



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

JANUARY 2022

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Calvary Messenger

January 2022

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

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Editor: Aaron D. Yoder

5188 W. 825 N., Leesburg, IN 46538

Ph: 574-646-2123; Fax: 800-956-7850

calvary.messenger.19@gmail.com**Assistant Editor:** Paul L. Miller

7809 S. Herren Rd., Partridge, KS 67566

Ph: 620-567-2286; Fax: 620-615-7352

plmiller1934@gmail.com**Contributing Editors:**

Simon Schrock, Enos D. Stutzman,

Aaron Lapp, Ronald J. Miller

Missions Editor: Floyd Stoltzfus

3750 E. Newport Rd.

Gordonville, PA 17529

Youth Messages Editor: Josh Kooistra

2445 Rough & Ready Rd.

New Concord, OH 43762

cm youtheditor@gmail.com**Junior Messages Editor:**

Mrs. Mary Ellen Beachy

11095 Pleasant Hill Rd.

Dundee, OH 44624

maryellenbeachy@icloud.com**Women's Editor:**

Mrs. Susan Schlabach

7184 W. Henry Rd., Ripley, OH 45167

skschlabach@gmail.com**Circulation Manager/Treasurer:**

Enos D. Stutzman

7498 Woods West Ave.,

London, OH 43140

Ph: 614-460-9222

enosmary@gmail.com

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The Humble Son of God

How wonderful to know the humble Son of God,
The richest of God's qualities upon the earth to trod.
To follow after Him; to push, and press, and rush,
To hide our eyes, to bow our face, to close our mouth and hush.

He's humble—does not speak unless He's spoken to.
There are not many like Him, they are the chosen few.
He longs their fellowship to have, like Him they long to be,
To bear His yoke, like Him they'll rise in joyful liberty.

He is the greatest of them all, all knees to Him will bow.
And all the humble followers, they still don't know just how,
He takes them from the dust of sin and raises them to heav'n.
He opens up His heart to them and holds them to His bosom.

Come join the little happy band, who see His smiling face,
Whose work is not found of themselves, but by His precious grace.
Won't you take up your cross and lose your life for His dear sake?
So in eternal halls of joy you'll of His boundless love partake.

Paul W. Rinear, Salesville, OH 

The Bleak Midwinter

Sometime, between the thrill of the first snow and before the first signs of spring are seen, is a time of year when many people get bogged down with the season of winter. Outdoor activities are restricted and cold and clouds seem to have no end. Many activities take more energy than are needed in a warmer season. Discomfort and danger lurk at many events. Impatience at the seeming unending cold weather runs rampant. Will spring ever come?

Heard during the recent Advent season, a song of the birth of Jesus talked about the *bleak midwinter*. While we may not know which season of the year saw the shepherds watching their flocks by night, it was indeed in the spiritual *bleak midwinter* of God's people, the Jews. Would Jehovah ever communicate with His people again?

We find the last words from Jehovah written by the minor prophet, Malachi. They include these words, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes" (Malachi 4:5). Here began the drought of the

"Word of the Lord" from Jehovah. The coldness of a spiritual winter set in and Jehovah went silent.

But spring was coming to God's people and to the whole world! As a certain priest was fulfilling his course of duty in the temple, "*there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense*" (Luke 1:11). The approximately 400 years of *bleak midwinter* was ended!

Gabriel had come from the presence of God; sent to speak to Zacharias. He promised joy and gladness to the righteous and blameless couple, Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth! Gabriel's words are recorded in the first chapter of Luke. "*But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John... And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*" (Luke 1:13,17).

Despite the apparent cold and cruel natural winter season, there are amazing things happening to many

seeds that have fallen naturally to the earth. Many seeds have a hard and impenetrable outer coating that protects the hidden life within. These seeds may need scarification to take place so moisture can enter and cause germination. Freezing temperatures, wind, rain and the trampling of humans and animals are natural forms of scarification.

Many spring-blooming bulbs need weeks and months of cold temperatures to stimulate a biochemical response that “turns on” flower formation. Without this *bleak midwinter* chilling period, many bulbs will try to bloom, but the flowers may be small and malformed.

Throughout the Old Testament we read of many examples of people who faithfully trusted God during an extended waiting period during the prime years of their lives.

Abraham was promised an innumerable posterity, but his *bleak midwinter* lasted until Sarah was past child-bearing age. But “*he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness*” (Genesis 15:6).

Joseph almost arrogantly related his dreams to his brothers and father. “*And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and,*

behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?” (Genesis 37:6-10).

The scarification in Joseph’s life included being sold as a slave, falsely accused of being an interloper in his master’s marriage, and was forgotten in one of Egypt’s prisons. But his *bleak midwinter* came to an end because of an extended famine. The dreams came true when his brothers came to Egypt to purchase grain. “*And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph’s brethren came, and bowed down*

themselves before him with their faces to the earth” (Genesis 42:5-6).

His character was revealed when his brothers fell down before him after their father’s death. They again lied to save their lives, but Joseph showed that he understood what God had been doing when he said, “...ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20).

We don’t know if **David** understood the significance of being anointed by Samuel while he was but a lad, but his *bleak midwinter* was a fight for his own life. He left his wife and home and became a vagabond in the land. Time after time he refused to slay the one who was seeking his life. He refused to put forth his hand against the LORD’S anointed. He said, “*The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee*” (I Samuel 24:12). He did not know when or if his *bleak midwinter* would end and indeed it lasted for many years. But it ended! “*Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD thy God said unto thee, Thou*

shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel. Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel” (I Chronicles 11:1).

After the Jews’ *bleak midwinter* came to an end with the birth of their Messiah, people who had waited patiently were the first to recognize the Christ. They saw, recognized, and exalted the Baby in Mary’s arms.

“*And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:25-32).*

“And there was one **Anna**, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but **served God with fastings and prayers night and day.** And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2: 36-38).

Maybe you are facing your own *bleak midwinter* that seems endless. The scarification in your life could be an illness you are enduring, an impossible “King Saul,” the spiritual needs in family members, empty arms while others are cradling their babies, standing alongside your friends while they stand at the marriage altar, or false accusations and misunderstandings similar to what Joseph endured. Or maybe

God is silent and it seems longer than the 400 years from Malachi to Matthew. If you are blameless (not perfect) and “righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord” like Zacharias and Elizabeth, your *bleak midwinter* will come to an end! Spring will burst forth with new life, and the coldness you are facing now will “turn on” your life like dead bulbs sprouting shoots out of the warming soil with the first blossoms of spring! Your blooms will be more beautiful because of your faith in God during the cold months or years.

Be faithful! Trust God! Don’t give up or despair! Serve others like Joseph and David did in their *bleak midwinter*. Spring will come, if not in this life in the life to come when the Lord will say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21). Spring will come!

-AY 

When you shoot an arrow of

truth, dip its point in *honey*.

-Arabic proverb

Announcement

REACH 2022

March 24-25, 2022

REACH brings together conservative Anabaptist ministries and Kingdom workers from all walks of life. Join us for this two-day program that includes 97 breakout sessions to support and equip people in ministry and all those with a desire for service. Over 50 participating ministries share their vision in focus sessions and displays. General sessions tie the event together with sermons, singing, and prayer. All are welcome!

Location: Calvary Church, 1051 Landis Valley Road, Lancaster, PA 17601

Read more information and register: fbep.org/reach-2022

Announcement

Mountain View Nursing Home

Personnel Needs

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Dietary aide- 1- March | 4. CNA (man)- 1- April |
| 2. Housekeeping- 1- March | 5. Dietary Manager - May |
| 3. CNA (lady)- 2- March | 6. Dean of Women - June |

If you have interest or know of someone who would do well in any of these departments, please contact Linnford Byler –linnford@mvnursing.net or (901)299-0498.



“Home is...where they love you!”

Conservation by Conversation

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Our main connection with other people is by conversation. Some people talk too much, and some not enough. Our social health and growth are largely advanced by our talk. Parents make much effort to get the small child started in talking. His first word is important, is enjoyed by everyone, and warrants special mention. Likewise, the last words spoken by a dying person are considered to be noteworthy. A person's life can be involved with a lot of talk between those two points in the duration of life.

The average speaking speed is about 125 words per minute, but the average person can process 400 to 500 words per minute in listening. That is why we consider it laborious to listen for any length of time to a slow speaker. We tend to get finished listening before he is finished talking which can happen also in church during the preaching. However, having a better anticipation of our listener's interest could greatly increase both conversation and preaching. Preaching could be called

a one-sided conversation.

It has been said that we remember only 7% of the actual words used, but 35% by the tone of voice, and 58% of the gestures and facial expressions. I do not have a percentage for how much is remembered. The degree of passion one employs in speaking can increase the percentage remembered. It could rate fairly high. An exit poll at a certain church revealed that 46% felt that the preacher "shared" too long, 31% thought he should have preached longer, and 23% didn't know he had spoken at all! Similar results could happen in some general conversations, especially with some people who are less than perceptive relative to the listener's interest, who sadly are very dull in their speaking.

We don't care to converse with people who:

- are too often negative, or often bring up an opposite view.
- always top your point.
- often interrupt with their own ideas.
- are usually the hero of their bigger or better occasions.
- don't really seem to listen, and

show evidence of loading both barrels in response.

- are chronic complainers.
- are quite dogmatic—the know-it-all type.
- respond with a lengthy story you had heard them say four times previously.
- change the subject without any interest at all in what you said.
- respond in a low tone that is difficult to hear.

We can improve our skills in conversation by being good listeners. We can improve our skills by observing persons who are good at conversation. Why are we drawn to them? Why do some people repel you by their speaking habits?

The crucifixion route in conversation is to traverse all the streets and alleys until you arrive at the intended site to give your point. Or making a short story long for the sake of monopolizing the time. It is often true that small minds discuss people, mediocre minds talk about happenings, and great minds share ideas. Likewise, that which is given without forethought usually requires little afterthought. Let all conversation be complimentary of your listener in some way, likewise about others, and maybe only a bit about yourself.

The harmony and success of

marriage is still concerning your conversation—it is a prime way to conserve the dynamic of matrimony even as it was during the time of courting. The main connection in marriage is our conversation. Surround your spouse with the gladsome words of information, good humor, and personal interests. Cause it to be thoughtful, considerate, joyous, hopeful, winsomely given, and by all means when you two are the only ones present, hilarious at times.

The main reason for this article is to try to address why so many young people suffer from a lack of conversation with their parents. It has been referred to as the “generational gap” for as long as I can remember. One middle-aged man told me he always faulted his dad for not having much conversation from him. But now he realizes the very same disconnect has happened to him with his own sons. They have left the church and apparently are “plugged in” elsewhere with who all that might be unknown to this dad. With tears he said, “What can I do? What should I have done? Where have I missed it?”

One set of answers likely will not cover the needed counsel in its entirety. The human heart can be so diversified that from the most dysfunctional family, one or more

children arise to be exemplary and outstanding. Contrariwise, a home might have been the greatest example in ideals, and yet have a son or daughter that goes astray. It is a risk to make a list, but here goes. What are some reasons for communicational disconnect between parents and children?

1. Financial harnesses

We hitch up too many obligations by buying things that are on the installment plan—more stalling than going forward! The financial grindstone requires primary focus. We might gradually have more love for nice things than togetherness of family enjoyments. Financial obligations take priority and relationships unintentionally become secondary or less. Make your own list on ways that you will use to budget your time as well as your money. Make family joys a good percent of your time and stick to it. It will make a difference if what is spent for family special times is basically seen as an investment. Time is money, they say, so spend more time with your family in pursuing their interests in talk and activity.

2. Crazy schedules

“Crazy” comes from a European term for crash. Schedules collide, that is, causing a social crash for family members. Dad gets up early

to go to work while everyone else is still in bed. Church programs call for participants and school demands priority. Few schools or church functions are designed with family togetherness in mind; most of it is compartmentalized according to age or stage. Dad comes home from work and must do some work at his desk while Mom is preparing supper. The children are in their rooms or in the basement. Later, they go for the evening to their various compartments in the church or school. Next thing is morning when Dad leaves early for his work again. There is no slack time, and days speed up into weeks, months, and years.

Thus, the family gradually grows apart. For most days of the month, when can they be together to share any common interests? Common interests are both the seed and the fruit of mutual, contributing conversation.

3. The fruit of compartments

Dad has his daily work at his job or business. Mom is in the child-bearing, child-rearing, housekeeping, domestics, gardening, and preserving-food stage. Children can help her, if she sees to it, and that is prime time for conversation. But mental preoccupation can insist on being prominent to only fill the mind, having minimal conversation.

Mom can keep the conversation flowing, but that can be a job in itself. Disconnects happen over time with so many outside-the-home interests. Smart phones are robbing prime time from our families with all this big time, highway robbery of conversation that connects people and families.

4. Teenage bedrooms

My 1950s farmhouse bedroom did not have a closet; our dress clothes were hung on hooks on the wall, and only two or three changes of work clothes in the drawer. The only bathroom was downstairs. There was no heat upstairs and no air-conditioning at all. We had electric in every room, quantified by one electric bulb in the ceiling. We were raised in the large family kitchen and dining room in a together atmosphere. No, I was not born or raised Amish.

I do not begrudge some of today's youth for a nice room of their own, with a loveseat for lounging, a small desk and office chair for homework, and a sound system to help fill every moment with music. For them, it is the most comfortable room in the whole house. O yes, I almost forgot, it also has a bed fit for a queen. I think that is a part of her quest. This fine arrangement can be a cause for children being disconnected from

each other and their parents if time at home is largely spent in their own bedroom. What else factors in the parent-child disconnect?

5. The homework from the school

Dad has his nose to the grindstone, Mom has her toes to the grindstone, and Sammie and Sally have their homework to the grindstone. It is all connected as running from one crankshaft, but they are basically all disconnected from each other in their various compartments! Not all educators agree to the professed value of several hours of homework for students each day. Our seven children were in school for 35 years, 1965-2000. Homework expectations were greatly ratcheted up in that span of time. It became very clear to me how the Christian schools have replaced the home as number one in the life of the child ahead of the home and the church. It is most unfortunate that "Christian" education has become so skilled and sophisticated that for five days of every week, the most or all the daylight hours of fall, winter, and spring are monopolized by school-related homework and school extra curriculars in some way. They rob us of precious family time. Consequently, meaningful family activity and conversation suffers.

No one can be perfect nor is expected to perform all the time

in the highest ideal. Our own assessment should be given toward a potential problem-solution response when a communication problem is recognized. The most critical stage of life seems to be in the 13-16 years of life. It is the least-addressed stage of life in our churches. The groundwork for that critical stage is laid in the ages 10-12 of both boys and girls at home, not in school. Take notice how animated in talk that age is after church services, and some even during the preaching time. Or watch them during lunch break in school. Then observe how quiet they often are at home with Mom and Dad. What is happening or has already happened?

The role of dads breaks down seriously because many fathers, if not most of them, will say, "I am not a reader." Part of the skill and aptitude for worthwhile conversation is in being interested in many things, and reading all kinds of worthwhile and informative books and literature. A broad-based reading regimen will immensely promote meaningful conversation, and at the same time produce more skill in private and public speaking. Poor memories become degenerate by lack of exercise. Some people say since most of what we hear and read is forgotten anyway, why bother with the mental

exercise? Shall we also say that what we earn is spent anyhow, why bother with earning it in the first place? Earning and spending is not in vain, nor is hearing and reading. Much good is produced by the exercise, both of earning and reading.

Reading is the basis of all learning and education. A child who cannot read by age nine will be hindered in his learning on all subjects at school, and from there all through his school years. An adult who will not try to improve and do better in reading will likely slowly slide backwards conversationally, both in listening and in speaking, and because of it, fail in the primary social skills.

A serious course in public speaking should include some basic one-on-one exercises in conversation on selected topics with the instructor. We cannot here fully discuss all the inter-related dynamics.

The Bottom Line is that we realize it to be impossible to cover this problem area with this brief article. The problem of not feeling connected on a conversational level could involve emotional dysfunction as well as a lack of spiritual input, even by parents. To conserve keeping the hearts of the children connected to their fathers will require being more intentional in our conversation with our children. Recognize the problem,

then do something corrective about it. Many fathers, and some mothers, should awaken to the inestimable value of being conversational with each of their children. We must begin in their childhood, through their

adolescent years, and on through the teen years. It will take precious time and some emotional energy to make it happen. Rewards always come at a later season in life, like apples on a tree.



The Spider Monkey

Justin Zimmerman, Mixcolaja, Guatemala

What has five limbs, looks somewhat like a spider, and barks like a dog? Can't guess what it is? Well, allow me to give you a brief introduction to the famed spider monkey. We got to visit some of these fascinating creatures a few months ago on our trip to the Peten in Northern Guatemala.

First, their fifth limb is their long and dexterous tail. They can use it to hang onto tree limbs, even swinging from just their tail, as well as to pick and hold fruit. They also use it to keep their balance on the rare occasions that they descend to the ground (most other monkeys use their forelimbs for balance when walking). Having a built-in "safety harness" is a very useful thing when living 80 to 100 feet above the ground! The tip of their tail has a bare patch of skin, which even has

skin grooves somewhat like your fingerprints! So, their tail is very nearly an extra "hand!"

Well, that explains the five limbs. What about the name "spider monkey?" One glimpse of these creatures swinging, scrambling, and climbing in the treetops far overhead will quickly clear up that question. With their very long limbs they do look like giant spiders from a distance!

Spider monkeys are very agile creatures, and even though they are the largest of the New World monkeys, they are generally considered to be the most proficient tree-top climbers of the Western Hemisphere. Adults' bodies are usually a little over two feet long, but their tail is about another three feet long! They have dark fur and skin, though some species do have brown

or reddish fur, and some have white markings (there are seven recognized species throughout Latin America).

Wild spider monkeys are generally wary of humans and will give a warning bark (much like a dog) when they feel threatened. The particular monkeys we visited, however, were not afraid of us. They lived in a protected area and are something of a tourist attraction. As long as you have bananas to give them, they don't mind getting close. But they were definitely wild and a little wary. The boldest of them would actually come close enough to grab a banana out of your hand but would scuttle back 10 feet or so before chowing down on their treat.

Another unique feature of the spider monkeys is that they lack thumbs. Their four fingers are very long and hooked, which is great for swinging in trees! But it does look kind of funny when working on a banana! Our sons were intrigued by a baby monkey clinging to its mother's lower back with its tail wrapped about the base of her tail for added security. Female spider monkeys have one baby every two to five years (and the lifespan of a wild spider monkey is about 25 years). After it became clear that we were now empty-handed, the troop of monkeys climbed back up and disappeared

into the treetops.

Monkeys are very entertaining and interesting. But they are not human. They are not even closely related to humans (regardless of what evolutionists may say). God said, "Let us make *man* in our image, after our likeness." Genesis 2:7 says, "*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*" Of course, man sinned, and we are now living in a broken world filled with lost souls. Monkeys do not need to be saved (in the spiritual sense, but they need some prudent intervention to prevent their extinction!). Monkeys don't need missionaries to tell them about God. They already glorify their Creator!



[Reprinted with permission from the October-November 2021 issue of the Mid-Atlantic Informer.]



marriages

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

Brenneman-Yoder

Bro. Zachary, son of Mark and Loretta Brenneman, Montezuma, GA, and Sis. Rosalyn, daughter of Clyde and Marilyn Yoder, Montezuma, GA, on November 6, 2021, at Clearview Mennonite Church by Dwight Yoder.

Gerber-Zehr

Bro. Shane, son of Steven and Janette Gerber, Lanark, ON, and Sis. Jessica, daughter of Tim and Charlotte Zehr, Millbank, ON, on November 27, 2021, at Donegal Mennonite Fellowship for Brookside Conservative Mennonite Church by Albert Brubacher.

Mejia-Wagler

Bro. Lovel, son of Ruben and Sharon Mejia, Belize City, Belize, and Sis. Lois, daughter of Menno and Barbara Wagler, Cottage Grove, TN, on November 12, 2021, at Bethel Fellowship Church for Calvary Christian Fellowship by Dwight Miller.

Troyer-Shank

Bro. Vincent Wade, son of Kenneth and Sharon (Byler) Troyer, Stuarts Draft, VA, and Sis. Judith Susanna, daughter of Ray and Marietta (Schrock) Shank, Rochelle, VA, on December 18, 2021, at Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Aroda, VA, by Bennie Byler.

Zehr-Miller

Bro. Seth, son of Henry and Rose Zehr, Flat Rock, IL, and Sis. Lovina, daughter of David and Esther Miller, Lexington, IN, on November 5, 2021, at Hanover Baptist Church for Living Waters Mennonite Church by Floyd Lengacher.



cradle roll

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

Clemons, Josh and Fanita (Overholt), Aroda, VA, fourth child, second son, Tre' Joshua, December 9, 2021.

Diller, Delbert and Mary (Stoltzfus), Melvern, KS, sixth child, fourth son, Weston Cole, November 2, 2021.

Kauffman, Linfred and Rosetta (Yoder), Falkville, AL, fourth child, third daughter, Traci Rose, October 26, 2021.

Kuepfer, Ron and Janelle (Erb), Baden, ON, fifth child, second son, Carson James, November 10, 2021.

Lengacher, Sheldon and Alisa (Miller), Lexington, IN, sixth child and daughter, Laurel Kayann, November 29, 2021.

Miller, Christopher and Julia (Byler), McConnellsville, OH, third child, first son, Hosea Christopher, November 17, 2021.

Miller, Jon Eric and Anita (Yoder), Big Prairie, OH, fourth child, second son, Malachi Jon, December 28, 2021.

Miller, Kenton and Crystal (Hostetler), Rio Vista, TX, fourth child, second daughter, Kate Olivia, October 6, 2021.

Miller, Walter and Frieda (Kuepfer), Partridge, KS, first child and son, Felix William, December 3, 2021.

Peachey, Andrew and Ina (Hershberger), Mannsville, NY, second child, first daughter, Kelsey Nicole, December 10, 2021.

Petre, Dennis and Donna (Yoder), Moulton, AL, fifth child, third son, Derek Hans, December 22, 2021.

Ramirez, Omar and Glenda (Miller), Itasca, TX, fourth child, third son, Alek Adrian, September 18, 2021.

Sommers, Nathaniel and Dorthea (Byler), Lyndon, KS, first child and son, Josiah Lee, October 17, 2021.

Stoltzfus, Floyd and Sarita (Gingerich), Greenfield, OH, first child and son, Adrick William, November 5, 2021.

Stoltzfus, Lyndon and Caitlin (Snyder), Wytheville, VA, first child and son, Asher Kade, November 2, 2021.

Wagler, Jay and Emily (Wagler), Stratford, ON, first child and son, Emmett Grey, October 13, 2021.


Wagler, Lester and Lois (Overholt), Lyndon, KS, eighth child, fifth daughter, Saralyn Jane, November 25, 2021.

Wagler, Randall and Melissa (Miller), Altamont, KS, first child and daughter, Addelyn Rae, December 4, 2021.

Yoder, Jacob and Eunice (Yoder), Ripley, OH, third child, second son, Ryan Eric, December 10, 2021.

Yoder, Ryan and Susan (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, first child and daughter, Kirsten Jade, October 16, 2021.

Yoder, Travis and Veronica (Gingerich), Goshen, IN, first child and daughter, Hazel Noelle, December 18, 2021.

Zook, Justin and Jessica (Esh), Rural Retreat, VA, third child, first son, Dominic Leo, November 8, 2021. 

Digging for *facts* is better mental exercise
than jumping to *conclusions*.

ordinations

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

Bro. Jason Hostetler, 34, (wife, Donna Yoder), Danville, AL, was ordained deacon for Emmanuel Mennonite Church on November 21, 2021. Preordination messages were given by Merlin Mast. The charge was given by Wayne Nisly, assisted by Perry Miller and Stephen Beachy. Mose Yoder shared the lot.

Bro. Jason Raber, 33, (wife, Katrina Wagler), Lexington, IN, was ordained deacon for Living Waters Mennonite Church on September 19, 2021. Preordination messages were given by Andrew Hostetler. The charge was given by Floyd Lengacher. Terry Yoder shared the lot.

Bro. James Schmidt, 35, (wife, Joanne Gerber), Millbank, ON, was ordained

minister at Anchor of Hope Anabaptist Fellowship, Stratford, ON, on December 5, 2021. Preordination messages were given by Jeff Drudge. The charge was given by Melvin Roes, assisted by Jeff Drudge. Clifford Horst shared the lot.

Bro. Brian Shenk, 33, (wife, Cynthia Kauffman), Hutchinson, KS, was ordained minister at Center Amish Mennonite Church on December 5, 2021. Preordination messages were given by Bobbie Miller. The charge was given by Dwight Miller, assisted by David Yoder. Nelson Martin and John David Miller shared the lot.

Bro. Wayne Yoder, 48, (wife, Clara Bender), Wytheville, VA, was ordained bishop at Light of Hope Mennonite Church on December 12, 2021. Preordination messages were shared by Jeremy Weaver, Tim Weaver, and Steve Yoder. The charge was given by John Beiler, assisted by Tim Weaver and Richie Lauer.



obituaries

Overholt, Donnie Ray, 70, Aroda, VA, died December 3, 2021, after a three-year battle with cancer. He was born in Norfolk, VA, on June 26, 1951, to Joseph and Mary Ann (Herschberger) Overholt. His growing-up years were spent in Virginia and Kentucky. In his youth he returned to Virginia and on July 8, 1972, he married Nancy Mae Martin.

Donnie was a family man and was delighted to be blessed with nine children. He would go out of his way to make everything a family affair, whether it was gardening, going out to eat, going on a trip, or doing something else on Saturdays. It was usually everyone goes, or no one goes. He taught his family to be generous and to help others. He enjoyed

making life and trips an adventure.

He was well-known as a hard worker and spent many years as a mason. In his later years he enjoyed going to auctions and acquired many things that he would resell at the Front Royal Flea Market. He loved to visit with people. He was a loving husband, father, and grandfather and will be fondly remembered by his family and friends.

He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Nancy; five sons: Al (Katherine), South Hill; Ashley, Aroda; Alban (Julissa), Aroda; Austin (Liz), Brightwood; Ardell (Audrey), Aroda; four daughters: Fonda Overholt, Aroda; Faylene (Jeff) Stoll, Arthur, IL; Felicia (Titus) Helmuth, Culpeper; Fanita (Josh) Clemons, Aroda; six brothers: Simon (Ruby), KY; Mart (Mary), VA.; Rudy (Elsie) KS; Lavern (Nellie), SC; Paul (Darlene), TN; John (Susie), KY; three sisters: Sara Mae (Samuel) Kramer, TN; Lena (Elmer Jr.) Miller, VA; Verda (Glen) Stutzman, KY; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, brothers and sisters: Arlene Yoder, Elmo Overholt, Lilly Overholt, Marilyn Kanagy, Carolyn Overholt, Margaret Mast, and grandson Brandon Overholt.

The funeral service was held on December 7, 2021, at the Oak Grove Mennonite Church, followed by the committal and burial at the church cemetery with Lamar Hochstetler officiating.

Stoltzfus, Jonathan Daniel, 93, a resident of the Quarryville, PA,

Presbyterian Home, was called home by his Lord and Savior on October 3, 2021. Born in Ronks, PA, he was the son of the late Amos U. and Fannie (Lapp) Stoltzfus. He was married 69 years to Miriam Mary Lantz who preceded him in death on April 15, 2021.

Jonathan worked many years as a farmer, construction worker, welder at Lancaster Level Flo, and for 19 years at Good's Store in Quarryville. He was a member of the Weavertown Amish Mennonite Church. He was a former minister and bishop at Gapview Amish Mennonite Church.

Surviving are six sons: Amos (Marianne), Lancaster; Edwin, Ronks; David (Karen), Whittier, NC; Jonathan Jr. (Lydia), New Holland; Alpheus (Kathryn), Nashville, TN; Vernon (Kimberly), Strasburg; four daughters: Rebecca Ann (Galen) Miller, Bourbon, IN; Elma Grace Stoltzfus, Ronks; Esther Marie (Wayne) Wagler, Washington, IN; and Linda Beth (Sanford) Weaver, New Holland; 37 grandchildren, and 47 great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by a daughter, Mary Louise, grandsons: Jonathan Stoltzfus III, Joshua Stoltzfus; and siblings: Gideon, Jacob, Christ, Amos, Elam, Mary Riehl, Sarah Stoltzfus, and Hanna Stoltzfus. He was the last surviving member of his immediate family.

A funeral service was held October 7, 2021, at the Weavertown Amish Mennonite Church with Dave Stoltzfoos serving. Interment followed in the adjoining church cemetery.

Yoder, Jesse J., 85, Woodville, NY, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his family on November 24, 2021. He was born June 13, 1936, to David T. and Elsie (Kurtz) Yoder in Belleville, PA. On April 21, 1960, he married Martha E. Peachey.

After living four years in Belleville, PA, Jesse and Martha moved to Selinsgrove, PA, where they enjoyed 30 years. In 1994 they moved to Woodville, NY, where they were involved in the church planting and establishment of the Northern Light Church of which they were members.

He was a lifetime farmer and enjoyed beekeeping, woodworking, and traveling.

He was predeceased by his wife, Martha, with whom he spent 47 happy years, on May 1, 2007, and two sisters: one stillborn, and Amanda Yoder.

Surviving are two sons and four

daughters: Mary Ellen (Mark) Hostetler, Rock Stream; D. Timothy (Arlene), Mannsville; Julia (Chester) Zook, Milroy, PA; Olive (Junior) Peachey, Woodville; Lois (Timothy) Yoder, Lewisburg, PA; Jonathan (Brenda), Centreville, MI; 35 grandchildren, and 32 great-grandchildren. Also surviving are four brothers and three sisters: Enos (Rebecca) Yoder, Milroy, PA; David (Marie), Stanardsville, VA; Raymond (Linda), Adams; Harvey (Nancy), Belleville, PA; Mary (Ray) Beachy, Liberty, KY; Barbara (Lester) Beachy, Liberty, KY; and Rhoda (David) Yoder, Mayfield, KY.

The funeral service was held November 27, 2021, at the Northern Light Church. Officiating were Michael Kurtz, Loren Hostetler, Justin Yoder, and Joe Kurtz. He was buried in the Woodville Cemetery with Wilmer Peachey giving the committal.



observations

The tiny Central American country of El Salvador has long experienced an economic situation in which a disproportionate portion of financial resources rests in the possession of relatively few people. This dynamic has been the impetus for a variety of social and political unrests in El Salvador's somewhat turbulent history. In the late 1990s it became apparent to the ruling party that the left-wing party was on the cusp of gaining a majority in national

politics. One tactic that the left talked about as a way to reduce the value of the money that the rich folks had, was to encourage inflation and the devaluation of the colón, the official Salvadoran currency. In order to preempt this possibility, on January 1, 2001, the government of El Salvador adopted the US dollar as official legal tender. This effectively tied the value of the official currency to moorings outside the reach of the political players in El Salvador.

When we lived in El Salvador in

the 1990s, it was reported that the largest city in the world of Salvadoran citizens was the capital city, San Salvador. But the second largest city, by Salvadoran population, was Los Angeles, California. I can't verify the truth of this statement, but it seems plausible. It does illustrate the fact that many, many folks from El Salvador live in the US and send money back to their families in El Salvador. About 22% of El Salvador's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is from money that is sent by earners in the USA to support relatives in El Salvador. There is a gap between the value of the money that is sent and what is received, due to various fees associated with this type of transfer. About 70% of the people in El Salvador do not have bank accounts. The El Salvador government is concerned about this gap in value, between what is sent and what is received.

So, in September of 2021, El Salvador became the first sovereign state to adopt Bitcoin as legal tender alongside the US dollar. One of the stated advantages of this move was to evade the fees associated with transferring money into the country via banks. This was touted as a way to make it easier for those who don't have a bank account to receive money since they wouldn't need to use bank services to receive Bitcoin. While

this step was introduced with much fanfare and hoopla, actually adopting the use of Bitcoin in El Salvador has been a bit tepid. This was despite an incentive of 30 US dollars value in Bitcoin to every Salvadoran who sets up Chivo Wallet on their cell device. Chivo Wallet is the app that facilitates the sending and receiving of Bitcoin and the ability to withdraw the funds from special ATM machines.

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For about as long as I can remember, I understood that a centralized global monetary system is one of the things that God's people expect in the end times. By virtue of the fact that cryptocurrency isn't actually tied to any central bank, it is more decentralized and more difficult for any political entity to control. However, there are ways that it is more universal than national monetary currencies. I do not try to pretend to understand cryptocurrency very well, neither do I understand prophecy perfectly. I do wonder sometimes, though, if there might be a connection here.

Despite the questions this brings, the important things never change. God will provide what His children need, both in terms of knowledge and grace, when they need it. Furthermore, life as we know it is transitory. The future is unknown

since we haven't experienced it yet. I'm guessing that in the future when we gain the vantage of hindsight, these future things that we think are key and important now will find a more suitable priority at that time.



In the last two columns I referenced the situation with the Christian Aid workers who were kidnapped in Haiti. At this writing our hearts are overflowing with gratitude for the Lord's deliverance. This is even for those of us who don't personally know any of those who were held. I'm especially thankful for several things, not listed in any particular order. I'm thankful that the ones who were held were not subjected to physical abuse beyond scarce food and deprivation of comforts. I'm thankful that they were allowed to stay together and encourage one another during their ordeal. I'm thankful that they were reunited with family, both their physical and spiritual families. I'm thankful that there was no loss of life for the hostages or the captors in obtaining their freedom.

Thanksgiving is always proper. By the time you read this in early February, the exultation of this might have dimmed for some of us. Ongoing prayer is also proper. Let's continue to pray...

...for grace for each day for each

of those who were kidnapped as they continue to ponder and move forward from this time.

...for God's work in the hearts of those who kidnapped them.

...for those who are still held by the kidnappers. According to news media accounts, many Haitians are being held for ransom. The situation they will face, if and when they are released, is still a very difficult reality.

...that those responsible to guard the hostages, as well as other captives still being held, wouldn't face retribution as a result of this providential escape.



The Winter 2022 issue of Plough Quarterly was entitled "Made Perfect—Ability and Disability." I found two of the accounts in this publication particularly stirring.

Heonju Lee and his wife from South Korea welcomed a baby daughter into their family who was born with cerebral palsy. She possesses a keen mind and spirit but is limited physically. Then, prenatal tests determined that a subsequent pregnancy would result in the birth of a son with Down syndrome. The couple, already dealing with significant limitations in the life of one of their children, was devastated. They planned to follow the advice of their medical providers and terminate the pregnancy. When the author's father heard the news, he

clearly and unequivocally interceded on behalf of the unborn baby. His sentiments were summed up in these two quotes, “We human beings have to honor our Creator,” and “You must allow this child to live.” The couple reconsidered. They welcomed their son with Down syndrome into their lives. To be sure, challenges exist, but their son, Yusang, has brought much joy and many blessings.

One of the blessings the parents note is that they consider their son to have saved the life of another child. It happened this way. A couple who is friends of the Lee family learned that the child they were expecting would likely be born with Down syndrome. As we can guess, this news was not welcome. The prospective parents planned to terminate the pregnancy. The Lees identified with and grieved with them. But Mr. Lee decided to go visit them. He didn’t know what to say because he could feel the raw emotion and disappointment with which they were wrestling. So he just told their story about their son, Yusang. Mr. Lee left that evening not knowing how they received his story. The abortion had been scheduled for the following day.

About a week later they met. The friend of Mr. Lee was ecstatic. He said they had decided to not show up for the abortion appointment.

Subsequent tests indicated that the first tests were inaccurate. They eventually gave birth to a perfectly healthy baby girl. That’s how the Down syndrome boy, Yusang, saved the life of the little girl.



The second article was written by Amy Julia Becker, the mother of a daughter, Penny, who was born with Down syndrome. Her article is entitled, “When Merit Drives Out Grace.” She deftly points out how intertwined our views of capitalism, production, value, and intrinsic worth tend to become. The author speaks poignantly about how she needs to slow down in order to stay with her daughter. This adjustment has often felt like a sacrifice, whose reward is being with her daughter. She also pointed out very ably how an inappropriate emphasis on merit displaces grace.



I think it is appropriate for us to be cautious regarding prenatal testing. I suppose it can be said that where a solid commitment to receiving all the children God gives exists, those tests have the potential to help the parents prepare. However, let’s not underestimate God’s grace to carry us through situations we have not anticipated. Foreknowledge is sometimes overrated.

Of course, it is not difficult for us to understand that prenatal testing has led to the elective abortion of many, many children. This is tragic!

We are past the phase in our life where we are expecting babies. But I'd like to encourage those who are in that phase of life to ask yourselves two questions:

Why is this test important?

What will I do with the information that this test provides?

It is also worth mentioning that much of prenatal care, including various tests, is designed to monitor conditions in such a way that adjustments can be made to address certain problems in a timely fashion.



This publication has a section that lists births. I like that feature. Publishing these births gives testimony to a priority that welcomes and celebrates babies. Praise the Lord! The miracle of birth and children is heavy

on my mind. Brenda and I recently welcomed our fifth grandchild. Lord willing, a sixth little grandchild will join our family tree next spring.

But we are living in a society in which many regard children as discretionary appendages to fit around more important life decisions. We also know that many loving couples experience the intense disappointment that comes from the unrealized and strongly-desired gift of children. This awareness should help God's children to be unapologetic and humbly grateful when God gives us children.

That gratitude must function apart from our consideration of these children's worth, convenience, or merit. It will also help us to "pump the brakes" on our uninformed judgments regarding whether certain parents should have more or fewer children than they have. We seldom know the whole story.

-RJM 

Love

Peace is love resting.

Prayer is love keeping tryst.

Sympathy is love tenderly feeling.

Enthusiasm is love burning.

Hope is love expecting.

Patience is love waiting.

Faithful is love sticking fast.

Humility is love taking the true pledge.

Modesty is love keeping out of sight.

Soulwinning is love pleading.

Sanctification is love in action.

Faith-Journey Contemplations

Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX

Joshua Harris, the author of the book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, which was a big influence on the purity culture among the youth within conservative Christian circles of the 1990s, made a public announcement two years ago that he was separating from his wife and that he did not want to identify as a Christian anymore. Since then there have been other prominent pastors and Contemporary Christian musicians who have also rescinded their Christianity and are in the

process of deconstruction. But the one that shook me to the core was last December (2020) when I read about the moral scandals involving Ravi Zacharias, the famed Christian apologist. For four decades he was defending and promoting the Christian faith and morality that he was secretly violating in every aspect. While there is much blame and accusation to go around, I decided to do a serious personal introspection instead, which for me was much more beneficial.

In contemplating on my faith-journey,
self-reflective questions arise within me.
As I scrutinize the depths of my being,
Am I really the person others are seeing?

Is my trust in Jesus Christ for my salvation
what truly prompts my acts of sanctification?
Or am I merely living out tenets of religion
I have received by ecclesiastical instruction?

Does the ready smile displayed on my face
in actuality reflect the glory of God's grace?
Or is it the natural type of my temperament
expressing itself as what is normally evident?

Is my testimony of unwavering faithfulness
in fact a manifestation of inner godliness?
Or am I simply falling in line with dogmas
I have gathered from my papa and mama?

Does my restraint from addictive immorality
spring from an in-tune-with-God spirituality?
Or is it primarily the result of being sheltered
within a church setting that is rule-cultured?

Is my regular attendance at every church assembly
spurred by a genuine love for Christ and His Body?
Or am I just doing this out of a habitual tradition,
because I love the human touch of socialization?

Is my participation in congregational singing
evidence that God's joy within me is overflowing?
Or is it mainly the developed musical proficiency
I enjoy that prompts me to harmonize so heartily?

Does my willingness to serve the congregation
arise from a pure motive of selfless submission?
Or am I only acting in step with innate talents
that I enjoy doing in effortless self-confidence?

In essence, is the witness that others view
indicative of a heart very honest and true?
Or is it the result of years of entrenchment
in a conservatively Christian environment?

As these contemplations circulate in my brain,
I wonder if there is actually anything to gain.
Does godly behavior due to perfunctory habit
render my well-meaning deeds without merit?

Is it unethical to take whatever I have been given
and expend it by rote for the Kingdom of Heaven?
Or is it important to ensure cognitive motivation
always prompts every undertaking of consecration?

I know that as humans we are habitual creatures,
so, any questioning of motives makes us insecure.
It is also a stark reality that as we grow a little older
there is a propensity to become somewhat colder.

This is exacerbated by the fact that as evil prevails,
one's former love for Christ often tends to wane.
Moreover, as we see pastors deconstruct from the truth,
discouragement causes one to question the piety of youth.

If such prominent Christian figures can apostatize,
I am motivated to perform a serious internal assize.
For no matter how long I have been Christianized,
the possibility exists of growing morally-desensitized.

Of all the things that can instill insecurity within me,
the greatest one I fear is the pull toward complacency.
Thus, while many are worried concerning outside forces,
I wrestle with the cacophony of cynical interior voices.

I guess I realize in me exists the capability of holiness,
and at the same time, the tendency toward ungodliness.
This self-awareness prompts in me a sincere humility,
for without God's grace I'd show the worst of humanity.

In ruminating on all this, I can see the bigger picture
concerning some serious warnings in the Scriptures.
One is: the more a man thinks he stands firm and tall,
the harder the impact he endures from the higher fall.

A second one is: I dare not use another mortal human as an arbiter to assess if I am in accord with God's plan. For no matter how much they appear to love the Savior there is no guarantee they are actually objects of His favor.


Another one is: I must examine myself continually, to be sure I am living in line with the faith birthed in me. For to become lax in conducting a personal inventory is a surefire route to losing the promise of future glory.

Furthermore, these three principles alone do not ensure that I will continue walking steadfastly and secure. This is why I must surrender to open accountability to fellow believers who truly love and care for me.

Indeed, I recognize that the sincerity of initial profession is not what determines the destiny of my final salvation. Neither is it the eloquence of boldly attesting, "Lord, Lord," but how faithfully I practically obeyed His Father's Word.

In the end, I cannot rely on a specific denomination to keep fanning the Spirit flame of my redemption. But rather, I will utilize my congregational affiliation as an agency within which to work out my salvation.

I acknowledge then, I am not better than anyone else; to boast of anything good I have acquired by myself. The main difference between me and the most perverse is my faith and hope are in the Creator of the universe.

A final thought: this poem may sound like self-criticism, bordering very closely on extreme religious fanaticism. But I would much rather harshly excoriate myself today than to hear words of condemnation on Judgment Day! 

The Missionary and His Family

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

It can be one of the most rewarding experiences for a family to serve at a mission setting. It makes all the difference if we willingly accept this calling as God's will and exercise attitudes of Spirit-filled cheerfulness and diligent responsibility mixed with an eternal purpose. Godly attitudes are catching as a sweet aroma in the household. At this time of life's history, we have the opportunity to sow joyful seeds of eternal values in the lives of our precious children, in the national church, and to the unsaved in the community. Enjoy your family while your children are young. Listen to their heart cries in the teenage bracket. Put your all into family life, but do not idolize your wife and children to the extent of neglecting the ministry of the gospel in the national church. It takes godly wisdom and discerning forethought to exercise a proper balance between family time, church work, and evangelism in the neighborhood.

For many years now, before families and single people are sent to the mission field under Amish

Mennonite Aid (AMA), several days of orientation are given in our community. Topical subjects of Biblical basis for missions, fitting into the national church, language learning, geographical settings, and cultural practices of the countries where the attendees were planning to serve, maintaining good unit relationships, and more are offered in the orientation. Practical handouts on the various topics on these subjects and interesting books are made available. Many missionaries have expressed an appreciation for the orientation as an extra boost and a great encouragement for service. To God be the glory!

Jay Ervin Fox was often invited to speak on "Putting My All Into the Work" at the orientation for the last topic. Brother Jay as a pastor, teacher, evangelist, and family man added more fuel to the fire that was already burning in the hearts of the group being orientated. This was not wild fire that soon dies but Holy Spirit fire from Heaven with supported enthusiasm.

Jay Ervin and Norma raised their eight children in the inner city of

Reading, PA. They planted a church and a Christian school many years ago. Both are still actively thriving today. I observed several factors leading to God's continued blessing on this city mission. Jay Ervin and Norma had a strong supporting church "back home" in the country. These people knew what they believed and why they believe it. They did not drift along with mainstream Christianity. They exercised a Biblical vision for missions (serving under the Keystone Mennonite Fellowship) and healthy, godly attitudes in their home, the church, and community. Even though Jay Ervin was often called to churches for evangelistic meetings, it seemed the children grew up with a sense of well-being, a desire to work (both in the church and physical labor), and security.

There are physical benefits for parents and children in living on the mission field. We can learn to enjoy new foods that will help to relate to local families and break down some cultural barriers. Food has a way of communicating likes and dislikes and may serve as a means to humble ourselves so we are better prepared to share the gospel with our new friends.

There are social blessings that appear along the highway of mission life that help us mature spiritually.

Learning a new language can be a real challenge! Parents and children studying together on the language course can be such an enhancement in uniting the family for a common cause. Language learning can knock down some "national pride props" that we often carry along deep inside our souls toward foreigners thinking we as Americans are the greatest people in the world. Learning a new language is one of the most beneficial exercises to humble ourselves as Paul addressed: "...*I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*" (I Corinthians 9:22b).

On the social level parents need to carefully monitor and guide the play and activities of their children with their friends. And we need to remember that the mission field will not automatically reform the sinful nature. Paul makes this clear: "*What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise...they are all under sin*" (Romans 3:9). The words "no, none, not one, all" often appear in this section of Scripture to prove that all have sinned. It is a wonderful privilege to lead your children to our precious Lord and Savior and be baptized with nationals in the church.

One of the most valuable services on the mission field is to take your children along on visits to sing, read

the Bible, and pray for the elderly, widows, and families in need, or simply to visit the faithful brothers and sisters in the church. Share your burden with the family for the lost in the community and pray for them in your family devotional time. Communicate with your children about those who have received the Lord and those who have requested to be baptized. When Dad is called to leave his family for church meetings, serve on special committees, or to have a personal talk with a wavering brother, then it will not be so difficult for children to accept when proper attention and love is shown to each child.

Be there for people during sickness, death, loneliness, losses, birthdays, holidays, and building projects. Take national Christians along on your visitation program. Give opportunities for development and exercise of spiritual gifts in the church like leading songs, conducting devotions, teaching a Sunday School class, or serving as janitor.

A well-seasoned missionary has written, "The witness and influence

of a Christian home is often incalculable. The example of well-trained and disciplined missionary children will often speak louder than words of instruction as how to bring up a family. Our children are our most precious heritage, and the proper care of them should come first." (*Facing the Field* by T. Stanley Soltau).

However, it is possible to become so involved in family life, even on the mission field, that we lose the vision: "Go ye into all the world; and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Did Jesus not even say in the context of how hard it is for those trusting in riches to enter the kingdom of God: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29.30).



Sympathy is two *hearts*
tugging at the same load.

Rotten Potato Salad, Anyone?

Lois Troyer, Georgetown, OH



In the faint light of morning I rouse myself from under my warm covers and putter down to the kitchen. I pull back the curtains and gaze at the freshness of the day, watching as my neighbor puts out his garbage for the garbage truck. Hmm, does he have any treasures over there, I wonder? As soon as he's back inside I make a quick dash across the street, hoping no one sees this Mennonite lady dumpster-diving in her housecoat. A quick search over the heap yields a nice vase in a mouse-dropping-strewn wad of newspapers and a large container of spoiled potato salad. Tucking both items under my arm, I hustle back home where all self-respecting ladies should be. Self-consciously, I pour my husband his coffee and listen to his plans for the day. My mind isn't on his plans but on that container of potato salad. Would he want some? Most likely not. I'd probably get chided for having been in the neighbor's garbage again. I'll just eat some myself after he's gone for work. Soon I'm alone and ready

to start my day. I have errands to run and a few friends to drop in on. Mary just had a baby and Emily's mom isn't doing well. They could both use some cheering up. I gather my things, tuck that potato salad into the cavernous interior of my purse and head out to bear some burdens. Maybe a serving of my find will buoy their spirits!

Now, before you question my sanity, imagine a different but similar scenario. Instead of pulling back the curtain and watching my neighbor, I curl up with my phone or sit down at the computer and log onto social media, a news source, or scroll through my neighbor's Facebook page. I find an inspiring post about being a mouthpiece for Jesus, and then, I just happen upon a piece of news so juicy and terrifying I can't possibly keep from sharing it. In a few clicks hundreds of people in my acquaintance wake up to this jolting information. As my husband and I discuss the coming day, my mind circles back around that news article. Should I tell him? If he doesn't hear it from me, he's bound to hear it from

Uncle Joe who keeps him abreast of happenings in this appalling day and age. But I'll leave the duty to Uncle Joe. I'm getting hints from my husband that he's tired of my constant perusing for news to help prepare me for the impending doom. He says the grace and protection of God will reach His children wherever they are. But I need to be prepared. And Mary, with that new, sweet baby, will also want to know this. I'm sure she wants to prepare herself for caring for a child in perilous times.

The potato salad from the first paragraph and the social media post from the second paragraph both have negative effects on a human, one affects the mind and the other the digestive system. One uses vomiting and other unmentionable gastrointestinal activities, and the other uses the age-old and very effective spirit of fear. For many of us, television and radio are forbidden in our churches, and for good reasons. But it seems as if the internet has stealthily crept in the back way while we weren't looking, offering us much debauchery and sensation and food for every carnal appetite. But we may not have been prepared and struggle with using it responsibly, especially news sources. I'd like to draw us back to a foundational principle, one that never fails to bring life when used

liberally and as God intended, and that is—speaking and living truth.

Lies can be hard to identify. They appear with so many different façades and with just enough strands of truth woven into them that they snare many unwary souls. If I want to teach my son what a lemur is, do I show him a giraffe, a mouse, or a skunk, all the while saying, "It's not this, it's not this, it's not this?" No, I show him a lemur and teach him the hallmarks of a lemur. Identifying truth by sifting through lies will only hurl us onto the shores of confusion. We identify lies by going to the source of truth, the inspired Word of God. Does our Father promise absence of hardships, persecution, famine, or that no calamity will touch us? No, but He does promise that no physical suffering can separate us from His love. And that is truth. The Scriptures are filled with promises of care and comfort, with promises of never forsaking us, and with promises that He controls the world's political climate. It's only when we take our eyes off these absolute truths that fear begins to fester in our minds, slowly poisoning us. It leaves us with little appetite for the truths and promises in the Bible and a raging appetite for lies produced by fallen humans with corrupt agendas. Remember, what we feed, grows.

The most damaging part of this whole scenario is just as the potato salad sickens the body, fear from lies, half-truths, and imaginations sickens the mind. Fear paralyzes us, clouds our discernment, dictates our decisions, and makes us live in the future. And according to II Timothy 1:7, fear is absolutely not from God. He gives us power, love, and a sound mind. What an incredible promise! If we choose to spread fear, we are embracing the devil's plan and engaging in warfare under his command. We have direct instructions in Scripture about guarding our thoughts and thinking right thoughts. Philippians 4:8 tells us whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report is what we should be thinking. And what's inside comes out. So, our acquaintances will be hearing uplifting words that encourage them on their journey if we embrace these commandments.

What does this look like in real life? It means not forwarding emails, WhatsApps, and other social media posts that you do not **know** to be true. The more sensational things are, the less likely they are true. And we need to starve that appetite in ourselves. It means not passing on to others anything that may plant fear in their hearts. It means purposely turning our thoughts

to Christ and His kingdom and engaging in worship and praise to combat the darkness. It means deliberately dressing ourselves with the armor of God, being girded with truth, and bearing the breastplate of righteousness with the boldness found at the throne of grace.

What can you do if you find yourself caught in the trap of feasting at the buffet of fear? Confess it to God and ask for forgiveness and for the power of His blood in your life against fear. If you're married, confess it to your husband and ask him for accountability. Single ladies can ask a friend who cares about truth to walk with them. It's not a battle to be won instantaneously, it's a slow, steady retraining of the mind. If your friends are feeding you, ask them kindly not to talk to you about issues that trigger your fear or are not truth-based. Observe the human landscape for people who don't forward those emails, don't take up those conversations, and surround yourself with truth-speakers. If you're feeding yourself, take a news fast; don't open that email, or delete that message. If you enjoy actual news, swap to a faith-based news source that doesn't use the political fear-mongering that most media outlets use to update you on world events. Be just as intentional about what

goes into your mind as what goes into your mouth. Remember the potato salad? Knowingly and intentionally engaging in Christ's Kingdom by

refusing to bow to the cowardly sniveling of the master of lies and fear is a powerful form of worship.



junior messages

Cambodia Rat Hunt

Renita Miller with Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

Food is important. We all enjoy eating unless we are ill. In every land people enjoy different foods. Here is a story about a unique food the Khmer people enjoy.

Friedrich and Renita were in Cambodia only a few weeks when some friends asked them if they would like to go along on a rat hunt. A what? Yes, you heard it right, a rat hunt! Here is the story Renita shared.

One warm, sunny morning we climbed on the back of a mini truck with our new friends. The truck had benches along the sides and a roof over the back. We were going to the village of Kumpumpluck, a quaint fishing village close to a lake.

When the rains come in Cambodia, the water rises, the banks of the river overflow, and totally changes life in the village. It rains for five months from June through November. In the dry season, people drive through the streets in a car or moto (motor bike),

but in rainy season, instead of roads there is water. Boating becomes the village transportation. The houses and restaurants are built on stilts to keep them high and dry.

The tops of the trees stick out of the water, and this is where the rats live during the monsoon season so they don't drown. These rats look much like the ones in America but are cleaner. They eat vegetation and grains. They are not dirty like slum rats. The Khmer people delight in hunting and eating these rats.

We boarded a large 30-foot boat with two levels. All of us started out in a big, loud, motorboat but later the men jumped into smaller motor boats to hunt the rats. It was fun to watch them maneuver around the trees. They had blowguns and slingshots to kill the rats. Small boats came close to our big boat. Ladies in the boats called out, "Buy snacks and drinks, crackers, green mangos

with chili sauce, chips, soda, and green tea.” We ate, laughed, and had a happy time with the ladies and children in the big boat.

Some of the men jumped out of the boats and swam around in the water from tree to tree trying to scare the rats. They yelled when they spotted a rat. They kept their homemade ammunition, clay balls or steel ball bearings, in water bottles in their pockets along with their slingshots. Somehow, they managed to put a clay ball in the slingshot and shoot the rats while they swam. They were such floating sharpshooters. When they hit a rat, it dropped into the water and was quickly grabbed and flung into the small boats. Some of the men took aim from the boats and more rats fell. When the men got back to the big boat, there were many dead, soggy rats on the bottom of the small boats. The men skinned the rats in a hurry, working deftly with sharp knives. They threw the guts and the heads into the water. We headed back to the village.

Our boat stopped in shallow water. The house we were going to was on a rise, so we got out and walked to the house and climbed up the steep, nearly ladder-like steps. Part of the house had water under it. I walked on the slated floor and could see through the cracks to the water.

“How do they guard and keep the babies from falling into the water,” I wondered. A family from our church who used to live in that village told Friedrich a story.

One day, their three boys were wrestling in the house. They got too close to the open door and fell into the water with a big, big splash. The two older boys rose to the surface of the water and could not see their younger brother, so they dove in, found, and rescued him. Water is just a normal part of life. Most of the children can swim, and hopefully they seldom fall in.

In the house, ladies were sitting on rice mats. They rubbed the raw rats with salt, sugar, chilies, and garlic, and then stuck them in a pan of hot oil. The stove was on a stand like a table with an open fire on top where they cook. The rat tails were sticking out of the pan as they fried. It looked disgusting!

When they were properly fried, we sat down on the floor and enjoyed a delicious afternoon snack, according to some people. Friedrich was hungry and thought the flavor was good and enjoyed the rat meat. I didn't like it so much, but I got it down. All in all it was a great cultural experience sitting on the floor eating rat meat with our new friends who seemed to like the rat meat as much as we like pizza!

If you come visit us at the right time, how would you like to go on a rat hunt? Would you like to try this amazing new food? Would you be curious and brave enough to try

biting into fried rat? Would you? Our new friends were so pleased that we did. If we are their friends, will it help them to listen when we tell them about Jesus?



youth messages

Standing Tall in the Face of Peer Pressure

Marvin E. Yoder, Meyersdale, PA

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2).*

The first verse of Psalm 1 suggests three stages that we may observe in the life of a person who yields to peer pressure and gradually gives up Biblical principles and practices. In the first stage, the individual may be attracted by the prevailing culture; he may be embarrassed by his distinctiveness; he may be influenced by peers who question biblical practices or have already discarded them. He listens to the counsel of those who say the commands of the

Bible are not to be taken literally or that they were intended for some other time.

In the second stage, the individual begins to doubt his own convictions and practices. After considering the arguments which his peers and counselors so ably defended, he has convinced himself that they must be right. Their arguments seem more convincing than the plain statements of Scripture.

In the third stage (the seat of the scornful), he adopts the unscriptural ideas and practices that he once rejected. He has been persuaded that his former position was too strict or possibly even intolerant.

Observe that this sequence (walk, stand, sit) is exactly the reverse of the sequence a growing child will

normally follow. As a child grows, he will first sit, then stand, and finally walk. Might this reverse sequence suggest that the person who neglects or rejects Biblical principles, which he once espoused, is regressing in his spiritual life?

I propose that this illustrates how peer pressure can gradually erode Biblical convictions. I offer several suggestions for standing tall in the face of peer pressure.

1. All of us desire a sense of acceptance and belonging, but we should be more concerned about obeying God than being part of the “in” crowd.

Daniel was taken captive as a teenager and enrolled in a training program in which the diet violated his earlier teachings. He was away from home and any authorities who might object to his participation. Other Jewish young men who were also captives apparently did not object to the diet, but Daniel *“purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the kings’ delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank”* (Daniel 1:8). Daniel wisely proposed an alternate diet for himself and his three friends which did not violate their conscience or their former teaching. With God’s blessing, the result was highly successful.

2. We naturally do all we can to avoid pain and discomfort, but we should be more concerned about developing character than maintaining physical comfort.

Moses was adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter and had access to all the wisdom and knowledge of Egypt. He was likely the heir to the throne. He could have avoided spending 40 years in the desert, but he *“refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt”* (Hebrews 11:24-26). Moses eschewed the comforts of the palace and chose to stand with God’s people. That choice was one big step in preparing Moses for the future work God had for him.

3. We want others—friends, family, peer group—to think well of us, but we should be more concerned about doing what is right than preserving our reputation.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were members of the Jewish Sanhedrin, a very distinguished position in Jewish society. However, they were also secret disciples of Jesus. They put their reputation on the line by challenging fellow members of the Sanhedrin about their criticism of

Jesus. (See Luke 23:51 and John 7:50.) They demonstrated their commitment to Jesus by taking His body down from the cross and burying it in Joseph's new tomb. I assume they were criticized for this act of devotion.

4. We have an instinct to preserve our physical life, but we should be more concerned about honoring God than saving our neck.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were threatened with death if they did not worship the image Nebuchadnezzar had built. They were not intimidated by the king's threat or the hundreds of people around them who worshiped the image. They said, *"If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up"* (Daniel 3:17, 18). They were willing to die rather than deny their faith in Jehovah. In this case, God sent His angel to deliver them. However, many others have given their lives for the sake of Jesus rather than denying Him.

5. We are frequently bombarded with ideas about sexual orientation, LGBTQ culture, and critical race

theory, but we should be more concerned about maintaining moral purity than being politically correct.

When Joseph arrived in Egypt, he was sold to Potiphar as a slave (Genesis 39). While serving faithfully in Potiphar's house, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. If Joseph had agreed to her proposition, he may have avoided two years in prison (Genesis 41:1). Fortunately, Joseph had enough moral backbone to refuse her enticement. He said, *"How...can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (39:9b). God honored Joseph's integrity, and he eventually became prime minister of Egypt.

Standing tall against peer pressure doesn't always bring welcome results. It may result in ridicule, but wouldn't you "rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today?" You can say, "I've committed my life to Jesus Christ, and I can't do this."

"Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

*[All scripture quotations from NKJV.]



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• • • • •

You cannot antagonize and persuade at the same time.

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