



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

MARCH 2019

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Calvary Messenger

March 2019

Purpose of Calvary Messenger is:

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

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The Stranger of Galilee

Lelia N. Morris, 1893

In fancy I stood by the shore one day of the beautiful murmuring sea.
I saw the great crowds as they thronged the way of the Stranger of Galilee.
I saw how the man who was blind from birth in a moment was made to see.
The lame was made whole by the matchless skill of the Stranger of Galilee.


His look of compassion, His words of love, they shall never forgotten be.
When sinsick and helpless He saw me there, this Stranger of Galilee.
He showed me his hands and His riven side and He whispered, "It was for thee."
My burden fell off at the pierced feet of the Stranger of Galilee.

I heard Him speak peace to the angry waves of that turbulent raging sea.
And lo! at His word are the waters stilled, this Stranger of Galilee;
A peaceful, a quiet, and holy calm, now and ever abides with me,
He holdeth my life in His mighty hands, this Stranger of Galilee.

***And I felt I could love Him forever, So gracious and tender was he!
I claimed Him that day as my Savior, this Stranger of Galilee.***

Come ye who are driven and tempest-tossed and His gracious salvation see.
He'll quiet life's storms with His "Peace, be still!"—this Stranger of Galilee.
He bids me to go and the story tell what He ever to you will be.
If only you let Him with you abide, This Stranger of Galilee.

***Oh, my friend, won't you love Him forever? So gracious and tender is He.
Accept Him today as your Savior; this Stranger of Galilee.***

[This is song number 232, in Hymns of the Church. May it help us worshipfully ponder what Jesus imparts to all who come to Him on his terms, who take Him at His word and walk with Him on the Calvary Road. -PLMJ] 

Dealing Redemptively with Sexual Abuse

Nevin Nisly, Partridge, KS

How can we as God's people, collectively as a church and individually, deal in a redemptive way with painful experiences and wrong choices? I am writing about sexual abuse specifically to understand some of the dynamics of the way Satan robs us of life and relationships, and to understand the path to victory. I write not as one with all the answers, but as one who is continuing to learn how to deal with my personal issues and how to help others in their journey.

It is important to recognize that sexual abuse is no small problem, either in its devastation or the frequency of its happening. In fact, if we would consider a more proper definition of sexual abuse in terms of understanding what causes emotional damage with serious spiritual and moral effects, it would be far broader than the law would indicate. It would include any instance where innocence is violated by someone

the victim perceives as a stronger party. This includes acts of exposure, inappropriate touch, filthy talk, introduction to pornography, sexual acts, etc. A person's immoral journey nearly always starts with such an experience, which opens up a world with which he/she is not equipped to handle. It has devastating effects on the victims, attacking their very being and worth. Those who come to our office who have been sexually abused often need help finding release from the guilt and shame they feel, and the ways they, in turn, have sinned. We strongly recommend that victims realize that they are not responsible for the abuse, they do not need to live the rest of their life in shame, and it does not make them "**BAD**" to seek help to find freedom and the ability to appropriate God's redemption and healing for themselves in a personal way.

Let's also look at it from the perspective of abusers, who likely feel devastated and unforgivable,

having no idea of where to turn for help. Guilt and shame can become huge, which robs from their ability to walk through the healing and restoring process, and yet they often find themselves powerless to change. To compound the problem, many feel that no one would understand and that they would face huge rejection and humiliation if they sought help. Truly, sexual abuse leaves immense damage in its wake. We strongly recommend that the abuser seeks help to deal with the things that led to this problem as well as the havoc it has caused. It is so important for the abuser to have a support system in place as he faces all the legal and personal ramifications, as well as finding emotional healing. The enemy capitalizes on things that are kept hidden, causing the perpetrator or the victim to feel they are alone in the situation. We all live in a fallen world and all of us have emotional issues which affect our responses, and we all have a fallen nature that compounds that problem.

Let me ask a question using the sexual abuse issue as an illustration: ***Is this not a picture of the work of the enemy in the lives of people? His goal is to get back at God; to steal, kill, and destroy in whatever way he can (John 10:10)?*** Hurting people tend to hurt people. Satan doesn't

care how he does it, but will do anything in his power to get people to respond out of their pain rather than out of the abundant life Jesus came to bring. More specifically, our hearts get broken in many ways in this fallen world and we all have our automatic reactions (or survival responses) when people step on areas in which we've been hurt before. We all have things to which we are sensitive and these trigger internal reactions, which easily could come out as hurtful to others as we react out of our pain. We have experienced pressures from anger, criticism, control, self-focus, and lack of love and understanding. This then is passed onto those around us, because, as much as we don't want to, we do what we know—that which we have experienced, we do to others. Are we willing to look at our own hurts, understand what they did to our hearts, find Jesus' comfort for the pain, forgive the offender from our hearts, and take responsibility for what we have done out of those hurts? I would plead for God's people to take these steps and find healing, so that our words and actions come from a heart that has experienced God's grace and thus can pass on grace. In the case of correcting, we can then discipline (train and coach) rather than punish (make them

suffer). We also can accept correction and admit our faults, being humble and teachable ourselves. In other words, ***Jesus will help us to live out of the heart He gave us*** rather than our head knowledge, which is our own understanding (Prov. 3:6)

I would like to suggest several guiding principles in dealing with any sins, problems, and failures. First, recognize that ***we all have our own battles to face and we need much wisdom and grace to work in a redemptive way with others***. We are called to “CARE-FRONT” rather than confront, that is to speak the truth only in love and to the degree that our relationship allows (Gal. 6:1-3), providing an atmosphere of safety, recognizing our own potential to sin, even as we try to “care-front.”

Secondly, we lead best by example. If we are willing to be open and honest with our journey, others are invited to do the same. Telling others that they need help will not encourage and invite them nearly like those who can say, “It was good for me to get help understanding my issues; I believe it could be beneficial for you.”

Thirdly, our churches can encourage those who have abused or been hurt by abuses or other pressures to find inner healing and resolving their spiritual and

emotional issues. Often we as God’s people focus primarily with spiritual issues which are actually symptoms of a deeper problem. Instead, we should seek to understand why there is a problem and resolve the cause. ***Scripture teaches us that Jesus came (see Isaiah 61) to seek and save the lost (deal with our spiritual condition), and also to heal the brokenhearted (heal our emotional woundedness)***, which I believe is referring to the process of sanctification as Isaiah describes in the verse that follows. I would encourage churches to have people within the church who are trained and gifted to work to that end. I believe that the culture of a church can have an atmosphere where the heart receives value, acceptance, and care, thus being a healing community for those who are under its oversight.

In conclusion, I know I have only stayed on the surface of the sexual abuse problem specifically and, in general, the battle each of us faces in our own brokenness. I would encourage you to ask God for wisdom to discern what applies to you personally. May God continue to show you His personal love and care for your heart. May He bless you on your personal journey to understand your own heart and thus be able to bring hope and redemption to others.

[Nevin Nisly, a former school teacher, was widowed at 53 years of age. After some years, Nevin and his second wife, Joann, sensed a call from God to minister to deep needs of struggling Christians. Their community-supported work, HOPE Ministries, seeks first to understand what people have experienced so the underlying emotional issues can be resolved rather than focusing merely on the symptoms.

It includes ministering to issues like abuse, moral failure, depression, and anger, focusing on personal, marital, and premarital enrichment and also having vision for presenting seminars to help churches understand the path of emotional healing and reconciliation. For more information, please email hope4yourheart@gmail.com.

-PLM] 

Announcement

Calvary Bible School 50th year Anniversary

A 50th Anniversary is being held in concurrence with the annual Beachy ministers meeting.


April 2, 2019 at United Bethel Church, 11342 Lafayette-Plain City Road, Plain City, Ohio 43064

All who have attended as students or teachers are invited to enjoy an evening of reminiscing, reflecting, vision, and special singing.

A slideshow of pictures will begin at 5 o'clock, with the service starting at 6:30.

If you plan to attend only this special event, please contact:

Mel Stoltzfus at (717) 278-4541 melandmaryellen@gmail.com, or

Marion Miller (740) 541-6528 mmiller6528@gmail.com 

The Oppressor–Oppressed Syndrome

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

A national journalist says, “In a world where there are only oppressors and oppressed, there can be no free men and women, no genuine liberty, no real self-government, and no common good. There are only people seeking raw power according to their self-interest.”

What a launching pad for a Bible-based sermon!

Is there any government in any nation in our world who is free from the oppressor-oppressed syndrome? No, of course not. Citizens are subjected to a host of laws, some of which may be oppressive. Employment is seen by many as being oppressive. Does that mean that the employer is free from oppression, even when he is seen as oppressive? No. He feels his suppliers and competitors in business are oppressive. Children may feel parents are the oppressive, while Dad feels the demands of the

children and family oppress him. What about Mom? She thinks the many needs and requests from her husband and children are oppressive to her.

Governments are seen as being oppressive, as well as large corporations and the research/medical complex. It seems as though the church is the only institution on earth that is oppression-free. Guess again. Many people would see it that the pastors are the only ones in church that are free from it. Some people see them as the main ones. I don't agree.

Daniel Davis, the journalist writes, “What younger Americans on the left need to appreciate is that our Constitution and political traditions are essential for achieving *even their own* liberal vision of justice.” Amen. In a world where the oppressor-oppressed syndrome is inescapable, the balance of human rights cannot be perfectly the same or fair or equal

for all people. The values of liberty require a measure of self-denial and motivated initiative toward opportunity, according to giftedness. The United States as a nation, has the most reasonable and practical opportunity to be the least oppressed. The yearning of the whole world is to be free from oppression.

The only way godless Communism worked out was to make and keep nearly everyone poor, weak, and disenfranchised. It greatly elevated the privileged class of the elite and powerful, essentially eliminating the middle class.

Where is the lesson for us as Christian people? Simply this: we live in a fallen, sinful, selfish world. We all are oppressed by sin! It is in our very surroundings, pervasive and insistent, despite our resistance to it.

Temptations are oppressive; lewd pictures and advertising, cell phone trash and television flicks are traps to hell. The shameless immodesty becomes the fodder of sinful imaginations. That is present-day, anytime, anywhere oppression.

Satan is the oppressor; we are the oppressed. We can change employment, or move to some western state to get away from the oppressive zoning board, but still,

we will never, in the strictest sense, be free from all oppression.

From a theological standpoint, only God is free. We are looking at it now from an absolute sense, as a perfect and total freedom. Jesus was in His home town of Nazareth on the Sabbath day, and went to the local synagogue. Likely everyone in town knew his parents and the associated rumors. Nonetheless, he was called on to read the Scriptures to these people. He opened the scroll and "*found the place where it was written*" in Isaiah 61:1. He stood up to read, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.*"

Look over this verse again to see which one of these oppressions is touching on a need you have right now. Many of us feel we are bruised in our emotions, or are brokenhearted from oppressive relationships. Jesus is there with YOU with these words and wants to free YOU from the oppression of Satan in your life. Don't be a victim of Satan's oppression. Don't go any farther with a victim mentality. Turn to Jesus and ask Him

to help you repent and make your confession.


Davis says that 70% of baby boomers say that America continues to be great. Whereas, a recent poll says, “Only half of Americans under the age of 37 agree.” He says we should not be surprised given what is increasingly taught in our (public) schools. Such teachers sow the seeds of hatred and a victim mentality, adding to random killing and riots. The reaction is uncontrolled violence of some kind and an uptick in oppression in a carnal and evil way of wanting to be free.

We have a message of mercy, grace, love, compassion, patience, understanding and helpfulness for the oppressed. Jesus Christ offers us freedom from sin and all the variables of oppression caused by sin. We look for that in our families and in the church. We might feel at times that we are giving more compassion than what is extended to us. Christians need to be like God in this, being givers rather than takers.

A possible equation: God loves us by 100%; we love Him by 70%. We love our children with that 70%, and they love us anywhere from from 20 % – 60%, depending on their age and current circumstances.

That reduction is viewed as an oppression by those on the low end! This equation can apply in the church, or also among your neighbors or business community. The beginning of bitterness is when a dark area of the heart has a one-sided mental argument, where someone is blamed as an unrighteous oppressor.

Toward the end of his article, Davis says that every American, whether liberal or conservative, must take on the mindset of a reformer, not a radical. The Bible takes it one big, basic, difficult, inconvenient, narrowing step further and says, “Ye must be born again.” Further, Jesus calls us to return to the narrow way. The other fundamental teaching of Jesus is about Christians practicing self-denial. A change in focus in these matters can do wonders for any person.

The Bottom Line borrows a concluding statement from Davis, where he says, “Before we even enter the policy arena, we must settle in our minds that the system we are partaking in is not up for debate.” Amen! We might not wish to agree with the call of God for discipleship on His terms, but the Bible, which brings to us God’s principles, is not adjusted by human resistance. 

Christians and Higher Powers

Joel Gingerich, Minerva, OH

The book of Romans was written to Christians being ruled by the Roman government. Paul's letter to the Christians there reflected his concern that they would respond properly to the earthly kingdom of Rome and its leaders while maintaining their supreme allegiance to God and His Kingdom.

While we enjoy religious freedom, we must acknowledge that moral corruption seems to be winning the day, good is called evil, evil is called good, and laws are being removed and replaced with laws that are contrary to Christian values. We too must remember that our ultimate loyalty is not to our government, but to the Kingdom of God!

Romans 13 is instructive for Christians in 2019 as well as to Christians in Rome in 57 A.D. Several questions we do well to ask ourselves;

1. How does God want us to view the leaders of this country?
2. Are they friends, foes or neither?
3. What is our responsibility to the civil government?
4. Does God ever allow

disobedience to our rulers?

Rom. 13:1-7 sheds light on these questions:

V. 1 says "**Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,**" meaning Jew and Gentile alike were to obey and submit to the Roman government. Paul seems to be speaking specifically about Nero and his government, who has been referred to as a "*monster of cruelty and wickedness.*" Just because Nero was evil did not exempt them from their responsibility toward him. Titus 3:1 and I Pet. 2:13-14 echo these same thoughts.

V. 1 clearly teaches that the civil government has been "*ordained*" by God and **every** power that exists originates with God.

V. 2. gives the seriousness of **not** being subject to them. Those who do not obey are working directly against God Himself and receive "*damnation upon themselves,*" meaning whoever resists the authorities God has ordained will bring judgment and punishment upon themselves. To my chagrin, I once had the "privilege" of being introduced to the same police officer twice in a four-day period! I was amply judged and punished, as

I deserved.

V. 3. We need not be afraid of our rulers, as that indicates we are guilty of resisting them! Have you ever hit the brakes when you spotted a police cruiser. The cure? “*Do that which is good;*” obey the speed limit; don’t pass on a solid yellow line; don’t roll on through a stop sign, and you have no need to be afraid.

V. 4. Previously, Paul refers to “*powers and rulers,*” but now he mentions “he.” Who is “he”? Probably Nero. Twice Paul says “*He is the minister of God.*” The word “minister” is derived from the same Greek word that “minister” is used in Col. 1:25 where Paul says “*I am made a minister,*” meaning “a servant.”

In Jeremiah 25:9, wicked Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, is called “*my servant.*” Both Nero and the president of the United States are ministers of God, ordained and empowered by God.

Daniel 2:21 tells us God removes and sets up kings. (and presidents).

President Trump has been ordained by God and is God’s servant. He has been “set up” as president and can be removed by God. He has been given authority and power by God alone and that authority can be taken away from him by God alone. The same could be said had Mrs. Clinton been elected as President.

V. 5 What should motivate us to obey? Because we are forced to obey or because we want to? Christians want to be obedient because it is the only path to a peaceful conscience.

V. 6-7. Because they are appointed by God, like it or not, pay your taxes. “***Render to all their dues.***” Remember, the Romans were in control. For the Jews to be forced to pay taxes to the Romans was not easy. Paul says, “Go ahead and pay them.” In so doing, you are honoring those in authority.

David is an example of honoring higher powers. In 1 Samuel 24, Saul is pursuing David and stops at the cave of Engedi. David goes into the cave and cuts off Saul’s skirt. Immediately “*David’s heart smote him*” because he cut off Saul’s skirt. He regretted doing this to his “*master, the Lord’s anointed.*” Approximately one year later, David and Abishai sneak into the camp where Saul and his 3,000 men are asleep. Saul’s spear was stuck in the ground near his head. His servant Abishai tells David, “*This is of God. Kill him with his spear!*” David replied, “*Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless?*” David remembered that his enemy, King Saul, was the Lord’s anointed and honored him as such.

Acts 23:1-5 is an example of Paul dishonoring his higher powers. As he

stood before the Sanhedrin, he spoke the truth with boldness. He was then smitten on the mouth after which he responded *“God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.”* Paul was really saying, *“God will smite you, you hypocrite!”* It was certainly not a respectful way of speaking to the high priest. Paul then offered a heartfelt apology after he realized what he had done. I commend Paul for that! We can learn from both David and Paul in these examples.

Let us examine our *attitudes* and our *speech* toward the God ordained “higher powers” of today: II Peter 2:10 speaks of those who *“despise government. (attitude) Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. (those of high rank) This is rampant today. May we not despise government nor speak evil of them. “Thou shalt not speak evil against the ruler of thy people”* applies to us as well. The main issue is not whether the higher powers are worthy or deserving of honor, the point we must remember is he is the minister of God, and we must honor him as such.

Should Christians form picket lines to influence governmental decisions or to oppose decisions already made by the government? Nowhere in the early church do we see the apostles trying to influence government other

than to persuade them for Christ. If we are going to form a picket line, we might consider a picket line of prayer and ask **God** to move the heart of the king.

Is it ever permissible to disobey the government? If so, when? In Acts 5, the Apostles were put into prison for preaching and doing miracles but were set free by an angel and commanded to *“Go, stand and speak in the temple,”* and so they did! When found, they were asked, *“Did we not command you not to teach in that name?”* Their reply: *“We ought to obey God rather than man.”*

When confronted with governmental laws which are contrary to God’s Law, we must obey God because our *supreme allegiance* belongs to Him, not to the king or any other higher power! If we were commanded by the higher powers to allow LGBTQ people to become members of our church, or to allow a divorced and remarried couple to join our brotherhood, or to allow infant baptism along with believers’ baptism, or to shutter our Christian schools and send our children to the public school, our answer must be a courageous *“We must obey God rather than man.”*

Our obedience and respect is not contingent upon whether or not the higher powers are good or bad,

cruel or kind, lenient or restrictive, liberal or conservative, Republican, Democrat, Socialist, Communist, Independent—or otherwise—but we must recognize they are God’s ministers, ordained by Him and we must honor them by our words and deeds. To speak evil of them or to resist their authority is to resist God Himself.

May we fulfill our responsibility toward them, found in I Tim.2:1-4. We are to pray for them. It pleases God when we pray for the civil leaders, FOR GOD’S DESIRE IS THAT ALL MEN BE SAVED—even the President and all who are in authority.



Meetings or Relationships— Finding the Balance

Ken Ranck, Mt Crawford, VA

Mennonites gather frequently for church meetings. Some have tongue-in-cheek said that Mennonites get their name from the “many nights” they have activities. We have Sunday morning meetings with Sunday school and preaching, Sunday evening meetings, midweek prayer meetings, youth meetings, revival/tent meetings, and Bible conferences. We meet for service projects and for informal fellowship. The list goes on.

In our congregations we are encouraged to “be there” whenever the church doors are open. We take seriously the New Testament command in Hebrews 10:25: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves

together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” An early Anabaptist statement encouraged the believers to gather at least three or four times a week for mutual encouragement. All these meetings are a blessing to the church.

Often we think of our church meetings as a tool for evangelism. We invite people who are unsaved or outside our church community to come to our meetings to hear the Gospel. We hope in this way they will find salvation. We wonder why more people do not come. When will we realize that this is not the way most people come to Christian faith?

While we may think in terms of

meetings, most people in our world think in terms of relationships. If we look at our churches, we find networks of family and friends. These relationships are part of what drew us to Christ and the brotherhood. For our neighbors, relationships are important too.

For our community evangelism, we need to build serious relationships with those beyond our network of family and friends. This means spending time with people, learning to know them and their needs, and learning to walk beside them in their life journeys. They will generally not come to us. We need to go connect with them.

I once heard a Bible school teacher who was active in church planting work say that he had learned that it took about ten home visits before people came to church services. (And that was about forty years ago.) So we have our work cut out for us.

How many of our neighbors do we know—really know? Do we know their needs? Do they know we really care about them? Can we chat with them at a level where we can naturally share about the things of God? Do people feel welcomed when they do come to our churches? Are they accepted as friends rather than projects? And when they come to faith, what is the depth of our

ongoing relationships?

Deep relationships are needed for good discipling. It is a two-way street. We learn from one another as equals in the body of Christ so we each can see our spiritual and relational blind spots. It is long-term commitment to brotherhood together. We do this naturally with our biological families. Will this carry over into our spiritual families?

Such relationships take time, caring, and trust. Time to visit and share life together outside of the meetings. Time to listen and understand at deeper levels and to show care for one another. Time to establish trust built on confidentiality. Relationships take work. Are we up to it? Going to meetings is easy compared to building relationships.

Christ lived with the Twelve for three years. These were years of deep sharing. Then He left to return to Heaven, leaving them to carry on His work. Read the Book of Acts to learn what happened after He left. The early believers met together regularly and went everywhere spreading the Gospel among the people they met. Believers were disciplined. The church grew. Let us imitate their example. Balance meetings and relationships for a healthy church.

[From Life Lines, September/October, 2018. Used by permission.]



marriages

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

Kauffman-Miller

Bro. Kevin, son of David and Anna Mary Kauffman, Lott, TX, and Sis. Stephanie, daughter of Jerry and Mabel Miller, Lott, TX, on Jan. 11, 2019, at Western Hills Church of Christ for Faith Mennonite Fellowship by Lee Fisher.

Mast-Gingerich

Bro. Ricky, son of David and Gloria Mast, Provo, UT, and Sis. Kendra, daughter of Wilbur and Leann Herschberger, Arthur, IL, at Penn Station for Trinity Christian Fellowship on Oct. 6, 2018, by Wilbur Gingerich.

Miller-Helmuth

Bro. Clayton Eugene, son of Carl and Wilma Miller, London, OH, and Sis. Angela Louise, daughter of Steve and Anna Helmuth, Plain City, Ohio, were married at United Bethel Mennonite Church for Canaan Fellowship Church, on Jan. 19, 2019, by Robert Beachy.

Overholt-Swartzentruber

Bro. Ryan, son of Jonathan and Cheryl Overholt, Auburn, KY, and Sis. Charity, daughter of Donny and Bertha Swartzentruber, Montezuma, GA, at Montezuma Mennonite Church on Oct. 20, 2018, by Donny Swartzentruber.


Overholt-Yoder

Bro. Leland, son of Steven and Kaylene Overholt, Montezuma, GA, and Sis. Amber, daughter of Leslie and Verda Yoder, Montezuma, GA, at Montezuma Mennonite Church on Jan. 12, 2019, by Donny Swartzentruber.

Ropp-Herschberger

Bro. (widower) Lynn Ropp, Fairland, OK, and Sis. Wilma, daughter of Sam and Dorothy Herschberger, Arthur, IL, at New Life Tabernacle for Trinity Christian Fellowship on Oct. 6, 2018, by Wilbur Gingerich.

Yoder-Wingard

Bro. Derek, son of William and Lila Yoder, Montezuma, GA, and sis. LaNita, daughter of Lamar and Laura Wingard, Montezuma, GA, at Montezuma Mennonite Church on May 26, 2018, by Donny Swartzentruber. 

cradle roll

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

Eichorn, Randall and Monica (Gingerich), Whiteville, TN, second child, first daughter, Kiahna Dawn, Dec. 23, 2018.

Hershberger, Mark and Emily (Miller), Stonecreek, OH, third child, first daughter, Aliyah Grace, Jan. 7, 2019.

Jantzi, Darren and April (Overholt), Wellesley, ON, fourth child, third son, George Alex, Jan. 6, 2019.

Kanagy, Benji and Esther (Miller), Goshen, IN, first child, a daughter, Graciona Jo, August 16, 2018.

Kauffman, Darin and Sue Ann (Schrock), Arthur, IL, fourth child, third daughter, Kiara Jade, Dec. 18, 2018.

Knepp, Jerrold and Jennifer (Stoltzfus), Whiteville, TN, fourth child, third daughter, Malia Grace, Jan. 19, 2019.

Kuepfer, Joseph and Marilyn (Miller), Hutchinson, KS (currently Nakuru, Kenya), fourth child and daughter, Abrielle Myla, Jan. 29, 2019.

Kuhns, Elmer and Mary (King), Auburn, KY, second child and daughter, Holli Kate, Jan. 2, 2019.

Leinbach, Willy and Carla (Kauffman), Myerstown, PA, first child, a son, Wyatt Laverne, Dec. 11, 2018.

Martin, Kendan and Meredith (Troyer), Aroda, VA, second child, first daughter, Annabelle Nora, Jan. 24, 2019.

Miller, Arlen and Naomi (Summy), Stuarts Draft, Va, fifth child, first daughter, Jacqueline Marie, Aug. 18m 2917,

Miller, Jon Eric and Anita (Yoder), Big Prairie, OH, third child, first son, Brant Gerald, Jan. 2, 2019.

Miller, Reuben and Heidi (Kuhns), Dundee, OH, fifth child, second son, Isaac Joel, Dec. 26, 2018.

Otto, Merlin and Lu (Yoder), Humboldt, IL, second child and daughter, Riley Charmayne, Dec. 14, 2018.

Plank, James and Megan (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, fifth child, third son, Tyson Darrell, Oct. 30, 2018.

Plank, John and Jolene (Weaver), Montezuma, Ga, fifth child, first son, Branson John, Nov. 2, 2018.

Quevedo, Vinson and Amy (Byler), Wesley, AR, second child and son, Andre Lionel, Dec. 22, 2018.

Raber, Jason and Katrina (Wagler), Lexington, IN, sixth child, fourth daughter, Ibri Ann, Dec. 25, 2108.

Sommers, Evan and Janean (Yoder), Hiddenite, NC, second child and son, Lincoln Kyle, Dec. 18, 2018.

Stoltzfus, Abner and Marlene (Stoltzfus), Berezyanka, Ukraine, seventh child, sixth daughter, Evelina Praise, July 16, 2018.

Stoltzfus, Kendric and Heather (Hochstetler), Aroda, VA, first child, a daughter, Kylie Brielle, January 12, 2019.

Troyer, Jonathan and Andrea (Miller), Stuarts Draft, Va, fourth child and son, Carson Alex, Nov. 29, 2018.

ordinations

Wagler, Lester and Lois (Overholt), Lyndon, KS, seventh child, fourth daughter, Kezia Grace, Dec. 28, 2018.

Weaver, Jared and Lucy (Miller), Lyndon, KS, first child, a son, Jeriah Michael, Dec. 9, 2018.

Whitt, Gabriel and Lauren (Adams), Montezuma, GA, third child, first son, Luke Hudson, Oct. 29, 2018.

Wright, Barrett and Maria (Martin), Orange, VA, second child, first living son, Finn William, Jan. 24, 2019.


Yoder, Doyle and Veronica (Gingerich), Middlebury, IN, first child, a son, Trae Zyaire, Jan. 19, 2019.

Yoder, Keith and Julia (Stoll), Whiteville, TN, fifth child, second son, Austin Duane, Dec. 11, 2018.

Correction: Yoder, Michael “Mike” and Sarah (Shank), Aroda, VA, fourth child, first daughter, Myra Esther, Dec. 7, 2018.

Yoder, Timothy and Roselyn (Yoder), Glenmont, OH, first child and daughter, first child and daughter, Shavonne Kay, Nov. 27, 2018.


Yutzy, Christopher and Eunice (Yoder), Hutchinson, KS, second child, first son, Cameron Miles, Jan. 19, 2019.

Zook, Josiah and Amanda (Schlabach), Georgetown, OH, second child, first son, Brendon Joash, Jan. 1, 2019. 

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

Bro. Gabriel Beachy, 42, (wife, Dawn Hurst), of Bastrop, TX, was ordained minister with additional charge by voice of the church, for Grace Mennonite Fellowship, on Jan. 13, 2019. Preordination messages were brought by Kevin Mullet and Lee Fisher, both of Lott, TX. The charge was given by Ray Yoder, assisted by Lee Nisly.

Bro. Maurice Graber, 43, (wife, Lois Miller), was ordained minister with additional charge by voice of the church for Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Bastrop, TX, on Jan. 13, 2019. Preordination messages were brought by Kevin Mullet and Lee Fisher, both of Lott, TX. The charge was given by Ray Yoder, assisted by Lee Nisly.

Bro. Daniel Stoltzfus, 52, (wife Naomi Miller), of Romney, WV, was ordained as bishop for Slanesville Community Mennonite Church, on December 9, 2018. Preordination messages were brought by Wayne Lapp, Burgettstown, PA. The charge was given by Elmer Glick, assisted by John U. Glick and Alvin Stoltzfus. Winston Miller was also in the lot. 

Kauffman, Marvin, 77, of Marshallville, GA, died Aug. 1, 2018, after a short hospital stay. He was born in Virginia Beach, VA, on Nov. 11, 1940, to the late Levi and Mary (Miller) Kauffman.

He was a faithful member of Meontezuma Mennonite Church.

On June 14, 1961, he was married to Alta Yoder. She survives. Also surviving are five children: Kenneth (Barbara) Kauffman, Huntsville, AR; Gary (Laura) Kauffman, Thomaston, GA; Jason (Melody) Kauffman, Gympie, Queensland, Australia; Donna (Matt) Powers, Marshallville, GA; and David (Toni) Kauffman, Sarasota, FL, 23 grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Other survivors include three brothers: Raymond (Malinda) Kauffman, Virginia Beach, VA; Richard Kauffman, Atlanta, GA; Larry (Linda) Kauffman, Montezuma, GA; and five sisters: Ruth (Melvin) Yoder, Montezuma, GA; Martha Kauffman, Augusta, GA; Drusilla Beiler, Tyrone, NC; Mary Lois (Robert) Yoder, Jesup, GA; and Susan (Alva) Yoder, Virginia Beach, VA.

He was preceded in death by a son, Marvin James “Jim” in Oct., 1989; a brother, Eli Kauffman, and two sisters: Laura Yoder and Rhoda Yoder.

Marvin enjoyed farming and was well-known for the strawberries, onions and peaches grown on the home place. He

loved children and was known in church as The Candy Man. His grandchildren especially remember the generous time he spent with them.

The funeral was held on August 4, with Donny Swartzentruber, Gary Kauffman, and Jason Kauffman serving. Irvin Yoder conducted the committal at the church cemetery.

Miller, Gerald Christian, 55, of Millersburg, Ohio, died unexpectedly Dec. 14, 2018, while visiting his daughter and family in Haiti. He was born April 18, 1963, in Millersburg, OH, to John C. and Rebecca Miller.

He was a member of Grace Haven Fellowship.

On Sept. 23, 1983, he was married to Rachel D. Miller. She survives. Also surviving are six children Jana (Jerry) Troyer, serving in Titanyen, Haiti; Jon Eric (Anita) Miller, Big Prairie, OH; Emily (Mark) Hershberger, Sugarcreek, OH; Joshua (Olya) Miller, Millersburg, OH; Bradley (Charity) Miller, Brinkhaven, OH; Annie (Bryson) Kline, Sugarcreek, OH; eleven grandchildren, and his parents, John C. and Rebecca Miller. Other survivors are sisters: Wilma Miller, and Karen (Dan) Sharp; and brothers, David (Ruth) Miller, Robert (Rosy) Miller, and Merle (Lillian) Miller.

Gerald was the owner of Miller Sawdust and a dealer of foam insulation.

He invested much time in the lives of his children and grandchildren. Gerald will be remembered for his patience, his way of seeing value in everyone, and his love for nature.

Gerald was preceded in death by his parents-in-law, and a brother-in-law.

The funeral was held on Dec. 27, 2018, with David Yoder officiating. Burial was in the church cemetery.


Yoder, Norman Daniel, 61, of Paris, TN, died of colon cancer at his home on Jan. 27, 2019. He was born Oct. 29, 1957, at Stuarts Draft, VA, son of the late Simon A. and Arlene (Yoder) Yoder.

He was a member and deacon of Calvary Christian Church, Cottage Grove, TN.

On Feb. 16, 1978, he was married to Dorothy Miller. She survives. Survivors include children: JoAnna (Donald) Schrock, Green Ridge, MO; Keturah “Kaye” (Galen) Schrock, Paris, TN; Phyllis (Ethan) Mast, Lincoln, MO; Olen (Charity) Yoder, Olive, MS; James (Elsie)

Yoder, Paris, TN; Eugene (Caroline) Yoder, Southaven, MS; Philip Yoder, Macon, MS; and Dennis (Rose) Yoder, Paris, TN; and 22 grandchildren. Also surviving are six brothers: Alvin (Emma) Yoder, Lamar, MO; Elwood (Julia) Yoder, Russellville, KY; Everett (Elmina) Yoder, Elmer (Pauline) Yoder, both of Paris, TN; Lyndon (Joann) Yoder, Advance, MO; and Ralph (Janice) Yoder, Paris, TN; and three sisters: Pauline (Alvin) Schrock, Olney, IL; Martha (David) Wengerd, Standish, CA; and Viola (John) Nissley, Kenton, TN; and one brother-in-law, Jonas Schrock, Leitchfield, CA. One sister Kathy Schrock preceded him in death.

He was owner and co-founder of Yoder Brothers Meat Processing and present owner of Yoder’s Country Store. Norman loved serving the community through family-operated business.

The funeral was held on Jan. 31, with Henry Nissley, Kevin Yoder and Dwight Miller serving. Michael Yoder conducted the committal at the New Boston Cemetery. 

observations

Nehemiah chapter 8 recounts a gathering of Jewish people who gathered to be reminded about what God asked of them in the Law. Verse 8 states that the presenters “...read in the book in the law of God distinctly,

and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” There are at least three important details regarding this important gathering that contributed to its worth. The first two I notice refer to the fact that those in charge began by reading distinctly

then explaining what was read. The third detail explains that the result was that the listeners understood what was read. Careful explanation resulting in correct understanding was the goal. But let's note that the process started by distinct reading.

My mind goes back to the time I was a student at Calvary Bible School 30+ years ago. The late brother Ervin Hershberger usually moderated our Bible Reading and Prayer period. We all took turns rising to our feet and reading a sentence of Scripture. We didn't read by verses, but by complete sentences. That obligated us to observe punctuation carefully. Careful instruction was given to observe punctuation and correct pronunciation—to read distinctly. I believe this worthwhile exercise continues at CBS today.

In recent months we have begun something in our congregation whose basic idea we borrowed from McKenney Mennonite Church. During our Sunday morning service the 13-17 year-old young men in our church take turns reading an assigned portion of Scripture, usually 10-20 verses as the congregation stands for the reading. Currently the reading is progressing through

the Gospel of Mark. It's true that this assignment doesn't include "giving the sense" since they only read the Scripture passage. But some really good things happen when a young man stands and reads Scripture facing the congregation. We see this as an opportunity to practice being in front of a group of people, where his only assignment is to read what has been assigned to him. We hope that this helps make the transition to other speaking assignments a bit less stressful. The congregation also benefits from hearing the reading. Some of our church communities have speaking opportunities for our young people in school that cultivate the importance of reading distinctly.

Distinct reading of Scripture is important!

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Recently a thoughtful reader pointed out an article entitled, "The Problem with Sharenting" in *World* magazine written by Michael Cochrane that was posted on January 17 of the current year. If you're like me, you would not know what this was talking about. The author was reminding readers of some of the problems that go along with sharing information about our children

on social media. The author cited statistics claiming that by the time a child reaches the age of 13 the average parent will have posted 13,000 videos and pictures of him or her on social media. Furthermore, between the ages of 13 and 18, the young person will likely have made an additional 70,000 social media posts of his or her own. The information available from this activity is staggering. And it's tricky because this is information that we wouldn't give to a telemarketer but can be gleaned by combing information that has been voluntarily provided on social media, because the provider didn't think of it as dangerous.

Identity theft is an ever growing problem. Three details that identity thieves find very helpful, name, birthdate and home address, are often readily accessible to experienced social media sleuths. Court cases have revealed how identity theft rings begin building digital profiles of children at an early age. When they turn 18, the crooks can then submit fraudulent loan and credit card applications in the name of the unsuspecting victims.

We tend to trust what we're familiar with. But maybe we need reminders from time to time that social media

has some inherent dangers we should be aware of. It might not be quite as trustworthy as we thought. Furthermore, when it comes to the information we share, more is not always better—maybe it's even worse sometimes. Real time and physical space are God-designed context for relationships. It's hard to improve on the Creator's original plan, but obviously man keeps trying.

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In 2016 USA residents consumed beef at a rate of 79.3 pound per capita. This put the USA in fourth place world-wide for per capita beef consumption. The top three countries, Uruguay, Argentina and Hong Kong all exceeded 100 pounds of beef consumption per capita. Uruguay led the way with 124.2 pounds per person. The US department of Agriculture in a recent 10-year projection stated that they expect domestic consumption to increase slightly the next 10 years.

When we lived in El Salvador we ate much more chicken than beef. El Salvador is very densely populated. The land available for meat production can be more efficiently used to produce meat from small fowl like chicken than larger mammals like cattle. El Salvador

is very good at producing a lot of chicken and eggs, but not as much beef. Beef was seen as more of a rich man's food due to the resources required to produce beef.

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What do you think when you see a vanity license plate that reads, "Trump Country"? Does that license plate choice communicate anything about the person driving that vehicle? What if I told you that a vehicle with that plate was parked in the parking lot of a gathering spot of conservative Mennonite people, mostly Beachy Amish folks?

I didn't see this vehicle, but someone who saw it mentioned it to me. This source didn't describe the vehicle and I don't even know what state it was registered in. I only know that the vehicle with that plate carried someone of conservative Mennonite affiliation to that gathering. Since I don't know where the vehicle came from, I won't disclose where it was seen. You've likely detected by now that I don't know much about the background of this situation, so my comments are prefaced with that disclaimer.

However, it would seem borderline scandalous to me if our people would consider it appropriate to express

political loyalties in this manner. I say this without regard to which side of the political aisle those sympathies lie. As far as I can discern, the fierce partisan politics that characterize public discourse today do nothing to reinforce the Kingdom sensibilities and priorities that Christ-followers today are rightly known for. Sadly, publicly visible loyalties expressed like this license plate, communicate a loyalty that I find unable to reconcile with my understanding of Kingdom Christianity. Can you? Maybe we shouldn't try.

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"A Life Overseas" is a blog containing a collection of contributed writing from a variety of sources related to overseas mission work. Since I was introduced to this several years ago, I've gone back to this blog from time to time. Recently a friend pointed out an article by an anonymous writer that I had not yet seen entitled, "Welcoming Broken Missionaries Back." I found the article thought-provoking.

I reflected on Brenda and my overseas venture 20-ish years ago. We were warmly sent abroad by our home church as a young family. The time we were away was a time when our view of life, family life and

church life, were profoundly altered. While we were gone, people grew up. Some were born and others died. Nothing about life is static and things “at home” changed. Sometimes people in such a situation sort of wonder where “home” actually is. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that while things at home change, perhaps the biggest change happens to those who are gone. When we returned after four short years to our former church congregation, we were warmly welcomed and found our adjustment quite smooth.

But it doesn't work that way for everybody. Somehow it feels like being a good sending church is a bit easier for us to understand than what is involved in being a good receiving church, when those who had left, return home. I can't really put into words what our church did to make our adjustment go well, but our memories of that process are warm and treasured. I don't have as many answers as questions and thoughts. I invite us to think together about these implications. I will sign off by quoting the last part of the article

that I am referencing from the “A Life Overseas” blog.

“People who live abroad get broken there. Then they come home and their wounds go unacknowledged. They are heroes. They are brave. They are warriors.

“Fine (sort of). But guess what? They are also weak, lonely, confused, shattered. Their marriages are damaged, their children have depression, their bodies are fragile and filled with parasites, their resumes have unexplainable holes, their job skills fail to translate. They are lonely, their faith has been pushed sometimes to the breaking point. They have seen poverty and the global realities of politics and their own ideas on these topics have been transformed. They are no longer welcome, when they speak from what they've learned, in the places which sent them out.

“I certainly see churches ready to send people triumphantly out.

“Please, dear Western Church, be willing and ready to welcome the broken back.”

-RJM 

*Looking on the bright side
of things relieves eye strain.*

Nuggets from an Evangel of Yesteryear

George R. Brunk I

[Editor's comments: The life of George R. Brunk I (1873-1938) has been an inspiration to many. In 1929, he launched the periodical, The Sword and Trumpet. His son, George R. Brunk II (1911-2001), who later also edited the publication his father had begun, invited me to use his writings in The Sword and Trumpet that I find useful. I am extending his invitation to include his father's writings which he referred to as The GRB Anthology. The following nuggets were reprinted in 1992. -PLM]

- As dear as my life is in the bosom of my family I should rather have the cruel bayonet thrust through my vitals than to lift my hand against the life of my fellowman. Shall we through slavish fear still sit like blocks and stones with no rebuke for war's inhuman butchery?

- We must never seek a false charity that allows us to rest quietly while the purity of the church is plundered or to become so devoid of true charity that we contend with bitterness and hate. The Bible teaches us to contend *earnestly* for the faith, but not *bitterly*.

- We take too much to heart the disappointments and reverses of this life. Really they do not matter much. The principal thing is to cultivate the

Christian graces of a renewed heart, to do good to men, and to honor and worship God. This can perhaps be done more easily in adversity than in prosperity.

- If we consider excuses, we will never find it convenient to have regular family worship. We must make it one of the essential things not to be neglected.

- Don't be oversensitive as to what place you are given to fill. A rose will give out the same perfume whether it be planted in a corner or by the gate.

- Do not expect perfection in man. Preachers have their faults and even the one you expect to be your life companion has at least a few, even if you cannot see them now. The moon, you know, has its dark

side and the sun has its spots. Still the Christian is perfect in will and motives. Hypocrisy has no place in him.

- A chicken-killing dog and a person given to sexual sinning are hard to reform, but God is able to save to the uttermost those who come to him.

- Self-sufficiency will make the soul lean, for if you suppose your cup to be full, you will not hold it to receive help from others.

- Worldly-minded church members often complain that preachers give too much time to restrictions. The subject is not agreeable to them and is unpleasant to the minister. It would be well if all members would follow the separated life so earnestly that the preachers would need only to handle it for the instruction of converts and strangers. It is a shame that it must be handled so often but the shame is upon a certain class of members and not on the shepherds.

- The Bible teaches that “man looketh on the outward appearance.” It also teaches that “the Lord looketh on the heart.” *But there is no Scripture that says God does not look upon the outward appearance. That is a false inference.*

- Let us never insinuate that the teaching of the apostles is not authoritative. Jesus did not personally deliver a whole system of Christian doctrine in detail. He laid down the first great principles and gave the details through the apostles by inspiration. Paul says, “If any man among you seem to a prophet or spiritual let him confess that the words that I write are the commandments of the Lord.”

- How can one obey Christ and live in [close] fellowship with those who disobey Him?

- The careless soul cannot keep in touch with the Lord.

- We must be firm in standing for the right but should avoid a harsh, rasping spirit. I have been led to see that I have often erred in this.

- Wicked works are the violation of God’s laws of right in the service of the world, the flesh and/or Satan.

- Dead works are works, no matter how good, that spring from selfishness, not from the spiritual nature of a converted man.

- Slang is now quite popular in some pulpits but does not become the Christian who is to have sound speech with sobriety.

- Do I really believe in missions?

Yes, verily, in carrying the Gospel to all countries that all men may have opportunity of salvation. The church should make great sacrifices to this end.

- False reports seem to spring up like toadstools where no seed even has been planted. We ought to be slow to believe floating rumors against good people and much less to help in their circulation.

- Penny pinching may bring riches in the course of a long life, but it shreds up the soul and kills the blossoms on the tree of human kindness.

- Confess your faults without if's or and's or with self-excusing evasions. Do not be too proud to confess to your inferiors, even to a child.

- We should bear with and overlook those infirmities in our brethren against which they struggle and pray, but if they become arrogant or justify their error, it is the duty of the church to bring them to account lest

it spread and become a curse [to the body of Christ].

- God now says, Never mind, my children. Endure hardship a little while. Get all things in order to leave. I will soon take you where there will be no hardships and self-denials but pleasures evermore.

- What a ceaseless moan of sorrow must reach the ears of God! And all because the way of the Gospel, which has power to make happy in adversity, is not known or followed.

- Snakes and spiders and the like cannot help it that they are what they are. It is right to put them out of the way in a merciful manner, but how can a Christian show an unchristian spirit toward them and be guiltless? We should not give needless pain to any of God's creatures.

- Sunday school and other public meetings do not release us from the obligation to teach our children at home the great Bible truths... and Bible stories.



*Anger is quieted by a gentle word
like fire is quenched by water.*

Discovering God's Will

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

Andrew Murray wrote, "The human will is the power by which a person determines his actions, decides what to do, and what not to do. In the will of God we have His highest expression of His divine perfection." Man having his own will, thought, and desire is bent to sin. Man's unyielded will standing alongside God's will is far from perfect. In fact, man's entire fleshly nature is deceitfully depraved and incorrigibly corrupt. In other words, our carnal nature is beyond repair. When we allow the Holy Spirit to break our stubborn will, God will give us a new nature and a longing to do His perfect will. Paul makes this clear, "(Not in your own strength) for it is God, Who is all the while effectually at work in you—energizing and creating in you the power and desire—both to will and to work for His good pleasure..." (Phil. 2:13 Amplified New Testament).

You received a call from a mission board to accept an assignment at a certain station. Or perhaps the Holy Spirit is nudging you to give an affirmative response to an urgent need in some voluntary service unit. Are you pursuing a career? Seeking a life's companion? Deciding to move? Planning to build a house? Purchasing a car? Shopping for furniture? Life is composed of decisions, choices, and plans.

During the 1800s George Mueller was given the spiritual gift of prayer in starting an orphanage in the slums of Bristol, England. The orphanage grew from forty to two thousand children through a period of years. Sometimes in the early stages in the Mueller Orphanage the staff did not know where the next meal was coming from to feed those dozens of hungry stomachs. But God always provided through faith and prayer. As the orphanage expanded and grew George was

faced with many small decisions and big decisions. In discerning God's perfect will he gave the illustration when ships approached a harbor three lights needed to be in perfect alignment to reach shore safely. The lights which must coincide are the Bible, providential circumstances, and our inward impulse. George said this always worked for him, but only when at first his will was totally surrendered to God. Now that may sound like an easy formula. However, in reading George Mueller's biography one does not get the impression that it was always easy for him in discerning God's will. But rather, the will of God was pursued in spite of opposition from people. God's will was discovered through inner struggles and agonizing prayer.

Let me say again, there is no quick, self-manufactured formula in discerning the perfect will of God. However, it is God's delight to plainly lead His children step by step. Since we cannot see God, how can we be sure of His leading? Following are six practical steps that may help us to discern God's will.

Consecration to the Lord. In Leviticus 1, we find an interesting Old Testament type for the believer's

consecration. God begins with the burnt offering in prescribing the divine order of the various offerings. This was a voluntary offering. It needed to be either a bullock, or a sheep or goat, or turtledoves or young pigeons. It dare never be done haphazardly, but carefully offered according to the law of God. These offerings were totally burnt up and nothing kept back. "...and the priest shall bring it all, and burn it upon the altar..." (Lev. 1:13b). This speaks of entire consecration to God. Paul's divinely inspired commentary on Leviticus one is, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies, of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1,2).

Communion with the Father.

In Genesis 24, we discover a key that unlocks the gateway to divine guidance. Abraham sent his oldest servant to Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac. This servant was in communion with God and devoted to Abraham. His prayer's


was answered “before he was done speaking,” and it was answered just as he requested. The servant worshipped the Lord and praised the God of Abraham. The key to divine guidance is found in the statement recorded in verse 27: “...I being in the way, the Lord led me...” We must be traveling with our Guide before He can lead us.

Christ and His Word. Christ is the Living Word. God is interested in leading us geographically according to His plan. However, it is more important to walk obediently in thought, speech, and character as the Bible clarifies: ‘... walk circumspectly...Redeeming the time... be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is’ (Eph. 5:15-17). “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication...” (I Thess. 4:3). The Bible does not spell out all the specifics. What place shall I choose for voluntary service? What car shall I drive? But I encourage you to search the Word. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth and just may show you His will explicitly.

Circumstances arranged by God. God often indicates His will through providential circumstances. But

sometimes we devise our clever plans and then ask God to fit into our mold. Did this opportunity for business or that call to service open freely without our help. When in doubt it is best to wait. There is a time to wait, but when the Lord opens the door plainly, move or the opportunity may be gone forever.

Conscience directed by the Spirit. An enlightened conscience is like a monitor. When something is contrary to the will of God it sets off an alarm: “beep, beep.” I so well remember, several years ago sitting at the Columbus airport waiting for our flight to Belize, the deep settled peace that flooded my soul. We knew God was in this venture.

Counsellors of the church. “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Prov. 11:4). Consult your parents in making decisions. Even if you are 21 or 51, seek their advice. Talk to mature brothers or sisters in the church. These people can often draw from a wealth of experience that can help us see more than the immediate present. A seasoned mission director once said it in similar words, “Never heed lightly the call of God through the voice of the church.” 

Food Committee Sisters

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



In a former article you may remember we looked at the diversity of gifts as God places them in our brother (sister) hood. I appealed for assistance with food/serving related activities. God worked through sisters who are intentional about using their gifts in His service, and a variety of articles fluttered onto my desk. I am indebted to Laurie Rolan, Regina Mast, and others for their well-articulated counsel on how the rest of us (who are not naturally Foodie Frans) can perform these tasks better as they come into our realm of responsibility. Thank you so much, sisters, for taking us with you into your lifetime of experience! I'll divide these culinary articles into two parts: Food Committee Sisters (part 1) Can Martha be Mary? (Part 2)

The following outline will help to organize the details of a large food event before the actual day arrives. These may not all be church-related meals, but much can be applied to any gathering where a high level of organization is optimal.

Use your food committee. It isn't necessary for the head couple to do everything themselves. Learn to assign details for others to carry out. One example: assign someone to be in charge of making coffee. At the moment of serving a meal, it is a bonus to not have that detail

to remember. Don't be afraid to delegate. Match assignments to personalities. If one lady is talented in décor or putting gourmet touches on food, allow her to do those things. If another is skilled in making phone calls, assign that to her. Save heavy work for the men. Let them set up tables and chairs, carry water coolers, roasters, coffee urns, etc.

Read the notebook! Many churches have "Food Committee Notebooks" where the details of previous meals are recorded. Information such as number of people served, the menu, the division of labor, etc., along with

notes taken afterwards that include details about left overs and things that could be done differently next time. Read the book, study the book, follow the book, and put your own notes in the book for those after you. If the book you have isn't very informative, make sure you add more detailed notes as you go along. Those after you will appreciate it!

Listen to all advice graciously. The input of others can save you from disaster, especially from those who have more experience. Recently I was in charge of a large meal for an area youth gathering. The menu was given to me and I was not familiar with the dish requested. I asked around and received the name of a local catering lady. She generously shared her recipes with me and helped me calculate ingredients. (And I put those notes into the notebook!)

Make lists. It will free your mind if you don't have to try to remember everything. I use a daily planner. If I'm cooking for an event, I think ahead about what time and temperature to bake things, and write it down. On the day of the event, I just need to refer to my notes.

The first thing I do is put a menu together with the help of the food committee. Then I take inventory in the church kitchen so I know what I need to buy. I make a shopping list

with amounts needed for the meal. Then I make an itinerary of what needs to happen and when, in order to serve the meal on time. Obviously this needs to be more detailed for a large event. For example, break the day into hours. What time to arrive, what time to peel potatoes, set tables, pour water, etc. By doing this I have a better idea how much work actually needs to be done and if I've allowed enough time (and people) to do it. It also helps me to review it and look for things I forgot to write down. When it's all over I type up my notes, along with a summary of the event and make sure they are put into the notebook.

Don't be afraid to try something new. We tend to get stuck in a certain way of hosting an event or always serving the same food. It's okay to introduce a new concept or recipe. We had a funeral in our church this past year that was quite large. One of the food committee members devised a new way to set up the serving lines for the meal. We tried it and served 400 people in just over 20 minutes!

Plan ahead. Plan details about serving. Decide how food will be placed and how people will go through the line. Avoid having them wade through the crowd with a full plate. Avoid traffic jams by having


the beverages away from the main food tables. At our church, it works well to have desserts and coffee on a separate table.

Have a back-up plan. It's not always possible, but being able to 'think on your feet' can save you from a disaster. I remember an event where the meat didn't reach. Fortunately we realized we didn't have enough before we started serving. We were able to quickly thaw hot dogs, which the children enjoyed. Crisis averted!

Work ahead. Do as much work as possible, ahead of time. That way you won't be scrambling at the last minute in case an emergency arises. There will always be things that have to wait until the last minute. For example, when I make cheesecakes, I cut them when I remove them from the pans. It makes it much easier later.

Plan well. I tend to underestimate the amount of time each task will take. It's better to allow quite a bit more time than you might think necessary.

You will find yourself more relaxed if you're not having to rush to get everything ready by a certain time. Do as much prep work as possible as soon as it's feasible to do so.

Hold your responsibility/position with an open hand. You will hear comments about how you handled a certain meal. If the comments are all positive and praise, be grateful and deflect honor on God and on your helpers. But, the comments may not all be complimentary. Don't let it get you down. If you are easily wounded at another's candid comments, grow thicker skin. If the negative comment has merit, make a mental note to do better next time. If it doesn't, try to let it go and don't harbor ill will towards the one who said it. If it was a case of someone simply having a different preference, let that one go too. You will not please everyone every time. Keep perspective by remembering that as we serve others, we are really serving the Lord. Serve with joy! 

*An argument can best be settled on the basis of **WHAT** is right, not on **WHO** is right.*

Trouble in the Night

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

During testimony time at church in Kenya, Sister Eunice shared a story about how God worked a miracle in her *dala* (homestead). Typically on African *dalas* there are numerous houses or huts: A hut for the parents and a separate hut for each of their grown sons.

One night some young children were sleeping alone in a thatched roof hut. The youngest child awoke and heard someone at the locked door knocking and asking to come in. The child woke the older sibling and told her that someone is at the door. Wisely, they refused to let them come in and went back to sleep.

Only God knows what they would have done had they entered the hut. After they were refused entrance, the “thugs” stole a cow that had been securely tied in a pen close to the huts. The theft of a cow is huge loss to people who don’t have many earthly goods.

Mama Eunice told us that many people will go to the witch doctor to get their cow back. But instead of consulting the witch doctor, Eunice

went to God and to the Word. She took her Bible over to the place where the cow had been tied for the night. She opened her precious Bible and fervently prayed that God would do a miracle and bring the cow back home.

Around noon, God answered her prayer for a miracle! A friend found her cow along the nearby river, and brought it home. The cow had been beaten and was bleeding—but alive.

I wonder if Eunice fell to her knees, with her hands raised to heaven, fervently thanking her Father for hearing her prayer. I have seen African women thank God fervently in that way.

What an encouraging testimony of faith. These are examples of “The Battle belongs to God!” God is more powerful than all the hosts of evil.

(Thanks to Clara Yoder for sharing this story.)

AN HONEST YOUNG MAN Dishon is a tall slender black man who was in Medical school in Kisumu when we worked in Kenya. He lived in the caregiver’s house in the Rabour church yard.

On Saturdays he was grateful he had

work. He would get on his bicycle and pedal over to the Kisumu compound. He valued his job of washing and cleaning any dirty vehicle.


He was thorough and meticulous. Sometimes during rainy season the vehicles were mud-splattered. He never complained but just went to work. It took him a long time, but when he was done scrubbing, there was no dirt to be found. Happily he would talk to anyone who took time to brighten his day with conversation.

One Friday a son of ours used the old gray cruiser and carelessly left an envelope with some money in the vehicle. The next day while cleaning the inside of the cruiser Dishon spotted the envelope. Even though his pockets were most often empty, he brought the envelope to us. His honesty was a bright spot where honesty is often not valued.

One Saturday we had fried fish left from lunch. I fixed a sandwich, grabbed a watermelon out of the fridge, got a big glass of cold water and asked Micah to go see if Dishon is hungry.

Later in the day he stopped at our house to thank us for the food. “I was so very hungry, God knew I needed food,” he confided. Again and again we were amazed with Dishon’s gratefulness.

A standing invitation to come to Marlin Weavers’ house for supper was a time Dishon loved, and looked forward to. He was accepted and blessed. In turn, he loved their family of many sons. His strong arms often held and cuddled a small Weaver. The Weavers impacted Dishon’s life for Jesus.

Wherever you live, open your doors and take time for people. 

thinking generation

A Place of Refuge

Grace Miller, Stuarts Draft, Virginia

MARCH 1671, EGGIWIL, SWITZERLAND—The early morning fog hung like a wet, cold blanket around the Shank farm. Christian hurried along the steep gravel path towards the

house. His foot skidded and the milk in his pail sloshed quickly to escape the confines of the bucket. “Really?” His little brother Peter muttered. “Like we didn’t need that milk.”

“Like we don’t need a lot of things”,

Christian snarled back.

This morning Uncle Abraham had run up the mountainside to warn Father that the police were in town again. Christian winced, trying desperately to keep his mind running away from the horrible story of his great uncle's recent martyrdom. His heart raced thinking of the danger his father was in. Yesterday Hannah Brubaker had tearfully told Mother of Bishop Hans' imprisonment, and the torture methods she heard they were using on him. Last week they took his best friend Emmanuel Brenneman without giving him a chance to say goodbye. The police ordered Emmanuel's father to flee the border and never return or he would be killed.

Father's firm voice from inside the cabin brought Christian back to the present. He held Peter back. "Let's listen to what they're saying."

"They've taken Uncle Benjamin and the other town officials to jail, Mary!" When Father used that voice something was really wrong.

"How terrible if they are being tortured because they refuse to say where we are," Father continued. "We must leave here as soon as possible." Their friends in town always blew the ram horn when police appeared, giving Christian's family a warning to hide in the

mountainside. Had someone been arrested for helping them?

Mother's voice was anxious in reply. "Michael, how can we? Leave our homeland and my sisters, never to see them again? It's so cold. Anna is so weak. Where will we find money for this? We are already paying every penny for taxes."

Father's voice was resolute, "The Dutch Mennonites are helping our people settle in war-torn Ibersheim."

Christian winced at Mother's cry. Father's voice softened and broke "I'm sorry, my dear Mary, it will be so hard for all of us. To leave behind all we've known and all of our family. To go to a place we don't know." His voice trailed off into a whisper.

Christian's mind whirled, "Would they really leave?" His fist clenched. On every side of them was a huge unmovable rock of suffering, heartache, and danger. "God in Heaven," Christian whispered, "who will help us? Where can we find a safe refuge?"

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MARCH, 1716, IBERSHEIM, GERMANY—Benjamin turned over on the cot inside the chilly makeshift cabin, pretending to sleep. His grandfather, father, and older brother huddled around the fire as they talked in low voices.

His eyes opened to look over at his

grandfather. How strong he was, and yet how tired his face looked. “I will stay here,” Grandfather had said to Father. “But you must take your little ones and go.

My father and I, and you, my son, fled here 45 years ago. Life was very hard for us. We came with nothing, so full of heartbreak for what we had left behind. The Dutch helped us so much in those early days. Sometimes there were glimmers of hope. But now it seems those too have been extinguished. Since the farm was taken from us, we have had so little to give the children.”

Christopher Brubaker had stopped in yesterday with the news that taxes were to be raised yet again for anyone unwilling to join the army. America seemed more appealing than ever. The Dutch Mennonites had graciously offered to finance their way across the ocean, and William Penn was providing farmland for all young and able-bodied Anabaptist men. Besides this, they would receive something they had not had in hundreds of years: a place to serve Christ and not be persecuted and oppressed for it.

“I want that for you all,” Grandfather Christian blinked back his tears. “Send me a letter when you arrive. I want to die knowing you have found freedom.”

Benjamin looked at Mother who

sat rocking in the corner of the room. Through the shadows, he could see the worry and sorrow crumpling her beautiful face. A tear fell wet on Baby Sara’s tiny face, and Mother wiped it away, but soon there were more. Benjamin thought about the large black ocean he had heard her whispering to Father about. Shivering, he pulled the blankets up farther. Would they die? How could they leave Grandfather? Would God go with them to America? Was there enough food in Penn’s land? Where would they find a safe home?

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MARCH 1718, GERMANTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA—Benjamin stood in the doorway looking across the field as the sun set over their new home. Behind him Mother rocked her first grandchild, Benjamin’s new nephew Michael. She sang about heaven, thinking, Benjamin knew, of little Sara whose body they buried beneath the angry waves of the Atlantic. Caring for little Michael and having her own little cabin had brought hope back to Mother’s eyes.

In this new land, Father had begun to plow furrows—in the fields, for once, instead of his brow. Benjamin recalled how the man in the Governor’s Office in Philadelphia held out a strong hand and a hearty welcome to this new land. Father

had received it with gratefulness. The John Groff family made room in their cabin for the Shanks. Henry thought about John's strange words as Father thanked them for giving them shelter and food. "Upon my conscience I could do no other. If you have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it to me."

Stephen Clemens, a local farmer, gave Father work and paid him with a little land to build a cabin. The Burkholders, Brubakers, and Brennemans met with them on Sunday. They had worshiped in freedom. Mother was still singing to Michael of heaven, of the time they would all find eternal refuge there. Until then, Benjamin determined, he would remain thankful that the Almighty God had given them a refuge here and a new home in America.

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MARCH 2016, DAMASCUS, SYRIA—Aaban hurried between the stacks of rubble, the air thick with dust. Surely he could get home before they started bombing again! His foot caught on a jagged edge protruding from an old appliance. The water in his jug spewed out onto the dry concrete. "As if I didn't need that," he muttered to himself. "As if we didn't need so many things." A doctor for Mama and baby Amena. Food.

Water. A shelter from the bombing. He shuddered. Death seemed to be knocking at their door.

Inside he could hear Papa. "We must flee. Europe—or America—is our only option. If we stay we will be killed."

Then his mother's cry. "Hayyam, we cannot go! Amena—she will not live! My leg is still unusable. Can we leave Mohamed to rot in prison? There are so many guns and bombs along the way."

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MARCH 2018, LESVOS, GREECE—Aaban rolled over. The cold was soaking through his mattress and seemed to be freezing his bones. Outside the tent he heard a group of men still rioting, somewhere out in the darkness. His father was with them. Inside, his mother tossed and murmured over and over again, "Amena, my angel. Mahomed! Amena!"

Amena had died several days into their flight. They had buried her small bony form beneath the sand. Only Allah knew what had become of her. Mama's injury from the bombing had only seemed to get worse. The loss of her homeland, her oldest son Mahomed still behind bars in Syria, and now her dear baby's death had made her soul sick. These tents stifled her hope. Papa too had

become anxious. Aaban pulled the dirty blanket up over his head in a desperate attempt to keep out the cold and fear. Would they be stuck here forever? Or would they be forced back into Syria to die? “Allah,” Aaban whispered into the darkness. “Allah, please, help us! Where can we find a refuge and a home?”

• • • • •

MARCH 2018, STUARTS DRAFT, VIRGINIA—Christian Shank’s great 8x granddaughter sat at the table eating her breakfast. Her husband had brought her coffee in bed earlier that morning. It seems she is sipping on the luxury of her patriarch’s choices and tears; so easily taking in the generous offerings from those who had helped the Shanks on their long journey to a free and welcoming land. She and her husband planned to be at their great uncle’s home for a delicious lunch. First they would freely meet for Sunday morning worship with the Troyers and Hershbergers. They had no fear of bombs and gunmen while traveling the open roads of the Shenandoah Valley. Her father-in-law was returning from prison on Tuesday. Even while American law conflicted with his conscience, he had not been treated roughly, and could return to them in joy and safety. Death, pain, and heartache seemed distant on this

spring morning. She had a safe home and an eternal refuge in mind.

I am the granddaughter. I wonder what Christian would say to me this morning. I wonder how he would respond if he knew of the confinement and fear of Aaban. I wonder what he would say if he saw the newly remodeled, spacious house with two bedrooms and a large living area I am moving to in a few weeks; the money in our bank account that could buy much more than bread; the plane I could jump on that would have me in Lesvos in a day; the two towns within a thirty minutes’ drive that hold some of the largest refugee communities in Virginia. And most of all, the hope I hold and harbor here in a land of peace. I wonder if he would look me in the eye, and then open his Bible to Isaiah 58 and read, “Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”

I think his conscience could do no other.

Writers for Thinking Generation wish above all to generate involvement in God’s Kingdom—especially among today’s generation of thoughtful young Anabaptists. For correspondence about this month’s article write to 1graceofgod@gmail.com



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An archaeologist is a man whose career lies in ruins.

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It is usually vain to try to change the mind of a man who talks loud and long.

• • • • •

Arthritis: *twinges* in the *hinges*.

• • • • •

It takes godly wisdom to choose the right time
to stand firm and the right time to bend.

• • • • •

However deep we fall, we are never out of God's reach.

• • • • •

A great beautifier is a forgiven heart, a friendly tongue,
and a cheerful outlook.

• • • • •

Be kind. Everyone seems to be fighting a hard battle.

• • • • •

If we always wait to put our best foot forward,
the other foot will soon be in hot water.

• • • • •

Let go and let God: to let go relaxes my dependence on myself;
to let God places my hand in His.

• • • • •

A worthy goal is to stay in a passage of Scripture until it says something to me.

• • • • •

Bad temper has its own scourge. A man's bitterness
poisons himself more than his victim.