



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

AUGUST 2018

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Calvary Messenger

August 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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A Good Listener

Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX



- A good listener is ever ready to hear someone else speak, even about his favorite subject, for surely, there is always something more he can learn.

- A bad listener closes his ears, especially to someone whom he feels is inferior to him, since he thinks he already knows it all.

- A good listener will hear a statement with which he may disagree, but will appreciate the speaker's main message content.

- A bad listener will disagree with a certain statement, and therefore will discredit the whole message.

- A good listener will listen carefully for qualifying statements to a seemingly ambiguous thought.

- A bad listener will hear whatever he wants to hear, and will therefore distort the message by putting unintended words into the speaker's mouth.

- A good listener will pay close attention and will wear expressions on his face to show genuine interest.

- A bad listener will remain expressionless, leaving the speaker to wonder if he has any interest at all.

- A good listener will overlook grammatical errors, thus enabling him to center on the spirit of the message.

- A bad listener will focus on the

delivery style, thus hindering him from grasping the spirit of the message.

- A good listener will hear the whole message, sift through it all, take what applies to him, make necessary changes, and become a better person.

- A bad listener will hear only the parts of the message that please him, discard whatever convicted him, has no intent of making any changes, and in the process, become more hard-hearted than he was before.

In our Christian culture today, the responsibility of a successful message is placed primarily on the speaker. Because we seemingly feel the need to be entertained, we determine the value of the message by how eloquent and interesting its delivery. However, according to The Master Teacher, the greater responsibility rests on the discernment of the listener. For this reason, Jesus said in Mark 4:24 "Consider carefully what you hear." And further in Luke 8:18 he said "Consider carefully how you listen."

In summary then, this requires that the listener be just as Biblically studious as the speaker. Yes, for the sacred Scriptures do not place a high premium on ignorance due to lack of intense and intentional study of God's Word!



Swimming or Wading?

Summer time brings water recreation. If we want to have a good time in the water, we might consider stepping into ankle-deep water, but we won't be swimming. We'd miss the thrill of being borne up in the water. In swimming, the feet usually don't touch bottom.

Shallow wading is somewhat like people who think they are coming to Christ when they merely and without repentance, mumble a guarded, "I'm coming in," and join church. If that's all that it means, we're staying too close to shore. We must go deeper!

Several Don'ts

- Don't be like those who make themselves believe that they're getting all God has for them without surrendering their will to Christ. And don't simply look at the apparent joy of victorious Christians thinking that merely copying their ways and their testimonies makes it real. Mimicry is not enough!

- Don't confuse staying out of sinful addictions by sheer will power with Christian victory. Draw near to Jesus by repentance. Face your own

sinful appetites and attitudes. We all have them. Confess them to God and stay in His presence until you sense that your prayers are heard and that Jesus forgives you. Once we meet God's conditions, He will give us discernment and strength to stay out of sin so that when confronted with temptation, we can say with Joseph, "...how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

- Don't try boot-strap righteousness. Don't substitute joyful participation in the life of the body of Christ with halfhearted support for the brotherhood. The church is not helped by fence-riders. And whatever you do, don't settle for the idea that wholehearted support for the local church fits best those who are not as clever as you are. Jesus has greater blessings for us than what we give ourselves with standoffish, self congratulation.

- Don't forget Lot's wife. Jesus has greater satisfaction for us than the excitement of Sodom. When Paul outlined fulfillment and joy, he described it as: a gift of Jesus, as peace with God that surpasses knowledge.

God's Resources

Song writer, Mrs. C. H. Morris, inquiringly stated life's choices this way: "Are you looking for the fullness of the blessing of the Lord, In your heart and life today? Claim the promise of your Father, come according to His word, in the blessed old-time way. He will fill your heart today to overflowing. As the Lord commandeth you, 'Bring your vessels not a few,' He will fill your heart today to overflowing, with the Holy Ghost and power." Mrs. Morris references the relief Elisha brought to a widow in 2 Kings 4:1-7 of her oppressive creditor's demands by miraculously making available enough (olive) oil to pay off her crushing debts.

This widow needed to take Elisha at his word when he told her and her sons to borrow lots and lots of vessels from her neighbors so she could collect enough oil to pay off her debt. Had they stopped carrying in these containers too soon, her future would not have included that of having her two sons at home with her. They would have been stuck in the grinding servitude of a grasping creditor.

So it is with us. If we give the devil a finger, he'll take more—all he can get. But if we give the Lord our full confidence, He will deliver us. We'll be positioned for the blessings He has

in store for putting Him first. That's when we can expect Him to make good His promises. He will hear our prayers and forgive our sins.

He will also meet our ongoing needs. But we must let go and let God! Our willingness to leave the shallow waters along the shore and launch out in faith is key. The thought that we can do this all by ourselves must go.

The desire to carry water on both shoulders must also be rejected. Thinking that we can secretly nurse friendship with the world inevitably places us at cross-purposes with what God wants for us. So what if we are thought fools for Christ? That doesn't really matter. It's His approval that counts!

Being tempted to sin is not the biggest enemy in our path. We must, however, turn a deaf ear to sinful desires that come—when we recognize them. Enjoying the thought of sinful pleasures must be renounced and repented of. Pornography must go. And we won't be laughing at disrespectful or "off-color" jokes.

On the pathway of victory and joy, let's note these inspiring words from another song writer (Anna Olander, 1904): "Oh, the joy of having all in Jesus; what a balm the broken heart to heal; never a sin so great but He'll

forgive it, nor a sorrow that He does not feel. If I have but Jesus, only Jesus, nothing else in all the world beside, O then everything is mine in Jesus—for my needs and more He will provide.”

Let us face our fears! Let us leave the shores of “self-chosen spirituality and humility”!*

God’s promises fit when things go well, but they apply just as surely when things get tough!

Let’s take Him at His Word. He’ll do His part. When we stop trusting in our self-satisfied, self-chosen spirituality and humility and instead, take Jesus at His word, we’re not *tempting* Him—we’re *trusting* Him! Praise God for His life-giving promises and provisions!

**(free translation of Col. 2:23b from Luther’s German)*

–PLM 

the bottom line

God’s Assurance in Chastening

Aaron Lapp

“**F**or consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:3,4). The Jews were the sinners referred to here. They were those who harshly and sometimes vehemently spoke contrary to Christ’s words of truth, despite being Jesus’ national and religious brothers. The contradiction from comrades is a very hard thing to bear. It can be quite unjust, untrue, unloving, inconsiderate, uninformed, unkind, inappropriate, and filled with ill will. Jesus took all that, and

more besides. When that seems to be directed at us, we must say we are likely worthy of at least some of those “contradictions.” But Jesus was perfect. He was not tainted in the least with any such unwarranted accusations or rebuffs. That is why we should consider His life and His response to those many injustices as our worthy example. We can be assured that He loves us and that He has our good in mind for the long term.

When we are accused, then we should want to check our hearts, and see if there is or was something amiss. We could examine our life to see if we

did miss the mark in some way—or examine our words wherein we may have failed. For James says, “If any man offend (violate) not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2). We fail and violate and sin more with our words than in any other way. But Jesus “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” His speech was perfect. (I Peter 2:22).

The Hebrew believers were harried and spoken against by their religious fellows. If it had come from the Roman occupiers of what was formerly the Jewish homeland, then perhaps they could have better endured it. But their contradiction was largely from their own people. That is often the greatest persecution, and the hardest to endure, and that which is most wearying and wearing upon the heart and mind.

Fortunately, he says, you have not been savagely beaten or thrust through with swords to the extent of bleeding. Their resistance was a spiritual battle, involving mental anguish against these tormentors. Their persecution came short of causing bloodshed, and subsequent death. The Romans forbade the Jews to kill anyone. There are many ways by which religious persecution can be very cruel, even when it stops short of killing someone. These first generation believers in Jesus were harassed for their faith by

those Jews who had not yet come to faith in Christ. Their harassment was an indication of their troubled conscience. They contradicted Jesus, and continued to do so to Jesus’ followers. The Hebrew writer calls the reader to renewed fervency in zeal and the fortification of their faith.

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:5,6). Chastening is God’s way of bringing His sons and daughters closer to Himself, lest they stray away and become comfortable with their distance from God.

The big part about God’s chastening is how one responds, both during the experience of chastening, and afterward. God is by no means sadistic, that is, causing hurt and setback and loss and misery for the pleasure of seeing people suffer. God’s purposes are always to seek the best development of character in His children. His goal is clear to Himself, though not to His own all the time. His children may be allowed to see into God’s purposes at times—maybe soon, maybe later—and sometimes much later, if at all.

When one is impatient in these

matters, frustration, despair, anxiety, fear, and discouragement can become a trial. That trial will last as long as one gives place to such besetting sins spoken of in Hebrews 12:1. We are not saying that every bout with the above named sins will immediately bar one from heaven. The trials of life are related to our human frailty and less than ideal circumstances at times. There can be times when our plans are too perfect, or by contrast, too sloppy and too careless. God cannot be held liable for our failings in perfectionism nor our losses through laziness and ignorance and carelessness. We should not blame God for our trials, nor subscribe every undesirable back-set and trouble to Satan. We are on this earth, and as a part of it, are earthy. The physical calamities are a set of circumstances related to our earthly lives. Our emotional and spiritual responses to such things are where those sins can bombard us. Satan can use such occasions to try to trip us into falling by the wayside. But we should not say all trouble and interruption and sickness and loss come from Satan against us. Our humanness can be the most likely cause in weakness, ignorance, or laziness.

It is at such times that God seeks us by His Spirit. If we have been given to Bible reading and Bible study, God can also use His guiding light

to show us the right way. Then when we choose His way and wait patiently on Him, His wonderful grace comes alongside to gently, yet powerfully, help us choose the right and do the right. This will surely offset Satan and his devices as he tries to cause us to fall in the ditch or take some off-road from God's way.

The Bottom Line is that God's chastening is at times occasioned by our shortsightedness, or can even be from our failings when we go against our own better knowledge. We should not blame God for our mistakes, nor credit Satan for every misfortune. This is an imperfect world. God can use those imperfections and our wrong choices as means for our correction. The goal of God's chastening is to teach us His better way, and to guide us toward His perfection. We always look for an easier way to get the results we desire. The temptation for believers in Christ is to compromise on God's evident will. God's chastening is dealt to us as His own to keep us from compromise, or if we have failed in some way, to bring us back to the narrow way.

[This article (and two more to follow) is selected from my book written recently as a commentary on Hebrews. I hope to eventually complete a set of commentaries on the entire New Testament. Over half of them are written at this point. A.L.]



How Much Paganism Is OK?

Chester Weaver, Itasca, TX

When one side of a seesaw goes up, the other side goes down. The seesaw illustrates the Inverse Law which says that as one quantity increases, the opposite quantity decreases by the same amount. So how much paganism is OK? For clarity's sake we are discussing the Kingdom of Christ, not the Kingdom of this world.

Those who thoroughly identify with the Kingdom of Christ have no problem using Wednesday (Woden's Day) or Thursday (Thor's Day) in normal conversation. But some Quakers of the past preferred to use Fourth Day and Fifth Day in place of those pagan names. Similarly, few people refuse to acknowledge December 25 as Christmas Day even though Christ was not born on that day. Nor does anyone mind using January (named for the god Janus, the double-faced god of beginnings) or March (named for Mars, the god of War).

Pope Gregory told the missionary Augustine before he went to Christianize the German barbarians, "Destroy as few pagan temples as

possible; only destroy their idols, sprinkle them with holy water, build altars, and put relics in the buildings." In other words, adopt the paganism you find except for that which is overtly evil. Build bridges to the pagans; the best way forward is by alliance with them. Replace the pagan holidays with saint days. The Roman Catholic Church is well known for baptizing paganism as a bridge to the Holy Gospel. They have done it wherever they have gone in mission efforts throughout the world.

Massive amounts of superstition and darkness have entered the Roman Catholic Church in this way. But Roman Catholicism has also gathered a massive number of converts by using this method throughout history. So, judging by numbers it has worked very well for the Roman Catholic Church. Is this mission approach OK?

Those reading this article most likely are not Roman Catholics. How much does that say? Does being non-Catholic indicate freedom from paganism?

Consider some characteristics of paganism/heathenism, the qualities

behind the temples, the visible idols, and the visible sacrifices: Darkness, fear, superstition, concealment, sexual sin, yin yang, noise, ignorance, idolatry, falseness, violence, deception, and confusion/chaos. These thirteen expose the basic characteristics of paganism, though there are other forms of it. Demons work freely in this kind of environment.

The Kingdom of Satan around us, both locally and nationally, manifests these characteristics openly. It is truly astonishing what the evil spirits are saying and doing publicly in recent times! Calling for national financial collapse in order to get rid of the President! Mutilating the body to make identity statements! Same sex marriages which even animals reject!

Paganism/heathenism is a present national condition. What should we do about it? Jesus enjoined a Cultural Commission when he said, “You are the salt of the earth; You are the light of the world.” Now is not the time to be timid or isolationist. To do so would be sinful. Jesus Christ entered the Roman world when it was in a similar or worse condition. His Church was birthed in this same kind of social context. Both Christ and His Church defeated the forces of darkness/paganism which stood to overwhelm them. God Himself stepped into history

to defend and open up the way for His Little Defenseless Flock. He did the same later with the Reformation. Is something big on the verge of happening again?


Can Christ use Christian professors to be Salt and Light who dabble in the “innocent” paganism of our surrounding culture? How much paganism is OK? Conservative Anabaptists in some communities are now feeding frequently on movies with pornographic content, movies with violence, movies for “fun and entertainment” (entertainment always teaches values), and “cute” Disney movies. I have hard evidence of the fact. Material which would make Grandpa’s hair stand straight up is being consumed regularly by his children and grandchildren. Some of this is happening openly and some is happening secretly. Such is the stuff of paganism!

Try exposing the darkness. Be ready for noise and lashing out. That which seems small suddenly becomes large. It takes a brave man to operate a flashlight. The Gospel tells us to have no fellowship with the works of darkness but rather reprove them. Demons love darkness and lies; they hate exposure. Exposed by the Light, they make noise! They squirm! And they threaten! “Men [love] darkness rather than light because their deeds

[are] evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed,” Jesus warned.

But warn we must. First, we must pray, for unless God does the exposing the exposure will collapse. Secondly, we must educate. A massive amount of ignorance accompanies paganism and paganism would have it that way. Thirdly, we must be undaunted by the noise that exposure naturally evokes. Much of the noise is bluff but some of it is not. When evil lashes out, it is merciless and cruel. To stand firm in the noise requires a strong identity in Christ. Fourthly, paganism is paganism whether or not the practitioner is a nice person.

And lastly, we must keep ourselves out of the way. Dealing effectively with paganism is more than a mere man can do. God must do the work. Nevertheless, Jesus does enjoin the Cultural Commission upon us as mere humans.

How much paganism is OK? I do not know. I do know that light has no communion with darkness and the temple of God has no agreement with devils. Thus, I do know that the less paganism I have in my life, the more Christ’s power is free to move out through me to do His work in the world. Since I do love Christ, I choose to identify with Him by being a Light to the World and Salt to the Earth, come what may. 

John Horsch

By Daniel Zimmerman

January 3, 1887, a young man stepped off a ship in the New York harbor about two weeks after his nineteenth birthday. The man was John Horsch, and he was immigrating to America from Germany so that he would not have to serve in the German military.

John Horsch was born in Bavaria, in southern Germany, the son of Jacob and Barbara Horsch. His

father served as an elder (or bishop) in their Mennonite congregation. As a boy, John loved to read the books in his father’s library and also two Mennonite periodicals to which his father subscribed and his reading sparked a lifelong interest in Mennonite history. Because his parents wanted him to be a farmer, John studied at the Bavarian State Agricultural School, but after

graduation in 1886, he instead made plans to move to America.

He reached this decision because he concluded that any service in the military was a violation of Jesus' teachings and example. He gained this belief by his reading of Anabaptist history rather than from his church or his parents. Well before John was born, most of the Mennonites of southern Germany had dropped their practice of nonresistance, although the doctrine was still taught to some extent. For John, however, it was an important aspect of his commitment to following Jesus.

In America, John was hired by John F. Funk to work at his Mennonite Publishing Company in Elkhart, Indiana. John was responsible for the German-language material which Funk published, including Sunday School quarterlies and *Herold der Wahrheit*, the German edition of Funk's influential periodical *Herald of Truth*. Besides writing articles, John wrote two short books on Mennonite history and began assembling a library of books about Mennonite history. He married Christine Funk in 1893. But finding it hard to work with the editorial staff, John resigned his position in 1895.

After trying to start his own publishing business, John went to

work for another publisher, J. A. Sprunger. Then in May, 1908, John moved to Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, to work for the Mennonite Publishing House as its German editor. Again, he began collecting a historical library, and began researching and publishing articles, pamphlets, and books.

John's goal in doing this was not simply to explore the history of the Anabaptists. He wanted to offer to others the same inspiration that he had found as a young man when he read the accounts of the early Anabaptists. He discovered that few American Mennonites knew much about their history, and he wanted to change that. He wanted to shore up the Mennonites' commitment to what he felt to be the essence of the early Anabaptists' faith: believer's baptism, a life of discipleship, and nonresistance.

John wrote many articles for the monthly *Christian Monitor* and for Goshen College's *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, which was edited by his son-in-law Harold S. Bender, a teacher at Goshen College. John also researched and wrote a number of significant books, including a biography of Menno Simons, studies on baptism and on nonresistance, and a survey of the history of the Hutterites.

During the early 1920s, John became concerned about the spread of modernism among American Christians, so he wrote *Modern Religious Liberalism* and *The Mennonite Church and Modernism* to combat the influence of modernist heresies.

In 1927, the Mennonite Church commissioned John to write an authoritative account of the early Anabaptists, reflecting all the research and scholarship which had been done since around 1900. John devoted himself to this task and finished his manuscript in 1940. Shortly after this, he fell sick. He died in October, 1941. His book was published to much acclaim the following year as *Mennonites in Europe*. It is still in print today.

I see a number of admirable qualities in the life of John Horsch. First, I admire his dedication to Christ. John wanted to be a consistent, faithful disciple of Jesus. This shows clearly in his decision to accept Jesus' way of love and peace, rather than to serve in the German military. John uprooted himself from his family and church as a teenager and moved to another country so that he would be able to "follow peace with all men" rather than learning to kill them.

Secondly, I admire John's willingness to tackle the issues of

his day and to stand for the truth of the Bible. Modernism then and now suggests that the Scriptures are outdated and untrustworthy. John knew that, on the contrary, the Bible is God's Inspired Word. John courageously defended the Bible and denounced those who wanted to abandon it.

Most importantly, I admire John's goal of strengthening the faith of the Mennonites by using our history. John spent his life researching and writing about our history, which can be very laborious. He believed that understanding more about our past leads to understanding more about ourselves. John was inspired to live as a faithful disciple of Christ from the stories of the faithful Anabaptist disciples in the past. And he wrote extensively to offer that inspiration to others.

We sometimes hear of the "Anabaptist vision": that the essence of their faith was a life of discipleship, characterized by peace and love, and an understanding of the Church as a community of believers. John Horsch was one of the key individuals in uncovering that vision and promoting it as an ongoing vision. May it continue in our lives.

[From KMF Messenger, May-June, 2018. Used by permission.]



That I May Know Him

Jonathan Proffitt, Earlysville, VA

The events of this past month have made me think long and hard about eternal issues. Death has touched my life in ways that remind me of the brevity of this life. Just over three weeks ago, my childhood friend's dad was killed by a drunk driver, while running along a country road. He was preparing for a 10-mile run. He was as healthy and physically fit as one could be for a man in his early 50s. Just this past week, a close family member died after fighting his fourth battle with cancer. Although the treatments seemed to be working well, the artificial valve in his heart began failing. He was too weak for surgery and finally passed away in the middle of the night at the age of 76.

For some reason, the reality of death has had me thinking much about life. Unless our Lord returns within our lifetime, we all will one day die. As much as scientists labor to help us live longer, death still will claim us in the end. The thought was again mentioned at the funeral this morning that we are all given two dates on our headstone, one

that states the date of our birth and another that states the date of death. There is a dash placed in between that represents the life we live in between these two dates. For me, my headstone will say 1993—?. What will define my dash?

Paul writes in Philippians 3:10 and 11, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Paul's dash could very well be summed up with those five words, "That I may know Him!" Although once a persecutor of the church, when confronted by the reality of who Jesus is, his entire life changed. He went from being a persecutor to being persecuted. The remainder of his life was spent in an all-consuming passion of knowing Christ and making Him known!

The reality of death has brought about much self-examination. What will define my dash? What is my all-consuming passion? Will my life be summed up with the same words that defined the life of Paul?

Self-examination is a tremendously beneficial, yet an incredibly difficult thing. Apart from God, only I truly know the intents, motives and desires of my heart. Yet brethren, I have found a truth that matches what Jeremiah also discovered: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” I have a tendency to justify my sinful, selfish motives more than even I am aware of. That is why the response which the Lord gives to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 17:10 is so needed in our day, “I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

David cries out in Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” We all need the searching of the Lord. We need our motives evaluated by a source apart from ourselves. With an understanding that death is nearer than many of us think, “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens” (Lamentations 3:40-41).

Many questions have passed

through my mind as I reflect upon my own life, motives and pursuits. These questions I share with you in an effort to move us beyond our comfort zone in self-examination. I also challenge you to ask a brother or sister in the church to honestly answer these questions for you, based upon what fruit is evident from your own life. Many of these questions are similar.

- What defines my dash?
- What am I actively pursuing?
- What gives me purpose and meaning in life?
- Do I serve myself or others more?
- How much time do I spend actively seeking first the Kingdom?
- What fruit do others see in my life that would indicate who I serve?
- Is my life’s goal and passion “To Know HIM?”

These questions are only the start. I know from personal experience that I have found much lacking in my own life. Though I am sure many of us would like to have the testimony of our brother Paul, I often wonder if we’re willing to accept the cost. The verses preceding Philippians 3:10 say this, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things

but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”


Am I so motivated by the excellence, the supremacy, of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord that I count all things as loss and dung? Has the pursuit of the excellence of the knowledge of Christ affected and cost my business? What about the house that I live in? What about the vehicle that I drive or the recreational activities I enjoy? Have I suffered any loss that I may win Christ? Brethren, we live in a day and age of luke-warmness where many in our world—yea, even in our own Anabaptist (Beachy) settings, try to serve two masters. Testimony after testimony of our Lord’s disciples, Christians through the ages and the early Anabaptists indicate that knowing Him comes at a cost of all other pursuits.

The cost of knowing Him is great. Jesus, in Luke 9:23-25, tells 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. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be

cast away?” Is our lifestyle marked by self-denial or self-indulgence?

Brethren, though the cost is great, Paul says the reward is far greater: “The knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Which of you has purchased something of great value without having to spend a great deal of money on it? Knowing Christ, or as many would phrase it today, “a personal relationship with Christ,” will cost us everything. It cannot be that it just might affect our lives. It must affect our lives! It will affect our business, what we drive, what we live in, how we dress, how much money we have! While this is uncomfortable to many, it is the truth of the Gospel. No man can serve two masters.

So in light of the coming day of death, let us truly examine our lives and ask, “Whom do I serve?” Paul writes in Colossians 3, “When Christ, *who is our life...*” Is Christ our life or just a good addition to it?

Brethren, in view of the reality that we each shall soon pass from this temporal life into eternity, let us with all our heart, soul, strength and mind seek to know Him. The cost may be great, but the reward is far greater. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). 

marriages

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

Brubaker-Lapp

Bro. Thomas, son of Sharon and the late Daryl Brubaker, Blackville, SC, and Sis. Esther, daughter of Ben and the late Lena Lapp, New Holland, PA, at Ridgeview Mennonite Church for Summitview Christian Fellowship, on March 24, 2018, by Dave Stoltzfus.

Coulter-Peight

Bro. Jason Alexander, son of Kinley and Rebecca Coulter, Honey Grove, PA, and Sis. Katrina Esther, daughter of Ben and Naomi Peight, Belleville, PA, at Locust Grove Mennonite Church for Shade Mountain Christian Fellowship on June 16, 2018, by Daniel Fisher.


McGrath-King

Bro. Christopher, son of Manfred and Naomi McGrath, Taylorsville, NC, and Sis. Rosanna, daughter of Abner and Mary King, Honeybrook, PA, at Summitview Christian Fellowship, on June 2, 2018, by Manfred McGrath.

Wagler-Zimmerman

Bro. Travis, son of Charles and Donna Wagler, Cross Hill, SC, and Sis. Lorinda, daughter of Charlie and Susan Zimmerman, Myerstown, PA, were married at Schaefferstown Mennonite Church on June 23, 2018, by Merl Beiler.

Zook-Stoltzfus

Bro. Timothy, son of Marvin and Rachel Zook, Gap, PA, and Sis. Michelle, daughter of Jr. and Debbie Stoltzfus, Honeybrook, PA, at Weaverland Mennonite Church for Summitview Christian Fellowship, on June 9, 2018, by Dave Stoltzfus. 

cradle roll

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

Beiler, Lamar and Yvonne (Swarey), Paradise, PA, sixth child, third son, Dustin Wade, June 12, 2018.

Brenneman, Manuel and Laura (Detweiler), Lewisburg, KY, second child, first son, Easton Cole, June 28, 2018.

Byers, Phil and Mary Ann (Weaver), Pulaski, TN, third child, first son, Randal Philip, May 24, 2018.

Byler, Kenneth and Kate (Knepp), Whiteville, TN, fourth child and daughter, Kyleigh Brielle, March 29, 2018.

Byler, Marvin and Arlene (Miller), Jackson, OH, fifth child, third daughter, Shakira Emma, May 16, 2018.

Garber, Lamar and Kimberly (Yoder), Clarkson, KY, fourth child, third daughter, Abigail Hope, April 19, 2018.

Graber, Kevin and Mary Anna (Swarey), Odon, IN, fourth child, third son, Aaron Hugh, April 16, 2018.

Groff, Will and Heidi (Miller), Russellville, KY, second child, first daughter, Ashlyn Marie, June 17, 2018.

Hershberger, Kristin and Andrea (Miller), Hutchinson, KS/Malaysia, second child, first daughter, Mariah Elise, June 7, 2018.

Hochstetler, Jethro and Twila (Beiler), Aroda, VA, second child, first son, Trevor Jett, June 27, 2018.

Hochstetler, Lonnie and Ruth (Lapp), Huntsville, AR, fourth child, third son, Logan Miles, May 29, 2018.

Hostetler, Eugene and Norma (Beiler), Auburn, KY, third child, second son, Ethan Trent, June 2, 2018.

Jara, Joel and Rosetta (Miller), Crossville, TN, second child first son, Michael Joel, April 19, 2018.

Martin, David and Beth (Sommers), Sugarcreek, OH, fifth child, fourth daughter, Alyssa Edna, May 20, 2018.

Mast, James and Glenda (Hochstetler), Huntsville, AR, fourth child, second daughter, Alisha Joy, June 3, 2018.

Mast, James and Marcie (Yoder), Clarkson, KY, fifth child, third son, Jethro David, April 2, 2018.

Mast, Lee and Clasina (Verwer), Atwood, ON, second child and son, Travis Ryan, May 26, 2018.

Mejia, Hector and Grace (Alfaro), La Merced, Pital de San Carlos, Costa Rica, first child and son, Terence Leigh, Feb. 11, 2018.

Miller, Brandon and Yvette (Otto), LaGrange, IN, sixth child, third daughter, Molly Nicole, April 29, 2018.

Miller, Lamar and Michelle (Yoder), Centerville, PA, second child and son, Brycen Avery, June 20, 2018.

Mullet, Terry and Janette (Coblentz), Sugarcreek, OH, fourth child, second son, Seth Taylor, June 7, 2018.

Stoll, Marlin and Marietta (Miller), Greensburg, KY, sixth child, fifth son, Benjamin Wade, May 25, 2018.

Troyer, Brandon and Brenda (Beachy), Millersburg, OH, first child and son, Blake Lawson, May 27, 2018.

Troyer, Eric and Ann (Kline), Baltic, OH, third child, first daughter, Rachelle Erma, June 7, 2018.

Troyer, Melvin and Laura (Yoder), Ligonier, IN, fourth child, second daughter, Caitlyn Raine, April 28, 2018.

Weaver, Jon Anthony and Jen (Bontrager), Jackson, OH, first child and son, Alexander Blake, March 6, 2018.

Wittmer, Michelle, Montgomery, IN, first and second daughter, Adison Brooke, born August 17, 2012, and Katelyn Breanne, born Nov. 20, 2014. Loved and cared for since birth and adopted on May 17, 2018.

Yoder, Caleb and Sherilyn (Troyer), Partridge, KS, second child and son, Kieran Elliot, June 13, 2018.

Yoder, Dan and Susan (Eicher), Melvern, KS, first child and son, Jacob Daniel, June 28, 2018.

Yoder, Edwin and Elizabeth (Keim), Brinkhaven, OH, third child, second daughter, Rayna Sue, May 21, 2018.

Yoder, Enos and Sarah (Hershberger), Falkville, AL, twelfth child, eighth daughter, Adeline Sarah, June 8, 2018.


Yoder, James and Lucrecia (Wagler), Stonecreek, OH, seventh child, sixth daughter, Tirzah Grace, May 24, 2018.

Yoder, Jonathan and Donita (Ropp), Jackson, OH, first child and son, Bryson Jon, Jan. 23, 2018.

Yoder, Kyle and Kendra (Eash), Auburn, KY, third child, second daughter, Myra Camille, Jan. 18, 2018.

Correction: Yoder, Matthew and Laura Marie (Schlabach), Mogadore, OH, third child, second daughter, Odessa Yaell, April 29, 2018.

Yutzy, Douglas and Elizabeth (Nissley), Mill Hall, PA/Yoder, KS, third child, second daughter, Briana Cherise, June 14, 2018.

Yutzy, JR and Rhoda (Hochstetler), Huntsville, AR, third child, second son, Carson Noah, May 31, 2018. 

obituaries

Gingerich, Jocelyn Amanda, 15 months, of Free Union, VA, died June 7, 2018, due to heart-related problems. She was born to Marcus and Melissa (Miller) Gingerich, on March 13, 2017.

She is survived by her loving parents, and her two sisters, Haylie Nicole and Mariah Kate, who miss her greatly. Also surviving are her grandparents, Abe and

Amanda Gingerich and Marlin and Fern Miller, uncles, aunts, cousins and a host of friends.

Burial was in the Gospel Light Mennonite Church cemetery, prior to the memorial service held at Preddy's Funeral Home chapel in Gordonville, Va, on June 10, with Eldon Hochstetler and Darrel Beachy officiating.

Knox, Lydia Ruth (Decker), of Plain City, Ohio, died after a three-year battle with cancer on June 13, 2018. She was born June 5, 1967, to Craig and Colleen Decker.

She was married to Arthur Knox for 29 years.

She loved life and did her best to live every moment to the fullest. She loved people and had a heart for others, even when it hurt to love them. She believed in people and tried to understand them and to speak into their lives. Lydia loved traveling, scrapbooking, coffee dates, and making holidays and birthdays special.

In addition to parents and husband, she is survived by six children: son Codi (27) and his wife Michelle, with their children: Israel (4), Tirzah (3), and Kadesh (2); daughters Sheri (24), Kezia (21) with her husband, Wynn Gingerich (with the fourth grandchild on the way!); Shantia (16), Zoe (11), and Talia (6). Also surviving are her siblings: Paul Decker, James Decker, Joel Decker, Charity Hostetler, Jeremy Decker, and Johnny Decker.

The funeral was held at United Bethel Mennonite Church on June 16. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

Mast, Anna (Hochstetler), 95, died at her home on June 2, 2018. She was born Oct. 29, 1922, in Nappanee, Indiana, to the late Joseph and Mary (Yoder) Hochstetler.

She was a faithful member of Maple Lawn A.M. Church and was quick to share when she saw a need and was

known for her servant's heart. She loved her church and loved people, which is evident by the many friends she had. Favorite pastimes were baking, quilting, singing, and flowers.

On Nov. 21, 1944, she was married to Andrew J. Mast. He died on July 31, 2008. Surviving are their children: Marvin (Carlene) Mast, Tualatin, OR; Allen (Norma) Mast, Goshen, IN; Mary Carpenter, Mattie (Mark) Chupp, both of Nappanee; Miriam (Brian) Hartman, Wakarusa, IN; Naomi (Aaron) Yoder, Leesburg, IN; and Ernest (Debbie) Mast, Rowlett, TX; 14 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. Also surviving is one brother, Levi J. (Sue) Hochstetler, Nappanee.

She was preceded in death by her son, Joseph, and four sisters: Elizabeth, Amanda, Sarah, and Edna.

The funeral was held on June 9, with Thomas Mast and Gary Burkholder serving. Mark Chupp conducted the committal at the church cemetery.

Yoder, Lydia Ann, 88, of Nappanee, Indiana, died on Feb. 22, 2018. She was born Jan. 26, 1930, to the late Dan P. and Susie (Mast) Yoder.

She was a lifetime resident and faithful member of Maple Lawn A.M. Church. Lydia Ann was gifted in sewing and spent many hours sewing custom quilts and for relief. She was well-known for the beautiful quilts she made. She enjoyed blessing others with her hand-made gifts.

She is survived by a sister, Amelia Laughman of Chambersburg, PA, and

many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by step-mother, Clara Yoder; sisters, Ruby Parker and Wilma Miller; brothers, Daniel and Freeman Yoder, and brothers-in-law, Richard Laughman and Raymond Miller,

The funeral was held at Maple Lawn Church on Feb. 26, with Thomas Mast and Gary Burkholder serving. Wade Burkholder conducted the committal at the church cemetery.

Yoder, Tobias B., 97, of Topeka, IN, died March 16, 2018. He was born in Thomas, OK, Nov. 30, 1920, son of the late Benedict T. and Mary Ann, (Bontrager) Yoder.


He was a member of Sharon Bethel A.M. Church, Kalona, IA. He was a retired farmer.

On May 11, 1944, he was married to Minnie A. Beachy. She died May 16,

1979/ On April 11, 1981, he was married to Katie Swartzentruber.

The children of Tobias and Minnie are Karen, Patsy, and Linda. Also surviving are a granddaughter, Rachel Yoder, a great grandson, Darin Yoder and a great granddaughter, Laura Yoder.

Preceding him in death besides his parents and first wife were his second wife, Katie, his daughter, Karen Yoder, his son-in-law, Sam Yoder and two great grandsons, Ross Yoder and Lavern Yoder, and five sisters: Fannie (John) Mast, Malinda (Clarence) Wingard, Edna (Amos) Yoder, Clara (Elmer) Wingard, and Bertha (John) Yoder.

The funeral was held at Fair Haven Mennonte Church, Goshen, IN, with Delmar Bontrager, Gabriel Beachy, and Freeman Yoder serving. Truman Yoder conducted the committal at Thomas Cemetery, Goshen, IN. 

observations

The United States Supreme Court ruled that the Colorado Civil Rights Commission violated Masterpiece Cake Shop owner Jack Philips 1st Amendment right to exercise his freedom of religion. The case was centered on an incident where a gay couple ordered their wedding cake at his place of business in Colorado.

These individuals were prior customers of the shop. Mr. Phillips offered to sell them something else from his stock, but said he could not in good conscience make and decorate a custom-designed cake for this occasion, due to religious objections. Some members of the Supreme Court found the Commission's disregard for Mr. Philip's religious

position particularly disturbing. The 7-2 majority ruling was celebrated by many conservatives, and of course welcomed by Jack Philips. However, it left others disappointed because it spoke narrowly to the issue of how the Colorado Civil Rights Commission treated Philips, rather than the broader question of whether a business can legitimately decline service based on religious persuasion.

Maybe I'm too simplistic, but it seems to me that this situation doesn't represent a case of refusing to serve certain people, but rather to produce certain products. That's why this is very different from the civil rights issue that arises when a business establishment refuses or extends service to people based on whether they have more or less melanin in their skin. Predictably, those advocating for rights for the LBGTQ minorities, are bemoaning the "injustice" of the ruling and the erosion of "progress" that it represents.

.....

As of this writing, Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, age 81, has announced his intentions to retire this summer after serving more than 30 years. Kennedy was considered by many to be a moderate voice who found himself exercising the deciding

vote in various 5-4 decisions handed down by the highest court of the land. This vacancy gives president Donald Trump the opportunity to nominate a second member to the Supreme Court. Last year Trump nominated Neil Gorsuch who was seated in April of 2017. This prospect leaves those who identify with the left very concerned by what will happen if the court tilts even further to the right than it already is. Those who align themselves with the political right are gleeful at the prospect of seating a conservative majority on the court for the next generation or so.

.....

Two years ago this spring some of our friends found a very hungry baby raccoon who appeared to have been orphaned. We gave Albert a home and food and enjoyed this little critter's antics that summer. Our dog and the 'coon were great pals and enjoyed many vigorous wrestling matches with jaws open and claws disengaged. That summer the 'coon came and went according to its whims and preferences. But as the nights lengthened that fall, Albert began to disappear for several days at a time. About the time we decided to relocate Albert to the woods beside the river, we couldn't find him anymore. Last spring he reappeared minus his tail, save the

first half inch or so. He didn't tell us what happened, so we can only guess. This spring he showed up again. Eventually it became clear that Albert had a litter of babies in a hollow branch of the giant elm tree in front of our house! Our assumptions related to Albert's gender were obviously quite mistaken. One Sunday afternoon in early May, she moved her litter to another hollow tree in our yard. We saw her make four trips with a baby in her mouth each time. She is somewhat wary of too close human interaction, but really does appreciate the privilege of dining from the provisions that we provide for our cats and dog. The story of Albert and her litter of babies, is an interesting reminder that sincerely believed, but mistaken impressions and gender labels are completely ineffective in modifying certain biological facts.

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A kind reader sent me an article that appeared on Brett and Kate McKay's blog, "The Art of Manliness". They pointed out that in 1960 men married at age 22 on average. But now the average age of men wedding is age 29. This article encouraged men to consider marrying younger rather than later. Many people today consider that it is financially advantageous

to postpone the wedding until a career is firmly established. But the McKays counter that establishing a home earlier sets young couples on a path that puts them financially well ahead of their age peers who postpone marriage until the late 20's.

I really don't want to be mistaken as endorsing the idea of getting married younger with the primary motivation being greater financial success. However, this is a good reminder that widely shared opinions don't always stand up to closer scrutiny. Most importantly, let's remember that when persons act selfishly, in pursuing or avoiding marriage, they display priorities that are quite short-sighted and carnal. It's been said that God cares more about our faithfulness than our comfort. Those are wise words!

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It's almost sweet corn season in our area. One unpleasant memory of the sweet corn harvests of my childhood was the inevitable discovery of the unsightly fungus that grows on the ear that we called "smut" as we husked the crop. Come to find out this dreaded growth is prized by many chefs of renown. In Mexico and other parts of the world corn smut is reported to be a highly desired delicacy. The only person I spoke

with who I know intentionally ate corn smut says it tasted like a fine mushroom. I'm not sure if I could muster the necessary intestinal fortitude that would be required for me to overcome my reluctance and venture a taste.

However, if we really think about it, there are many things we eat without much thought that we might find repulsive if we hadn't been conditioned to the idea that these are suitable for human consumption. Meat is a primary example.

•••••

How should we view retirement? Is it the due reward for a life of diligence? Is the goal to enjoy ease without the need to work? Should retirement be devoid of financial uncertainty? Or should retirement be the time in life when citizens of the heavenly kingdom shift their primary energies from wage earning to other areas of service?

I've had the opportunity to know quite a few wonderful people whose contribution to the Kingdom after normal retirement age was huge. These people seemed to embrace the idea that they were placed here to serve and bless others. Furthermore, they seemed to take special pleasure in having more time to devote to serving, since they didn't have the schedule demands of a full time job.

I'm blessed by their example and would like to remember that when I'm tempted to idolize leisure.

•••••

I recently had the privilege of visiting with a brother with a fine spirit and testimony for the Lord. He related that he sees his vocation as his pulpit and his employees as his fellow-missionaries. He experienced many difficulties as a young child. His father made some very sinful choices that separated him from his family. His faithful mother led her children in regularly praying for the salvation of her wayward husband. Years later, when he experienced a terminal illness as a result of the lifestyle he had chosen, he came back to his wife and to the Lord. The family rejoiced that his last days were a demonstration of God's grace.

His son, with whom I was conversing, with an unspoken hint to the difficulty of his childhood, said something to this effect, "I'm not bitter. I'm not on edge. God is good and life should be lived to His glory." I was encouraged and moved by the buoyant and fervent attitude of this young man. Many with similar experiences would have chosen to dwell on life's injustices. But not he. Praise the Lord!

-RJM 

Steward or Owner?

Living Life in the Light of Christ

Lyle Musser, Denver, PA

Stewardship is using the God-given resources in my care to fulfill God's purposes for mankind and the created world.

Stewardship is a broad topic that touches nearly all of our everyday activities. Stewardship attitudes are expressed in daily life and action. The 21st century Christian living in the United States is daily confronted with lies and cultural pressures to abandon the simple God-honoring principles that have guided God's people for many generations. We will look at God's directives concerning biblical stewardship, along with its negative counterpart expressed in the culture around us.

Steward

- Contentment
- Thanksgiving
- Moderation
- Humility
- Brotherhood

Owner

- Covetousness
- Complaining
- Excess
- Pride
- Independence

Steward or Owner?

The primary stewardship attitude

could be described as stewardship versus ownership. The steward takes the stance that "everything I have is a gift from God," whereas the owner takes the position that "everything I have is mine and I deserve it because I earned it." Psalm 24:1 says: "*The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.*" We tend to think that when we take ownership of something that we become a steward of that thing on God's behalf. According to Psalm 24:1, there is only one owner—God. To be an owner we must rival God. Stewardship and ownership are opposite attitudes. Owners reach out with a grasping hand to take things they can call their own. Stewards reach out with an open hand to see what gifts God will place in it.

Contentment or Covetousness

The contented steward recognizes that everything he holds has been provided by the gracious hand of God so he holds his resources with an open hand. The covetous person has an owner mentality as he tightly

grips *his* resources as the product of *his* hands. Contentment provides an environment in which relationships take precedence over acquiring things, while covetousness puts the acquisition of things ahead of relationships making it a common cause of conflicts related to finances. Nearly all of us can think of disgraceful situations where a covetous owner attitude drove wedges between close friends or family as the inheritance was disbursed or an item of wealth (such as a business) was passed on to the next generation. This should not happen among saints (Ephesians 5:3). The contented steward finds joy in being productive with an eye toward providing spiritual and material resources for others, while the covetous owner is driven by the needless desire to have just a little more for self.

Thanksgiving or Complaining

Thanksgiving is the logical response of a contented steward because he finds joy in what God has provided. Complaining is the logical response of a covetous owner because he is never satisfied with with the amount of or quality of *his* things. The irony of the covetous owner attitude is expressed in Ecclesiastes 5:10, *He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance*

with increase: this is also vanity. This dissatisfaction manifests itself in complaining, while the contented steward gives thanks, which is the appropriate response when we have received a gift.

Moderation or Excess

A lifestyle of moderation is expressed by restraint, self-control, trusting the Lord, and living within one's means. Thrift and good discipline is evident in finances even when there is abundance. Excess is a lifestyle of self-indulgence and lack of restraint in which consumption, leisure, and entertainment become priorities. There is only one prayer recorded in Proverbs—a prayer seeking moderation:

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain. (Proverbs 30:7-9).

This prayer recognizes two extremes: poverty and unrestrained wealth. It asks for “just enough” similar to the Lord's Prayer when we ask for daily bread. This prayer belongs on note cards by the sink, and in book marks in our Bibles

because we are wealthy, and we are full, and in that state, the natural way is to deny our Lord.

Humility or Pride

“Our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29), yet we are told to draw nigh to Him (James 4:8). The only logical response to these commands is to come before Him in reverence, humility, and godly fear. When believers gather in a spirit of humility it produces a brotherhood in which mutual submission and accountability are highly valued. The humble steward knows that one day he will stand before this God who is a consuming fire and give account of his stewardship. This recognition promotes a godly fear that welcomes accountability from the brotherhood to keep one’s stewardship in proper perspective. The humble, accountable steward can stand before God with more confidence when he has the confirming voice of the brotherhood. Trust in God is foundational to Christian living. Scripture warns that wealth can lead to self-trust and pride. Rather than using wealth to humbly serve in the pattern of Christ, the proud use wealth to serve, insure, and attempt to redeem self. Pride shuns accountability. One day, the proud owner will stand before God alone (which is his preference),

without the confirming voice of his brotherhood.

Brotherhood or Independence

Brotherhood, humility, and service walk hand in hand in the family of God. Mutual submission and accountability lead to care and concern expressed in mutual aid as needs arise. Pride and independence walk hand in hand in the lives of those who trust in self and in riches. Independence is expressed by an attitude that says, “I take care of myself, so why can’t you take care of yourself?” This spirit immunizes a person from the blessings of love and care shared in the mutually dependent brotherhood. We should shudder in fear that God would describe us as the Laodicean church who “had it all together” as they proclaimed, “I am rich,” while God said they were “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).

Are you a steward? The evidence will be found in your contentment, thanksgiving, moderation, humility, and love for the brotherhood.

Are you an owner? The evidence will be found in your covetousness, complaining, excessive lifestyle, pride, and independence.

[From KMF Messenger, March-April, 2018. Used by permission.]



To Our Leaders

Of the church and in the home

Vera Overholt, Sarasota, FL

May you have the leadership qualities of these Bible men:

The **PATIENCE** of **JOB** (James 5:11) and his **CONCERN FOR HIS FAMILY** (Job 1:4,5).

The **WISDOM** of **SOLOMON** (I Kings 4:29, 30).

The **MEEKNESS** of **MOSES** (Numbers 12:3).

The **INTEGRITY** and **FORGIVING HEART** of **JOSEPH** (Genesis 39:5-9; 45: 7-15).

The **COURAGE** and **PERSISTENCE** of **NOAH** to build the ark, saving his family and reprovng the world (Genesis 6:5-7 to 7:1; Hebrews 11:7).

The **TRUSTING** and **UNWAVERING FAITH** of **ABRAHAM** (Genesis 12:1-4; 22:1-18; Hebrews 11:8).

The **NONRESISTANT SPIRIT** of **ISAAC** (Genesis 26:17-25).

The **BLAMELESS CHARACTER** and **CONSTANT PRAYER LIFE** of **DANIEL** (Daniel 1:8; 5:12; 6:10, 16).

The **VIM, VIGOR,** and **STAMINA** of **CALEB** (Joshua 14:6-13).

The **LOVE OF SINGING** and **PRAISING GOD** that **DAVID** had (the Psalms).

The **BROTHERLY LOVE** of **JONATHAN** (1 Samuel 18:1; 2 Samuel 1:26).

The **FEARLESS, DEDICATED LEADERSHIP** of **JOSHUA** (Joshua 24:15-25).

The **BOLDNESS** of **PETER** and **JOHN** (Acts 4:13, 29).

The **PROMPT OBEDIENCE** of **PHILIP** (Acts 8:26-38).

The **MISSIONARY ZEAL** of **PAUL** and his **APTNESS TO TEACH,** and **ENDURING HARDNESS** for Christ's sake (Acts 21:10-14; Titus 1:15; 2 Cor. 11:22-33; Acts 9:18-28).

The **MEDIATING, PEACE-MAKING SKILLS** of **BARNABAS** (Acts 9:18-52).

The **TEACHABLENESS** of **TIMOTHY** (James 3:17; 1 Timothy 1).

The **OUTSPOKEN DIRECTNESS** of **JOHN THE BAPTIST** in speaking out against adulterous marriage, as well as same-sex marriage and homosexuality, even if it means imprisonment and death (Matthew 14:3-12).

And above all else, may you have:

The **GENTLENESS, HUMILITY,** and **COMPASSION** of **JESUS** and the **COMPLETENESS IN HIM** (John 8:11; Mark 6:34; John 13; Colossians 1:10, 2:10, and 4:12).

May you ever keep pressing toward the goal of perfection to be like Jesus! (Philippians 3:14)



Reflections on Iraq

Marvin Kauffman, Weldon, Iowa

Walking into our base office one day, I noted something that one of our creative staff had just posted on the whiteboard: A neatly drawn bridge with the slogan “Build bridges, not berms.” In a land where berms (earthen embankments), military outposts, gun-toting guards, and traffic-jammed checkpoints are a part of the “scenery,” we counted it a God-given opportunity to be building bridges, bridges for the love of Jesus to reach into the hearts of people. We prayed to give hope in the midst of the trauma, the mistrust, the despair, and the cynicism that is so prevalent in this country that has seen almost continuous war or violent internal conflict for over thirty-five years.

In 2014 ISIS took control of much of northern and western Iraq, including the large city of Mosul (Biblical city of Nineveh) and surrounding towns and villages. CAM’s International Crisis program in Iraq was a response to death, destruction, food shortages, medical needs, and incredible trauma in the

wake of over two years’ occupation by ISIS followed by months of intense fighting as the area was liberated.

We enjoyed the role of house parents at our base in an Assyrian Christian (primarily Syriac Catholic) town. From there our staff ministered on two fronts with two very different groups of people... distinctly different in religion and ethnic background, but both suffering loss and trauma from the same conflict. The ministry within several blocks of the base was restoring hope to those who wanted to return to their homes that had been burned out by retreating ISIS fighters. The hot (up to 120 degrees), hard work of chipping off cracked plaster with hammer drills, wheeling out the rubble, and washing out with pressure washers was an opportunity to be the hands of Jesus to a discouraged, war-weary people.

Our medical team ministered to Arab Muslims from Mosul and surrounding villages who had fled to IDP (internally displaced persons) camps set up by a UN refugee agency. Generally they divided into

two teams and made “tent calls” pre-arranged by their translators. While some needs were minor, others required ongoing attention. Some required major surgery in the city. Our staff facilitated their initial exam, surgery appointment, legal “hassles” of leaving camp, and provided transportation. Financial help as needed came from CAM’s International Crisis fund.

One recipient was a young father left crippled by an earlier vehicle accident. He had been told by several doctors that they couldn’t help him. He broke down and cried when our staff told him they had found a doctor who could help and Christian friends in America would provide the funds. It was a special moment for our medical team to witness the joyful reunion with his family after a successful surgery. One of those who had invested in the time-consuming, often frustrating legal work of getting him out of camp and to surgery said that seeing the joy and appreciation definitely made it “worth it all.” The team wished that those in the states whose contributions made it possible could have witnessed the joy.

In spite of their fears and insecurities, we found the people, Christians and Muslims alike, to be warm and hospitable. They were not only responsive to our efforts to

befriend them but sometimes took the initiative. Like the time a total stranger encouraged my wife and me to try the food in a local café, then paid the bill! On more than one occasion, I had no sooner exchanged greetings with a merchant in town, or made a purchase, than I was invited to sit down for “chai” (their typical sweet tea). Whether sitting on a tent floor in camp, in the money-changers’ office, or in a local home, we drank a lot of chai! If invited for a meal with neighbors in town, or in the camp, the spread they laid out for guests was amazing in variety, quantity, and flavor.

For our base we were graciously allowed to use a seminary (school for priests) which had been damaged by ISIS in return for doing some cleanup. For the local house-cleaning project, we worked very closely with some of the leading church officials in the city, who became not only loyal supporters, but friends. Whether relating to officials, the home owners, the shopkeepers, or the friendly guards in front of the Archbishop’s house across the street, the ongoing question for us was how to relate to a people who so readily identify themselves as Christians. But do they know what it really means to follow Jesus, and that being a Christian is much more

than an ethnic identification? How do we challenge and encourage them without being offensive, when we are dependent on them to facilitate our very presence there?

We wondered what was being accomplished for the Kingdom in the short time we were there. We asked: Are our efforts to bring hope to devastated lives making a difference? Whether Christian or Muslim, do they see Jesus as they look into our faces and watch our lives? Will the jolly, friendly greeting consistently given to the guard at the traffic-jammed checkpoint somehow make a difference for him? Perhaps this was the only friendly smile he got from drivers all day! Will they see Jesus in the nurse sitting with them on the tent floor? Will the kindness shown to the crippled man by followers of Jesus be a step toward he and his family's believing that Jesus is indeed the way to God?


We claim the promise "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." Eccl. 11:1. While we may not know how or when or by whom it may be found, we do believe God works as we scatter the "bread". We were encouraged already before we left when a local teenager who had befriended us said, "I want to be your kind of Christian". Though he feels very alone, we pray that he

will stand strong and grow in his commitment.

We are grateful that a medical team with a few of the same staff has been able to return to Iraq and minister in the camps once again. One nurse felt so encouraged when a young mother who had been rather aloof toward her last fall welcomed her back with a warm, joyful smile. That feels like pieces of "bread" are being found again, yet it may be many more days before these dear people are truly "found." Ministering to these people is about building relationship and trust while showing them the love of Jesus, a love that people in this war-torn country know very little about.

One impact of living in this country is (hopefully) never again taking for granted the privilege of living in a country that has not seen war on its own soil since 1865. The immediate threat of ISIS was no more than over 'til conflict arose between Iraq and Kurdistan. If that had continued to escalate, we all may have been repacking our bags, though some of us had just arrived. Being able to continue was a direct answer to prayer, just as we experienced in even getting there in the first place. Our faith was strengthened as we saw God move in our behalf numerous times. There were the times that urgent prayer requests were relayed

back to the base for someone “stuck” at the border when it was urgent to get through, or to pray for a patient in surgery, or for the staff member picked up and detained by the Iraqi military in Mosul.

Though far removed, our hearts continue to go out to the war-weary people of Iraq. Pray that as the “bread” is scattered among them, they be moved to open their hearts to the Prince of Peace. 

A Woman After God’s Heart

Let It Go, Sister

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH

God made us ladies to love and nurture life. We cultivate and support fragile pea plants. We mend and heal and shelter. We cringe at stories of gore and conflict. We soothe and comfort, reach out and love. We are able to organize and cook to feed a small army. When the toddler falls we produce antiseptic, band aid, Kleenexes, a lap and a story, all in quick order. We are the hub of our small universe, daily running the command center of laundry, cooking, gardening, household management, and relational complexities. Ah, relationships. Those draw on our energy as we strategize, agonize and theorize. Whether it’s managing workers in a store, teaching livewires, overseeing girls in a Bible School, or patients in a clinic, we get it done.

We almost pretend that life depends on us.

But what’s to do when the situation at hand doesn’t yield to our touch? All the coddling, fussing, mending, prompting and counseling in the world won’t repair this issue. Nor answer the questions, meet the demands and carry the weight. Our kind grows plants and babies, but we are also skilled at growing fears and grudges.

Fill the blank with what has an irrational hold on you. What keeps you wide eyed at night? What breathes down your neck in the morning, greets you at the door and slaps you around all day?

Perhaps truth is being misrepresented. Suspicions may be playing evil games in your mind. A cherished friendship turns stale and

you can't figure out why. Wrongs inflicted on the defenseless destroy your peace. Is it that situation— even in a godly setting—where prejudice seems to win? Is it your children's choices or your spouse? Or the absence of a spouse? Maybe your physical appearance, your health or your house's interior design all leave you feeling so needy.

You are longing to embrace your calling as a nurturer and not as a troubled worrier. You want to be a supporter, not a busy bodied "*it all depends on me and where are the rest of you, anyhow?*" kind of person. You would like to care less about the things without eternal value. And care more about the souls around your supper table. You're looking for that peace in the storm, and grace in the trial. You want to quit saying *–but this isn't how life was going to be.* And more of—*Thank You, Jesus.* You want to sleep at night and wake up refreshed in the morning. You just want to be free from this nagging incompleteness and aloneness.

This article is not coming to you as a neat "How To" article. Like steps one, two and three, and you will feel happy and live free for always. Rather it comes to you as a personal invitation from the One Who made you to be a nurturer, a doer and a productive force. He also knows your tendency

to gather troubles along the way. But as His redeemed daughter, He created you to be a restful inspiration. He has *soul peace* waiting for you. Jesus understood injustices and complexities far beyond our scope and experience. He prayed for us that we could learn to be *in* this world without being *of it*—that although we are surrounded by trouble, trouble does not consume us.

Hear His invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your soul." *Come, weighed down sister. Find rest in Me. To know Me is to trust Me. The way to find rest is to find Me first. I am meek and I am within your reach.*

His words don't come with a lot of psychological reasoning and strategy. In I Peter 5:7 it just says to "cast your burdens on Him." Do we need *casting* lessons?

Another visual image is a lesson borrowed from a message by evangelist Ron Border. He expounded on the account of the Apostle Paul's island campfire with the natives and about the snake which had fastened onto his hand. *And he shook off the beast into the fire.* Ron further instructed: as life's disillusionment and abuses would inflict injury on


our hearts and minds, we need to “shake it off” lest its bite poisons us.

Because we sometimes complete our thinking processes better when it's tied with doing, let me give one physical exercise to help us visualize the work that the Holy Spirit does. Picture a box up on a shelf in your main room. You are troubled with The Sadness. Go over to the shelf and place it there. Walk away and picture it staying there. If the heaviness strikes again, remember that you placed it into the box. You will need to repeat the exercise as you mentally process the fact that you're leaving your burden with the One Who said, “Come unto me...find rest.” If we don't put a lock and key on the box, it calls for frequent return trips.

I know you can't put your colic

baby or church struggle into the box and walk away. But you can place there your mind agony over the situation. In the walk to the shelf, your heart is embracing God's fundamental control over the baby or the church. It allows God's grace to flow all over those areas you used to be clutching and agonizing over.

A woman who had been bowed down, crippled, and hampered by a *bowing down disease* came to Jesus. She hadn't been able to walk upright for eighteen years. He noticed her and called her to him, laying His blessed hands on her. (Luke 13).

Jesus' words echo to you and me today, freeing us from what bows us down, even if it has crippled us for many years. Shake it off. Cast. Let it go. *Woman, thou art loosed.* 

junior messages

Safety, from the Lord

Margretta Yoder, Hutchinson, JKS

I slipped out of the girls' bedroom feeling relieved that Beatriz and Silvia were both in bed

and settled for the night. I was still adjusting to my life as dorm mom to these two dear deaf girls. Life at

the CICS, a school for the deaf in El Salvador, was certainly a lot of hard work. I loved being there and found my job fulfilling.

I glanced around looking for the staff, but everything was unusually quiet. Where were Mary Eva and Rosanna? Then I heard someone say “Hey, there are some men here from a gang. The administrator is talking to them on the porch.” Life at the deaf school had been so peaceful, but now two men were demanding money. I was not so concerned and worried like the natives around me were, I was mostly ignorant of the power the gangs held in the country. That night our administrator gave ten dollars to the gang’s men and told them we are a non-profit school which helps deaf children. The men never returned. That was a wonderful answer to prayer.

However, most gangs do return. Many businesses and families in El Salvador are visited weekly or monthly by the gangs and required to pay ‘rent’ for their house or business. Gangs say the rent will grant protection against violence from neighboring gangs. In reality, members of the gang want money and power and are known to kill if not obeyed. Most people comply

with their wishes.

Because of gang violence, El Salvador is considered a dangerous country. However, during my two years in El Salvador, I never had more close encounters with the gangs in a way that was frightening. I rode in a gang’s little public transportation vans to go to town. I am sure that I met gang members on the street and rode with them on the buses.

Occasionally a gang member enters a bus and robs everyone on that bus. My friend Eva was riding a bus one day when a man started coming down the aisle demanding money from each person. However, he ignored Eva and her sister who wore head veils and were modestly dressed. He acted like they did not even exist.

I love the story my friend Mary told me of God’s protection while she was attending a university in the city. One evening after classes, Mary and her friend Aracely hurried home. It was dangerous to be on the streets after dark. Darkness comes early in El Salvador year round, but that evening seemed extra dark and not many people were on the streets anymore.

Suddenly at the corner up ahead, a small unkempt woman appeared and headed directly for Mary

and Aracely. The woman pushed her way directly between the two friends, separating them. Aracely took off running but before Mary could follow her example, the small woman grabbed Mary's wrist with one hand and with the other she shoved a broken bottle in Mary's face demanding that she give her money.

Mary was speechless with fear but began to pray that God would protect her. "Give me a dollar or your watch!" the woman demanded desperately. Mary reached into her purse to get a dollar bill but suddenly remembered that she was carrying a large sum of money that day as well as important documents. Mary wavered....what should she do?


Meanwhile Aracely returned. With all her might, she forcefully pushed the small woman away and grabbed Mary's hand. They took off running, their hearts pounding wildly until they arrived at her house.

Mary was very grateful for God's power and protection to her that dark night.

Most of the time, living in El Salvador did not feel dangerous to me. Was I just fortunate? No, I believe the Lord protected me. Psalm 20:7 says 'Some trust in chariots and

some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.' When David wrote this Psalm, horses and chariots were relied on to win wars and help give protection. David said 'we trust in the Lord instead.' He had learned the secret that safety comes from God. (Proverbs 21:31) Safety is of the Lord!

Today I live in rural Kansas far from the gangs and violence of El Salvador. Does this mean I never experience fear? Does this mean that I don't need to rely on God for protection? No, even though this country is not considered a violent country, scary things happen. Random shootings take place. Houses in our neighborhood have been broken into. Kidnapping is said to be on the rise. Dire predictions of nuclear missiles and terrorist acts are seen in the news.

I needed God's protection in El Salvador; I also need it here. When feelings of fear arise in my heart, I need to talk to the Lord and hear from Him. While it is normal for us to feel the emotion of fear when something scary happens to us, we do not need to be constantly fearful. God's Word tells us that Jesus will never leave us or forsake us and that the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him. 

When Reading the Bible Isn't Enough

Gideon Yutzy, Dunmore East, Ireland

You can never place too much value on the Bible. True or false?

It came up in Sunday school once. *Gospel-hardened* was the term we used that day. Is there a danger of becoming Gospel-hardened? We tossed the question around a little, but no one was brave enough to say yes.

Now I'm starting to wonder.

Three catalysts converged in the recent past to cause my wondering: a book by a Presbyterian pastor; an intense conversation around a campfire with someone from my church; and a blogpost by an ex-conservative Mennonite turned Eastern Orthodox. On some points they differed, but on this they all agreed: we need to reevaluate our approach to Scripture.

The question deserves an answer—what is the fruit when people approach the Scriptures as they ought? Is it that they achieve correct doctrine? Commit sizeable portions

to memory? Find the most accurate version?

Maybe this is circular reasoning, but notice what the Scriptures say about the subject. Paul, writing to Timothy, says they “equip us for every good work” (2 Timothy 3). In another place, Jesus tells the Pharisees that despite their meticulous studies they missed Scripture’s main point: Jesus Himself (John 5).

To meet Jesus and grow in good works, these are reasons the Bible gives for its own existence. But we have to acknowledge, this doesn’t describe everyone who reads the Bible. Instead, people often use it to promote selfish agendas; to validate cherished beliefs; to self-righteously condemn their fellow humans. They view it as a good-luck charm, memorizing verses as though they contain amulet-like power. They approach it out of duty, hoping to impress God or other church members. They sentimentalize it

in Hallmark cards and Kinkadee paintings.

And let's be honest, it's not always "they." Sometimes it is us. Sometimes we all, like the Pharisees, approach the Scriptures in a way we were never intended to.

The words of Scripture reorient us. They give us, amid all of today's noise, a solid (if multi-layered) understanding of "the faith once delivered to the saints." But note it well, the Scriptures also reveal God. Should we miss everything else, we must never miss that. Any other reality about Scripture pales in comparison to that of encountering in them the God of the Universe—eternal and all-powerful, yet intensely relational.

Of course some people haven't had ready access to Scripture, and God can reveal Himself in many ways; through nature, through answering a "fleece," through dreams and visions. Yet with astonishing persistence, God reveals Himself through His words. With His words, spoken centuries earlier through Isaiah, He drew in the searching Ethiopian eunuch. With His words in the Sermon on the Mount, He gave us a picture of a flourishing human. Indeed His entire creation He spoke into existence through His words.

It is fortunate then, since God seems so partial to words, that He created us with a tremendous capacity for them. We use our words to speak to other people and then experience the miracle of them responding. Even more incredibly we use our words, like the Psalmists, to speak to God Himself; adoration, thanksgiving, frustration, deep questions, and so on. Wonderfully, God desires to extend the conversation by speaking words back to us.

This is where it gets interesting. God's primary way of speaking to us in the Church Age is through a collection of writings spoken over a period of time from Creation to shortly after the Resurrection—through Scripture. Few Christians, past or present, would disagree.

It follows, then, that we must approach the Scriptures expecting a life-changing encounter with God. Any other motive puts us in grave error as well as spiritual peril of the highest degree. If we approach Scripture expecting to keep intact even one of our presuppositions about God, ourselves, and reality, we stand to miss the entire point. *Woe is me, for I am undone...mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*, said Isaiah. This must be our overriding response also, as we

approach Scripture.

And please understand, missing the point of Scripture happens. Often. To quote the pastor I referenced earlier: “It is entirely possible to come to the Bible in total sincerity, responding to the intellectual challenge it gives, or for the moral guidance it offers, or for the spiritual uplift it provides, and not in any way have to deal with a personally revealing God who has personal designs on you.”¹

On a church level also, if our reading of Scripture does no more than cause chronic divisions and self-serving dogmas, I fear we are nowhere close to the vision Jesus and Paul had for Scripture. But Paul and Barnabas experienced division, someone will say, and that’s true. However, their disagreement wasn’t over pedantic differences in how they read isolated passages, but an issue surrounding the active work of God’s kingdom. If only our divisions today would be for similar reasons; people unable to agree, for example, whether they will serve the homeless or the imprisoned.

To sum it up, Scripture reading must lead to an active, transformational following of Christ on both a personal and collective level. And we may as well plan for it, the Bible will unsettle

¹ Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book*.

us before it will settle us. The right reading of Scripture always has cataclysmic implications, including:

- Radical transformation of our entire being.
- Our own place among the new humanity, the cloud of witnesses, the Hall of Faith described in Hebrews. (Audacious, yes, but true!)
- Language to communicate with and about God in fresh, life-changing ways.

These are not new thoughts. Most likely, we have all read this article before, somewhere else. If we haven’t read the article, we’ve heard the discussion. We have generated enough thinking and discussing; the next step is living it. Scripture is first of all actionable (though the genealogies might be an exception). “We don’t believe any parts of the Bible we don’t act on,” an astute minister once said.

Let’s embrace the truth of his words. It is only in doing so that we erase the danger of placing too much value on the Bible or becoming Gospel-hardened.

Writers for Thinking Generation wish to generate, above all else, greater involvement in God’s Kingdom—especially among today’s thoughtful young Anabaptists. Send further correspondence about this article to gideonvutzy@gmail.com.



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We build our lives each day with the bricks of habits we have.

• • • • •

The foolish seek happiness in tomorrow; the wise seek it in today.

• • • • •

We could call a prune a plum that didn't take care of itself.

• • • • •

He who walks with God always gets to his destination.

• • • • •

When we have the Holy Spirit on the inside, we can stand the battle on the outside.

• • • • •

Whether king or peasant, the happiest place is still the home.

• • • • •

Living on the level prepares us to climb rugged peaks.

• • • • •

We flatter those we scarcely know; We please the fleeting guest;
Yet oft we deal a thoughtless blow, To those we love the best.

-Source unknown

• • • • •

To know what to do and not to do it, is no better than choosing to do wrong.

• • • • •

The early fish gets hooked for the same thing the early bird gets credit for.

• • • • •

The humble Carpenter of Nazareth was also the mighty Architect of the Universe.

• • • • •

If you lovingly remember others they will not forget you.

• • • • •

Tears shed for self may be tears of weakness, but tears shed for others show strength.

• • • • •

Blunt people can make a point quickly.