



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

Galatians 6:14

OCTOBER 2004

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JUNE 2004

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 Saviour;
 To welcome prodigals back to the fold and family of God;
 And to help defeated Christians find victory in Christ Jesus.

Calvary Publications, Inc., is a non-profit organization, incorporated in the State of Ohio, for the purpose of sponsoring, publishing, and distributing Christian literature. The board is elected, one member annually, by the ministers of the Beachy Amish Mennonite Churches, at their annual spring meeting.

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Editorial correspondence for CALVARY MESSENGER, marriages, births, obituaries, and general articles—send to the EDITOR. MISSIONS/YOUTH/JUNIOR MESSAGES—mail to their respective EDITORS.

SUBSCRIPTIONS, renewals, changes of address, etc.—mail to CIRCULATION MANAGER. WHEN YOU MOVE, please notify the Circulation Manager one month in advance, giving your old and new address in full, so that your mailing label can be properly corrected and your credit be kept in order.

CIRCULATION MANAGER/TREASURER
 Mark I. Beachy
 11095 Pleasant Hill Rd. NW
 Dundee, OH 44624

EDITOR

Paul L. Miller
 7809 S. Herren Rd.
 Partridge, KS 67566
 Ph/Fax 620-567-2286
 paulmiller@mindspring.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Elmer D. Glick
 RR 1 Box 47-C
 Augusta, WV 26704

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

David L. Miller
 P O Box 73
 Partridge, KS 67566

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Simon Schrock
 Enos D. Stutzman

MISSIONS EDITOR

Floyd Stoltzfus
 6150 Beaver Dam Rd.
 Narvon, PA 17555

YOUTH MESSAGES EDITOR

Ken Miller
 76 Locust Grove Ln.
 Stuarts Draft, VA 24477

JUNIOR MESSAGES EDITOR

Mrs. Anita Yoder
 10393 N 1100 W
 Ligonier, IN 46767

HELPERS AT HOME EDITOR

Mrs. Mary June Glick
 10351 Fayetteville Rd.
 Bealeton, VA 22712

Calvary Messenger (USPS 767-160) is published monthly by Calvary Publications, 2673 TR 421, Sugarcreek, Ohio 44681. Subscription rates are: 1 year (U.S.) \$7.50, 3 years (U.S.) \$21.00. For congregations using the every-home-plan, \$6.00 per year to individual addresses. Second class postage at Sugarcreek, Ohio. Postmaster: Send address changes to Calvary Publications, Inc., 11095 Pleasant Hill Rd. NW, Dundee, OH 44624.

Standing Up or Sitting Down?

Janelle Erb
Milverton, ON

Some time ago I was enthused
To do some work for God.
I thought and dreamed of great big
plans.
“Let’s go!” was my heart’s throb.

The planning all went beautiful.
I got the details small.
But when the time came to begin
I didn’t hear the call.


I had told myself, *I’ll wait a bit*
For surely God will show
An open door that’s just for me
He’ll tell me when to go.

But when I sat and waited on,
The months turned into years.
And faster than I thought them up
My dreams just disappeared.

When people asked me of my
dreams,
What happened to their course.
I shrugged my shoulders and
declared,
“God did not open doors.”

I now believe my attitude
Toward open doors was wrong.
I should have stood up right away,
Instead of sitting long.

By standing up we give a sign
That any time we’ll go.
And when God has His plan
prepared
He’ll always let us know.

What is the posture in your life,
While awaiting word from above?
Are you sitting down to wait
Or are you standing up? 



A Fortunate Family

My parents, both born in Kansas in 1901, had twelve children. While there were times of scarcity and inconvenience, I felt positive about our large family. I sensed welcome and acceptance by Mom and Dad, even though I was the tenth child to arrive. They would have abhorred even the thought of abortion. Dad once told me that he and Mom were always thankful when the new child had normal health. They never faced the disappointment of having a newborn arrive with an observable disability.

In recent years, I've sometimes pondered the implications of my parents' sacrifices for us. Their financial resources always seemed limited. At the time of the stock market crash of October, 1929, they already had seven children and struggled through The Great Depression of the 30's with a young family. Even though not wealthy in worldly goods, one might say they were "millionaires twelve times over with three daughters and nine sons." I acknowledge with thanks their welcome to so many "arrows" for their "quiver," for providing work at home for the

family as much as they could, and for taking good care of us all.

By now, each of this aging dozen has some health challenges. We all, at some time or another, have had narrow escapes. Two of us had cancer that was detected early enough to be effectively treated. But all twelve survive, though one is widowed, and all are now seniors, ranging in age from 67 to 83 years. If our parents, Levi D. and Clara (Nisly) Miller, were still living, they would be well past 100. Their willingness to provide for our health and nutritional needs, even when the day needed to start with hot cereal for breakfast (no cold cereal for a number of years) is remembered gratefully. Their concern for our spiritual welfare is appreciated most of all.

Miller Family Breakfast

Just over a decade ago, when more of us were approaching semi-retirement, we decided that since we had more spare time available, we'd like to get together once a month at a restaurant for breakfast. We all enjoy it and several have, at times, selected cooked cereal. Two siblings live out of state, and rarely make it to the special breakfast. Sometimes

next-generation members join us, when they travel back to south central Kansas.

At our August breakfast, Brother Samuel Menyonger, from Sierra Leone, West Africa, came along to breakfast with brother David. He seemed quite in awe of the unmistakable resemblance in our appearance, the bald pates and mostly white hair. He marveled that such a large family, so advanced in years, has all survived, even though only nine of us and seven spouses were present that morning. Samuel's home land has experienced much civil unrest and strife in recent years. In Sierra Leone, most families have suffered the loss of one or more members of a family. A fortunate situation like ours would be more unusual there than in America.

Samuel observed one thing that almost stole my appetite from the delicious omelet set before me at Carolyn's Essenhaus. He looked at us and noted that none of us were amputees. He reported that in the recent civil war in Sierra Leone, many of his countrymen were killed. Others were assaulted and maimed, so that violent amputation of a hand or foot was quite common. In fact, there are an estimated 10,000 amputees in his small country. The maiming he described was done by deliberate chopping off with hand-held weap-

ons, not through remote attack. What made it even worse, he reported that many of these atrocities were carried out by mere child soldiers who were drugged and essentially forced to terrorize by such methods. Does cruelty get more debased than that?

We are blessed! Let us count our blessings in this land of freedom and opportunity. Let us teach our children the blessing of compassion and positive regard for others, even toward those with whom we disagree. Let us teach our children the way of nonviolence. Let us show by example that it is better to *endure* suffering than to *inflict* suffering. Let us live our lives the way the meek and lowly Christ did, who equips his sincere followers to love not in word and tongue [only], "but [also] in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

• • • • •

Speaking of families, I want to mention a family who often sings together. Not only because they sing well do I mention them here. This family has found song in the midst of disappointment and trial. Harold Dean and Ruth Anne Miller have nine children. Through a situation that remains unexplained, four of their children live with significant hearing impairment. Bro. Harold Dean, who has often been asked to speak about good music in our churches, is well known. Music

holds more than a passing interest for them. Both parents like to sing and have led their family in singing beautifully together.

In recent months, Martha and I bought a recording the family made. It is entitled, "I Love You, Jesus." The title song is one of three original songs on this recording composed by Ruth Anne. It is lovely four-part, a capella singing with deep meaning.

Eighteen songs are included, all reflecting confidence in God's wisdom and goodness in His children's lives. The family refers to these songs as mealtime favorites they want to share with others. They are: *I Will Praise; A Name I Highly Treasure; Ever The Same; Plenty of Room; Trusting the Shepherd; Where He Leads Me; Joy*

Comes In the Morning; How Can I Fear; Lullaby; I Love You, Jesus; Lo I Come; The Wonder of It All; It Doesn't Matter; 'Tis Marvelous and Wonderful; Just Over Yonder; Sailin' Home; My Last Move; While Ages Roll.

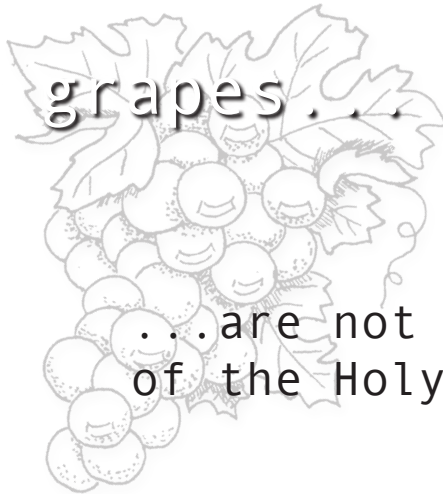
If you are looking for music with fervent Christian testimony, you will not be disappointed. The Millers offer a recording free to widows and widowers. I have their consent to bring this to you. To contact them or to request CD's or cassettes, write to:

The Harold Dean Miller Family,
R.R. 1 Box 357,
Honey Grove, PA 17035
Telephone: (717)734-3987

-PLM


Sour grapes . . .

. . . are not a fruit
of the Holy Spirit



Report on June Conference of the Reformed Church and Anabaptists in Zurich, Switzerland

*William McGrath
Dunmore East, Ireland*

Four of us attended from Ireland. Having a longtime interest in church history, this was one conference I did not want to miss. The purpose of the conference was not an ecumenical union between the Reformed Church and the Anabaptists, but a reconciliation meeting.

There were many meetings in the years 1523 and 1525 between the Reformed Church of Zurich and Anabaptists to see if they could work together. Both groups wanted to go the Bible way. Anabaptists took Christ's New Testament as their rule, but the Reformed Church looked more to the Old Testament, taking infant baptism for circumcision, and a state church that could kill.

The Conference Program, June 26, 2004, at Grossmuenster, Zurich

The city of Zurich, Switzerland, (population 400,000) is the capitol of Canton Zurich, with a population of about 1.5 million. This is the canton from which many Amish Mennonite families originated. It is one of the most scenic places in the world.

The Grossmuenster Cathedral is

the main church of the Swiss Reformed Church. The program began at 10 A.M., with witnesses of the past in words and music. A song written by Ulrich Zwingli was sung, then the song by Felix Manz, "Mit Lust Will Ich Singen" (With Pleasure Will I Sing). There were testimonies from both sides. A Swiss Mennonite chorus sang the Manz song in German, and later an American tour group of 30 sang it in English, with some of us helping. We had sung it in Ireland. It seemed only right that with martyr Felix Manz being remembered, we should sing his song, composed in prison shortly before he died. **"Though he is dead, he still speaks."** The world can kill martyrs, but they testify on.

Various speakers gave short messages, describing the Reformation in Zurich. Some of the speakers were Reformed, some Mennonite, one Plymouth Brethren, most were historians. A song by Zinzendorf, a Pietist, was sung "Heart with Loving Heart United." (No. 836 in The Mennonite Hymnal)

After this service, we dismissed for lunch, went across the Limmat River to a place called Lindenhof, where the Romans made a fort long ago. Under tents there, we ate a lovely lunch and chatted with people from many different churches. Elizabeth Lutz, well-known tour guide and historian, arranged the catering with her family. We enjoyed the fellowship.

At 2 P.M., we divided into different workshops, which gave opportunity to discuss Reformed and Anabaptists of today. Workshop topics included: Tracing Anabaptist Sites, The Peace Question, Anabaptist Roots in Switzerland, Reformed and Mennonites, and Reconciliation. There were no attempts to impose communion with different churches and no “charismatic” practices as some feared. After all, our original Anabaptist forefathers **asked for meetings with others to discuss issues**. I was glad to see that many conservative Mennonites, as well as some Amish, were there.

At 4 P.M., there was another service in the Grossmuenster, to discuss reconciliation. Swiss Reformed churchmen made it clear that they ask forgiveness for the persecutions done by their forefathers. They said, **“We confess that the persecution was, according to our present con-**

viction, a betrayal of the Gospel and that our Reformed forefathers were in error on this issue. ...We acknowledge the faithful of the Anabaptist tradition as our sisters and brothers, and their churches as part of the body of Christ...We honor the radical approach of the Anabaptist movement to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world as a free community of committed believers putting into practice the message of the Sermon on the Mount.”

Swiss Mennonites replied, “We have been used to being cut off from the world...We confess that our communities can (also) find conformism, atrophy, withdrawal and pride...We no longer feel as victims...We do not ask for material retribution for the past; that would seem to us contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel...We receive your confession with a forgiving attitude.” One Mennonite speaker said, “We too have walked at times in darkness.”

At 6 P.M., we went back to the Lindenhof Hill across the river, for dinner under the tents, on chairs at tables, with delicious food like that typically found at a Mennonite gathering. We were not among enemies, but hospitably treated by friends. We talked together of heavenly things.

At 8 P.M., we gathered by the Limmat River, by the Felix Manz

memorial stone, lying flat and mortared into the river bank, for all to see the real story of his martyrdom. Here is my English translation of that inscription: **Here in the middle of the Limmat from a fishing platform, Felix Manz and five other Anabaptists were drowned in the Reformation time, between 1527 and 1532. The last Anabaptist executed in Zurich was Hans Landis in 1614.**

A head of the Zurich City Council spoke to us, a crowd of about 300. He told how he had personally searched the Zurich Council records for 1527, and that Felix Manz had been unjustly tried and murdered. **He asked us to forgive them.** There was hardly a dry eye among the Christians there! The Swiss Mennonites acknowledged the apology. Then a boat came slowly rowing across the river, and two boatmen in it hooked off the scarlet cover over the Manz Memorial and dragged the cover into the river as they rowed away. Just so Felix had been treated, and they were making visual to all looking on that it was wrong and that they were sorry.

At one point, James Landis from

Virginia came forward and read a poem as a tribute to one of his forefathers, Hans Landis, who was executed in 1614, and is mentioned on the memorial as the last martyr to die in Zurich. Even though this was hundreds of years ago, and none of us hate the persecutors, we could all feel the solemnity of this moment. May we never become persecutors. If we are persecuted, may we always forgive.

At 9 P.M., the Conference concluded with a Cultural Evening Program in Grossmuenster. John Sharp, Mennonite historian, shared stories from his Amish and Mennonite childhood and relatives. There were samples of Swiss Folk Singers. Chief Dalton, a Cree Indian who is also a Mennonite minister, shared from his tribe's history about the massacre of American Indians by American army soldiers. May God heal our land, that no more innocent blood be spilled on the ground, that we may live as peacemakers never shedding the blood of others—whether in America, Ireland, Switzerland or Iraq.



Gossip: Ear pollution.



marriages

Burkholder-Troyer

Bro. Scott, son of Wade and Miriam Burkholder, Nappanee, IN, and Sis. Suzanne, dau. of Paul and Barbara Troyer, Bourbon, IN, on Aug. 14, 2004, at United Pentecostal Church for Clay Street A.M. Church by Wade Burkholder

Knepp-Yoder

Bro. Stanley, son of Ervin and Mary Knepp, Loogootee, IN, and Sis. Shannon Dawn, dau. of Leslie and Verda Yoder, Montezuma, GA, on June 12, 2004, at Montezuma A.M. Church by Donnie Swartzentruber.

Miller-Oatney

Bro. Timothy, son of Gary and Rosanna Miller, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Esther, dau. of Brent and Suzie Oatney, Partridge, KS, at Cedar Crest church for Center A.M. Church on Jan 3, 2004 by David M. Yoder. [I'm sorry this is so late.]

cradle roll

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

Esh, John and Linda (Stoltzfus), Gap, PA, fifth child, fourth dau., LeAnne Grace, August 12, 2004.

Peachey-Hostetler

Bro. Sam, son of David and Rhoda Peachey, Reedsville, PA, and Sis. Viola, dau. of William and Sarah Hostetler, Auburn, KY, Aug. 14, 2004, at Providence Mennonite Fellowship, Auburn, KY, by David Peachey.

Schmidt-Wagler

Bro. Thomas, son of Daniel and Crystal Schmidt, Crossville, TN, and Sis. Rosetta, dau. of Thomas and Sadie Wagler, Trout Creek, MT, at Trout Creek, MT, on Aug. 6, 2004, by John Mast.

Yoder-Sommers

Bro. Randall, son of Nathan and Doris (Zehr) Yoder, Free Union, VA, and Sis. Serena Eileen, dau. of Paul and Mary (Miller) Sommers, Baltic, OH, at Sugarcreek, OH, July 31, 2004, by Roman B. Mullet.

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

Gingerich, Joel and Dorcas (Sommers), Minerva, OH, fourth child, second dau., Clara Abigail, July 24, 2004.

Glick, Ben and Anna Ruth (Stoltzfus), East Earl, PA, fifth child, fourth son, Benjamin Kyle, July 21, 2004.

Hershberger, Titus and Ella Mae (Frey), LaGrange, IN, first child and son, Chadwick Lynn, August 18, 2004.

Hostetler, Eli and Wilma (Schlabach), Auburn, KY, fourth child, third dau., Kayla Joy, July 20, 2004.

Lapp, Edward and Rita (Miller), Quaker City, OH, first child and dau., Mikayla Ann, August 8, 2004.

Mast, Darrell and Debbie (Yoder), Auburn, KY, eighth child, third dau., Dayna Jo, Aug. 4, 2004.

Mast, Michael and Ruth Anne (Overholt), Auburn, KY, fourth child and dau., Melissa Dawn, Aug. 10, 2004.

Miller, Alpha and Lauranna (Miller), Crossville, TN, ninth child, fifth dau., Amanda Jane, July 18, 2004.

Miller, Ray and Wilma (Peachey), Shipshewana, IN, second child, first dau., Michelle Rose, July 10, 2004.

Miller, Tom and Carole (Byler), Leesburg, OH, second child, first dau., Myra Nicole, April 16, 2004.

Mullet, James Richard and Donna (Hess), Newcomerstown, OH, second child and son, Alex James, May 20, 2004.

Nissley, Gary and Tina (Lengacher), Shipshewana, IN, second child and dau., Briana Shonte`, Aug. 15, 2004.

Nissley, Robert and Ella Jean (Miller), Monticello, KY, seventh child, fifth dau., Elena Rose, Jan. 9, 2004.

Sommers, Jonathan and Twila (Zook), Kensington, OH, third child, second dau., Tanya Marie, August 4, 2004.

Stoltzfus, Amos and Priscilla (Stoltzfus), Parkesburg, PA, fifth child, fourth dau., Rachelle Joy, July 17, 2004.

Stoltzfus, Chet and Cindy (Kauffman), Leola, PA, second child, first dau., Alisa Renae, July 23, 2004.

Troyer, Philip and Rachel (Miller), Sugar-creek, OH, second child, first son, Kendall Eric, June 6, 2004.

Webb, Michael and Miriam (Brumbaugh), Woodburn, IN, second child, first dau., Brenna Elizabeth, Aug. 24, 2004.

Yoder, Arlen and Keturah (Hershberger), Colon, MI, fourth child and dau., Jacina Kay, July 18, 2004.

Yutzky, Ferman and Lorna (Gingerich), Goshen, IN, sixth child, fourth son, Matthew David, July 9, 2004.

obituaries

Coblentz, Barbara A., 71, Hartville, OH, died August 12, 2004, surrounded by her family. She was born in Belleville, PA, the daughter of Andrew and Mary Miller.

She was a faithful member of Pleasant View A.M. Church.

Barbara is survived by her loving husband of 50 years, Melvin Coblentz; two sons: Leon (Marlene) and David (Tracy); seven daughters: Alta (Stephen) Hege; Susan (Perry) Miller; Mary (Ruben) Miller; Betty (Greg) Mishler; Nancy (Duane) Eash; Judy (Ernest) Miller; and Jean (Joseph) Miller; 29 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.; two sisters: Betty Sommers and Fannie Collins.

Funeral services were held on August 16, with Pastor Homer Zook officiating. Burial was in the Pleasant View Cemetery.

Yoder, Laura Ellen, 72, Partridge, KS, died at her home August 7, 2004, having suffered from congestive heart

failure. She was born May 16, 1932, at Nappanee, IN, daughter of the late Levi and Anna (Gerber) Helmuth.

She was a member of Center A.M. Church, Hutchinson.

On Sept. 6, 1956, she married Edward H. Yoder at Nappanee, IN. He survives. He was ordained to the ministry in 1963. She was a loyal helpmeet for him in this work.

Other survivors include three daughters: Marijane Nisly (Titus), Hutchinson; Anna Jolene Yoder (Sanford), Partridge; and Janice Renee Yoder, Partridge; five grandchildren, two sisters: Mary Shrock (Clarence), Huntsville, MO; and Irene Miller (Mahlon), Nappanee, IN.

She was preceded in death by two brothers, Joseph Raymond and Crist Helmuth, and a sister, Florence Elaine Miller Bleile.

Funeral services were held at Center Church on August 10, with brethren David Yoder, LaVerne Miller, both local, and Dannie Diener, IL, serving. David L. Miller served in the committal at the West Center Cemetery.

observations

This month I open this column with a continuation of last month's comments from a minister from our fellowship of churches in another state who responded at length to my column in June, 2004. His comments con-

tinue:

“One area that I especially have a burden for is the seeming increase in ‘silenced’ ministers. Or am I just more aware of these situations? I do believe that when there is sin or false doctrine involved, silencing

a minister is biblical after appropriate steps have been taken. My concern is the minister who is being 'recessed,' 'paused,' 'advised to retire,' or otherwise removed from the ministry he was ordained to do.

"There is nothing that such a man can make right, no sin to confess, we just 'can't use' his ministry right now. If he goes to another church, they are free to reinstate his ministry and he will be welcome in our pulpit again as a visitor. If he stays here he is welcome to commune, teach Sunday School, or hold any other lay office. We just 'can't use' him in the ministry. How far are we from hiring and firing our ministers? I can see the possible value of having a minister 'sit back' for a period of time for rest, or refreshment or even a time of proving, but I'm speaking of 'silencing' a minister, whether we call it silencing or something else, for convenience when there is no sin or clear biblical reason that can be given.

"Maybe we need some teaching from you older brethren on the calling and responsibility of ministers and why, how, and when it is appropriate and biblical to be released from that calling. Are we losing some respect for the sacredness of God's call to the ministry? Could there be value in a third party reviewing such situations before the

step of silencing is taken? Should there be, or are there, any guidelines on when and how silencing a minister should be done?

"I realize that each situation is different but I wonder if ordination to the ministry holds the sacredness that it should today? How does the use of lay preachers by some congregations affect us in this? I have more questions than answers in this area.

"I'm not necessarily writing this for publication, but if you wish to use any parts of it, I don't object. I think it would be best if my name were not mentioned. Thanks for listening. May God bless you."

• • • • •

A reader who requests anonymity writes in behalf of a friend who suffers from emphysema and multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). Other people's use of hair spray and perfumes can cause serious discomfort for the afflicted person.

The writer, who appeals for a friend, pleads with us that people attending church should be aware and considerate of such people with special needs. The writer of this concern invites letters of information, encouragement and prayer support to be sent to the editor of *Calvary Messenger*.

• • • • •

A brother from another state and

fellowship submitted an article of very serious concern about the use of the computer and the Internet.

We can ill afford not to be aware and concerned about these dangers. We continue to feel that to have such equipment and access in our homes without appropriate safeguards is not an acceptable option. It is becoming clear that various people and churches respond to these electronic wonders differently. There are those who sincerely believe they are but tools that can be used as many other modern inventions can, to the glory of God. Others seem to feel that these inventions themselves are inherently evil, and should not once be named among us.

It seems important that the church should reach an agreement that is defensible from the standpoint of accountability and safety. For some that may mean no computers. Others will establish a different standard. Surely every family head should do what he feels is best for his own family, even if it is a more conservative position than his church has. Sin does not dwell in any manmade invention. But the wrong use of things, many things, can feed our sinful nature and draw us away from God.

I continue to urge that we see the seriousness of these things and

guard our homes accordingly.

• • • • •

My sincere thanks goes to readers who continue to provide items of interest for possible use in this column. Because of space limitations, not everything can be used, but your interest and participation are appreciated and needed.

• • • • •

The Jerusalem Post (undated) carries some interesting statistics about world Jewish population. A comprehensive study reports that some 92% of the Jewish population lives in countries that are in the top 20 percentile of standards of living. While this allows them many advantages, it also increases the likelihood that they will lose their Jewish identity by being assimilated into the cultural mainstream of the country of their residence. The problem is particularly acute in America. Much of the Jewish population does not see the need to maintain distinctiveness and is experiencing an alarming erosion of communal identity.

From 1970 to 2003, world population increased by 70%. Jewish population increased 2%. A number of factors point to future zero growth or even decline.

There seem to be dynamics at work here that remind us of the value of a distinctive identity from

a Christian perspective. (Courtesy David Troyer)



There are more than one million Jehovah’s Witnesses in the United States. *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 8-30-04, gives a brief history. This movement apparently started with William Miller. He is called the founder of Adventism. The advent of Christ simply means His second coming.

When Miller’s prediction that the return of Christ would occur in 1844 failed to be fulfilled, their interest in date setting was not deterred. Charles Russell, called the founder of the Witness movement, predicted that the Lord would return in 1874.

There have been several other failed attempts to predict the time of Christ’s return. The church has now officially dismissed date setting as speculation.

From my limited interaction with their personal workers, it seems that repentance, faith, grace, and reconciliation to God is not part of their message. Seventh Day Adventists trace their beginnings to the Millerite movement.



NOTICE: Third Annual Marriage Enrichment Retreat, February 11-13, 2005. To be held at Crosswinds Retreat Center, Hesston, KS.

These meetings have grown out of rich experiences some of the planners have experienced at Penn Valley Christian Retreat. This effort is not intended, in any way, to compete with the good work being done at Penn Valley. It was simply felt that a location involving less travel would reach couples better that don’t live close to PA. So far participants have expressed strong appreciation and support. Participation has come from a variety of conservative Anabaptist groups. The following two paragraphs are quoted from a planners’ announcement:

“This retreat is for couples of all ages. Our goal is to provide Biblical teaching on the foundation, value and joy of marriage. Couples will be challenged to deepen their relationships with their partners in a setting removed from the pressures of the daily routines of their daily lives. For your benefit please make arrangements for your children (except infants) elsewhere.

“Participants will enjoy excellent food in a beautiful setting. You can anticipate wholesome fellowship with other couples, as well as private times with your spouse.

“The cost is \$250 per couple. We request \$100 deposit to secure your reservation. Make checks payable to Center Marriage Retreat.

“If unforeseen circumstances

would necessitate a cancellation, your deposit would be refunded. Mail your reservations to Joe and Twila Yoder, 5505 S. Riverton Rd., Partridge, KS 67566.

“For more information contact

Oren and Joanna Yoder, Phone: 620-567-2626 or Julian and Bertha Nisly, 620-664-5304. In case applications would exceed the number to be accepted, early enrollees would have an advantage.” -DLM



Ministers' Meetings Messages

Abbeville, SC

9. “Biblical Basis for Non-Conformity”

Daniel Bontrager, Shipshewana, IN

While there are many nonconformists today who are not worthy of respect, this is an important topic. The Mennonite Church of yesteryear also thought so. In 1951, they assigned a study group to give a thorough and faithful treatment of this Bible teaching. The book that resulted from this was the one that Simon Schrock recommended to us this morning, *Separated unto God*, by John C. Wenger.

We have been hearing recurring concerns in our annual ministers' meetings. While it might be alright to hear about these, I have a more pressing question: What is being done with these concerns?

If you take gold and mix clay with it, it has certainly been made impure. But what if you take gold and mix silver in with it? Is it then pure gold? Here then is an interpretive question that we face: Is the world immoral or amoral? Is it neutral?

You might ask me, “What kind of world are you talking about?” The Bible uses the word *cosmos*. Sometimes it means the world of people, sometimes it means this earth, the creation on which we live. But today we are thinking more of a third meaning: **The order of things.** We want to understand what is behind what we see. Purity of heart demands an exclusiveness. It refers to something unmixed, alone.

Romans 12:2 gives us the term, “nonconformity.” As we read it we understand that there are two sides. It is important which side we are on.

If we want to understand the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, we must guard our ideas and understandings. Whatever we allow to enter our minds, affects our perceptions. Berkley renders this verse, “Be not conformed to this present world’s scheme.” Philips says it this way, “Do not let the world around you squeeze you into its mold.”

This one of the two distinctives, nonconformity and nonresistance, we most often talk about as distinguishing our Anabaptist heritage from other Protestant emphases. We cannot afford to lose the distinctive of separation from the world. The Greek word means “to fashion alike, to pattern after, to conform to the same pattern.” Church in the original word is *ekklesia*. That means “the called-out ones.” As one Oriental believer declared, “There is no such thing as a call from God that is not a call out of the world.” Lot and Sodom are an Old Testament type of our relationship to the world and the effect of the world.

Pure religion is unspotted from the world. It is undefiled and God-exclusive. It is an important issue. We live either for or against God. In 1 John 2: 15-17, we come to specifics that help us grapple with the issues we face. It tells us about what is in the world: “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life

[which] is not of the Father but is of the world.”

In Ephesians 2:1-3, “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of the world.” In other words, the world has a course. It has design and direction, with the power it wields and the influence it leaves. The passage continues with this, “According to the prince of the power of the air,” associating it with something that goes farther back than we see and identifies it as “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

1 John 5: 19 says, “And we know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness.” Another rendering says that the whole world “lies in the lap of the wicked one.” There is something going that we may not always be aware of. In 2 Corinthians 4, we read that, “the God of this world has blinded the mind of them which believe not.”

It seems to me that the tangible world is amoral. Granted, natural creation was altered when Adam and Eve sinned. Weeds grew. Death came. Jesus prayed for us that as we live in this world, we do not become part of it. We are instructed how to use the world and not abuse it. So I conclude that I am not necessarily influenced toward evil just by the fact

that I am in this world. In that sense, the world we live in is amoral.

Up to this point most Protestants agree. But there is something else going on. We all agree that we should not love the world. That's where the question comes in, "What is the world?"

To be opposite from the world is not our goal. But can we have a scriptural nonconformity—can we feel about it like God does—unless we try to know what God thinks when He looks on the world and the lusts thereof which He has told us will pass away? Could it be that too often we have tried to understand nonconformity by looking at it through the eyes of the world? Would we not do better by going back and letting everything begin with God? [by trying to look at it from God's perspective]

When God looks on the world He has made, He also sees the sinister design behind the way man would use it. He sees the devil behind much of the way His world is being used. Something seems to come into focus: There are two kingdoms.

A young man from our congregation went to Florida this past winter for a while. While there he was offered the chance to go deep sea fishing. He had quite an unusual experience. When he was reeling in one fish, he found it pulling extremely hard, then all at once—not hard at

all! When he got it in, it was part of a fish, bitten in two by a much larger fish. So the captain instructed him to put the leftover fish on a much larger hook and a much stronger line.

Sure enough, soon he had a tug. But he lost it. Then he had another tug, and lost it again. Finally the captain said the bait is too big. So they cut a smaller piece off and threw it in again. The unwary fish bit yet again and they brought it up to the boat, but it was so big they had to shoot it to bring it in. The specimen, just under seven feet long, brought great sport to Wendell, a young man who does not claim to be a fisherman.

This is a picture of what's going on in this world. Whenever we get close to the world, [we are offered bait that brings us] close to the mind driving the world. Is it any wonder that when God sees us get close to the world, He says, in essence, "Be not conformed to the world. You're in mortal danger, if you are a part of this world." The world is a real entity. It is not an abstract idea. We get away from this reality when we speak of the world as simply an illusion, (something that's not real).

When we lose our fear of the world, we fiddle with it, instead of fleeing from it. In our past, we have struggled with visible, tangible things and have probably felt, for instance, that black hats do not necessarily

show humility. But some of us have become involved in business to the extent that we have [not chosen to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and thus have] become worldly, and yet thought we were living humbly. I'm afraid we were taking the bait [of prosperity] and didn't realize what was inside sometimes. That is not a comment on "hats" and "business," but on the need for consistency.

Which part of the world did Jesus say we are not to love? Which part is it alright to love? We are concerned that people are not taken by the strategy of the enemy.

What are scriptural principles for? Are they given just so we know? Or are they given to be applied? An unapplied principle is not worth much. We may so diligently generalize or define a word that we almost put it out of our existence, but it's still there.

This world has different branches. One branch is politics. Another is education. Do those things affect us? Many of our Mennonite friends who heard John C. Wenger speak of the world of politics in 1951 are involved in politics today, even though Wenger's interpretations were then essentially what ours are today. Is not the very nature of politics that of self-exaltation, of exerting power, driven by the lust for power? Why has politics become that? It's because

there's a sinister mind driving it.

Education is similar. It is to exalt man. Many Ivy League schools started as centers of Christian education. Technology leads us into all kinds of things we hardly know how to respond to. Take genetic engineering. Or life support systems: When do you turn them off? We are faced with many questions that we hardly know what to do with. God did not mean for us to get into questionable things, but an enemy did. Then there are the arts; music, for example. Commerce is another. Fashion is an important area. (Important, but we leave it for another time.)

Religion is an important area of the world of our time. Much of religion is not Christianity. The enemy has reached into this and is using it to give people a false hope. Jesus said, "Him **only** shalt thou serve." It doesn't matter how many synods or conferences or ministers' meetings there have been it is simply not true that all religions are alike. There is only one way to heaven.

I find no clue in the Bible that Jesus plans to save the [unbelieving] world. He came to save us out of the world. Casual lifestyle and affluence press upon us. We know, but do we do? Sometimes we are intimidated, when we should be brave. As Bro. Jim Yoder yesterday quoted a certain military captain, "Men, we are sur-

rounded by the enemy, don't let one of them escape!"

If we think we have the standard just right, and everything will work out from here on out, think again. We have people telling us that if we were spiritual enough, we would not need guidelines and standards. "If we were all spiritual enough, we wouldn't need group standards." Who's going to say anything after that? We are afraid to be identified as unspiritual. God does not ask us to choose between two wrongs. It simply is not true that standards make you unspiritual.

Paul did not write in Romans 12:2, "Be not conformed to the world, but be conformed to Christ." He wrote, "Be not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." [Not imitation but transformation is required.] In Colossians 3:2, he wrote, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." When the affections are set on the things of Jesus Christ, I think we will see things we never saw before.

Let us close on a positive note: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. The issues of nonconformity are largely issues of the heart. When something becomes an issue of the heart, there will be an application.

Could it be that our hesitation to take a stand against the Internet is a reflection of how we are handling issues of nonconformity in our fellowships? This world is geared up to make it hard to do certain things in business without the Internet. We come under financial pressure to make allowance for it. [Is it, however, safe?]

Youth need the example of their parents and parents need the example of their leaders.

10. "Effective Transmission of Truth"

Andy Mullet, Lott, TX

The burden of this final message comes from questions sometimes raised by our children. Our youth and other seekers are asking questions that weigh heavily upon us. A great burden is upon me that I rightly divide the Word of Truth. I want to say to you with my whole heart about what we have heard today, "Amen! You've heard it; Go live it!" But I realize that if someone came to me and asked, "What is truth?" and I would say, "Read your Bible!" that would be simplistic and naïve. We must rightly divide the Word of Truth.

In John 18:33-38, we have the passage in which Pilate asked the question, "What is truth?" In this trial

of Jesus before Pilate, as it usually is in a legal trial, there was much conflict. Here there was conflict between Jesus and the Jews. What Jesus was saying was confusing to Pilate, because Jesus answered Pilate with unexpected answers. With the prosecution vehemently declaring one thing and Jesus responding in such surprising and mysterious ways, finally, I believe Pilate just threw up his hands in frustration and said, **“What is truth?”**

If Pilate had only known that he was speaking to The Truth, he would not have had to ask, “What is truth?” The Truth was standing right in front him. Jesus had just said that He had been sent into the world to bear witness to the truth. He had even said, “Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice.” But Pilate did not understand. I don’t think he was searching for theological truth. With all the confusing testimony, he was probably saying in effect, “I just want to know what I need to know to bear proper judgment here today.”

For those of you who are serving in developing countries, you know you have been confronted with all kinds of people and all kinds of situations, where this brother is saying this and that brother is saying that, and finally in frustration, you too say, “Well, what is the truth?”

I was saved when I was 12 years

old and baptized at 13. This issue in itself caused some consternation and confusion among our people who thought baptism should always come later. I well remember my father discussing current issues with another man during those troubled times of new interpretations, who said with exasperation, “If only we knew the truth!” We must think things through.

An electrician, who had recently found the Lord, came to me one day on the job and greeted me with the words, “The Lord is risen indeed; are you a Christian?” I told him that I was indeed a Christian. As I inquired about his search for a vital faith, I asked him what he found. He said it was through the Christian Orthodox Church. His answer was different from mine. I consider myself an orthodox Biblicist, an Anabaptist. My religious pride wanted to hear him say that he found the answer to his search for the Lord in the same place I found it, but I repented of that.

Another young man I know, who was searching for many years, is now a settled, sincere believer and holds conservative, Anabaptist convictions. I asked him how he came to solid answers—just how he found truth, “How did you ever come to believe what you do today?”

He said, “I finally got settled in Jesus Christ, when I studied cosmol-

ogy.” This man has a big telescope and studied the heavens, especially taking an interest in physics, time and matter and so on. He said he simply came to the place that he saw God in everything.

Many people still search for the truth. Jesus made it sharp and clear: “I am...the truth.” We may search for truth in a study of cosmology, or in any other study, but we will never find the truth about life until we accept God’s Truth as our Savior and Lord. The Truth is incarnated in Jesus Christ alone. In order to find truth, we must find Jesus. Does that provide a clue as to why there’s so much confusion and restlessness today? Jesus said in John 17:17, “Thy word is truth.” These two Scriptures are the two great foundation stones of saving faith.

I am persuaded that we will never find the truth in history, in denominationalism, or even in the Reformation. We can learn many valuable things in the study of those things, but beyond that we must seek and find Jesus. Paul said to the Galatians that truth is found in the Gospels. In Ephesians 4:21, he points them to, “The truth [that] is in Jesus.” Everything in this quest for truth points back to Jesus Christ.

Truth is immutable and non-negotiable. Jesus Christ is eternal and He will always be truth, whether I choose

to live by it or not. Any open-minded person should not have difficulty establishing that God’s Word is truth. I don’t think that those among us who ask for truth, are asking if it’s the Bible versus the Koran, Transcendental Meditation, or some other eastern religion. That’s not the question we meet most often from those who get confused from the diverse interpretations and applications of what we call “truth.”

It is important that we stop thinking so much about what people will say and start thinking more about what God thinks. That’s why we must be diligent in our study of the Bible. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). We ministers seem to live with a great deal of peer pressure. We may even be afraid of truth. An epitaph on one man’s tombstone said, “He feared man so little, because he feared God so much.”

Rightly dividing the word of truth is not only our privilege, it is our obligation. If we say, “Go to the Bible and get your answer there, we are not doing our job.” One reason why truth must be rightly divided is: Truth is absolute. Truth is not relative. Truth is found in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. Commentaries are good, but the best commentary on Scripture is

Scripture. I fear that the confusion we have today comes because we have not settled in our minds just what is truth. Sometimes we confuse culture and tradition, or our background and our way of living with Truth. Beware of syncretism!

Syncretism is mixing impure religion with pure religion and calling the end product equal in value to pure religion. In Africa, we often meet syncretism. It seems that many times truth is not seen as absolute, or that truth stands alone. We find that often when Africans must choose between the Word of God and the culture, culture wins. But syncretism is not only an African problem, it is also an American problem.

If you seem to hear me say that I have nothing for standards, you are taking me wrong. I am every bit for application, just like you are. But we must make it very clear, that these applications are not truth. They are applications of truth.

Another reason that truth must be rightly divided is that Scripture comes to us in a variety of ways. For example, the Word of God comes to us in two covenants. Many Protestants say, the two covenants are equally inspired and equally important today. We say, the two covenants are equally inspired, but the New Testament supercedes the Old Testament, and therefore becomes more

important to the way we live. So it is vital that our young people and seekers understand the difference between the two covenants, because that makes a difference in how we make applications to the way we live.

The Word of God comes to us as history, as poetry, as law, as proverbs, as parables, sometimes it is didactic, sometimes it is in the form of a command, sometimes it is advisory, sometimes the culture shows through. We could make other distinctions of the forms in which the truth of God is presented in the Word of God.

For example, Bro. Menno Kuhns said the first evening that a Scripture he referred to was to be spiritualized. I agreed with him. Since some Scripture is literal and some is spiritual, we are given the task of deciphering which is one and which is the other. Yesterday Bro. Wayne Schrock read the passage in which Jesus said, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee:...if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off...." Bro. Wayne rightly said that it was hyperbolic, not literal. It simply means exaggerated, for the sake of emphasis.

When we read the Scriptures, we are really dealing with three different cultures: The Jewish culture, the Roman culture and our own. I think in some things we read in the Bible, we see local Jewish culture coming through. We must decide how these

things are to be rightly divided. In Luke 10:2-12, we found out how the 70 were sent out. It seems strange, unless you inject some knowledge of Jewish culture into it. How would we respond today if a mission board said, “Don’t take any shoes; don’t take a wallet; don’t take a food container; don’t take an extra change of clothing; just go as you are, and by the way, don’t give a greeting to anybody.” We read that and we say, “It has something to do with those times.” That is another way of saying (but we don’t like the word “culture”) that it was cultural.

We once planned to go to Nigeria for mission service under the mission board at Elkhart, Indiana. We were given eight pages of instructions, but none of them said anything about going barefooted, or about not having an extra change of clothes. Our plans to go were cancelled, but not because they did not follow Luke 10. For other reasons we had to give it up. Later we got a list of preparations needed for going to Belize with Amish Mennonite Aid. Again, no list from Luke 10:2-12 was included. I think the reason is found in that aspect of lifestyle known as culture. Customs, culture and traditions are capable of reculturation, but the truth is not. It is absolute; it stays the same.

Several points for consideration are:

1. Examine the Word of God. Look for apparent influence of culture.
2. Some principles of the Old Testament are restated in the New Testament. These principles are transcultural. They are transcendent over every culture.
3. Allow for some first-century distinctives. It is one thing to understand the early church and it is another to try to make ourselves identical to them.
4. Several transcendent principles: Marriage for life started in the Old Testament and holds in the New Testament.

The headship order stated in 1 Corinthians 11 goes back to Creation and The Fall.

Modesty, the idea of proper dress, began in the Garden of Eden and is restated in the New Testament.

These are transcultural principles. Applications may change, but the principles do not change. These unchanging principles apply to every culture.

How can we effectively transmit God’s truth?

1. Make sure you distinguish between application and principle.
2. Be consistent. (1 John 4:18,19)
3. Practice brotherly love. When this is missing, our young people have reason to doubt.



ANNOUNCEMENT

Sometimes our memories need an extra nudge. Here is a nudge about Ministers' Week at Penn Valley, coming up on November 9-12, 2004.

You may not have been sure earlier you could be present this year. If things are now shaping up so that you could come, don't hesitate to come on very short notice. We expect that there will be sufficient space and accommodations for all who

come. Just give us a call when you decide that you plan to be there.

Let us seek God's blessing in these three and one half days that provide interaction with the teachers and other participants. Check out the September issue of *Calvary Messenger*, pp. 31-32, for details.

For Christ and the Church,
Aaron Lapp
Kinzers, PA



First Solo Flight

Betty Yoder
Hutchinson, KS

[These observations from a seasoned and successful teacher provide food for thought. The problem of frequent teacher turnover is a common one. This proposed solution deserves careful consideration. -PLM]

Invite you to stroll with me down South Mohawk Road in rural Hutchinson, Kansas, where several successful businesses are clustered within a half mile of my house. Let us note how they help

newcomers learn new skills and thus promote their continued success.

Our first stop is my next-door neighbor and cousin who is a paraplane (powered parachute) dealer. Heading in that direction we hear the buzz of paraplanes and looking up, we see their colorful spread in the sky. My cousin is certified to train people to fly these fascinating machines. Knowing that peoples' lives are at stake, he carefully follows a precise training plan. He

spends hours explaining different facets of the process. Next, the trainee flies along and watches the trainer demonstrate how to operate the machine. After this the trainee takes the controls in his own hands, while the trainer sits in the back seat and evaluates his readiness. By law the trainer is required to thoroughly prepare his client to fly the skies safely. We likely agree that this is not needless anxiety, but wise and reasonable caution.

Going a short distance down the road, we arrive at my brother-in-law's dairy. He takes seriously the responsibility of providing for his family. Among other things, this translates into striving for excellence in caring for their cows and calves. For a number of years he has hired help to assist him with milking and feeding chores. This summer, while anticipating a short trip with his family, he was concerned that a new hired hand would have sufficient training and experience before they left for six days. Thus he wisely apprenticed the inexperienced young man. First he explained to him the processes involved in caring well for the cows. Then he demonstrated it for him and gave him several weeks of opportunity to do things himself as they worked together. When they left for their trip, the hired hand was equipped with the tools needed to

care well for the cows. We look on and say my brother-in-law is wise to give the new man such a start.

Our final stop is down the road from the dairy, where the workers build storage barns. Their new workers are carefully trained before they are asked to work alone on construction projects. The process is carefully explained and demonstrated step by step. The new employee then works alongside experienced men for weeks or even months, before he is asked to go ahead with a project on his own. Again, we look on and say this is a wise and responsible way to do it. Indeed, who would want to buy the first barn built by employees who were holding nail guns and painting equipment in their untrained hands for the first time?

We now pause and sit in the shade of a nearby tree. While resting there, another scene comes to mind. It may be located in a Christian school near you. A classroom has been prepared with the proper textbooks, desks, chairs—and a group of students. Some of the students are eager to learn, others are eager to create mischief, but all need wise guidance for mind and soul. Before the students stands an inexperienced teacher who was hired only weeks before school started. The teacher he replaced was already the classroom's third in four years. After months of feeling

inadequate and overwhelmed, the former teacher had concluded that teaching was not for him, and thus began anew the desperate search for a replacement.

Now the new teacher stands in his place. His mind whirls. When he was persuaded to “just try it for a year,” he was assured that God would bless his availability, for that was more important than his ability or prior experience. No training was given him. There wasn’t time, and besides, the general sentiment was that training isn’t really necessary.

As he stands in front of the students, he frantically tries to remember the pointers other teachers gave him in the last hurried days. His mind races to remember how his teachers handled things years ago when he was a student. But things feel so dif-

ferent in his new role as teacher. He wishes desperately he could have had at least some time to sit in someone else’s classroom to see the process demonstrated, or much better yet, have had the opportunity to work alongside an experienced teacher for a number of months. Already he suspects teaching is not for him either and that one year will be more than enough.

The children look up expectantly. Their lives have been entrusted to the care of their teacher for 6-7 hours a day, five days a week, for the next 8-9 months. Will they travel as safely through this year as do the paraplanes? Will their needs be met as well as the cows in the apprentice dairyman’s care? Will their inner “house” be built as well as my neighbor’s storage barns are?



Choices That Matter

*Simon Schrock
Fairfax, VA*

In the last eight months, I have taken part in seven funeral services. Maybe that’s why I’ve been thinking about things that really matter.

Recently while driving and thinking, my mind went back almost 50 years. As I relived this, tears of regret came to my eyes for a missed

opportunity that mattered.

Back then, I was close to my twenty-first birthday and drove a 1950 Ford I had named Pedro. My youngest brother was 16. He was in ailing health, due to Bright’s Disease. Raccoon hunting with his older brothers and friends was a sport he enjoyed. My parents’ awareness of

the life-threatening potential of his sickness caused them to give special consideration for him to pursue his desire to hunt.

What really makes a raccoon hunter is his “coon hounds.” The bay of a hound that has picked up a whiff of a “coon” track is sweet music to a hunter’s ears. The dogs bark and yelp as they follow the trail and “tree the coon.”

My brother had several hounds of his own. One evening he asked me if I would take him and his hounds somewhere in my car. The thought of “coon hounds” in Pedro didn’t set well with me. They would get my car dirty and who knows what else they’d do? I declined the opportunity. My brother got a neighbor to do his hound dog transporting.

Not long after that incident I stood with my parents and two other brothers, as we gathered around the coon hunter’s bedside at the Garrett County Memorial Hospital, while life left the body. My brother, Menno, died just weeks before his seventeenth birthday. His body was committed to the ground and Pedro ran a good many years after that.

Eventually Pedro was given a resting place to rust in the woods at the home farm where Menno and I were born. The old Ford has been there now for many decades. Recently, I took a walk to the woods just to look

at Pedro again. A lot of memories flooded my mind. I noted the starter button to press on the left of the steering column while pulling the choke on the right. I remembered the feel of the clutch as I slid the gear lever into low, then second, and on into high. Memories of trips, courting the one who would be my first wife, double dates and a whole “biography” of other experiences in old Pedro came back.

Then I thought of Menno’s request to transport his hounds. It brought a painful regret of missed opportunity. Fallen tree limbs have left their marks on old Pedro. Brush grows up around it. It looks like someone enjoyed breaking window glass. I could still recognize it as a 1950 Ford by the distinctive round ball in the center of the grill, with the figure 8 on it, meaning it had a V-8 engine under the hood. The beautiful emblem is now broken and a bird has built a nest on top of the rear seat. The seats and upholstery are tattered.

Now after all these years of deteriorating, what difference would it have made to take my brother and his hounds where he wanted to go? Suppose they would have shed some hair or left some dirt on the plastic seat covers or a made a slit in the upholstery. Menno hadn’t asked for a long trip, just a short errand in a seven-year-old car. Too late I realize

that a few coon hound hairs and a little dirt don't matter much.

If I could do it over, I'd take the opportunity to take Menno and his beloved hounds wherever he wanted to go. I could even have borrowed a blanket from Mom, put it over the back seat and "away we go!" Mom would probably have wanted to go along.

Maybe Menno wanted to talk about something precious on his heart while he still had life. Maybe he wanted a few minutes with his older brother. After all, this was a brother-to-brother thing, and he wasn't asking me to use my precious car to transport all his friends' dogs. I was single and had no wife to bring me to my senses. I could even have swept out any hound dirt before the Sunday date, if I had been that considerate.

I missed an opportunity for what really mattered. I missed letting Menno know he meant something to me, and that I was glad to spend some precious moments with him before he left me for good.

I cannot go back and start up the old car and take Menno and his hounds somewhere. A tombstone marks Menno's grave. The old car is junk and home for spiders and birds and whatever. It is also a reminder that I missed an opportunity that would never return.


The tombstone and junk heap are reminders that we make many choices that are selfish, short-lived and unfulfilling. Choosing to please ourselves over what really matters brings a leanness to our souls somewhat like it was for Israel when God gave them their request, but sent them leanness of soul. (Ps. 100:15)

What shall I do with my regrets? James says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result, that ye may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4 NAS). May the painful memories of regret move me on to become complete in Christ. I can count it all joy that God let me remember this so I can bring it to Him and by His power make future decisions that count for eternity.

I can let my regrets remind me of Hebrews 13:14, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Fords, dogs, and things are temporal. People are eternal. I can be reminded to cultivate my relationships with people—God's crowning creation.

It is a reminder that I am prone to make decisions that have no long-term value and that I need to keep the goal of seeking kingdom values first. (Matt. 6:33)

Psalm 90 is more than a funeral text. It is a reminder for the living to live now for what really matters. Moses wrote that our life “is soon cut off and we fly away.” (v. 10) He prayed, “So teach us to number our

days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (v. 11). That is my heart’s prayer. Out of my tears of regret, I pray, “Lord, teach me to make decisions and choices that really matter.” 

Who Will Take Care of the Children?

Lydia Nissley

Catlett, VA

Isaiah said, “Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8). Will you, young mother dear, say the same to the special responsibilities before you?

The job seems lowly—fixing meals, changing diapers or taking little ones to the bathroom—again and again, for the children. Simple tasks. You might say, anyone can do that. Not just anyone can do it honorably. Can you do it without a frown? You must learn to do it willingly, or you may see it as giving up your rights, and that feels different to a child.

Teach them numbers when they set the table, gather the eggs, and fold the wash cloths.

Teach them Bible verses and songs that glorify God when they are young. Teach them to love God.

Teach them to hold still and listen. Teach them to give up their wills. Teach them the meaning of “No.”

Who can better teach them to respect Daddy than you?

Who will teach them orderliness? Who will dress them modestly and appropriately?

Whether it’s walking slowly to match a young child’s steps, going outside to enjoy the snow and to help build a snowman, or getting down on hands and knees to play with them, it takes a cheerful willingness to give love to the young child. Otherwise, he learns that he’s not worth much to you.

We don’t have little ones any more. Our youngest is nine. Recently we took care of a two and a three-year-old for several days. It was a real eye opener. I had almost forgotten how much care little ones need. You must put only a little milk in the glass because it may get spilled. Food must be dished out.

Older children may fuss at younger ones. Mealtimes can be interrupted because a younger child needs to be disciplined. Keep on, Dad and

Mom! Do your best and ask God for wisdom.

Who will hold a child waking up from a nap? If you young mothers get so busy cleaning, cooking, sewing, going away and rushing about, you will not give much comfort for the young child who cannot always cope with his frustrations. And who can? We must all have a parent to be there for us. For adults, it's our Heavenly Parent. For the child, it's you, young mother and father.

A mother's job is very important, much too important to take another job outside the home.

Why should you sit down and hold a child while you read a good story for him at bedtime, when it would be faster to simply put him to bed? It gives him assurance that "God is in his heaven and all is right with his world."

It takes Christian mothers who love the Lord, their husbands and their children to make good use of the opportunities that come to them.

Once, when my sons were helping me butcher roosters, I called my mom and told her about it. I saw it as a big job and somewhat of an unwelcome prospect. She reminded me that in semi-retirement, she misses such interaction. *That's right*, I thought, *I really do have it nice.*

One more thing, young mothers—Don't neglect your own devotional life. You need the inspiration of God's Word, of committing your life to God over and over again. You need good thoughts from good books and from God Himself. Let us always remember, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God..." (James 1:5).



Thoughts on the Death of a Loved One

Alvin Mast

Millersburg, OH

A person whose 20-year-old son was killed in an accident sent me a letter. He tells me his son was a Christian, yet he finds his grief nearly overwhelming. While he is not of my denomination, I appreciate him a great deal. He has a good testimony. Here's one sentence from

his letter to me: "I am not praising God right now. The grave is an awful lonely place."

How does one respond to such comments? After several days, I finally wrote the following. I still wonder whether I responded helpfully. —AM

When my father died in 1998, many people came to view the body.

My family greeted hundreds of people. Some somberly shook hands with us and passed on without saying anything. Some murmured words of consolation. Probably the worst remarks I heard were from well-meaning people who said, “He looks so normal.” I remember thinking, *He does not look normal; he is dead.* Even though I did not say so, I was rather offended, but I just kept my thoughts to myself.

Even after six years, I miss my father more than I ever have. There are things I want to say to him. I want his counsel... I want to look at him, but he is not here. I can go to his grave. I can sit down and reminisce. I can go back over how often I let him down and failed to tell him that I love him...

Yes, life can be lonely in grief, even when you're surrounded by people. There are things we'd like to say but we don't know how to say them. With our thoughts so private, we become very lonely. Sometimes we go to our private thoughts too much and too often. We block out too much of what is real. In our private world, we seem to “live in another world.” The world of grief is

a lonely world. We smile, we laugh, we speak words, but inwardly, we live mostly in that other world with loneliness and grief. **Finally our lonely world becomes like a dirty pillow that needs to be replaced.**

No, my father is not here any more. He went to meet God. I'm not sure how he met God and whether he was ready to meet Him. I like to think he was.

I shall visit his grave soon, but I know he is not there. That's why I don't go there often. It is not a good place to stay. It is too lonely. Dad doesn't live there. He lives somewhere in eternity.


My memories of Dad are lonely, too. The best thing to help me when grief threatens to crush me is to face life and turn away from death. Death is so final and leaves us so helpless. Life is bright and full of hope. As Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” When I go to the grave, I can say, “Here lies my father.” But when I look at Jesus' promise, I say, “In His promise lies my hope for eternal bliss.” This is the reason I can keep on going. Every other relief is insufficient.

Loneliness, despair, and hopelessness cease when I think of being with Christ in eternity. When I think of my father out in

eternity somewhere, I despair. But when I focus correctly and think of him being with Jesus, it makes me want to go there.

Why don't we go there together? Is it too soon for you to wash the "dirty pillow"? Does it have to become a little more soiled with grief and loneliness? If necessary, take time to soil it some more with your tears. Love for your son allows it.

But remember, eventually you need to have a fresh pillow on which to lay your head. Life is too short to sleep on dirty pillows day after day, year after year.

I encourage you to **give your pillow to Jesus**. Let Him wash off the grief and loneliness and replace it with a clean pillow. Your son would want it that way. 

mission awareness

Seven Prongs of Evangelism—Part Two

Floyd Stoltzfus

Evangelism is sometimes called "the great unfinished task." As Jesus saw the vast expanse of the harvest in His day, He made some striking statements, note how two gospel writers record them in Luke 10:1-12, Matthew 9:36-38, and 10:1-15. These statements are like pointed prongs. In September, we considered the scope of evangelism. Let us examine two more prongs.

Prong 2: The Scarcity of Laborers

"The laborers are few."

Laborers were few in Jesus' day. They are few today. Seminars are becoming more numerous. Winter

Bible schools and Bible institutes have increased in number. Missions programs and organizations are enlarging their focus and boundaries. But the shortage persists—year after year. Why are there never enough laborers? Here are four hindrances I see:

a. Satan's attack: Paul felt it. He earnestly desired to visit the young flock at Thessalonica, but his Gospel team had to leave abruptly, because of persecution. He writes from a burning heart, "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we

would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us” (1 Thess. 2:18).

Satan uses strategic devices and utmost zeal to keep the Gospel from penetrating communities and villages where Christ is not known. Paul noted this in Romans 15: 20-22: “Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.” Satan is holding large sections of the world in spiritual darkness, so that multitudes bow down and worship idols. He is aggressive and moves over the whole earth with his power and deceptiveness. As a wolf goes for the jugular vein of its prey, so Satan attempts to drain the blood-bought church of her energy by internal problems or by focusing on material pursuits and worldly pleasures. However, we thank God for the multitudes in lands of heathen darkness where thousands are calling Jesus “Lord” and are gloriously saved in spite of persecution and even death.

b. Downright selfishness: We may detest the term “laborers.” A

laborer is a field hand, working for a low wage. He may work hard and get blisters. His feet may get sore, his back ache, his clothes get dirty and his face dusty. By nature, he would aspire to being a supervisor, an administrator, a board member—anything but a common laborer.

Selfishness says: “I would miss my weekly paycheck.” Or, “It would mess up my retirement plan.” And, “The mortgage on the house must be serviced.” Or even, “That debt on the SUV keeps us here.” Selfishness is at the bottom of disobedience, and it grows into spiritual blindness when it collides with God’s commands.

c. Sentimentalism: We would miss the purr of the diesel tractor pulling the five-bottom plow, or the satisfaction of making beautiful cabinets, or the fulfillment of making modern houses. How about the hum of the sewing machine designing all sorts of fancy stitches? What would it be like to be without the plush living room carpet or the conveniences of the kitchen?

Leave my family and friends? How I would miss them! I cannot go. The fact, however, is that these good things can hold us back from walking in the will of God when He beckons to the “regions beyond.”

d. Shortsightedness: This comes from wrong choices. Moses shows

us that success in life is made up of “refusings” and “choosings.” When we choose one thing, we refuse another. Moses “**refused** to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; **choosing** rather to suffer affliction with the people of God...” (Heb. 11:24, 25). Moses exercised faith in the invisible God. His obedient choices kept him from pursuing a worldly lifestyle. He was probably in line to succeed Pharaoh’s throne. His Egyptian education, his brilliance, his thorough military training were all laid down in answering God’s call to lead His people. Many times they were rebellious and ungrateful. Moses looked beyond that and saw that the eternal rewards of suffering for God far outweighed all the glamour of Egypt.

It is humbling to consider the hundreds of dedicated workers from our churches who have served and are presently serving in voluntary service units, in home missions, in the North, across the seas. Many have taken the call of God seriously and have not permitted these hindrances to blur their vision.

Prong 3: The Seriousness of Prayer

“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest...”

Jesus frequently taught His disciples to pray. Here He taught them

what to pray. Is Jesus actually saying that He, the Lord of the Harvest waits on our prayers before He sends laborers into the harvest? Herein lies a deep mystery of prayer.

Andrew Murray said, “How little Christians really feel and mourn the need of laborers in the fields of the world so white for the harvest. And how little they believe that our labor supply depends on prayer, that prayer will provide ‘as many as he needeth.’ So wonderful is the surrender of Christ’s work into the hands of His church. So dependent has the Lord made Himself on them as a body, through whom alone His work will be done. So real is the power which the Lord gives His people to exercise in heaven and earth, that the number of laborers and the measure of the harvest do actually depend upon their prayers. Solemn thought!”

Yet, we believe the all-powerful God may actually send out laborers without our prayers. Notice that Peter was sent by the Holy Spirit to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. I doubt that the apostles of the early church were praying for laborers to be sent to the Gentiles. However, Cornelius was praying when God sent Peter to help him.

What place does praying for laborers to enter the harvest have in your life? Perhaps the solution to

the shortage of workers is simpler than we think. Could it be that the shortage comes because we do not pray like Jesus commanded.

We admire the Moravian Brethren of 1727 for their commitment to prayer. Even the children had prayer meetings. Much intercessory prayer day and night united the church in an outpouring of love for Christ. One result of that remarkable revival was a prayer meeting 24 hours a day that lasted for 100 years. It was followed by missionary activity that sent workers around the world to many

countries and thousands of souls were brought to faith in Christ. How did they do it? Twenty-four people covenanted with God to pray one hour each day, around the clock, to intercede for the power of God to be poured out on their mission workers, mission projects, and mission leaders. For example, one person would pray for one hour from 4:00 to 5:00 A.M. in the morning. Another person would pray from 5:00 to 6:00 A.M., and so on, around the clock.

(to be continued)



helpers at home

The Proverbs 31 Woman

Mary June Glick

She buys imported food, brought by ship from distant ports. She gets up before dawn to prepare breakfast for her household and plans the day's work for her servant girls." (Proverbs 31:14,15 TLB.)

The king's mother in Proverbs 31 lived in a palace. She was accustomed to man servants and maid servants. Her responsibility was to manage the household. In those days, before refrigeration, food was

bought daily at the marketplace. Exotic foods came off the ships at the seaports. Grain was ground fresh each morning for the day's supply of bread.

Life is much easier for the woman of today. We don't usually need servants to do our work. We have many appliances to be our servants. However, we still need to provide for our family's needs.

The kitchen is the heart of the home. Food preparation should be a

ministry of love to our families. The kitchen is a place where we extend hospitality to others.

Let's be practical:

1. Create a cheerful kitchen.

The kitchen should be a place where you enjoy spending time with cheery curtains at the windows, flowers on the window sill, dried herbs, a teapot and tea cups ready and even candles here and there. Surround yourself with things you enjoy. Clear the clutter from your drawers and cupboards.

2. Prepare nourishing, attractive meals.

Provide lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. To cut down on the sugar and fats, most recipes allow you to use half the sugar or exchange applesauce for oil. Serve the meals attractively. For easy clean-up, fill

the sink with hot, soapy water and wash the dirty dishes while you're cooking or baking.

3. Be a wise grocery shopper.

Don't shop when you're hungry. Make a list; avoid impulse buying. Use a calculator; compare prices. See how many meals you can prepare with the food you already have in your kitchen.

4. Plant a garden.

Gardening is a teaching experience for your children. It's economical, providing fresh vegetables. Preserving food not only helps the budget, it provides satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. It is also hard work, so don't do a larger garden than you can handle.

May you find joy and fulfillment in meeting your family's physical needs.



Money not only
changes hands,
it changes people.



The Lost Song

Anita Yoder

Ligonier, IN

“Hello. Yes, I have a little time to talk, if you don’t mind that the sweeper is going. I’m cleaning my canary’s cage. I have someone coming at 10. Okay, I’m listening. Yah, uhum....”

Whoosh! The canary’s gone!

“Oh, dear,” moaned its owner, as the phone fell to the floor. She tore open the vacuum sweeper. That’s what I get for being so careless!” Amid the dust and debris of the sweeper bag, the little yellow canary was still alive, but no longer bright yellow. He looked more like a dust bunny. Quickly, she took him to the sink filled with hot soapy dishwater and restored to him his luster. Only now, he looked somewhat like a yellow, wet rat.

The hair dryer, that’s it, she decided. Blasts of hot air from the hair dryer fluffed him up in a hurry.

Once again, canary sat in a clean cage on his perch, looking very nice indeed. But he sat silent and dazed, slowly blinking his eyes. For many days he didn’t sing.

Can you blame him? First, a terrible force pulled him up a narrow

tunnel into a prison of dirt. Next, the hot water made him quite uncomfortable and last of all, blasts of hot air dried his feathers.

Do you ever feel like this canary?

You attend a song service at church. Mechanically, you try to find the page numbers. You hardly care, let alone opening your mouth to sing.

What takes our song and causes us to be listless about singing? Could it be strong, negative forces like, “This game is not fun; you need to cheat to win.” Or verbal blasts like, “You’re so clumsy; you’ll fall over your own feet.”

Remember that God joys over you with singing when you respond in obedience to Him, as He said about the children of Israel in Zephaniah 3:17. Since we have access to the Father through Jesus, God has included us as his people. God joys over us with singing!

The next time you are invited to sing, think about God joying over you with singing and you will not sing halfheartedly. You will sing with joy—exuberant joy!



Return to the Old Paths

Craig Eicher

Butler, IN

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls...” (Jer. 6:16).

Pete, the kitten, was born one blustery spring day and placed in a cardboard box on our front porch. He seemed quite contented at first. One day his eyes opened and he discovered the four walls hemming him in.

Pete hated those walls and seemed constantly to try climbing out of the box. He did not seem to realize that he had been placed in the box for his own protection, and that a few scant feet away were parked two “giant” vehicles that could easily crush his tiny frame.

Pete grew by leaps and bounds. He seemed bent on his “freedom,” and one day he climbed out of the box. From that day forward it was impossible to keep Pete penned up. We would place him in the box, only to have him climb back out a few minutes later.

I was home the day one of our family members backed one of the

cars out of the driveway and didn’t see Pete crouched behind the back wheel. As I watched his tiny body twitch in death, I thought about how sad it was that we had not been able to communicate to Pete the value of staying in the box.

Many Christian youth in our churches today are much like Pete.

They chafe under parental discipline and church guidelines. They buck moral issues and live for the day they can make their own decisions. One day they grow big enough to climb out of the protective box of parental moral supervision that God placed around them. Once outside, many of them look back with regret and realize that their parents were not so narrow-minded, after all.

Dear Christian youth, be very careful how quickly you discard the Christian heritage that has been handed down to you. Realize the value of age and maturity over youth and inexperience, and remember the words of the Lord in Jeremiah to the children of Israel, “Return to the old paths!”



THOUGHT GEMS

Faith in Christ sanctifies all legitimate human bonds and relationships and makes them even stronger.



When we walk in the light as He is in the light, we are sanitized by the brightness of His glory.



Some people get all bent out of shape if we don't bend the rules to accommodate them in their sins.



A Christian abounding in giving thanks will be found abounding in the work of the Lord.



By victoriously refraining from that which is bad, we enhance our capacity to enjoy that which is good.



When we forget ourselves, we are more likely to do things that are remembered.



Anything you love more, fear more, or serve more than God is an idol.



The person who looks up to God, is not the one who looks down on people.

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