



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

## AUGUST 2022

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Calvary Messenger

August 2022

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# Psalm 119

*Richard Stoltzfoos, Burgettstown, PA*

All my heart around  
By this book is bound.  
Could I find more chilling cold,  
Deeper warmth, than in Your Word?  
Every morning I escape  
From warm covers to Your law.  
Gazing through the yellow page  
Home I see approaching soon.  
In Your kingdom and Your law  
Justice comes to all the earth.  
Knowledge is a priceless pearl,  
Like a sapphire is Your Word.  
Meditating on Your law  
Nightly I retire my thoughts.  
On Your Word my mind is set,  
Purposed firm to not forget.  
Questions from my aged friend  
Ring of reading in Your Word.  
Stitch my quilt with statutes from my Lord,  
That between His pages I might lie.  
Until in Your love I hide,  
Verses on my sheets I scribe. 

## Our Hoarded Resources

**O**n December 24, 1866, a baby girl was born to a young couple, Eldon and Jean Johnson, in Vineland, NJ. They named her Annie.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, little Annie would lose her mother who died as she gave birth to Annie's baby sister. Mr. Johnson, who himself was suffering from an incurable disease, willed his children to the Flint family who would bring them up in the Baptist faith. Early in life, Annie gave her heart to the Lord and learned to trust Him through the difficult circumstances in her life.

Annie trained as a teacher, but arthritis began to show itself in her second year of teaching. She was soon unable to continue her work of teaching and suffered several years of helplessness. Both of her adoptive parents died within months of each other and left Annie and her sister alone again. There was little money in the bank, and the twice-orphaned children had come to a real "Red Sea place" in their lives.

Out of this life of hardship and suffering came poetry that she

entitled, "What God Hath Promised." Through these words and many others, she became convinced that God intended to glorify Himself through her in her weak, earthen vessel.

It is from one of Annie's songs that this discourse found seed. Her song, "He giveth More Grace," includes the lines, "When we reach the end of our hoarded resources our Father's full giving is only begun." This line begs the question: Why do we often wait to call upon our Heavenly Father until we have exhausted our own efforts and resources? Does God not need to help those who help themselves?

The Bible does teach us to be resourceful and provide for our own households. "*But if any provide not for his own [relatives, ESV], and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*" (1 Timothy 5:8). God's command to Adam was that he should work for his food, "*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*" (Genesis 3:10). But therein may be the problem. We think we are able to provide for ourselves and do not recognize that without God,

---

*1* [hymnary.org/person/Flint\\_Annie](http://hymnary.org/person/Flint_Annie)

we would not be able to provide for ourselves.

The “fool” that Jesus referred to in Luke 12 was still hoarding his resources. He was not asking his Father in heaven what he should do with the blessings God had given him. It doesn’t seem that he gave any recognition to the God of creation Who blessed the earth and the seed that he sowed to produce bountifully. Would God rather have spoken the welcoming words, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant,*” had he chosen to lay up his treasure for an unselfish purpose? As it was, all his hoarded resources were left for someone else to enjoy. How much better would it have been if he had given his riches to God to use to bless another needy soul who had exhausted his own hoarded resources?

In Psalm 50 God tells Israel that He does not fault them for their sacrifices, but He does not need them. God owns all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle on a thousand hills are His. Mankind has from ages past taken pride in what he is able to accomplish and what he can do for God. But God desires that we recognize our complete dependence upon Him, the Creator of the universe, and offer praise and thanksgiving from the depths of our

hearts. “*Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*” (Psalm 50:14-15).

God’s Word is filled with promises that He will hear us if we are in need. He promises things much greater than we can even imagine.

“*He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him*” (Psalm 91:15).

“*Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*” (Jeremiah 29:12).

“*The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy*” (Psalm 145:18).

“*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not*” (Jeremiah 33:3).

After the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples decided to go fishing. But after spending the whole night at a task very familiar to them, their nets came up empty every time. After

spending three years following their beloved Master, they could not even catch a single fish. But as they came close to shore, an unknown person onshore asked if they had any meat. Their answer was “No.”

*“And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes”* (John 21:6).

Is it surprising that the “disciple whom Jesus loved” was the one who recognized that the Stranger was their beloved Master? I believe he arrived at his conclusion because of the miracle they had just experienced.

Sometimes our hoarded resources may be the abilities and experiences that have always brought results for us. We may fish all night and come up empty time after time. We should be humble enough to recognize that our beloved Master may speak through a “stranger” who offers some unlikely advice. Sometimes God answers even before we call upon Him if we are willing to admit that our hoarded resources are not sufficient to provide

our needs. May we recognize and worship, as John did when he said, “*it is the Lord.*”

Maybe we miss the desire that God has for an everyday relationship with us. One way we can do that is to praise Him for all of life’s blessings and tell Him about the things we will be facing each day. God is Infinite. We will not exhaust His resources, not even with our daily insignificant needs. Verse three of this song is less familiar, but Annie seemed to understand our Father’s love when she wrote, “Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision, our God ever yearns His resources to share; lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing; the Father both thee and thy load will upbear.” Our loving Father enjoys to hear our needs and has promised to care for those who fear Him. “His love has no limits, His grace has no measure, His power has no boundary known unto men. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!”

—AY 

When one door closes, another *opens*; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has *opened* for us.

—ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL



## Announcement

### Faithful Women Seminar 2022

Saturday, October 1, 2022

#### For Such A Time As This:

Ideas about womanhood come from many places today. Society, family, friends, and church communities communicate messages to us about what it means to be a woman, what our role is, what determines our value, and how we ought to relate to others.

In this seminar, we will seek to learn from God's Word about His purposes and plans for women and talk practically about living as women for God's glory.

Biblical View of Womanhood— *Estalee Anderson, Rochelle, VA*

The Role of a Wife— *Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH*

Beauty or Modesty?— *Janice Neuenschwander, Leetonia, OH*

Why Manners Matter— *Christine Martin, Plain City, OH*



*Location: Plainview Christian School, 8270 Amish Pike, Plain City, OH 43064*



## the bottom line

### Levels of Understanding

*Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA*

**T**he amazing faculty of our understanding is an endowment to us by God which involves recognition, comprehension, and a vast array of calculation in any area of interest or inquiry. Some of this is instantaneous, on the spot, seemingly without thought. At other times we need to say, “Now let me think a little.” We might close our eyes a

bit accompanied by a frown, while the negatives and positives are in a high-speed mental ping pong match, contemplating a winning thought or decision. The winning thought or decision is filed away in our memory bank as a part of our conscious mind. With the passing of time, and along with the general enormity of information relative to its importance, any quantity of

facts is put into our subconscious mind without us deciding to do so. Later on, we have a certain feeling about something without quite knowing why. It is coming out of our subconscious mind.

We will consider these three levels of understanding.

### 1. Rebellion

Rebellion is knowing but not doing. It is what we call “going against better knowledge.” It is an intentional disobedience. The mind has been informed and the concept of what is

right has been adequately spoken or explained, but it is rejected.

Rebellion is simply “a defiance of or opposition to any authority or control” (Webster). The defiance begins in the mind, possibly entirely unseen or unrecognized in its earliest stage. A small child can be noted to do this before he can speak, having ways to express disappointment or even showing signs of disgust. It is a pattern that can grow and increase to being a very serious problem through all of life. We all know of grown

## Announcement

### Single Ladies Seminar

August 5–7, 2022

#### L.I.V.I.N.G. VIBRANTLY:

Single women can sometimes question their WHY. At times they may wonder who they are and what their purpose is in life. In this seminar, we will seek to discover some practical elements of living in relationship with God and others that can promote a vibrant, abundant life and usefulness in the Kingdom of God.

Living Vibrantly— *Delight Yoder, Bemidji, MN*

Intity in Christ—*Rosemary Troyer, Plain City, OH*

Value of Trouble— *Kelly Kauffman, Thomaston, GA*

Inside My Heart— *Valerie Steiner, Plain City, OH*

Navigating Friendships— *Naoma Lee, Harrisonburg, VA*

Grace for Reality— *Lucille Martin, Memphis, MO*



*Location: Plainview Christian School, 8270 Amish Pike, Plain City, OH 43064*

*For more information or to register, please contact Deeper Life Ministries:*

*(614) 873-1199 or [info@dlnohio.org](mailto:info@dlnohio.org)*





men and women in our churches who have always been irritable, contentious, contrary, generally uncooperative and cantankerous. We know them as scorners. Physically, they are full grown. Spiritually, they sometimes perform like babies.

## 2. Ignorance

We certainly recognize the variables inherent in people's brain capabilities. There have been many problems in the home where a son or daughter with a high IQ has mocked and seriously belittled a sibling who was a slow learner in certain school work, or one who was disadvantaged in playing games, or who just did not like to read and was depreciated for it.

We could call that an unselected ignorance. What the rebellious one does is a chosen ignorance, choosing to ignore that which is known to be a right thing or a better way, whereas the ignorance that comes from a mind incapable of comprehending academically should not be scolded or reprimanded or penalized for his lack of mental capacity. Some people have certain impossible mental blocks; others take that as an easy step up to the next level.

## 3. Reception

Receivers are wise as a result, not as a choice. Rebellion is a choice, even as being receptive to knowledge and instruction is a choice. There is a

distinct joy in learning that becomes a reservoir of knowledge from a fresh stream of input. By contrast, the rebellious ones channel their bile into a septic tank of bitterness.

Receivers have clear eyes (some actually shine), ears like antennas to take it all in, and hearts that would clap their hands if they had several. They are the ones, as James says, who are doers of the Word. Typically, they come back for more, not less. They are blessed, not cursed. They also give a good report of their instructors and face the future with the expectation of the better things of life.

Concerning learning that which is good and being wise, Proverbs 3:8 says, "*It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*" What a curious concept! Whoever went on a special diet for the health of his navel? Who drinks an expensive drink to moisturize (center margin) the marrow in his bones? No one, of course. Overall physical health is promoted by being a receiver in life. This text in verses 1-8 says that being a receiver of God's commandments adds length of days, peace and favor with God and man, and the benefit of direction in life. And then, Luther's German speaks about the unintended and unplanned result of these things providing overall health to the physical body and a gracious

quicken to the bones.

This article is a follow-up to the one last month about one's understanding. We parallel that message to say there are two basic approaches to the wonderful faculty of the understanding.

The one approach is an academic approach that becomes satisfied by measurable proof. Proof is at rest by the test of natural cause and effect as a logical conclusion. In some cases it is subjected to the rigors of science that provide an indisputable verdict by man's principle of repeatability. These two observable approaches are needed platforms for the vast enterprise of learning on a natural level. They are put to daily use in our schools, and the rest of us do this in our efforts to be self-taught.

The other approach is where the understanding comes as a result of faith in God and His Word. It is founded on the first and primary response to Bible teaching in a decided and chosen faith to all the Word of God. That response is a chosen and singular faith to all Biblical history, its devotional sections, commandments, and prophecy. Faith must come first in order to have a divinely sanctioned understanding. It is by "*faith we understand*" as clearly stated in Hebrews 11:3, and not as some are saying where we first

must understand in order to have a valid faith. The response of faith is a needed emphasis in our churches on a regular basis as being everyone's primary response.

Our concern is that, more and more, our preaching and Bible teaching emphasizes the need of understanding God's Word as a first and primary response. Therefore, we are called upon to understand why God has spoken as He has in the Bible. But, we say, preaching and teaching should clearly proclaim what the Bible says, and then call for a primary response of faith to that teaching. There are not a few things in the Bible that are difficult to understand, which cause us to question why certain things should be done, and why other things must not be done. And then some people have difficulty in understanding those "whys" and "wherefores." Finally, some conclude that the issues in focus have no reasonable understanding for its prohibition and just give in to the flesh, a little here and a little there. A person's understanding can go either way, either to error and sin or to right choices and God's approval. In each case, the understanding is established and claims justification based on their chosen understanding. They hold fast to what the Bible means to

them, rather than what the Bible says.

The Bible says, “*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our [understanding], (No!) but, “even our faith”* (I John 5:4). The general emphasis in the New Testament is that the understanding is given by God as a result of our trust in Him. Even the Old Testament retained that principle in the lovely words of Proverbs 3:5, “*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.*” One is inclined to fall in the direction he leans. The Bible says our love of Christ passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:19), and the peace of God passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Faith also passes all understanding by far.

**The Bottom Line** is that faith must be nurtured; it can increase and faith can be strengthened. This is a call to all Bible teachers and preachers to give a renewed emphasis

to that Biblical response to faith as we teach and preach and write. Hopefully, our school teachers will differentiate between teaching math, science, social studies, and grammar as studies to be understood, and Bible classes as teachings to be believed rather than being primarily understood.

These concepts could profitably be used by parents in training their children in their homes. Those people who believe God and all of His Word have a better understanding of the Bible than those who must first understand before they will choose to believe.

*[Correction to the July 2022 article, “The Early Church Fathers in Perspective.” Clement (AD 35-99)<sup>1</sup> and Polycarp (AD 69-155)<sup>2</sup> both lived in the era of the apostles. (The Apostle John was banished to the Isle of Patmos in AD 97.)<sup>3</sup>]*

<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>2</sup> Britannica.com

<sup>3</sup> *Martyrs Mirror*, 96



## Gay Girl Meets Mennonite Pastor

*Julie Kaufman, Middlefield, OH*

There were 24 of us, a motley crew of Mennonite high school seniors and their supportive parents with a toddler in a stroller. Thousands of Girl Scouts were spread out all across the National Mall on blankets and underneath umbrellas, sipping

slushies and celebrating the Girl Scouts Centennial. It was also the weekend of the LGBT Capital Pride festival held in Washington D.C. every year. In the bumper-to-bumper traffic, convertibles passed us, their rainbows barely fluttering in the

stifling heat. It was definitely not the best weekend to visit the place where our country celebrates its origin to try to inspire our high school seniors to appreciate the great sacrifices it took our Founding Fathers to build this country.

They maneuvered our group into the security lines at the Capitol building, and we stood in awe of the Rotunda. We walked along the Vietnam Wall, and toured the Lincoln Memorial. A few of us women admired the gowns that the First Ladies wore at their inaugural balls. We walked for miles, ate hot dogs from street vendors, and watched them make money. We welcomed the restful, cool atmosphere at the Ford Theater. We were hushed into silence at the atrocity of the suffering that many endured during the Holocaust at the Holocaust Museum.

Finally, it was time for supper and my pastor husband and I were on the schedule to choose the restaurant. My husband—the pastor—grew up in El Salvador in a missionary family, and he was hungry for pupusas. Thanks to Google, he found a little hole-in-the-wall restaurant offering Salvadoran cuisine, but true to culture and the overloaded city, there was a wait time. He assured us it would be fine; they would be able to handle all 24 of us!

And wait we did. We spread out

across the sidewalks, and peered right into the little restaurant with the glass front. The gay and lesbian folks inside peered back at us. One couple was making out, right there inside the window. The senior boys were dramatic. “Dad, we’re not eating here!” one of them declared.

Meanwhile, the pastor got in line behind a lesbian couple to reserve our 24 seats. A dialogue started, and the sweet little lesbian girl was very open and shared freely with the pastor. “What’s it like?” he asked. “What do you feel from the Christian world in general when we relate to you? What do you feel from us?”

The girl was kind, but it was not a pretty answer. Animosity, staring, rudeness, and just plain old hate. Like a project to be dissected and torn apart—they feel the eyes, see the disgust. Never mind that this is who Jesus died for—an actual person with a heart and soul and feelings. Yes, maybe they are confused, but who is supposed to care? Who is to be the Body of Christ to them if it’s not us?

Bob\*, one of the dads in our group, came back to me where I was mingling with the others, and there were tears in his eyes. “That’s why,” his voice broke, “that’s why I’m so glad he’s my pastor. He really cares about her.” And the pastor, though I know his imperfections, really does

care. He really wants to know what she's feeling. And I, who was very hungry by this point, did I really care? Or am I more concerned about what's for supper, or what I'm going to wear the next day than caring about she whom Jesus came for?

Bob, who had lost his way some years earlier, knew how much he needed God and His people—the church and the community of believers. He had said that if it weren't for a few of God's fierce warriors, he could not have made it. They fought for him and with him.

Do I know how much I need grace too? I, who have had the privilege of growing up in a Christian, two-parent home, a Christian school, and church family? I know the pride in my heart that lurks just around the corner, the indifference that steals over my soul, and the selfishness I keep seeing in the mirror.

I had seen the gleam in her eyes when my daughter brought me the book. "You have to read it," she said. I laid aside my other reading and went on a journey with Jackie Hill Perry in *Gay Girl, Good God*. I was convicted, deeply. How we have missed this community that Jesus came to save! What pain, anguish, and hurt brought them to make the decisions that they made? And Jackie said it too, how that a same-sex attracted person who

comes to Jesus needs community. They can't do it alone.

After at least an hour, they finally got all 24 of us around a table. As the enchiladas and pupusas started to arrive, I wondered who was under more scrutiny, was it the lesbian and gay community or the 24 Mennonites? One thing for sure, it was probably the first time that that many Mennonites and gays were in one room together! But all of us were sinners (some who were saved by grace) and messed up and so in need of the only One Who can fix us—Jesus!

Betty (one of our group) paused to chat with the restaurant owner as we were leaving. By the time the chat was over, she was praying with her, passing God's love on to the next person.

[Author's note: To self-educate, read the fascinating book, *Gay Girl, Good God*. Not only is it a compelling story, but the author gives sound Biblical help for those dealing with same-sex attractions.

Please do not assume from this article that it is only non-Mennonites who struggle with same-sex attractions. Some Mennonites do struggle with this. They need guidance and love and care, just like we all do for the sins that so easily beset us.]

\*not his real name



# The Trumpet of the Lord

*Anya Hursh, Krivoshientsi, Ukraine*

*“To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything He has given us—and He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence, a gift of grace.”*

*-Thomas Merton*

The air carries a sense of expectancy these days. We often scan the sky, keeping our ears tuned for the roar of helicopters and war planes. The wailing siren in town and air raid alerts on our phones remind us to be careful and alert. Occasional gunshots and the rumble of passing army equipment remind us that war is being waged. The soldiers at the block-post at the end of our lane are also vigilant. Recently, they asked us to not mow our yard because the purr of the lawnmower makes it hard for them to catch the first sounds of approaching planes.

As believers, our ears are tuned for more than the roar of an army helicopter. We are listening for the sound of a trumpet! Our eyes scan the clouds in the eastern sky, knowing that any day, deliverance could come. This expectancy does not put us on edge like the sounds of war do. But it does give a sense of pressure. Are we doing all we can to prepare for

the great judgment day? Are our neighbors and friends ready to go with us? We, too, have to turn off the noises that distract us from listening for the sound of the trumpet. When the roll is called up yonder, by the grace of God, we can be there!

• • • • •

Recently, I was privileged to travel with iCAM’s mobile clinic from Romania on a trip north of Kiev. We went to the village of Rodinka where friends of ours, Alosha and Luda Fed, live. The stories they told us of their time spent under Russian occupation were tear-jerking.

We passed many sad sights as we drove to their area. Bombed towns, burned tanks, and broken bridges were keen reminders of the realities of war. At one block-post, the guards were on edge. “Are you sure you want to go in there?” they wondered. “They are predicting that 200 Russian tanks will be in here by tonight!” We were very near the Belarusian border and knew that it could easily be true.



We arrived in Rodinka where a group of eager people had gathered already. Nurse Diane and her helpers set up a clinic in one room and Nurse Marina and I worked from another room. One by one the villagers came in and shared their health issues and received medication. The mobile clinic carries a large supply of medicines, but still there were needs we could not meet. Along with the medications, people received apples, food parcels, and Christian literature.

One woman entered the room, wearing a black scarf. Grief was etched on her face, and her eyes brimmed with sorrow. Later I heard her story. Her son was one of the brave ones of the village who risked his life to bring milk to the village during Russian occupation. He and a few others would sneak to a dairy farm in another village and bring milk back. The milk was rationed, a liter per family, and every few days they would make another trip. They feared the Russian soldiers but an even greater fear was the landmines. The forest was no longer a safe place to be. A few days before the village became free, her son and several others were driving through the woods when they hit a landmine which blew up all three men. Not one survived.

I listened to the stories and found it hard to imagine soldiers marching



through these same streets only weeks before. The thought of Russian tanks possibly approaching with nightfall seemed surreal. But the fears and the tears of the people were just as real as the bombed buildings and the bullet holes. The horror of war is not stopped, even by the stunning beauty of spring.

Nearly 90 people received medicine that day. We left the village after eating supper under an apple tree buzzing with bees and laden with blossoms. There were tears of gratitude in the eyes of our hosts as we bade them goodbye.

At one of the block-posts, Jesse, the driver, gave one of the soldiers a heavy-duty flashlight. The soldier gratefully received the flashlight. "Tomorrow is my birthday," he said, his voice thick with emotion. "Thank you so much!" Jesse wished him God's blessing and thanked him for what he was doing. The soldier was greatly touched, and returned the blessing. "Thank you for what you are doing to help heal our people," he said. I thought about it as we drove on, how blessed we are to be able to

offer hope and healing through Jesus. How different our responsibility is than the soldier who stands by the block-post checking the traffic.

We knew we would not reach home before curfew, but we hoped that because we were traveling as medical workers and volunteers they would allow us to pass through the block-posts. We arrived at a block-post just outside of Kiev two minutes before ten. To our dismay, the guard informed us that we would not be traveling further that night. “Look, we’re tired,” our driver said. “We’ve been helping people all day. Please let us through so we can sleep in our beds tonight.”

“I’m tired too,” was the terse reply. “I’ve been here since the 25<sup>th</sup> of February. I also want to go home. But orders are orders. I can’t let you go.” He directed us to the empty gas station next door and told us to park there for the night.

So we parked there and spent time sharing and singing, encouraging each other in the Lord. As we stood there in the darkness with stars twinkling above us, we counted our blessings. We were alive and relatively safe. We were not captured by cruel soldiers or hunkered in bomb shelters.

We stretched out as comfortably as we could in the vans and got a bit of shut-eye. Hours later, we welcomed

the dawn in the eastern sky, and as soon as curfew was over at five in the morning we headed toward our village of Krivoshientsi.

After a few hours to load food parcels and freshen up, the medical team was on their way again. This time I stayed at home, but I had a renewed appreciation for the brave people who spend day after day, and at times night after night, traveling across Ukraine, ministering to the needs of the people around them.

Please pray for the mobile clinic and for others who sacrifice many of the comforts of life in order to give comfort to the grieving and hope to the hurting. Pray that God would give them the emotional strength and physical stamina as they offer care and support.

Pray that, as our drivers go through countless check-points, the soldiers would sense God’s love and that their hearts could be drawn towards Christ, the Prince of Peace.

No matter on which side of the ocean we are, may we all keep watching the sky and listening for the trumpet of the Lord. Surely, He is coming soon!

*[This was written on June 7, 2022, as updates to their family and friends. While they are not in the most dangerous areas, on Sunday morning, June 26, a Russian missile landed in a field a kilometer from their house. It was loud enough to awaken all of them. Pray for peace in Ukraine! AY]*





## marriages

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

### Schrock-Overholt

Bro. Tyler, son of Tim and Margaret Schrock, Hayward, WI, and Sis. Louisa, daughter of Steven and Kaylene Overholt, Montezuma, GA, on March 5, 2022, at Montezuma Mennonite Church by Donny Swartzentruber.

### Yoder-King

Bro. James, son of Noah and Fannie Yoder, Summertown, TN, and Sis. Kyra, daughter of Wendell and Ruthie King, Pulaski, TN, on June 3, 2022, at Ethridge Church of Christ for Goodspring Mennonite Church by Perry Miller.



## cradle roll

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

**Byler**, Stephen and Krista (Wengerd), Saegertown, PA, first child and son, Fredrick Shane, June 13, 2022.

**Chupp**, Nathan and Glenda (Zimmerman), Grove City, MN, first daughter, second child, Candace Lafaye, May 31, 2022.

**Eberly**, Laverne and Lisa (Wagler), Odon, IN, fourth child, second son, Landon Cole, February 3, 2022.

**Hostetler**, Mike and Melody (Yoder), Kenya, Africa, fourth child and daughter, Jazlynn Raine, June 7, 2022.

**Jantzi**, Denise, Milverton, ON, first child and daughter, Sophia Lynn Aubrielle, born March 17, 2016, and second child, first son, Bryce Alex Declan, born September 5, 2017. Adoptions finalized April 4, 2022.

**Kanagy**, Ron and Larissa (Miller), Accident, MD, second child, first daughter, Carmen Lana, June 12, 2022.

**Lehman**, Jaran and Leanna (Stoltzfus), Concord, AR, third child, first son, Conner John, May 20, 2022.

**Miller**, Nelson and Lydia (Miller), Owenton, KY, second child and daughter, Makinzie Diane, May 13, 2022.

**Otto**, Joshua and Regina (Wagler), Crossville, TN, fifth child, fourth son, Coleson Bryant, May 9, 2022.

**Overholt**, Benny and Beth (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, fifth child, first daughter, Kinley Sage, June 7, 2022.

**Peachey**, Brian and Rebekah (Peachey), Earlysville, VA, first child and daughter, Avery Nicole, April 30, 2022.

**Petersheim**, Michael and Melissa (Sommers), Salisbury, PA, sixth child, second daughter, Rosalie Charmaine, June 19, 2022.

**Stoltzfus**, John Ervin and Emma (Smucker), New Holland, PA, sixth child, fifth daughter, Aleah Kate, June 22, 2022.

**Swarey**, Simon and Renee (Coblentz), Auburn, KY, fourth child, third son, Austin Reed, June 8, 2022.

**Weaver**, Jonathan and Deanna (Wagler), Washington, IN, first child and son, Bowen Tate, June 23, 2022.

**Wittmer**, Jared and Carol (Wagler), Loogootee, IN, first child and son, Braxson Larry, May 18, 2022.

**Yoder**, Sheldon and Joanne (Yoder), Aroda, VA, first child and son, Anthony Ray, June 7, 2022.



## ordination

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

**Bro. Patrick Overholt**, 32, (wife, Brittany Burkholder), Warsaw, IN, was called by the voice of the church and ordained minister at Clay Street A.M. Church, Bourbon, IN, on June 12, 2022. Preordination messages were given by Darlton Bontrager. The charge was given by Scott Burkholder, assisted by Darlton Bontrager.



## obituaries

**Bontrager**, Joyce, 67, of Kokomo, IN, passed away on May 28, 2022, at Ascension St. Vincent Hospital in Carmel, IN. She was born September 8, 1954, in Hutchinson, KS, to Melvin and Fannie (Yoder) Nisly. On August 11, 1978, she married Stephen Bontrager, who survives.

Along with her husband, Joyce is survived by their children: Brian (Lois), Darrel (Karen), and Lisa (Lester) Hochstedler; 11 grandchildren; siblings: Judith (Perry) Stutzman, Cynthia (Dale) Miller, Titus (Marijane) Nisly, and Janelle Nisly.

Joyce was preceded in death by her parents, and nieces, Julia Stutzman and Twila Stutzman.

The funeral service was held June 3, 2022, at Kokomo Zion United Methodist Church, Kokomo, IN, with Darlton Bontrager officiating. Burial followed in the Christner Cemetery.

**Hostetler**, Sara Ann, 80, Sarasota, FL, passed away May 7, 2022. She was born to Levi and Emma (Schlabach) Yoder in Sugarcreek, OH, on February 17, 1942, and married Lester E. Hostetler on September 21, 1961.

She is survived by her loving husband of 60 years, and children: Marilyn (Marlin) Miller, Colorado Springs, CO; Freda (Robert) Yoder; Junior (Deb); Caroline (Chip) Stoltzfus, all of

Sarasota, FL; 16 grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. Also surviving is one sister, Erma (Yoder) LaRaviere of Sarasota.

Sara Ann was preceded in death by her parents, and a daughter, Arlene (Hostetler) Riehl.

In her youth, she accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior and served Him faithfully as a member of the Sunnyside Mennonite Church for 49 years.


**Yoder**, Barbara, 79, of Montezuma, GA, went to be with the Lord May 23, 2022. She was born August 30, 1942, to Rudy and Lydia (Shrock) Yoder in Norfolk, VA.

She dedicated her life to Christ, and was a faithful member of the Montezuma Amish Mennonite Church. She touched many lives through her work as a nurse's aide and homecare nurse. Barbara had a gift of entertaining children when

they came to visit, and she will be remembered by many for her delicious popcorn.

She was loved and will be missed by her sisters: Malinda (Raymond) Kauffman, Naomi Kauffman, Esther Yoder, and Anna Yoder; brothers: Eli (Miriam) and William (Naomi), 45 nieces and nephews, a host of great-nieces and great-nephews, and close friends.

She was preceded in death by her parents, sisters: Martha (Carl) Brenneman, Mary (Irvin) Weaver, Ruth Yoder; brothers: Irvin and Paul; and brother-in-law, Eli Kauffman.

The funeral service was held May 26, 2022, at the Montezuma Amish Mennonite Church with Donny Swartzentruber, Irvin Yoder, Paul Brenneman, and David Lee Yoder officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery. 

## observations

In 1973 the Supreme Court ruled that the United States Constitution protects a woman's right to choose to abort her unborn child. The validity of that decision has been hotly contested in the nation's courts, living rooms, and basically everywhere else. The moral outrage that accompanied this debate was not limited to either side of the debate. Those who favored the decision were

appalled that anybody could be so "heartless" as to refuse this choice. Obviously, that concern seemed hollow and secondary to those who understand that abortion amounts to killing a person who hasn't had the opportunity to be born yet. The National Right to Life Committee estimates that approximately 63 million abortions have occurred in the USA since that famous court decision.

Some folks who staunchly supported the right to abortion acknowledged from time to time that the Roe vs. Wade decision had weak legal underpinnings. The double standard in which courts were able to convict someone of wrongful death of an unborn person in certain criminal proceedings and yet recognize the constitutional right of someone to choose to kill an unborn person provides jarring dissonance to many who sought to reconcile the two. Furthermore, the link between abortion and the Constitution was a link that was particularly elusive, even to many pro-choice folks, like the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader-Ginsburg. She felt that women should have access to abortion but wasn't sure that it was a legally defensible constitutional right.

This year the Supreme Court overturned the Roe vs. Wade decision of 1973. This won't end legal abortion in the USA. But it did determine that there is no legal constitutional right to choose abortion for the entire nation. It leaves the matter of determining the legality of abortion up to individual states. The dust has not yet settled on this decision. However, it seems likely that abortion is or will soon be illegal in most forms in more than half of the states and affects about half of the population.

For anybody 50 years old or younger, the provision for a legal abortion is all they have known during their lifetime. However, the USA has been in existence about 250 years and Roe vs. Wade has been in place for roughly 50 years of that time. If the Lord tarries, time will tell whether the most recent Supreme Court decision regarding abortion will represent another swing of the legal pendulum or whether these last 50 years will represent a dark blip in this nation's history.

But we don't have to wait for time to render its commentary on this chapter. God values human life, from unborn little folks to the elderly whose physical capability has outperformed their mental capacity and vice versa. We value children as gifts to be cherished and stewarded that we plan around and make room for. We don't regard them as inconveniences that we fit into our schedules when it suits.



In June of this year an Amtrak train with around 275 people aboard bound for Chicago struck a dump truck at a crossing near Menden, Missouri. The collision killed the driver of the truck plus three people in the derailed train. About 50 persons were transported to area hospitals for treatment.

Local residents had long been concerned about the danger associated with this crossing. A combination of poor visibility, marked difference between the height of the roadway and the railway, and a lack of lights or crossarms are all deficiencies that those familiar with the crossing had mentioned. Additionally, this crossing is in a rural area where trains are moving quickly that makes all of the aforementioned conditions more dangerous since the opportunity to take corrective action is proportionately reduced as the train's speed increases.

As of this writing at least two lawsuits have been filed in connection with this accident. The widow of the truck driver is suing the railroad because they had failed to act on the known issues associated with this crossing despite it being repeatedly drawn to their attention.

The rail company is suing the employer of the deceased truck driver for his role in the crash.

Various ones of the affected passengers have retained legal counsel. It is expected that additional lawsuits will be forthcoming.



On May 24 of this year Salvador Ramos walked into Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, heavily armed. Before he was killed by law

enforcement, he killed 19 students and two teachers. The grief and regrets associated with this tragedy are plentiful and painfully sharp. Much has been said and written about who is to blame and what went wrong.



I take note of these two incidents, because they are both recent and painful reminders of the precious gift of human life. Life is indeed precious and worthy of sincere stewardship efforts. I find it difficult to reconcile the legitimate concern associated with the loss of life in these instances with the response in some quarters to the Supreme Court decision overturning Roe vs. Wade.



Without quoting inflation statistics, many of us understand that grocery shopping and fuel purchases take more money than we used to pay. I do not wish to minimize the difficulty that these conditions are creating for some people. The challenge is real. However, if I have a climate-controlled house to live in and food in my kitchen for more than today, that puts me in some pretty select company in our global community. Gratefulness for what is, rather than complaining about what isn't, is just a pretty solid policy for us Christians.

God's constancy and His grace stand in sharp contrast to our

changing circumstances. It is a privilege to serve God in these times.



Conservative Anabaptists are folks who are often regarded as being a people with a practical bent. This practicality emphasizes function and minimizes the importance of ostentation. I am one of many who embrace that characterization, despite the fact that our implementation of this ethic is a bit uneven. It is not equally embraced by all of us. It is not equally embraced in all areas of our lives.

One area that gets minimized in this context is the importance of education beyond what is legally required. I offer a few comments related to education for your musing and consideration.

Education happens in the classroom and in real life. Both are legitimate.

Our lives have been benefited in a wide variety of ways by formal and informal education.

For example:

- The textiles we use are made with a variety of materials, including cotton, bamboo, wool, and synthetic materials. Somebody, sometime did a lot of research to understand how to convert these things to usable textiles.

- Road construction has improved

dramatically in the last 100 years. The equipment available to perform these tasks and the design of roads and bridges are both the result of the confluence of research and applied education and the appropriation of that learning. This has greatly enhanced our ability to travel.

- Those of us who are involved in construction use tools that are the result of ongoing improvements in performance and design. I've overheard carpenters debate the pros and cons of various cordless tools. This is already several generations of tools removed from hand tools that led to power tools, to corded electric tools, etc.

- Ag practices related to plant nutrition and animal husbandry have come a long way. Much information is available regarding the most efficient way to provide plant and animal nutrition organically or chemically, the benefits and risks associated with tillage, etc. Many people involved in farming now either speak like a plant biologist, an animal nutritionist, or listen to someone who is. This applies on a smaller scale to home gardeners and hobby farmers.

- The vehicles we drive are more comfortable and driven more miles than their predecessors. There is constant ongoing research being performed that seeks to continue to

improve the vehicles we drive.

- Education is more than an accumulation of knowledge. Knowledge that is acquired in and from a context grounded in faithful pursuit of God provides stability for Christian faith, rather than vice-versa.

As you see, this list could go on indefinitely. Our lives are impacted in ways that are easy for me to overlook by those who take education seriously. Some of that education is academic and some is based on

real-life observation. For the child of God, those efforts support and benefit each other. I live a life that is indebted to those whose formal education continued far beyond what I experienced. Furthermore, it seems appropriate that we cultivate a healthy posture that is open to learning new things related to the world around us. This amounts to real-life, ongoing education.

–RJM 

## Charitable Disagreement in a Polarized World

*Josh Nisley, Meadville, PA*

### Ten Principles for Loving Engagement

We are living in a time of deep and often rancorous disagreement. At times, our only options seem to be to pick a side and wade in with both rhetorical fists swinging or to lament the hopelessness of the situation and disengage entirely.

Yet, neither of these responses are appropriate for Christians called to be ministers of reconciliation. Joining the fray will inevitably put us at odds with neighbors we are commanded to love. And while apathetic disengagement could feel like the most viable alternative, it misses the insights afforded by

healthy debate. Disagreement itself is not a bad thing; in fact, we need to disagree and be disagreed with in order to gain a true perspective of reality.

In what follows, I suggest ten rules for charitable disagreement—principles and practices to keep healthy disagreement grounded in love.

**1. Begin in hopeful trust. Assume the good faith of the other person until proven otherwise.**

One of the casualties of our polarized world is trust. We find it increasingly difficult to believe in the good intentions of someone who disagrees with us.

Christians, however, are called to love, and love is the antithesis of suspicion and cynicism. Love “believes all things, hopes all things” (I Corinthians 13:7 ESV). That is, love hopes in the sincerity and good-heartedness of the one who disagrees with us. Love hopes all things, and hope, as Alan Jacobs writes, “is the virtue by means of which suspicion can be overcome.”<sup>1</sup>

Avoid statements like these:

- *You’re just saying that because you’re...*

- *I know your type. You probably believe...*

- *Only a \_\_\_\_\_ person could believe something like that.*

Charitable hope is ground zero for meaningful conversation. With hope rather than suspicion as the default setting, you not only open yourself to new ideas and perspectives; you open the possibility for relationship.

## **2. Seek true understanding by summarizing ideas and asking for clarification.**

Nobody likes to be misunderstood, or worse, to have their words twisted to mean something they don’t believe. Our conversations should model the conversation of Christ—to seek, in the words of St. Francis, “not so much

to be understood as to understand.”

A great way to understand the perspective of someone who disagrees with you is to summarize their ideas in your own words, making sure your summary represents their argument in the best possible light. If possible, have them agree with your summary before you respond to it. Although it’s tempting to mischaracterize the argument in order to make it easier to defeat, doing so disrespects the person and damages your credibility.

Here are templates for seeking understanding:

- *So what you’re saying is. . . Is that correct?*

- *Okay, as I’m understanding you, you believe that. . .*

- *When you say . . . what do you mean?*

Putting ideas into our own words is uncomfortable because it requires that we momentarily put aside our perspective and what we have to say, but it goes a long way in fostering healthy, productive debates. Perhaps counterintuitively, it also makes us more persuasive because it signals our commitment to the issue itself, not just to being right.

## **3. Respond to ideas, not labels. Don’t reject ideas simply because you associate them with certain movements or groups of people.**

1. Alan Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 89.



Marxism, Christian nationalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, CRT, anti-racism, fake news, conspiracy theory, cancel culture, wokeism: public discourse is full of labels, shibboleths, and buzzwords, many of which are weaponized and used to dismiss the concerns of those who see the world differently than we do. Concerned about racism, poverty, and issues of justice? You're probably a woke, CRT-loving Marxist. Concerned about the breakdown of the family and the degradation of traditional values? You're probably a racist white supremacist who secretly wants a Christian theocracy.

In the context of such volatile reactions, it's always easier to label and dismiss a person than it is to take the time to understand their concerns. The way of charity calls us to something better. Rather than using labels to categorize and dismiss, try to understand and respond to the ideas at the heart of an issue. Define terms. Unpack ideas. As much as possible, use fresh language that isn't freighted with all the negative connotations of buzzwords and jargon.

#### **4. Acknowledge and identify common ground, shared goals, and mutual concerns.**

When we take the time to understand an idea and the person

behind it, we will likely find that we share more ground than we initially thought. It is increasingly difficult to imagine the possibility of common ground because we live in a culture that thinks of argument primarily as war—a zero-sum, take-no-prisoners battle for power. Followers of Christ, however, should be able to imagine argument in terms other than war. Argument grounded in love for God and neighbor can be constructive and productive.

Here are templates to acknowledge points of agreement and identify common ground.

- *I can see your point that...*

- *I agree with you that we should be concerned about...*

- *I sympathize with your experience...*

- *I understand that...*

- *X is a valid concern.*

In addition to demonstrating charity, this approach makes you more persuasive because it disarms your opponent's natural resistance to your words. I am always compelled to take an idea seriously if I know the person respects my perspective and shares my concerns. On the other hand, if I get the sense that I'm being ridiculed, I find myself much quicker to go on the defensive. We simply don't find condescension and condemnation persuasive.

**5. Don't dismiss the entirety of a person's work because you disagree with part of it.**

It's tempting to reject everything a person says when you disagree with one piece of it. Recognize that someone's take on one issue doesn't necessarily determine the validity of their other ideas. Also recognize that a person's ideas change over time. What they published 20 years ago might not be an accurate representation of their beliefs today.

**6. Choose your battles carefully.**

Be selective and wise about the conversations you engage.

We live in a culture that feeds on controversy. News and social media platforms are constantly competing for and profiting from our attention. It is in their best interests to keep us hooked on a never-ending cycle of outrage and controversy.

Before engaging in the latest dispute with your "hot take," ask yourself:

• *Is the emotional energy I am about to expend worth it?*

• *What good could come out of this?*

• *Why do I want to respond? Am I doing it to serve the interest of others? Or am I doing it simply to "stir the pot" or to signal my virtue?*

• *Do I have the authority, credibility, or character to speak to the issue?*

As a rule of thumb, we probably

shouldn't be taking strong positions on an issue if we aren't working to address it in our daily life, immediate context, or neighborhood.

**7. Prioritize personal interactions over public ones, face-to-face over virtual.**

The relative anonymity of online interactions encourages us to say things to people we would never dream of saying to their face (if we'd talk to them in the first place). Even when we know the person in real life, we feel emboldened online because we are responding to a disembodied idea of the person, separated by distance, time, and the nuances of vocal inflections and body language. The rules of common courtesy that govern real-world interactions get lost in the virtual world of snarky memes and push-button reactions.

If you find yourself in a heated public exchange, consider inviting the person to continue the conversation privately through direct messaging or a phone call. Better yet, go out for coffee if you live in the same area. Taking the conversation offline not only lowers the stakes but demonstrates that you truly care about the issue and the person behind it.

**8. "Give it five minutes."**

This gem from Alan Jacobs applies particularly to online platforms,

which reward the snarky retort, the scathing comeback. We are especially quick to enter what Jacobs calls “Refutation Mode”<sup>2</sup> when someone threatens our deeply-held beliefs. We feel a sudden stirring in our stomach, an uptick in our heart rate, and a burning need to drop a payload of truth bombs into the conversation. Righteous indignation, we call it.

Although we like to legitimize our anger as “righteous passion” or “holy zeal” (perhaps even “prophetic”), the Bible gives very little room for the expression of anger, righteous or unrighteous. On the contrary, James admonishes us to “*be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger*” precisely because “*the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God*” (James 1:19-20).

The Notes app on my phone is home to several snark-riddled takedowns that never made it online because I decided to wait a bit between writing and publishing. I have never regretted not posting something I wrote in the heat of a moment. I can’t say the same for other words I have posted.

### **9. Don’t answer a fool according to his folly.**

The book of Proverbs, from which

this rule is taken, has a lot to say about arguing with fools.

*“Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself”* (Proverbs 26:4).

*“If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet”* (Proverbs 29:9).

Some conversations are simply not worth having. Be careful not to get drawn into worthless arguments with someone who has no interest in truth and wisdom. Don’t be baited by inflammatory comments whose sole purpose is to provoke. Ask yourself: Is this conversation worth having? If it is, both you and your conversation partner will be edified, and you will take the time to define terms and clarify ideas.

When we engage the arguments of fools, we usually end up accepting their terms and, in the end, becoming like them: raging, laughing, and noisy.

### **10. Unplug from “outrage culture.”**

If we’re honest, most of us like feeling indignant at times. Outrage boils the blood and gives us that sweet sense of moral superiority.

Vicarious outrage is also highly profitable. It is the financial engine of talk radio, much of the 24-hour news cycle, and countless internet commentators, bloggers, and podcasters.

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2. Alan Jacobs, *How to Think: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Profile Books, 2017), 18-19.

Outrage culture is corrosive to the soul because it feeds on our desire to humiliate our cultural enemies. The Bible calls it scoffing and frequently associates it with pride, ignorance, and foolishness (Proverbs 21:24, Proverbs 1:22, Proverbs 14:6).


Rooted as it is in pride, outrage-as-entertainment is contrary to charitable disagreement. Whenever we laugh along with professional scoffers, vicariously enjoying their smug ridicule and savoring their rhetorical assaults, we identify ourselves with them and start becoming like them. As Jeffrey Bilbro reminds us in his recent book on engaging the news, “What we attend to determines to whom we belong.”<sup>3</sup>

### Conclusion

Charitable disagreement is based on the premise that knowledge and love are inseparable. Paul makes the audacious claim in I Corinthians 13 that we are nothing without love, even if we have “*prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge*” (1 Corinthians 13:2). Elsewhere in Scripture, he admonishes us to “*speak the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15) and to

let our “*speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt*” (Colossians 4:6). This connection between truth and love is essential. Love without truth isn’t love. Truth without love isn’t truth. As followers of Jesus, our conversations should embody both. If you win the argument but fail to love the person, you have lost far more than just the argument.

Ultimately, charity speaks out of confidence in future reality. We can risk loving our enemies—even our ideological enemies—because we know that truth will prevail in the end. Our knowledge now is only a partial knowledge, a seeing “*through a glass, darkly*” that we hold to in anticipation of a perfect knowledge. We will never lose by seeking to understand and engaging in love because our hope is not ultimately in proving someone else wrong but in the final salvation and victory of Jesus, Who is truth and love incarnate. This is our assurance: not the certainty of impenetrable argument, still less making our enemies look like fools, but God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (II Corinthians 5:19).

*[This article was reprinted from the Summer 2022 issue of the Faith Builders Newsletter. Used by permission.]* 

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3. Jeffrey Bilbro, *Reading the Times: A Literary and Theological Inquiry into the News* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 119.

# Jonah, the Reluctant Missionary

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

Jonah's name means "dove." He is the son of Amittai, meaning "truthful." We think of the dove as a bird with characteristics of gentleness, humility, and being slow-moving. We might say, what a godly combination and mixture of speaking the truth in gentleness. It doesn't seem that Jonah's character matched the meaning of his name except "slow-moving."

The book of Jonah is written in the third person. It was written after his return from Assyria. It begins with Jonah running away from God and ends with God's rebuke. But in reading the entire book it would appear, especially in chapters two and three, that the prophet responded favorably to God's patient rebuke at the end. Here is a simple (chapter by chapter) outline of the book of Jonah: (1) Jonah pays; (2) Jonah prays; (3) Jonah preaches; (4) Jonah pouts.

In II Kings 14:25 Jonah gave a brief prophecy that was fulfilled during the reign of Jeroboam II. Jonah came from the tribe of Zebulon, one of the tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel, from a village just two

miles northeast of Nazareth. This was a discouraging time in Israel's history. The northern kingdom was steeped in idolatry. Consider an Old Testament fearful prophet, likely small in stature, confronting modern \_\_\_\_\_ of our day. The Assyrians were making deep lasting impressions, and bold statements of terrible vengeance to the world of their time: (1) Some of the victims were held down by one of the torturers. Then they would grip the victim's tongue and yank it out. (2) They would lay the victim on the ground and tie their wrists and ankles to stakes and take a sharp knife and flay them alive inch-by-inch and hang their skins in the city for the public to see. (3) For others, the sharpened end of a pole was driven through the lower part of a man's chest; the pole was raised; it was planted in a hole and the man is left to die. (Baxter's, *Explore the Book*).

God said, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me" (Jonah 1:2). Knowing the danger of such a task, what would I do? What would you do? Is there any wonder

Jonah was reluctant? After all, Assyria was one of Israel's key enemies.

But Jonah bought a fare at Joppa for one of those ships heading for Tarshish. In the Old Testament times Tarshish is used in connection with ships, merchants, and trade. It is a Phoenician word meaning "smelting plant or refinery." Phoenician boats used to take the sea route regularly, transporting smelted ores from mining towns in Spain. We do not know what kind of cargo the mariners dumped into the sea or exactly where the boat was heading. These Tarshish ships carried materials of "first-rate magnitude to whatever place the voyage may have taken them." (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*). Whatever the case, it seems as though Jonah was heading to some distant place in the opposite direction. Jonah was fleeing from the presence of the Lord which means he was running away from the sweetness of God's fellowship.

Jonah "*went down to Joppa*"... and "*went down into it [the ship]*" (1:3). The Lord hurled "*a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest*" (1:4). "*But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship*" (1:5). The men were afraid and each cried unto their own gods and cast out the cargo to lighten the ship, but to no avail. And Jonah was lying fast asleep.

Is this a picture of a sleeping church in the midst of a tempestuous storm and oblivious to the spiritual needs of humanity? Jonah seems to have been tired, discouraged, suicidal, and really, he was angry at God. To run away from God is a physical, emotional, and spiritual drain to any person.

The shipmaster awakened Jonah and pled with him to call upon his God. When the lot was cast and Jonah was the revealed reason why God had sent this great tempest, the men were "*exceedingly afraid*" (1:10a). Jonah knew the storm came because of his disobedience and suggested to be thrown into the sea. The mariners rowed hard to bring the ship to land but they could not. Now the men were crying unto God: "*We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee*" (1:14). Somehow, these men knew to call upon God. They feared God's punishment on them in throwing Jonah into the sea. Well, Jonah gave a brief witness earlier: "*I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which made the sea and the dry land*" (1:9). They finally took up Jonah and threw him overboard, and the sea was calm. "*Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly*" (1:16a).

Now the men are praying unto the LORD Jehovah instead of crying to their gods *“and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows”* (1:16b). Jonah never prayed or promised to offer a sacrifice until he was in the belly of the whale, but these men meant business with the LORD now. You see, God is not put in a corner. He is not mocked and is never out of options. The first converts of this mission trip were not in Nineveh. They were on this ship in the middle of a storm.

Jonah’s prayer is poetic. It is a three-fold moving prayer. Each section ends with a prayer of God’s holiness or praise with a voice of thanksgiving. It is a deep heart-cry expressing his affliction in the deep sea of the whale’s belly, as the floods, waves, and billows covered him! The weeds were wrapped around his head. In the belly of this sea monster Jonah goes down deeper even to the bottom of the mountains. His prayer goes from the depth of the sea to the height of God’s holy temple.


Jonah is now ready to preach. God orders the sea monster to spit him out. Jonah must have been a gazing stock after this heavenly discipline. His message was simple: *“Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown”* (3:4b). The people of Nineveh believed God. The king

decreed the people to fast and to cry *“mightily unto God”* (3:8a). Even animals were put on a fast of food and water. These beasts and the people were not even allowed to taste anything. There was to be complete repentance: *“let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands”* (1:8b). Remember the terrible brutalities that were ordered by this nation for misconduct?

This was one of the greatest revivals in the Old Testament! *“And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not”* (3:10). This is interesting! “Repent” here means “to relent; be pliant; to soften.” God changed His timing and method. But this was the very thing that caused Jonah to be exceedingly displeased and very angry (4:1). God used an object lesson of the gourd, the worm, and the east wind to help Jonah believe in God’s love for a lost world. God loves to reveal (lay bare) His marvelous grace and abundant mercy! The early church should have remembered this Old Testament story of a heathen city that repented in receiving the Gentiles into the church. God was gracious and merciful and of great kindness (4:2)! The Lord is teaching us through this

marvelous “turn around” to welcome people (from every nation and every language group) into the fellowship of the church when they have gladly obeyed the Word of Christ (Acts 2:41).

God was patient with Jonah. “You care so much about yourself,

Jonah. But you do not care for these many lost souls.” It would have been observant for Jonah to have learned from the prophet Samuel: “*Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.*” Perhaps the book of Jonah is not so much concerning the Ninevites’ repentance as it is about Jonah. 

## A Woman After God’s Heart

### Encourage

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



**H**ave you ever strolled along, reveling in the endless beauty of the bluest of skies, delighted with the overwhelming pleasure of being alive? It felt like nothing could rob the deep-down joy pouring from your very soul. You rarely knew life could be so good.

Or, have you stood, eyes to the ground, willing your foot to take one dreaded step farther into the day which you had no desire to discover? *If* the sky was indeed blue, it was but a mockery of the dark hole you found yourself scratching around in. It felt like no one, for sure not God, was close enough to understand, care, or lend a hand.

Most of the time our existence is somewhere between paragraph one and paragraph two. No doubt,

I exaggerate for emphasis. However, in real life we *do* tend to respond in exaggerated dimensions. When a positive word of praise is shared, the shot of dopamine makes us temporarily feel like the world is ours and nothing can stop us! The opposite: when we are blasted or criticized in even a small way, our whole world turns to darkness and we’re persuaded that everyone is against us.

As always, the Bible says it more succinctly than I can. Proverbs 18:21 says, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue.*” Matthew 12:37 states, “*by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*” Proverbs 12:18 ESV: “*There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*”



Dare I be so basic and simplistic to suggest that at times the difference between paragraph one and paragraph two might be contained in a single word? It might be.

The prefix *en* is to put into or onto; cause to be. *En*-courage is simply to give courage to another. It's like you're standing there, and I hand it to you. The prefix *dis* is to deprive of, to do the opposite. When I discourage you, I take your courage away.

Speaking ill of someone, also called gossip, is the sword-piercing from the verse in Proverbs. By contrast, praising and commenting on the qualities of a person promotes healing. To compare someone in a negative context, illustrates the sword again. Even the nonverbal mental comparing we ladies are so good at, usually bringing ourselves up short, serves to *discourage* us, and not *encourage*.

In parenting it has been observed that we tend to criticize our children more often than we praise them. A heavier ratio of praise (vs. correction) may actually serve us well in several ways. Praise encourages the child, while it also defines for them the behavior we're looking for.

A number of you readers have *encouraged* me with your responsiveness, giving me practical illustrations of what it looks like when we dispense God's grace to

each other. The following is much of what you said.

When someone shares her sorrow, listen with your heart. Pray with and for your sister right there, bringing her needs to the Father. When she shares her joys, exult in and praise the Father with her.

Be liberal with cards and snail mail, remembering widows, young mothers, single ladies, or ladies who support their men in difficult positions. Even if there's no obvious reason for the note, you respond in this way because the Lord brought her to your mind.

Model contentment with yourself, your house, children, and husband. It will encourage gratefulness in others for what *they* have. Refuse to launch a trendy model that becomes a stretch for others to imitate and breeds discontentment.

Be one who encourages doing the right thing. Use words like, "Listen to your husband," when wavering on some issue.

Use the power of physical touch, especially during a difficult time. When you commit to pray for someone, tell them so, and then follow through with that commitment.

Ephesians 4:7 ESV: "*But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*" God's grace is often extended to us through

the people around us. We become channels through which God's grace flows, ministering to the need of another. In Oswald Chambers's words, we become broken bread and poured out wine to benefit others. In fact, that exchange may well take place without a conscious awareness of being that channel or those crushed grapes. It is simply and beautifully the miraculous provision that happens in the body of Christ.

A depressed person told me that on some days during her darkest experience, a compliment or word of thanks gave her just enough strength to go on. That can be illustrated in the words of R.C. Simons, "God's grace is a life raft, not a cruise ship."

We are called to the ministry of encouragement, whether or not we

have officially recognized that calling. I invite you to resolve with me, to graft the working-out of that calling into our lives as firmly as a daily prescription.

"Dear God, use my life, and the words I speak, or that gentle touch, the lunchbox note with the prayer, or my words "*you can do this*" to craft my brother's or sister's life raft. Allow me to be the wine and bread and healing they so desperately need. And tomorrow when I'm stumbling with my gaze to the ground, I believe that their gentle hand and caring words will help my eyes to see that no matter if the sky is blue or gray, Your grace is sufficient. I praise You, caring Father, for the way that Your grace is passed around by Your children."



*GRIEF* has seasons where the imbedded *beauty*  
is hard to see, and that's ok.

When we *RUSH* to look for the *light*,  
we miss lessons we can learn in the **dark**.

—ANITA YODER



## Shall We Gather at the River?

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

The story behind a hymn gives new life to a song. May all who have lost loved ones, whether aged or young, find comfort in the words of Jesus.

The heat was oppressive in Brooklyn, New York, in the summer of 1865. City life was miserable enough during the intense heat waves of summertime, but now a fierce epidemic was raging through the city. Hundreds had already died, and many more were sick and dying.

For many days, Pastor Robert Lowry, affectionally known as the “Good Doctor,” ministered to the needs of his congregation. He visited the sick, comforted the dying, and gave solace to the many families who were plunged into grief.

Pastor Robert was a cheerful man with a big beard and a quick mind, but one afternoon he returned home in a state of physical exhaustion and near collapse. The stifling heat pressed around him. As he rested in his home, he recalled how his people often asked, “Pastor, the river of death has parted us. Shall we meet again at the river of life?”

Pastor Lowry had assured his people over and over that the broken family circles would be complete again at the river of life that flows by the throne of God. He had repeated this promise to hundreds of families as home after home was robed in the dark cloak of sorrow.

The exhausted pastor sat at his little organ to find relief in music from the pent-up emotions of his heart. He thought of “God’s precious little angels,” the bright, innocent children who were taken by the epidemic. He thought of the tearful mothers with empty arms. His mind recalled adults, friends, and relatives who had gone on before.

He remembered the words from Revelation 22:1, “*And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*”

God filled him with heavenly inspiration, and the words and music of a new song flowed forth. Soon he was singing, “Shall we gather at the river, where bright angel feet have trod, with its crystal tide forever, flowing by the throne of God?”

The chorus joyously answered his question. “Yes, we’ll gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river, gather with the saints at the river, that flows by the throne of God.”

There is coming a better day for the children of God. As the song reminds us, “On the margin of the river, washing up its silver spray, we will walk and worship ever, all the happy

golden day. Soon we’ll reach the shining river, soon our pilgrimage will cease, soon our happy hearts will quiver with the melody of peace.”

“What Can Wash Away My Sin” is another well-loved song written by Robert Lowry.

*Resource: Clint Bonner, A Hymn is Born, 1959, (Broadman Press, Nashville, TN)*



## youth messages

# To Teach is to Touch a Life Forever

*Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH*

**T**here is a saying that is attributed to the Jesuits that says, “Give me a child until he is seven, and he will remain a Catholic the rest of his life.” Vladimir Lenin is reported to have said, “Give us a child for eight years and it will be a Bolshevik forever.” Proverbs 22:6 says, “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*” In the church today, some of the most underrated yet highly impactful members of our congregations are our school teachers. They prepare the next generation for meaningful, active church membership and leadership roles in the church. They give our children skills for life

and relationships. Jesus considers our interaction with children one of the most serious activities of being Christian. And yet, we are experiencing a shortage of teachers.

Teachers do more than teach the basics of how to read, the computational processes of math, grammar, science, history, and the other typical subjects. Teachers oversee the social development of children. They guide our children in learning teamwork and preferring others over themselves. They reinforce what parents teach at home in promoting sharing and kindness. Sometimes teachers can push children to excel beyond what their parents even think may be

possible. Teachers help children learn to submit to authority outside of the home. They share devotionals in the classroom to teach morals and instruct in Bible memory. They teach children songs that they will sing for years.

A lot of what a teacher does translates directly to church life. It is evident to me that teachers are instrumental in developing the next generation of the church and preparing students for interacting with a body of believers. When they teach teamwork and putting others first, they are preparing children for brotherhood interaction. The structure and standards of our schools help to prepare them for the standards of the church and submission to authority therein. The games that they play at recess are a practice field for honesty, integrity, and working together as a team. Writing essays and giving oral reports and book reports prepares the students for when they need to study to give a devotional or write for a periodical like *Calvary Messenger*. As teachers guide students through the social norms of school, they help to prepare them for social life as youth. Games like volleyball and softball are staples in our youth groups and in their interactions with each other.

Teaching doesn't just impact the students, it has a major impact on the life of the teacher as well. I took the liberty of reaching out to several teachers that I know and asked them about the impact that teaching has had on their lives. There was a common theme in most of their responses—teaching is stretching but very fulfilling. As a former teacher, I concur with the sentiment that we learn so much as teachers. A teacher put it well when he said, “...*teaching impacts and changes you as a teacher just as much, if not more, than it does your students.*” Teachers are given many opportunities to practice patience, compassion, leadership, and responsibility. Teachers gain insights into how children think, which, as one teacher mentioned, “...*sometimes doesn't change much as they get older.*”

One teacher mentioned that teaching helped prepare him for parenting. A parent once told him, “*Brother, with you being the teacher, we have a pretty good window into your life.*”

He replied... “*Yes, I understand, but I've got your front door, and all the lights are on!*”

Teaching, often far from home, broadens your horizons and allows you to build relationships and make connections that will last for years to

come. Off the top of my head I can think of over a half dozen married couples that I know personally who were previously co-teachers. One career teacher said this, *“Relationships are the most important thing in life. Through teaching I have met several of my closest lifetime friends who were also teachers. In seeking to become better teachers, we came from all directions to network together, and my life is better because of the many passionate teacher/learners that I am in contact with.”*

*“Related to this is the network of students and their families that I would not know had I not taught. Knowing more people broadens your horizons. In teaching I’m helping to prepare dozens for work in God’s kingdom. I am blessed beyond words when I see young people going out, sometimes into the far corners of the globe, and realize that I had some small part in helping them to share Jesus’ love in whatever they are doing for Him.”* Teaching in a Christian school is Kingdom work. It is mission work at its finest. As one teacher so aptly described it, *“...you have an opportunity to impact hearts for eternity. Through you, they may meet God, for you are the hands and feet of Jesus.”*

The world around us continues to degrade. Students in public schools

are bombarded with “alternative” lifestyles, sex education in elementary grades, evolutionary teachings for the origins of life, and the Big Bang Theory for how we all got here. Now, more than ever, we need our Christian schools. It’s been around 60 years that we have been able to have our own Christian schools. Growth in our communities, along with many of our schools choosing to add high school grades, has contributed to the need for more teachers. This coupled with inflation and the fact that so many of our teachers are underpaid and underappreciated for the work that they put in may have an influence on our shortage of teachers. As our local schoolboard has searched for a teacher, they have found that other schools are in the same position we are.

Perhaps you feel as though you aren’t cut out for teaching. The truth is, there are some people that find it difficult to teach. I’ve met a few in my life that were one-and-done when it came to teaching, and there is no shame in that. Do you think the apostle Peter ever dreamed when he was fishing that he would preach and teach in front of hundreds and thousands of people or that he would debate with the leaders of the synagogue? What made the difference for Peter? In his case it had

nothing to do with his upbringing, his education, or whether or not he had teachers in his family. His relationship with Jesus Christ was the determining factor in his ability to fulfill his calling. As difficult as teaching can be at times, it forces us to rely heavily on God for wisdom and strength. Philippians 4:13 says, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” I was always more tired mentally at the end of the day when I was teaching, but with God, nothing is impossible. As some of the teachers I consulted mentioned, “watching children grow in faith is extremely rewarding and helps our faith to grow as well.”

Teaching is a gift given to the church. “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:11-12). Teaching is a high calling. Our churches and school parents need to do better in being appreciative and supportive of our teachers, especially financially. I recently spoke with a teacher’s mother who told me that her daughter decided to keep track of her hours one week. She spent 56 hours in school-related work. Are we creating a shortage of teachers because we want education

at a bargain? Remember, teachers are some of the most influential people in the lives of our children and the future of the church. Maybe teaching isn’t as much about being called as making yourself available. When I taught school, I found out about a need and offered to serve. You can too.

Thanks to the teachers who contributed to this article.

Keith and Deb Garber; both taught two years in Las Huertas, Honduras; former teachers.

Laura Conley; taught 20 years at Sonlight River Brethren School in PA; current teacher.

Rosina Lapp; taught two years at Heritage Mennonite School in New Concord, OH; current teacher.

Rosanna Stalter; taught four years at an Old Brethren school in Palestine, OH and four years at Heritage Mennonite School in New Concord, OH; former teacher.

Melody Lapp; taught two years at Limes Mennonite School in Grenada and three years at Antrim Mennonite School in Antrim, OH; current teacher.

Howard Mast; taught four years at Mt. Nebo Mennonite School in IN and will be teaching as administrator at Trinity Faith Christian School, IN, for the 2022 / 2023 school term; current teacher.



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Periodicals

## THOUGHT GEMS

Everyone is entitled to my opinion.

• • • • •

Walk softly; speak tenderly; pray fervently.

• • • • •

The smile that lights the face will also warm the heart.

• • • • •

The price of mastery in any field is thorough preparation.

• • • • •

When opportunity knocks, the grumbler complains about the noise.

• • • • •

The ideal neighbor is the one who makes noise at the same time we do.

• • • • •

Prayer is exhaling the spirit of man and inhaling the Spirit of God.

• • • • •

If you are satisfied with yourself, you had better change your ideals.

• • • • •

Opinionated people: little rotund islands of complacency  
anchored in a sea of prejudices.

• • • • •

It's easier to love humanity as a whole than to love  
your neighbor in particular.

• • • • •

He who kills time buries opportunities.