



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

Galatians 6:14

FEBRUARY 2005

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 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.

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In the Midst of My Darkness

Craig Eicher

Butler, IN

In the midst of my darkness, in the
storm of my tears,
When I sob in my pillow and no one
else hears.

In the midst of my darkness, no
compass or guide,
Cast adrift in life's sea where the
deadly shoals hide.

In the midst of my darkness, only
blackness remains,
While the billows roll o'er me, one
joy still sustains.
That through the swirl of deep waters
and pull of the tide
My love for the Lord Jesus has been
amplified.

I despise not the preacher, the wise
man, the pope.
While his words may praise God, his
luxury's his hope.
As others behold this, their
testimonies are dimmed.
While mine grows still stronger, in
spite of the wind.

Satan sees, too, and he says with a
sneer,
"Your saints still obey you and are
of good cheer.
Take away what they have; good

times and their place,
And these very same people will
curse in your face!"

But when he sees my name, what
does Satan say,
When he sees I serve God out of love,
not for pay?
And so my dear friend, if your life's
a hard place,
You're in a position for the workings
of grace.

In the midst of my darkness as I lean
on His breast,
His manna sustains me; I know He
knows best.
No preacher can preach it, no lawyer
explain,
Like the life that serves God in the
midst of its pain.

Writer's note: I dedicate this poem to the many who, like me, find depression and/or pain a nearly constant companion. If you are a Christian and are experiencing trials or difficulties, this poem has a message for you. This is it: You have an opportunity to lift your Master high by simply serving Him faithfully in the midst of your pain.



Apostles of the Lamb

The Bible comes from God and puts man in touch with God. It blesses everyone from the barely literate to the most learned. Like a deep, pure well of water, it refreshes and satisfies all who come to God by faith. Saving faith comes “by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). This brings me to a matter of grave concern regarding the Word of God: **Some of my friends who profess faith in Christ discount the writings of the apostles.** I believe we should simply take the apostles’ writings as being given by the Holy Spirit, like we do the writings of the prophets, who spoke, not from personal agenda, but “as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20,21).

I fear that apostolic writings are discounted because they prescribe certain specifics of Christian conduct that run counter to popular practice. Examples might include both Peter and Paul’s instruction to Christian women proscribing the wearing of jewelry and prescribing inner beauty of character instead of outer ornamentation (1 Tim. 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:1-5); Paul’s instruction for sisters to pray and prophesy with covered

heads (1 Cor. 11:1-16); Paul’s emphasis on the permanence of marriage (1 Cor. 7:10-13 and Eph. 5:24-32); both Paul and James’ teaching to avoid adopting the world’s values and appearance standards (Romans 12:2, James 1:27 and 4:4,5); and Paul’s teaching that women should not take charge of and direct men (1 Tim. 2:11,12). Other examples could be given.

Does this situation explain why some people discount apostolic writings? I don’t know, but I wonder. Some even suggest that if we take these writings seriously, we’ve stooped to snooping in someone else’s mail, since many apostolic writings after the Gospels were letters written originally to individuals and churches. Yes, they were, but God wants all His people, during the church era to live by them. By the way, why has no one thought to propose that the Gospels were written only for people of the first century?

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he was moved to confirm the absolute trustworthiness of the Old Testament. He wrote, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and is

profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness....” (2 Timothy 3:16). He didn’t say, for instance, that we must live exactly as people did in any of the times and lands of the Bible, but that is quite different from saying that no specifics are given that might now put us at odds with common practice in our time. The practical questions of our day should be addressed by seeking to understand and live out the biblical principles inherent in all pertinent issues of life and conduct. This commitment presents no insurmountable hardship, when we are serious about walking fully in God’s will, for then “his commandments are not grievous” or burdensome (1 John 5:3b). **But we must want to do them, or they become burdensome.**

The Apostles’ Role

In Ephesians 2:19, 20, Paul speaks fervently about the Christian’s favorable position: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; **and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.**”(emphasis added)

This concept is reassuring. The teachings of Jesus are perfect. Even though we do not fully understand

them, we fully embrace them. For instance, He told us He came not to destroy the Law of Moses, but to fulfill it. He also gave a new commandment. He gave us the Sermon on the Mount, as well, and we mean to live by it even though some who name the name of Christ tell us it applies to the future.

Why were the apostles a logical choice to attend the birth of the early church? The apostles were contemporaries of Jesus. Thus they had ring-side seats as He presented His teachings and exercised His ministry. Apostolic writings give authentic interpretations of Jesus’ spiritual legacy and help us understand what we are to believe and do.

As we attempt to build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, let us be assured that we are building on what God wants for us. This scriptural foundation marks out the path of obedience and blessing.

Just a few words about Saul (Paul): While Jesus ministered as a human being, Saul was His avowed enemy. Saul was apparently a member of the Sanhedrin which sentenced Jesus to die. The Jews of that time, being a subjugated people, could not carry out the death penalty they wanted for the Son of God. He was, they mistakenly thought, simply the son of Joseph and Mary, but was deluded, thinking Himself to be the Messiah.

Because Saul's call to apostleship came on the Damascus Road after Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, he acknowledged that he had "seen (Jesus)...as one born out of due time." He further acknowledged: "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am..." (1 Cor. 15: 8-10a). Nevertheless, in Romans 1:1, he presented himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle..."

Was Paul mistaken about his call as an apostle of Christ? Peter didn't think so. And Peter was given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Peter gave Paul's writings unreserved endorsement in 2 Peter 3:15 and 16. Furthermore, Peter apparently took counsel from Paul in Galatians 2:14, even when Paul felt it necessary to correct him.

Peter and Paul, as well as other apostles, were human beings who struggled with issues much as you and I do, but they had greater responsibility than we do because they were apostles and were thus appointed to lead out in the emerging church.

Our Savior has not given His work to apostles since those early times. God and Jesus sent the third member of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to empower the apostles. For a time

apostles wrought miracles much as Jesus had done. This identified them as Jesus' successors. After early apostolic times had passed, miracles (sign gifts) were not so common. In fact, no miracle of healing is reported in Jerusalem after Acts, chapter 5.

According to Revelation 21:14, the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem have the names of the **apostles of the Lamb** inscribed on them. Why does God give apostles this recognition above His other children? Is it because He wants us to take their teachings as authoritative? I think so.

The Apostles' Doctrine

While no part of the New Testament was actually written by Jesus, the apostles' doctrine might be most strictly considered the latter part of the New Testament which follows the four Gospels and Acts.

Apostolic viewpoints mirror well the teachings of Jesus. This is most reassuring. In fact, apostolic treatment of different issues adds perspective and detail to Jesus' perfect, yet sometimes mystifying, words. We can better know what Jesus meant as we carefully consider what the apostles taught.

Let us always take Jesus' teachings at their intended full value. Many of His words are literal, but some are figurative, otherwise He

would hardly have spoken of a man swallowing a camel—hump, hoofs, hairy legs and all. That’s quite a gulp, even for a well-developed imagination! The sinless Son of God expects us to believe every word He spoke, even though we spiritualize certain aspects of it. When literal interpretation seems impossible, we find looking at issues in light of the apostles’ writings helpful. We must always look to God for wisdom that rightly divides “the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Note 1 Corinthians 14:37, which reminds us that to consider Paul’s writings arbitrary or optional, is not a mark of genuine spirituality. It says, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write

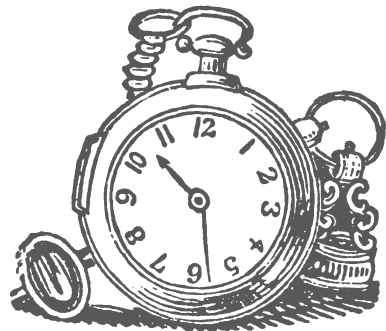
unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” This letter was written to the Corinthians, but also “to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:2). The apostles believed the sacred record we call the Old Testament. **They join OT writers of Holy Writ in pointing to the Key Character in all of human history—Jesus Christ, the Son of God!**

The early believers’ spiritual diet is described as that of continuing in “the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). No wonder they prospered! **Praise God, the apostles’ doctrine still ministers life abundant to followers of the Lord Jesus!**

—PLM



You don’t have time
to hurry. Time is lost,
not gained, by hurrying.



Announcement from Mission Interests Committee:

Melvin Gingerich

To our brethren in the Lord,
We extend greetings of peace
and love in the wonderful
name of the Lord Jesus, the One
who is building His church. It is our
privilege to be co-laborers with Him
in the great task of bringing souls into
His Kingdom.

The MIC board is presenting this
letter to inform you of a need that
is current. We desire and attempt to
make satisfactory compensation for
our long term missionaries. Over
the years we have been giving a
designated amount of what we call
“retirement funds” to eligible work-
ers. These funds are reserved for
missionaries’ retirement. However,
we have not been able to build these
funds nearly to the degree of today’s
average laborer.

Ezra and Nannie Peachey, Red
Lake, Ontario, have been serving
with Believers’ Fellowship since
1959. They have faithfully minist-
tered to the First Nations people
in Red Lake and in the hinterland
beyond. Ezra had for many years
been administrator and continues to

be an excellent resource of insight
for fellow missionaries.

Now in his upper 70’s and with
health concerns, the Peachey’s feel
it best to move back to Belleville,
Pennsylvania, where they lived
before they moved north. This is
not an easy decision for them. They
have given most of their lives for
First Nations people, and a part of
their hearts will always remain in
the North.

Our desire is to see them being
helped with their living expenses in
retirement. Thus we invite you, and
offer you the privilege of sharing
with them in a love offering for this
purpose.

Present plans are for them to make
their move this spring, in 2005. We
are ready to receive your contribu-
tions. Please send them to:

*Melvin Gingerich, Sec. Treasurer
Mission Interests Committee
8850W 400S . Topeka, IN 46571*

A receipt for your contribution
will be provided. Thank you and
God bless you.



.. Waste not; want not ..

Is Evolution Scientific?

Ernest Strubhar

Perkins, OK

[Over a period of several months, Bro. Ernest Strubhar submitted a number of letters to the editor of their local newspaper, Perkins Journal. We might ask, "Are encounters like this productive?" On further thought, a second question might be, "Is that not what Paul was doing at Athens on Mars Hill in Acts 17 when he engaged the philosophers of that day in debate about creation issues?" I think we should ask one more question: "Do not such encounters, undertaken in the fear of God, provide an avenue to 'earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints' (Jude 3)?" Here is the first of Bro. Ernest's letters. We hope to publish others in future issues. -PLM]

I would like to invite Perkins Journal readers to go to website: <DrDino.com> and let their adrenaline start flowing at the bona fide offer given there. Click on "Ministry" and follow the link to the \$250,000 offer. **If you can offer empirical evidence of evolution, you can earn a handsome \$250,000!**

Mr. _____, I would like to respectfully respond to your letter. You are a friend, a neighbor, an educated man. But is your belief in evolution

backed by real evidence?

You wrote, "Today we know that the universe was not put together in seven days, but over millions of years." Incidentally, evolutionary scientists now speak of "billions of years," but either way, let me ask, "Were they there? Did anyone witness it?" If not, how do they know? And how can you or anyone know—when, as you say, evolution is a theory and "No theory is final"?

In the historic sense of the word, science deals with what is observed, what can be tested, what can be repeated in a controlled experiment. In that sense, **evolution is not science.**

Evolution is a theory about history. What we know about history we know by the testimony of eye witnesses, or by the testimony of credible witnesses close enough to an event to investigate and report it. That is why I ask anyone who believes the universe was formed by chance plus billions of years, "Were you there? Do you know someone who was?"

As for evolution, has anyone ever observed even one case of Darwinian evolution, sometimes called "macro evolution"? Surely, we see variation

within species, whether produced by controlled breeding or by the isolation of a species that limits the gene pool. We call that “micro evolution.” But no one has ever seen a one-celled amoeba develop into a protozoan, or a fish become an amphibian, or a monkey evolve into a man. In fact, all we ever see is exactly what God says in Genesis 1, that each plant and each animal shall produce “after its kind.”

Evolutionists commonly respond that anything can happen, given enough time. Oh, really? How long would it take for a dictionary to compose itself out of a huge collection of letters—one or two billion years? Today’s science of genetics has demonstrated that the DNA that controls the development of life is a set of tremendously complex information—more than a whole Library of Congress—all contained in one living cell. Where did all this information come from? Who “wrote”

it? And by the way, has anyone ever observed order arise out of disorder? I’ve never seen it happen in my shop. Furthermore, can you give me one concrete example of how belief in evolution has contributed directly to scientific discovery? I know of none.

Do you realize that the theory of evolution was not Charles Darwin’s brainchild? It is not the product of the Scientific Age. Pagan philosophers promoted evolution thousands of years ago. Modern science arose out of the belief that a Creator God made an orderly universe that we can start to understand, because the Creator established laws that make the world predictable. And that agrees with what God says: “In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Exodus 20:11)

I wasn’t there, but I know who was. And I believe what He said.



THE LESS SAID,
THE LESS MENDED.



Connecting Horizontally

Aaron, Lapp

Kinzers, PA

Few Christians would deny their need to connect with God. We need Him. We assume He needs us. To cooperate with God is appropriate. He made us. It is reasonable. He directs us. It is profitable. He wants to bless us. God isn't pushy. He doesn't argue with us or hold a grudge. God is good and we stand to gain much when we connect with Him.

But to connect with the brotherhood in the church isn't as easy. Some say they are in the local congregation, but don't connect with its program or with the brotherhood. Disconnection has caused much grief and heartache.

Two things will help you to connect, or re-connect with your church: Giving and receiving.

Let's start with receiving. Receiving can be hard. Connecting with people begins with receiving. Disconnection has often happened when one cannot graciously receive from others. Failure to gladly receive causes failure to connect.

Some people are naturally self-sufficient. They find it hard to take a suggestion, a helpful hint, without

changing it a bit or even a lot. And, depending on who is giving it, they will modify it—or top it—or refute it. Their natural self cannot receive something as it is given. For, you see, they are in charge of their own life. They find it hard to receive and to connect with others.

Receiving comes quite naturally when we are connected, but is hard when we are disconnected.

When one is envious, he can't receive.

When one is jealous, he can't receive.

When one is angry, he can't receive.

When one feels wronged, he can't receive.

When one feels superior, he can't receive.

Failing to connect is failing to receive. Receiving is hard because it makes one feel indebted. It obliges one to say, "Thank you!" Giving thanks may cause him to assume he is inferior to the giver. To receive well requires humility. Is it possible that failing to connect with people is actually a problem of personal pride?

Failure to respond can be an in-

troverted expression of pride rather than an expression of humility and reserve. Some relationships cannot be established because one is poor at receiving.


The Laodicean church was rich, and increased with goods, but claimed to “have need of nothing.” Any church, any group, any individual that cannot receive is poor, even though they are “rich and increased with goods.”

Since the Laodiceans were neither cold nor hot, neither for nor against, neither yes nor no, they could receive nothing; they could give nothing; they could do nothing for others. Yet, they concluded that they needed nothing.

Consequently, their neutral position brought on a “take away” situation. It took away their purpose and left them wretched. It took away their peace and left them miserable. It took away their prosperity and left them poor. It took away their vision and left them blind. It took away their shame and left them naked: “Because

thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:” (Rev. 3:17). This is really bad and regrettably sad. In their delusion, they thought they had “need of nothing” when in reality, they were “naked.”

Our Lord’s call is in Rev. 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” That is where the grace of receiving begins. We receive from Christ because we have needs we acknowledge. We receive from others only as we acknowledge that we need them.

The bottom line is that one side of the principle of connecting with the brotherhood is being able to receive graciously. Next month’s issue will address the other side of the coin: connecting through giving. 

Church Divisions

*Donald Stelfox
Spring Grove, PA*

The Mennonite Church in the past 50 years has seen an increase in the number of church divisions and has come to accept them as a legitimate and neces-

sary part of church life. This should be cause for concern, because the Bible gives little room for divisions. Many conservative Mennonites have experienced as least one division.

Division had been resorted to as the means of alleviating various problems that arose in the body.

Most divisions do not arise over matters of doctrine so much as personality conflicts, differences in application of biblical principles, and the desire for position and power. Ironically, both sides often claim to be set for the defense of the faith. This results in unbrotherly and sometimes hostile feelings, which may spill over into succeeding generations.

According to Scripture, divisions sometimes occur over matters of right and wrong. (e.g. Matt. 10:34-36; Luke 12:51-59; 1 Cor. 11:17-19) When a church tolerates sin, it disrupts the unity in the body of Christ, and if it continues in sin, it apostatizes. In such a case, as in 1 Cor. 11:17-19, the faithful may find it necessary to meet together or to transfer membership to another church. Such persons do not cause the division, and to remain faithful they must find other fellowship.

Membership transfers to other established fellowships because of personal convictions, marriage, or mission assignment are certainly in order. But to cause schisms is contrary to New Testament doctrine. "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for an-

other" (1 Cor. 12:25). The Amplified Bible reads: "So that there should be no divisions or discord or lack of adaptation [of parts of the body to each other], but the members all alike should have a mutual interest in and care for one another."

God disapproves of those who cause discord and divisions. "A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a forward mouth...Forwardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord...These six things doth the LORD hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him...and false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:12, 14, 16, 19).

Paul and Barnabas separated over their opinions concerning John Mark's suitability for further mission work. The Bible is silent as to the Spirit's direction or who was "spiritually correct." Paul continued on his missionary journey with other companions, and John Mark was salvaged (no doubt by Barnabas) so that Paul later said he was useful to him for the ministry. God can bring good out of man's mistakes and shortcomings, but that is no excuse to be lax about seeking God's will for our churches. Paul and Barnabas continued working for the Lord, but they didn't build churches down the road from each other nor compete for

each other's sheep.

Ephesians speaks of the church as Christ's fullness (1:22,23), a building fitly framed together which grows together (2:21), and is built together (not for dividing or separating) into a holy temple, a habitation for God (2:22). "Christ...loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). See also Col. 1:13-18; 2:10-19.

Jesus at no time tried to divide or even suggested dividing the synagogue. He preached and taught, and individuals responded to the truth. The apostles preached and taught; but at no time divided the church. It is sin that divides, not truth. God has given to the church the "word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19). Jesus prayed for the unity of the church so the lost may believe in Him. "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

An increased emphasis on mission outreach in our conservative constituencies is commendable. But at the same time, I think I see more

divisions, more divisive influences, and less oneness. May the message of reconciliation touch our own consciences and hearts, especially reconciliation in brotherhood relationships.

Paul challenged the church in Corinth to be reconciled to God and man (2 Cor. 5:14-21). He also urged the church at Philippi to be reconciled (Phil. 1:9-11; 2:2, 3, 9-11; 3:1-4, 19-21; 4:2-9). It appears there was a conflict between Euodias and Syntyche (4:2). Paul encourages them to be of the same mind in the Lord. He didn't say, "Euodias, it would be best if you would find a different church" or "Syntyche, why don't you start another church? You could call it the church of the Synites. Then when you meet another Christian you might ask, 'Are you a Synite or a Euodite?'" Conflicts and divisions in the church have hampered the testimony of many Christians. [Would that not seem strange, especially in light of Paul's teaching that forbids sisters taking leadership roles in the church? —PLM]

Respect for church leadership and authority has declined in recent years. Have church leaders contributed to the lack of respect by supporting and encouraging church divisions? If church leaders would challenge dissenters to reconcile, settle their differences, and not be

implacable, the “church division” syndrome might be healed.

The Bible gives *implacable* as characteristic of the ungodly. They are “without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable [unappeasable]” (Rom. 1:31). They refuse to sit down and discuss their points of dissension. Why is this so? Do they fear their sedition has no foundation? Or is it because the other party is implacable as well?

God is concerned about church divisions. The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:21,22; 4:12). Can Christ be divided? To divide the church and have the parts be at enmity with each other does not portray the harmony the church is called to exemplify to a chaotic world. Are malice toward fellow Christians and divisions in the church bringing reproach on the name of Christ? Should we not give this careful consideration and ponder this in our hearts?

The church is an organism (something alive), not a mere organization. Christ is the head of this entity that has a one-life principle (Christ) throughout all its parts. A mere organization is no more than a cooperation of independent parts to produce a united action. Error is made when we fail or neglect to recognize the church as the body of Christ directed

by the Holy Spirit and the Word, which are witnesses of each other. They always agree.

God sent His Spirit into the hearts of believers to guide them into all truth (John 16:13). We need to remember that God is jealous for His people (Ex. 20:5). God is concerned for the unity and health of the church. (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3-5, 11:18-30).

Divisions have caused strife, bitterness, divided homes, monetary stress, family heartaches, and angry words—all in the name of Christ. Open hostilities, as well as suppressed ones, are a blight to Christian people which can lead to lives of duplicity, being one type of person at church or among certain people and another at home or in the business world. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3). Brotherly love is a sign of true unity (John 13:34,35). Believers are not appointed to separation, but to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

The cure for church divisions is not organizational union that gives the [mere] appearance of spiritual unity. Rather, love for Christ and fellow believers is absolutely essential. Love is a normal fruit of one who walks in the Spirit. Our faith is proved by our love for the brotherhood. “We know

that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). We can be assured of our salvation since we are born of God (1 John 2:29). That birth binds us together as brethren and sisters. Sabine Baring-Gould (1865) wrote: “We are not divided, all one body we, one in hope and doctrine, one in charity.”

A number of congregations use the book *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*. It says, “God designed the body (church) to function without schisms or divisions. We can have that unified working together in the church as we bear each other’s burdens and exercise the same care one for another. Our love for the brethren should be such that we would gladly see them receive more honor than we do. This will make a strong body with a clear testimony to the world” (page 56).

Since God has designed the body (church) to function in this manner, it is our responsibility to uphold that function. We cannot teach our applicants this concept, if we leaders do not support God’s designed function of the body.

What can be done to prevent further division of the body of Christ?

— We need to recognize the church is an organism, the body of Christ (Col. 1:24).

— We need to understand that to

divide the body for non—Scriptural reasons is sin.

— We need to rise above excusing our actions in past failures, assuming they give us the right to continue dividing. The first Mennonite division took place six years after Menno Simons died. It was over an ordination that was not accepted by some. For leaders to continue to support divisions for non—Scriptural reasons is to set the pattern for more divisions.

— We need to accept God’s Word as the final authority for faith and practice.

— We must exercise faithful discipline with regard to church standards which are based on Biblical principles. A Scriptural tradition transmits a Biblical truth into a practical application. Procrastination in exercising discipline according to Matthew 18 when transgressions occur will likely result in more transgressions and will cause a lack of unity.

— We recognize that where there is a departure from the Scriptures as the final authority for faith and practice, organizational division is sometimes necessary because spiritual division has already occurred. Unwarranted division results from a breakdown of communications and a breaking of fellowship in a congregation or group of congregations.


Henry Ward Beecher wrote: When

ministers and elders and members of the church, in a heart of loving each other, are seen wrangling and quarreling and railing at one another, when they exhibit natures as full of selfish passions as a sepulcher is of dust and vermin, it is not to be wondered at that skepticism and infidelity are rife among us so that men say, 'I do not want such a religion as that.' Oh, it is not religion, but the lack of it, that makes infidels. And when there is real revival in the church and Christians begin to settle their differences and to show kind feelings toward each other, and do things which are hard for the natural man, when this transcendent power of love begins to manifest itself in their lives, then people are affected and say, 'There is something in religion after all.'"

While organizational division may sometimes be advisable because of geography for the sake of greater

participation of the local brotherhood in the affairs of the church, and because of special issues that the distant church may face in its setting, this need not fragment the body of Christ. And while conservative Mennonites find themselves in a variety of fellowships, sometimes with differing and yet equally Scriptural applications of Scriptural principles, they should not let this circumstance divide them spiritually. They should enjoy rich spiritual fellowship as believers of like precious faith as they recognize and respect each others' Scriptural applications and church organizations.

May we rise to the call of commitment to Christ and His church to live at peace with each other as called-out people of God.

Used by permission from Life Lines, Nov-Dec, 2001. Submitted by Eugene Eicher, Grabill, IN. 

If the shoe fits,



marriages

Beiler-Kurtz

Bro. Marcus, son of Marlin and Gloria Beiler, Paradise, PA, and Sis. Joanna, daughter of James and Christina Kurtz at Snow Hill, MD, Nov. 6, 2004, by James Kurtz.

Bontrager-Esh

Bro. John Michael, son of Ray and Denis Ann Bontrager, Goshen, IN, and Sis. Anna Ruth, daughter of John and Anna Esh, Narvon, PA, at Bethel Christian Fellowship, on Oct. 2, 2004, by John U. Lapp.

Mast-King

Bro. Arlen, son of Edward and Wilma Mast, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Gloria, dau. of Jake and Joyce King, Arlington, KS, at Cedar Crest A.M. Church for Arlington A.M. Church, on Jan. 1, 2005, by David M. Yoder.

cradle roll

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

Aguilares, Misael and Regina (Miller), Partridge, KS, fifth child, first dau., Linda Joy, Dec. 22, 2004.

Beachy, Gabriel and Dawn (Hurst), Bastrop, TX, third child, second son, Joseph Marvin, Dec. 6, 2004.

Miller-Yoder

Bro. Jonathan, son of Marvin and Ruth Miller, serving in Romania, and Sis. Heather, dau. of Elmer and Esther Yoder, Montezuma, GA, on Nov. 13, 2004, at Montezuma Mennonite Church, by Sylvan Weaver.

Yoder-Beachy

Bro. Jeremy, son of Marlin and Julia Yoder, McVeytown, PA, and Sis. Lois, daughter of Alvin and Elsie Beachy, London, OH, at United Bethel Mennonite for Bethesda Fellowship Church, on Nov. 13, 2004, by Elmer Stoltzfus.

Yoder-Glick

Bro. Merle, son of David and Sara Yoder, Leola, PA, and Sis. Karen, dau. of Eli and Verda Glick, El Salvador, at Santa Ana, El Salvador, on Oct. 2, 2004, by Philip Glick.

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

Beachy, Ken and Diane (Hostetler), Plain City, OH, tenth child, sixth son, Thomas Daniel, Dec. 5, 2004.

Bontrager, David and Joanna (Herschberger), Kokomo, IN, first child and dau., Alana Raquel, Nov. 13, 2004.

Coblentz, Don and Lorene (Miller), Freeport, OH, seventh child, fourth dau., Leanna Dawn, Nov. 9, 2004.

Coblentz, Marlin and Amy (Stutzman), Hicksville, OH, first child and dau., Autumn Lynne, Nov. 26, 2004.

Eash, Marvin and Dorothy (Yoder), Hutchinson, KS, sixth child, first son, Christopher Luke, Dec. 12, 2004.

Horst, Clifford and Carolyn (Erb), New Hamburg, ON, third child, first son, Cedric Dale, Nov. 2, 2004.

King, Steven and Angela (Yoder), Harrison, AR, first child and dau., Tirzah Laurelle, Dec. 8, 2004.

Mast, Brian and Mary Jane (King), Crossville, TN, first child and dau., Geneva Sue, Nov. 15, 2004.

Miller, Dale and Miriam (Beiler), Clarkson, KY, sixth child, second dau., Angela Rose, Nov. 24, 2004.

Miller, Dean and Barbara (Yoder), Harrison, AR, third child and son, Wilson Denver, Nov. 27, 2004.

Miller, Jonathan and Anita (Graber), Huntsville, AR, second child, first dau., Meagan Leigh, Nov. 14, 2004.

Miller, Keith and Miriam (Martin), Hutchinson, KS, third child, first dau., Elyssa Dawn, Dec. 31, 2004.

Miller, Steven and Anita (Smucker), Lott, TX, third child, first son, Trevor Lynn, Nov. 19, 2004.

Overholt, Jonathan and Cheryl (Yoder), Russellville, KY, fifth child, second dau., Brooklyn Jo, Oct. 15, 2004.

Overholt, Nate and Rose (Faus), Russellville, KY, fifth child, second dau., Kaylena Joy, Dec. 31, 2004.

Peachey, Mervin and Lois Ann (King), Belleville, PA, eighth child, seventh dau., Danelle Martha, Sept. 6, 2004. *(This was erroneously reported in Dec., 2004. I'm sorry! -PLM)*

Schrock, Wayne and Joan (Keener), Thomas, OK, third child, second son, Hunter Roy, Sept. 30, 2004.

Smoker, Jaden and Regina (Peachey), Paradise, PA, first child and son, Reagan Nicholas, Dec. 16, 2004.

Steckly, Ronald and Sharon (Roes), Millbank, ON, seventh child, fifth son, (one son deceased), Jonathan Mark, Oct. 28, 2004.

Stoltzfus, Matthew and Jewel (Stoltzfus), Honey Brook, PA, second child and dau., Diane Rachel, Oct. 13, 2004.

Troyer, Nathanael and Ruth Elaine (Smucker), Plain City, OH, fifth child, fourth son, Vincent Duane, Oct. 21, 2004.

Troyer, Vernon and Mary Ann (Coblentz), Bloomfield, MO, third child and dau., Katrina Faith, Oct. 17, 2004.

Troyer, Wayne and Joyce (Martin), Stuarts Draft, VA, sixth child, fifth son, Nathan LaVon, Nov. 23, 2004.

Weaver, Lawayne and Ruth (Mast), Montezuma, GA, third child, second son, Jaron Kyle, Nov. 12, 2004.

Weaver, Michael and Alta (Yoder), Quaker City, OH, first child and son, Ethan Michael, Dec. 7, 2004.

Williamson, Lee and Rhonda (Overholt), Franklin, KY, third child, second son, Caleb Robert, Nov. 19, 2004.

Yoder, Andrew and Judith (Swartzentruber), Montezuma, GA, second child, first dau., Leanna Patrice, Nov. 12, 2004.

Yoder, Brady and Luann (Weaver), Montezuma, GA, third child, second son, Devon Laray, Nov. 10, 2004.

Yoder, David Jesse and Teresa (Slaugh), Shipshewana, IN, tenth child, sixth son, (one deceased), Caleb Michael, Nov. 27, 2004.

Yoder, Sheldon and Rhoda (Gingerich), Martinsburg, OH, first children, a son and two daughters, received by adoption Sept. 6, 2004: Patrick Dennis, born Jan. 4, 1989; Michelle Lucia, born July 14, 1992; Megan Damaris, born Jan. 22, 1994.

Zook, Marvin and Marie (Troyer), Centerville, PA, second child and son, Matthew, July 4, 2004.

ordinations

Bro. Wilbur Gingrich, 35, Arthur, IL, was ordained to the office of deacon at Trinity Christian Fellowship, Dec. 5, 2004. Preordination messages were brought by Perry Troyer, Plain City, OH.

The charge was given by Dannie Diener, assisted by Perry Troyer and Elmer Miller. Darrel Hershberger was also in the lot.

Bro. Steven R. Kooistra, 49, La-Grange, IN, was ordained to the ministry at Hebron Christian Fellowship, Dec. 12, 2004. Melvin Bontrager, Berne, IN, brought preordination messages.

The charge was given by Henry Hershberger, assisted by Melvin Bontrager and Glenn Yoder. Also in the lot were Galen Miller and Lamar Bontrager.

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

obituaries

Hershberger, Roman E., 78, died at Sunset View Nursing Home Dec. 11, 2004. He was born at Etna Green, IN, Sept. 25, 1926, son of Eli and Amanda (Yoder) Hershberger.

He was a member of Peniel Christian Fellowship, Holmesville, Ohio.

On Jan. 27, 1949, he was married to Anna Beachy. To this union were born 11 children. They are Sarah, Eli, and Jake, of the home; Roman, Jr., Greenville, TN; Elmer, Abraham, Paul, Isaac of Florida; Anna of Atlanta, GA; Jacob and Amanda, OH. Also surviving are 23 grandchildren.

Preceding him in death were one brother, John; and two sisters, Katie and Emma. Surviving are three sisters: Verna, Dundee; Nora, FL; Edith, Wooster; and one brother, Albert, Holmesville.

Funeral services were conducted by Moses J. Miller. Burial was in the church cemetery.

observations

How should Christians respond to criticism? Should one promptly dismiss it as suffering for righteousness' sake? Should one take it so seriously that he becomes afraid to do anything for fear he would do something wrong? Surely there is a better way.

How about thanking God for our

King, Joshua Levi, 10 weeks, son of Myron and Mary Ellen (Yoder) King, Belleville, PA, died at his parents' home Dec. 7, 2004. He was born Sept. 27, 2004, at Huntingdon, PA.

He was preceded in death by two brothers, Derek Austin on June 9, 2001, and Jenson Samuel on Sept. 10, 2003. The three sons were all afflicted with the same genetic disorder, *epidermolysis bullosa*.

Maternal grandparents are David and Sara Yoder, McVeytown, PA; paternal grandparents, David S. and Martha King, Belleville, PA; and paternal great grandfather, Eli B. King, Sr.

Serving in the funeral were Uncle Dwight Nisly, Brooklyn, NY, and Grandpa David S. King. Burial was in the Locust Grove Cemetery, with committal by Great Uncle Eli B. King, Jr.

critics? Whether the allegations are altogether true, altogether false, or somewhere in between, is not the question of first importance. A right response is.

A wrong response is simply always wrong. It prevents us the benefit of the blessing of being helped by some truth that may well be part of the criticism. In any case, a right

response can help refine Christian character.

In case the criticism is not given “in the spirit of meekness,” (Gal. 6:1), that gives all the more reason that we should respond in the spirit of Christ.

Criticism is serious business. Those who concentrate on the needs of others are in danger of being unaware of their own needs.

Approaching another in a right spirit takes carefulness. It takes prayerful preparation. The one making the approach runs the risk of being reminded of his own failures. But that should not keep us from making a needed contact.

May God guard us against being so artificial, so sugar-coated that there is no exhortation of one another. (Heb. 10:25) May He also guard us against a wrong approach or a wrong response in this important part of healthy fellowship.

And let us not forget the value of encouragement and affirmation. This can be an important part of creating a climate of trust in which wholesome criticism can be truly edifying.



In November, 1948, three years after the United States military forces dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, a Japanese educator came to Goshen College’s fall missionary conference with a troubling account

and a stirring invitation.

Dr. Takio Matsumoto, president of Hiroshima Girls’ School described how the atomic bomb had demolished his school building, had painfully injured his daughter, had killed his wife, eighteen of his teachers and 300 of his students. With a gentle spirit that astounded his youthful Mennonite audience, Matsumoto asked his listeners to forgive the Japanese people for their part in the war. He also invited them to bring the Gospel of Jesus to his country.

A student, Ralph E. Buckwalter, was deeply touched by this message. He later wrote: “We couldn’t help but cry, ‘No, forgive our blindness, our lack of concern, our basic failure to be truly Christian.’”

Ralph was the son of Mennonite bishop, Earl Buckwalter, Hesston, KS. Ralph made his initial commitment to Christ at an early age. During his growing up years his parents often hosted missionaries. “It just grew on me that serving God in overseas missions was my calling.”

Ralph’s wife, Genevieve, was the daughter of Joseph Lehman, also a Mennonite minister in Kenmore, ND. During World War II, while Ralph was in Civilian Public Service, Genevieve took nurses’ training at LaJunta, CO. These experiences nurtured and strengthened their preparation and conviction for future

Christian service.

On December 17, 1949, Ralph and Genevieve arrived in Japan as pioneer Mennonite missionaries in that country. They served with another Mennonite couple, Carl and Esther Beck. The Buckwalters served in Japan for 30 years. He died of cancer at age 57.

The above information was gleaned from *Mennonite Weekly Review*, July, 2004, by permission. I choose to share this information for several reasons:

—It highlights the uncivilized cruelty of war.

—It illustrates that the spirit of Christ can respond kindly in those who are wronged.

—It identifies the Gospel of Christ as God’s remedy for man’s uncivilized tendencies.

—The evidence of true humility and earnest entreaty was a powerful witness to a young audience.

• • • • •

John Esau, retired Mennonite minister and columnist for MWR, reports that more than half of Mennonite and Protestant congregations in the US have fewer than 75 members. Many are unable to support a full-time seminary-trained pastor. Esau suggests that there seems to be a perennial shortage of pastors. We do well to trust the Lord of the church to give direction to provide

stable leadership for His church. It should not surprise us if this should include persons spiritually and otherwise qualified for pastoral leadership, without a prescribed level of academic accreditation.

According to the Pastoral Epistles, character qualities deserve primary attention when considering ministerial qualifications. Diligent study is always important. It seems to me it would be wrong to assume that should happen only in a formal setting. History does not bear out that formal training and faithful shepherding are necessarily the same.

• • • • •

Jerry Ribordy is 33. He recently made a service call to our house to check our water softener. In our conversation, he made some remarks that led to my seeking an appointment to learn more about his interesting story.

During his childhood and youth, he lived on a diet that was high in sugar and caffeine. He would typically eat several meals a week at a fast food place which added significant fat to his diet.

He was a hard worker. In addition to his regular job, he did additional work in mechanics and construction.

At age 25, he began to experience loss of energy and chronic tiredness. His schedule was still full and he ate

fast foods more often. His habits did not change and his health problems grew steadily worse.

At one point, he told his boss that he was going to quit smoking. The boss told him that he was glad and handed him a hundred dollar bill. He told him that it was his to keep as long as he lived up to his resolution. But if he smoked again, he was under obligation to return the money. Jerry says that was a big help in overcoming a very strong addiction. He never ever saw a cigarette that was worth \$100.

He gained a lot of weight and his condition worsened. At age 32 he was taken to the hospital with what was at first thought to be a stroke. It turned to be the onset of multiple sclerosis. When he tried to go back to work, he not only lacked energy, he also had trouble keeping his balance. It was difficult for him to keep his thoughts straight. He experienced wide mood swings. He finally had to quit his job. Now what?

His research led him to the con-

clusion that his diet needed a radical change. An M.D. neurologist explained that his MS was caused by lesions on his brain. Not only were the right foods important, but a healthy non-food diet to encourage healthy brain cell repair was recommended. This includes avoiding foul smells, all television, and all rock or other off-beat music. He is supposed to read at least 20 minutes a day and is encouraged to listen to classical music. The rationale for this is that to view or hear violence and disharmony is an assault on the mind and is unfriendly to mental health and healing.

At one point it was difficult for Jerry to walk across the shop floor. He now regularly walks six miles a day. He is again able to hold a job and his health is gradually improving.

I feel this information is not only very interesting, but is also useful to help us understand that to abstain from taking in mental garbage has benefits that we should be aware of.

—DLM




It's better to be safe than sorry.

The Pathway to Revival

Dennis Kinlaw

[This message was given at the Heart-Cry for Revival Conference, April, 2004, at The Cove, Asheville, NC. Courtesy of the Francis Asbury Society, used by permission. Isaiah 52, in its entirety, was originally included. —PLM]

Let us note Isaiah 52. This chapter leads into Isaiah 53, that picture of Christ our Lord as the Servant Savior, as the arm of the Lord. The word in Isaiah 52 is a word to Zion, Jerusalem and to the people of God. Notice that it opens with a call to awake and put on garments of splendor. When the Lord returns to Zion, His city and His home, He will comfort His people.

A conviction has grown with me across the years that I'm not sure I can prove. As I've looked at the Church, the Body of Christ, and at life in general, I've come to the conviction that organizations or institutions or movements or groups of any kind tend to rise or fall in one heart. At the center of any group there is a heart that is a key to the whole. There may be times when God has to work around that key. The conviction, however, has deepened with me that His normal pattern is, as you can have one mother for a baby, so there is one

person who is a key to a group. The group may be a family; it may be a neighborhood; it may be a Sunday school class, an educational institution, or a local church.

When I was a pastor, when spiritual slippage came in my own soul, and when there was spiritual dissipation in my inner being, there was disintegration in the flock, in "my" congregation. And when there was a centering in Christ and a total depending upon the Spirit inside me, God seemed to be free to work in the people for which I was responsible. This had nothing to do with my skills or the program I was operating as a pastor. That's where I came to feel that God usually starts to work in one heart and then moves to that larger group.

I think there is some biblical base for this. In the Garden of Eden, when God created man, God started the whole with a part but He had the whole in mind. When the time of the flood came and the thoughts and imaginations of men hearts were only evil continually, God had to wipe them out. He started again with Noah, one man, to reach the whole. After the tower of Babel, God had on His hands a world that was lost.

Again He started with one part within the whole, Abraham, to reach the whole.

You find when He spoke to Moses, He said something like this, “You are to tell Pharaoh to let My firstborn son go. If he does not let my son go, it will be son for son.” (Ex. 4:22). I missed for a long time the fact that He said, “firstborn son.” It may be the first great text in Scripture for missions. God seems to be saying here that Israel is to be His firstborn and there is going to be a place for others like the Gentiles. They would be secondborn sons. But God started with a part to get the whole.

You find that Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles, the means God could use to reach the world. But by the time you get to Deuteronomy, it’s not the whole of Israel, it was an Israel within Israel, those that are circumcised in heart and not just in the flesh. It is a remnant, and it is a part in the part of the whole that He worked with. Then you come to Isaiah, and He was looking for something within that part of a part and He said that if He could find one the circumstances would be different. None other was found, but He became one. So we have in Isaiah 53, the promise of Christ. The biblical call to repentance fits this, because the call to repentance in Scripture is not primarily to Babylon nor to its leaders, to the

Sennacheribs or the Nebuchadnezzars or the Cyruses. The calls were to the Jehoiachins and the Zedekiahs, who were kings in Israel. The call for repentance is to the people of God because there is no point in calling the world if the people of God are not what they should be.

So it is a call for revival among God’s people that is the only hope for the world. In Isaiah 52, God says in effect, “Awake, awake, *O Zion*, the people of God! Would you awaken and will you open the door so God can return to His own city?” If they do, the arm of the Lord will be manifested. All the nations of the earth will see it when He is able to return to His own people. God says, “You who bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean.”

The Call Is to God’s People

In connection with this, I’d like to deal with a verse which is probably the first verse that you and I tend to turn to when we think of revival, and it is 2 Chronicles 7:14: “*If my people, which are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*” (emphasis added)

You notice immediately to whom this is directed: “*If my people, who are called by My name....*” We

Christians are the ones who have the name of Christ on us. This is not a word to the world. It is to His own people who are identified with His name. There needs to be a consonance between the name we bear and what we are. If that consonance is not there, then the world has no way of knowing the way out of its own darkness. So God is saying, *“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”*

I am not a Hebrew scholar but I used to teach a little of it, and I know enough that when I find a text that intrigues me, I turn to the Hebrew to see if there is light there for me that doesn't come to me through the English translation. I looked at this passage and checked out the language used. There were insights that came that you're not going to find in commentaries, but I think they will help us.

God says, *“If My people who are called by my name will humble themselves...”* The verb *“humble”* in the expression *“humble themselves”* comes from a Hebrew word that is **not** a common word in the Semitic world, but it is used in a way that means to “contract” –something that is larger is brought down and made

smaller. It is used of an eagle which has been soaring above everything, then folding his wings. When he folds his wings, he comes down to reality, down to the earth.

I'd like to make a suggestion from that. To humble oneself is to deflate oneself. We come to realism about what is necessary for God to be able to show His hand. I may be puffed up and think I have something to do with the work of God and that I can produce it. The Scripture is very clear that we are never causes; *we are only occasions for the work of God*. It is very easy for us to come to the place where we think we are causes, and we begin to assume a little credit. When we do, God begins to withdraw because if you mislead people to think that you can do it, then you have misled them into deception. There is only one hope for the human heart.

There is only one answer for the human heart and that answer is God Himself in Christ. This idea of humbling ourselves is getting us deflated to where we know very well that our only hope is God, and if He doesn't move, it is vain, it is futile.

“If my people will...pray...” I checked on the Hebrew word here for *“pray.”* It is not the word for worship, where one bows down before the Lord. It is the word which basically means “to interpose.” It can be translated “intercede,” although

it is not always translated that way. It is interesting that both the verb “humble” and the verb “pray” are reflexive. The verbs point back to the speakers—“will humble themselves, and pray.” Since these verbs are reflexive, the meaning is—they will humble themselves and will insert themselves in between the God who can answer and the people who have the need of God. So it is the interposing of themselves.

But what does it mean when one interposes himself? It means that the other person’s problem becomes yours. You commit yourself to that other person’s problem. You take it. I’ve become more and more enamored with the way the Old Testament uses the word “bear.” What happened on the cross was that Jesus bore our sins; he bore our evil and our transgressions. He interposed Himself and took our problems for His own. Likewise we should interpose ourselves: take the lostness, the sickness—take whatever that burden is that others have and bear it before God until God is able to act and solve that problem.

So the “pray” here is an interposing of oneself. It’s more than going down a prayer list. It’s where the other person’s problem becomes my problem, and I care more about him than I do about myself, and I’m ready to take his place, as it were, that he

might be redeemed.

“If my people will humble themselves and pray and will seek....” What are we to seek? Not the blessing of God. We are not even supposed to seek revival. We are to seek God and to seek His face, because HE is what we need. In 1970 when revival broke at Asbury College a few minutes before the end of chapel, a philosophy professor turned to the Academic Dean who was presiding and said, “He’s here, and if you give the audience a chance, there will be a remarkable response.” Notice that sentence, “He’s here!” “The Lord calls us to seek Him. But let me move on to the next phrase, and then come back to the phrase, *“seek My face.”*

“...and turn from their wicked ways.” I got a bit of a surprise when I looked at the Hebrew meaning for “wicked ways.” Although there is a great strong Hebrew word for wickedness that is used in contrast to righteousness, a different Hebrew word is used in 2 Chronicles 7:14. This word translated as “wicked ways” means something that is offensive, something that is disagreeable, something that disturbs the relationship. What He is talking about here is to turn from those ways that distress the Lord and that are offensive to Him.

If a person is to be used of God and to have the anointing on him, he has to be more than moral. He can’t be

immoral, but he has to be more than moral. There has to be that personal relationship with God where He can say to a person, “I don’t like that, and I want you to quit that and get clean on that score.” You may say, “Everybody else does it. It doesn’t seem to bother all the other Christians.” The Lord says, “I know. That’s their problem. This is my problem. I don’t want this in *your* life.”

I had the privilege of being married fifty-nine years to a remarkable wife. She taught me more than I ever taught her. She was a person of prayer. Because of my vocation I traveled much. Sometimes I’d be gone for weeks or months at a time. When I came home from my travels, she would meet me. Do you know what was always the first thing I did? Before I ever asked her, “How are you?” I looked at her face, because her face told me where I stood. In a close, personal relationship, faces will tell you worlds. When her face was troubled, it was not because I had broken one of the Ten Commandments. It was not because I had been unfaithful to her. But there was something in our relationship she was not happy with, and I knew I had to deal with the issue that caused her face to tell me so.

“Grieve Not the Spirit”

I have come to know godly people across the years, people with the anointing, who have had a relation-

ship with Jesus that was personal. The text in Ephesians that says “*Grieve not the Spirit*” (4:30) was a living reality to them. The people who have meant the most to me have been people, oftentimes met in unexpected places, who have an honest relationship with Christ and truly did not want anything in their lives that’s displeasing to Him. And they live close enough to Him that they know when something displeases Him.

Sometimes after you’ve ministered, God says something like this, “You had a little too much of you in there, didn’t you?” And you say, “Lord, forgive me.” I look back across the years and there are certain people for whom I give thanks. I always give thanks for the widow lady who said to me very directly, “Now Dennis, when you’re clever, it’s much harder to see Jesus.”

I was a young evangelist right out of seminary, preaching for souls, and I thought my reputation was going to hang on my effectiveness. When I got back to the parsonage one night after preaching, the pastor said to me, “Now Dennis, there was a little more of you in that invitation than there was of the Holy Spirit, wasn’t there?” I knew he was right. And I thank God that he said it to me, because when we inject the flesh into the things of God, we contaminate things, and make it difficult for God

to get His work done. We're not talking now about great sins. We're talking about those things that affect that clear relationship with the Holy Spirit where He can anoint us and use us, when we become clean channels through which He can work.

And so God says in effect, "Seek My face, and get rid of the things that offend and displease." And when we do, He says that He will hear. When He hears, He will forgive and will heal our land. I don't know of anything our nation needs more today than healing—God's healing. There is no point in railing against the people we read about in the news. The place where we need to start is right here with us, His people. When he starts with us, the wonderful thing is that all of us are in webs of influence.

There was an elderly bishop in the Southern Methodist Church in the early part of the 20th century, who had been a railroader and got converted. He never had the privilege of academic training as many people did. He pastored in San Antonio, Texas, for a number of years, and in that time he never had a Sunday without conversions. Somebody asked him what the secret was. He said, "I have sixty men who meet during the Sunday school hour and pray for the next service. They pray until their hearts are hot. Then they go scatter them-

selves through the audience. One of our rules is that no two of them will sit together in the service. Any sinner who sits next to them will melt and thaw out, so that we've got him before it is over."

I wonder if that is not the hope of America. God will come when in these small webs of relationship we get something burning in us so much that the sinners around are affected by it. We need to start!

I had a friend when I was on the board of *Christianity Today*, and oftentimes we would sit together at the board meetings. He was a prince of a man, a Baptist from the West Coast. I liked him and felt we had things in common. In the meetings, when the break came, we talked. One day we were in O'Hare Airport, leaving Chicago, and our gates were opposite each other. We both had a little time on our hands and he said, "Dennis, let me tell you a story, a personal one."

He said, "I was converted as a teenager. When I graduated from the university, God called me to preach, so I went into the ministry. I had what was considered in our church a successful ministry. By the time I was twenty-nine, I had five people on my staff. I felt pretty good about it, but slowly I came to the place where I found a great emptiness in my life. It was deep enough and troubling

enough that I thought, if this is all there is to it, it isn't worth it. One night I went into my study and locked the door behind me, and shut the light off. I just stretched out flat on the floor and began to pray."

He said, "Dennis, I had a very unusual experience. It is hard to describe. But it was almost as if I were a briefcase, and He picked me up and turned me upside down, and began to shake. As He shook, I was astounded at what came out. He shook and He shook until I thought He was never going to quit shaking. Then finally He quit and turned the briefcase right side up, and then in all of His glory He climbed in and filled it. It may not be true, but it seemed to me the room turned to light. And I found myself transformed. *"They that bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean."* I felt clean.

"I decided I wouldn't tell anybody about my experience. So I didn't say a word to anybody about it. A few weeks later I was meeting with my staff, and we finished our business but nobody moved. All of my staff turned and looked at one person. I thought, 'Uh, oh, something is coming,' and I was right. The staff member slowly and hesitantly looked at me and said, 'Pastor, we've been talking to each other, and we have a question, and it's very personal. We think something has happened to you, and we like it.

'We don't know whether you'd be willing to tell us about it or not, but if you would, we'd appreciate it.' So I shared with them my experience. I said, 'Now I've told you. You cannot tell a soul.'"

Continuing his story, my friend said, "Not too long after that I was in a deacons' meeting, and we got to the end and nobody moved. Everybody was looking at the chairman, and the chairman was looking at the floor. Finally, the chairman looked up at me and said, 'Pastor, we've been talking, and we think something has happened to you. We like it. If you'd be willing to tell us about it, we would appreciate it.'" So he shared how the Holy Spirit came and cleansed his heart and filled him. A totally new relationship was established, and a totally new relationship with his people as well.

Let us give the Holy Spirit a chance to speak. Let us look to Him, in His face, and ask, "Is there anything in me that grieves You? Lord, could You and I just talk about that—just You and I? Is there anything in me that grieves, that hinders You? If it grieves You, it would be better if it were straightened out." Let's give Him a chance so that we can be clean and He can work.

*Submitted by Alvin C. Yoder,
Hutchinson, KS.*



No day is over if it
makes a memory.



mission awareness

The Three-Legged Stool

Floyd Stoltzfus

When you read this, Term One at Calvary Bible School, 2005, will be history. In one of the classes, “Missions and Church Planting,” we will attempt to highlight, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, a biblically-balanced missiology. We call it the Three-Legged Stool of Missions.

The unpleasant sensation of sitting on a lopsided, three-legged stool illustrates the importance of a balanced sense of mission. The three legs we shall consider are: Adoration—the upward look; Indoctrination—the inward look; and Evangelism—the outward look. We shall not attempt to place the one above the others in importance. When one is placed above the others, the result is imbalance. All are important.

One thing we should note is sequence. Adoration must precede

indoctrination and evangelism. If not, then church planting becomes an empty, fruitless activity, performed in the flesh, devoid of spiritual life and vitality.

1. Adoration

Adoration is worship or paying homage. To worship is to admire and stand in awe. The early church held a balanced view of missions. Jesus commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with heavenly power. Interestingly, after the Ascension, they “returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple praising and blessing God” (Luke 24:52b,53). Theirs was obedient, unified worship! That continued in Acts 1. Then in Acts 2, evangelism and indoctrination followed. After the Holy Spirit came upon them, 3,000 were ushered into the Kingdom by baptism. Their

baptism by the Holy Spirit occurred simultaneously with the new birth.

We must attempt to view mission work the way God does. Jesus fasted for 40 days then He was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert and severely tempted by the devil. After that, He was ready to embark upon His public ministry. Biblical mission work is essentially the work and overflow of the Holy Spirit.

What is God's key purpose in missions? Someone has aptly written: "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church; worship is. Missions exist because true worship does not. Worship is ultimate, because God is absolute. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before God in heavenly worship, missions will be no more. Missions are a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal in missions."

However, adoration and worship must be carefully seasoned with the salt of sound doctrine. They must be illuminated with the light of God's Spirit within to give a true and pure witness of Jesus Christ. If these are not in proper balance, ritualism may set in similar to what happened to the church in the Dark Ages. Large, elaborate church buildings were erected. Costly pipe organs and all sorts of relics and images were set

up, but they were expressions of the inner emptiness of the human heart without God.

2. Indoctrination

To indoctrinate is to instruct with doctrines or beliefs. L. E. Maxwell challenges us with the words of Isaiah 54:2: "Enlarge the place of thy tent,...lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." Maxwell further elaborates, "Would we lengthen the cords of the missions tent? We must strengthen the stakes of the consecrated life. We must go deeper within if we would go further abroad." To strengthen the stakes is to teach men "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20a). Jesus instructed us not only to teach converts, but to lead them into a life of obedience according to the Scriptures. This comes about by teaching and training them in sound, solid Bible doctrine.

Paul explains to us that the purpose of indoctrination is: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:14,15). To focus chiefly on indoctrination, thus neglecting holy worship is that it fails to evangelize and tends toward

hypocritical legalism.

3. Evangelism

To evangelize is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel in a nutshell is given in 1 Cor. 15:1-4, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

Missions lie deep in the heart of the eternal God! The message of missions is woven into the fabric of the entire Bible. To overemphasize evangelism may foster liberalism, resulting in a broad and unscriptural tolerance that violates the exclusive claims of Christ.

We see the “three-legged stool” sitting straight in the early church.

The proper balance of adoration, indoctrination and evangelism came to them because of their commitment to obedience of the Word and the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Notice these three active ingredients giving life to the body of Christ: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship [indoctrination], and breaking of bread and in prayers [adoration]. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple [indoctrination], and breaking of bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God [adoration], and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved [evangelism]” (Acts 2:42, 46,47).



The Sabbath or The Lord’s Day?

William Barclay

We cannot preach the Cross too much... But perhaps some of us preach the Resurrection too little.

It is clear that very early in the second century, and probably before the end of the first century, The Lord’s Day had taken the place of the Sabbath. Ignatius speaks of the

Christians as no longer keeping the Sabbath but observing the Lord’s Day.

Now the Sabbath, the last day of the week, commemorated God’s rest after the six days of creation; the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, commemorates the Resurrection.

That is why the day came into

being. It is the day on which the Christian Church remembers that the Lord has risen indeed.

Here is the proof, if proof were needed, that the Resurrection ought not to be [merely] the subject of an annual sermon on Easter Day, but the basic memory of every Sunday.

[Note the significance of the Resurrection in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowl-

*edge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know...what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, **which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places**" (from Eph. 1:17-20). —PLM]*

Excerpted from *Daily Celebration*, page 315.



helpers at home

Friendship

Mary June Glick

February is the month of roses, sentimental cards, boxes of candy, and sweetheart banquets. It is the time to express love and kindness to those who are special to us, but of course, it is always the time to do these things.

I want to think this month about friendship, especially the friendship of woman to woman. We read about pure, biblical friendship in 1 Samuel 20:4, where it says that Jonathan loved David as his own soul. Proverbs offers much encouragement to friendship. In 17:17, it says, "A

friend loveth at all times." We all need a friend, a person who understands and accepts us as we are.

The dictionary defines a friend as a person whom one knows, likes and trusts. It is a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause, a comrade. It is one who supports us, sympathizes with us, an acquaintance.

A friend is someone you are comfortable with, who believes in you and shares your dreams and vision. A friend is one who eases your pain instead of adding to it, who laughs

with you, not *at* you. It is someone who prays with you and for you. Friendship calls for commitment.

Friends are:

1. Accountable to each other.
2. Good listeners. They don't need to do all the talking, are not concerned about impressing others, but about impacting others toward godliness and Christian growth.
3. Encouragers. People want compassion not condemnation, affirmation, not unkind criticism. Everyone needs a touch of love and kindness.
4. Servants, ready to serve each other. Friends sustain and support each other during difficult times, doing what they can to make the load lighter.
5. Humble, rejoicing in the joys

and successes of others. Rather than doing their

own things, they look out for others. They esteem others better than themselves and don't need to be in control.

6. Quick to admit, "I was wrong," or "I am sorry." Friends don't hold grudges.

7. Ready to forgive *immediately*, not allowing time for bitterness to take root or grow. Forgiveness is a choice; it releases the offender and prays a blessing on him.

8. Honest and trustworthy, friends always keep confidences, not even sharing it with others as a prayer request.

A friend is remembered not so much by his words as by his life.



junior messages

Holding Light

Anita Yoder

Ligonier, IN

Harold watched Mr. Weybright's retreating figure as his teacher went from desk to desk helping his other students.

I want to be like him, Harold thought. He never condemns me,

and always believes I can do well. He loves me.

Harold's seatmate, Lance, nudged his elbow. "Get to work, and quit staring." Harold didn't expect it; his hand flew across the desk and knocked his reader to the floor. His

face reddened. The students around Harold snickered.

Mr. Weybright turned to see who had caused the commotion. Harold bent over his work, too embarrassed to look up.

I feel so stupid. What can I do? How can I change my situation? Does God love me? It doesn't seem like the boys do.

He sat up straighter and tried to concentrate, but the struggle went on for Harold.

“Class is dismissed for today. Harold, I need some help repairing my bookcase. Could you stay and help me?”

“Sure, Mr. Weybright!”

What now? Harold wondered. I'll probably get talked to about causing a disturbance. I didn't mean to do it! Can I tell him how I feel?

After all the students left the room, Harold walked up to Mr. Weybright's desk, and said, “What can I do to help?”

“Here, Harold, are a few nails. Come, you can hold this molding in place for me. I've noticed some students making it hard for you. Tell

me, how does a person hold light?”

Harold looked at his closed hand holding the nails. He opened it to show the nails lying in his hand. “I guess my hand would have to be open to hold light, Mr. Weybright.”

“That's right. So if God is light and God is love, then how did Jesus show love?”

Harold answered thoughtfully, “He allowed mean men to put nails through his hands.”

“Yes, Jesus could have fought back with closed fists, couldn't He? When He offered His open hands, He made a way for us to do the same to others. Real, true love is offering open hands to others. Even if they put nails in them, we can respond with forgiveness and love. That's light. Christ came to show that light is better than darkness. God thought you were valuable; that's why He sent His Son to die. God had that much love.”

“I'm beginning to see that I need to look at love and what the cross meant, Mr. Weybright. I want to love others like you do.”



A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

Set Free

Ann Schrag
Hutchinson, KS

The German Shepherd puppy was so cute and cuddly. She was mostly black with tan facial markings and tan feet and legs. I named her Trudy. She was to make my dream of raising dogs come true. She would also be my friend. Little did I know I would only get to enjoy her for one short week.

Trudy was living in the garage until a proper home could be made for her. She greeted me with eager nose and wagging tail as I stepped out of the house. “Come and play,” Her eager brown eyes seemed to say.

I gave her a loving pat. “Sorry,” I said, “I can’t play now.” And I backed up the car. **Crunch.** *Oh no, I killed her!*

Panic. “Quick! Someone call the vet!” *Horror. This can’t be real! Please, just be a dream.*

Grief. Stroking her lifeless body, tears stream down my face. But there’s no going back. The deed is done; I crushed the life out of my puppy and my dream.


Remorse. Questions. Why didn’t I look before I moved the car? Why didn’t I realize she wouldn’t know to stay out of the way? How could I

have been so careless?

My puppy in a box, buried by the hedge, is out of sight—not out of mind. Nothing seems to comfort me. I did the awful deed. With inexcusable carelessness I ended its life. I know Trudy was only a puppy, but I feel so bad. Does God know about my pain?

Sitting by the puppy grave, I hold my Bible in my lap. Heaviness weighs in my heart. Is there any hope for me? Then I get a gentle reminder: Jesus died—not for the righteous. Not for those who make no mistakes. He died for the guilty and the careless. He died for me!

Forgiveness. Will I accept it although I don’t deserve it? Yes, I will. I’ve tormented myself long enough.

Release. Weeds grow over the grave. After a while, I no longer know just where it is. But the lesson and the forgiveness remain. I make other mistakes. Sometimes in my carelessness I hurt others. But God’s mercy is still held out to me. Every time I accept it I am saved from despair. It gives me hope and purpose to go on living. It sets me free. 

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"...who then is willing to consecrate his service this day to the Lord?" (1 Chronicles 29:5b)



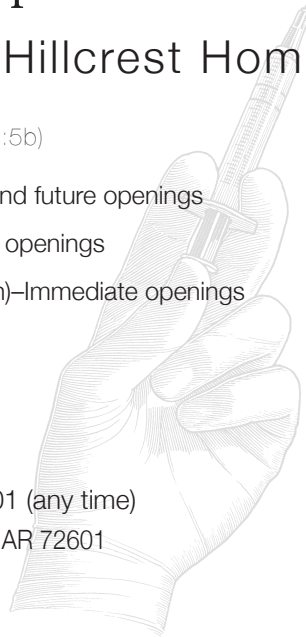
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THOUGHT GEMS

Gems from Yesteryear Revisited

A big load is a lazy man's load.

• • • • •

If wishes were horses, beggars might ride.

• • • • •

There's no shame in getting dirty; the shame is in staying dirty.

• • • • •

A penny saved is a penny earned.

• • • • •

God helps those who help themselves.

• • • • •

Where there's a will, there's a way.

• • • • •

Make hay while the sun shines.

• • • • •

Everyone hoes his corn a little different.

• • • • •

Be not vain before thy mirror; pretty is as pretty does.

• • • • •

Children are the joy of the house.

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