



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

MARCH 2018

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Calvary Messenger

March 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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The Altar of Prayer

Jason Miller, Concord, AR

Unto Thee, O Lord, I bow my knees,
To ask of Thee, O Lord, please,
Do fill this great need of mine
For all the great riches of heaven are Thine!
The promise if I in thy Word abide
You will surely walk by my side!
You said if I would but ask
This would not be too great a task!
You know, O Lord, I have no power
For this important half hour.
So to my altar I flee
For You have power aplenty for me.
So onward I go—walking this sod,
Knowing Thy will is being done.
Thy kingdom has surely come.
And I've come into the presence of God! 



To The Stars Through Difficulties

The Latin motto *Ad Astra per Aspera* means “To the Stars Through Difficulties.” This Latin term was chosen as the official Kansas state motto on January 29, 1861. Let us be reminded that 1861 was a time when the “uncivilized” Civil War was raging. That was when Kansas territory emerged from the Louisiana Purchase to become a state.

The Civil War lasted from 1860 to 1865. The war officially ended just a few weeks after President Abraham Lincoln’s assassination (April 15, 1865). In the middle of those war-torn years, on January 1, 1863, Lincoln had made his historic Emancipation Proclamation, which granted freedom from slavery to all African Americans living in America who were still held as slaves.

Before 1861, Kansas was simply known as a block of territory in the middle of the Louisiana Purchase (a large area in the central plains that President Thomas Jefferson’s cabinet acquired from France in 1803). Before Kansas gained statehood, there were welcoming overtures from

the southeastern United States to have the Kansas territory join them in seceding from the larger United States of America. Bloody skirmishes in eastern Kansas and western Missouri broke out in the years before Kansas reached statehood. These violent incidents gave this grassy, semi-arid, buffalo-dominated, Indian territory the name, “Bleeding Kansas.” The southeastern states believed that states’ rights should not be assumed by the national government. At least some of the people in those states wanted to continue the practice of owning slaves. Thus the Confederate States of America formed and declared their independence from national jurisdiction. Their cause was defeated in the Civil War, which resulted in at least 620,000 deaths. Apparently there was not enough support for slavery to join the slave states in Kansas (that “little 2 by 4”—about 200 miles by 400 miles). Kansas chose to be free from slavery. Here’s a question I have no answer for: Is Kansas’ struggle against slavery linked to why their state motto

became, “To The Stars Through Difficulties”? I don’t know—but I find it an interesting thought!

Is the foregoing historical introduction to 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 justified? Maybe not, but today is Martin Luther King Day. That fact and the fact that as I was studying 2 Corinthian 12 recently, the Latin phrase, *Ad Astra per Aspera*, kept coming to mind. I think accepting difficulties is also an important stepping stone to gaining higher ground in the Christian life.

Paul’s Journey in Life

When the Lord approached Ananias to go to the house of Judas, in Acts 9:15 and 16, He prevailed upon Ananias with the following explanations: “Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” And suffer Paul did!

In 2 Corinthians 11: 18-28, Paul lists some of those sufferings. It’s a wonder that he survived! Then in chapter 12, Paul explains some of his most closely-held secrets of things that God had shown him in “dreams and visions.” He was seemingly afraid that they (and we) would think he was boasting. So, at first he referred to these divine visitations from God

as occurring to someone else (verses 1 to 4). But as we read further, we soon realize that Paul is speaking of himself. He is certainly speaking about himself when he describes that unique suffering he called his “thorn in the flesh.” He understood that God gave him that “thorn” for good reasons, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations.

Let us assume that this “thorn” was a physical problem. Earlier God had at certain points given Paul miraculous healing power over physical problems in others. Apparently, however, God did not give these miracle powers to Paul or to any of Jesus’ disciples/apostles that went with them throughout life. The fact that miracles characterized their earlier ministries, indicates to me that these early miracles of the apostles gave them an identifying mark to show that they were the true successors of Jesus’ ministry.

According to our understanding of Jesus’ original apostles’ deaths, only John died a natural death, and that after a miraculous deliverance from a dip in very hot oil. All the other apostles were martyred. Paul was also an apostle and he too was martyred. Paul spoke of his apostleship as one born out of due time. God gave Paul the signs of an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12).

Paul later, however, left Trophimus at Miletum sick (2 Tim. 4: 20). In 2 Corinthians 12: 1-10, Paul also came to situations that required him to have God answer his fervent prayers for his own healing with “No, I have something better for you.”

Paul’s experience in not getting what he earnestly prayed for is instructive. I believe the following facts reside in this case: 1) Paul asked God over and over for healing. 2) God heard him every time. 3) God’s answer, in essence, was NO, and “My grace is enough for you; My strength comes through when you accept your physical handicap” 4) Paul was blessed when he accepted God’s answer as bestowing the full blessing God meant for him. 5) Paul learned to accept disappointments: “in physical limitations, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses...” Why?

Paul’s conclusion was, “Because when I’m weak, then am I strong.” (verse 10)

How Shall We Then Pray?

What does this mean for you and me? I think it must mean that God places various challenges before His children. What my neighbor faces may (or may not) be my lot. It is for each of us to sincerely and earnestly ask for, *but not demand*, what we want from God. Even our Master, Jesus Christ, prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” And God did not remove that cup. Jesus needed to drink the cup of suffering unto death.

Let us thank God that He directs our steps so that we may also come “to the stars through difficulties.”

-PLM 

reader response

Re: “What’s Wrong with Drinking?” (p. 34, January, 2018).

I appreciate the article by Rhoda Martin with David Martin..

In the two years I spent as a 1-W in a general hospital in Kansas City, Mo, in the early 1950’s, I saw nothing good coming from drinking alcohol.

I saw men in terrible agony with *delirium tremens*. They saw “snakes and spiders” that no one else could see. They had to be totally restrained. Everything I saw and heard there confirmed to me that “zero tolerance” in how much to drink is the only good policy.

Why not take our burdens to the Lord instead of trying to find courage in the bottom of a bottle? A stand against drinking (whether in moderation or excess) can be appropriately addressed with the questions and the challenge in Isaiah 55:2, “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness” [(abundance)—NASB]

It is only when we lose contact with the Lord Jesus, that alcohol seems to offer comfort.

Eldon Bontrager, Arlington, KS

.....

The article about alcohol consumption raises the awareness that there is potentially another spiritual monster lurking on the horizon. A generation or two ago older ones saw the effects of alcohol imbibing on people’s lives— firsthand.

Our preachers would exhort against drunkenness almost every time they preached, but not advocating teetotalling. As I remember growing up in the presence of alcohol usage, if I could use one word to describe what I saw, it would be “filthy.” Memories of immorality, anger, disappointment, confusion, pain, poverty and other

bad things accompanied the use of alcohol.

I have memories of a friend, 18 years old, losing control of his car, DUI, never to awaken on earth again.

It is amazing that we have a president in the U. S. who doesn’t imbibe because of the terrible and horrible things he saw that alcohol can do!

Have our young people been too sheltered? Have we been too lax in teaching the dangers of alcohol?

Alvin Yutzy, Huntsville, AR

.....

Re: “Get in the Way of Evil” (p. 5, January, 2018).

My main reason for writing is to say what a blessing Val Yoder’s article was to me!

Amy Yoder, Middlebury, IN

.....

Re: “Working With Our Minds” (p. 30, January, 2018).

I really appreciated this article by Kendall Myers, There was a lot of good stuff in it.

I was asked to lead our men’s prayer meeting this morning and was afterwards convicted by this timely instruction to be diligent in my thinking and speaking. I’m prone to errors of speaking in generalities and using cliché phrases. We would all benefit from following the advice to “roll up the sleeves of our minds

and get to work.”

Thank you for your efforts to print stimulating and helpful articles!

Luke Nisly, Oswego, KS

••••••••••

Re: A Modern-Day Dorcas, Feb., 2018.

I want to sincerely thank Aaron Lapp for writing the article about participating in the ladies’ sewing. I

feel it is such an open door and a way for us ladies to help a ministry in an organized way. I love that we have this creative way to assist. It has also been a huge discouragement to me to see the lack of participation for whatever reasons. I pray this article does some good!

Sincerely,

Darlene Troyer, Bealeton, VA 

Announcement

This is Benjamin Jones from the Mt. Perry (OH) MCF congregation. I’m planning a fundraiser with five other single Mennonite fellows. We’re raising money for Christian Aid Ministries Middle East in Crisis Program by hiking about 150 miles in the Grand Canyon in April. For more details visit our website: trailsforchrist.com.

In Christ,

Benjamin Jones 

***God included you in his
plans, have you included
Him in yours?***

The Atheist Dilemma

Ivan W. Martin, Penn Yan, NY

Atheism is usually thought of as an idea adhered to by only a few eccentric individuals existing on the fringes of society. Atheism has a long pedigree, but it did not have much impact in the ancient world. Although there were many pagan religions, there were not many atheists. The memories of the creation of the world, the “paradise lost” in the garden of Eden, the world-wide flood, and even the confusion of language at Babel, were too entrenched in society—even though couched in corrupted mythologies. So we’ll take a look at the more modern manifestations of atheism.

One of the well-known “modern” atheists was the French philosopher Francois Voltaire (1694-1778). Concerning Christ, he said, “Curse the wretch!” He also boasted that, “In 20 years Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took 12 apostles to rear.” However, on his deathbed all the

bravado was gone. To his physician Trochim he said, “I am abandoned by God and man! I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months of life. Then I shall go to hell; and you will go with me, O Christ! O Jesus Christ!” No wonder his nurse said, “For all the wealth in Europe I would not see another infidel die.” Ironically, shortly after his death, his house was acquired by the Geneva Bible Society.

Thomas Paine (1709-1839), the notorious American author of *The Age of Reason*, said on his deathbed, “I would give worlds, if I had them, that *The Age of Reason* had not been published. O Lord, help me! Christ help me! O God, what have I done to suffer so much? But there is no God! But if there should be, what will become of me hereafter? Stay with me, for God’s sake! Send even a child to stay with me, for it is hell to be alone. If ever the devil had an agent, I have been that one.”

No review of modern atheism could

be complete without mention of one of its central figures, Charles Darwin (1809-1882). The pre-Darwinian atheists were freethinkers of a more general sort. Any rational stick would do to beat Christianity with. Darwin, with the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, provided the kind of scientific veneer that the scoffers so desperately looked for. If there was no God, there was no creator—hence no creation. Therefore, nature must have created itself and Darwin attempted to show that it was up to the task. Although Darwin started out as a student of divinity, we can see the result of rebellion upon the return in 1837 from his five-year journey aboard the *HMS Beagle*. By the time he married in 1839, he had reached this conclusion: “But I had gradually come, by this time, to see that the Old Testament, from its manifestly false history of the world... was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindus, or the beliefs of of any barbarian.” So, finally Darwin reached this point: “I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true, for if so, the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include

my father, brother, and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine.”

Thus we can see Darwin’s attitude about the time he was 30 years old and this was 20 years before the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. Science had little or nothing to do with this attitude shift. It was a rejection of God and the Bible. Darwin was careful not to use such language in his book. In fact, whereas he had made a comment seemingly allowing for divine involvement in the origin of the human race, he later expressed regret for having “trucked” to public sentiment. Perhaps the most damning statement by Darwin was written privately in a letter, “To have the unthinking masses accept all I say would be calamity...” Truer words were never spoken.

The American lawyer, Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899) lectured on contradictions of the Bible. This was in the heyday of naturalistic speculations spawned by the publication of *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin in 1859. Arguably, this would have been one of the slim reeds leaned upon

by Ingersoll. One of his famous talks was called, "The Mistakes of Moses." One defender of the Bible commented that he would like to hear Moses speak on "The Mistakes of Ingersoll." At his graveside, his brother exclaimed, "Life is a narrow vale between the narrow peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailings." How sad!

Thomas Huxley (1825-1895) was known as "Darwin's Bulldog" for his vigorous defense of Darwinism. And truly, the (rotten) apples didn't fall far from the tree. Julian Huxley (1887-1975) and his brother, Aldous (1894-1963) were grandsons of Thomas Huxley. Both were atheists and humanists. They believed that Man was the pinnacle of evolution and that therefore man was the measure of all things, a law unto himself and answerable to no one, Deity or otherwise.

Aldous Huxley said, "I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning,...the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was...from a certain system of morality. We

objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom." How's that for a dose of honesty from an atheist?

Julian Huxley wrote, "I use the word *humanist* to mean someone who believes that man is just as much a natural phenomenon as an animal or a plant; that his body, mind, and soul were not supernaturally created but are products of evolution, and that he is not under the control of guidance of any supernatural being or beings, but has to rely on himself and his own powers." Julian also signed *The Humanist Manifesto*, which declares, "No deity will save us; we must save ourselves..." Now bear in mind that Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, and Hitler were all trying to "save" us. Oh, the horror!

Isaac Asimov (1920-1992), the well-known atheist and science popularizer of the twentieth-century said, "Emotionally I am an atheist. I don't have the evidence to prove that God doesn't exist, but I so strongly suspect He doesn't that I don't want to waste my time." What a gamble! Asimov supposedly had an IQ of 200. An IQ of 140 is considered to be genius level. This only goes to show that there are some very smart fools!

(Psalm 14:1)

So far, we took a brief look at the history of atheism. Let us now turn to its modern manifestation. One thing must be kept in mind, however. The ghost of Charles Darwin has been hardwired into the modern psyche by the incessant drumbeat of the scientific establishment and its mouthpiece, the news media. Equally pernicious is the brainwashing effect of state-sponsored “education” under the guise of science. Lastly, and saddest of all, is the fact that the liberal “mainline” churches have aided and abetted in this scam, by rolling over and playing dead. Hence, the confusion of the masses.

What we might call “classic” atheism would be best represented by twentieth-century skeptics such as Bertrand Russell (*Why I am Not a Christian*, 1029) and Anthony Flew (*God and Philosophy*, 2005). To the everlasting embarrassment of the modern atheists, Anthony Flew recanted some of his atheism in 2007 with the publication of *There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed his Mind*. It was stated in the preface of his book that the response of his fellow atheists “verged on hysteria.” It should be sadly noted, however, that this did

not mean that Flew accepted the idea of Christ as a Savior.

Thanks to the marketing power of large book publishers, the most widely-known of the modern atheists would be such authors as Dan Brown (*The Da Vinci Code*, 2003), Sam Harris (*Letter to a Christian Nation*, 2006), Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*, 2006), Daniel Dennet (*Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, 2007), and Christopher Hitchens (*God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, 2007).

This modern generation of atheists might be fairly portrayed as the angry atheists. See, for example, Dawkins’ fiery statement that parents who teach their children creationism “should be charged with child abuse.” These apostles of denial are full of zeal; but what is their message? What fuels all the anger and zeal? Atheism is a full-fledged world view—a religion, if you will. Ostensibly, it is built on rationalism and science and herein lies the problem—for it is neither.

Considering that in a cosmos devoid of deities and therefore purpose, it is hard to see how one can get passionate about anything—much less angry. Here we find a clue:

Atheism is not about explaining the purpose or meaning of anything, but rather about denying such possibilities. How can anyone get pumped up about such an endeavor? How could you explain when there is no meaning, but rather, find the whole cosmos to be without purpose? Could all the fuss be about God after all? The troublesome thing is that He just won't go away, as the title of Francis Schaeffer's book indicates, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*.

At the heart of the atheist dilemma is the fact that once God is removed from the cosmos there is no purpose. Everything must be blind chance—an accident. The forces of nature are incapable of performing. Still, we are expected to believe this by the same gang that cannot face miracles performed by Almighty God Himself. This is not rational. This is all about getting rid of God. Call it “The Great Dodge,” and it is doomed to fail.

Modern atheists have gone to great lengths to cloak their world view in science. Unfortunately for them, this is not working too well. Everywhere we turn, we find nature to not be up to the task of creating itself. To wit: The Law of Biogenesis shows that life only comes from life. The First Law of

Thermodynamics shows that matter cannot be created or destroyed. The Second Law of Thermodynamics shows that all processes [naturally] go toward disorder and chaos, not to mention, “the Big Bang” is a bust.

All efforts to create life in a laboratory have failed miserably. The fossil record does not support evolution as there are only “missing links.” Radiometric dating, the “savior” of old earth proponents, has been shown to be unreliable. The earth is blanketed in water-borne sediments and fossils, results of a worldwide flood. History is hostile to Darwinism, and archaeology has confirmed the reliability of the Bible.

What is the poor atheist to do? It would be better to drop the facade of “science” and admit that atheism is nothing more than a modern-day pagan superstition, and [that it is] irrational at that. This is why G. K. Chesterton warned that, “He who will not have softening of the heart, must eventually have softening of the head.”


The atheist dilemma is being able to see far enough philosophically to ask why God would allow suffering and death, but being too blind to look beyond to the answers that God provides in the Bible. C. S. Lewis

commented on this problem when Russian cosmonauts returned from an orbital flight and stated that they had not seen God up there. Lewis commented that, “One who could not see God here on earth was not likely to see Him in outer space.”

Possibly the saddest example of modern atheism may be the case of Charles Templeton, the “Canadian Billy Graham.” Templeton, who once preached to crowds of 30,000, admitted in an interview with author Lee Strobel that he always had “secret doubts” about the Genesis creation account. By the late 1990’s, he slipped into total disbelief and wrote a book, *Farewell to God; My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith.* [Years later] when Strobel asked Templeton about Christ, Templeton’s voice softened and he said, “He was the greatest human being who has ever lived. He was a moral genius. His ethical sense was unique. He was the

intrinsically wisest person that I’ve ever encountered in my life, or in my my reading. His commitment was total and led to his own death, much to the detriment of the world.” Then he went on to say, “I adore Him... everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus.” His voice cracking, he said, “I...miss... Him!” and burst into tears.


In the final analysis, one cannot escape the conclusion that the atheists are merely “whistling past the graveyard.” This is the atheist dilemma.

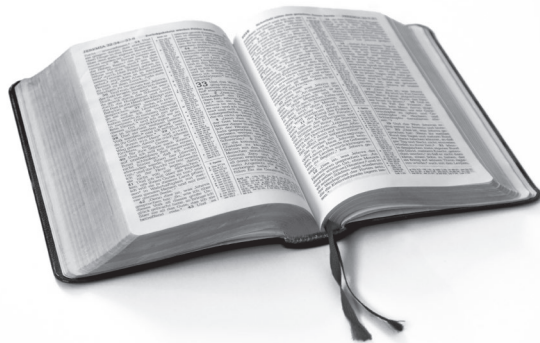
[From *The Anabaptist Forum*, January/February, 2018. Used by permission. Author’s note: Most of the incidents referred to in this article came from two books: *Last Words of Saints and Sinners*, by Herbert L:ockyer, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 1966 and Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000.] 

***Those prepared to die are
best prepared to live.***

How to Use the Bible

Submitted by Jake and Iva Miller, Millersburg, OH

- When in sorrow, read John 14.
- When men fail you, read Psalm 27
- When you have sinned, read Psalm 51
- When you worry, read Matt. 6:19-34
- When you are in danger, read Psalm 91
- When you have the blues, read Psalm 34
- When God seems far away, read Psalm 139
- When you are discouraged, read Isaiah 40
- When lonely or fearful, read Psalm 23
- When you feel down and out, read Romans 8:39
- When you need courage, read Joshua 1
- When the world seems too big, read Psalm 90
- When you want rest and peace, read Matt. 11:29-30
- When leaving home, read Psalm 121; 107:23-31
- If you get bitter or critical, read 1 Cor. 13
- If thinking of investments, read Mark 10:17-31
- For a great invitation/opportunity, read Isaiah 55. 



marriages

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

Beiler-Hostetler

Bro. Larry, son of Allen and Linda Beiler, Stuarts Draft, VA, and Sis. Sarah (Byler) Hostetler, Stuarts Draft, VA, at Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, Stuarts Draft, VA, on Nov. 4, 2017, by Bennie Byler.


Gingerich-Yoder

Bro. Chad, son of Lester and Ruth Gingerich, Burkesville, KY, and Sis. Lynelle, daughter of David J. and Faith Yoder, Oskaloosa, KS, at Town and Country Church for Ebenezer A.M. Church on Sept. 15, 2017, by Mervin Graber.

Mast-Miller

Bro. Kendal, son of Joel and Ellen Mast, Cuba, MO, and Sis. Virginia, daughter of Ervin and Alma Miller, Wesley, AR, on Dec. 9, 2017, at Assembly of God church, by Truman Yoder, Lincoln, MO.

Miller-Weaver

Bro. Duane, son of Ray and Ada Miller, Uniontown, OH, and Sis. Diane, daughter of Wilber Weaver, Leetonia, OH, on Dec. 14, 2017, at Demasus Friends Church, by Eldon Falb. 

cradle roll

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

Beiler, Marcus John and Joanna (Kurtz), Paradise, PA, sixth child, fourth son, Adrian John, Jan. 15, 2018.

Hershberger, Darrell and Alison (Funk), Stuarts Draft, VA, fifth child, fourth son, Angelo David, Dec. 18, 2017.

Kirkman, Ben and Malinda (Knepp), Newberry, IN, third child, first son, Brian Drew, Jan. 3, 2016.

Kuepfer, Jeff and Rhoda (Wagler), Lucknow, ON, tenth child, seventh son, Titus Allan, Oct. 13, 2017.

Kuepfer, Ronald and Janelle (Erb), Baden, ON, fourth child, third daughter, Aria Brynlee, Dec. 12, 2017.

Martin, Eldon and Regina (Sweigart), Worthington, IN, second child, first daughter, Lanita Rose, Sept. 17, 2017.

Miller, Jethro and Sherri (Hershberger), Melvern, KS, first child and son, Winston Lavon, Nov. 22, 2017.

Nisly, Conrad and Judith (Brenneman), Partridge, KS, fourth child, second daughter, Emily Jane, Nov. 16, 2017.

Nisly, Wayne and Sharon (Brenneman), Hartselle, AL, tenth child, eighth son, Micah Joel, Dec. 18, 2017.

Stoll, Conrad and Sharon (Falb), Odon, IN, second child, first son, Carter Lee, Nov. 15, 2017.


Troyer, Jay and Amy (Schlabach), Owenton, KY, third child, second daughter, Ashley Jewel, Dec. 10, 2017.

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

Weirich, Joel and Stephanie (Yoder), Aroda, VA, third child, second son, Isaac Grant, Oct. 10, 2017.

Williams, Luke and Sarah (Fentress), Pulaski, TN, fifth child, fourth son (one son and one daughter deceased), Grayson Cletus, born August 13, 2016. Adopted Dec. 12, 2017.


Yoder, Daniel and Kathy (Miller), Hutchinson, KS, first child and daughter, Brooklyn Kate, Jan. 9, 2018.

Zook, Jason and Marla (Knicely), Mifflin, PA, first child and son, Brandon Lee, Jan. 8, 2018. 



ordinations

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

Bro. J. Arlan Kurtz, 45, of Belleville, PA, was ordained as minister at Pleasant View A.M. Church on Oct. 29, 2017. Preordination messages were brought by Marlin Stoltzfus, Greeneville, TN. The charge was given by David J. Peachey, assisted by Lee Stoltzfus and Wilmer Peachey. 



Goff, Kendell, 19, of Double Head Cabbage, Belize, died Jan. 9, 2018. He was born May 19, 1998, to Evan and Glennis Goff. His siblings are Michelle, Erssie, Stacey, Roxannie, Justin (Sara Schrock) Keyron (Janelle Yoder), and Krista (Conrad Raber).

He was a member of Zion Mennonite Church, Belize.

The funeral was held on Jan. 21, with Ellis Beachy and Stephen Schrock serving. Burial was in the Double Head Cabbage Cemetery.

Hostetler, Solomon "Sollie" D., 88, of Belleville, PA, died Nov. 21, 2017, at his home. He was born Jan. 12, 1929, son of the late Noah D. and Mattie (King) Hostetler.

He was a member of Pleasant View A.M. Church. He was a retired dairy farmer. He enjoyed hunting, especially with his grandsons, cutting wood, doing wood working projects and spending time with his family.

On Nov. 27, 1951, he was married to Anna M. Yoder. She survives. Children surviving are Raymond S. (Tura) Hostetler, David T. (Julia) Hostetler, Rhoda (David J.) Peachey, Ruth A. (Jesse Lee) Spicher, all of Belleville; Mark S. (Mary Ellen) Hostetler, Rock Stream, NY; Martin L. (Karen) Hostetler, Vienna, GA; 38 grandchildren; 34 great grandchildren and one brother, Elam

Hostetler, McVeytown.

He was preceded in death by a granddaughter, Sara Hostetler, four sisters, Ada E. Hostetler, Nancy Hostetler, Lizzie Kauffman, and Sadie Hostetler; two brothers, Benjamin S. and Alvin M. Hostetler.

The funeral was held on Nov. 25, with David Byler, David Jonathan Peachey, Jesse Lee Spicher and David J. Peachey serving. Burial was in the Locust Grove Cemetery.

Miller, Orpha (Wagler), 91, of Arlington, KS, died after a period of declining health on Jan. 17, 2018, in the home she shared with her daughter, Jean Ann and Wesley Schrock.

She was born in rural Hutchinson, KS, Nov. 12, 1926, youngest child of the late Peter and Barbara (Yoder) Wagler.

She was a devoted member of Cedar Crest A.M. Church.

On August 28, 1949, she was married to Harry Miller. He died in 2012. Six children surviving are: Yvonne, Leon (Holly) Miller, Michael (Lois) Miller, Erlis (Gesine) Miller, Arlyn (Loretta) Miller, and Jean Ann (Wesley) Schrock, and ten grandchildren.

Preceding her in death were brothers, Raymond, Willie and Mahlon Wagler and sisters, Laura Miller, Mary and Martha (infant twins) and a stillborn infant.

The funeral was held on Jan. 20, with Lee Nisly and James Shetler serving. Burial was in the West Center Cemetery.

Spicher, Jesse Lee, 63, of Belleville, PA, died Jan. 2, 2018, at Hershey Medical Center. He was born Aug. 6, 1954, in Belleville to the late Jesse D. and Annie (Yoder) Spicher.

Jesse was a ministering deacon at Pleasant View A.M. Church, serving for 26 years. He enjoyed working with and helping people, being very fond of visiting and family activities.

On June 28, 1979, he was married to Ruth A. Hostetler, She survives. Also surviving are their children: Joseph L.(Rebecca Zook) Spicher, Allensville, PA; Joanna M. Spicher, at home; Sharon J. Spicher Poland; James. M. Spicher, Reedsville; Mary Ellen (Jethro) Fisher, Gordonville; Ruthie Spicher, at home; and two grandchildren. Also surviving are siblings: Naomi S. (Quill) Yoder, Bellville; Anna Mae (Noah) Yoder, Burgettstown; Susan J. (Joe) Peachey, Cuthbert, GA; Mary Etta (Daniel) Miller, Canon City, CO; Abe. L. (Marlene) Spicher, Middlebury, IN, Lois R. (Jesse) Kauffman, Belleville; Ruth E. (Joseph) Kauffman, Belleville. Also surviving is his mother-in-law, Annie M. Hostetler, Belleville and sisters-in-law, Cheryl Spicher of Bethany Beach, DE, and Esther Spicher, of Belleville.

Jesse was preceded in death by two brothers: J. Paul Spicher and David J. Spicher, and a sister, Rhoda S. Hostetler.

The funeral was held at Pleasant View

Church on Jan. 6, with bishop David J. Peachey, ministers David Peachey and David Byler serving. Burial was in the Locust Grove Cemetery.

Stutzman, Ervin J., 96, of Hutchinson, KS, died Jan. 26, 2018. He was born Sept. 2, 1921, to John L. and Anna (Miller) Stutzman, at Thomas, OK. When Ervin was 20, he moved to Hutchinson, Kansas.

He was a faithful charter member of Cedar Crest A.M. Church, Hutchinson.

On August 8, 1943, he was married to Emma Nisly. She survives. Children surviving are son: Mahlon, Stutzman, Hutchinson; daughters: Florence (Mike) Galloway, Hutchinson, KS, and Virginia Ferguson, Rogers, Arkansas; 12 grandchildren, 20 great grandchildren and six great great grandchildren. Brothers surviving are Clarence (Matilda) Stutzman, Wooster, OH; L. Perry (Silvia) Stutzman, Hutchinson, KS.

Preceding him in death are a brother, Tobe Stutzman, and a son, Don Ferguson.

The funeral was held at Cedar Crest on Jan. 30, with Lee Nisly and James Shetler serving. The committal at West Center Cemetery was by Paul Miller.

Yoder, Isabelle (King), 100, died at Jan. 6, 2018, in Newport News, VA. She was born March 10, 1917, daughter of the late Abe and Alice King, of West Liberty, OH. On June 23, 1939, she was married to J. Otis Yoder who preceded her in death.

J. Otis Yoder launched the radio broadcast in the 1960's known as Heralds of Hope. Isabelle was his faithful

assistant in this endeavor. Because the Yoders and their work are known in our constituency, we take this opportunity to inform our readers of Sis. Yoder's "graduation."

Yoder, Kore E., 96, of Belleville, PA, died of congestive heart failure peacefully at the home of his daughter, Judy (Perry) Beachy in Winfield, PA, on Nov. 30, 2017.

He was born near Belleville, PA, on June 4, 1921, son of the late Abraham S., Sr., and Salome (Zook) Yoder. He attended Ore Bank and Gap elementary schools in the Big Valley.

He was a member of Pleasant View A.M. Church, Belleville. He farmed for more than 50 years in the Belleville and McVeytown area.

On Dec. 3, 1943, he was married to Emma Spicher. She died on March 2, 1972. On Feb. 19, 1976, he was married to Annie Sharp. She preceded him in death on March 25, 2001. Survivors include four children: Sylvan (Susie) Yoder, McVeytown; Salome (Glen) Yoder, Middleburg; Judy (Perry) Beachy, Winfield; and Sanford (Laura) Yoder, Free Union, VA; a son-in-law, Samuel Detweiler, McVeytown; a


brother, Benjamin Yoder, Elizabethtown; a sister-in-law, Helen Yoder, Belleville; 26 grandchildren and 51 great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by four children: Mary Ellen, Anna, Lois Detweiler, and a stillborn son, seven brothers, four sisters, one grandchild and one great grandchild.

The funeral was held on Dec. 4 at the Pleasant View Church. Interment was at the Locust Grove Cemetery, Belleville.

Yoder, Simon, J., 88, of Salisbury, PA, died Jan. 14, 2018, at Goodville Mennonite Home, Grantsville, MD. He was born July 20, 1929, to the late Jacob S. and Fannie M. (Yoder) Yoder.

In his youth, Simon recognized he was a sinner and trusted in the blood of Jesus for atonement of his sins. He was a faithful member of Mountain View Mennonite Church. He participated in evangelism for many years by distributing the Gospel tract, "The Way."

He worked on the family farm for many years. He is survived by one brother, Menno J. (Nona) Yoder and two sisters, Lena J. Yoder and Grace J. Yoder, all of Salisbury, PA, and a brother-in-law, Cloyd Yoder, of Meyersdale, PA. 

*Taking good advice is often
harder than giving it.*

After a huge earthquake rocked El Salvador in 2001, many Salvadoreans moved to the USA under a provision referred to as Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Since its inception, this provision was extended repeatedly 18 months at a time. However the current administration in Washington announced that El Salvador is being removed from the list of countries that qualify for this protection, since the conditions prompting the action no longer exist. They say further that making permanent provision for these people is congress' job, and Temporary Protected Status isn't applicable for an event 17 years ago. This means that almost a quarter million people have 18 months to return to El Salvador or find some way to stay in the USA via immigration processes. The responses to this announcement among US residents has been quite predictable. Some people seem to feel like this action is long overdue. Others point out how heartless this is for those who have more than a decade of history here in the US. For some this history includes a

spotless employment and track record, and a spouse and children that are US citizens, and so on. It truly is complicated.

This seems like a good time to remind ourselves that our national interests must not eclipse our allegiance to Christ's Kingdom. This allegiance means that we are called to serve others and love our neighbors. Let's remember that Jesus' definition of neighbor includes more than those who live close to us.

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A friend submitted an item that she saw in *Readers Digest* 'Laughter, the Best Medicine' in the January, 2017 issue. I do not subscribe to this magazine so am unable to verify the source, but have heard several similar versions of this "story".

"I've given up social media for the new year and am trying to make friends outside Facebook while applying the same principles. Every day I walk down the street and tell a passerby what I've eaten, how I feel, what I did the night before, and what I will do tomorrow. Then I give them pictures of my family, my dog and of me gardening. I

also listen to their conversations and tell them I love them. And it works. I already have three people following me—two police officers and a psychiatrist.”

This is not a true story, but illustrates a couple of key concepts. One is that context matters. Some things that are appropriate in one setting lose all sense of propriety when applied elsewhere. Secondly, there’s something about the distance created by social media that emboldens some people to share personal information and relate in ways that would not be considered winsome, helpful or proper in face-to-face interaction. I’m not convinced that the difference between what is proper in face-to-face communication versus electronic communication is as great as it seems to many people. Do you think so?

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Last evening our neighbor passed away. She was a widow the last decades of her life. If she would have lived to see her April birthday it would have marked 99 years for her. Her only child was a professing agnostic which was a deep disappointment to her. She lived alone even after she was unable to drive anymore, but moved to an assisted living facility the last 3 years or so of her life. To me her life seemed to be a lonely existence.

But Leah has been an inspiration to us in many ways in the 15 and a half years that we’ve known her. Let me list a few:

When it became too risky for her to walk alone outside unassisted she would still take walks on the road with her walker, greeting motorists with a cheery wave.

When she still lived down the road from us, my wife Brenda would from time to time call and tell Leah that she wouldn’t need to fix supper and would send a plate of food for her evening meal. She was always so thankful.

She was generous. She didn’t have much in the way of possessions, but cheerfully offered that we could store some of our canned goods in her root cellar since she couldn’t use it anymore anyhow. It worked out well for both of us, because when we stopped in we were able to help keep her pantry stocked with things we stored in her root cellar.

Her hearing was failing these last years. During our spring tornado season, Leah said she doesn’t worry about storms. She just takes her hearing aids out at night and goes to sleep. If a tornado takes her away, that wouldn’t be a problem. She thought it would be quite fine to wake up in heaven.

She was interested in people.

When we went to Kenya to visit the missionaries a couple of years ago, she told us she prayed for us every day we were gone. She relished the pictures we showed of our trip when we got back.

While we aren't assigned the task of judging a person's readiness to meet God, Leah's life in many ways gave evidence of a keen awareness that we must be prepared for eternity. Her life displayed many of the graces and qualities that I admire in God's children, gratefulness, cheerfulness, humility, and selflessness as characterized by a focus on others, choosing not to give vent to self-pity and rejoicing in other people's joys. In these ways, she was a good example.

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In 1921 Fredric Melcher proposed that the American Library Association establish an award for the most distinguished American children's book published each year. This award was named after an English book seller named John Newbery. The purpose of the award was described as, "To encourage original creative work in the field of books for children. To emphasize to the public that contributions to the literature for children deserve similar recognition to poetry, plays or novels. To give those librarians,

who make it their life work to serve children's reading interests, an opportunity to encourage good writing in this field." This award was called the Newbery Medal and was first awarded in 1922.

The process of determining the winner of the award highlighted the fact that there were often other outstanding books worthy of mention. So the winner was called the Newbery Medal winner and other notable books received a Newbery Honor. Our children enjoy reading alone and enjoyed when we read aloud to them. We started noticing that often the books that they and we enjoyed the most ended up being either Newbery Award or Newbery Honor books.

The committee that chooses the winners uses criteria that emphasize the literary quality of the book. That is proper and important. However, we shouldn't ever overlook other important considerations. The best books stoke what is noble and right and godly in the reader. Furthermore, outstanding literary quality that feeds our baser inclinations are still not worthy of our time.

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Maybe we shouldn't have any enemies. But Jesus told we should love our enemies. Does that at least imply that part of living life in the

Kingdom is that we are at odds with some people? I believe so. We are dismayed at the polarity in the politics of this nation, the gulf that is exposed by our society's ideological differences, etc... But what about the gulf that separates believers, sometimes even within churches?

Michael T. McRay writes that "dismantling our enemies requires at least three steps: proximity, curiosity, and humility. We must be close enough to listen, curious enough to want to know more than we already do about the other's story, and humble enough to wonder if perhaps we've been wrong about the other all along."

Certainly taking the time to get close enough to our adversary to listen, to inquire and to open ourselves to the possibility that we might have some more learning to do yet, would go a long way toward building common ground on which to build a future together. But, usually the persons in the middle of this type of difficulty believe they see things clearly. Sometimes a third party needs to help sort out the differences. This can be a really helpful way to see past some of the blind spots, but its usefulness is quite limited unless all are willing to accept what the third party recommends.

-RJM 

Bring Back the Holy Kiss

Megan Hill

Christian Living
"Nobody ever touches me," a friend recently lamented. I could sympathize. In my 20's, I was in the same situation—unmarried and living far from my parents. As a teacher in a public junior high school even my job was strictly touch-free. Faculty were routinely warned against so much as placing a hand on a student's

shoulder, and once an anonymous co-worker filed a sexual harassment complaint against a single male teacher who sometimes stopped to talk to me on his free period. With no spouse and no nearby relatives, I returned untouched every evening to a quiet room and a stack of papers, often spending several days in a row without so much as a handshake of human contact.

Now, one husband and three young children later, my life is filled with touch: hand-holding, hair-stroking, and crack-your-ribs hugging. In fact, I frequently long for some isolation. But I haven't forgotten my earlier life. And when I read my Bible, even in the middle of one of my leave-me-alone funks, I can't ignore the fact that five times—five!—in the New Testament, we are commanded to touch other Christians (Rom. 16:16, I Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, I Thess. 5:26, 1Pet. 5:14).

It's a challenge. With touch in our culture so often either co-opted by sexualization or horrifically corrupted by abuse, the right expression of physical affection in the Christian church is difficult to figure out. But I want the church to try.

Public Rap

In a May article for *The American Conservative*, "Our Starved for Touch Culture," Leah Libresco grieves the lack of touch for many in our society. She theorizes that we have abandoned friendly touch because it has been too-frequently tainted or overtaken by ulterior motives of sexual intimacy: "The friendzone is treated as a wasteland not just because we treat sex as an idol, but because friendship and non-sexual affection are written

off as irrelevant. Casual dating has been replaced by casual sex; platonic touch has been eclipsed by erotic signalling." (Albert Mohler has written a thought-provoking essay making a similar argument.)

In addition I suspect that instances of abuse have done their nasty work to bring touch low. Particularly in the church, we are rightly sickened by our public rap sheet of abusers—often church leaders or clergy—who corrupted touch and abused vulnerable human beings to serve their own sinful desires.

We have, on every church roll, people who still suffer the effects of inappropriate touch. We worship weekly alongside men and women who have themselves touched others in sinful ways. We also, often unknowingly, enjoy fellowship with those who have been abused. We must not forget to treat our brothers and sisters with special tenderness, aware that we may not know what they have experienced.

We are right to be cautious. In touching, just as in talking and looking, much can go wrong. But rejecting biblical imperatives poses danger, too. The New Testament "holy kiss" actually stands against many of the touch-corruptions in our day. What is a holy kiss? It's a culturally appropriate, morally

chaste, physical expression of love for other believers. It's a hand on a shoulder, a warm smile with a hand-clasp, or a friendly hug—a touch that publicly acknowledges our bond with other members of Christ's body. It's not just a kiss, it's a holy kiss, a kiss reclaimed from a fallen world and repurposed for the glory of God.

And it's not optional. Pastor A. N. Martin notes that in 2 Corinthians 13:12, the holy kiss comes at the end of a list of imperatives that we would unanimously consider Christian obligations: rejoice, aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace, greet one another with a holy kiss. One of the essential marks of the body of Christ is physical affection.

Wide Diversity

We might be tempted to think of the holy kiss as a practice for a particular first-century culture, too fraught with issues for our day. But this imperative covers the wide diversity of the New Testament church. Paul commands it, and Peter commands it, too. It is required of the Jewish-background diaspora recipients of Peter's epistle, and also of the Roman and Thessalonian churches—bodies largely composed of Gentile converts. Twice, the holy kiss is commanded for the Corinthian church, a church

so beleaguered by sexual impropriety that you'd think the apostle Paul would ban touch altogether.

In many ways, this requirement best guards against perversion. "Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss," reads 1 Thessalonians 5:26 (emphasis mine). The holy kiss is not subject to personal choice and individual preference. Touch in the church is not offered to someone we especially like as a sign that he or she has been singled out for intimate attention. The holy kiss is not exclusive. In contrast to the man in James 2:2-4 who tells the rich man to sit here and the poor man to stand over there, we must not show partiality in physical nearness to our brothers. We don't touch only the people of our choosing; we touch the people of God's covenant choosing. We give a holy kiss to all the brothers.

And the holy kiss does not accomplish goals of our personal choosing. It is not to the end of asserting power or manipulating someone into sealing a business deal—or scam, as Libresco notes. It is not for our own physical pleasure. (Treat "older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity," Paul writes in 1 Timothy 5:2.) Instead, the holy kiss is what Martin calls "visible, physical confirmation

of mutual love.”

Last Sunday, my church celebrated the Lord’s Supper. I looked at my hand and at the cupped hands of my brothers and sisters, each of us holding a piece of bread. And I gave thanks that Jesus has given us something to touch. The sacraments

are themselves a holy kiss of sorts—a visible, physical confirmation of mutual love.

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

[Megan Hill is a pastor’s wife and writer living in Massachusetts. Submitted for publication by Roman Stoltzfoos, Kinzers, PA. Used by permission.]



Someone’s Calvary

Steve Bayer, Englewood, Ohio

*Lord, give me eyes, that I may see,
Lest I, as people will,
May pass by someone’s Calvary
And think it just a hill.*



Many times we had taken note of this plaque on the wall. But this time was different. Perhaps it was because we had traveled to attend a funeral that was particularly poignant. One had been called away in the prime of life, when it seemed that they were still needed sorely. For their family, this was not “just a hill.” This was their Calvary where their regular routine, one of their chief delights,

and their comfortable future had been crucified.

This was forcibly brought to our attention after another death. The deceased had reached beyond the biblical three score years and ten. In fact, another score had been added to that age. We overheard someone at the grave asking how his wife/her husband, who was several years older yet, was getting along. The response was that he

was/she was devastated and could scarcely function. We might marvel at that until we considered, this was someone's Calvary, not "just a hill."

Why is it that a mountain in my life would seem only a bump in the road if I saw the same thing in your life? Like so many questions, we need to go back to Eden for the answer to this one. When man was in perfect communion with God, he focused on God. After the fall, his gaze turned inward. His response to life's circumstances was concerned about the effect it had on him. Not until the essential Calvary crucifixion came to pass could man relate to God as it was intended from the beginning.

True, there were godly men who came nearer God's expectations than most. Abraham "was called the friend of God." David was found to be "a man after mine own heart," according to God. Yet, remember how Abraham misrepresented his relationship with Sarah—twice? How about David's willful behavior in numbering the people? Calvary made it possible for "whosoever will" to be "partakers of the divine nature."

But as long as we tabernacle in the flesh, we will have our "Abraham moments" and "David experiences." Unless God gives us eyes to see, we will not see someone's Calvary but "just a hill." How wondrous that He

will give us a clearer vision when we ask in faith!

Who all is at my brother's Calvary? If we see only a hill, we may not notice anyone else. But as we carefully consider this as his Calvary, we find quite a number there.

Just as there were at Golgotha, we will find detractors and mockers. Because of the flesh, there will always be those who feel that justice has been served by someone having their Calvary. In ways unknown to them, they are right. While they may delight in another's misfortune in a vindictive way, they cannot see that God intends our Calvary to be a blessing in our life. He wants us to focus on the eternal and not the temporal. He desires that the ties holding us to this earth be loosened and that the tug on heaven's lifeline be felt more keenly. Not being cognizant of this, there will be those who sneer and jeer and call for the crucified to come down from the cross. But the Father has a better plan for us.

At the Calvary just outside of Jerusalem, there were some faithful supporters. Only a few women, including Jesus' mother, only the beloved John, alone of the eleven. But they were there and we cannot fathom the comfort this must have afforded our Lord. Even so, our individual Calvaries will have those

who see this is not just a hill, but our Calvary. There may not be anything they can do, but they are there. Simply standing by, they do “lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet.” The King’s commendation to them is, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

There is another Observer there who views the picture, not as just a hill but as someone’s Calvary. When His only begotten Son endured His Calvary, the Father veiled the scene with darkness and turned away from the sight. When one of His children of the kingdom experiences their Calvary, it would seem that the Father bathes the scene of obedience with glory’s light and smiles in satisfaction. By His Spirit, He proclaims “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” And again, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Who can fathom the blessing intended for those who are “obedient unto death, even the death of the

cross”? It may be with tears in our eyes but we can still sing with joy,

Good when He gives—supremely good—

Nor less when He denies;

*Afflictions from His sovereign hand
Are blessings in disguise.*

With Job of old, let our confident boast in the Lord be, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

It is not hard to see our own Calvary. The Christian’s challenge is to “anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see;” to see the Calvary in his fellow traveler’s life. That Calvary is just as real to them as our Calvary is to us. May we never be counted among those those that passed by..., wagging their heads, and saying, “Save thyself, and come down from the cross.” Rather, may we be as those who encouraged the early martyrs to remain faithful unto death, rejoicing in their steadfastness. Let us never minimize any Calvary to consider it just a hill. Instead, let us hearten and cheer one another in our Calvarys, with “diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

I knew not what my Lord had planned,

Perceiving naught but loss;

I struggled and I could not stand,

As o’er me loomed a cross.

But ah! The love He had for me!

Though, staggered by despair,
I could not see the victory
Which waited for me there.
In time, I learned the blessing dear,
There at my Calvary;
With joy, I felt the Father near,
And saw His love for me.
Now, when my brother's heart grows chill,
I try my best to see
He faces much more than a hill—
This is his Calvary!
I will not mock him, nor disdain
The struggles he must face;

For self must die, if he would reign
When ends his Christian race.
I'll do my best to cheer him on
Until we each shall see
Celestial morning's brilliant dawn—
Dawn of eternity!
God's children shall surround His throne—
A wondrous company!—
And know then why each had their own
Dear, precious Calvary!

*[From The Vindicator, Sept., 2017. Used
by permission.]*



mission awareness

Bring My Sons From Afar

*Submitted by Floyd Stoltzfus
[from Grace Press News]*

We have received an open letter from our acquaintances who are working among refugees in Greece. These refugees, like many others, are stripped of their earthly hopes. They yearn for something to fill the void, which opens the door to present Jesus Christ as the answer.

Hello, my name is Hamid. I am an Iranian believer from a Muslim background. My wife's name is Kinuko. She is a Japanese believer from a Buddhist background. Both

of us, by God's graceful leading, have come to a Biblical Anabaptist belief of the Scriptures over the years.

We have been ministering to Muslim refugees for fourteen years.

We have witnessed wonderful conversions and transformations in their lives. Under God's divine providence their hearts are amazingly open right now. We feel it is one of the most unique times in Christian history to be able to reach out to our Muslim neighbors so freely. God has opened a door to them like never before.

Many Muslim people have been questioning the authenticity of their own religion. They are fleeing the bloody wars between Muslim nations. All these wars have been done in the name of God. In their escape, they are finding refuge in European nations. We believe that this is one of the main reasons why their hearts are more open to the Gospel of Jesus Christ than ever before.

We believe the Lord could use the conservative Anabaptist people to reach the Muslims like no other people. The first reason is because of the shining example of Mennonite sisters. One of the big stumbling blocks for God-fearing Muslims to come to Christ is their deep-rooted bias (partly through Hollywood movies) that Christianity makes women immodest and disobedient. In fact, many serious Muslim seekers have actually come to us with tears and asked how it was possible for

“Christian” women to wear such immodest clothes.

We need more modest, head-covered Anabaptist missionary sisters across Europe, where there are many serious Muslim seekers! In fact, we have heard from refugees that they have been touched by the Mennonite sisters' modesty and meek and quiet spirits. Their inner and outer modesty gives such an outstanding testimony. This testimony is what God uses to break Muslim biases toward Christianity.

Secondly, the Biblical Anabaptist teaching on headship in the home and the church is desperately needed in Europe. Feminism has invaded every fiber of European society. As my wife (who was a former female preacher in an evangelical church) can testify, the Biblical headship teaching saved her life from sickness, confusion, and disaster. So we believe that an Anabaptist rebirth in European countries could bring much recovery on Biblical manhood and womanhood.

The third reason why we need Anabaptist churches in Europe is the New Testament Biblical teaching on nonresistance. Whenever we talked with Muslim people about the teachings of Jesus on nonresistance we received questions and challenges. We used to tell them that most of the

mainline Christian denominations have not obeyed Jesus' command to love our enemies and tried to explain to them that it should not be that way, but somehow our arguments were not persuasive. Recently, however, when joined with some other Anabaptist brethren from the United States, we were teaching on nonresistance in the Iranian Bible class, and we felt such a convincing power of the Holy Spirit! I believe it was because, as brothers, we were teaching as one body of believers. This gave us a consistent teaching based on actual practice of nonresistance. With this witness, it was amazing how attentively those seekers were listening!

Hundreds of Muslim-background refugees in Greece have sincerely believed in Jesus Christ. Many of them have come to Anabaptist convictions. Most of them are now scattered in various parts of European countries without finding an Anabaptist community nearby. In addition to the Muslim-background believers, there are also many non-Muslim European families with Biblical Anabaptist beliefs who cannot find fellowship. This is the fourth reason why we need Anabaptist missionaries from America to give support and more Biblical teaching to sincere seekers.

Recently, we have been pondering

why God has preserved conservative Anabaptists and their distinct Biblical teachings and practice for over five hundred years. We understand that this conservatism could have been misapplied in various forms over the years, but today, there are those hoping to find a group of God's people who practice purity, simplicity, and undefiled love in the midst of a highly-secularized and entertainment-driven world.

We are asking for the Anabaptists of America to respond to this amazing harvest of Muslim-background seekers by establishing a Bible-believing church in Europe. We also believe that Biblical Anabaptist evangelists and missionaries could be greatly used of God to minister to the sudden influx of Muslim-background seekers.

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over to Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9).

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Potato Salad

Susan Schlabach

Like children, many of us relate best to divine truths through our very human concepts and tastes. Jesus repeatedly broke into story mode about everyday things to teach His learners about Himself and about how things work in His Kingdom.

Explore with me the variations in creating the humble Potato Salad, and what it can teach us about how God works in our lives. (Bear with me, healthy cooks, who may scorn these carbohydrates and reach instead for arugula, romaine and vinaigrette. That's a story for another day.)

In my youth we always *diced* the spuds that went into the salad. Today at our deli, we usually grate them. A sister-in-law peels the potatoes, and then cooks them. I cook them in their jackets first, and then peel them. We're both making potato salad.

It's important to me to add the crunch of tiny pieces of celery. You prefer it without. For my husband, more hard boiled eggs are better.

But the salad at yesterday's carry in sported few eggs. It was still potato salad.

One recipe says to mix it, dressing and all, and let it set for 24 hours. Another says to let it set one hour before serving. Our dressing recipe calls for lots of sugar; your aunt's doesn't. Sally's ends up looking much more yellow than mine does, somehow. For my taste, don't forget the onions. You order yours without. And we're all making potato salad.

If I look on the following page in the cookbook I see the recipe for German Potato Salad. It's served hot! And have you ever heard of adding bacon? But it's still potato salad!

Those of us who've lived in a South American country where grilled meat is common have been introduced to *Ensalada Rusa*. There's no better accompaniment to the meal! It's prepared strictly with an unsweetened mayo/vinegar/lemon/salt dressing. You can add a small amount of peas, carrots, beets or tomatoes, but, you guessed it, the

main ingredient is potatoes. It's another country's version of potato salad.

Here's the lesson: God is making people. He's stirring together the ingredients in our lives to make us into the finished product that He's looking for. While He desires the same final product – a man or woman who bears His likeness, He most certainly has different, but somewhat similar ways of getting to that final product. Sound familiar?

My mother passed away when I was a child. And then my “second mom” died too. My friend who's much older than I still has her mother. The young lady down our road has neither parent remaining.

My husband's employment gives him lots of interaction with people. Your husband sticks to a rigid time-card-punching lifestyle, working with parts on an assembly line. And my brothers-in-law farm at home.

Joyce hasn't any children born to her. We have been blessed with six. My husband's family had 12. You've been given yours through adoption.

You were married at 19, I at 27, and many of our friends were never married.

Skin irritations, weight control, and cancer may be his recipe for me. Blindness, diabetes and strokes may be yours. Does He love me

more than you? Does he care about your family and children more than mine?

God is making people. And He continues making people after His own image. He will allow – do — what it takes to get the final product He desires. He may cook or grate or dice or precook or season or stir or shake or let set to His divine pleasure. He may add anything He pleases to my life in order to arrive at the creation He desires. And He may take anything out that He wishes. He will not follow the same recipe for your life, or for my cousin's life, or for the minister's wife, or that of the school principal. However, that doesn't indicate that He doesn't know what He's doing. Nor does it indicate that He has something else in mind besides reproducing His holy character in us. Not anymore than your potato salad ceases to be potato salad because you left out the celery.

Borrowing lines from the poem “Whom *God Chooses*”:

When God wants to drill a man,
and thrill a man, and skill a man,

When God wants to mold a man,
to play the noblest part—

Watch His methods; watch His
ways—

God knows what He's about!

(*author unknown*)



Dethroning the Tyrant Within

Gideon Yutzy, Dunmore East, Ireland

The late Dallas Willard once made a profound observation. Children, he said, spend next to no time and energy cultivating a persona. Adults on the other hand often spend most of their waking hours doing so.

Our persona is what we want the world to know about us. The natural impulse is to put our “best foot forward,” to make sure people find out only the supposed good things about us. Meanwhile we hide our true selves behind a mask—indeed in Latin *persona* means “a mask worn by an actor.” But to be human is, by definition, to have deep flaws.

Our ego has robbed far too much of our precious energy, but it is time we deny it that power. It is time we grow up. Of course—and this is one of the Great Christian Paradoxes—to grow up we must become like little children. Jesus said, “Unless you turn around and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven!” (Matt. 18:3). Sadly, we tend to become less childlike as we get older and more

childish. We tend to become less Spirit-led and more ego-driven.

A controlled ego versus egoism

I am aware that psychologists have written reams about the ego. The word is difficult to define and understand. But it is safe to say that one aspect of the ego—Latin for “I”—simply refers to a person’s self as it is distinguished from another person’s self. Perhaps it can be thought of as the sum total of Maslow’s pyramid, or at least the lower layers. Food, shelter, belonging, security, affirmation, and so on—those needs have to be met. “No one has ever hated his own body but he feeds it and takes care of it” (Eph. 5:29). Our bodies require food for energy, and that’s why we eat; the elements can be brutal, and that’s why we all laud the invention of houses.

The problem arises when the ego hijacks our lives by putting forth a false persona. Jesus said that people who succumb to this, people who spend most of their waking hours pandering to the ego’s insatiable needs, are no better than the pagans

(Matthew 6). In reality, continues Jesus, our heavenly Father has already provided for all our ego needs, and because this is true we are now free to focus our energy on the kingdom of God. In fact, He says, we can now make the Kingdom the prominent pursuit of our lives!

The closest Biblical equivalents to egoism are “the flesh” and “self.” And usually the language used to describe it isn’t all that flattering. Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh. We are to deny self. Self must die. All this might leave us asking: Is Scripture’s teaching on self-denial some joyless exercise to deprive us of a fulfilled life?

On the contrary, dying to self is the only proven way people can live fulfilled lives—another Great Christian Paradox. Our false self of egoism must die so that the real life of the soul can finally awaken.

Identifying an inflated ego

Most likely, few of us would disagree that we must die to egoism. But how can we know we have done so?

First, we must acknowledge that it is difficult to keep the ego from ruling. Not only is the ego needy, it is also sneaky. Just when we think we have dealt it a mortal blow, it rears up its distended head again, sometimes where we least expect it. Satan, working through our egos, tempts us

to self-dominance in all areas of life.

This egoism shows itself even, and perhaps especially, in the God-ordained institutions of the home and the church. As conservative Anabaptists, we have always valued the doctrine we call headship order. But is it possible for husbands to abuse this principle by “dragging along” their wives as they build mini-empires in the business world and even in ministry? I am floating this idea as a possibility; if you have not seen this played out in your community, I am genuinely thankful, and I apologize for having been alarmist.

Here is another one to consider. We have valued multi-generational Christian families, and in some cases it has become a matter of respectability whether or not our children stay with our Anabaptist churches. Is it possible for us to become egotistical about this also? Could our families become our idols? Was Jesus thinking about such tendencies when He said people can’t be His disciples unless they hate their families (Luke 14:26)? Certainly we must train our children the best we can, but our primary identity must not lie in how good our children look—it must lie in how committed we are to following God.

Again, I raise these issues not to be alarmist, but rather to point out that our ego expresses itself in

sneaky ways. Let's do some further self-diagnosis:

In our aspirations (and all of us have them), are we imagining the Kingdom of God spreading among the myriad situations in our communities, or our own ambitions?

In a recent sermon, Greg Boyd spoke of how everyone has a meta-narrative, the brain's way of making sense of everything that happens in life. In my own meta-narrative, who is the hero? Who always makes the best decisions? Who is the funniest, the most insightful, the most original? Does my brain usually end up deciding it was me? If so, I am afraid my ego's tentacles are still quite intact.

When viewing a group photo that includes me, do I inevitably look for my face first and then spend most of the time admiring the same? When looking at a mirror, do I feel pride? Contempt? Both, by the way, are signs of an overactive ego.

(Apologies if this one sounds preachy or cliché, but it's too relevant to ignore.) How much time and energy do I dedicate to social media? It is no secret that corporations like Instagram and Facebook have exploited the ego's vacuum. They condition people to spend inordinate amounts of time cultivating their social media profiles—like some master gardener tending an estate

lawn. Of course we are free moral agents; if our ego regularly indulges itself on social media, it's because we have allowed it to.

How heady do I become when I experience success or affirmation? Also, how devastated am I by failure or criticism? As often as not, these are two sides of the same coin; people who become inflated by praise are also devastated by criticism. Ego-driven people assume they alone are responsible for all their actions, both good and bad. Thus the ego is in a position to take them on an endless roller-coaster ride.

In point of fact, all our actions, whether good or bad, are influenced by a host of factors—our childhood experiences, our teachers, our detractors, our parents' financial status, and our physical abilities, to name a few. But more than anything, this should be freeing. This should help us realize that our ego is actually just an over-inflated impostor without any real role in our lives, other than perhaps motivating us to find food, clothing, and shelter. All of these, I might add, are trivialities, not life itself. Ego needs are what we get out of the way so that we can get on with real life. "Isn't there more to life than food and more to the body than clothing?" Those are the words of our Lord Jesus, the true Lord who wants to replace Lord Ego.

Subduing our egos

Egoism is a problem. But how can we transition the lordship of our lives from the ego to Jesus? How can we enter again, as C.S. Lewis put it, the “blessed self-forgetfulness” of childhood? How can the ego’s soul-destroying ravages be healed? Is it even possible?

First, nothing cramps the ego’s style as when we focus on others. Consider the following startling passages from Scripture. “The whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5: 14). In other words, Paul is saying, by loving our neighbor we can condense reams of Old Covenant law into one short phrase. Elsewhere in his writings, Paul instructs us to honor our neighbor, not just *as* ourselves, but *above* ourselves (Romans 12:10).

Nothing offends and starves our ego as does an ever-growing focus on the needs, successes, and positive character traits of others.

Second, egoism cannot co-exist with gratitude. My wife and I had always heard of people who keep gratitude journals, but we never bothered to keep one for ourselves. That all changed recently when we came across Robert Emmons, a sociologist who did studies to test the effects of gratitude. Emmons divided the

participants, aged eight to eighty, into two groups: one group kept gratitude journals and one group did not. After ten weeks, those who had kept gratitude journals were thriving, and in far more areas than Emmons and his colleagues had ever anticipated. The unintended consequences of the participants’ focused gratitude were—among many others—that they rested better, forgave more easily, and felt less lonely.

If Emmon’s long and varied list of gratitude’s effects had a common denominator, it was this: the effects were not primarily ego activities. Gratitude and egoism, as Emmon’s study shows, make lousy bedfellows. You can guess what we have been writing on the magnetic writing pad on our fridge!

Dallas Willard, whose observation about personas I included in the beginning, understood the urgency of gratitude in fighting egoism and diligently cultivated the same. In 2013 as Willard was dying of cancer, he uttered his last words on this earth: a simple but profound “thank-you.”

Third, our ego decreases in proportion to how much our acts of service increase. For most of us, opportunities to serve others will be all around us, if not foisted upon us. The most common example of this, applicable to most of the


world's citizens at some time or another, comes in the form of being responsible for children. A fellow parent from here in the Dunmore East community once said, "I find having children to be very deadly on my selfish impulses." As the parents of three beautiful (but demanding) daughters, my wife and I concur. Serving our children has, like nothing else, shifted our center of gravity from ego-centeredness to others-centeredness.

Of course this does not mean that one has to have children to serve; it only means that having children forces the issue, probably as effectively as anything else in the world. (Face it, putting your own needs first is out of the question when a crying baby's diaper has to be changed in the middle of the night.) But opportunities to serve are everywhere. Giving suggestions for opportunities seems unnecessary, even ludicrous. If, however, you do not see the needs around you, review the situations where Jesus appears as "the least of these" (Matthew 25). Destitute. Sick. A stranger. In prison. If you still can't think of any needs, I would like to visit the utopia you have discovered.

And now to end with a call to action: Jesus really expects this conversion from egoism to service and gratitude to happen; it is not just some benign suggestion, for

us to take or leave. In fact for those who fail to experience it, Jesus will not mince words. "Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels!" During a recent presentation about their work among refugees in Greece, Yann Larrieu, the administrator of i58, drew attention to this passage. He pointed out that Jesus did not judge people on what they believed concerning modes of baptism, Calvinism versus Arminianism, or which view of the atonement is theologically superior—important as all those topics might be. Rather, the passage portrays Jesus judging people on whether they served others or their own ego. Sobering indeed.

I think I know what Dallas Willard was saying in his observation about personas and children. He was saying there is no freedom like the freedom from our own egos. Willard knew what all wise people know, that only as we enter the blessed self-forgetfulness of childhood, only as the crushing burden of egoism is lifted from our lives, can we be truly free.

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

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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

Some folks, though imperfect, are looking for perfect neighbors.

• • • • •

It is one thing to speak well of discipline;
it is another thing to submit to it.

• • • • •

He who ceases to learn cannot adequately teach.

• • • • •

We tend to make rules for others and exceptions for ourselves.

• • • • •

An excuse is a close relative of a lie.

• • • • •

Let us use experience as a guidepost rather than a hitching post.

• • • • •

We make success into failure if we stop and brag about it.

• • • • •

Those who truly fear God need not fear death.

• • • • •

If you can buy a person's friendship, the price is too high.

• • • • •

The hand that gives gathers.

• • • • •

God's answers are wiser than our prayers.