



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

AUGUST 2020

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## Calvary Messenger

August 2020

**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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## Savior, Who Died for Me

Savior, Who died for me, I give myself to Thee;  
 Thy love, so full, so free, claims all my pow'rs.  
 Be this my purpose high, to serve Thee till I die,  
 Whether my path shall lie 'mid thorns or flow'rs.

But, Lord, the flesh is weak, Thy gracious aid I seek;  
 For Thou the word must speak that makes me strong.  
 Then let me hear Thy voice, Thou art my only choice;  
 Oh, bid my heart rejoice; be Thou my song.

May it be joy for me to follow only Thee;  
 Thy faithful servant be, Thine to the end;  
 For Thee I'll do and dare; for Thee the cross I'll bear;  
 To Thee direct my prayer; on Thee depend.

Savior, with me abide; be ever near my side;  
 Support, defend, and guide; I look to Thee.  
 I lay my hand in Thine, and fleeting joys resign,  
 If I may call Thee mine, eternally.

–Marie Mason (Public Domain)



## What Really Matters

*“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (II Timothy 4:7-8).*

The roles were reversed this time. Instead of the parent caring for the children, the offspring were caring for their progenitor. After a brief illness, our dear mother was not able to take food or water. Our last days together were happy and sad with both the past and future keenly in focus. As we gathered on her last Sunday on earth, our family shared memories and how the lives our parents lived affected us through all phases of life. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren remembered both significant moments and things as seemingly insignificant as the ever-present candy dish. We laughed and cried as reality of the ending of her life gripped us. Then quietly she slipped away.

The year of 1959 was a time of many changes. My parents purchased a 70-acre farm. Soon after moving to

this new location, my invalid paternal grandmother, whom they were caring for, passed away. Throughout the community, a spiritual awakening was continuing, and tent revival meetings were ongoing. My father was searching for truth and life. After attending alone several evenings due to my mother’s pregnancy, he graciously waited until she was present before he made the life-changing walk down the sawdust trail to give his heart to his Maker. Brother Fred reached out to him and directed him to the sin-cleansing blood of Jesus. Several weeks later I was born.

Life took on new meaning as our family adjusted to a new home and church. Many challenges stressed our home in the coming years. My parents would make many mistakes. Making ends meet was a challenge, but we never lacked enough. I remember my mother’s thoughtful

answer when I asked her if we were poor. I clearly got the idea that there are many riches besides dollars.

Despite the financial challenges, there was always enough to share with the needy and searching souls. It didn't matter the color of skin or what mistakes had been made. One of my sisters recalled sleeping through the excitement of our neighbor's house fire and awaking to some of the displaced neighbor children in her bed. When gifts of dollars were not available to share with the needy, gifts of service were always possible. That was only one life lesson that was taught by daily living.

After a full life and almost a decade of widowhood, pneumonia resulted in a lonely hospital visit. Complicated with the COVID-19 hospital restrictions, we communicated virtually. When my mother realized that medical intervention was not a good option, she took her fears to Jesus in that otherwise lonely hospital room. She found peace in coming back to her home of the last 61 years and letting her children care for her in her final days. She enjoyed rich visits with friends and family. Her focus on her heavenly home and seeing Jesus and friends gone before her took away her fear of death. And then she was gone.

There are few things that clarify

the meaning of life like watching your parent pass into eternity. What does it matter if the vehicles we drove were not new? What does it matter in death if we could not keep up with the Joneses? Will Jesus stand at the other side of the river and read off our financial statement or our social status?

### **Beginning well**

No, **what really matters** is what we have done with Jesus! Receiving God's love in our hearts is the only way to everlasting life. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). It's important to be sorry for our sins and to confess them to our God. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (I John 19). **What really matters** is by faith believing that the blood of Jesus can take away our sin. *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot..."* (I Peter 1:18-19).

### **Ending well**

The beginning of our spiritual walk is especially important. But



as few things in life depend only on the beginning, so ending well is important when we meet our King. God gave us a new heart and gives us strength and grace to serve Him faithfully throughout our lives. The apostle Paul continued faithfully throughout his life. In Philippians 3:14 he said, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” A life lived out of love for our Savior will result in the welcome words of our King when we come before Him in judgment. “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I

was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:34-40).

**What really matters** when our eyes are closed in death is what we have done with Jesus and our sins. Let us all prepare now so we can hear those welcome words, “**Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**”

–AY 

## reader response

**Re: What Bible are You Reading?**  
June 2020, p. 35

I very much appreciate the article in the June issue on “What Bible are You Reading?”

I am appalled at all the new versions that are being swallowed up by the Anabaptist people. Does it reveal a lack of true hunger for the Word of

God? My question is this: if these modern versions are so much easier to understand, why do we not see more dedicated obedience instead of such great falling away? My grandpa and my parents would have none other than the KJV. I am satisfied and not looking for anything better.

–Denver Yoder, Somerset, Ohio 

## Announcements

### Faithful Women Seminar

October 3, 2020

#### DIAPERS, ATTITUDES, AND ME

*Walking with God* – Lily Bear, Elida, OH

*The Littles* – Sylvia Yoder, Somerset, OH

*Teens and Young Adults* - TBD

*In Community* – Faye Shaum, Orrville, OH

To register, or for questions about the seminar, please call 614-873-1199 or email [info@dmlmohio.org](mailto:info@dmlmohio.org).

This seminar is sponsored and hosted by:

Deeper Life Ministries, 5123 Converse Huff Rd., Plain City, OH 43064

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### Single Ladies Seminar

August 7-9, 2020

#### T.H.R.I.V.E.

*The Will of God*—Sharon Bange, Narvon, PA

*Handling Finances*—Karla Good, Logan, OH

*Relating to the Church*—Amy Byler, Seymour, MO

*Indignities with Dignity*— Kelly Kauffman, Thomaston, GA

*Victorious Amidst Desires*— Vicki Kauffman, Thomaston, GA

*Excellent in Spirit*—Naomi Diller, Summersville, KY

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## Urgency by Foresight

*Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA*

Our nation and our world has been rocked as in a social earthquake by the ill-famed Coronavirus. Never before, except at the tower of Babel, has this vast world of people gone to sleep with one main focus, and woken up the next morning with the same fear; it has consumed us, mind, body, and spirit. We have had it for two whole months, and we are wearied by it. The aftershocks of the social earthquake will be in this world for a while yet, for sure for a year, maybe 10 years, perhaps for 100 years in some socio-economic ways in particular. The displacement of the food chain already has been phenomenal. Politics is doing some deep tillage, bringing up many stones to throw at one another.

What happened? Some people became sick, most of them recovered, and some have died, based on data by a number of knowledgeable and caring doctors. We have heard them speak and read their papers.

What has gripped the world in

such a short period of time? FEAR! There has been a deep fear that has gone from our minds to our hearts to our actions. A lot of that has produced more inaction than action, at times. From January 1 to April 5, 2020, 60,000 people had died from the virus, which is less than 0.001%, or  $\frac{7}{10,000}$ th of one percent, as given by the Worldometer. Dr. Riliz said this is not a pandemic. He says this fearmongering is driven by lies, deception, and fear. Slavish fear happens, in that order. The urgency of the world was based on their prophesies as to where this could lead, and what could happen. All the predictions prophesied bad stuff.

What does this have to do with urgency? The wave of fear gripped our world with an immediacy similar in affect to a natural tsunami, the result of an earthquake in the ocean. As the fear subsided, so did the urgency. It is not difficult to see the relationship of fear to focus to urgency.

What was the degree of urgency for godly living and sacrificial service in



my congregation in the past, in more normal times? We all have done quite well for the sake of our school programs and its buildings, and for my church and its building and grounds. There are still a few women who go to the sewing circle once a month and a few men who volunteer for disaster service and prison ministry. We would be in error to say nothing is done beyond what serves our family, our school, and our church. A godly fear should bring to us a focus on the future. That future must be more than how I see my future on my life and my things and my family. That should be concerning more than my focus on the future, beyond the payments on my loans and mortgage, my leisure and recreation, and my travels and extracurriculars. No wonder we can give our testimony that we have a lot for which to be thankful, as we think of our lives in the involvement of the above.

Then when this COVID-19 earthquake hit us, it adversely and interruptingly affected all of the above. We then said or thought, "There goes my life!"

Jesus often gave a forward look when His teaching took on a ratcheted upward increment of urgency.

1. When the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast. Matthew 9:15

2. Pray for laborers for the harvest. Matthew 9:38

3. Go, preach and heal, to the lost sheep of Israel. Matthew 10:7-8

4. I am not come to send peace, but a sword. Matthew 10:34

5. Woe to you, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Tyre, Sidon, Capernaum; judgment is coming. Matthew 11:20-24

6. Five illustrations are given of the future judgment. Matthew 12

7. It was given to Jesus's disciples to know the mysteries of His kingdom. Matthew 13:11

8. There are eight parables given by Jesus, all of them with a sense of urgency. Matthew 13

9. The events and teaching lead up to the judgment of the end. Matthew 16

10. Jesus said the event of His transfiguration should be held secret until He is risen from the dead. Matthew 17:1-9

11. The consequence of offenses will be cause to be cast into hell. Matthew 18:1-9

12. Both eternal rewards and eternal punishment are spoken of in Matthew 19.

13. Eternal rewards are illustrated in Matthew 20.

14. Warnings of condemnation and punishment are spoken of in Matthew 21.

15. Warnings of condemnation

and punishment are spoken of in Matthew 22.

16. Jesus gave warning by speaking of eight woes on the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew 23

17. Jesus gave warning of His coming again and of the end of the world. Matthew 24

18. Jesus gave three life situations concerning eternal life or eternal damnation, based on their deeds. Matthew 25

19. The urgency of preaching, Jesus's future kingdom, Jesus's coming again, and sitting on the right hand of power. Matthew 26

20. The urgency of the belated confession of Judas, of Pilate, of the Roman centurion, and the Pharisees. Urgent, but to no avail. Matthew 27

21. The great commission in the context of the end of the world. Matthew 28

I only scanned the book of Matthew; the other gospel writers could give more of this.

The foresight by our Lord was always with a degree of urgency because of the future. Looking into the future will always give impetus for prompt action and maintained zeal. This coronavirus is based on the dire prophecies of great consequences if nothing is done by way of protection and prevention.

Businesses are urgent about profit

and survival. Financial seminars are urgent about individuals being free of the bondage of consumer debt and credit card overloads. Farmers are urgent about planting and harvesting. Sports people are urgent about winning. All of these make serious assessments about their future. Those who win usually have studied it most earnestly, with personal focus and a readiness to respond accordingly.

Meanwhile, in the church, we keep ourselves on the safe side by doing the best we know how for today, one day at a time. Our teaching and preaching is mostly on how we should live today. By comparison, the life and teaching of Christ was futuristic. The Bible is futuristic. It has been said that 28% of the Bible was future prophecy at the time it was given. This coronavirus "pandemic" was effective largely because of the scary prophecies of speculation by the supposed experts. Many doctors do not agree with the politicians who are largely in control. The control factor is enormous; some of it was needed and some was not needed. Likewise, some people see Jesus's teaching and warnings as some being needed and some of it is not needed.

My **Bottom Line** this time is a question. IF the history of the past is futile, as some church groups

say, and IF what God says by way of future prophecies should be regarded as being neutral, does it matter what I am or do today? Our Lord was certified to speak the words of future prophecy with heaven-inspired urgency. There is no need to make it even more urgent, but are we approving or requiring it to be less urgent than originally given in the Word of God? Seemingly, it is at times. Our hope in God is woven into the prophetic Word for our own vindication and reward.

The platform for the church for renewal, holiness of life, and evangelism is squarely set on II Peter 3:11, 13, 14, and related Scriptures.

*“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”*

The “seeing” and the “looking” of these verses about the future can easily lose their urgency when it is largely replaced by looking away from it and seeing primarily what is for me now and only for today.



## Souls—Sold for Gold?

*Jolan Sommers, West Lafayette, OH*

**T**here was once a young prince who was made king of a vast empire. This king, unlike most kings of his day, ruled without violence and cruelty. Instead, he ruled his kingdom with great compassion and justice, especially toward those who were of the lowest class of society. Because of this, many of these outcasts volunteered their lives for service to the king. As they did so, the king promised

to continue to bless them with the provisions necessary for life if they would partner with him and promote his kingdom by giving the same treatment to the poor as they had received from the king. And so, they served their dear king. They counted not their own lives dear but sought instead to channel his blessings and supplies to those less fortunate.

After several short years, the king’s empire had grown to an astounding

size. Many servants had travelled as ambassadors to more distant and remote areas with the goal of expanding the king's domain. Many of these valiant subjects succumbed to sickness and poverty themselves. But they never lacked the things the king had promised. Others of the king's servants were murdered by forces of an enemy king.

Among the bountiful things promised to each of the faithful servants was a glorious mansion in a new land—a land which no one had yet seen. The day came when the king went to prepare those mansions. And he assured his people that he would return for them when the time was right.

Soon, however, some of the servants saw that there was tremendous wealth and power to be gotten. Their lives could be made much easier if they used only a small portion of the king's gifted funds to help the poor and then hoard the rest for themselves. Because of this, the king's empire slowed its growth. The servants became contentious with these riches that had been given to them with the intent that other people be helped and blessed, using them carelessly to ensure a life of ease and frivolous pleasure. This led to the starvation and death of millions of poor, would-be immigrants, seeking

refuge from their cruel rulers.

Have we become unconscious of the fact that what we have is given to us, not so that we can live lavish lives, but so we can share with those in need? (Ephesians 4:28) We are known by much of society as the well-to-do folks in town. Or shall we just say it—the rich?

What is it that makes us American Christians so quickly lulled to sleep by the “difficult” ease of making a living? Have we lost sight of why we are here?

From Deuteronomy 8:18 and 1 Chronicles 29:12 it is clear that what we do have is given to us by God. This places on us the tremendous responsibility to use wisely what is given to us. We are stewards, and stewards are responsible to care for what is someone else's. As those who are so materially blessed, are we hoarding the blessings God intended to be channeled to others? Doesn't God bless us so that we can aid those who are less fortunate and be used to advance the work of His kingdom?

In this article I'd like to consider some of Jesus's teachings as well as some views that the early church had on the subject of wealth.

Let's examine a few of Jesus's teachings first. Not only did He say much about the dangers of wealth, Jesus said almost nothing good about

earthly riches.

As is recorded in Mark, He said that among other things, “*the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.*” Choking leads to death if the cause of choking is not removed. From this passage we can conclude that riches are counter-productive to the abundantly fruitful life our King Jesus desires to see in us.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “*Do NOT lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.*” After all, heart follows treasure. He did not say *don’t lay up too much.* In the same passage He said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*” I don’t recall ever hearing someone saying that God has blessed them with poverty. And to say that riches are a curse would seem unreasonable to us. But wait, don’t many of Jesus’s other teachings seem unreasonable as well? While being content and rich toward God doesn’t depend solely on how much we have, it is extremely difficult to be materially rich and yet be poor in spirit. It seems clear from Matthew 19:23 that riches hinder entrance to the kingdom of God.

Helping the poor is something that will, in part, determine our spiritual outcome. According to Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus, the King, made helping the poor a central part of the determining factor of destiny. I

believe God rejoices when we realize the seriousness of the responsibility we have been given and give freely as we have received.

Finally, let’s look at what Jesus, our Great Example, did to save us. He left the riches of heaven for the slums of this sin-cursed earth. (Voluntary poverty?) Shouldn’t this inspire us to action? We as Christians (little Christs) should be willing to leave all and follow Him. We should not only be willing but be doing. After all, we are strangers and pilgrims. This is our calling! This is our identity! Our lifestyle and value system should be different from the world’s.

Following is a very small selection of writings of some of the early church leaders—those who followed very soon after Jesus and the apostles. They lived in simple obedience to what Jesus taught, rather than trying to make the Gospel fit their lives. Their positions were radical, yet balanced and accurate.

*Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215)*

“Wealth, when not properly governed, is a stronghold of evil. Many, because of casting their eyes on it, will never reach the kingdom of heaven. For they are sick for the things of the world, and are living proudly through luxury...But the best riches is poverty of desires. And

the true magnanimity is not to be proud of wealth, but to despise it.”

“Riches, then, which benefit our neighbors, are not to be thrown away.”

*Cyprian (died A.D. 285) (bishop of the church in Carthage)*

“A blind love of one’s own property has deceived many. How could they be prepared [for persecution] ... when their wealth fettered them like a chain?”

“You are the captive and slave of your money! You are bound with the chains and bonds of covetousness! You, whom Christ had once loosed, are once more in chains!”

“You say you are wealthy and rich... Let the poor feel that you are wealthy. Let the needy feel that you are rich... In this very matter you are sinning against God if you think that riches were given you by Him for the purpose of thoroughly enjoying them, without a view to salvation.”

*Mark Minucius Felix (Roman lawyer converted to Christianity)*

“Rich men—attached to their means—have been accustomed to gaze more upon their gold than upon Heaven.”

Have we American Christians adopted the value system of the people among whom we live instead of embracing the kingdom of God?

America is the richest nation in the world. According to a CreditCards.com survey, Americans spent more than \$100 billion on sporting events, athletic equipment, and gym memberships in 2017. Following are some interesting statistics on how Americans spend their money annually.

Groceries: \$478 billion (USDA)

Fast Food: \$117 billion (Fast Food Marketing)

Soft Drinks: \$65 billion (National Soft Drinks Association)

Chocolate: \$16 billion dollars (we eat 2.8 billion pounds of it!) (IBIS)

Coffee: \$11 billion (Franchise Direct)

Taxidermy: \$800 million (Breakthrough Magazine)

Pretzels: \$550 million (Reuters)

We as “plain people” are known for good work ethics. This is right and good. But could this strength also be one of our greatest weaknesses? Do we, in our ambition to have plenty, neglect our families, churches, and the physical and spiritual needs around us? That’s a very high exchange rate! Very high, indeed, for something that will not last for eternity. Oh, that we would work as much overtime for the kingdom of God as we do for our kingdoms of sod!

Fathers, your children will not be



bought back with any amount of money that you accumulate. Your children want your hearts, not your money. They can easily see where your investments really are. Gain is NOT godliness!

Youth, the challenge is yours. “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel,*” not just for a short time. Let’s carry our King’s banner—the cross. Not for our own profit, but so that we may hear His words, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*” Jesus also sought His Father’s glory, not His own. Don’t waste the prime of your life laboring for “that which profits not.” Consider that God wants us to pursue Him, rather than the vain pleasures that for us are so easily affordable. Don’t fear failure in life

as much as you fear success in what really doesn’t matter!

So, my plea is not that we abandon all jobs, businesses, and money. But rather, that we use wisely the things God gives us to build His kingdom, not our own. Let us invest more of our time, money, and energy in reaching out to the physical and spiritual needs around us. May we as Christians in the greatest land of opportunity live with a proper view of God’s kingdom, and from that view, come to realize what true riches really are. Let us recognize our responsibility to use our earthly riches to bless others. May we also see the reality of the shortness of life and the length of eternity. There are souls at stake!



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GOD SENDS NO ONE AWAY  
EMPTY EXCEPT THOSE WHO  
ARE FULL OF THEMSELVES.

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## marriages

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

### **Hertzler-Ropp**

Bro. Travis, son of Russell and Julie Hertzler, Stuarts Draft, VA, and Sis. Krista, daughter of Lamar and Lois Ropp, Wellman, IA, on March 7, 2020, at Kalona Mennonite Church for New Hope Church by Delmar Bontrager.

### **King-Stoltzfus**

Bro. Caleb, son of Les and Miriam King, Ronks, PA, and Sis. Lydia, daughter of Michael and Linda Stoltzfus, New Holland, PA, on April 18, 2020, by Dave Stoltzfoos.

### **Mast-Smucker**

Bro. Hans, son of Marvin and Lois Mast, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Beth, daughter of Dan and Anna Smucker, Narvon, PA, on May 30, 2020, at the home of the bride, for Summitview Christian Fellowship by Dave Stoltzfus.

### **Miller-Beiler**

Bro. Jerick, son of the late Enos and Kathryn Miller, Antrim, OH, and Sis. Ruth, daughter of Calvin and Verna Beiler, Gap, PA, on June 27, 2020, at the home of the bride, for Summitview Christian Fellowship by Dave Stoltzfus.

### **Miller-Byler**

Bro. Sterling Kyle, son of Steve and

Evelyn Miller, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Erika Rose, daughter of Larry and Violet Byler, Hutchinson, KS, on June 27, 2020, outdoors at 7210 W. Mills Avenue, Hutchinson, KS, (near Cedar Crest A.M. Church) for Center Amish Mennonite Church by David Yoder.

### **Miller-Yoder**

Bro. Conrad, son of Paul Ray and Irma Miller, Newcomerstown, OH, and Sis. Kanita, daughter of Dave and Esther Yoder, Newcomerstown, OH, on May 23, 2020, at Meadows of Light Church by James R. Mullet.

### **Stoltzfus-Miller**

Bro. Aaron, son of Michael and Linda Stoltzfus, New Holland, PA, and Sis. Christine Renee, daughter of Lowell and Judy Miller, Nickerson, KS, on June 6, 2020, at an outdoor venue at 6819 S. Herren Rd., Partridge, KS, for Center Amish Mennonite Church by Dwight Miller.

### **Stoltzfus-Snyder**

Bro. Lyndon, son of Mahlon and Ruth Stoltzfus, Wytheville, VA, and Sis. Caitlin, daughter of Dave and Vonda Snyder, Plain City, OH, on June 20, 2020, at Grace Evangelical Church for Bethesda Fellowship by Elmer Stoltzfus.

### **Wagler-Miller**

Bro. Randall, son of Galen and Mary Ellen Wagler, Oskaloosa, KS, and Sis. Melissa, daughter of Ronald and Brenda Miller, Oswego, KS, on March 28,

2020, at the couple's future residence for Cornerstone Mennonite Church by Ronald Miller.

**Yoder-Detweiler**

Bro. DJ, son of David and Brenda Yoder, Auburn, KY, and Sis. Hannah, daughter of Bob and Susan Detweiler, Auburn, KY, on June 20, 2020, at Providence Mennonite Fellowship by Jason Miller.



**cradle roll**

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

**Beachy**, Freeman and Shaena (Bontrager), Kalona, IA, fourth child, second daughter, Addison Nicole, December 23, 2019.

**Beachy**, Jonathan and Melody (Yoder), Riverside, IA, fourth child, first daughter, Janette Joy, June 22, 2020.

**Beiler**, Glen and Angela (Ropp), Brooklyn, NY, third child and son, Jediah Kenneth, June 10, 2020.

**Beiler**, Michael and Sharla (Peachey), Malta, OH, first child and daughter, Everlie Jade, May 31, 2020.

**Beiler**, Timothy and Vasilica (Bitica), Gordonville, PA, fourth child and daughter, Leah Dawn, June 24, 2020.

**Chupp**, Brad and Lucy (Steiner), Paynesville, MN, first child and daughter, Jaelynn Reille, May 23, 2020.

**Coblentz**, Michael and Joanne (Stoltzfus), Zaprudya, Ukraine, third and fourth children, first daughters (twins), Alisha Rianne and Abigail Raine, June 3, 2020.

**Kauffman**, Doug and Rose (Yutzky), Huntsville, AR, second child, first son, Felix Alvin, May 13, 2020.

**Kauffman**, Joe and Linda (Raber), Etna Green, IN, first child and son, Chase Mackai, June 3, 2020.

**Kauffman**, Loren and Jean (Peachey), Reedsville, PA, third child (one deceased), first son, Alexander James, June 4, 2020.

**Kensinger**, Josiah and Sarah (Young), Minerva, OH, second child and daughter, Emma May, May 5, 2020.

**King**, Emmanuel and Phoebe (Raber), New Holland, PA, fifth child, third son, Aviel David, April 3, 2020.

**Kuepfer**, Jeff and Rhoda (Wagler), Lucknow, ON, eleventh child, eighth son, Ethan Cole, February 21, 2020.

**Mast**, Carson and Carmen (Overholt), Russellville, KY, second child, first son, Kadrik Blane, May 28, 2020.

**Rose**, Scott and Judith (Yoder), Hillsboro, TX, first child and daughter, Larissa Grace, January 1, 2020.

**Schrock**, Matthew and Kathryn (Miller), Wellman, IA, third child, second daughter, Jensyn Rains, March 3, 2020.

**Sommers**, Joel and Esther (Stoltzfus), Hatyai, Thailand, first child and son, Judah Flynn, June 14, 2020.

**Troyer**, Joel and Loretta (Beiler), Leesburg, OH, sixth and seventh children, third and fourth daughters, Kari Jasmine and Jenna Pearl, April 8, 2020.

**Villalobos**, Charles and Loretta (Miller), Itasca, TX, fifth child, second son, Michael Simon Rafael, February 20, 2020.

**Weaver**, Jared and Lucy (Miller), Lyndon, KS, second child and son, Nicholas Javon, June 7, 2020.

**Weaver**, Micah and Rebecca (Yoder), Owenton, KY, seventh child, sixth daughter, Elianna Joy, January 26, 2020.

**Yoder**, Dan and Susan (Eicher), Melvern, KS, second child, first daughter, Ruth Elaine, June 11, 2020.


**Yoder**, Kevin and Emily (King), Fresno, OH, second child, first son, Eric Donavon, May 9, 2020.

**Yoder**, Leland and Donna (Stutzman), Owenton, KY, fourth child, third daughter (one deceased), Shannon Rose, June 3, 2020.

**Yoder**, Rick and Valetta (Byler), Blackville, SC, third child, second son, Carson Luke, June 20, 2020.


**Yoder**, Timothy and Roselyn (Yoder), Glenmont, OH, second child, first son, Victor Lee, May 19, 2020.

**Correction: Zook**, Jason and Marla (Knicely), Mifflin, PA, *second child and son*, Michael Landon, February 1, 2020.

**Zook**, Tim and Michelle (Stoltzfus), Gap, PA, first child and daughter, Avery Willow, May 16, 2020. 

## ordination

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

**Bro. Joni Yoder**, 33, (wife, Andrea Eash), Russellville, OH, was called through the church and ordained to the office of deacon for Still Waters Mennonite Church, Georgetown, OH, on June 7, 2020. Preordination messages were brought by Matthew Raber. The charge was given by Marcus Yoder, assisted by Dave Miller and Paul Weaver. 

**Bontrager**, Lydia Mae, 87, Kalona, IA, passed away in her home on January 25, 2020. She was born to the late John E. and Edna (Yoder) Yoder in Thomas, OK, on February 22, 1932.

She married Henry E. Bontrager in Weatherford, OK, on November 27, 1952. They moved to the Kalona community in March of 1957. She was a faithful member of Sharon Bethel Amish Mennonite Church, Kalona.

Along with her parents and husband, she was preceded in death by two sisters, Sylvia Yutzy, and Bertha Schrock, and one brother, David E. Yoder.

She is survived by her children: Wayne, Kalona; Delmar (Carolyn), Wellman; Laverta (Evan) Beachy, Kalona; Loretta (Elam) Stoltzfoos, Kalona; a brother, Toby Yoder, Paris, TX; sisters; Dorothy Kinsinger, Oakland, MD; Barbara Stutzman, Leon; nine grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held on January 28, 2020, at the Sharon Bethel Church with Leighton Yoder and Gabriel Beachy officiating. The interment was at the Sharon Bethel Cemetery.

**Miller**, Eli, 87, of London, OH, passed away peacefully in his home on Friday, June 5, 2020. He was born October 27, 1932, in Madison County to the late Leroy and Elizabeth (Troyer) Miller.

He was preceded in death by his parents; a sister, Emma; three brothers:

Clarence, Wyman, and Alvin; and two brothers-in-law: Joe Gingerich, and Abe Troyer.

Survived by his wife of 63 years, Wilma M. Miller; and children: Danny (Debbie) Miller; Lorene Miller; Carol (Kevin) Lee; Lyndon (Sheila) Miller; and seven grandchildren. He is also survived by siblings, Susie Miller, Fanny Troyer, Arie (Daniel) Hochstetler, Mary Gingerich, Ralph (Cathy) Miller, Katie (Alvin) Yoder, and John (Mary Ellen) Miller.

Funeral services were held on June 8, 2020, at United Bethel Mennonite Church. Burial was at Bethesda Fellowship Church Cemetery.

**Peachey**, Nannie M., 85, Belleville, PA, passed away on May 24, 2020, at her home after a five month battle with pancreatic cancer.

Born July 5, 1934, in Belleville, she was the daughter of the late Jonathan C. and Katie L. (Peachey) Peachey. She married Ezra T. Peachey on August 25, 1955.

Nannie and her husband served as missionaries in Red Lake, Ontario, Canada, for 45 years and returned to Belleville in 2005 where they became members of Valley View Amish Mennonite Church.

Nannie was known as a caring and compassionate person who most enjoyed helping and encouraging others.

Her husband, Ezra T. Peachey, preceded her in death July 19, 2019.

Nannie is survived by her three sons: Nathaniel (Sheri), Greensboro, NC; Jonathan (Mary Elaine), Santa Fe, NM; and Ezra Timothy (Carolyn), San Diego, CA; six grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, a sister, Arie Byler, Timewell, IL, and nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by sisters: Lydia Hershberger, Olive Byler, and Martha Yoder; and a brother, Mahlon Peachey.

A private funeral was held May 26, 2020, at the Locust Grove Cemetery and was conducted by Matthew Peachey.

**Yoder**, Elizabeth, 91, Dundee, OH, died on June 13, 2020, at her home after a brief illness. She was born November 12, 1928, to the late Noah B. and Lucy (Miller) Weaver in Wayne County, OH.

She was a charter member of Maranatha Fellowship, Sugarcreek, OH, and was a faithful member of Agape Christian Church, Berlin, OH. She was always concerned about people in need and had a true servant's heart. She and her husband spent time in SC after Hurricane Hugo and served several

years at Freedom Hills Ministry. She was known for her love of roses and enjoyed cooking.

On November 25, 1948, she married John E. N. Yoder. They were married 61 years until his decease on August 20, 2010.

Surviving are her children: Miriam (David) Beachy, Strasburg; Ervin (Sarah Sue), Dundee; Lucy Wood, New Philadelphia; Ruth (Brian) Wells, Atwater; Kayte (George) Yoder, Millersburg; Aaron (Naomi), Leesburg, IN; Esther (Kim) Eichorn, Dundee; two brothers: Eli (Amanda) Weaver, Minerva; Roy (Judy) Weaver, SC; and one sister, Mary Ann (James) Beachy, Dover. She had 24 grandchildren and 61 great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by a brother, Dan (Elizabeth) Weaver, a sister, Jemima (Roy) Yoder, a son-in-law, Doug Wood, two granddaughters, and one great-grandson.

A private funeral and interment was held at the Maranatha Church Cemetery, officiated by Jamin Yoder, Luke Stutzman, and Jerry Jr. Kline.



## observations

In late June of the current year a huge plume of dust that originated in the Sahara region, made its way across the Atlantic Ocean from Africa to the Caribbean basin, then parts of Central America,

as well as the southeastern USA. The occurrence of this phenomenon is not unusual for this time of year, but the enormous extent and density of this dust cloud were very unusual. The atmosphere turned hazy and



ground-level visibility was reduced to a few miles for some islands in the Caribbean as the dust cloud passed. The ebb and flow of this particular dust cloud measured from 3,500 to 5,000 miles long and extended some 20,000 feet into the atmosphere! Occasionally these dust clouds are significant enough that they are visible from space. This one surely was. Astronaut Doug Hurly took some astounding photos from his vantage point aboard the international space station that demonstrated the size of this cloud.

Thomas Gill, a professor of geological sciences at the University of Texas at El Paso, had this to say with regard to Hurly's photos. "A dust cloud has to be incredibly large and very thick to be that evident from the space station. This one literally sticks out like a sore thumb—or maybe like a dirty thumb."

There is something about contemplating the enormity of such a cloud and its thousands-of-miles journey that puts my personal importance and the grand design of our omnipotent Creator into helpful perspective. I feel pretty small. But the God Who spoke the creation into existence is quite grand!

• • • • •

Forrest Fenn, age 89, is a retired Air Force pilot who made a fortune

as owner and operator of an art gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He was diagnosed with cancer in 1988 that he expected to be terminal. But he recovered. He had a strong desire to have people enjoy the great outdoors and devised a plan to entice people to spend time outdoors. He authored and published a book entitled, *The Thrill of the Chase*. About 10 years ago, he placed a treasure chest containing more than a million dollars' worth of gold and rare jewelry "somewhere in the mountains north of Santa Fe," and included clues about the location of the chest in his book. The book included a cryptic poem with nine clues regarding the location of the treasure. The last stanza of his poem reads:

"So hear me all and listen good,  
Your effort will be worth the cold.  
If you are brave and in the wood  
I give you title to the gold."

The interest in finding the treasure mushroomed over the years. A few people quit their jobs to dedicate their energy full-time to the search. Some estimates put the number of treasure seekers in the range of 350,000 in the ensuing years. The quest stirred significant controversy for several reasons.

Some doubted the existence of the treasure and wondered if Mr. Fenn

was simply leading adventurers on a futile chase after a perpetually illusive fancy. Indeed, Fenn hinted that part of the treasure was to experience the beauty of the natural world, making this treasure accessible to all who searched. Fenn also pointed out that he was careful that he didn't get any profits from the sale of his book.

Furthermore, at least five people were reported to have lost their lives in the search. Some people needed to be rescued because they got themselves into perilous situations looking for the treasure. Authorities urged Fenn to call off the search because of the danger that the search placed people into. He refused to do so and reminded all that he placed the treasure in a visible place that he, an old man, carried unassisted from his truck. The chest and contents weighed 42 pounds. He said the location was not a dangerous one, so people who were imperiled were not following the clues well.

On June 8 of 2020 Fenn announced that the treasure had been found, by a man "from back east" who wishes to remain anonymous. He released a few photos of himself reviewing the contents of the chest. Some of the silver was tarnished, but it was all intact. Regarding its location, he commented that "It was under a

canopy of stars in the lush, forested vegetation of the Rocky Mountains and had not moved from the spot where I hid it more than 10 years ago."

This didn't quiet all the controversy and questions, but many of those interested in the quest conceded that the hunt was over and congratulated the unidentified individual. One person commented, "Thank you, Forrest, for the many years of treasure hunting. We had a blast." So it sounds like Fenn's goal of having people experience the treasure of exploring the out-of-doors became reality for some.

Jesus said in Matthew 13:44, "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*"

The pursuit of the Kingdom is worth every ounce of effort and every penny of investment in our quest. The irony is that even though it costs us everything, it is still offered freely to all who seek it. Make no mistake, the value of being part of the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus talked about makes the contents of a dingy old treasure chest pale in comparison.

• • • • •

In 1946 a boy was born into the

family of an Anglican family in Madras (now called Chennai), India. The little boy's name was Ravi Zacharias. He didn't embrace the faith of his parents and attempted suicide at age 17 by ingesting poison. While recovering in the hospital from his attempted suicide a local Christian worker gave his mother a Bible and told her to read to young Ravi from the book of John. Ravi was deeply touched and found hope that he hadn't known before. He prayed to the Lord, "Jesus, if You are the One Who gives life as it is meant to be, I want it. Please get me out of this hospital bed well, and I promise I will leave no stone unturned in my pursuit of truth."

Ravi immigrated with his family to Canada in 1966, then later to the USA. He authored over 30 books and became a highly-regarded Christian apologist. In March of this year he was diagnosed with a malignant cancer in his spine. He died in his Atlanta home on May 19 at 74 years of age.

In a tribute to Ravi Zacharias, Joanna Hor wrote, "What stood out to me the most was his unwavering dedication to the gospel of Jesus Christ, coupled with an empathy and kindness for his listeners that not many of his intellect and caliber had. Ravi respected his questioner,

and would address the person, before delving into illustrations, stories, poems, Bible passages, and even quotations from atheists that proved the coherency and validity of the Christian worldview. As a friend of mine described beautifully in a moving letter to Ravi Zacharias, he 'disarmed the questions—never the questioner—that were thrown at [him] with gentleness and dignity.'

Ravi was a firm advocate of holding onto the truth with compassion, kindness, and courtesy, and had said in one of his videos that 'if truth is not undergirded by love, it makes the possessor of the truth obnoxious, and the dogma he possesses becomes repulsive.'"

Ravi Zacharias's life was not without controversy, as is often the case for persons who are as well-known and effective as he was. I offer no perspective regarding the legitimacy of those controversies. Ravi ordered his life with the stated intent of pointing others to Christ. Inasmuch as this happened, his name is added to a long list of fallible humans who followed God in such a way that others found Life. Indeed, the scripture that Ravi said so profoundly gripped his young heart in that hospital bed was, John 14:19 *"...because I live, ye shall live also."*

—RJM 

# Lord, Make Me a Bold Witness

*Clayton Shenk, York, PA*

“**W**here is Jesus?” Jorge bellowed at the end of the Christmas Eve Candle Light Service at the Universal Unitarian Church. “What we heard tonight is a lie,” he continued.

As he preached from the back of the auditorium, we sat there in stunned silence. Our hearts raced wildly, as did our thoughts. As he proclaimed the truth that Jesus is the Only Way, and that this church that claimed an open mind to all religions should realize that the claims of Christ and the claims of Buddha can’t both be true, we were filled with gratitude that he was speaking what we were feeling all service long.

**BUT!** Was this the way to do evangelism? Was this the way to bring Jesus to a congregation who for the past hour had mentioned Him only once along with Buddha and others?

On the way to the service, my wife had asked why we were going to a service of unbelievers. “We’re going to witness,” I told her. “We’re going to build relationships and open doors

so that we can dialogue with them in the future and bring them Jesus.” But was this the way?

Jorge continued for five minutes admonishing the audience to carefully consider the teachings of Jesus and Buddha and see that they are diametrically opposed to each other. They can’t both be true as they claimed. The star that night was for Jesus alone and not for Buddha, too, as was proclaimed in this service.

Jorge completed his rebuke, and the pastor dismissed the service. Some quietly left. Most stared at us. Some glared. Many huddled in discussion groups. We had some decisions to make. Do we apologize for the guest we brought along with us to this service? Do we slink out as fast as possible to avoid any further damage to our reputation? What do we say to the pastor whom we knew from other involvements and was so shocked — yet pleased to see us when we arrived?

But wait. What he said was all true. His boldness was tremendous. Is this what Jeremiah, Ezekiel and prophets of old did when the people

of God strayed from true worship? Should we be embarrassed by a fellow believer who boldly stood for truth and for Jesus?

As the congregation began to try to rebuke us by singing several more Christmas carols—including the Hallelujah Chorus—we stood and sang too. We sang with gusto the real words that proclaimed Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We didn't rush out. We stayed and visited. We asked questions. We were among the last to leave.

And, as we discussed this later as a family, we asked ourselves if we and he did the right thing. We all agreed that it was outside our normal order of evangelism. We all agreed that he did what we would not have done. We all agreed that what was said should have been said. We all agreed that we should have been willing to do what he did.

So why was it so hard for us to stand up and be 2 Timothy 4:2 Christians? "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."

Have we been the "quiet in the land" for too long? Have we become complacent and content to simply let our lives show for Jesus? Are we satisfied to allow our lost neighbors

to continue their path to Hell without any verbal rebuke and reproof?

America is headed toward end-time apostasy and widespread moral decay faster now than in any generation before. Homosexuality is becoming accepted as normal and perfectly legitimate. Polygamy and bestiality are rearing their ugly heads as the next moral deviations with which to contend.

What will we do about it? Will we sit and hope that our lives show love for God and each other enough that the lost will seek us out? Or will we become bold as lions and stand for truth and the right?

My prayer is for me and for all of us to become the prophets of the land. Those who will not allow our neighbors, co-workers, family and friends to enter a Christ-less eternity unchallenged.

Will you join me in that prayer?

*Used with permission*

[KMF Messenger editor's note: Clayton served as editor of the KMF Messenger for about ten years. He passed away on Dec. 25, 2019. We reprint this article from 2014 as a tribute to his work with the KMF Messenger. It demonstrates well his passion for evangelism and the Kingdom of God.]



# Utter War

*Wendell Schlabach, Grimsley, TN*

War is brutish. It seizes men as a powerful general who gathers numbers for an anticipated victory, and in turn will bring them steadily unto a place devoid of human feeling, a place filled with gruesome horror. War is terrible. I'm listening to an audio recording of the happenings of the Civil War of America. Brave men enlisted into their respective armies, committed to enter a fight for the cause of their countrymen. They found themselves in fields filled with smoke and blood, pushing forward straight into enemy fire only to recede in a fallen line of some kind of bravery. Huddled closely together, they braved fiercely cold nights to face another day of vicious slaughter. All knew they could die and often considered escaping the ugly brutality on a run, but they could not, not when their fellow men would rise again to charge, committed to their cause until their bodies fell exhausted to the soil. As I hear the brutally real stories of these men who found themselves in the middle of live combat, I think of the skirmish in my mind last evening. We too have wars.

It is some kind of accumulating attitude, a fear, a questioning, a failing faith. We know where we stand and can recite all we believe, but find ourselves on a proving ground, an internal combat, testing the depth of our allegiance. Our trampled minds have been observing; we have seen what could be and what we think should be, yet we know where we should remain standing. It comes in a torrent of mind, an evil force of brutal mass, threatening to crush our thinking into some vague form of self. It is overwhelming; the fog of uncertainty has so clouded our vision that we cannot even see our fellows or conceive what they are fighting about. There is blood on the ground, and people are running everywhere. The temptation to throw down our weapons and give up our ground convulses our tired bodies; we want to run.

Now I believe I understand a little of this real fight that millions have generously given their lives for. The free soil I stand upon was bought with an incredible price, of life. Because of their courage, because they didn't run, our opportunities lie all around as bountiful fruit from a



fighting army long ago.

I cannot run. The battle in my mind intensifies as does the blood of broken bodies and the smoke of confusion. I have been instructed; my Captain is standing by. I will charge on, even in the face of that looming dark cloud of giving up in utter despair. We cannot give in. We must not run. So soon the cannons will quiet, the charging recede, and our terror will begin to fade. Out of the smoke and rubble of an exhausted mind will rise a perfect white flag of victory, the promise that only those who have stood can see.

*What does it mean? Only those battle-scarred can feel in the grim*

*terror of their own soul's struggle the depth of the war-story of another. The foe is real. The fight is real. The Truth is real: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." You must stay standing, and you must give it all up to your Captain. He only can clear the smoke of battle into a calm reassurance for your troubled mind. You have fought, and won!*



## mission awareness

# Glimpses of Our Missionary Journey (Part 2)

*Darrell Nisly, Sioux Narrows, Ontario*

*To receive the full impact of this compassionate story, read part one in the July 2020 issue of this periodical. Missionary stories can plant indelible impressions on children's minds to be useful in furthering the work of God's Kingdom. Pray for missionaries in the North. –FS*

**I**t was 30 years later that I heard of another suicide; this time of a young lady from a family whom

I knew well. In her earlier years she had attended Sunday school and Bible school. I was particularly grieved as

I thought of her despondent action and made my way to the wake at the community health center.

As I entered the building, the foyer was empty, and I could see into the darkened circular room where the elder was speaking. How I wished I could understand what was being said! Soon an uncle of the deceased came out and warmly welcomed me. He was anxious to take me inside and ushered me to a seat next to another uncle. For quite some time I again sat there, wishing I could share “good news” with these mourners.

Suddenly the uncle next to me leaned over and said, “He’s calling you up.” “What do you mean?” I whispered back. “You’re Darrell, aren’t you?” I nodded. “Yes, he’s calling you up.”

Abruptly, the elder switched to speaking English. “We have with us tonight a family friend, and I’m asking him to come share some words with us. Darrell, will you please come up?” My mind was in a whirlwind; I had all of thirty seconds to think what to say. All these years of attending services and longing for an opportunity to share, and here I was with only seconds to prepare!

So, in a few words, I shared with them how the Creator loves us and longs for us to know Him. I told of His presence with us in the midst of our pain and sorrow and of Jesus coming

to identify with us in our darkness; giving His life to bring release from sin and evil. As I finished, I wondered how the message was received. As I was leaving the room, the elder came to thank me for sharing, then went on to say, “Now the funeral will be tomorrow at 11:00, and I want you to come and share again.” Of course, I readily agreed!

I was elated as I drove home to tell my wife what had just happened! After thirty years of ministry to these people, an elder who had previously openly discouraged his people from “listening to the white missionary,” requested that I publicly share a message with them! What an answer to many prayers!!

That night I prayed for wisdom and for the words to speak. As I meditated, I recalled how I came to know the family. My “connection” with them was a result of extended time spent with their grandfather many years earlier. They listened with rapt attention as I shared my story; then went on to say how in a much greater way, the Creator longs to have connection with us. I told how He has already sent His Son to make a way for us to know Him by His death and resurrection. I concluded with a prayer, and when I finished, numerous audible “amens” were heard. As the elder took the floor again, he instructed them “...to listen

to what the ‘old man’ said!”

Since that time, it is normal for them to request that I speak or participate in other ways in their services. Just last week I was asked during the service to be a pall bearer and to offer a prayer for the deceased’s family at the graveside.

Many miles have been covered in bringing children to Sunday school and vacation Bible school. Countless magazines have been distributed in an effort to bring the good news to those who don’t know. “Wire pulpits” were set up in various places of business to offer wholesome reading material to people in the area.

For the past twenty years, I have served as the Believers Fellowship Administrative Director. When I consented to serve in this capacity, we felt it needful to lay aside our initial calling of “grass roots ministry” as I focused on giving direction to the organization. These duties included day-to-day bookkeeping, staying current with government legal requirements, recruiting staff, processing immigration documents, liaison work associated with the function of the organization, as well as giving oversight and leadership to the Believers Fellowship staff.

The Lord blessed us with seven wonderful children; six who have grown to adulthood and one was called home before we got to know

her. Additionally, during the past fifteen years we have opened our home to over two dozen foster children, ranging in duration from just a few nights to the current young chap who has been with us for eleven years. Due to the special physical needs he experiences, we anticipate having him stay with us for as long as he needs us.

My wife, Kathy, oversaw most of the primary education of all our children under the roof of our home. Their childhood and youth took place in the context of remote northwestern Ontario bush country. In place of a large extended family, church community, and farming environment, they experienced developing relationships with “different children”, going to church with few or no other people besides our family, skating and playing hockey on the lake or outdoor rinks, and wilderness fishing, hunting, and snowmobile excursions.

Throughout all our time of serving, we have experienced times of incredible blessing as well as intense and painful struggles and loss. We believed with unwavering certainty that our heavenly Father had brought us here and would bring us through. Today we say with unwavering certainty that we have experienced His presence with us through it all. It seems though, that

instead of giving us “answers,” He walked with us through our journey, giving grace and strength in our processing of life. After all, that is what He promised us!

As we have looked to the future, we feel clearly that it is time to modify our lives and ministry. I have submitted my resignation as Administrative Director of Believers Fellowship. We are constantly looking for ways to constructively interact with our children as they navigate life. It is a special blessing to offer support to several of our children who have settled in our community and are investing in the lives of people here. Staying connected with our sons

and grandchildren who live in other far-off places involves electronic communication and considerable travel. For our foster son, we are committed to continue giving a solid, stable, nurturing, and loving home. We find increasingly that instead of us seeking ministry opportunities and connections, people are coming to us, requesting involvement in their lives.

I offer these glimpses of our journey to you as our supporters in an attempt to thank you for your past support and request that you continue lifting us to our Father as we seek to faithfully accomplish His call in our lives.



## A Woman After God’s Heart

### Jesus’s Hands (Part 2)

*Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH*



In last month’s column, “Jesus’s Hands, Part 1,” our caregiving sisters shared their greatest challenges, regrets, and blessings in the caregiving process. In this second article we hear them, 1) tell how the rest of us can be involved,

2) a small pooling of tips for caregiving, and 3) their expressions of appreciation.

Our sisters who live with fragmented days and nights probably have times of feeling unappreciated by the ones they are devoted to. They

give us cues for possible ways the rest of us could come alongside to lift their arms and spirits. Perhaps the parent who suffers from dementia can't thank them. Can we?

*Verbal encouragement and appreciation from others is powerful and significant. Another person with experience consoled me with, "Everything takes long." Expressions of prayer support are powerful; or a note, "I thought of you today, and I'm praying for you." Or a simple inquiry, "How's it going?" It takes effort to get a person in a wheelchair to church. We are encouraged when someone notices because it would usually be easier to stay at home.*

*My family's support has been such a blessing. We work at this challenge together and make tough decisions together. Tough calls like telling dad, "no more chain saw handling" or "from now on, you get to ride with us, and we keep the keys!" My oldest daughter takes the initiative to get Grandma out the door on time when leaving for church. Another daughter does a good job combing her hair. This is an excellent opportunity to teach grandchildren and great-grandparents to respect and be involved with the elderly. When feasible, we plan picnics together for grandchildren and grandparents.*

*Care-giving support groups, recordings of seminars, and singing, are ways others have ministered to us.*

*I did not need others to come help physically since my parents were especially private persons. But meals were always appreciated. Find out if there are dietary concerns or limitations, even particular dislikes, perhaps. Bread, casseroles, and baked goods all speak your love. Or offers like, "Can I freeze your sweet corn, or can your green beans for you this summer?"*

*It can be annoying when someone who sustained a two-week caregiving stint, pretends to understand what it's all about. Unsolicited advice is awkward. We would probably all agree that God didn't call the most skilled for this task, but what we need most is a listening ear and an occasional, "What can I do to help you?"*

*Here are some visiting guidelines: When preparing to come and visit, it's good to let us know beforehand. A visit not too early in the morning nor too late at night is appreciated. A special blessing is when there are several present to carry on a conversation among themselves when the one being visited isn't able to converse well. An occasional visit that allows me to go my way, while they "sit" my parent, frees me to attend*

*to other pressing issues. If I need to stay and be present at each visit it can sometimes add to my load more than it lifts.*

Following are tips, routines, or a plan that caregivers are suggesting to each other.

*Have a schedule for getting up, mealtimes, and going to bed.*

*Do NOT have a schedule as much as possible. They are not in a nursing home. Work around them. (There you have it, the quandary caregivers face all the time: how to get this right??)*

*Elderly should not have to be nagged about DIET. It's past time for that.*

*Decide from the beginning that there may be misunderstandings or wrong decisions made, that is part of the gift of caring. Resolve not to take things too personally. Try to keep your thoughts positive. Be very aware when negativity steps in. The negative habit is hard to break. I cannot change this situation, but I can choose how I respond to it.*

*We have a whiteboard where we write what we're doing that day. It does NOT help to tell things too far in advance. I don't need to correct things she says that are wrong when it doesn't matter. Taking her out of familiar surroundings is more difficult than hosting occasions at home. Engage*

*in slower-paced conversations. Do not share negative news stories. Find small doable tasks and allow her that responsibility. Some helpful details: the use of surveillance cameras, less carpeting, glass door cupboards, plenty of lighting, their own bathroom, and handrails.*

*Make time for personal meditation time. Avail yourself of books and helps (i.e. The 36 Hour Day). Have your own hobbies where your mind can wander stress-free. Get some fresh air. Have your parents listen to recordings. Rent a lift. Hire a home healthcare nurse for assistance. Getting Hospice/health care involved gave us the equipment needed.*

*With our special needs daughter, I have learned to make a dreaded event one to look forward to. It took some creativity, but it has been well worth all my effort.*

*Meals take LONG. I eat faster so I read aloud while they finish eating, and we all enjoy it.*

*Keep a calendar schedule for siblings to follow on care-giving, so there are no surprises.*

*Have a living will to know what their wishes are/were. Get their financial affairs in order as soon as possible.*

*Do not expect them to read the Bible and pray for long periods of time. They may find it difficult to concentrate or*



remember. Read to them. Pray with them.

Keep a running list of neglected things for others to help with when they offer. Keep life basic.

Focus on your children still at home who want life to be as normal as possible. Keep your own family first.

Have one or more “go to” people whom you can call or message when you need a listening ear. Caregiving can be lonely, so it’s important to reach out at times, at least by phone.

The caregivers’ expressions of appreciation and gratitude:

*In our church there has been a systematic schedule to help with meals or relieving the caregivers for scheduled hours. Our church gives us a break from teaching Sunday school and serving in capacities like food committee or youth counselors. They do so well in lightening our responsibilities for church cleaning or food preparation.*

*I appreciate when people engage with my dad after church, when they stop, bend down to his level, and talk with him.*

*One of our visitors offered a prayer of blessing over our mother and us, her caregivers. This was such a meaningful gesture of Christian care and bearing our load with us.*


Several concluding thoughts:

*While caregiving for a senior has comparisons to caregiving of children, there is a foundational difference. The vision and purpose to care for children is so that they can outgrow that care and become independent. The purpose to care for an older person is to give them quality of life until they... die. This reality is starkly different from child-care and it is helpful to remember along the way.*

*I was once asked if I knew why my parent was living so long. In self-condemnation, I answered that I supposed God still needed to refine my character. He replied, “A doctor once told us that the disabled parent lives on and on because they are loved.”*

**How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.**

**-George Washington Carver**

*In the future I hope to conduct an anonymous survey for ladies who live singly in a married world. The responses will be knit into one or several articles for this column. If you are single and willing to be included in the survey, I would be pleased to hear from you. Find my contact information inside the front cover. *

## A Snake Bites Me

*Aaron Ulrich, Ghana, Africa*

*Based on a true story that happened in April 2020.*

**M**y name is Shakuru and I live in Ghana, West Africa, with my parents. I have four older sisters and a younger brother. I am five. We are Muslims and pray to Allah.

We have neighbors who are Christian missionaries from America. They have a boy called Noah who's about my age. We often have fun playing together. We don't mind that my skin is black, and Noah's skin is white. One day his family left town for a few days.

The next night a snake bit me when I was sleeping. I had been sleeping on Mom's bedroom floor like normal with Mom, my older sister, and little brother. I woke up crying. Mom desperately called Dad. He came and killed that very poisonous snake.

That night yet, Dad took me by moto to my uncle in another village. My uncle is known to be able to treat snake bites with herbs. He got roots and bark, boiled them, and smeared my arm with it. It hurt when he squeezed my arm. He made me drink

some of the herb water and bathe with the rest of it. It tasted bad!

Dad left me with my uncle and promised to come back the next day. I was scared. I had never spent a night without either Dad or Mom. I was in a different house in a different village. I cried and cried! There was no electricity in this village and no street lights. It was so very dark. I was sad and felt so forsaken by my parents!

But Dad came to see me every day.

Four days later, when Dad came to visit, Noah's dad came along. The missionary neighbor-friend brought me a small gift of bananas and crackers. I liked that. Dad lovingly looked at my swollen hand and a sore on my foot that was bleeding. Then he took me for a walk. It was hard to walk because my feet hurt so badly. Before Dad and the white man left, the missionary prayed for me and told me I would be OK.

The next day Mom came to see me instead of Dad. When she saw my swollen hand and my painful feet, she

was very sad and afraid. I was getting worse. The left side of my chest was swollen and so sore it hurt.


Dad took me back home when he came the next day. My mom got me ready to go to the hospital. The missionary came and took Mom and me on his moto to the hospital in town about 5 miles away. At the hospital they gave me some water in a little tube that went into a vein in my hand. They put some anti-venom medicine into the water that was going into my arm. I soon started feeling better. Even though I stayed overnight at the hospital, I wasn't very scared because my mom slept in the same bed with me.

In the morning, the swelling in my arm and chest had gone down some. The white man came back with his

son, Noah, to see me, and I took a walk with them while we waited for the doctor to come. When the doctor came, he said I could go home.

I was so happy to go home! When we got home, lots of neighbors and friends came to see me. I was a bit shy and went into our bedroom to hide. It was seven days ago that the snake bit me.

Later, my dad and I went to see the missionary neighbor. It was good to see Noah and his family again. Noah's dad prayed with us and thanked God for sparing my life and healing me. He said that God has a good plan for my life. I wonder what that means.

*The Bible tells us God sees even the little sparrow that falls. How much more He sees and cares about all the little children of the world!* 

## youth messages

# Six Simple Steps to a Miserable Devotional Life

*Shawn Miller, Newcomerstown, OH*

“It is a solemn thing, and no small scandal in the kingdom, to see God’s children starving while actually seated at the Father’s table” (Tozer, 1950, p. 4). A. W. Tozer wrote this in the context of a church, yet

it can well be applied to personal devotional times with God. How often people leave their personal devotional times feeling famished rather than full of the delicacies from the Father’s table!

Having personal devotional time with God can be very strengthening to Christians, yet so many people view it as dull, boring, and miserable. It becomes a duty rather than a joy. Knowing the spiritual strength that can come from a vibrant devotional life, Satan will do his best to sidetrack us. In *Secrets of the Kingdom Life*, David Bercot states, “Because our devotional hour is such an important part of the Kingdom life, Satan will do whatever he can to torpedo our devotional time” (Bercot, 2014). Following are a few strategies Satan might employ to make your devotional life miserable.

#### **Avoid Consistency**

Christians vary on the time they prefer to set aside for personal devotions. Some prefer mornings, some evenings, and others the middle of the day, depending on their responsibilities. If you have no consistent or set time, your devotional life will be pushed around and squeezed to fit into whatever time remains after everything else is done in the day. The best times will be used for what is important to you and the less-than-ideal times will be used for your devotional life. Often, personal time with God might be skipped altogether. This in turn leads to unfulfilling and erratic devotional times.

On the other hand, a consistent time for personal devotions assures

it won't be skipped easily; it becomes important and scheduled, and, as one brother said, a “natural part of your daily life.” Setting a very specific time is ideal. However, since your schedule may vary from day to day, you may prefer setting more general times, such as mornings before going to work or evenings before going to bed. Since these times vary, people like to adjust accordingly.

#### **Find the most comfortable and relaxed position**

Waking up in the morning and immediately slouching on the recliner with a Bible in your lap will result in a dull and groggy devotional time. The words will start to blur, your head will begin to nod, you'll doze briefly, then jerk awake, ready for another round of the vicious cycle. You will be much more alert and able to concentrate if you first get dressed and ready for the day, and then sit erect.

It can also be tempting to find the most comfortable position when having devotions in the evening. After a day of hard work and a nice warm shower, it is tempting to stretch out on the recliner and half-heartedly read the Bible. Some people find it tempting to crawl into bed and try to read a passage just before going to sleep. All of these things militate against concentration and alertness.

Many studies advocate good posture to boost concentration. In 2018, the San Francisco State University

published a study in which posture proved to make a big difference on math scores. The article states, “For people who are anxious about math, posture makes a giant difference. The slumped-over position shuts them down and their brains do not work as well. They cannot think as clearly” (p.1). The article mentions that body position can help people prepare for many different types of performances. It concludes by saying, “You have a choice. It’s about using an empowered position to optimize your focus” (p.1).

Position and posture directly affect devotional times. The better posture you have, the more alert you will be. Comb your hair, brush your teeth, get dressed for the day, and use good posture. It will enrich your devotional times and enable you to absorb more from the Word of God.

### **Make sure you feel rushed**

“He that goes to his closet in a hurry, only to repeat a short form of words, may pray all his life without real devotion” (Law, 1729 as cited in Bercot, 2014). Feeling rushed while having devotions is a sure way to get less out of it. Our hearts are not drawn into true worship when we hurriedly read the Word without time for reflection. Feeling rushed also compels us to say quick, insincere prayers from which we hope to get a spiritual charge for the day.

A set time for devotions, as discussed in the first point, will help decrease the rushed feeling and lend to more profitable times. We are living in a frenzied world where rushing around is the norm. But remember, the world can rush on without you for one hour a day while you meditate on the Word of God and pray. Allow yourself time to truly worship God in spirit and in truth.

### **Invite Distractions**

In his book *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer writes, “The world of sense intrudes upon our attention day and night for the whole of our lifetime. It is clamorous, insistent, and self-demonstrating. It does not appeal to our faith; it is here, assaulting our five senses, demanding to be accepted as real and final” (p.26). A. W. Tozer was writing in the mid-1900s before computers and cell phones were the norm. Even during those times, remaining focused was difficult.

Today there are innumerable distractions competing for our attention, especially when reading the Word or praying. It takes intentional effort to put distractions away from us and solely focus on God. The cell phone is a prime example of something that can easily distract us.

It may be useful to deliberately set the phone aside or to put it in airplane mode. There is a reason why colleges, universities, and many other public settings ask for all cellular

devices to be put on silent mode for certain times. They can easily distract from the lectures or whatever else is at hand.

I love the prayer A. W. Tozer prayed: “Lord, teach me to listen. The times are noisy and my ears are weary with the thousand raucous sounds which continuously assault them” (p. 37).

### **Disregard Structure**

People who work in construction know the importance of a strong structure for a building. Without a strong structure, the walls will easily collapse. It is the same way with our devotional life. It will collapse into chaos if there is no structure or plan in place. Structure promotes concentration. Good Bible reading plans or devotional books like *Beside the Still Waters* help provide structure. Purposeless jumping around to various chapters of the Bible with no consistent pattern or plan will decrease the effectiveness of devotions. One spiritual leader admitted that for years he did hit-and-miss Bible readings. He said the results were more miss than hit.

It may be good to set times of Bible reading, meditation, and prayer. For example, maybe you could structure your devotions to read and meditate on a Psalm for ten minutes. Then read another Bible passage or devotional book for fifteen minutes. After that you may want

to spend fifteen minutes in prayer. There are many ways to structure devotional life and make it more meaningful, but don't just use other peoples' methodologies. “If we rely on others' methodologies as a means of bringing personal experience, we will be disappointed,” said one missionary.

A word of caution, though: while structure is good, beware that if it is too rigid, it can diminish spontaneity and the moving of the Spirit. Bible reading plans are good, but as one pastor cautioned, they can be used to gain “mileage rather than message.”

### **Ignore Internalization**

It is so easy to forget what you read or meditated on in your devotional time. In one sense, your devotional time is a separate part of the day, but in another, the thoughts you gleaned should be carried with you throughout the day. The Psalmist said, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97). It is important to internalize our devotions. When we discipline our minds to ponder and internalize what was read in devotions that morning or the evening before, it can add tremendous joy and strength to our day. As one brother shared, “Learn how to live with an awareness of God's presence all the time.”

There are many ways to internalize our devotions. Sharing our thoughts with others is one way to do this.

When we don't share with others what we read or meditated on, we aren't as prone to concentrate on what we are reading. I have been tremendously blessed by a brother who sends me a verse from his Bible reading every day. It is strengthening for me, and I'm sure it's a blessing to him. When we talk with others about what we read, it encourages them to also share what they read. Expecting to talk about your devotional life will increase the motivation to carefully glean more thoughts.

Saying short prayers throughout the day can also help internalize your devotions. Saying "Thank you, Father" for blessings that come or "Please help me, Father" as challenges arise are a few examples of short prayers. I have a friend who prayed for an unsaved person every time he touched his car door handle. He was amazed how often this little reminder helped him pray. Journaling your thoughts or pocketing a piece of paper with a written verse for the day are just a few other examples of ways to internalize your devotions and make it a part of life.

### Conclusion

Although the title may have a sarcastic and negative connotation, the flip side of each of these points can help make personal devotional times interesting, meaningful, and life-giving. To do these things takes discipline and yet "these disciplines


will enable us to do what we don't want to do in order to achieve what we've always wanted to achieve" (Swindoll, 2005). You may ask why it is so important to give your personal devotional life so much attention. A. W. Tozer states it well: "Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified. The body becomes stronger as its members become healthier. The whole church of God gains when the members that compose it begin to seek a better and a higher life" (p.43). An enriching personal walk with God will help enrich the spiritual lives of those around us and those within the church.

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## THOUGHT GEMS

If you are dissatisfied with your lot, perhaps you haven't taken care of it.

• • • • •

Things begin to look right when you stop doing wrong.

• • • • •

As Christians, our responsibility is to be faithful.

• • • • •

The law gives us first duty and then privilege.

• • • • •

Envy provides the mud that failure throws at success.

• • • • •

God tends to use the one nearest Him.

• • • • •

Facing duty in service is easier than running away.

• • • • •

God measures our service, not by our ability, but by our willingness.

• • • • •

The crowns we wear in heaven must all be won on earth.

• • • • •

We are saved to serve, but we cannot serve to be saved.

• • • • •

We are not cisterns made for hoarding, but channels made for sharing.

• • • • •

Realize that every material thing you have  
isn't owned but loaned to you from God.