



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

JUNE 2022

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## Calvary Messenger

June 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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# A Godly Father

*Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX*

- A nice father tries hard to make his children happy,  
but a good father seeks to provide stability for them.
- A nice father sets out to be his children's buddy,  
but a good father sets out to be a mature mentor.
- A nice father is afraid to ever tell his children no,  
but a good father is not afraid to deny their wishes.
- A nice father withholds discipline for fear of disrespect,  
but a good father will discipline to instill proper respect.
- A nice father will turn his head when his children sin,  
but a good father will keep his eye on them lest they sin.
- A nice father will let his children choose their own way,  
but a good father will direct them into the right course.
- A nice father uses himself to gauge divine fatherhood,  
but a good father uses God as a model for his fathering.
- A nice father changes his standards to fit his children's,  
but a good father maintains his biblical convictions  
even though his children eventually decide to not follow him.
- A nice father coddles his children to their detriment,  
but a good father tenderly cuddles his children  
for their spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical development.
- A nice father anticipates that always pleasing his children  
will surely obligate their deference to him,  
but a good father knows that by honoring God  
his children will also learn to honor their Heavenly Father.
- A nice father will side with his children against established authority  
in hopes of earning their respect,  
but a good father will respectfully discuss any problems  
with the child's authority before he renders a verdict.
- A nice father works to win his children's approval,  
but a good father diligently labors for God's approval.
- A nice father will fulfill his children's wants,  
but a good father is concerned about meeting their needs. 

## And Samuel Died

*“And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah” (I Samuel 25:1).*

The death of Samuel ended a time of spiritual awakening and direction from God. At a very young age, the Lord spoke to him in a story that likely touched many of us in our childhood. Samuel’s eager service and obedience to the Lord as he helped Eli in the *“temple of the LORD”* was especially precious since he was *“lent to the Lord”* by his mother out of gratitude for answering her prayer for a child. Despite being separated from his parents at a young age and being around the wicked sons of Eli, he fulfilled the prophecy of a man of God who brought God’s word to Eli because of his wicked sons. *“And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever”* (I Samuel 2:35).

*“And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of*

*his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD. And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD”* (I Samuel 3:19-21).

Samuel continued his eager service and obedience to the Lord throughout his life. His character was noble, and he was faithful to the LORD Whom he served. It is the reason that all Israel was gathered together and lamented his death. The one sad stain on his otherwise exceptional life of faithfulness was the failure of his sons. *“And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment”* (I Samuel 8:3). The record of his life is not marred by any other act or word which would appear unworthy of his office.

How will you be remembered at your death? What will they say at your funeral?

At a recent funeral in our community, despite the fact that this 90-year-old saint was imperfect, there were several outstanding character

qualities that were obvious as children and grandchildren described his life. While these words could be described as eulogies, the praises in all reality were for the God he served. When his voice was almost too soft to be understood, he was still concerned that his children had released and forgiven where they had suffered wrongfully. While we may specialize in other godly character traits in our lives, it would seem to be a life well-lived to be known for kindness as he was. What characteristics will be noted at your funeral?

Seldom does a young person set a goal for his funeral. And, of course, we should never seek to be eulogized, but the goals and life patterns we set in our youth do affect our end.

Consider with me these thoughts.

**A cheerful, willing service to those around us is ministering to the Lord.**

*“And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli”* (I Samuel 3:1). I expect that Samuel understood his mother’s love for him, and her gratitude to God for his life was an important incentive in his willing service to Eli and to the God of Israel. It doesn’t matter whether it’s in our daily occupation, serving our family and spouse, or opening *“the doors of the house of the LORD,”* doing it gladly for the Lord’s sake makes it all

worthwhile and is a witness to those around us. And this may be when we learn to recognize the voice of God.

**Recognize the voice of God.**

*“...the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place”* (I Samuel 3:4-9).

**Understand the heart of God.**

*“And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do **according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind:** and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever”* (I Samuel 2:35).

In contrast to this prophecy about Samuel, King Saul focused on his

appearance before men instead of obeying the commandments of the Lord. When Saul didn't follow God's instructions about destroying all of the property of the Amalekites, Samuel said, "*Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry*" (I Samuel 15:22).

**The person you are is more important than what you do.**

It is easy to be so involved in our occupation and activities that we forget to nurture and grow our spiritual lives. It is in the busyness of good things that the best things are often neglected. Form good daily habits of connecting with God. Commend family and friends for

treating others with respect. Study the lives of godly men in the Bible, like Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, or Barnabas. Do a random act of service for someone—just because. Think of one thing every morning that you are grateful for. Apologize when you have failed others.

**Live life for the Master.**

When I heard that the 90-year-old saint had almost imperceptibly slipped into eternity, I could almost hear his Master's welcoming words to him, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*" Living life to hear those welcoming words is the best purpose we can ever have. In fact, when a life is faithfully lived with that far-distant goal in mind, those words from our Master will be more important than the words that will be said at our funeral.

—AY 

It is important for a *good manager*  
to know how to *listen* as well as to talk.

We too often forget that  
*communication* is an exchange.

—LEE IACocca

## The Early Church Fathers in Perspective

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Occasionally, a speaker on Anabaptist faith and doctrine will quote from what one of the early church fathers wrote on a given subject. The implication is given of their having keener insight into the Bible than many of us, and that maybe we should place it next to the Scriptures and above our current insight and interpretation.

A reprint from *Sword and Trumpet* of “A Proper View of the Early Church Fathers,” by Marvin Brunk, is an exceptionally good article on the subject and is in this issue. We find his information to be very helpful to see a bit of who this sampling of men was in their time and place. He cites three eras from AD 190-400, a span of 210 years.

Brunk says they are generally divided into three groups. Polycarp and Clement lived in the AD 190-210 era, five generations after the prime apostolic period of the AD 40-70 time slot. The Ante-Nicene Fathers were in the time period of AD 200-300, encompassing an additional three generations. Prominent in this

timespan were Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, and various lesser-known men. The third group is commonly called the Post-Nicene Fathers, after the watershed Council of Nicaea in AD 325. Notables among these were Jerome (AD 340-420) and Augustine (AD 354-430). The latter two espoused doctrines that fed into some of the Catholic way of thinking. Jerome “was a learned Father of the Roman Catholic Church” (World Book).

All of these men needed to research their information and reported conclusions from many writings, wherever and however they became available. Their sources were undoubtedly piece-meal, some likely authentic and in line with apostolic authorship, and some philosophical and spurious. Luke begins his Gospel record with saying, “*Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us . . . it seemed good to me also, having perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order*” (Luke 1:1-3). Luke wrote in

AD 60. Imagine the numerous well-intentioned people who teach and write in every generation, and how it could spread out over a vast group of people in the broad time period of eight generations, or 240 years, AD 190-430. Out of that, extensions of thought can evolve out of previous extensions.

I have witnessed two full generations in our Weavertown Church where I have been a member for 70 years, and in that time, we were served with five bishops ordained by us. A shift in emphases became prominent every 15 years. Every 15-year cycle can be identified with incremental change by adding to the previous prevailing emphasis and generally amending the guiding light of the 15-year cycle prior to the previous cycle. For instance, the 1965-1980 cycle had partially discarded and replaced the wisdom and vision of the 15-year era of 1950-1965. Weavertown was established in 1909.

Most of our Beachy people will have had up to now, an active church lifespan of 60 years, a mere two generations. The sun suddenly rises to a new dawn, often times when a young man is in his 20s or 30s. He sees time as running out amazingly fast, and as a self-styled prophet, calls for instant change. Like the

young man ten years ago who heaped ridicule on the founding fathers of two previous generations, who had stepped forward with a vision for church-sponsored schools in the 1960s, in which the public school system had become more and more unbiblical and humanistic. He could make quite a splash with how he and his institution were now raising the academic standard and increasing salaries to respectable levels. That first generation was faulted for being low achievers in a number of ways, compared to what he now represents.

The fact is, the 1945-1970 era was the pioneer days for the Christian school movement. It was a bit ahead of my time as a dad with school-age children, but these men and women sacrificed much to secure land and build new buildings. It hurt my spirit to see their vision and dedication trashed by a young spokesman for Christian education. Not knowing or seeing the man (only hearing him on a CD as the featured speaker at a public meeting), I guessed him to be only in his 30s. Later, it was affirmed to be so. His newly rising sun shone brightly on him. Thus, he and his peers proceeded to cut a wide swath in a celebrated way as career educators.

This very same thing happened in three generations of a large group



of churches known as the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, 1880-1970. They were consigned similarly by a popular historian who faulted them far beyond what was needed or appropriate. Regrettably, to be sure, they had leaders who were staunchly traditional and had their own share of hypocrites among their membership. Despite that, they gradually arose to commendable accomplishments in education, evangelism, book printing, missionary work, Bible conferences, and revival meetings. They don't need to be praised and revered but should be recognized and credited for pioneering a noble work when their era is analyzed by an honest historian.

Money was tighter in those days than today. Their blood, sweat, and tears deserved a better report as a work of history of 1880-1970. Their laudable work in church administration and publishing became a guiding light for hundreds of congregations, local missions, and foreign missions. Their work of pioneering various church institutions has provided a major platform for the successful endeavors of many conservative conferences and fellowships arising in the 1960s to our present time, including our own Beachy churches. Let us never vaunt ourselves so grandly that

we despise the good values of our forebears. We should consider that they also did the best they knew how in their time and place, even as we now seek to do.

There might come to pass in another 100 years when the 1880-1970 era could be held high again, and be viewed as an era of great significance and contribution, like some speakers now address some of the writings of the Early Church Fathers, or the Anabaptists. It is of particular concern to some of us when a speaker quotes from their sources as being on par with the Scriptures, or where one could take their word as a plausible extension a tad above the Bible, if needed, to buttress a preferred interpretation.

It has been an age-old problem, even a great error, where people praise the dead, and persecute the living. A prophet, Jesus said, is not without honor or respect that is due, except in his own community. We tend to add more weight to what a man says who lives 500 miles away than the pastors in our own church. The same happens when the Early Church Fathers are held high and quoted with nearly the weight of Scripture. The Pharisees esteemed Moses very highly and ridiculed Jesus.

I quote from Brunk. "The 27

books we now include in the New Testament canon were formally ratified at the Council of Hippo in AD 393.” He makes a very valid point that the 240-year era of the Early Church Fathers were without the recognized canon-approved edition of the New Testament. Those important 240 years were dealing with a wide range of writings from many sources. Brunk warns that “modern copies of their writings do not always accurately preserve what they originally said.” We would be more selective in quoting them if we knew about some of their extra-biblical concepts. Jerome was a noted Latin student who wrote the Vulgate version of the Old Testament in use by Catholics today. The beliefs of Augustine curiously state that God lives in the soul of every man, woman, and child. He preached that God saves only those whom He chooses, as irresistible grace, and that certain persons by God’s election could not be saved even if they begin to think in that direction. His emphasis influenced John Calvin, Martin Luther, and others (World Book). John Calvin is credited for the five points of Calvinism, the points that go with the “once saved, always saved” doctrine held by many church bodies in our time. They have some great books and commentaries that

we preachers quote rather freely, even by name, at our annual ministers’ meetings. The inference seems to be, that to be a chosen speaker is to quote from books written by people assumed to be up there somewhere in the academic stratosphere, and being sure to name them.

Brunk says these men were merely and sincerely “seeking to understand and apply the Word of God,” and as an “aid in understanding the meaning of Scripture.” Every man and woman who desires to be spiritually endued and live a godly life does concern himself with enlightenment that comes by way of the understanding. We have been impressed (not always favorably) with the current emphasis on the development and expansion of one’s understanding on the things of God, even of God Himself and His Word. That discussion about the understanding should be taken up in the *CM* issue next month.

**The Bottom Line** is:

1. The writings of the Early Church Fathers can be of value to see how the thinkers of their day confronted error and held up a worthy standard.
2. Their work was likely targeted to their people who occupied their time and place.
3. Their writings were assumedly intended as commentaries, and not

to be taken as an authority parallel to the Bible. These writings were without a standard, canonized New Testament as we have it today.

4. It is significant that the standard canon of the Bible was formally put in place by authorized persons at the close of their notable era.

5. Anyone who places the writings of the Early Church Fathers or Anabaptist authors, as equal to the Word of God, does so in error. Public accountability needs to prevail on this point, whether in speaking or in writing.

6. A faithful commentary of the Bible is one that promotes faith as being quite a bit higher than man's understanding. The critical component in a qualifying response

to God's Word is whether it will be believed, received, and embraced as truth, conclusively and with a restful finality in faith that is equal to God's Word as it is toward God Himself.

7. God has spoken very highly of His holy name, and just as highly of His Word. The Bible says, "*I will worship toward thy holy temple (His dwelling place among men), and praise thy name (identity) for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth (singular): for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name*" (Psalm 138:2). Jesus made it airtight with eternal permanence when He said, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*" (Matthew 24:35).



I have no voice for *singing*. I cannot make a *speech*:

I have no gift for *music*. I know I cannot *teach*.

I am no good at *leading*.

I cannot "*organize*." And anything that I would write

would never win a *prize*.

It seems my only *talent* is neither big nor rare—

Just to *listen* and *encourage*.

and to *fill* a vacant chair.



# A Proper View of the Early Church Fathers

*Marvin Brunk*

**T**he church is an ancient institution. God founded it over 2000 years ago by His own will. Through those years the doctrine and beliefs of the church have been developed, fleshed out, and refined by many Christian writers and thinkers.

This knowledge has been built up and put through various tests and trials. On the main, the beliefs that have been faithful to God's Word have withstood those trials while erroneous teachings and beliefs have been discredited. So many of these nearly universally accepted beliefs and doctrines we take for granted today. We forget that at one time Christianity was a new religion. So how should we consider those who lived before the development of these doctrines, those who came in the first few centuries after the apostles?

These men are often called the Early Church Fathers. They are generally divided into three groups. The earliest is the Apostolic Fathers. These lived in the late first and the early second centuries, right after the apostles. Two better-known of these are Clement and Polycarp.

The second group is the Ante-Nicene Fathers. These came after the Apostolic Fathers but before the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. Prominent members of this group are Justin Martyr and Ireneaus.

The final group is the Post-Nicene Fathers. As their name implies, they came after the council of Nicaea. Examples in this group are Augustine and Jerome.

The Early Church Fathers lived during the second through eighth centuries AD, while Christianity was new. Most of the things about Christianity that we simply take for granted were yet to be established. A major development that we take for granted today is the New Testament canon. The canon is the writings that the church recognized as being inspired by God. These writings were not made into Scripture through the process of canonization. Rather, as these works were recognized as Scripture, they were added to the canon. This distinction is important. There must be a clear division between writings that are and are not the inspired Word of God. The 27 books we now include in the

New Testament canon were formally ratified at the Council of Hippo in AD 393.

Many of the Early Church Fathers would not have had access to all 27 books of the New Testament. They also, in their fallibility, could have accepted writings that were not inspired by God. Their writings, therefore, were not guided by the clear teachings of the full New Testament. The Early Church Fathers did not have the security that we have today in a universally-accepted, fully-ratified canon of Scripture. An additional precaution with the early church writings is that their writings were not written under the inspiration of God. Since they were not recognized as being a part of the New Testament canon, they were not preserved with the same scholarly diligence as the New Testament was. Throughout history, the copying of their works was not under strict scrutiny—especially not the precision that the canonical Scriptures went through. But that need not concern us, since these are only the works of men. But what that means is that errors have crept in. Modern copies of their writings do not always accurately preserve what they originally said.

The writings of the Early Church Fathers should not be seen as more

than the writings of man. When studying these writings, one must remember there is no key to unlock new knowledge in these works. There will be no long-forgotten truths to rediscover. Rather, they are pioneers to the Christian faith. And the men themselves cannot be seen as more pure Christians whose truth and purity have been forgotten through the ages. These men did not have the benefit of well-developed, time-tested Christian doctrines. These doctrines came about because the church faced challenges throughout the ages. And through these challenges the church was forced to turn to Scripture to see what it said about the issues at hand.

A comparison can be made to a young believer. When one first becomes a Christian, most likely he does not understand all the issues of the Christian faith. He does not understand the importance of the virgin birth or all the implications of Christ's atonement. But as he is challenged on such matters, and as he continues to study the Bible, his understandings and convictions grow and develop.

This process is the same for the church. Through history the church has refined its beliefs and grown in its convictions, all of which are centered and based on the Word of God. The Early Church Fathers did

not have history to look back on. They planted the seeds of many of the doctrines the church accepted throughout history. But they did not have them thoroughly fleshed out in all cases. And some of their beliefs were wrong.

Because the works of these men were not inspired, and they are the writings of mere men, they must not be used as an authority over and against Scripture. Scripture alone is our guide for the truth about God, His kingdom, and the salvation of man. Where these writings contradict clear teaching of Scripture, they must be discounted. They also should not be viewed as essential to true Christian faith, else Scripture's sufficiency is denied. If God has revealed "*all things that pertain to life and godliness*" (II Peter 1:3), then believers need nothing more than the Bible to live complete, faithful Christian lives.

All this being said, reading and studying these writings can be of great benefit. Though the Early Church Fathers were not super-Christians and their writings do not contain any new or lost truth, they are useful. They offer a historical perspective and give us a window through which to see how the church grew and how it came to be what it is today. One historian of the Early

Church period made a comparison of the Early Church Fathers being to the church what one's own family tree is to an individual. They are a part of our history and help explain how the church grew into what it is today.<sup>1</sup>

They can also offer a glimpse into the culture of that time. It was a very different time indeed. Having a greater understanding of that culture can add to and enlighten our understanding of the culture of the New Testament. Finally, these men were seeking to understand and apply the Word of God. So they can offer another perspective to aid in understanding the meaning of Scripture. Studying their works is the same as studying the works of any other faithful servant of God. This is the same as studying the works of men like Menno Simons or Charles Spurgeon. They offer insights from men who studied Scripture and earnestly sought to let it change the way they lived.

The writings and lives of the Early Church Fathers are beneficial to study and to learn from. But these men were mere men. They cannot

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1. Bryan M. Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2007), 28, 29.

be used as an authority over the clear teachings of Scripture. The Word of God alone brings the message of salvation.

[This article first appeared in the December 2021, issue of *Sword and Trumpet*. Used by permission. Requested for reprint by Aaron Lapp.]



*To awake each morning with a smile brightening my face;  
To greet the day with reverence for the opportunities it contains;*

To approach my work with a clean mind;  
To hold ever before me, even in the doing of the little things,  
**THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE TOWARD WHICH I AM WORKING;**

To meet men and women with laughter  
on my lips and love in my heart;

*To be gentle and kind, and courteous through all the hours;*

To approach the night with weariness that ever woos sleep  
and the joy that comes from work well done—

*This is how I desire to waste wisely my days.*

—THOMAS DEKK



## marriages

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

### **Burkholder-Jantzi**

Bro. Lonney, son of Luke and Heidi Burkholder, Fredonia, KY, and Sis. Julia, daughter of Steven and Katie Jantzi, Millersburg, OH, on March 12, 2022, at United Dayspring Mennonite Church for Fredonia Mennonite Church by Titus Troyer.

### **Hostetler-Howard**

Bro. Luke Hostetler, Dalton, OH, and Sis. Anna Howard, Rural Retreat, VA, on February 19, 2022, at Legacy Christian School, Sugarcreek, OH, for Shalom Mennonite Church by Marlin Miller.

### **Mast-Sommers**

Bro. Paul, son of Benny and Leona Mast, Campbellsville, KY, and Sis. Jenni, daughter of Jason and Miriam Sommers, Wytheville, VA, on February 5, 2022, at Hillsville Pentecostal Holiness Church for Light of Hope Mennonite Church by Wayne Yoder.

### **Nisly-Mejía**

Bro. Darren Christopher, son of David and Janice Nisly, Manassas, VA, and Sis. Lucrecia Abigail, daughter of José Inocente (Chente) and Mary Jane Mejía, Puerto Viejo, Sarapiquí, Heredia, Costa Rica, on April 30, 2022, at La Marina de San Carlos, Costa Rica, by David Nisly, father of the groom.

### **Yoder-Miller**

Bro. David, son of the late Paul W. and Esta Yoder, Dundee, OH, and Sis. Wilma, daughter of John C. and Rebecca Miller, Millersburg, OH, on March 19, 2022, at United Dayspring Mennonite Church for Grace Haven Fellowship by Robert (Bobby) Miller.


### **Yoder-Miller**

Bro. Jeremy, son of Harry and Susan Yoder, Aroda, VA, and Sis. Melanie, daughter of Arno and Linda Miller, Hutchinson, KS, on March 19, 2022, at Cedar Crest A.M. Church by Lee Nisly.

### **Yoder-Miller**

Bro. Joshua, son of Freeman and the late Retha Yoder, Arlington, KS, and Sis. Gina, daughter of Sam and Marjorie Miller, Haven, KS, on April 16, 2022, at Arlington A.M. Church by Arlen Mast.

### **Yoder-Wagler**

Bro. Wendell, son of David and Faith Yoder, Oskaloosa, KS, and Sis. Donna, daughter of Leon and the late Marietta Wagler, Fredonia, KY, on January 7, 2022, at Northside Baptist Church for Fredonia Mennonite Church by Titus Troyer. 





## cradle roll

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

**Beiler**, Duane and Samantha (Hochstetler), Leesburg, OH, second child, first son, Bryce Parker, April 16, 2022.

**Coyne**, Enda and Susie (Hanakova), New Ross, Ireland, second child and son, Elijah, April 3, 2022.

**Gingerich**, Clifford and Leanna (Hostetler), Arthur, IL, fourth child, first son, Bryson Evan, March 29, 2022.

**Gregory-Smith**, Henry and Becky (Longenecker), Dunmore East, Ireland, first child and daughter, Constance Mary, February 13, 2022.

**Jess**, Brian and Lori (Plank), Arthur, IL, second child and daughter, Moriah Anne, March 4, 2022.

**Kauffman**, Jeremy and Linda (Yoder), Oakland, MD, third child, second son, Mason Jay, April 14, 2022.

**Kurtz**, Mark and Marla (Stoltzfus), Belleville, PA, sixth child, fifth son, Elias John, March 26, 2022.

**Miller**, Darren and Jenni (Miller), Hutchinson, KS, first child and daughter, Annika Grace, December 9, 2021.

**Miller**, Jethro and Sheri (Hershberger), Melvern, KS, third child and son, Lincoln Grant, February 27, 2022.

**Miller**, Kendrick and Shobhana (Culp), Leesburg, OH, first child and son, Hudson Cole, April 23, 2022.

**Miller**, Marvin and Jackie (Yoder), Partridge, KS, fourth child, first daughter, Emma Claire, November 15, 2021.

**Miller**, Ronnie and Beulah (Graber), Scranton, KS, third child, second daughter, Saige Aubrey, March 19, 2022.

**Miller**, Ryan and Karen (Miller), Kalona, IA, first child and son, Cody Tyrell, December 27, 2021.

**Ropp**, Michael and Connie (Bontrager), Liberia, Africa, fourth child, second son, Josiah Lee, January 28, 2022.

**Weaver**, Joseph and Melody (Miller), Lexington, IN, sixth child and son (one deceased), Japheth Dale, March 23, 2022.

**Yoder**, Delbert and Elizabeth (Yoder), Fredonia, KY, third child, second son, Dallas Lamont, March 2, 2022.


**Yoder**, Jared and Joanna (Miller), Sturgis, MI, second child and daughter, Alivia Claire, March 6, 2022.

**Yoder**, Larry and Cynthia (Otto), Arcola, IL, third child, second daughter, Avery Kate, April 20, 2022.

**Yoder**, Lyndon and Verna (Miller), Fredericksburg, OH, third child, second son, Cody Lynn, April 12, 2022.

**Zook**, Joel and Krista (Miller), Rural Retreat, VA, first child and daughter, Malia Brielle, April 20, 2022.

**Zook**, Kevin and Jen (Weaver), Burgettstown, PA, fourth child, first daughter, Erin Rebecca, January 24, 2022.

**Zook**, Paul and Verneda (Petersheim), Kinzers, PA, fifth child, third daughter, Kyra Anne, March 30, 2022. 

## o b i t u a r i e s

**Graber**, Daniel L., 84, of Shippshewana, IN, died March 24, 2022, at his residence. His death was unexpected and was due to natural causes. He was born February 8, 1938, in Constantine, MI, to the late Levi and Lizzie (Bontrager) Graber. On October 25, 1962, in LaGrange County, IN, he married Joanna Troyer. She died January 26, 2020.

Daniel was a member of Fairhaven Mennonite Church and had worked as a farmer and blacksmith for most of his life. He enjoyed fishing and was passionate about horses.

Surviving are four daughters: Elizabeth (Douglas) Snow, Southaven, MS; Cristina Graber and Kathryn Graber, both of Sarasota, FL; Iva Jean (Tim) Graber, Sturgis, MI; two sons: David (Shari), White Pigeon, MI; Steven (Anita), Amelia, VA; 18 grandchildren; a great-grandson; and sister, Anna (Floyd) Yoder, Shippshewana.

He was preceded in death by a son, Paul, sister, Edith Hochstetler, and two brothers: Cletus and Crist.

The funeral service was held March

29, 2022, at Fairhaven Mennonite Church with the Fairhaven ministry team officiating. Burial was in Thomas Cemetery.

**Lengacher**, Lydia, 93, of Loogootee, IN, peacefully entered into rest at home surrounded by her family on February 14, 2022. She was born July 18, 1928, to Amos and Fannie (Richer) Stoll in Daviess County, IN. On April 13, 1950, she was united in marriage to Simon Lengacher. They lived a happy married life for 71 years.

Lydia was known for her loving care for her family and friends. She spent much time in prayer for her family and always wanted what was best for each one. She loved to have the family together for mealtime and did what she could wherever needed. She enjoyed her garden and could be found there in the summer months gathering in the fruits and vegetables.

She was a faithful member of the Mt. Olive Mennonite Church.

Surviving are four children: Dorothy

(Cletus) Graber, Loogootee; Raymond (Sue), Loogootee; Floyd (Marietta), Lexington; and Fannie K. Schrock, Loogootee. Also surviving are 21 grandchildren, 74 great-grandchildren, and one sister, Emma Stoll, Odon.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Simon, parents, son-in-law, J. Stephen Schrock, brothers: Isaac, Enos, Herman; sister, Rosann Wagler, and grandchildren: Beth Ann Lengacher and Cletus Andrew Graber.

The funeral service was held at Mt. Olive Church, February 16, 2022. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

**Lengacher**, Simon Jr., 94, Loogootee, IN, peacefully entered into rest on February 4, 2022, at home surrounded by his family. He was born July 2, 1927, to Simon and Katie (Graber) Lengacher in Daviess County, IN. On April 13, 1950, he married Lydia Stoll and happily lived together for 71 years.

Simon was a contractor and farmer for many years and in his retirement enjoyed working at the Dinky Auction Barn. He will be missed greatly by his family and friends for his pleasant disposition, fun-loving ways, and his love for singing.

He was faithful member of the Mt. Olive Mennonite Church.

Surviving are his wife, Lydia, four children: Dorothy (Cletus) Graber, Loogootee; Raymond (Sue), Loogootee; Floyd (Marietta), Lexington; and Fannie K. Schrock, Loogootee. Also surviving are 21 grandchildren and 74 great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents, son-in-law, J. Stephen Schrock, brothers: Joe, Henry, Samuel and Menno; sisters: Mary, Fannie, Katie, Rebecca, Magdalena, Martha, and Maggie; and grandchildren: Beth Ann Lengacher and Cletus Andrew Graber.

The funeral service was held at Mt. Olive Church, February 16, 2022. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

**Miller**, Freeman Ray, 88, Kalona, IA, died at his home January 29, 2022. He was born July 10, 1933, in Johnson County, IA, to Noah J. and Elizabeth (Lehman) Miller. On January 15, 1953, he was united in marriage to Mary Ellen Miller.

He was baptized in his youth in the Old Order Amish Church. On August 21, 1966, Freeman was ordained to the ministry at Sharon Bethel Church where he remained a faithful member until the time of his death.

Freeman is survived by his wife, Mary Ellen, of 69 years, two daughters: Rosie (Sam) Stoltzfus, Honeybrook, PA; Joanna (Leighton) Yoder, Kalona; 12 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; sisters: Susie and Katie Miller, both of Kalona; brother, Eddy J., Kalona; and sisters-in-law: Arlene Miller, Albuquerque, NM; Mattie Miller, and Leona Peachy, both of Kalona.

Freeman was preceded in death by his parents, brothers: Truman (Lavina), Levi (Lydia), Ezra Miller; sister, Mary Magdalena Miller, and a sister-in-law, Dorothy Miller.

The funeral was held February 1, 2022, at the Sharon Bethel Church with Delmar Bontrager officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

**Stoll**, Clyde, 71, of Odon, IN, entered into eternal rest February 25, 2022, at his residence, with his wife by his side. He had battled cancer for a year. He was born May 25, 1950, to the late Enos and Dorothy (Stoll) Stoll. He married Mary Coblentz on December 12, 1970.

Clyde was a lifelong farmer and enjoyed many hobbies including woodworking and fishing. He loved a good challenge.

He was a member of Mt. Olive Mennonite Church where he served as a minister for 30 years. He had a heart for children, and he and Mary opened their home to many little ones who needed a place to be loved. He invested many hours into Mt. Olive School, guiding and paving the way for better learning. He spent many winters in Arkansas teaching young people at Calvary Bible School. He especially loved the times he spent with his grandchildren and was deeply interested in each of their lives.

Surviving are his wife, two sons and two daughters: Conrad (Sharon), Arlin, Glenda (Lauren) Kauffman, and Miriam (Adin) Knepp, all of Odon IN; grandchildren: Malachi, Grace, Alivia, Quinton, Janet, Emma, and Edwin Knepp; Rániah and Carter Stoll; and Elyse Kauffman; siblings: Owen (Marie), Darrel, Richard (Ruth Ann), Dwight, Diane (Gary)Wagler, Rose (Omar)

Miller, Linda (Darrel) Wagler, Ruth Stoll, Sharon Stoll, Sandy (Jason) Bainbridge, and Leonard (Lana).

He was preceded in death by his parents; a stillborn son; brother, Ernest; sister-in-law, Naomi (Wagler); and granddaughter, Alliyia Maria Curtis.

The funeral service was held February 28, 2022, at Mt. Olive Church. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

**Yoder**, Jerrica Angeline was born January 10, 2022, at DuPont Hospital in Ft. Wayne, IN. She died January 11, 2022, in her mother's arms. Her life here on earth was but a vapor, having lived only 25 hours.

She is survived by her parents, Eli and Judy Yoder, LaGrange; two sisters: Jennica and Kianna, a brother, Layton, all of LaGrange; grandparents: Abie and Jemima Yoder, Topeka; John and Mahala Mast, Crossville, TN; and many aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Proceeding her in death was a sister, Kaylene Rose, uncle, Emmanuel Yoder; aunts: Lizzie and Patricia Yoder; and a cousin, Devon Mast.

There was a private burial on January 16, 2022, at the Rosewood Church Cemetery.



When Brenda and I went to the office of the local firm we work with in filing our taxes, we waited in line for a few minutes as the person ahead of us was winding up his appointment. I didn't pay much attention to what was being said but heard enough to understand they were discussing what sort of financial activity could qualify as a loss and thus favorably impact the tax bill. The client inquired if gambling losses would qualify. Then he went on to emphatically declare that he thinks he had at least \$20,000 dollars in gambling losses in 2021!

We live in southeast Kansas, less than 20 miles from the Oklahoma state line. There are about 15 casinos located within approximately an hour and a half drive of Oswego. It is not unusual for the parking lots of these establishments to be well-filled on weekends. I'm amazed at the amount of traffic at these places relative to the regional population. I've never seen the inside of a casino, but the flair with which they are constructed gives some evidence that the revenue generated is more than is typical for most businesses in the area.

According to 2020 statistics, Kansas casinos reported about \$300 million in revenue and Oklahoma reported \$100 million revenue for the year. This is a small amount compared to the \$7.9 billion that casinos in Nevada reported. The numbers for Nevada are about triple what the next highest state, New Jersey, reports.

Our region is relatively sparsely populated and somewhat sleepy economically. It makes me wonder how much of the economic lethargy is due to the fact that area casinos vacuum up income that could be invested in constructive ways in the community.

It is distressing how often local wage earners rue the fact that after the first weekend following payday has passed, they are out of money until the next payday. Of course, much is spent on legitimate living expenses. But the distressing part has to do with the fact that some of these folks spend a lot of their earnings at a nearby casino. There is something about the ready access to this vice that seems to remove some of the stigma attached to gambling.

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Several years ago a local credit

union made the news because of some problems that financial regulators became aware of. Nita Rae Nirschl, a local lady in her mid-60s, had been employed as a manager at the credit union and ended up being sentenced for a variety of crimes that this investigation substantiated. In addition to prison time, she was ordered to pay \$10,000,000 in restitution.

The courts and investigators established that between 2010 and 2014, she embezzled multiple millions of dollars from the credit union. Based on the financial transactions that were traceable, a large share of the money she stole funded her gambling habit. She made frequent, sizable cash withdrawals from ATM machines located inside casinos in the region. She insisted her gambling was with personal money. But she didn't have a good way to demonstrate how her personal finances could support her gambling expenditures.

It is really difficult for me to imagine how one could blow through \$10,000,000 in gambling like this. However, with a bit of math, it isn't quite so hard to get to that figure after considering some of the eye-popping admissions she made to investigators. During one three-month period in 2014, she reported spending

\$192,000 on gaming devices at casinos and receiving \$57,000 in winnings! In September of 2013, she spent more than \$500,000 at two casinos!

Given that casinos do business with clients who crowd their parking lots, and among them are folks like the gentleman at the local tax office and this lady who is partway through her prison sentence, it stands to reason that the casinos pull in a lot of money. What a shame!

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Recently our congregation observed communion. This is not a new thing for me, neither is it for our congregation. However, just because it isn't new for me or for the congregation, doesn't mean that there aren't some in the congregation for whom the experience is new. I had some thoughts related to communion that are both new and old.

- Communion is both a *remembrance* of Christ and a *celebration* of the implications of His advent, death, and resurrection in the lives of His children.

-Over the years I have been blessed with a variety of nuances and significance in the practice of washing feet. However, this time, I was struck with the words of Jesus, when He explained the significance of what He had done in verses

13-16 of John 13. The master isn't greater than the servant. We ought to practice this among ourselves as a reminder, etc.

Washing feet had practical implications for those whose feet Jesus washed. Let's not console ourselves that we have discharged our duty by literal obedience and observation of this Christ-instituted practice. A wide variety of intensely practical ways exist in which we can "wash each other's feet" in ways that the literal practice symbolizes.

- Introspection and self-examination are helpful. But even though a proper emphasis on personal preparation is a proper companion to the observance of Communion, this doesn't mean that there isn't a danger in majoring on that aspect rather than making Christ the focus of the event. It was Jesus who enjoined His followers to do this, "*in remembrance of me.*" That's different than observing Communion and focusing on my successes or unworthiness.
- The time-honored traditions of the emblems, the singing, the Scriptures, the preaching, the washing feet, etc., always bring with them the possibility of the tradition devolving into meaningless ritual. However, I don't find them that way at all when I am willing to be still and to ponder the significance of what

we're doing. As I reflected, I was nourished, encouraged, and sobered. A proper progression following those sentiments is an attitude of gratefulness.

- I'd find it quite disappointing to observe Communion without the presence and participation of my brothers and sisters in the congregation. After all, the word "communion" implies something that isn't done alone, but with others. It is sweet, indeed, to state with our observances, actions, and words that we are serious about following Christ. We should do so as individuals and corporately as congregations. He is worthy and we are blessed.
- Celebrating Communion together with church brethren is one of the most exhilarating events of church life.
- Jesus instituted the Communion we observe with His disciples. Judas, being one of the twelve, was involved. Much has been said about his presence or absence—about when he was there and when he left.

A hyper-focus on Judas has the potential to lead us into two ditches. The one ditch says that Judas, with all his treachery, was absent when the Communion actually happened. So this emphasizes the importance that we be vigilant that all those with

whom we observe Communion are worthy. If I can't vouch for that, then I'd better not participate.

The other ditch says that if Judas with all his problems was there at the first Communion, then the church is out of line if any sort of parameters are established regarding who is eligible to participate.

I propose that both of these ditches, while not likely significantly present among us in their purest forms, are represented in various shades in our hearts from time to time. But whatever legitimacy that these ditches offer, let's acknowledge that both of them distract us from the high road that celebrates the dual blessings of Holy Spirit-inspired self-examination and from a focus on the cost and sufficiency of Christ's finished work on our behalf. Praise the Lord!



Mother's Day is in May and June brings Father's Day. Remembering the fathers and mothers in our

lives is proper for God's children. We honor our mothers and fathers when we make decisions that honor God.

US florists report that approximately one-fourth of the annual dollar volume on flowers and plants is spent for Mother's Day. In 2021, approximately \$2.66 billion were spent by US consumers for flowers and plants for Mother's Day. I'm sure that many of these floral investments are motivated by a desire to honor our mothers. While that demonstration can be legitimate, let's not neglect the honoring we can bestow on our parents by the life choices we make. In some cases, those are much more precious than flowers that fade. But flowers that accompany honor and respect can serve as thoughtful gestures that enhance basic principles of honor and respect.

-RJM



Those who have a "*why*" to live,  
can bear with almost any "*how*."

-VIKTOR FRANKL



# Should We Sing a New Song?

Wendell Glick, Meadville, PA

**D**id you know that many of the four-part hymns sung in many conservative Anabaptist meetings today were written between 1725 and 1925? We typically really like them. “Blessed Assurance,” “Come, Thou Almighty King,” and “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee” are familiar and comforting, significant to the faith formation of those who have sung these songs since childhood. But what about hymns from the rest of Christian history? “Sing a new song” (or a close equivalent) is found eight times in the Scriptures, with “new” translated from the Hebrew *châdâsh* (fresh, new thing) or the Greek *kainos* (recently made, fresh, unused, unprecedented). While one can argue that “Amazing Grace” can be sung in “fresh, new” ways (music arrangers rely on this), it is unconvincing to interpret “sing a new song” as “sing an old song in a fresh, new way.” Questions emerge. Should we sing new songs in church? If so, why? Is there a balance to be sought with old music? What is old music, anyway?

“Old” is a relative term. When I hear “Just As I Am” and “What a

Friend We Have in Jesus” described as “old” songs (or, even better, “good old” songs), I wonder how “Shepherd of Tender Youth” (ca. 200) and “Be Thou My Vision” (ca. 600) would feel—ancient, I suppose. We should sing ancient hymns in greater number and frequency; among other things, they help connect us in spirit to the church of long ago, while reminding us of the insignificance of our lifetime compared to the life of the church for two millennia.

Neglecting old (and ancient) hymns will impoverish our worship on various fronts, but is it important to sing new songs? I offer a qualified, yet resounding “yes”—qualified, because new songs introduced without adequate attention to local context, culture, and musical aptitude can distract, alienate, and frustrate worshippers. But our world is constantly changing, and we need poets who pen hymns addressing contemporary matters, giving each new generation a voice. Furthermore, musical styles have developed over the flow of Christian history. Time and utility work to filter out the mediocre

in every musical era, leaving the best for posterity. New music is how composers add value to this musical stream. Several hundred years ago, many of our “good old” favorites did not exist. Like every baby and every song, they entered the world brand-new. The singing church becomes richer when poets and composers birth new works.

With thoughtfulness and care and skill, in the right proportion, as good stewards of a rich and vibrant singing heritage, let us welcome and shepherd the newly-born, and may some of them grow to a ripe old age!

*[This article first appeared in the Spring 2022 issue of the SCMC Newsletter. Used by permission.]*



## mission awareness

# The Missionary and His Finances

*Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA*

**T**he subject of money matters and handling finances is a biblical, personal, and sensitive issue. Do my actions and the way I handle money indicate what is going on in my heart? The money exchangers at the temple were selfish and greedy. They took unjust advantage of the poor. This is a sin that God hates intensely! Jesus used an extreme measure of discipline to correct this ungodly practice.

Financial counselors tell us, “Jesus said more about finances than any other subject except love. More is said in the New Testament about money than heaven and hell combined. In the New Testament one out of every five verses relates to money and its use. There are over 2000 verses in

the Bible on money and possessions.” (*Biblical Financial Guidelines* by Lester Miller).

It will be a helpful qualification for a person to have some biblical principles and practices rooted in his life before enlisting for the mission field. Do these people handle their money wisely and frugally? Are they willing to live within a budget plan, and are they willing to stretch their dollars? Can I go into voluntary service and make car payments and pay on a mortgage on the house? Some voluntary service directors (recruiters) tell us that car payments are the very things that keep some people from serving in VS units. Perhaps the car or property could be sold or some financial arrangement

be made before going into service. If you decide to rent out your property, it is wise to choose a trusted overseer who is close to you, to assist in maintenance or other details while you are gone. Sometimes it is helpful to have a lawyer set up a power of attorney, especially in handling finances at home.

Jesus gives encouraging words to the disciples, *“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). This Scripture is spoken in the context of Jesus’ conversation with the rich young ruler. Jesus made a striking statement and answered them again, *“Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”* The disciples’ response was, *“They were astonished out of measure, saying, . . . Who then can be saved?”* We would wonder too, living in the wealthy land of America. But Jesus gives us some comforting words, *“With men it is*

*impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”* Yes, there will be many rich people in heaven who have given and given and given again, whose hearts and “trust” are not on riches, but have laid hold of eternal life. Oh, what a joy in first giving ourselves to the Lord and then our tithes and offerings!

Now, there are a variety of financial arrangements used by mission boards in channeling money for distribution to support missionaries. There are those who speak in churches concerning their vision and call to the mission field to raise support. Then the congregation will decide if they will assist in financing this family or individual. Some will send out letters to relatives and friends for this purpose.


Other mission organizations encourage their enrollees to wait on the Lord in prayer and faith for financial assistance. This approach to financing is called “faith mission” as practiced and made known by men such as Hudson Taylor, Watchman Nee, and include Irwin Schantz, the founder of Northern Light Gospel Mission (now Native Impact Mission). Allen Roth (Brooklyn, NY) writes, “Faith mission means God is trusted to provide finances, not the mission organization. We understand that a variety of

approaches to financing God's work exist and are not implying that any other approach is devoid of faith and is not being used by God." Amish Mennonite Aid and Mission Interest Committee started in faith on God's promises (and continue by faith) to provide the finances. God provided and still does.

We know of missionaries who hold part-time jobs to assist in their labor for the Lord. It is understood that the Apostle Paul worked as a tentmaker while preaching the Gospel in Thessalonica: *"For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God"* (I Thessalonians 2:9).

I appreciate the historic method that the conservative Anabaptist groups have utilized where churches take offerings designated to a mission organization. Then the mission board has a policy where the level of distribution is according to how long the individual or family has served in that particular country(s) under their organization. In Belize and El Salvador a number of missionaries purchased properties and are attempting to carve out their own living. Many of these people have extra support from their home churches in the U.S. It is a blessed

exercise for missionaries and their children to also give from their finances. If we teach the nationals this biblical practice, so should the missionaries. In the event of disaster or hardships in a community on the mission field, it is a wise practice to consult faithful brothers of the national church and make decisions on that level. It often does not work out for the best human relationships when the missionary gives handouts. A more profitable approach is to get the nationals involved in some biblical micro-financial program.

When serving under a mission board, it is important to be open and honest in handling finances and to send regular reports to the mission board or to supporting churches. It is a biblical practice as missionaries to write a "thank you" letter when personal gifts are given. This is the main reason we have the warm, congenial letter to the poor, pure church at Philippi. Express your unworthiness with deep appreciation in receiving the gift. We don't soon forget missionaries on furlough who express heartfelt gratitude for financial offerings, letters, and prayers. This thoughtful gesture is a great connecting link between missionaries and their supporters. 

# Dad and God's Word

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



**H**is was not so much a concise philosophy of life, charted out as 1, 2, 3. In fact he talked about not reducing life principles into a series of rules and simple formulas. He called it God's grace. I call it living out the Scriptures. Scriptures that he understood and cherished.

Like: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God."* In the 70s, when the call came from AMA for our family to serve at an orphanage in El Salvador, the rest of the family chuckled in incredulity. Except for Dad. He stated that his thriving carpentry business wasn't enough to keep him home. After life in El Salvador, his position on Calvary Bible School and rescue mission boards helped keep him focused on kingdom values. When he preached at my farewell before I left for South America, he offered that he'd rather I live a continent away than next door if the far-away course followed God's will.

His life showed us what II Corinthians 5:17 means: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away;*

*behold, all things are become new."* As a preschooler I remember his life change when he met God; the time when revival meetings by Roman J. Mullet stretched into three weeks and he and Mom became new creatures in Christ. After that he didn't say those embarrassing words anymore when agitated. He held us on his lap evenings and read to us from *The Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes*. He didn't take us to a restaurant to eat on Sunday anymore although he now had a car in which to take us. He prayed prayers we could understand and join in.

Our family was attending an evening program at a scenic attraction in another state among what felt like thousands to me, but was probably only hundreds of attendees. As the evening wore on, the lights dimmed, the music beat more powerfully, and immodest women danced onto the stage. My dad stood and whispered, "Let's go," upon which our entourage of seven stood and wound its way out of the seated crowd. *"Wherefore come out from among them"* and *"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes"* is

cemented into my mind and reminds me of a dad who chose God's way in a public place in Wisconsin.

Looking back was not one of his coping strategies. If he had a life verse it may have been: *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* By today's standards he probably didn't grieve appropriately when he buried two wives, marrying a third. I remember the walk he and I took together when he carefully explained that his grief had already begun awhile before her death. He had begun to face death at her initial cancer diagnosis.

Looking around wasn't one of his guidelines either. We quickly learned that "but everyone else is doing it" certainly gained us no special permission. I know his textbook verse for that was: *"comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."*

He believed that feeling sorry for oneself is wrong. *"In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."* Same with grudges. It's like I can hear him say, "If you want to feel miserable, hold onto your

pain and all the bad things others have done against you." To find peace and forgiveness by rehearsing and reviewing past pain was not a form of therapy he understood or practiced.

Joshua 1:8 was why he carried ©Navigators little white Scripture memorization cards in his shirt pocket for review during the day. *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."* Possibly he hadn't caught on that memorization was too difficult for someone his age.

In the 60s he helped pioneer our first private Christian school. Though I was quite young, I remember observing his vision and motivation at a time when not everyone supported what felt like a bizarre idea. Longsuffering ran hand-in-hand with his motivation.

He didn't allow our mother to bring tales of our transgressions to the supper table. To this he held firmly; mealtimes were for relaxed conversation, not scolding times. A strict disciplinarian would never have fit his description.

We never doubted that he loved his wife (wives) more than he loved

himself. He allowed us to glimpse their affection for each other.

I remember well the day I forcefully exclaimed, "This weather is crazy!" He merely countered, "Who makes the weather?" Forty years later the reality of that statement trails my steps as if he'd spoken today. His philosophy was, "Don't fight the weather. It is what it is. You can do nothing about it. Accept it and be more comfortable than when you fight it."

"You don't not do work because it's not fun. The two don't depend on each other. You work because it's the right thing to do." And the famous hard-to-understand-when-you're-six: "You don't have to if you want to."

There were times he quietly lived out the Golden Rule in ways we didn't know about. One example would be the story one of his customers told my brother after Dad was gone. After the contracted job was finished, Dad returned a large sum of money to this man saying, "I made enough money on this job, you can have this amount back."

His inability to harmonize did not keep him from singing, but remarkably his whistling tones were right on key. Neither was he known for his eloquence or ease of expression when preaching. He wasn't a sought-after evangelist. His

most powerful preaching to the mini congregation of his family included reading to us evenings. At certain places his voice would break and there was clearing of throat in an effort to steady his emotions. For sure when he read Edgar A. Guest poetry.

His love for learning persisted throughout life. Book shelves laden with volumes of all types, a stamp collection, maps, and clippings immortalized the knowledge he'd sought, loved, and embraced. If there were new (or old) places to visit, tour, or hear about, he was as eager as a child.

In a letter to a granddaughter he related about touring a friend's large new house. He wrote: "I haven't seen our mansion yet, we'll get to see it when we go to be with Grandma. *'In my Father's house are many mansions.'*"

When there were dire predictions about what lay around the corner, or when doomsday prophets pedaled their rumors, he quoted, "*There is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, see, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.*" He was knowledgeable in history and could readily draw up stories of earthquakes and wars more disastrous than the present awful ones.

We could count on him to quote

*“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”* at our reunions, baptisms, and weddings, punctuated with emotion. He insisted that it was only by the

grace of God. He died; still without a defined code of principles, or a how-to sequence. *Just* the grace of God. *Just* living God’s Word.



## junior messages

# They Need God’s Word

*Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH*

**I**n the rugged mountains of Peru, a young boy, Romulo Saune, took his family’s sheep to the mountains every day to graze. Romulo was trained to be brave just like the other children in his large village of 80 houses. His parents prepared their children for the harsh life in the mountains by placing their child’s hand in an ant nest until the child would say it didn’t hurt.

One day while riding a pig, Romulo flew off and banged his head. The accident caused hearing loss, and learning in school was a challenge.

When Romulo was 12, his family moved to the city in hopes of finding work and a better education for the children. The move indeed did change the family’s history because the family found Jesus.

Romulo’s grandfather especially wanted Romulo to get an education and prayed that Romulo would one day spread the Gospel. He

never imagined just how influential Romulo would be in bringing the Bible to his own people.

To earn money for school, Romulo shined shoes, sold newspapers, and baked bread. Despite his hearing loss, he finished school and attended university. When Romulo was a teenager, his father became the caretaker of the Wycliffe Translation Center. Romulo helped with the work and met Conrad Phelps, a translator, who talked with the teens around the Center to improve his Quechua, the Ayacucho dialect of Romulo’s family.

Romulo’s world expanded when the translation team chose him to be their language-helper. He helped the team translate the New Testament, idea-to-idea instead of word-for-word. Romulo was driven to get the translation done as soon as possible. He knew his family and people could never fully understand God’s Word if they didn’t hear it in their own



language. He worked long hours and pushed the team to work hard.

Romulo married an American woman and continued his translation work, helping translate the Old Testament. He became frustrated. He felt he couldn't accurately translate the Bible without seeing Israel. The Quechuas had dozens of words for mountains and descriptions of the mountains were important to them. How could Romulo know what words to use if he had never seen some of the places described in the Bible. In 1984, his dream of visiting Israel came to pass.

During this time in Peru, a group called Shining Path believed they held the key to solve Peru's problems. Their goal was to make a socialist utopia. They incited violence and rebellion. Roadblocks, shootings, and burning vehicles were all too common, and evangelists especially faced danger.

One night when Romulo and his family were going to bed, they heard a voice call, "Is the pastor there?"

They responded negatively since the pastor who used to live in their house was not there. The next morning a man came to their house and confessed to Romulo that he had come to kill him the night before, but when he spied on the church, the verses he heard convicted him.

Romulo led the man to Christ.

He did his best to keep his family safe, but he felt that surely one day he would be killed by Shining Path.

Translating the Old Testament often takes decades, but Romulo felt a great urgency as his country was at war and people were suffering. They needed God's Word now! Finally, the day arrived that the translation was finished. And even though the economy was in shambles from the war, 11,000 Bibles sold the first week they were available.

Romulo and his wife were exhausted after working such long hours to finish translating the Old Testament. They planned a trip to the United States to visit friends and family.

After their return to Peru, Romulo planned a trip to the mountains to see his family and grandmother. Traveling in Peru was dangerous because of Shining Path. Romulo loved time in the village with his family and even had the opportunity to show the villagers the "Jesus Film."

Romulo's family was concerned for his safety, but nothing happened in their village. However, on the way home, Romulo gave a policeman a ride. Two unknown strangers also joined his truck without permission.


At a roadblock on the way down the mountain, 100 rebels stopped his

truck and opened fire on Romulo and three of his brothers and nephews.

“This must’ve been a great man,” the citizens of Romulo’s town commented when they saw the nearly 2,000 people who showed up to join the funeral procession for Romulo.

His wife Donna reminded the people to do what Romulo had

fought hard for during his life. “Don’t be weary of doing good. Don’t let divisions separate you. Work together; this is God’s will.”

Peru needed God’s Word. Today, many people are still in need of the Word of God. What can you do to help spread the Good News? 

*Resource: One Bright Shining Path, Chris Woehr, (Crossway Books, 1993)*

## youth messages

# Who Needs Convictions?

*Aaron I. Lapp, New Concord, OH*

**H**ave you ever wondered why people lose their faith in God? How can someone grow up in a Christian home with great parents, and yet walk away from what seems good and right? Why is it that some people are always pushing the edge of what is okay and slowly lose their values, even biblical values? In this article I will try to answer these questions and more. I will endeavor to convince you that convictions are key to the Christian faith. We will be asking the following three questions: What is a conviction? Why are convictions important? And lastly, how do we form convictions?

What is a conviction? A conviction is something that directs our words

and actions in everyday life. The dictionary defines conviction this way: “A firmly-held belief or opinion.” I believe this defines conviction fairly well; however, I believe convictions are more than just firmly-held beliefs. It is something that motivates and dictates how we live our lives. Convictions call us to action, not just firmly believing something. There is a difference between a conviction and a fact of the Bible. I don’t have a conviction that Jesus rose from the dead or that God is good. These are facts of Scripture that are held widely among faithful believers. A conviction is a judgment that you make about what is right and wrong. Scripture does not always spell out exactly how to apply the principles

that it teaches, so we must form convictions on how we might apply them in a way that is pleasing to God. For example, Scripture does not tell me if I should spend my evenings watching movies, but I have formed a conviction against that for several scriptural reasons which I will not go into here.

There are many examples in Scripture of people who had convictions. Daniel had a conviction to pray three times a day. He was so consistent that he did it even when his enemies plotted against him. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow down to the idol that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. They had a conviction that would not allow them to bow down to the idol. David had an opportunity to kill King Saul in the cave, but he had a conviction that would not allow him to kill the Lord's anointed. One of the best examples of a conviction in Scripture is found in Jeremiah 35:1-17 (ESV).

*The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: "Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak with them and bring them to the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers; then offer them wine to drink."*

*So I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah and his brothers and all his sons and*

*the whole house of the Rechabites. I brought them to the house of the LORD into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, keeper of the threshold. Then I set before the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups, and I said to them, "Drink wine."*

*But they answered, "We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, 'You shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons forever. You shall not build a house; you shall not sow seed; you shall not plant or have a vineyard; but you shall live in tents all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.' We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, to drink no wine all our days, ourselves, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, and not to build houses to dwell in. We have no vineyard or field or seed, but we have lived in tents and have obeyed and done all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, 'Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans and the army of the Syrians.' So we are living in Jerusalem."*

*Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Go and say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction and listen to my words? declares the LORD. The command that Jonadab the son of Rechab gave to his sons, to drink no wine, has been kept, and they drink none to this day, for they have obeyed their father's command. I have spoken to you persistently, but you have not listened to me. I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, 'Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers.' But you did not incline your ear or listen to me. The sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have kept the command that their father gave them, but this people has not obeyed me. Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them and they have not listened, I have called to them and they have not answered."*

This is an amazing story. The Rechabites had a conviction against

drinking wine. God put this conviction to the test by bringing them into the temple and having Jeremiah, a respected prophet, command them to drink wine. God used them as an example to Judah saying, "See, the Rechabites obey their father. How much more should you obey me?" We need to have personal convictions for the things that Scripture tells us to do. Scripture tells us to think on pure, lovely, and commendable things, and to spend our time wisely; therefore, I will not spend my evenings watching movies. I have made a judgment that, in general, movies are not pure, lovely, or commendable, so I formed a conviction that I will not watch movies that do not meet these requirements.

Here are a few more practical ways to define a conviction. A conviction is something you have learned from Scripture. An example of this is non-resistance. Scripture says we should love our enemies, so we can form a conviction that says we should not kill them or harm them in any way, as doing that would not be loving them. A conviction is something that comes from within. It may be something that you have been taught, but ultimately you will decide whether or not you will obey it. A conviction cannot be forced on anyone but must

come from within. It is something you do when no one else is looking, and it guides and motivates you even when you are at home and no one can see what you are doing.

Convictions are important for many different reasons. They direct our lives when we don't know what to do or where to turn. They ground us and give us something to live by when everything else seems to be falling apart. Convictions give us confidence in Christ. It is so beautiful and freeing to live a life knowing we are doing what God wants us to do. If you don't have convictions, you will fall away from God. The Christian life cannot be successfully lived without forming convictions.

People without convictions are easily swayed by others' opinions, culture, and styles. You can probably think of someone in your life who seems to be a different person depending on whom they are with. These people do not have many convictions. They are easily swayed into doing something if their peers are doing it. We do not want to be a person "*driven with the wind and tossed*" as James says. Many of you have also observed when someone leaves the Mennonite church and does not have convictions. They often go to a more liberal church, and eventually they are a completely

different person. They do not practice biblical principles like modesty or non-resistance. What was missing in this person? Why did they not hold to what they were taught and how they were raised? It is because they did not own it for themselves. They did not form the necessary convictions to walk in God's ways. And ultimately, they likely did not have a sincere desire to walk in His ways in the first place. Ask yourself what you would do if tomorrow your church would be gone? It is burned to the ground. Not only is the building gone but all the people in it. You are completely alone in your Christian walk. Who are you? What kind of person would you become? How would you act? What would you do?

Not only is it important to have convictions but also to be forming convictions. You need to be forming convictions now for the future so you have something to stand on. Don't wait until you are forced to decide but try to form your convictions so that you know what you will do when these different situations come up. When I was younger, I always thought that when I got older I would just know what I believed and how to be a good leader. I thought that when I got married I would have it all figured out and I would understand the Bible and know where I stood on

many controversial issues. I'm here to tell you that it doesn't just magically happen. These points in my life have come and gone and I didn't magically have convictions afterwards. It is so important to be forming convictions all the time. Be active in your faith and begin forming these convictions in your life.

So how can we form these convictions? What are good ways to start? I imagine if I could see you right now I could tell that you are a person who has some convictions. How did you form those convictions? Did you just make them up? Was that just the way you were raised? Are you just doing what those around you are doing? Or do you have a biblical framework of principles and values that you are following that allow you to purposely develop your own convictions?

Start with your attitude. How serious are you about following Jesus? Do you sincerely want to do what God wants you to do? There are two common types of attitudes towards God. The first says, "What do I need to do to be a Christian or get to heaven? Where is the line? How much can I get away with without making God angry?"

The second attitude and the one we should strive for says, "God, show me what You want me to do to make

You happy? How can I best serve You? How can I make You happy and proud of me?" Wouldn't we all want to be part of a family where the children do what they can to make their father happy, rather than try to see what they can get away with without making him angry? We should always strive to make our Heavenly Father happy.

Our convictions should be based on Scripture and not on man's faulty thinking. "*Let God be true, and every human a liar*" (Romans 3:4 NIV). We can use logic and reasoning to explain away Scripture and make it say what it does not, but let's approach Scripture as infallible. If Scripture says that all things work together for good to those who love God, then let's believe it even though terrible and evil things happen to good people! God's ways are so much higher than ours, and who are we to think that we know better than God?


If we want Scripture to guide the formation of our convictions, then we will need to study it! Spiritual formation takes more than a 30-minute devotional per day, it takes lots of reading and studying. When forming a conviction on any given topic, it is wise to try to understand the whole picture. Gather all the Scriptures on the subject and read them. Think about the purpose

and importance of this issue. What has been the story of this issue in history? What are the whos, whats, and wheres? Where is this issue going and how will it affect me as a believer? After we have established the big picture, then we should begin looking at the details and how we might live it out. Let's not let our flesh keep us from doing what Jesus says, but let's be radical and do it even if it looks stupid or seems silly. We should always align ourselves with Scripture rather than align Scripture with ourselves.

To the younger readers, I challenge you to start forming your convictions now. Ask the why questions and search for the answers from Scripture. Don't think that convictions just happen and don't wait to start. Start today! To the older readers, continue to learn and grow and stay fresh on why you do what you do. Forming convictions should be a process of continual growth and learning. It is also wise to review the convictions you do have. Sit down and have a discussion with a friend and try to explain to him why you do what you do while your friend plays devil's advocate or writes an argumentative paper for your conviction. Another great way to stay brushed up on this is to evangelize. As you try to bring people into the Kingdom you will be

forced to explain why you do what you do.

I hope that you can see the important role of convictions in a person's life. Think about the question I posed earlier. If my church was gone tomorrow, who would I be? Develop the attitude of wanting to please God instead of seeing what you can get away with. Allow Scripture to have precedence over human reasoning.

In conclusion, convictions are judgments that you make about right and wrong that direct and affect how you live your life. It is something that you would do even if your church would be gone tomorrow. Convictions should be based on Scripture. Why are they important? They give us direction in times of uncertainty, they give us confidence in God, and they keep us grounded in our faith. How do we form convictions? Start with the right attitude. Study Scripture deeply, asking God what He wants from us. Align ourselves with Scripture rather than Scripture with us. Step back and look at the big picture first then at the details. Here is my challenge: If your church was gone tomorrow, what would be your convictions? If you had to explain to a new Christian why you do what you do, could you point to Scripture and show them why? 

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Periodicals

## THOUGHT GEMS

Chin up, knees down.

• • • • •

He who trusts his own heart is a fool.

• • • • •

It is easier to build boys than to mend men.

• • • • •

A real family man is one who looks at his new baby  
as an addition rather than a deduction.

• • • • •

Character is never erected on a neglected conscience.

• • • • •

Do not use a hatchet to remove a fly from your friend's forehead.

• • • • •

When two men in a business always agree, one of them is unnecessary.

• • • • •

When the shepherd speaks well of the wolf, the sheep are in trouble.

• • • • •

Tact is knowing how far to go before going too far.

• • • • •

Good character, like good soup, is made at home.

• • • • •

Many promises impair confidence.