



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

DECEMBER 2018

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Calvary Messenger

December 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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Editor: Paul L. Miller
 7809 S. Herren Rd., Partridge, KS 67566
 Ph/Fax 620-567-2286
 plmiller1934@gmail.com

Assistant Editor

Contributing Editors:
 Simon Schrock, Enos D. Stutzman,
 Aaron Lapp, Ronald J. Miller

Missions Editor: Floyd Stoltzfus
 3750 E. Newport Rd.
 Gordonville, PA 17529

Youth Messages Editor: Gideon Yutzky
 Leperstown, Dunmore East,
 Co. Waterford, Ireland X91-R228
 gideonyutzky@gmail.com
 phone: 353894220572

Junior Messages Editor:
 Mrs. Mary Ellen Beachy
 11095 Pleasant Hill Rd.
 Dundee, OH 44624
 maryellenbeachy@icloud.com

Women's Editor:
 Mrs. Susan Schlabach
 7184 W. Henry Rd.
 Ripley, OH 45167
 skschlabach@gmail.com

Circulation Manager/Treasurer:
 Enos D. Stutzman
 7498 Woods West Ave.,
 London, OH 43140
 614-460-9222
 enosnmary@gmail.com

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Life's Autumn

Wendell Schlabach, Grimsley, TN

Tarry not summer, hold not your own,
Loosen the treasures the wind's calling home.
Golden by bushels, ruby and rare,
Hiding in thousands who've been hanging there.

Budded and blooming, tender in spring,
These felt the blush of the soft blowing wind.
Unfurled a message, willing to live,
Filling a purpose the Maker would give.

Bearing in shadows, beautiful boughs,
Bore up the banners in plentiful rows.
Golden eye glimmers, bright is the sky,
Gathering thoughts when below it will lie.

Coursing the colors, showing the night,
God of beginnings will end still in light.
Shimmering grandly, life toil all fought,
Bearing the mercy the Maker has wrought.

Fluttering briefly, floating in peace,
Down to a rest where the the cover will cease.
Shake off the mortal, all we have known,
Now is the time we are winging on home.

Autumn is grand. Walk under the golden trees and you will find in the leaves the cause of their beauty: they are dying. Dying reveals the colors that hid under the cover of life all summer long. Let summer fade to fall, and life to afterlife in an awe-inspiring mindset. Here is where God can show through the strongest, when all of my selfish green recedes to reveal His great underlying presence. That is why I stood! Jesus was there all the time. Now you may see Him best, when I die.



A Blunder, then a Blessing

Old duffers like myself are good at making mistakes. I depend on friends to help me use good judgment in this work of editing *Calvary Messenger*. Today I was at the end of the month and found that an article I was depending on did not survive the scrutiny of these trusted friends. What should I do now?

Today's plans were made, which included attending the annual rescue mission's luncheon in Wichita. So I prayed, "O God, since I made a good-faith effort that did not pass muster, let's see what You will do to fill the gap that is not yet filled."

Two hours later, Martha and I arrived at the luncheon site in East Wichita. The speaker would be a man from Washington state who manages a rescue mission there. As we waited for lunch hour to come, to our surprise, this speaker took an interest in the two quaintly dressed seniors present. Yes, I was wearing my suit coat and my wife's head was obviously covered. In the interval before lunch time, he came over and seemed eager to get acquainted. The interest he took in us was keen, but

not intrusive. For that matter, he himself was wearing a nice dress coat, but no necktie.

We got acquainted and actually visited for quite a while about more than surface issues. Then he moved on and lunch was served. As soon as lunch was finished, and just before his speech was to begin, he came to our table again and asked if I would kindly offer a prayer for him as he knelt by our chairs, so that he'd bring glory to God, and not to himself. I gladly consented to that. Then he went on his way with a spring in his step.

When he spoke he held our rapt attention for some 40 minutes. As he spoke, Martha and I were sitting close by a dozen homeless men who sang in the service and are presently at the mission, where they are taking a New Beginnings course. We noted their response. (I don't think we stared at them.) It seemed to us that, although these men are generally quite stoic, in that time they never seemed to lose interest. Of course, the speaker had a lively speaking style and had pictures to go with his message.

After the meeting ended, I felt that I owed the speaker a report of

my impression of how the prayer we shared that God would bring glory to Himself was answered. When I spoke to him, this servant of God expressed deep gratitude for my willingness to stand with him when he feared that the men might feel that he was talking down to them.

How Does He Do It?

But let's go back to our first conversation with this rescue mission director: In our first conversation, he'd said he has had better results in evangelism from a one-to-one approach than in preaching to a crowd. After we heard him speak, we thought this was quite a statement. Nevertheless, he described it this way: When meeting a man in the hope of helping him, just ask three questions, then offer to pray for him. Very few refuse prayer when thus approached.

So what are the three questions?

“Where are you from?”

“How long have you been here?”

“What are your plans?”

(Note the past, present, and future sequence. These questions allow for a lengthy response if the person chooses to do so.)

Then, “May I offer a prayer for you?” which almost always is answered with, “Yes.”

Note several things happening here:

· It takes a personal interest that makes it clear who the question is for.

· It offers to pray, but does not pass judgment on what has been shared.

· It gives opportunity to mention God's love and plan of salvation for everyone.

So what's the “takeaway”? First of all, ‘most anyone can make one-to-one contact. If God opens a door, let us walk through it. Effective preachers can hardly afford to neglect the most effective method they know about. And this is not limited to preachers. Any servant of God who desires to be useful in God's Kingdom can take such an interest in others and ask those “past, present, and future” questions, with an offer to pray.

This method of evangelism is not limited to rescue mission work. Should we not make it a tool of sharing the Good News in other settings? It might even open doors for those who think they are well and haven't yet realized that they need The Great Physician.

The speaker today organized his message around mountain climbing in the Pacific Northwest. He concluded his message with this 12-word challenge that I will pass on: “God gives us mountaintops so that we can give them to others.”

-PLM



Announcements

Helping People in Need Seminar

January 22-24, 2019

JANUARY 22, 2019: BIBLICAL THINKING

God, His Will, and You – Ben Waldner

Fear, Worry, and You – Denver Yoder

Self-Worth, Self-Esteem, Self _____? - Ben Waldner

Forgiveness – Tim Weaver

JANUARY 23, 2019: BIBLICAL GROWTH & CHANGE

The Call to Discipleship – Dave Snyder

The Role of Scripture in Discipleship – Tim Weaver

Key Elements of Discipling, (Session 1 & 2) – Bryan Fleagle

Case Study Discussion – Tim Weaver

JANUARY 24, 2019: SOLUTIONS: HELPFUL OR HARMFUL?

Discerning the Spirits – Dave Snyder

Theories of Helping People – Phil Helmuth

Practices in Helping People – Phil Helmuth

Lessons from the Ministry of Christ – Denver Yoder

Registration deadline: January 8, 2019. To register, or for more information regarding the seminar, please call 614-873-1199 or email info@dmlmohio.org.

This seminar is sponsored and hosted by:

Deeper Life Ministries

5123 Converse-Huff Rd.

Plain City, OH 43064

614-873-1199

www.dmlmohio.org 

VS Workers Wanted

The Hayloft Ice Cream Shop in Leola, PA, is in search of VS workers. Position is year round and includes working with the public, making and

serving soft pretzels, ice cream treats, as well as the daily operation of a retail environment.

This new mission supports the Allegany Boys Camp and has an exciting opportunity for two immediate full-time VS workers. Please call for more information.

Merv Lapp, Manager

Phone: 610-441-2717

Email: lancasterhayloft@gmail.com 

2019 Annual Amish Mennonite Ministers' Meetings

April 2, 3 and 4 2019

Hosted by area A. M. churches in Ohio

(To be held at United Bethel Mennonite Church, Plain City, OH)

For information contact:

Duane Troyer

Leesburg, OH

740-606-1174

duane9266@gmail.com 

the bottom line

Dealing With Deadlines

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

We try to become accustomed to man's arbitrary deadlines, which we discover with a bit of tinkering here and obstinance there,

to be neither *a line* that one can see, nor does it leave us *as dead*. We plug in to so many things in our fast-paced life, that we flip an emotional breaker at times from social and church and

school overloads. Some people have switched to the 220-volt circuit in order to handle possible overloads of schedules and suppose strength will be there to handle it.

My fall real estate tax was due on August 30. I called them a week prior to see if they could give me seven days' grace until I had the \$13,000 due. The lady who took my call said ever so coolly and matter-of-factly, "No grace," which meant that the penalty would apply for being even one day late.

Today is the scheduled day for our picture to be taken for the church directory. The announcement at church this past Sunday was unreal, since the moderator said we *must* be sure to be there on time, and that we *must* be there for our scheduled appointment. This is so strange to hear this about church, because *must* is not how we "do church" anymore. They said we *must* wait on the photographer. One cannot help but wonder how Jesus feels about that concept, since we are admonished to wait on Him. When I was a boy, I remember the preachers saying that Jesus did not use "**must**" very much except we "**must**" be born again.

The ten virgins of Matthew 25 are a case in point. They all had the same invitation to that wedding. They all took their little lamps for night time walking; a prerequisite. During the night the shout was made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." Five of the virgins lit their lamps and were ready

to join the happy procession.

Alas! The other five had no oil for their lamps. They went to buy oil, but when they returned, the door was shut (German: "locked"). Their careless and lazy disposition caused them to miss this deadline. The lesson Jesus gave was "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:13). This is a pertinent and applicable line for our busy lives.

Some careless and lazy persons have said, "I can come to Jesus for salvation whenever I choose to do so." God informs us that we come to Him when He calls us, and that He will judge us as we were when we died. The shut door is a locked door in God's house.

It may have been some fifty years ago when I heard of a wedding in which they locked all outside doors when it was time for the wedding to begin. What a lesson that was to everyone; those inside were glad, those who were late were astonished; they missed the wedding by only a minute or two! That is just how it could be when Jesus comes again; my spiritual condition *at my last lucid moment* will be how I will be judged.

I am in need of a hip replacement. My appointment with the surgeon is next Friday at 7:30 a.m., but the secretary said I *must* be there at 7:15. A typical scenario is a flight schedule at the airport which is for 2:30, but they say we *must* be there by 12:30.

Deadlines are a bother only when we are less than enthused about our presence or participation at a given event. One gauge of interest is about how important it is to us to be there early. We are quite interested in our Lord's return, and so we continually keep on being prepared to meet Him.

The difficulty some people seem to have with schedules and being on time has several observations about it.

Philosophical. Our philosophy of life is a powerful guide to how we live. We grow up either appreciating being scheduled, or hating it. If we love being scheduled, we may despise those who are more free-wheeling. If we love the free range style of living, we may resent those who are too regimented and go by the clock.

Habitual. There are some people who are habitually late. It could be that their up-bringing, which happened to not be "up" enough, caused them to not be prompt in school, and now they are often late for an evening meeting or for church on Sunday. It likely begins as children, when they need to be told two or three times as to what they are to do.

Respectable. Doing our best to be on time shows what level of respect can be attached to this person or that enterprise. Paying bills on time shows a level of respect, since you didn't need to pay it at the time of the transaction. Making some contact with the creditor when a bill simply cannot be paid by the

deadline indicates a needed level of respect. Some Christians really need a spiritual revival on this point.

Theoretical. A faulty theory is that the first call by Dad is a suggestion, the second call is a request, and his third call is a "must." This is not a good way to raise a family, lest they use this same theory toward God. Being too precise, urgent, meticulous, exact, and literal might sound too arbitrary as a view about the nature of God. God is righteous in His staying precisely true to what He has said. Some people who are raised with permissive space have said, "Give me some slack," when they were faced with improving their response to responsibility.

The Bible says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (II Peter 3:9,10). He offers grace for the day without being slack in His promise to save all, and will come punctually in the eventual judgment, also without slackness.

The theory of expecting slack on demand is not characteristic of God in His dealings with mankind. God deals in grace to us all, and is righteous in the promised expiration of time known only to Him. Deadlines are imposed man to man for the economical use of time and orderliness on the

earth. There is a restful freedom in fulfilling obligations well in advance of arbitrary deadlines. Being ready when Jesus calls us home is by far not the least of these.

The Bottom Line is that a permissive and irresponsible society is basically established on a faulty foundation in the home. Parents can scarcely teach reasonable promptness unless they also live it themselves. Our appreciation for grace and its limits begins with God in His dealings with man. The privilege to participate in the benefits of life should never cause us to feel entitled to an exemption from our responsibilities. We joyfully cooperate in fulfilling our part, and thank God for the way others do the same.



marriages

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

Byers-Miller

Bro. Lyndon, son of Rodger and Sue Byers, Free Union, VA, and Sis. Lindsey, daughter of Dean and Joyce Miller, Middlebury, IN, at Fairhaven Mennonite Church for Woodlawn Mennonite Church on August 18, 2018, by Robert Summy.

Fisher-Byler

Bro. Merle, son of Lee and Sadie Fisher, Lott, TX, and Sis. Stephanie, daughter of Robert and Katie Byler, Drasco, AR, at Arbana Baptist Church for Shadylawn Mennonite Church, on Sept. 27, 2018, by Carl Gingerich.

Hostetler-Miller

Bro. Marvin, son of Eli and Irene Hostetler, Apple Creek, OH, and Sis. Susannah, daughter of David and Ruth Miller, Millersburg, OH, at Berlin Christian Fellowship for Grace Haven Fellowship, on Sept. 29, 2018, by David Yoder.

Jess-Plank

Bro. Brian Lynn, son of Kenneth and Sue Ann Jess, Arthur, IL, and Sis. Lori Joan, daughter of Dennis and Rose Plank, Arthur, IL, at the Dennis Plank residence for Trinity Christian Fellowship, on August 24, 2018, by Wilbur Gingerich.

Kauffman-Raber

Bro. Joshua, son of Enos and Joanne Kauffman, Greenville, TN, and Sis. Katie, daughter of David and Barbara Raber, Bourbon, IN, at Sandy Ridge Mennonite Church for Clay Street Amish Mennonite Church, on October, 6, 2018, by Scott Burkholder.

Kauffman-Raber

Bro. Josiah, son of Enos and Joanne Kauffman, Greenville, TN, and Sis. Linda, daughter of David and Barbara Raber, Bourbon, IN, at Sandy Ridge Mennonite Church for Clay Street Amish Mennonite Church on October 20, 2018, by Scott Burkholder.


Overholt-Jara

Bro. Austin, son of Donnie and Nancy Overholt, Madison, VA, and Sis. Liz, daughter of Justo and Barbara Jara, Paraguay, at Oak Grove Mennonite Church on April 7, 2018, by Lamar Hochstetler.

Weaver-Yoder

Bro. John, son of Freeman and Mary Weaver, Cullman, AL, and Sis. Naomi, daughter of Enos and Sarah Yoder, Falkville, AL, at Danville Baptist Church for Emmanuel Mennonite Church on Oct. 5, 2018, by Wayne Nisly.

Yoder-Miller

Bro. Jared, son of Lonnie and Violet Yoder, Lexington, IN, and Sis. Rosie, daughter of Joe and Hannah Miller, Melvern, KS, at Lyndon Amish Mennonite Church on August 24, 2018, by Lawrence Overholt. 

cradle roll

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

Albrecht, Adrian and Regina (Byler), Brunner, ON, second child and son, Josiah Louis, July 17, 2018.

Beachy, Freeman and Shaena (Bontrager), Kalona, IA, third child, second son, Dallas Wade, June 28, 2018.

Beachy, John and Clara (Yoder), El Salvador/Auburn, KY, third child, first daughter, Jasmine Ruth, March 20, 2018.

Beachy, Kevin and Jenelle (Miller), Kalona, IA, first child and daughter, Shayla Rianne, August 24, 2018.

Eichorn, Howard and Sharon (Beachy) Free Union., VA, sixth child, fourth daughter, Sharlene Ruth, Oct. 5, 2018.

Correction: **Gerber**, Trevor and Kathryn (Schmidt), Millbank, ON, third child, second daughter, Keilah Mary, May 19, 2018.

Graber, Justin and Carolyn (Villalobos), Melvern, KS, fifth child, third son, Bryson Jamal, Oct. 2, 2018.

Knepp, Jeremy and Krista (Stoltzfus), Whiteville, TN, second child and son, Zakiah Quinn, Oct. 4, 2018.

Lehman, Aaron and Eva (Miller), Shipshewana, IN, second child and son, Gabriel Evan, Sept. 6, 2018.

Mast, Carson and Carmen (Overholt), Russellville, KY, first child and daughter, Gladys Raine, Oct. 24, 2018.

Miller, Merlin and Kimberly (Miller), Kalona, IA, first child and daughter, Nakia Brielle, July 9, 2018.

Miller, Willis and Mary (Detweiler), Wakarusa, IN, fourth child and daughter, Brooklyn Rayne, Oct. 24, 2018.


Overholt, Lewis and Marge (Wagler), Melvern, KS, sixth child, third daughter, Lisa Dawn, Oct. 18, 2018.

Schmidt, Walter and Miriam (Jantzi), Wartburg, ON, fourth child, second daughter, Serenity Grace, Oct. 1, 2018.

Swartzentruber, Rodney and Amy (Weaver), Denmark, SC, third child, second daughter, Brynlee Rae, Sept. 24, 2018.

Troyer, Luke and Mary Ellen (Swarey), Auburn, KY, third child, first daughter, Emily Grace, Oct. 17, 2018.


Wagler, Alan and Joyce (Jantzi), Cross Hill, ON, second child, first daughter, Monica Kate, Sept. 11, 2018.

Wagler, Joshua and Hannah J. (Harlow), Hartville, OH, third child, first son, Justus Reid, Oct. 2, 2018. 

ordination

May the grace of God be upon our brother as he ministers faithfully. Let us pray for him.

Bro. Daniel Gerber, 31, (wife, Renita Wagler), Millbank, ON, was ordained


as deacon at Cedar Grove Amish Mennonite Church on Sept. 30, 2018. Preordination messages were given by Lawrence Overholt, Lyndon, KS. The charge was given by John Gerber, Larry Ropp, and Lawrence Overholt. Wayne Gerber and Larry Wagler were also in the lot. 

obituary

Shannon Jewel Wagler, 6, of Loogootee, IN, died September 7, 2018, at Peyton Manning Children's Hospital in Indianapolis, surrounded by family and friends. Shannon was born November 23, 2011, to Darrell and Becky Wagler. She was one of God's special children and was born with Down's Syndrome and also with heart and lung issues. She had numerous surgeries and spent many days in the hospital. On September 1, she developed pneumonia for the 16th time and then went into heart failure, causing her death six days later. She brought

much joy to her family and all who knew her as her greatest joy was meeting people and making friends with them.

She is survived by her parents and sisters, Janet Leann, Bethany Faith, Sharilyn Grace, of Loogootee, IN and grandparents Henry and Viola Wagler and David and Rosanna Graber.

She attended Mr. Nebo Mennonite Church and School where she was a first grade student for 8 days. The funeral was held September 11, 2018, at First Mennonite Church. Burial was at Mt. Nebo Mennonite Cemetery. 

observations

Did you ever wonder how the Beachy Youth Fellowship meetings began? I'm a couple birthdays beyond my 50th birthday and I had no clue. Brother Ernest Hochstetler from South Carolina sent me a copy of a paper that was written by Harvey Yoder chronicling its beginnings that I found thoroughly fascinating.

On Ascension Day, 1949, which fell on May 5 that year, Dan and Ana Zehr

who belonged to the Maple Lawn congregation in Nappanee, Indiana, but lived near Fort Wayne, Indiana, invited the youth from the area Beachy churches to their home for a day of singing, informal fellowship and playing games on their lawn. The keen interest that this couple in their 60s had for youth prompted this invitation. For the next couple of years a similar Ascension Day meeting was hosted by Dan and Ana, but in 1952

the group had swelled to the point that they felt they could no longer accommodate them at their home, so Dan's brother David and his wife invited the group to their home near Topeka, Indiana.

As the interest in the meetings continued to grow, the church leadership from the various congregations in Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan began to give further direction and leadership to what had become an annual event. David O. Burkholder, bishop at Maple Lawn, together with the ministers from neighboring congregations sent out a letter in April of 1953 inviting the youth from the Beachy churches in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Michigan, Canada, Indiana and Iowa to the event that was planned for Wednesday evening and all day Thursday, May 13 and 14 of that year. This meeting was planned by the Nappanee and Goshen literary committees. The focus shifted from games and informal fellowship to include more preaching and teaching. David A. Miller from Thomas, Oklahoma, and Jacob Hershberger from Lynnhaven, Virginia, were invited to come prepared to preach as often as necessary, but David Miller was unable to attend. Attendance at this meeting varied from about 175 at the opening session on Wednesday evening to an estimated 375 for the last session on Thursday evening. The services were conducted mostly in German. The meetings became more officially organized at that event

with the election of a committee to plan the meeting for Ascension Day, 1954, which was held in Somerset, Pennsylvania. In 1955, at a minister's meeting at Weavertown Church in Pennsylvania, the legitimacy and future of the meetings was deliberated further. Considerable diversity regarding the benefit and danger of this effort existed among that group. The resulting decision however, was that the meetings would continue and that the youth planners should work under the supervision of the hosting church's pastoral team.

Though the enthusiasm for these meetings was not shared equally by all, these meetings had been birthed and interest continued to grow for many years. The format has undergone more than one revision since then, but they continue in some form today. I am one who enjoyed the Youth Fellowship Meetings many years after they began. Now my children attend these annual events. Learning a bit of the origin of these meetings is a prime example of how the seeds of vision shared by a few people can sprout and flourish when they experience the blessing and structure offered by participating churches, and the Holy Spirit is behind it all. The result has reached down through the decades and blessed many people far beyond the sphere of influence of the visionaries at that time. When God orchestrates things, His Kingdom is edified.

• • • • •

When six families moved from

Center church to southeast Kansas 15 years ago, we all got land-line phones. A few of us had cell phones then, but not everyone. The congregation has grown since then, as 18 households now call Cornerstone their church home. While updating our church call list, I discovered something that surprised me. There are about 50 phone numbers associated with those 18 households. Of those phone numbers, only two of them are land lines, with the balance being cell phones! The main land-line service providers find it difficult to compete with the combined flexibility and economy of cellular service. It's not unusual for me to come up empty when trying to find a neighbor's phone number or address in the phone book, because cell numbers are not listed. I miss that. But maybe one benefit to this is when this obligates me to go find my neighbor and talk face to face rather than by phone. Face to face communication might be less efficient in these situations, but it offers the opportunity to be more personal.

The Esther Project reports that in the course of Christian history, the past 2,000 years, approximately 70 million Christians have died for their faith. More than half of them lost their lives in the 20th century. From 2000 until 2010 another 1.1 million people were killed for their Christian faith. These numbers illustrate the

broadly reported fact that world-wide more Christians suffer for their faith now than at any previous time in history. A January 4, 2018, headline in *Newsweek* magazine declared, "Christian Persecution and Genocide Is Worse Now Than At Any Time in History," Report Says."

It is too easy for our senses to become dulled to the harsh reality of persecution. Numbers represent real people. Large numbers represent many, many people. The ease of modern communication heightens our awareness of the realities that persecuted Christians face. But that same communication from afar also facilitates the ability to stay insulated from the situation.

Because none of us can meet the needs of all those who suffer, we might be tempted to do nothing. Knowledge of need and doing nothing tends to deaden our senses. We can combat the "doing nothing" mentality a variety of ways. We can be compassionate here and now when we have opportunity. We can sometimes share monetarily with those in need. And we can pray. *Voice of the Martyrs* states that the single greatest request for help for those who are experiencing persecution is for prayers.

The Scripture teaches us in II Timothy 3:12 that, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." If we aren't suffering, it might be because we need to strengthen our awareness of the fact that when one part of Christ's body suffers, the whole body suffers.

Sharing the burden of the our brothers in bonds, through intercessory prayer, is important. It is quite possibly, both the most natural way we can share, and the easiest to neglect.

• • • • •

Generally speaking we American Christians don't feel much persecution, because we're living in a time of religious freedom. After all the USA doesn't appear anywhere on the lists of nations where believers face the most hostility. Persecution probably seems further away than it should.

• • • • •

One hundred years ago, in late November of 1918, two young Hutterite men, Joseph and Michael Hofer died at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, after being tortured because their understanding of Christ's teaching prevented them from serving in the armed forces. They refused to wear the uniform that was assigned to them. When the U. S. Army released the bodies of these two deceased men, they were dressed in military attire.

Since that time the government of this country has made provision for conscientious objectors to war, to serve in some alternative capacity. Those who served in alternative service were often subjected to less physical, but yet quite pronounced forms of rejection and contempt. The provision for conscientious objectors attracted its fair share of persons who wished to avoid military conscription for self-serving reasons quite apart from any religious objection. Many conscientious

objectors were thought of as cowards. The booklet, "Hey Peachey" published by Calvary Publications chronicles the experiences of one such person who bore the brunt of disapproval where he served. His testimony and faith were outstanding and eventually broke down some of the walls of contempt that were so daunting.

One benefit of the draft was its forceful reminder that our primary citizenship is in a Heavenly Kingdom, not an earthly one. This reality has many, many implications beyond military involvement. As memories of the draft and alternative service dim in our collective memory, it's as important as ever to cultivate that awareness.

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Brother David Smith pointed out an interesting study carried out at the University of Illinois at Chicago in which adolescents completed a survey in which they assigned the value they placed on money, possessions and their gratitude for the people and material things in their lives. The participants were then split into two groups. One group was encouraged to keep a diary of their events and activities for the next two weeks while the other was encouraged to keep a daily journal of things they are grateful for. After the two week experiment, they retook the original survey, and were each give ten dollars and told they could either keep it or give some to charity. Those who kept the gratitude journals gave over two thirds of their money to charity and reflected a much lower focus on

the importance of possessions and an increase in gratitude compared to the first time they took the survey. Those who simply chronicled the events of their lives gave less than half of their money away and provided very similar answers to the survey as before the experiment.

The conclusion of this study is

one that shouldn't surprise people whose identity is hidden in Christ; namely that, cultivating gratefulness is helpful in combating materialism. The implications of this study give us something interesting to "chew on" between that Thanksgiving turkey and Christmas ham.

-RJM 

School Matters

About Teacher Development

Jonathon Erb

Learn as you go" and "Sink or swim" are indeed the survival mantras of many a beginning teacher in our church schools. This is strange, considering the valuable place of a school in the life of our church, in the life of our homes, and most importantly, in the life of our students.

Most of us subscribe to the following ideas.

→We believe in the *dignity and nobility of the teaching profession*, that of helping and caring enough to make a difference in the generation of tomorrow.

→We understand that school *is a serious place*. It is where men and women are born. The teacher is perhaps the single greatest factor that will make or break our schools, our budding men and women, and therefore our homes and churches of the future, and even the nation. Our schools must therefore be more highly

esteemed than our banks, for there is far greater wealth in them.

→All *time and effort spent* by both teachers and others *in developing teacher effectiveness is time well spent*. A new teacher needs to be developed just as surely as a new mason, seamstress, or plumber. However, the raw material with which a teacher works is far more valuable than sand and stone, fabric and zippers, or pipes and valves.

It is necessary then to develop teachers (both the new, and the more experienced) so that they can be effective in (1) proper expectations about student success, in (2) managing the classroom well, and in (3) designing and teaching the lessons for the ultimate goal of lesson mastery. To fail in any one of these three areas is to fail as a teacher, no matter how willing the mind or consecrated the spirit.

Being a willing, consecrated servant

of God and the church seems to have become the main criteria for hiring a new teacher. While not minimizing these noble qualities, we must believe *far more than this is necessary* for our schools to truly thrive.

Unlike the apprentice in the trades, we have developed by default the tradition of finding that willing person, sending them to a brief teacher/school conference, and then giving them full responsibility in a real classroom. These aspiring teachers are expected to perform satisfactorily and successfully immediately— may God richly bless them.

The brows of boards and parents furrow when the new teacher struggles to maintain discipline, teach classroom procedures and routines, keep multiple school records, practice model behavior at all times, and identify and deal proactively with non-supportive, energy draining students, co-teachers, parents, and an occasional board member. The rookie is subconsciously expected to perform these tasks as responsibly and effectively as the well-seasoned teacher on the staff. Perhaps we would not say so outright, but our patience is not very long-winded when it is our own children getting the short end of teacher inexperience.

Is there a better approach to teacher recruiting? Can the blows of the first year(s) be lightened? Can we develop a better record of teacher retention?

Yes. Yes. And yes!

Then why do we not emphasize developing our teachers more? Here

are a few possible reasons:

1. We are a bit too *satisfied with the “Learn as you go” and “Sink or swim” mentality*. A measure of wisdom is indeed present in these maxims, for teaching must be experienced to develop teachers. Learning teaching is in this regard similar to learning to ride a bicycle. Yet it need not be entirely so. The vision and methods of present effective teachers can be drawn on for this, as well as a plethora of sound books on this subject. Aspiring airplane pilots have ground schools, for not everything is best learned by actual flying. Like them, *teachers can learn much from a disciplined personal learning plan* but without the risk and expense inherent with the actual experience.

2. Also, teacher training takes a *personal vision and motivation* for our schools and an eye for the end product when working with raw material. As Michelangelo said about his world famous statue of David: “David was there all the time – I needed to remove the obstacles to let him out” (my paraphrase). Quite evidently, this kind of vision and inspiration is packaged and franchised about as easily Florida sunshine. Is that is why we see so little of it?

3. Another reason we do not emphasize teacher training more is that it cannot be measured in dollars and cents, feet and inches, bushels and gallons, sheen and luster, pounds or ounces, or any other such measurements so dear to our conservative views and values and so

native to capitalism.

4. Also, it takes *sacrificial* sponsors, mentors, and coaches willing to part with or forgo both time and money.

It is quite easy for the school boards to shift the responsibility of development onto the teacher (which is not entirely inappropriate) and for the teacher to look to the board for guidance on this matter, of which there is little or none, going to a teacher/school conference excepted.

We promote school teaching as an opportunity for Christian service in which the workers are best prepared by consecration, not education. As mentioned before, this is indeed valid, but hardly the sum of things. A novice, but none the less consecrated/dedicated, bulldozer operator can be quite dangerous, especially when operating near “green” concrete. Consecration to God and the church cannot be the only qualifier, yet we perhaps have emphasized this at the expense of effective teaching. And the concrete is green—the students are tender.

Here are a few more considerations about the question, “Why don’t we emphasize developing our teachers more?”

5. We fail to recognize that “*if you dare to teach, you must dare to learn.*” Effective teachers are always thinking, dreaming, and planning. They are continually learning more about what they are to teach and how they are to teach it. Teachers who have lost their effectiveness have lost their ability to learn and continually improve.

Too many teachers teach a year or two and simply repeat those years over and over (if they remain in the classroom). The quantity of teaching increases and is posted on the teacher conference roster, but the quality has perhaps stagnated.

6. It is the personal responsibility of teachers to nourish themselves by continual learning. However, we have found *it far easier to be shaped by the difficulties we meet than to shape our future by good, solid thinking, dreaming, and planning* (judging by our low teacher retention rates). Teachers need not work on a reactionary basis. If they can have a vision of what they are to do and how they are to do it, they will be far more effective than simply being shaped by the difficulties they meet. This vision is acquired and maintained by constant learning.

If we subscribe to the ideas presented here, we should agree that teacher development is a worthwhile endeavor. Effective teacher training will move the aspiring teacher through the survival mode, into the mastery mode, and therefore on to the impact mode. This circle of learning repeats itself at the point where the effective master of teaching again enters phase one : aspiring to teach, and to do so a little more effectively!

“So the question nags: Are we willing to pay the price for development? There is, after all, a cost involved. Effective teaching isn’t available at any bargain-basement sales.” [*This quote is from Dr. Howard Hendricks from Teaching to Change Lives*]



Exclamations of Joy

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

Disciples of Jesus Christ should be the most joyous people in the world. John Drescher writes in his excellent book *Doing What Comes Spiritually*, “The word ‘joy’ occurs in the New Testament sixty times; ‘rejoice’ seventy-two times. Much of the great literature of the ages is sad and pessimistic. Not so the gospel, which is ‘joy unspeakable and full of glory.’” There are “joy robbers” lurking around seeking to drain us of vibrancy and passionate love to know God. One of the “joy robbers” for missionaries is the passionate enthusiasm to serve God, rather than to know God. To be over worked in serving can cause burnout and rob us of precious devotional time with God in the Bible and prayer.

Exclamation has the idea of crying out suddenly with intense fervency and passionately. This is how the births of John the Baptist and of Jesus (before and after) were expressed in Luke’s gospel. Suddenly there were angelic announcements from heaven unequalled from any previous angelic visits to mankind. There were also prophetic messages spoken by men and women in the fullness of the Holy Spirit of these two births that

leaves one with an amazing wonder and great joy! You see, there were four hundred years of silence in Israel’s history; no message from Jehovah; no prophetic voice. It was a sad day when the Shekinah glory left the temple because of the sins of Israel. You read about this slow and reluctant departure (yet “full of the brightness of the Lord’s glory) in Ezekiel 9:3, 4; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:23.

However, even during this four hundred year period when great darkness had covered the land of Israel there was a remnant group, who were beams of light. Luke describes Zechariah and Elizabeth, “both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (1:6). An angel appeared to this elderly priest and announced that he and Elizabeth would have a son whose name was to be John. “And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth . . . he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (1:14, 15).

Six months after John was conceived the angel Gabriel came to Nazareth and appeared to a virgin whose name was Mary. The angel said to Mary, “And, behold, thou

shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” (1:32). That marvelous heavenly announcement burst through the ages exactly as Isaiah had prophesied approximately seven hundred years before: “. . . Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (7:14). There had never been a birth in all history from such a miraculous conception. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Herein lies the great fact of salvation that Jesus is fully God and fully man. There is no other way to Heaven. It is because of His precious sinless blood that we can be saved. Hallelujah!

Mary hurried to the hill country of Judah and saluted Elizabeth. Elizabeth “spake out with a loud voice” and blessed Mary. Baby John (still in Elizabeth’s womb) leaped for joy. Friends, if a baby in the womb is able to leap for joy because of the presence of Jesus, let us praise God for His great salvation during this season (and always) when we commemorate Jesus’ birth and worship the living, resurrected Christ.

In Luke 1:46-55 we have the glorious expression of Mary called the “the Magnificat” (which is based on the first word of the Latin translation – the Vulgate). It seems she has a knowledge of the inner constitution of humankind just as the Apostle Paul wrote, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved

blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thessalonians 5:23). Mary beautifully distinguishes between soul and spirit and believes that man is tripartite. This is called the trichotomy of the human being—spirit, soul, and body. Of course, we believe this clear teaching was given to her by the Holy Spirit, “And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior” (1:46,47). Notice the “doth magnify” in her soul and the “hath rejoiced” in her spirit. Her soul was outwardly magnifying (enlarging the picture) of her deep inner feelings in her spirit. Mary’s spirit (deep inner being) was enlightened and could not contain how she felt because of the miraculous conception of the Christ child that her emotions and words burst through her soul and body (mouth). The expression of the Magnificat is rich with imagery of her lowly state of poverty and how the mighty God has reached down and done great things. Its message reflects her surrender to God: “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word...” (1:38).


Probably the greatest exclamation of joy in connection with the Christmas story is the angelic message from heaven in the night of our precious Savior’s birth “And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which

shall be to all people... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (2:9, 10, 13, 14). Please note: this message is from Heaven. It is the best that God could do. This is not some mystical story published in an earthly magazine by an unknown writer. It is an eternal message and never grows old. The sudden appearance of the heavenly host announcing the birth of the Savior was deeply embedded in the shepherds' hearts and contagious in their witness: "And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child" (2:17).

These exclamations of joy were spoken before the Holy Spirit was

poured out at Pentecost. Friends, how much more (since the Spirit lives within us) can our reservoir contain of Biblical truth as we meditate on these marvelous and miraculous facts of history!

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Now back to "joy robbers." We realize some are given the motivational gift of serving. Yes, we need the Marthas. It was not the serving for which Jesus admonished her. It seems Martha was over occupied and too busy. "But the Lord replied to her by saying, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; There is need of (but a few things, or) only one. Mary has chosen the good portion—that which is to her advantage—which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41, 42-Amplified New Testament). 

A Woman After God's Heart

Brand Name Sisters

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



When Tabitha realized that it wouldn't work for her to teach the ladies' Sunday school class, she mused, "I'll ask Sadie. She hasn't taught recently. She'd have all week to study, and she might enjoy the challenge for a change." Tabitha was startled when Sadie burst into tears upon her request, attempting a muddled excuse why she wouldn't be able to

teach.

Fran, another sister, confided to Tabitha that every Sunday she came to the ladies' Sunday school class with the resolve to offer at least a few words. She ached to cross the difficult gulf (in her mind) between a contributor and the silent non-participant she always was. But whenever she opened her mouth it all turned to cotton.

Sadie, Queen of the Sewing Machine sewed perfectly, flawlessly, and generously. Probably her name would have been Dorcas in Paul's time. Her work was the standard to which all others were compared. We could always tell if it was a Sadie Garment. Or not.

I reflected on the "Dilemma of the Sisters," wondering at the way God arranges us in a sister-hood, with our individual gifts. Yet we're called to share responsibilities and cover for each other. My musings became even more tangled when I recalled the Sunday when Fran's husband invited the whole congregation to their home for the evening. The plan had been hatched in the space of about 30 minutes and Fran was A-1 OK with the plan. We did not find her a bit ruffled that evening. By contrast, Tabitha would probably have said, "Please let me teach Sunday school!"

Wouldn't life be easier if Fran were always on the food committee? Tabitha would perpetually teach Sunday school and Sadie— would sew, sew, sew. These elect ones find fulfillment in their calling and the rest of us love to have it so, especially if it leaves us off the hook. Or do we? We may not label them in conversation, but in our minds they are neatly organized. Seamstress Sadie. Foodie Fran. Teacher Tabitha.

Could we hem this up neatly with Scripture verses like: "*Neglect not the gift? Stir up the gift. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same?*" Identify your gift, exercise

it, excel in it, and then allow *it* to identify you.

To see what it looks like when we revolve only in the role we enjoy most and are naturally gifted in, bear with me in the following exaggerated scenario. This is not given to challenge Scripture, but to help us understand it.

Sadie is the sought after seamstress. The rest of us aren't tempted to try our hand at it because it just won't compare with her quality. And because no one else has attempted the craft, others' work really *does* fall far short. Sadie gets more specialized; the rest of us fall further behind.

If Fran isn't here we'll not attempt a fellowship dinner or seniors' banquet because we'd rather not have a food-related flop. But, if sheer necessity calls for an occasion with food, we'll sigh and lament," if only Fran..."

We don't look forward to the Sundays when Tabitha's not the teacher because there's no discussion, and the 25 minutes stretch out dully. If for any reason I must take a turn, I'm tortured by the thought that everyone is comparing me to Tabitha who usually teaches in shining glory, but I am insufficient me.

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Shift now to the sister-hood where responsibilities are passed around and where ladies take turns at things that don't come naturally or easily for them. Not surprisingly, we can find Scriptures to support that too! *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.*

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. That ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.


Sadie is delighted to show Fran how to butt the seams on a quilt, pleat a covering, or do smocking. Tabitha takes the time to sit down with Sadie and details the processes she uses in lesson preparation, presentation, and ways to encourage participation. Fran invites Tabitha to review the notebook of recipes and do and don'ts for food committees. She shares about her flops in the past and secrets that are more fool proof. Gracious assistance flows with a call to climb higher. Exulting in sharing the "how to's" of each one's gift multiplies the glory of the Giver and His gifts!

When Tabitha is head of the banquet and the roast runs out before the people do, her sisters take the opportunity to reassure and affirm her. Tabitha actually needs to embrace humility and the grace from her sisters because she so rarely fails in anything she undertakes. Her sisters also need to extend grace to her in a matter that (to them) seemed so obvious. Beautiful vulnerability happens when an over-achiever enlists the aid of one in the shadows. And when the timid sister is brave enough to take on a new challenge—miracles take place.

Watch what happens when the Adult Ladies' Sunday school quarterly gets passed around the circle for everyone to take a turn.

When it's Fran's turn to teach she thinks seriously about all the times she hid under the silent cloak. For the first time, the lights go on and she begins to realize that if everyone is as inhibited as she, there will be no discussion. In her mind she resolves that as a student next time she **will** devote time to study beforehand and she **will** contribute. Also, because Tabitha took her turn planning the seniors' supper last year for a change, she's quick to offer her assistance this year. We begin to witness a gentle launch of hidden talent.

Would it shock anyone to know that *labels* do not nurture grace? *Labels* do not grow love. They can grow intimidation, jealousy and loneliness. I quote a sister's heart cry: *I am labeled in my community as a _____. I have people tell me that they are "awed" by what I do. Others feel like they can't measure up to me. They sigh, "How do you do it?" I am completely distressed by these comments. I am NOT above the rest of the women. We are ALL made in the likeness of God. I am a human completely intact with emotional issues, laziness, overwhelmed-ness – that the other ladies talk about.*

Some serve. Others teach, or write. One observes; another works hard. What God gives to each individual is a beautifully integrated part of something much larger. There is one gift, though, that is given to all of us. "But unto every one of us is given **grace** according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Eph. 4:7) 

South Sudan, The Forgotten Country

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

A team from Christian Aid Ministries was visiting remote villages in South Sudan. At one gathering they asked the people if they knew about God? An elderly woman responded, "We do not know, there is no one to tell us."

SOUTH SUDAN

- Imagine yourself living in a country where 70% of school age children have no schools to attend.
- Half of the people have no access to a good water source
- One of every 10 children die before the age of five
- There are no hospitals or medical care in vast areas of the country
- There is more malaria than in any other African country.
- There are only 120 miles of paved road. The United States has two million miles of paved roads.
- It is one of the world's most poverty stricken and least developed countries.
- Many areas have no electricity, no cell phones and only dirt roads

Christianity is viewed favorably by the government and many people, yet few Christian groups are brave enough to work in South Sudan which is full of dangers, with thirty years of ongoing civil war.

Two and a half million people

died. These statistics have not been announced to the world. On a daily basis, South Sudan kills its own people. The war has kept out medicine, vaccines, food and AID groups. Yet, Muslims are at work to win the people to their beliefs.

This past winter while listening to Christian Aid Ministry Open House CD's from 2015, I learned that CAM is sending literature into South Sudan. In a land where Bibles and Christian literature are very difficult to find, the Good News is like drops of rain on dry and thirsty souls.

CAM "Saving-South-Sudan" project is distributing Christian literature across the country. This includes systematic teaching of key Bible stories with the goal of bringing people into the Kingdom of God. A team visited there two weeks this past June and again in the fall to train national volunteers in oral Scripture outreach to remote tribes--some with 99 percent illiteracy.

Here is an account from one of the team members:

Come with us for a day in the bush! As we leave Kapoeta in our four-wheel drive, most remaining signs of modern technology melt away. The economy and lifestyle in the bush is nearly like it was thousands

of years ago. Dowry for a wife is practiced here as it is in many African countries. Even today, the going rate for a wife is 100 head of cattle. The more important and wealthy the man is, the more wives he will have. The circular houses and food storage structures are constructed entirely of natural materials and enclosed with a hedge of thorny branches. The women build the village structures, the men tend to the cattle. Between each village there are vast swaths of bush with low trees, bushes, and a very sandy soil. In front of us a giant baboon runs across the road. After crossing a treacherous river where a large truck is hopelessly stuck, we stop at a small village where a friendly chief lives.

THEY ARE HUNGRY

This village is friendly and welcoming even though the first time our team visited them they were very antagonistic and threatening. This changed after they interpreted a rain shower as proof that the Lord had sent us. Now they quickly and eagerly gather out under the tree to hear what we have to share with them. The young children, the mothers, the elderly, and a few men listen attentively as we share the story of Creation. They intently study the colorful picture illustration. After questions and dialogue about the story, we ask them if they have any prayer requests. They request rain because this year has been dry like the previous four years and they are hungry. We pray for rain and ask the


Lord to show them that He is God. We give some small gifts, including 101 and 25 Favorite Stories from the Bible. Even though they can't read, they look intently at the pictures. The chief goes with us as we lurch on further into the bush on the treacherous track.

We spend hours visiting various villages, telling stories, dialoguing, singing, and praying. The chief's presence brings us favor. The crowds listen closely. The team shares the Bible stories and acts them out dramatically to the great delight of the children.

As the day wears on, it starts to rain. The number of rain showers increases and finally there is a steady downpour. As we near the village where they first asked for rain, the Lord is granting it in great rushing quantities as the floodgates of the tropical sky burst open. The chief sprints through the downpour back to his village as we gun our vehicle to the river crossing. Thankfully the waters have not yet risen significantly and we make it across. We rejoice in the rain, knowing full well that this village will give full credit to the God of Creation in Whose name we prayed.

Each day when a team returns to a village to give a new story, the crowds are larger.

There is a great need for laborers in South Sudan. The land is vast and the villages seem to be without number.

Pray that the Lord of Harvest would send forth reapers. 

The Experiment

Matthias Peachy, Rural Retreat, Virginia

December 1, 2017—It was 4:00 pm. I was sitting at my desk at school entering contacts into my new phone. “What kind of phone?” you ask. “A Galaxy S8?”

Nope. It wasn’t an S8. It was a flip phone. And why a flip phone in 2017? Well, honestly, it was a little hard to answer that question myself. Anyway, I was entering contacts into my flip phone and I received a call. I panic. How do you answer a flip phone? There’s no green slider to accept the call or red slider to reject it.

What brought this about? A few different things. I had always known smartphones were addicting, and also that they symbolize status and elevate us to other peers who have them. That mentality, I began to notice, goes the opposite direction as well: owning a smartphone affects our relationships with people who don’t have them. It gives us a kind of power over them.

As I was considering these things,

I heard several talks on technology and media. The first was a series entitled “How Media Shapes Our Culture.” Another one that really got me thinking was a series on music by Christian Berdahl entitled “The Distraction Dilemma.” Later, I listened to a series of talks by Harry Argo on social media and the effects of technology.

Around this time a friend spoke at church one evening, pointing out how our faith is tied with our works. He also made it practical and applied it to the internet and smartphones. We say we do not want to put any evil thing before our eyes, and we want to listen to wholesome things, so we do away with TV and radio. But isn’t that hypocritical? What about our smartphones? Are we willing to put those away? After all, they can do just as much harm (and way more) than any TV or radio. Plus, we have them with us all the time. That made me think.

So, I decided to do it. I ordered a

phone, online. It arrived Thursday, November 30. I knew I wanted to do this, but yet I wasn't totally sure about it. *What will people think?* I tried to imagine the reaction of my students when they saw I had a flip-phone. I imagined the reaction of the school parents when they couldn't Vox me or send me WhatsApp messages anymore. I imagined not being able to keep up with the youth chat anymore, or with the funny, sometimes inspiring, other times ridiculous, statuses on WhatsApp. I imagined how it would be not to use Google Maps. How lost would I feel? What about the good quality camera, the pictures and music stored on my phone? What about my ability to check the weather, or to look up the pronunciation of a word, or do a Google search for almost any question under the sun?

I finally got the nerve on December 1 to set it up. My students reacted kind of like I had imagined. One day they came in from break and were discussing this whole thing and taking sides, saying that for their first phone they are going to get a dumb-phone or that smartphones are the only way to go. It was quite interesting! It affirmed in my mind that there are some young children today, who are being influenced **dramatically** by the smartphone.

Their parents allow them access to a smartphone, not realizing their children will become addicted to them from an early age.

The older students found out that I had a dumb-phone and they also reacted. One of them asked me why I was doing this. What was the point? I tried as best as I could to explain some of the reasons—some of which I still didn't really know myself! Hopefully it made them think about the choices they will also need to make.

Through the students, the parents found out about my decision and most of them affirmed me. A few thought it was a very noble thing to do. My communication with the parents really did not change much. I can still access Voxer on other devices; and, it turns out, texting and calling are still a decent way to get hold of people. It took a while for people to figure out I wasn't going to get their WhatsApp messages and that I probably wouldn't see their Voxer messages right away either, but they eventually caught on.

One benefit has been having more time. Hurray for more time! Well, I soon figured out I will spend the extra time somehow and it had better be something good. It was easy to fritter away that time on the computer now. Checking the news.

The weather. Emails. YouTube. I tried to get control of my time. Eventually I figured out I can do all my checking, prep my lessons for the next day, and still have time to go home and read for a good solid hour before bedtime. I actually did that a few times and I was able to read three books within a month—quite a feat for me. (Granted, some of that time was over Christmas vacation.) Having extra time to read and just relax, instead of being on your smartphone and getting distracted from your other work, is very refreshing. Somehow, I have more time for prayer and meditation as well. I realized my smartphone kept me from concentrating on reading Scripture.

Going to youth functions was embarrassing. What are you going to pull out of your pocket when you're bored or want to wow the person sitting next to you with a picture of a massive buck? Your dumb-phone? Absolutely not! How silly! You need at least a 4.5" screen to wow somebody and the phone should be touch screen so they can touch the picture and blow it up to see it closer. You see, dear reader, you can't do that with a flip-phone. I was able to observe the smartphone habits that I—not just others—had fallen into. There is a lull in the conversation, for example, and after a few seconds

you have a strong urge to pull out your smartphone. As if on cue, at least two others pull theirs out and the conversation turns to at least three different topics relating to what was of interest on the smartphones. So much for making conversation out of the wealth of your personal experience and knowledge.

I didn't realize this, but football and smartphones fit together extremely well. Apparently football apps will give you live updates on games across the U.S. and even videos of the games. People can be at a youth event AND at the football game a thousand miles away. How convenient! How disturbing to the ones who have dumb phones! Keeping a conversation going in the physical youth group is hard because ten or more people may be having media-related conversations with their other friends on Snapchat. A phone dings and the conversation soon changes to whatever the alert was about, maybe that there are 2 minutes until the end of the game and the Steelers are down by 4.

As I indicated, taking out my dumb-phone was not something I did when I was bored. Rather, I would now slide it out of my pocket just enough to see the time and of course, it must be on vibrate because the sounds that a flip-phone makes

are not to be compared with the snazzy smartphone ringtones. If it vibrates, you can at least walk out of the room before exposing the Stone Age vestige you carry in your pocket.

One of the greatest benefits was learning to focus. I began to realize how little I was using a phone as a phone is intended to be used. Now I text or call a few people a week. (I know: texting isn't cool anymore. To be cool, you need to use pictures and voice messages.) I didn't miss my smartphone as much as I thought I would, though. Yes, maybe it was a bit awkward at first trying to explain to everyone, but overall people were understanding and even affirmative.

January 2, 2018-The month is over. What is my plan? Is having a smartphone worth the headaches that come with it? Put another way, is it worth going without some of the luxuries a smartphone has? And by the way, I had to buy a GPS to replace Google Maps because I am not very good at finding my way around unknown areas.

You would think that somehow there would be a way to use a smartphone wisely. But is there? Can *you*?

I am a little closer to a conclusion on the matter. What makes a smartphone smart? The internet, right? What would happen if I

would use a dumb-phone to text and call—the things you need a phone for—and then use either a computer or tablet to do the things that don't need to be done on a phone? One of the biggest reasons smartphones are such a hit is that they allow you to do anything, at anytime, anywhere. Could I only use the internet for things that are essential? Oh, and also, could I do it where others can see me? A smartphone becomes private very fast. I am the only one who can unlock it, it has *my* name on it, it reflects *my* image when the camera is turned on selfie mode, and it helps *me*. It soon becomes my closest friend. I feel lost without it. I feel grumpy when there is no service or Wi-Fi. It begins to replace real-time, real-place relationships.

I, of all people involved, will benefit most from not having 24/7 internet access. And really, I don't foresee any great inconveniences! I could continue using a dumb-phone and buy a tablet for necessary things like a banking app, email access, and music and photo storage. This would keep me, at youth functions and other social gatherings, from accessing the internet at the slightest lull in a conversation. Now I would have to pull out something bulkier and more conspicuous and find the password for the Wi-Fi. Besides not using the

internet so compulsively, I would be using it out in the open now (the benefits of which are self-evident).

It is a journey, but I am beginning to realize the impact smartphones are having on people and particularly families and the church. Families that allow their children to access smartphones are opening their homes to relationship problems and, later on, children who will have a warped view of reality. Life isn't

how it appears on movies, videos, Facebook, and cartoons. That's a fake life. Let's get real. Let's open our eyes to the world around us and identify the dangers that are everywhere.

Writers for Thinking Generation wish above all to generate involvement in God's Kingdom—especially among today's generation of thoughtful young Anabaptists. Address correspondence about this article to wuodlando95@gmail.com.



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Abbreviations used: Ed=Editorial; GE=Guest Editorial; HH=Helpers or A Woman after God's heart; SM=School Matters; Med=Meditation; MA=Mission Awareness; Obs=Observations; P=poem; RR=Reader Response; Y=Youth or Thinking Generation.

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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

Loneliness is wandering away from the One who would be with us everywhere.

• • • • •

Some people seem to have enough religion to make them despise evil but not enough to make them love goodness.

• • • • •

A lie may make the present easier, but it will definitely make the future harder.

• • • • •

It takes good manners to put up with someone who has bad manners.

• • • • •

It's better to die for your convictions than for your preferences.

• • • • •

To measure a man, note the height of his ideals, the depth of his convictions, the breadth of his sympathies, and the length of his sacrifices.

• • • • •

If we fail to support missions, we are voting to bring missionaries home and to cease missionary activity.

• • • • •

When we give to God, we are taking our hands off what already belongs to Him.

• • • • •

Financial success is related to hosting a greater *craving* for *saving* than to an *urge* to *splurge*.

• • • • •

Isn't it strange that when we give till it hurts, we feel better?

• • • • •

A godly parent points his/her child to God as much by the force of example as by the power of words.

• • • • •

Harmony in the life comes from more than just humming the joyful notes of obedience.

• • • • •

The best way to advance in years, is to stay young at heart.