



Calvary MESSENGER

“... God forbid that I should glory, save in
the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

Galatians 6:14

JANUARY 2018

Meditation	
<i>Children of the Heavenly Father</i>	1
Editorial	
<i>Music that Promotes the Gospel</i>	2
Reader Response.....	5
The Bottom Line	
<i>Questions Without Answers</i>	5
Get in the Way of Evil.....	8
What to Read.....	12
Attending the House of Mourning.....	13
Marriages.....	14
Cradle Roll.....	14
Ordination.....	15
Obituaries.....	16
Observations.....	18
A Woman After God's Heart	
<i>Nudges</i>	21
You've Got a Mission.....	23
What We Truly Believe Will Show.....	24
Rest.....	27
School Matters	
<i>Working With Our Minds</i>	30
Junior Messages	
<i>A Day For Miracles</i>	31
Thinking Generation	
<i>What's Wrong with Drinking?</i>	34
Thought Gems.....	back cover

Calvary Messenger

January 2018

Purpose of Calvary Messenger is:

- To propagate sound Biblical doctrine;
- To stimulate a deeper study of God's Word;
- To anchor and fortify the faith of Christians;
- To point lost and dying souls to Christ the Savior;
- To welcome prodigals back to the fold and family of God;
- And to help defeated Christians find victory in Christ Jesus.

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Children of the Heavenly Father

Carolina S. Berg, 1858

Children of the heavenly Father
Safely in His bosom gather;
Nestling bird nor star in heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given.

Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh,
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy.



Music that Promotes the Gospel

To be human is generally to be able to sing. But—so I’m told—atheists do not sing in their gatherings. Christians usually enjoy singing. To be full of confidence in God and joy in Jesus Christ makes us want to sing. But, as it is with other features of life, this gift can be used either to enrich or debase.

In 2 Chronicles 20:21, we have a powerful example of the effect of appropriate praise in the cause of conquest in God’s kingdom. King Jehoshaphat sought insight from God and consulted with the people on how to go against the enemy. The plan he used was, 1) To believe in the Lord God and thus to be established. 2) To believe His prophets so they’d prosper. 3) To appoint singers unto the Lord, that should praise the beauty of holiness. 4) To send the singers ahead of the marching army singing, “Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever.” The result? Overwhelming military victory!

In the new covenant, spiritual victories can also be traced to the power of music. Paul and Silas, in Acts 16:19-40, sang praises to God at midnight despite having their feet in stocks. Their backs had been

mutilated with severe whipping. But they sang *praises to God!* What might have happened had they sung, “Does Jesus care when my heart is pained...”? God answered with an earthquake that shook the doors of the building and of the jailer’s heart. When the dust had settled, the jailer’s whole family turned to God in faith and repentance. The result? Overwhelming spiritual victory!

We owe much to composers of the past who have written and sung inspiring Gospel songs. Billy Graham, now approaching 100 years of age, has had a significant ministry of mass evangelism in the last half of the 1900’s. For many years just before Billy would preach, he had baritone soloist, George Beverly “Bev” Shea, sing a song. Bev early dedicated his life to singing the Gospel. Billy is said to have remarked that he thinks he could often have cast a Gospel net right after one of Bev’s solos and had people make a decision for Christ right then and there. Such was the impact of his singing. Such is the power of Christian music whenever it is given sincerely to glorify God.

Some of the music sung earlier in the church age was not as pleasing

to one's ears as that which we now commonly sing. It was commonly slowly chanted, with little movement in the melody. Isaac Watts (1674-1748) is sometimes called the Father of English Hymnody. Isaac's father was a pastor. One day as they walked home from church, Isaac said that the musical chants they had sung that day did not satisfy him. "Why so?" Father Watts asked. Isaac said he wanted songs that praised Jesus. His father wisely said, "Son, why don't you mend the matter?" Isaac must have taken his father's encouragement seriously. I note that John Martin's new hymnal (*Hymns of the Church*) contains 45 of Isaac Watts hymn poems. Other Christian hymnals also include numerous Watts compositions.

A Gospel song is more subjective than a hymn. We might say the Gospel song speaks more directly to the heart and that a hymn speaks to the mind or spirit of man. I conclude that, according to Paul's letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians, good music can take different forms. In Ephesians 5:18b and 19, Paul wrote, "Be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." In Colossians 3:16, he wrote, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in

your hearts to the Lord."

Let us consider definitions of the terms given in these passages:

psalm: a sacred song or poem used in worship.

hymn: a song of praise to God.

Not from a dictionary, but my definition of a *spiritual song* closely parallels that of a Gospel song that speaks to one's fellow man, such as a song sung in invitation to receive and/or serve Christ. Seeing this and seeing the use of Christian music in our time, I conclude that we can rightly expect that different kinds of music do serve the church's various purposes.

Music needs rhythm. I don't think music should be flippant or that every rhythm is appropriate. There is music that ministers to the spirit of man and there's music that must be considered basically body music. Body music uses various beats to stir bodily appetites. To such music the Scripture says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof... but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (from Romans 6:12, 13).

Seemingly music that endures best comes out of hardship. Is that why some old Negro spirituals speak so powerfully to us, even to us who did not experience slavery? Most

of us did not face the hardships of those families who were violated and enslaved and/or separated by slavery. Nor did we face the second-class treatment many African Americans endured even after January 1, 1863 (when President Lincoln made *The Emancipation Proclamation* that was to set the slaves free.)

Obviously, much more could be said about this important subject, but let us simply acknowledge that music is a gift that the church should utilize as a vital part of proclaiming the Gospel. Let us not neglect it or cheapen it with inferior choices. Let us seek edification with psalms and hymns! And let us proclaim the Gospel with truly spiritual singing!

Yes, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy” (Psalm 107:2).

• • • • •

With this issue, we thank Sister Mary June Glick for the many inspirational articles for *Helpers at Home* that she’s been writing up to now. Several years ago, Sis. Mary June asked me and the Publication Board to consider replacing her, but we saw little reason to act right away. Nevertheless, health considerations must be considered, and we now introduce a new writer for sisters.

Susan Schlabach, from Ripley, Ohio, is Mrs. Delbert Schlabach, a minister’s wife. Thank you for giving

your consent to write, Sis. Susan.

In considering the fact that this column speaks to more than just mothers, Susan and we have decided to rename it. We are confident that it is read by many women with desire to grow in faith and virtue, regardless of their marital status. In fact, I think men have also read with interest Mary June’s writings.

Numerous sisters who do not have direct family obligations give unstinting devotion to the call of God on their lives. If this column can offer something that includes them, that seems better. Let me hasten to say, however, that I think that Mary June Glick has done well in writing about issues of interest to all women. Perhaps this feature was already writing to all women and just needed a new name.

God bless you, Sister Susan, as you take up your pen and write, **A Woman After God’s Heart!**

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CASP ANNOUNCEMENT:

We are looking for two young men to serve with CASP in January and several more in February. If you have any friends who might be interested in spending a month doing housing rehabilitation projects in Hutchinson, KS, please contact Ray Yoder at hprsofjoy@gmail.com.

–Tim Miller, for Peace and Service Committee.

-PLM



reader response

Dear Bro. Paul,
I just finished going through the newest *Calvary Messenger* (October) and thought it was loaded with great articles. I applaud you as a team for gathering great resources. I noticed some were from other constituencies and wish we had more great writers in our own, but am glad we can pull from other great men of God as well. Some of us younger men need to do more

writing, I guess. :-) It does seem that this issue has a lot of needed and well-written articles in it, and I know that takes effort and organization. Gideon Yutzy's column was especially good this time. I also applaud the new cover design that was introduced last year.

Be not weary of well doing!

Blessings,

Joshua Gingerich

McConnelsville, OH



the bottom line

Questions Without Answers

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Last month, in *Calvary Messenger*, I admitted that one of my weaknesses is having perfectionist tendencies. That said, it has for years led me to analyze the message of public speakers, and some accompanying gestures.

The speech of public speakers is also of interest. Why do they ask so many questions? I don't know either. Why don't they give some answers to the questions? I don't know. What are they trying to say with all those unanswered questions? Frankly, I don't know.

At one service, three speakers were

featured. Altogether, they asked more than a dozen questions, all without answers. Questions like, Why don't we trust God more? What are we trying to accomplish in life? Why are we not doing more in a Gospel witness? Why do we try to earn so much money? What do we concern ourselves with having such nice houses? What is our life's goal? How can we be so complacent about our salvation? What are we doing to prepare for our Lord's return? All such questions are given without answers and seem a bit strange when given at the ending of an address.

As a listener, I would have liked to give some answers. But these are given in topics and sermons, not in a panel discussion. The tone in which these questions are given usually implies that we aren't doing enough, giving enough, excited enough, and caring enough. And, sure enough, I do feel my own lack.

The first question in the Bible was by Satan, when he asked, "Yea, hath God said?" The second Bible question was asked by God, "Adam, where art thou?" Satan still pushes his question, both to believer and unbeliever, and God also has been asking His question to all mankind ever since. Satan keeps on deceiving people toward obscurity and darkness, while God continues to give answers and direction to clarification and light.

One of the things I especially noticed while writing commentaries of Matthew and John, was the way the opponents of Christ asked "innocent" questions. Jesus also asked some questions of His twelve disciples, and His opponents, and His audience. Generally, when Jesus perceived genuine interest, He provided some measure of giving an answer, either to inform, affirm, or to give a basis for later teaching. But when Jesus knew that these "innocent" questions were intended as a political or religious trap, He turned their strategy onto themselves, and asked them one or more questions.

Some meditations, along with some imagination, have provided a sanctified amusement, or otherwise just warmed my heart as I observed the spirit of wisdom that Christ used as He lived among men.

What is the last question given in the Bible? It is in Revelation 15:4. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" That question is asked in the midst of great exclamations by the saints in heaven. The obvious answer is in their exaltation of God for His judgment. The redeemed are praising God, and all nations will also do so, even if for them it is too late to be saved.

I have not found an answer to the last question in the Bible which God asked of someone. Years ago, I had thought to sometime prepare a sermon on, "The Questions God Asked." I never did it, but will leave it up to others to pursue what could be an interesting study.

One of the brotherhood rules for preaching is that one should not let questions "hang," that is, unanswered. We seem to do it all the time. Why do we do it? I don't know, but I just did it again. So, we are guests with some others and the host says, "Why don't we go to the table to eat?" I was wondering the same thing. We are seated, and the host says, "Brother Aaron, why don't you lead us in prayer?" Is it a time to

discuss the question? Which of these do you suppose applies? Should I say, 1. "I have not yet been asked to do so." 2. Or, should I say, "Could not Brother Jack do it better?" 3. Or, to ask if it might be appropriate since Paul said our food is sanctified by prayer? 4. To be precise I could say, "I would be willing to lead in prayer if you would say I should do so."

And why do we say? "That is a good question," when obviously there is no real answer, or no one knows the answer? It seems to me a good question is one that provides a teaching moment, or leads to some practical discussion that can give real life answers.

Brother Paul asked many questions in his epistles. Some of them were rhetorical questions, with obvious answers. Sometimes the question is answered by his teaching that follows. It seemed to be a routine Jewish thing to communicate in part by questions. It is prominent in Jesus' teaching and in the epistles.

I must say I have felt sorry for children, especially little children, who said or did something unacceptable, and the Dad asked one question after another and then still more questions. There are times when the child does not know why he did it, cannot say how wrong it was, and is not able to handle an adult level of interrogation. Many a father has asked questions in an

unfriendly climate, in a tone of voice too threatening for the child to respond to at all. The father might spank the child all the more because the child's fear of saying a word is incorrectly interpreted by the Dad as arrogance and rebellion, when actually, the heavy handedness of the Dad's anger caused the child's thinking mechanism to shut down quickly and completely.

This illustration can be applied to Colossians 3:21, where the Bible says, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." In the tense atmosphere of this parental court, the small child is so devastated by the parents' explosive disposition that he cannot feel safe to say or do anything.

An interrogation by some rapid-fire questions is not a good teaching moment at all for a small child. What should the parent do? 1. He should state the unacceptable word or deed. 2. Analyze the part that was wrong. 3. Say what should be done if such a scenario comes to the child again. 4. Speak praise for some good he has done today. 5. Ask him about his feelings now and whether he is sorry for his error. (Note that my number five is not number one or two).

The Bottom Line is that, whether we are dealing with adults or children, one well-spoken statement is worth more than ten questions without answers!



Get in the Way of Evil

Val Yoder

When the Apostle Andrew was captured and brought before Governor Aegeas, Aegeas told Andrew, “If you don’t stop preaching this message about Jesus and his cross, I’m going to crucify you on one, too.”

Andrew replied, “Sir, I would not have preached about the glory of the cross if I was not willing to die on one.” He was taken and tied to the splintery wooden beams of a cross, where he hung in excruciating pain. He preached the Gospel for three days until he finally went to be with the Treasure of his heart.¹

Much of the western church has deceived herself into thinking that she lives in a very unique dispensation (or geography) where Jesus’ words don’t apply. Even as contemporary Anabaptists we have passed off some of His clear, indisputable statements as not applying to us.

We agree that what He said was true in the early church, and then to some degree throughout the Middle Ages. We see the truth of His words again in the Reformation and even today in some other remote parts

of the world. But, we think, praise God, that his Words aren’t true for us and haven’t been for our parents or our grandparents, and beyond them, well... that’s too long ago to worry about.

Jesus said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you... if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...” (John 15:18-20).

We smugly say, “Thank you, Lord, that we don’t live in such a traumatic era of history.” But Jesus was not saying you might suffer persecution, some will suffer persecution, or if you are carnal Christians you will suffer persecution. If we follow Him, we *will* be persecuted. What does our lack of persecution say about us?

I have lived too much of my life denying this truth, hoping it was not true. I grieve over what sweet intimacy with Christ that denial has cost me. Until we are ready to die with Christ, literally, we are not prepared to live with Him either.

Jesus was not speaking metaphorically when he told us, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross

daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” (Luke 9)

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance. Is Jesus only a metaphorical king? Was His death only metaphoric? No.

Some would say, “But we don’t really die, that’s too radical, too hyper-spiritual— a martyr’s complex.”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did more than metaphorically refuse to bow to the idol Nebuchadnezzar had erected. They did more than stand in their hearts while they knelt with their bodies. They stood out in the multitude like a sore thumb because they got in the way of evil.

Christ was talking about more than passing out tracts and singing in the park when He said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:32) That lifting up was His death. It was the cross. It was laying down physical life, not metaphorical life. That was how Jesus got in the way of evil. Jesus’ words make it clear we will never win western culture for the Kingdom of Christ through volleyball tournaments, Amish-made furniture, or even our church

services. All of these may have a legitimate place, but they are not our means of getting in the way of evil. We must jump into the fray and tangle with the enemy. To be persecuted is to get scratched, clawed, bitten, and maybe eaten by the enemy.

In October of 2014, a young boy slipped and fell into a tiger enclosure at the New Delhi Zoo. The surprised tiger watched and “played” with the crouching boy for fifteen minutes. Bystanders watched, yelled, threw stones, and videoed, but no one went to his rescue. The boy was finally carried off and killed by the giant cat. If that had been your son, would you have videoed the event? Would you have yelled and screamed for fifteen minutes? Or would you have convinced some friends to join you in saving his life?

Adam also dismissed his responsibility. When he faced a situation that mattered most to God, to Eve, to his children, to all mankind, he stood and watched as the serpent spoke to his wife. He watched evil progress without intervening.

The foundational difference between the early Christians and their enemies is that they did not believe they needed to survive. They did not expect to survive. We declare at our missions conferences, “Go your ways:

behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.” (Luke 10:3) This is not a survival course. No biblical doctrine guarantees our safety when the wolves of godlessness surround us.

The scandal of Christ’s trial was the ultimate display of this world’s total injustice. The justice system found Him innocent, but still they whipped Him, made a crown of thorns and pressed it onto His head, and hit Him with the palms of their hands. These actions rage against justice. Do not depend on a speck of fairness in the system that will persecute you. Do not expect justice when you get in the way of evil.

In 400 A.D. a monk named Telemachus happened to be near a Roman stadium just as a brutal gladiator’s battle began. He was sickened.

“In the name of Jesus, stop!” He shouted, but no one heard. People screamed to see more blood. Telemachus jumped over the wall, into the stadium, and landed among the gladiators. He yelled again, “In the name of Jesus, stop!”

The surprised gladiators halted their fighting long enough to hear his cry. Furious at his interruption, they chased him down. When the dust settled, Telemachus lay dead on the floor of the stadium.

The crowd was finally totally

silent. The sight of a dead monk shocked everyone. Slowly the crowd began to leave. The gladiators and finally the emperor left, leaving only Telemachus’ body. Within an hour the emperor issued an edict: “No more war games in the stadium.”²

We must be willing to step between the abused and the abuser and shout, “In the name of Jesus, stop!” Stop divorces, abortions, church splits, pornography!

We are not called to passively observe sin, we must actively confront sin. Step in its way. Crash the gates of hell.

We do not step between the abused and the abuser with carnal weapons. We step between with spiritual weapons that are mighty for the pulling down of strongholds. We step between the seeker and the lie, the brotherhood and the post-modernist, the sodomite and his life-style.

It is a grievous shame that we can argue on Facebook about the morality of relating to the gay community or the ethics of transgender bathrooms, and remain unengaged with the neighbor who aborts her baby and the fellow employee who is cheating on his wife.

Sisters, every time you appear in public with your elegant, modest dress, you are graphically getting in

the way of evil. You are called upon to demonstrate the beauty of holiness to this decadent and immoral western culture that allows Hollywood to determine the undress of this sensual culture.

If American Christians were willing to get in the way of evil, the country's jails would probably be populated with Christians. Instead, we have very few brothers like Brother Ken Miller and Brother Timo Miller serving time in prison.

Jesus came to die so that we might live. He sends us to die so that others might live. This was to be a repeated cycle throughout the New Testament dispensation. We blissfully sing, "This is my commandment that ye love one another, that your joy may be full," but ignore the next verse, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:11-13)

We are told that, "...The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." (John 16:2) We live in a time when this is, again, literally true. The baptism of blood is not metaphoric; it is the commitment level of anyone entering into the "armed forces" of Christ's kingdom. It is the resolution of anyone who will get in the way of evil.

Do not be unduly alarmed at the

fiery ordeals which will come to test your faith, as though this were some abnormal experience. Death has lost its victory. Death is only the passageway from a decadent and broken world to the beauty and health of heaven.

Rejoice when you are called to share Christ's sufferings. One day, when He shows Himself in full splendor to men, you will be filled with the most tremendous joy.

You will walk through the parks and gardens of heaven, fellowship with the redeemed, and feast at the tables of the New Jerusalem. You will be with a holy beautiful Bridegroom of perfect character and love who unveils all the mysteries of our previous, present, and eternal life. "I will never leave you nor forsake you" will gain new meaning. Gratification will never end. Beauty will endlessly increase. Desire will be forever filled.

Most people know that we will worship God in heaven, but they cannot guess how thrilling it will be. If we could get the briefest keyhole peek of the beauty of Jesus in His home and His plans for eternal escapades, we would look forward to death. We would be invincible in persecution as we use weapons that are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Mark Batterson says, "It's time to

quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death. It's time to go all in and all out for the All in All. Pack your coffin!"³

God is calling the young people of the Conservative Anabaptist church in America to enter the stadium. He is calling us to get in the way of evil. We are to storm the gates of hell! He is calling our churches to send out men and women who abandon this life because of their focus on the reality of the next life.

¹ van Braght, Thieleman J., *The Martyr's Mirror*, Herald Press, 1938.

² Monk, Preston. *The Monk Who Ended the Coliseum Games*, www.prayerfoundation.org

³ Batterson, Mark. *Going All In: One Decision Can Change Everything*, Zondervan, 2013.

[The longer address Get in the Way of Evil was first presented as the closing message at REACH 2017 in Lancaster, PA. To listen to this and other REACH presentations visit the "recorded events" page at ChristianLearning.org. The written version was first published in the Summer 2017 Edition of Daughters of Promise magazine. Used by permission of Val Yoder.]



What to Read

Writer Unknown

If you have the blues, read Psalm 23.

If your wallet is empty, read Psalm 37.

If you are losing confidence in men, read 1 Corinthians 13.

If people are unkind, read Job 15.

If you are discouraged about your work, read Psalm 126.

If you find the world getting small and yourself growing great, read Psalm 19.

If you can't have your own way in everything, keep silent and read James 3.

If you are out of sorts, read Hebrews 12.

[I invite others to add to this list of Scriptures that apply well to life's situations. Wouldn't it be great to have a back cover of Calvary Messenger filled with gems like this? PLM]



Attending the House of Mourning

Dale R. Eby, Dundee, NY

Meditating on life and our inevitable death is wise. Attending funerals and staring death in the face have a way of demanding our attention. Today our society wants to deny death and run from the thought of God and eternity. Funerals are being exchanged for celebrations of food, drink, and laughter. Viewings and funerals are being exchanged for cremation.

Too many people are not facing the reality of death and grieving properly. One hometown funeral director testifies that family members of the deceased have come back to him later lamenting that they did not have a viewing and a proper time of mourning with friends. Some feel like they still have not fully grieved—even a year later.

The Bible states, “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth [pleasure]” (Eccl. 7:2,4).

In Genesis 50:3, it says there were 70 days of mourning for Jacob. Genesis 50:9 says “a very great company” went from Egypt to bury Jacob back in Canaan. Upon their arrival at the burial site they spent seven more days

mourning with “great and very sore lamentation.” Attending the house of mourning gives time for expression of appreciation for a life lived and also a time to begin healing from the loss.

When Lazarus died his family and friends wept at the “house of mourning,” and when Jesus came, He wept also. John 11:33 states, “He groaned in spirit and was troubled.” He was affected by grief. The departed was missed.

The “house of mourning” has its place in adjusting our value system. Life is given focus when eternity for us and our standing before God is pondered. For the unsaved, the five senses tend to dictate life. The focus is on the here and now with little thought of eternity ahead. Some things come into clear and bold focus as we consider the following verses: Heb. 9:27, “...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment.” 2 Kings 20:1 “Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live,” and Amos 4:12, “Prepare to meet thy God.”

The next time you ponder attending the services for a departed one, remember, it is good—profitably good—to go “to the house of mourning.”

[From The Mid-Atlantic Informer, Dec. 2017/Jan.2018. Used by permission.] 

marriages

May the homes established by these marriages be little substations of heaven, where God reigns and His blessings flow.

Kuhns-Miller

Bro. Ronnie, son of Mark and Susan Kuhns, Leesburg, OH, and Sis. Sheila, daughter of Mark and Martha Miller, Leesburg, OH, at First Baptist Church for Faith and Light Mennonite Church on May 27, 2017, by Duane Troyer.


Sharp-Peachey

Bro. Matthias, son of Joe and Martha Sharp, Belleville, NY, and Sis. Debra, daughter of Wilmer and Vera Peachey, Ellisburg, NY, on July 7, 2017, at Pulaski Wesleyan Church for Northern Light Christian Fellowship, by Wilmer Peachey.

Weaver-Miller

Bro. Jared, son of James and Fannie Weaver, Golden City, MO, and Sis. Lucy, daughter of Kevin and Christina Miller, Scranton, KS, at Town and Country Christian Church for Lyndon Amish Mennonite Church on Oct. 27, 2017, by Rudy Overholt.

Yoder-Byler

Bro. Merle, Jr., son of Merle and Esther (Miller) Yoder, Lincoln, MO, and Sis. Kimberly, daughter of Dan and Rhoda Byler, Whiteville, TN, at First Baptist Church for Whiteville Mennonite Church on Oct. 20, 2017, by Merle Yoder. 

cradle roll

The children which the Lord hath graciously given . . . Genesis 33:5


Byler, John and Barbara (Erb), Brunner, ON, sixth child, first daughter, Breanne Mary, Oct. 30, 2017.

Cantrell, Seth and Sheila (Stubenrauch), Advance, MO, fifth child, third son, Owen Seth, Nov. 13, 2017.

Farmwald, Michael and Frieda (Miller), Bloomfield, IN, fourth and fifth children, second and third sons, Douglas Abe, born Dec. 31, 2012 and Wyatt Marion, born Feb. 10, 2014. Received by adoption Oct. 5, 2017.

Fisher, Levi and Emmaline (Lapp), Honey Grove, PA, seventh child, fourth daughter, (one son deceased) Kierra Skye, Nov. 12, 2017.

Helmuth, Aaron and Denise (Herschberger), Lott, TX, fifth child, third son, Weston Sawyer, Nov. 11, 2016.

Helmuth, Matthew and Rosanna (Schrock), Lovington, IL, third and fourth daughters, second son, Neveah Payton, born May 12, 2012, Jamison Shane and Jaselyn Shantel (twins), born March 26, 2013. Received by adoption August 31, 2017. 

Lapp, Daniel S. and Elizabeth Ann (Stoltzfus), Ephrata, PA, seventh child, fourth daughter, Melania Grace, Nov. 19, 2017.

Mast, Jared and Sara (Yoder), Mountain View, AR, second and third children, second son, first daughter, Gabriel Orion and Aaliyah Marie (twins), July 27, 2015. Adopted August 31, 2017.

Miller, Josh and Angela (Lantz), Lott, TX, first child and daughter, Savannah Hope, Dec. 15, 2016.

Mullet, Josiah and Amy (Miller), Sugarcreek, OH, second child and daughter, Jenna Nicole, born March 3, 2016. Received by adoption, Nov. 20, 2017.

Mullet, Michael and Janell (Troyer), White Pigeon, MI, first child and daughter, Brooklyn Grace, Nov. 3, 2017.

Overholt, Jansen and Monica (Kauffman), Cayo, Belize, first child and son, Theodore Samuel, Nov. 21, 2017.

Schlabach, Martin and Kristina (Yoder), Cochran, PA, second child, first daughter, Ava Cheyenne, Nov. 1, 2017.

Stoltzfus, Andrew and Keturah (Miller), Advance, MO, third child, second son, Kyle Blake, June 5, 2017.


Stoltzfus, Lavon and Missy (Troyer),

Dundee, OH, fourth child, second daughter, Kaylee Hope, Oct. 25, 2017

Troyer, David Dean and Rhoda (Beiler), Leesburg, OH, sixth child, first daughter, Abigail Grace, Nov. 14, 2017.

Yoder, Larry and Cynthia (Otto), Arthur, IL, second child, first son, Theodore Eugene, Sept. 15, 2017.

Yoder, Millard and Carolyn (Yoder), Rural Retreat, VA, fifth child, third son, Mason Hans, Nov. 1, 2017.

Zook, Nate and Celena (Yoder), Rural Retreat, VA, second child, first daughter, Faith Miranda (received by adoption June 13, 2017). Born Nov. 13, 2013. 

ordinations

May the grace of God be upon our brothers as they minister faithfully. Let us pray for them.

Bro. Matthew Bontrager, 40, (wife, Lacy Havristiuc), was ordained to the office of bishop on Nov. 12, 2017. at Pleasant View A. M. Church, Arcola, IL. The voice of the church had also put Paul Plank in the lot.


Bro. Andy Martin, 27, (wife, Arlene Raber), of Hicksville, OH, was ordained as bishop at Hicksville Christian Fellowship on Oct. 29, 2017. Preordination messages were given by

Paul Weaver, Wellston, OH. The charge was given by Lavern Miller. Sharing the lot was Jadon Yoder.

Bro. Kevin Mullet, 50, (wife, Leona Yoder) of Lott, TX, was called by voice of the church as deacon of Faith Mennonite Fellowship April 8, 2017. Preordination messages were given by James Shetler, Hutchinson, KS. The charge was given by Brian Bontrager, assisted by Lee Fisher and Andy Mullet.

Bro. Martin D. Schlabach, 36, (wife Kristina Yoder) of Cochranton, PA, was ordained to the office of deacon on August 20, 2017, at Plainview

Gospel Fellowship, Guys Mills, PA. Preordination messages were given by Paul Beachy, Bastrop, TX. The charge was given by Roy Hershberger. Sharing the lot were Joseph Schlabach, Michael Peachey, and Dennis Yoder.

Bro. Mahlon Stoltzfus, 43, (wife Ruth Stoltzfus), of Wytheville, VA, was ordained as deacon at Light of Hope Christian Fellowship on Sept. 24, 2017. Preordination messages were given by Winston Miller, Slanesville, WV. The charge was given by John Beiler, assisted by Manfred McGrath and Bennie Byler. Sharing the lot was Phineas Kauffman. 

o b i t u a r i e s

Lebold, Shirley Anne (Wagler), 64, of Millbank, Ontario, died Nov. 3, 2017. She was born Dec. 1, 1952, to the late Solomon and Lovina (Kuepfer) Wagler.

She was a faithful member of Fairhaven A. M. Church, Milverton.

On Oct. 6, 1973, she was married to Wayne Lebold. He survives. Children surviving are Rodney (Sarah Gerber) Lebold, Millbank; Norma (Mark) Miller, KY; Philip (Rosemary) Lebold, Millbank; grandchildren: Yvonne, Jarrett, Garrett, Destiny, and Alexander Miller; Ryan Lebold and Aria Lebold. Others survivors are her step-mother, Katie Wagler (Jantzi); brother Elroy and Diane Wagler; step brothers and sisters:

Vernon Jantzi (Linda); Donald (Mary Jane) Jantzi; Nelson (Verna) Jantzi; Darlene (Merlin) Jantzi; step brother-in-law Lloyd (Kathryn) Albrecht; and sisters-in-law: Ken (Mary) Lebold; Wanda (Mervin) Wagler; and Floyd (Kathy) Lebold.

Preceding her in death: Solomon Wagler and Lovina (Kuepfer), step sister, Irene Albrecht, Nephews: Nathaniel and Timothy Wagler, Jonathan Albrecht (in infancy).

The funeral was held on Nov. 6, with Vernon Jantzi and Arnold Jantzi serving. Burial was in the Mornington Amish Mennonite Cemetery.

Miller, Mary, 84, of Shreve, Ohio, died at her home on Nov. 4, 2017, following a period of declining health and complications from a stroke. She was born July 15, 1933, daughter of the late Eli and Emma (Troyer) Wengerd.

She was a member of Peniel Fellowship, Holmesville.

On Feb. 26, 1953, she was married to John J. C. Miller. He died Nov. 6, 1999. Surviving are three children: David (Effie) Miller, Paul (Savannah) Miller, and Ruth (Wyman) Yoder, all of Shreve, OH; 20 grandchildren and 23 great grandchildren.

Preceding her in death were two grandsons, Matthew Paul Miller and Timothy Alan Yoder.

The funeral was held at Peniel Fellowship with the home ministers serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Wagler, Leroy, 84, died Oct. 22, 2017. He was born April 26, 1933, to the late Menno and Verna (Stutzman) Wagler.

He was a member of Pleasantview A. M. church, Hartville, OH. Leroy had an excavating business and enjoyed gas engines, trap shooting, hunting and fishing.

On April 23, 1953, he was married to Marie Coblentz. She died Nov. 7, 2000. He is survived by sons Thomas (Sadie) Wagler, Montana; James (Ruth Ann) Wagler, Beach City, OH; and Mark (Ruby) Wagler, South Carolina; Martha (Philip) Yoder, Sugarcreek,

OH; and Ruth (Lee) Hostetler, Cottage Grove, TN; 16 grandchildren, seven step-grandchildren, and 40 great grandchildren; and two sisters, Ada Schlabach and Miriam Wagler.

The funeral was held on Oct. 26, at Hartville Conservative Mennonite Church with burial at Oak Grove Cemetery, Uniontown, OH.

Yoder, Sheila Rose, 18, of Cottage Grove, TN, died very unexpectedly of heart failure on Nov. 12, 2017, at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, in Nashville, TN. She was born Feb. 5, 1999, in Paris, TN, the youngest child of Michael and Virginia (Miller) Yoder. She was baptized and a faithful member of Calvary Christian Fellowship.

She is survived by two sisters, Kathleen and Maria of the home, and two brothers, Nathan of the home and Dean (April) Yoder, Cottage Grove, TN, paternal grandparents, Ervin and Louise Yoder of Cottage Grove, TN, and maternal grandparents, Raymond and Ida Miller, Roodhouse, IL. A number of uncles, aunts, and cousins survive.

She was preceded in death by three cousins.

The funeral was held at Bethel Fellowship church on Nov. 17, with Henry Nissley, Paul Miller, and Dwight Miller serving. Burial was at the Calvary Christian Fellowship cemetery, with Nathan Nissley conducting the committal service.



New Year's festivities vary greatly around the globe. The holiday falls during the cold season of the year in the northern hemisphere and the warm season in the southern hemisphere. Some people usher in the new year with a celebratory swim, while others celebrate with food or fireworks. Almost all celebrations involve other people. Somehow solitary celebrations aren't very attractive. Alcohol consumption is very common in many cultures around the world. Celebrations are designed to make something memorable. However, alcohol consumption lowers one's awareness and memory, which runs counter to the idea of making memories. Maybe the emphasis on alcohol during this holiday is a reflection of the fact that many people live lives they feel better about trying to forget rather than celebrate.

I remember the thrill of watching the clock tick midnight on December 31 while I was a child. My interest in celebrating the New Year has waned with time. I'd like to chalk it up to a more mature approach to life. Maybe so. But I suspect it has just as much to do with the fact that, the more New Year's Days that I see, the less

novel they become. An event can be mesmerizing to an 8-year old because it happens ONLY once a year. A 60-year-old might wonder where the year has gone and be amazed that it's time to "do it all over again".

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During the third quarter of 2017 the US economy grew by 3% which is remarkable considering the two major hurricanes that blasted the US mainland during that time. The DOW has seen record highs. Depending on one's political sympathies, these favorable numbers are viewed as "in spite of the current government administration" or "a validation of the current administration." We're funny that way, aren't we?

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Those of us who use mobile technology are quite aware that its legitimate use has a huge benefit in simplifying our lives in helpful ways. Since the benefits are so thoroughly experienced, they don't need much explanation. Those benefits have parallel dangers that are equally striking but less understood. This might explain why more ink in publications such as this one, is dedicated to pointing out the dangers, and why the technologically

progressive among us, might feel like they're being picked on.

I belong to the crowd that uses a smartphone. I realize that might give me a bit of credibility with some of you and eliminate my credibility with others of you. But, my conviction continues to grow that this technological use brings results that we need to work on understanding better. Better understanding can help us make choices regarding use that minimize negative results. Solid homes and strong parent-child relationships together with healthy church relationships are helpful in reducing the desire to fill a personal void with virtual fluff. But the benefit is mostly in a reduced propensity to use technology unwisely rather than preventing negative results from unwise use. Let's not pretend that our solid church communities will somehow inoculate us from the negative effects of inappropriate use.

The September, 2017, issue of *The Atlantic* ran an article authored by Jean M. Twenge entitled "Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?". I was encouraged by multiple sources to read the article and would encourage you to do so if possible, particularly smartphone users and parents of smartphone users. (Ironically, some of you might choose to read it on your smartphone.)

Studies cited in this article indicate that teenagers in the last 5-7 years spend significantly less time being with their peers, but are more sleep deprived and more lonely and depressed, than their counterparts of just a few years prior. This trend coincides with the time when most in this age group acquired smartphones. How ironic that the timing of the increased "connection" via social media, is paralleled with reduced social activity and greater loneliness and depression!

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Recently released studies cited in an article published by *Penn Medicine News* indicate that the structure of nerve fibers in women makes them more susceptible to concussions than their male counterparts. This, along with other more obvious gender differences, makes me wonder what exactly it was that God did when he removed a rib from Adam to create Eve. In addition to the rib, did he remove other elements of Adam's person whether physical, emotional or otherwise?

Serious minded Christians should have no problem supporting the clearly articulated scriptural truth (Galatians 3:28) that there is no difference in the intrinsic worth of men and women. But equality of value does not translate to equality of roles, composition, etc... Those who

don't find a stopping place in their promotion of gender equality end up defending definitions of equality, including physiological makeup, that are completely incompatible with reality. Just a few decades ago, nobody would have taken seriously the ideas that some of these people now espouse with remarkable conviction.

Several Scriptures come to mind that underscore the importance of having our understanding anchored in the unchanging nature of God and Scripture, rather than the fickle dictates of our various contexts. Since we wish to reap a harvest of righteousness, let's sow the seeds of that harvest by seeking to align ourselves with God's plan for His people.

Pro. 16:25, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Rom. 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Gal. 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

• • • • •

United Parcel Service (UPS) and several other companies with a large fleet of vehicles on the road have implemented a policy that eliminates left-handed turns on

their delivery routes in some urban areas. Even though this means that their vehicles traverse a few more miles overall, there are at least three reasons why avoiding left-handed turns is better for them. This results in fewer accidents and is faster, since the increased distance is offset by reduced waiting at traffic signals. Finally, the quicker routes translate to overall fuel savings for the company. Obviously, these benefits are greatly reduced, if not completely absent, when the delivery routes involve rural areas.

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During our most recent Wednesday prayer meeting one brother requested prayer for our witness during this Christmas season. I realize that by the time you read this, Christmas will be in our rear-view mirror. But, this emphasis is appropriate for various reasons. God's children should be known as givers rather than consumers. We just might need that reminder during the Christmas season. Furthermore, through our ease of transportation and communication, we need to be reminded that we should cultivate relationships with the people we rub shoulders with on a day-to-day basis. It is through personal interaction that the light of Christ is most clearly displayed and understood.

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As of this writing, the leader of

North Korea and of the United States seem to be engaged in a competition to “out-bluster” the other. Both individuals act quite eager to engage in inflammatory rhetoric. This leaves onlookers asking whether they might be willing to translate these bold proclamations to military action. The prospect of each country using their nuclear capabilities has implications that would be dreadful indeed.

Let’s pray for those in positions of power and influence. Let’s pray for

God’s children everywhere. But let’s not forget that come what may, God’s Kingdom is an eternal one. We don’t know what mechanism God will use to draw the curtain on what we know as time, but He will provide all that his children need for each day. Our hope goes far beyond the limits of this time and this planet. This awareness offers plenty of reason not to be anxious about the current state of affairs in this turbulent world.

-RJM 

A Woman After God’s Heart

Nudges

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH

God uses a variety of ways to get our attention. Can you identify?

A late-stage cancer diagnosis, a house fire or a baby’s death knocks us off our feet and leaves us reeling, sobbing and gasping for breath. Hopefully, after our thrashing quiets down, we find Him and grasp His faithfulness. We are changed for life. Those experiences feel like a powerful “shove” from the Almighty.

But in this commentary, it’s not the “shoves” I’m talking about, but the “nudges.”

For example, the Memorization Nudge. In last Sunday’s message,

the minister mentioned spiritual lethargy. Add that to my memory of a dad in his 40’s who carried little white *Navigator* cards in his pocket to memorize Scripture. And all the while I’m being plagued as I remember Mrs. Bishop who held the ladies’ session at the last minister’s meetings. She dared, no commanded us, to begin memorizing Scripture. Guess what? I can’t walk away from my need to memorize Scripture. The Holy Spirit used human voices and lives to catch my attention.

Here’s another example of a nudge: An evangelist of a week of meetings opened the service each evening by

asking, “How did you encounter God today?” He prompted us to live each day in the awareness of God and how He infuses all of our experiences, and then to verbalize that. People popped to their feet, sharing with everyone about the way they’d found God that day in an apology, a flower, a stumble, the weather, or on the job. Today, roughly fifteen years later, I catch myself in the mental processes of asking, “Where, when, how did I see God today?” That may be called a, “Practicing the Presence of God Nudge.”

I recollect a number of nudges coming to me through this publication, *The Calvary Messenger*. One was a suggestion given by the lady’s column editor about a creative way to honor fathers. Another addressed technology use and something about “reverse,” and more recently about being technology monks. An article of years ago left an indelible impression regarding apologies.

A Woman After God’s Heart is attentively thoughtful about nudges. Our sensitivity, being tuned in to little things, and responsiveness begs for direction. Among us, there are youthful eager hearts, reaching out to learn and absorb. There are lonely widows with time on their hands, wondering if anyone wants their time. There are mothers with more


toddlers than hours of sleep. Singles, grasping for identity in a coupled world. Middle-aged mothers, grappling with the choices adult children are making. Hearts that grieve infertility, or much fertility, rejection, unfaithfulness, conflict, sickness, or want.

Do we dare be vulnerable enough to share our personal stories of depression, relationship clashes, loss, and longing to minister to our sisters who may be languishing on the other side of answers? The power of story is immeasurable, and yours may be the missing link between someone’s struggle and resolution. This definition of counseling resonates with me: In the context of our churches, *counseling* happens when I communicate my struggle to another who has gone the way before and she can guide me through that area of pain. Another time, someone comes to me about an issue and my past experience guides her. She leaves, empowered to assist another. And so the stories of loss and victory weave the fabric of our lives. When our frayed edges slip through from time to time, we work together at hemming them more neatly for each other.

May I suggest that this forum, the sisters’ column, could be a platform for feminine voices to minister and be ministered to? Of women, by

women, for women. I heard a busy young mother state that by the time she's read the Bible and the *Calvary Messenger*, she doesn't have time to read anything else! If that's true, we have work to do!

Ladies, I would be eager to hear about subjects you would like to hear discussed. Testimonies that are

burning to be shared. Lessons learned. Nagging uncertainties. And your answers and resolutions; because I know you have those too. It may come in the shape of a story, a question, a one-line suggestion, a testimony, or an inspirational challenge. See my contact information on the inside cover. You have been nudged. 

You've Got a Mission

Simon Schrock, Catlett, VA

I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, "You must prophesy again before many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

(Revelation 10:10-11).

John was abandoned on Patmos. His testimony for the risen Lord seemed crushed. Instead, God used him to perform a mighty work that would impact every generation.

"You must prophesy again." God was not finished with John. There was yet kingdom work for him to do. John was to prophesy again, and write the Book of Revelation. God has work for every member of the body of Christ. There is a mission for all God's children. All around us are unsaved people, people who are hurting, distressed, and discouraged by grief and disappointments. Orphans, widows, and older people who feel

neglected need our ministry. There are people bound to sinful habits who will find release in Christ. This sinful and adulterous generation is discarding God's principles and moving toward the condition of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In this hurting, hopeless world Jesus has called us to be his "salt and light." God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (1 Corinthians 12:18). God has placed you where you are to be his ambassador. Whether it is giving a cup of water in his name, or preaching his Word, there is a work for you in his body.

What an awesome thought—I'm part of his body and I have work to do for him! "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1).

[This final meditation is from page 138 of Revelation Day by Day, edited by R. Leslie Holmes and Richard A. Bodey. Published in 2001 by Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group. Used by permission.]



Letter From Harrisburg What We Truly Believe Will Show

By Dorcas Smucker

For The Register-Guard, AUG. 13, 2017

I envy my dad: He gets letters in the mail.

Paul and I get bills, Fabric Depot fliers and seed-germination results.

The college kids get credit card offers and updates on financial aid or grades.

Dad gets letters. They come from Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota and elsewhere, with stamps canceled in small towns, handwritten addresses on the front and often a few fun stickers on the back. Last week, he got three letters in a single day's mail.

He pulls out his yellow pocketknife and carefully slices open the short end of the envelope, just as he has for probably 90 years. He blows a quick puff at the sliced opening to separate the sides, then reaches in and pulls out greeting cards,

newspaper clippings, photocopied articles and, of course, letters: pages of ink and words and love and connection, folded in thirds.

Settled on the living room loveseat with his glasses on his nose, he peruses these missives from friends, former students, his many nieces and nephews, his children and his brother Johnny. Then, as he stomps through the kitchen on his way outside to work on my apple trees, he leaves the envelopes on the kitchen counter with a note — "Read if you want to."

I want to, so I do.

Johnny irrigated his fourth planting of corn and hopes the cows don't get into it. Cousin Barbara says the mice are eating her cucumbers in the garden — she didn't know they did that. My brother Marcus and his wife are headed to Canada to visit

their daughter and hopefully find some hungry fish as well. A historian cousin sends the shocking news that a long-ago acquaintance's death may have been murder rather than an accident.

In this era of text-message communication, where even emails are becoming outdated, I have a nostalgic fascination with letters.

Colorful stationery waits in one of my desk drawers; envelopes and address labels in another. I have just the right fine-tipped black pens, an old recipe tin full of addresses on file cards, and pretty stamps from the post office.

I even follow letter-writing sites on Instagram. Full of shots of elegantly addressed envelopes, hand-decorated paper and inspiration, they turn an old-fashioned art into modern creativity.

Sadly, though, I seldom get letters in the mail. Because, to be harshly honest, I seldom actually write them.

Hosting my dad forces me to think about the things I say, the decisions I make, and the results I get. He is 100 years old, and this is his fourth consecutive summer with us in Oregon.

Thanks to his deliberate personality, his Amish theology and the reality of growing up in Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl, Dad has an unusual clarity about choices and results,

sowing and reaping, and the huge difference between thinking about doing something as opposed to actually doing it.

Like most of us, he knows about nutrition and exercise. Unlike many of us, he deliberately eats small, nutritious portions and goes for a walk every day, forcing himself to go outside even though it's hot, he's sleepy, and his legs are stiff and unsteady at times. Knowing, by itself, doesn't keep him healthy and limber; only heaving off the couch and thumping outside with cane in hand, drinking mugs of hot water, and eating piles of lettuce and broccoli does.

"Faith without works is dead," the Bible's Book of James says. We Amish and Mennonites, sisters under the Anabaptist theological umbrella, quote it a lot. We are skeptical of talk, opinion, pretension and insistence until we see how a person lives. "Show me, don't tell me," the writers' mantra, could be our denomination's as well.

We live in a strange era in which beliefs and opinions seem to count as much as action, and an emphatic Facebook post about prison reform or preserving our forests qualifies as having done something about it.

Our daughter Emily went to Oregon State University every day with a mug and tea bags in her

backpack. She knew where all the hot-water dispensers were located and often arrived in class with a comforting cup of hot black tea.

She didn't have an ideological agenda. It just seemed like the right and responsible thing to do instead of spending money on daily doses of tea in throwaway cups.

Emily had one young professor who, she said, didn't try terribly hard to hide his political preferences. "How does that work, you bringing a mug to class?" he asked Emily one day, bewildered and amused, as she settled into her desk.

She explained. He listened kindly but still seemed confused. Then he took a swig of coffee from his daily disposable Allann Bros. cup and went on with the class.

For a Mennonite student, it was an eye-opening moment.

"I realized then," Emily said, "that everyone around me who believes in human-caused climate change is living exactly like everyone who doesn't."

My dad would be utterly bewildered by my Instagram feed with the pretty calligraphy on white envelopes and the butterflies cut out and glued on lined paper. He sees the clear line connecting decision and effect, and the worthlessness of opinion without action.

You aren't into letter writing if you

don't write letters, and you won't get any letters in the mail if you don't send them. I'm sure that would be his philosophy, should he choose to put it into words.

Dad doesn't talk about writing letters. He writes letters.

When he comes in from his walk, he sits on the loveseat, places a lap desk on his thin legs, and tapes a piece of lined notebook paper into the correct angle.

He clicks his ballpoint pen, an invention that is still a marvel to him.

"Dear Truman," he writes. "Dear Lydia Mae; Dear Marcus; Dear Johnny."

Slowly, with perfect penmanship, he fills the page with ink and words, weather and news and stories, harvest and apples and family history. Soon, he and his cane thump to the mailbox. He sets the envelope in the little groove, closes the flap and raises the little flag. That afternoon the letter is on its way, full of paper, promise and connection.

He comes inside, knowing that Truman, Johnny and all the others will, most likely, soon write back.

That is how it works.

I know better than to pontificate to Dad about my interests and passions — Jesus, justice, responsibility, orphans, stewardship, creativity and many more. For one thing, Dad has a hard time hearing me. Much

more importantly, he is sharply observing my life. He knows what I really believe, because he sees what I do. Emphatic opinions are like the dandelion fluff blowing in the hot wind and ignored as he heads to the mailbox, letter in hand.

It's the doing that tells the truth about what you believe. Do I really want to get letters in the mail, and am I truly interested in renewing the art and skill of letter-writing? If so, I will, before long, be following Dad's footsteps to the mailbox in the early afternoons, envelope in hand, sending ink and paper on its way, sure of a soon reply.



Dorcas Smucker writes from Harrisburg, Oregon. Her newest collection of essays, Fragrant Whiffs of Joy, is to be released in November. You can reach her at dorcassmucker@gmail.com

Selected by Nathan Yoder, Free Union, VA. Used by permission.



Rest

(Anonymous, written in 2005)

What does *rest* mean to you? If you're anything like me, and I suppose you are, rest is something you enjoy. I'm not going to go to the dictionary meaning of rest, but will give you my own definition.

Rest is not doing anything that takes effort. Rest is relaxing, maybe in a hammock with a nice breeze blowing, or sleeping in the most comfortable bed—your own. Have you fallen asleep yet? That's physical rest. What about spiritual rest—does it exist? I can assure you that it does because

I've experienced it. Here's a bit of my story: I cannot write all of it because it's not finished yet. But the part I've been through has been a meaningful and exciting journey.

I grew up in a wonderful Christian home in a large Mennonite community. I was confident that my family loved me. I invited Christ into my life in my early teens. Then in my middle teens I was baptized and became a church member. I started participating in youth activities then, too. I had great friends who loved me and shared many good times with me.

My friends and I had a lot of things in common like friends usually do.

I love to sing and was involved in our church chorus. I taught Sunday school, went to church regularly, and I was happy—most of the time.

There were times when I wondered what God had planned for me. Did He want me to go into voluntary service sometime? If so, when? Where? Like all young girls, I also longed for a young man to notice me and love me just the way I was. I wasn't naive enough to believe I was perfect, but thought surely I was good enough.

I went to Calvary Bible School and made more friends. I got older. My friends started dating. Some of them went into VS—with some even serving on foreign soil. I went to Sharon Mennonite Bible Institute and made more friends. Some of my friends got married and started their own families. And so it went. I could rejoice with the ones whose dreams were coming true, but I wondered about my own dreams. Didn't God care about mine?

I was still at home. I had never been to VS. Several well-meaning persons asked me if I had ever considered VS. Of course, I had! But nothing had worked out. It seemed that God closed those doors.

I had a job I loved, though it was stressful, with constant deadlines to meet. I had a car that was reliable and

paid for. I had a circle of close friends.. My youth group was close. My family became more precious than ever. My young siblings grew up and became in many ways my peers, not just my little brother and sister. We became best friends.

But I was restless. Living in a large Mennonite community has its drawbacks, as many of you know. There were so many things to do and so many places to go. They were good things and places, but they left me no time to *be!* I was always doing, doing, doing—finding my identity in my work and activities.

One day I had had enough. To make a long story short, I moved. I knew only a few people in the area to which I moved. I found a good job working for a Christian employer, attended a Mennonite church, and started joining their youth activities, though by then I was definitely on the old side of young.

I adjusted—slowly. What I hadn't reckoned with was the ache of missing my family, especially those siblings still at home. I missed my brother's sense of humor and our discussions—sometimes crazy, sometimes serious. I wished for freedom to ask him questions to get a masculine perspective on issues. I missed my times of shopping and laughing and even arguing with my sister. In other words, I had no one

with whom I would really connect. I had no one to dream with, no one to put my arm around and say, “I love you,” and no one did that to me either. I was lonely—desperately so!

I started trying to fill the void. Oh, I didn’t do anything really bad. I read lots. I spent hours reading, sitting in a comfy chair with a cup of coffee, reading, reading, reading. Always I was just wishing to be spending time with someone—someone I could really connect with.

But I reached out to the wrong people. I got to know a young man who was not a Christian, but seemed to be a good person. I knew it was wrong, but I let down the guard of my heart and let him in. He became the object of my dreams. But, you know, I still wasn’t really at rest.

Finally, I had had enough—again. I knew there had to be more to life than that. I needed help, and this time I found more than help—I found God. I found God in a way that I had never found Him before. And it was awesome—really awesome, not just the way we casually use that word. It was breathtaking!

That evening I broke down and cried out all my pain to God. He knew about my pain, but I was finally admitting it all to Him and giving it to Him. I was giving Him my dreams—my precious dreams. It was scary. What would He do with them?

Would He smash them? I didn’t know if I could bear that. What if He simply ignored them?

Do you know what He did? He embraced me. Me, the one who for so long had pushed Him back. The one who didn’t trust Him with her dreams and longings. The one who wasn’t sure who she was. The one who wasn’t even sure she was loved by God. Yes, I had heard all my life that God is a God of love, that He loves me, but that wasn’t real to me. It wasn’t an intimate love. It was more of a “He’s-got-the-whole-world-in-His-hands” kind of love. But that night I sensed his presence in a very real way. I felt I could actually reach out and touch Him. I knew his love was real. His love is REAL! And with his loving embrace, came rest. Total rest. Peace. Calm. The frantic search for acceptance was over. I had found God. Finally I had quit searching for Him in the wrong places.

God hasn’t smashed my dreams. No, He’s allowed me to keep dreaming. I’ve learned, though, to give those dreams to Him. His dreams for me are far bigger and better than mine ever were.

He’s also given me new friends. Good friends. Precious friends indeed. My relationships with others have a whole new depth. Yes, I’m still single and even farther on the old side of young, but life is good because I am resting in God’s arms. It’s the safest

place I've ever been. And best of all, his love for me will never ever end. It's forever. This is rest!

[Editor's comment: This testimony was sent to Ernest Eby while he was editing the youth column in Calvary Messenger. Ernest knew the writer's name; I never

have. I don't recall why Ernest and I didn't use it right away. Unfortunately, I lost track of it until recently. Surely we can understand why the writer asked to be anonymous. May God bless her transparent desire to be all that God can do in her; regardless of what the 12 years since then have brought to her.]



School Matters

Working With Our Minds

Kendall Myers

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind (I Peter 1:13a)

Typically, in our culture and subculture, we value the man or the woman who has the drive and determination to get up early and work late, to stick to a job until it is done, to tough it out through “blood, sweat, and tears,” and to do a job well. The very hint of laziness is detested. To be a sloth, to be unwilling to work or to exert oneself strenuously to accomplish a task is to be a failure. Laziness is leprosy of the soul.

We teach our children to work hard. When it comes to making the fence, mowing the yard, scrubbing the floor, and uprooting the weeds, our children typically learn that diligence, industry, and tenacity are virtues of the highest order—and for good reason. Success

is not served up to us like our birthday breakfasts. The responsibilities of work, family and community call for hard work.


But I have a question to ask: Is the emphasis on working hard in our communities disproportionately directed toward the physical? Cut it straight, hit it hard, pull it tight—emphasize the importance of diligent and skillful manual labor. And this serves us well. I believe that everyone should learn how to work with his hands. But I wonder, do we care just as much about intellectual diligence? We are willing to sweat up a shirt; are we just as willing to sweat it out mentally? To work just as hard with our minds as we are with our hands?

Certainly the willingness to work hard with our minds is no less important than working with our

hands. In fact, the components of our lives that are of greatest long-term consequence—relationships, communication, worship—rely more directly on mental and spiritual faculties than on manual skills.

We must be willing to work hard to find the right word and the right expression when we speak so that we are really saying what we mean. We must resolve to find original ways to express our ideas, beliefs, and opinions rather than use the oft-repeated clichés and the stock expressions that get used over and over with so little thought. We must insist on the need to work hard to verify our facts and to make sure our sources are reliable. We must persist in our effort to chisel vague and general ideas into specific, exact, and hard-hitting ones: rather than to say, “There is a lot of good stuff in this book,” say “Through the story of Javier Sanchez’s unsuccessful search for employment in the city of

Chicago during the 1950’s, *A Chilling World* elicits compassion and respect for immigrants in America.” We must resist the urge to turn to Google the first instant a question presents itself, to making it the one-stop alternative to thinking and any kind of intellectual labor. We must be willing to get up early and stay up late to analyze and verify the coherence of our reasoning and the consistency of our beliefs. We must work that our interpretations of Scripture be accurate and consistent. Anything less is laziness.

What would happen if we were willing to work as hard with our minds as we are with our hands? Perhaps we *are* just as diligent in using our upstairs machinery as the outdoor equipment, but from my observation, and I’m including myself in the survey, I think we are lagging a bit in this department and hope, that as we have opportunity, we will roll up the sleeves of our minds and get to work. 

junior messages

A Day For Miracles

Sonya Miller, Sugarcreek, OH

I was thrilled to be in Ghana visiting my sister, Gretal and Aaron, her husband. It was wonderful to get to know and love

my new small nephew, Noah. It was a precious family time with Friedrich and Shannon, too. The visit to Africa was definitely a dream come true.

The two week visit was very enjoyable. There was lots of family time, as well as tourist activities and visiting locals. Aaron and Gretal's house was small, so we siblings stayed in a nearby motel.

The morning we were packing up at the motel felt like such a good thing coming to an end. Aaron and Gretal planned to drive us to Kumasi in the afternoon. The next day we would catch a bus for Accra, Ghana's capital, and start the long long journey home to Ohio.

Shannon and Gretal went to visit a school, while the rest of the group visited friends and made lunch. After lunch I walked out to the truck to see if my purse was there. But there was no purse! I asked my brother if he had seen my small black purse. No, he had not seen it anywhere. I felt frightened and worried. Where was my purse? My purse held my important passport. I had to have that to fly home. I thought of the money in my purse, at least \$400. My cell phone too was hiding in my purse.

I prayed. My prayers were quite desperate and sincere. God knew exactly what had happened and the whereabouts of my lost purse. It felt like a bad nightmare: if only I could wake up and find this a dream. But it was real. Yet I knew where to turn. I knew that the best thing to do was PRAY! When in trouble, PRAY.

I started recounting where I had last

seen my purse. I remembered having it that morning at the motel. I had taken my luggage out to the truck. The cab had been locked. I set my luggage on the back and my purse on the bumper. Shannon had been standing guard over the luggage so I mentioned to her that I want my purse in the cab once the truck is unlocked. I returned to the motel to lock our room. When I came back my sister was in front of the truck. I forgot about my purse.

Had my purse really been on that back bumper when we drove away? If it was, where was it now? Was it even possible to ever find it again? How could we leave without my purse? All these questions swirled through my head. I could not fly home without my passport. We checked all our bags. We searched and searched to make sure it wasn't anywhere in the house or truck. No purse.

We decided to drive back to the motel to see if someone had found my purse. Surely it could have fallen off in the parking lot. Aaron went inside to ask the motel staff if they had found a black purse? Aaron came back saying that no, that the staff had not seen anything. We were suspicious that one of them had found it.

The roads we had taken to get to Aarons' house that morning were full of traffic. This had happened hours ago. It seemed hopeless to look for my purse on the roads.

In Ghana, at times when people find or lose valuables they contact radio stations so they can broadcast their discoveries. We went to two stations to inquire. It was fruitless.

My purse was lost; there was no clue; what should we do? Were people being honest? Only God knew.

The last place we decided to check was the police station. They did not know anything about it either.

In order to obtain a new passport you need to have a documented police report about the case so Aaron and I went inside and got that done. That whole process took around an hour. In the meantime we contacted my parents and our travel agency. People were praying for the whole situation.

I was feeling horrible--all of this was because of my carelessness. At that point I didn't care about the money or the phone. All I wanted was the passport. I knew if I didn't get my passport back it meant staying at least two more weeks in Ghana, while my brother and sister went home. It would mean an extra 10-hour trip for Aaron and Gretal. Gretal was rejoicing if I could stay, but I wanted to go home.

Aaron decide to go talk to his Christian friend, Chief Adams. Aaron explained to him what happened and asked him what we should do? He suggested broadcasting it over the radio, then Chief Adams prayed, "God, this situation is difficult but You

told us to give thanks in everything. So we thank you. Whatever happens, we want it to be a testimony for you."

It was such a blessing to have the native people praying for God's will to be done. Aaron and Friedrich took the chief's advice. Two radio stations broadcasted that a black purse with "some dollars" and passport are missing. If the purse is found, please contact this number.

About three hours later Aaron received a call to come to the information center. No details were given, only a command to come. I didn't get my hopes up very much. I went out back behind their house to dump the slop. All of a sudden my sister came running toward me calling excitedly, "Aaron has your purse!" Though my cell phone was crushed, I had my passport, and even my cash! What an amazing miracle!

Beyadacey, an elderly man who worked as a taxi driver, was driving on a busy road that morning. He noticed a black object that had been run over. He stopped to investigate and found a battered black purse. Did he look in it? Why did he not take the money? So many people in Ghana live in poverty. That amount of money could have made his life much easier. But Beyadacey just hung the purse on a nearby tree, he thought the owner might find it there. That evening he heard the radio broadcast, and knew it was likely the same purse he picked

up. He went back and found it still hanging in the tree! He grabbed the purse and came to the station. Aaron was contacted.


Beyadacey was so happy that he “happened” to be the one who found it, and he was thrilled that Aaron rewarded him. His heart was at peace for he had been honest.

The next day as I was walking through the airport I noticed all the passports and yet I don’t think anyone was as grateful to have theirs as I was to be clutching mine.

I claim Chief Adam’s prayer as my prayer, “God, whatever happens, we

want this to be a testimony for you.”

Several days later Beyadacey came back to visit Aaron. “This is the honest man who found the white lady’s purse,” Aaron informed their neighbors. The neighbor people really commended Beyadacey for his act of honesty. His ebony face lit up with a beaming smile for having done the right thing!

As I traveled home my heart was happy and filled with praise. My God is Big. He cares. He can take care of a lost passport in a purse full of money. Truly that was a day for miracles. PRAISE THE LORD! 

thinking generation

What’s Wrong with Drinking?

-Rhoda Martin with David Martin, Rochelle, Virginia

They were a common sight at the mission where I lived for three of my childhood years. Unconscious, they would lie on a street corner or sprawl out in the city flowerbeds, sleeping off a hangover. Occasionally they lurched through the front yard of our house in town, and my siblings and I would scramble inside in terror. They were the town drunks.

Their children came to church with

bruises and unexplained injuries. Their wives told stories of being threatened with knives and being dragged around by their hair. I saw with my own eyes the horrors of alcoholism. Forever after in my young mind, drunk people were like monsters. They were lawless in their strength, a picture of power out of control.

I’m older now, and I know that not every drunk person passes out in the nearest flowerbed, or beats

small children. But the seriousness of alcoholism remains stamped on my mind. I can't forget those women, those children; that devastation brought on by drunkenness.

Recently, someone told me the "well-known" fact that drinking has become an issue among some Beachy youth. I was shocked by this news. I hoped it wasn't true, that it was just an exaggeration. Unfortunately, other sources confirmed what I had been told. To make matters worse, when I questioned multiple Beachy youth about their personal convictions on the use of alcohol, they were unable to give me specific reasons for abstaining.

I'm writing this as a plea that we youth reconsider the wisdom behind the position our culture has traditionally taken on this issue. I don't know why you're reading this article. Maybe you drink and think it is fine. Maybe you think drinking is a bad idea, but you aren't sure why. Whatever the case, please join me in considering what the Scriptures teach about alcohol, as well as the possible implications of allowing it into our churches.

Now, on to the big question...

Is Drinking Wrong?

We could answer this two ways, "Yes, with exceptions," or "No, with exceptions." Scripturally, there are some instances where drinking is condemned, and some (such as

for medicinal use) where it is recommended. Scripture teaches that drinking is wrong in at least five scenarios:

1. Drinking is wrong when it leads to drunkenness.

"Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery." Eph. 5:18

"Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral...nor drunkards... will inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6:9,10

"I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is... a drunkard... not even to eat with such a one." 1 Cor. 5:11

"Let us walk properly, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness..." Romans 13:13

"Now the works of the flesh are evident... drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you... that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. 5:19

There are many more verses warning against drunkenness, too many to list them all. One thing is clear: God hates drunkenness.

2. Drinking is wrong when it is physically harmful to you or others.

"If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are." 1 Cor. 3:17

"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." 1 Cor. 6:20

The statistics on alcohol are grim:

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, nearly 88,000 people die from alcohol-related causes annually, making alcohol the fourth leading preventable cause of death in the United States. Woody Caan writes, “The long term use of alcohol is capable of damaging nearly every organ and system in the body.”

My nurse friend tells this story, “One day at work, I was caring for a man who had severe liver damage from a history of alcohol abuse. He confided that it all started with just a little social drinking. He enjoyed the occasional drink, but didn’t want more than that. Then, his mother died. The ongoing pain of loss was intense, and he longed for relief. He remembered how the wine made him feel, and he began to medicate his pain with alcohol. Before long, alcohol controlled his life. Then, it slowly began to kill him. He urged me, ‘Please, *please*, don’t ever get started with this. Don’t even take the first drink. If I had never tasted it, never known how it made me feel – I would never have been tempted to try it. Don’t touch it.’”

3. Drinking is wrong when it leads a weaker brother to sin. Many of our youth today are involved in outreach. Because of the drug-saturated American culture, a large percentage of the youth we minister to are, or have been, involved in drug abuse. How

can we warn them against the stuff that has poisoned their parents and siblings—the personal devils they’re fighting hard to overcome—if we ourselves indulge in it occasionally? The beverage that appears harmless to us looks like sin to them. Why would they not return to their drug abuse when the “good Christian” that’s been explaining God to them appears to be doing the same thing? For that matter, what if you can “handle it” but your younger brother can’t, and dies a drunkard? It happens. Lots.

4. Drinking is wrong when it becomes an addiction. Our bodies are to be slaves only to Christ. It is wrong for a Christian to be addicted to any substance. “*You say, ‘I am allowed to do anything,’ but not everything is good for you. And even though ‘I am allowed to do anything,’ I must not become a slave to anything.*” (1 Corinthians 6:12 ESV)

5. Drinking is wrong when it becomes an escape from reality. Drinking is often used to blur the sharp edges of reality – to make life more palatable. A biblical perspective of difficulty and suffering teaches that these experiences are given to us to point us to God. Turning elsewhere with the pain of our hearts reveals a proud determination to deal with our suffering in our own way. Instead, we are called to receive the conviction and comfort of Christ. He often answers our prayers for help by walking

with us through our suffering rather than giving us an easy escape from it. Is drinking the only way people try to escape suffering? Of course not. Walking with the Lord through trouble is not easy, and no doubt we have all been tempted by some avoidance strategy or another. If we haven't been involved with drinking, it is good to remember our own sinful escape tendencies, especially when we are helping those who are finding false comfort in substance abuse.

A Bold Appeal

If I didn't care about you, I wouldn't even bother to write this. Instead, I'm sticking out my neck and writing about this touchy subject because I care deeply about what happens to my generation. I care about what happens to our children and grandchildren. I long to see our constituency continue to produce passionate Kingdom builders, all the way up until the very minute the Lord returns. I hope our homes are always pictures of heaven on earth. I pray that the world will always see that Jesus has changed us, and that our "saltiness" will never fail to give them a thirst for living water.

I'm asking the age-old question: Can a man take fire into his bosom and not be burned? Can our culture truly embrace drinking and experience no negative consequences? Are we willing to risk the souls of our children for today's "fun little drink with the guys"? Is it possible that we place too much

trust in our ability to "handle it"?

"What's wrong with drinking?"
We've discussed that. I believe there's a better question: *"How can I become more whole-hearted in my pursuit of Christ?"*

You and I – we both want *real* Christianity, not something founded on legalism or empty religion. We want Christianity that is *founded on Christ*. It's there, it's real, and you can really have it. Will it be easy? No. Yet I am convinced that all Christian young people know, deep inside, that they were made for more than simply pleasing themselves. Our glorious Leader stands beside us, waiting. His invitation to life resounds in us. We find that the life He promises is what we've been longing for. Yes, there is surrender involved, death even. But who is surprised by that? Sooner or later, we all die. He gives us a choice: eternal death in the end, or death now followed by living forever?

Jesus is still waiting, beckoning. Abundant life awaits us. He's the greatest King. His is the greatest war, for the greatest purpose. The reward is out of this world. Will our generation follow Him?

Writers for Thinking Generation wish to generate, above all else, greater involvement in God's Kingdom—especially among today's Anabaptist young people. Did this month's column evoke a response from you? Contact the writer at rhodarelle@yabb.com



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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

Greatness lies not so much in being strong, but in the right use of strength.

• • • • •

The truth of a matter lies not in how many people believe it.

• • • • •

God has a solution planned even before we know we have a problem.

• • • • •

Clouds in our lives many times precede showers of blessings.

• • • • •

Real eloquence includes knowing when not to speak.

• • • • •

The day typically goes the way the corners of one's mouth are turned.

• • • • •

Use today wisely and tomorrow will be alright.

• • • • •

Empty lots and minds attract trash.

• • • • •

Thankfulness is the soil in which joy thrives.

• • • • •

When meeting temptation, turn to the right.

• • • • •

Faithfulness needs no fanfare.

• • • • •

Success is *sweet*, but it usually requires *sweat*.

• • • • •

Courage is like a kite; a contrary wind causes it to rise.

• • • • •

A joyful life of living above sin best represents the risen Christ.