



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

Galatians 6:14

DECEMBER 2006

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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.

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A Friend's Worth

Marlene Wengerd · Greensburg, KY

A friend is a gem,
Who'll bless you through life.
Bring sunshine and comfort,
When deep in the strife.

At times the clouds come,
And others may doubt;
That anchor of trust,
Will bring you about.

God showers more blessings;
Your soul has its song.
A joy shared is doubled;
The road's not so long.

A treasure of worth,
True love to the end.
"Lord, thanks for the gift
Of having and being a friend."



Is God's Peace a Valid Check?

On the night of Jesus' birth, the angels proclaimed their good news with jubilant joy. Their message seemed to be vouchers of payment—"checks to be cashed"—by all mankind. The check the angels offered to the terrified shepherds explained that Jesus came to bring **"peace among men with whom he is pleased"** (Luke 2:14 NASB).

Why is it, then, that peace seems to be scarce these days? Did the angels offer a "bad" check? Are there not "sufficient funds" available?

Think of where peace is missing today:

—Hundreds die violently and prematurely every day. The conflict in Afghanistan is not resolved. The war in Iraq rages on. Terrible civil strife tears at the fabric of life in Sudan. North Korea forges ahead in its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Over every continent, ominous clouds of conflict hang low.

—Lawlessness plagues our land. Every day innocent crime victims die. The attack on October 2, 2006, against young girls in an Amish school near Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, is but one example. Prisons across America

are overcrowded, with many new ones being built. Charles Colson commented some time ago that the American prison population has increased ten-fold since 1975. That's only 31 years ago! We needn't be surprised that the unbelieving world isn't cashing the check for peace that God offers to believers.

—It would be nice to be able to say that all conflict is "out there," but it's not. Even though God's wonderful peace is the inheritance of His children, unity is often hard to come by in the brotherhood of believers. At times separation is necessary for faithfulness, but sometimes there is wrangling over trivial incidents and issues. Brothers lose confidence in brothers and break faith with each other. Next, they meet separately for worship. It's sad that the world often looks in vain among professing Christians for the peace the angels over Bethlehem announced. We should all treasure the check for peace God has issued to us—and cash it!

—As you and I undertake our personal walk with God, let us find His peace. Life is quite a puzzle at times. Instead of merely trying to

make ourselves comfortable, we must look beneath the surface of things to use His wonderful provisions to walk with Him and minister for Him. Let us seek help earnestly in prayer and bring our personal hurts to God in the name of Jesus Christ. He suffered and died for us, and that's how it is that "by His stripes we are healed." Jesus knows, by His own experience, how it feels to be human. He never made bad responses to life like we do. Fortunately, we can avail ourselves of Jesus' miracle-working power when we ask Him to help us unravel "the tangled strands where we have wrought in vain."

"Great peace have they which love thy law..." (Psalm 119:165a).

Peter asked Jesus a good question, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Let us not fail to go to Him with our struggles of soul. He who made us knows us much better than we do. Let us face the shame of failure. Honest confession is still good for the soul. When life's challenges become overwhelming and when the *outlook* is dark, let us go to God and His people who can help us with the "*up-look*."

Let us deal with life's hard times as the parents of the girls at Nickel Mines did theirs. According to the press, these parents took courage


from each other and gave their burdens to God. Rather than pursuing justice, they offered forgiveness to the murderer's family. These parents could have simply ignored or even snubbed the widow of the murderer of their daughters, but they did neither. Instead, they tried to encourage the poor widow in the tragedy of her husband's murders and suicide. Oh, what overcoming, resurrection power they drew on!

These parents are choosing to live their lives by their Christian beliefs, rather than lashing out at the people around them. After all, a vindictive attitude would not bring back their precious girls. Nevertheless, that's how some people would have responded to such tragedy.

The injured girls who survived the shooting still have a hard road ahead of them. Let us hope that the submission and courage they and their parents have shown thus far will not fail them. Let us pray for them.

And let us cash our checks for God's wonderful peace!

"And **the peace of God**, which passeth all understanding, **shall keep your hearts and minds** through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Colossians 3:15). —PLM 

Re: Veilings

Just recently, while on vacation, we were made more aware of how some groups do not teach on why they wear the headship veiling. The storekeeper (a lady) at a souvenir shop noticed my veiling and started asking why I wore it. She had visited a large [plain] community and was never able to get a satisfactory answer when asking them why they wore veilings. Most of them didn't seem to know why!

My husband explained the headship order to her, and also asked her to read the passage in 1 Corinthians 11. She had already read it, but in the New World translation which implied that a woman's hair should not be covered because of its glory. My husband advised her to look it up in [other translations].

We were glad to witness to her, but are saddened to know that there

are those who don't really know why the headship veiling is to be worn. During my growing up years, I also thought I wore a covering because, well, it was what we did. I have heard young girls express themselves with the words, "Oh no, I hope they don't ask me why I wear it!"

Are we ashamed to identify with Christ or is there such a lack of teaching in our homes, churches, and perhaps even in our schools on this issue? Maybe we need to view why we wear the veiling through an outsider's eyes and have some clear, simple teaching so that even the shy and timid ones will be able to give answer to "every man [or woman] that asketh you the reason..."

Just a thought—will the curious or sincere seeker even ask those who wear a small or nearly invisible veiling?

—Mrs. Ralph Yoder, Paris, TN



RIGHT IS RIGHT
EVEN IF NOBODY DOES IT,
AND
WRONG IS WRONG
EVEN IF EVERYBODY DOES IT.

Protesters and Security Guards

Simon Schrock · Catlett, VA

It was early in the morning when I arrived at the Pentagon to check the Choice Books display. As I approached the entrance I noticed there was more activity than usual with what looked like dozens of police officers. Security was tight. Behind a fence and the line of officers was a group of demonstrators. It was clear they were protesting some action of the military. The cross with the form of a person on it did not appear to be proclaiming the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

I paused for a few seconds and observed. As I moved on inside, my thoughts moved about as fast as the escalator I took to the concourse. Because of my commitment to Jesus Christ and His teaching, I am a conscientious objector to being involved in warfare. The demonstrators were opposing the actions of the military but did not appear to be promoting the peace we find in Jesus. In this land of freedom, people may demonstrate against the actions of the very government that permits them to protest.

So here I am—not endorsing the demonstrators, nor the action of the military, walking past the throng of security personnel with the freedom to offer Christian reading material at

the drug store inside the building. I checked the display and soon left the building by the way I had entered.

The display had sold nearly 200 books since my visit the month before. Authors who embrace Anabaptist theology wrote a lot of those books.

On the way from the building, I stopped and chatted with several of the security guards and asked them a few questions. One terse comment they offered was, “Many men died so they can protest.”

I left pondering this question, *I am disciple of Jesus, and what should my attitude be toward all this?* Many men died to give me freedom, and yet I could not take up arms of defense or serve as an armed security guard. In part, I agree with the protesters. I am walking a way of life that represents a path between the protesters and the security officers. I think of the freedom and protection I have that lets me walk through security and take the Christian “good news” into the shopping concourse of the Pentagon.

What is a scriptural response to the protestors and the security officers? I think of Peter’s teaching for the Christian: “Having your conversation

honest among the Gentiles...” (1 Peter 2:12). This is a call to excellent behavior among non-believers. He also instructs us: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake” (v. 13). Verse 17 includes a clause that gives me insights: “Honor all men.” That applies to the protestors *and* the armed officers. I want to conduct myself in a way that will speak well of the Lord Jesus Christ. After all, the shedding of His blood was sufficient to atone for all our sins. I want to respect them because God’s love and grace is still available for whosoever will come to Him.

Peter, also in verse 17, calls us to, “Honour the King.” Does this mean I violate Christ’s commands to obey the king? It is a call to obey and respect the government in whatever edict does not violate New Testament teaching. While the government does numerous things I cannot conscientiously do in following Christ, I want to respect persons involved because of Christ’s love for them. I want to use the freedom we have to promote the “good news” without dishonoring the price that was paid with men’s lives so “they can protest.” As a disciple of Jesus, I am not protesting, nor standing as an armed guard. I want to show respect to each one and be a true light of the Gospel of Christ as I walk between them.

This reminds me of the teaching of Jesus about the two ways for mankind to take in life. One is the broad way to destruction and the other is the narrow way to life. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

I visualize myself walking on the narrow path of Jesus in the center of the broad way. The narrow is a joyous path going toward the heavenly city. On this path all my needs are met because the Lord Jesus “hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3).

As I walk this narrow way, I visualize a broad way on both sides going down to eternal destruction. It is the unbeliever’s road filled with the smorgasbord of attractive religious and temporal pleasures that never satisfy the deep longings of the human heart. As Isaiah so clearly stated, “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:2).

Lord, I want to be a clear, bright light of your love as I walk life’s journey between protestors and security guards; between the empty pleasures of this world and continue on the journey that leads to Your very presence.



From Mystery to Reality—Part 2

Aaron Lapp · Kinzers, PA

Imagination Yields to Curiosity

Sometimes life seems too complicated, actually paradoxical, and even at times—just one great mystery. The mystery of the Kingdom of God provides enough revelation that it puts the believer beyond the scope of complex frustration. Whereas, sin takes one from the simple to the complex, righteousness takes one from the complex to the simple.

Let's try thinking of the mystery of life as seven steps to the reality of life. Righteousness—doing what is right—brings us nearest to the reality of life. This is even on a bit higher level than faith itself, as given in the following proposition.

Seven steps from mystery to reality:

1. Imagination yields to curiosity.
2. Curiosity yields to inquiry.
3. Inquiry yields to discovery.
4. Discovery yields to diligence.
5. Diligence yields to faith.
6. Faith yields to doing what I know is right.
7. Doing what I know is right yields to reality.

The word “yield” is deliberately

chosen. Every succeeding step moves one upward to a higher level. Going from mystery to reality is identifiable in these seven sequential steps. Saying “yes” to God at every step allows a progression of life toward its highest and best reality, a step upward in God's grace. Saying “no” to God at any step will not allow further progress, but actually causes one to step down the scale again.

Our Creator, the loving Heavenly Father, made us with *an inherent desire to rise*, to ascend, to step up. With that, God also made us with *an innate compulsion to be free*. These two entities are lofty concepts, indeed.

But at the other end of the spectrum is natural man's fallenness and bondage. These two pull like gravity and mitigate against rising and freedom.

Children variously go through the first three stages: imagination, curiosity, and inquiry. Imaginative characters in stories are constructive to their pre-primary development of understanding. (Some well-meaning adults feel that their imagination dwarfs—or worse, perverts—their God-designed development of un-

derstanding.) Children can usually distinguish between the imaginary and the real, the illusory and the actual.

The imagination provides imagining. Creating images in the mind is a God-given faculty. Sometimes the imagined is nearly as real as the actual, especially where there is traumatic confusion in the child's experience. In the trauma of parent-induced confusion, the child can engage the imagination in a desperate effort to escape reality. This is a sad case of parental failure. The child is not at fault here; the parents are.

When a child is spanked for engaging in some form of the imagination, or is in some way forced by the parents to suffer, this can cause the child to feel violated by the parent. In the trauma of this confusion, the child can further engage his imagination as it reaches out to make some sense of his unfortunate situation in the absence of reasoned explanation.

Having been taught about the God of love, the child easily arrives at some semblance of security in an all-knowing, all-powerful God who loves him. A child-like faith in such an infinite God is a distinct possibility for any child, even the traumatized child.

But if the child has primarily been told that the all-knowing, all-powerful God is a judging God, a God of wrath and retribution, then the child

will likely have imaginary fears and dread that escalates uncontrollably in a time of trauma, especially when his parents are driven by contradictory issues. Such a child will be propelled to wrong conclusions about God, and will cause even more distance between him and God. The child's imagination will be the vehicle that causes the alienation.

In this case the imagination will likely be blamed. But the imagination should not be faulted as much as the parents who gave faulty teaching and role modeling.

Imagination is incorrectly seen by some as only evil, as something to avoid and restrain in every way. Has not God created us with the ability to foresee, to visualize, to have insight? Can adults live without visualization? Can a woman prepare a meal without using her imagination? Can a farmer plant his fields without imagining the harvest? Cannot the preacher do a better job in sermon preparation when he visualizes an audience and listener response?

Of course, we all use our imaginations every day for good. God made us to have *foresight* as well as *insight*. Children also can use it to good purpose. Just because Satan uses it for evil purposes does not consign it to be a faculty that must be treated with contempt.

One's imagination is not an end

in itself. Conclusions made by the imagination can be selfish, exaggerated and misleading. Some people have dwelt on a situation so long in their mind that eventually imagination becomes fact to them. Of those the Apostle instructs us to cast “down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).


Visualization and foresight can be used for good. It is given by God for the next steps to which it can constructively lead. It leads to good interest and noble desire on through to a measure of inquiry toward a larger goal.

One of the expanding goals of this series is to bring people to faith in Christ and/or a stronger and more vibrant faith in Him. Faith allows us to see into God’s purposes with a glorious reality. Faith helps us visualize God’s promises and sometimes even see beyond them. “By faith Abraham...looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:8, 10). “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them...” (Hebrews 11:13).

Their looking into the future was not a figment of their imagination.

But, really, it was a spiritual exercise that rose out of a spiritual maturity. This places it a number of steps above infantile comprehension. Faith is the means, God provides the guarantee, and God’s power is the facilitator.

Faith “sees” the invisible, beyond the reach of our five senses. The vision of faith is in a separate category from our human imagination. By contrast, earth-bound imagination frequently dead-ends in the irrational and sometimes even further in the impossible. As such, it becomes an enemy of the spiritual visualization produced by genuine faith. Seeing the invisible God and His seeming incomprehensible promises never dead-ends in impossible promises. The “persuasions” and “embracing” of these promises gives an open-ended insight based on God Himself. That settles it for us, as it did for Abraham, or it is never settled at all!

The Bottom Line is that the mystery of God is intended in Christ to be a personal experience in life’s reality on the earth in the church age. It was hidden in the Old Testament, but is now revealed in Christ. Imagination and visualization have purpose for the development and function of all ages and stages in life. They are not ends in themselves, but early stages toward a desired goal. They are carried along by a devout—as well as a stout—faith in the living God. 

Carest Thou Not That We Perish?

(Mark 4:35-41)

By B. E.

The story is short
In Mark 4:35.
But, oh, what a message
When faith comes alive!

It speaks of disciples
Afloat on the sea.
And Jesus is with them
Life is as it should be.

But, when in our lives,
We see a storm rise.
Waves beat on the boat
We fear we'll capsize!

We turn to our Master—
How soundly He sleeps!
Can't He feel the water
As inward it creeps?

We cry out, "Oh, Master!
Oh, do You not care?
We perish! We're sinking!"
Our fears we declare.

And then Jesus rises.
How calm are His eyes!
He sees the waves beating,
And the overcast skies.


He sees no excitement,
And yet, what a thrill!
He speaks to those gusts
Commands, "Peace, be still."

But then He speaks on
Says, "Why did you fear?
My child, O, my child!
Did your faith disappear?"

Ah faith—it had vanished!
We knew He was near.
How could we have panicked,
Why did we all fear?

Yes, fear is a monster,
And Satan's skilled plan
To weaken our faith
Shows us mere man.

But Jesus is there,
How deeply He cares!
Each wave and each wind lash
He lovingly shares.

And if we but trust Him,
Hold faith with a will.
Tune in to His voice,
We'll hear: "Peace, be still." 



Some flowers will not yield their
perfume until they are bruised.



marriages

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

Gerber-Jantzi

Bro. John, son of Mahlon and Mary Gerber, Millbank, ON, and Sis. Tanya, daughter of Kenneth and Bernita Jantzi, Wellesley, ON, at Cedar Grove A.M. Church, on Sept. 16, 2006, by Arthur Gerber.

Miller-Byler

Bro. Joe, son of Joseph and Elizabeth Miller, Carlton, PA, and Sis. Anna, daughter of Urie and Martha Byler, Saegertown, PA, at Plainview Gospel Church on Sept. 23, 2006, by Ervin Miller.

cradle roll

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

Aguilar, Misael and Regina (Miller), San Salvador, El Salvador, sixth child, fifth son, Josiah Nathaniel, Oct. 26, 2006.

Beachy, Darrel and Joanna (Mast), Dyke, VA, first and second children, twin sons, Evan Ross and Eliot Wade, Oct. 8, 2006.

Beachy, Gabriel and Dawn (Hurst), Cedar Creek, TX, fourth child, second dau., Andrea Ruth, Oct. 4, 2006.

Miller-Yoder

Bro. Philip, son of David and Effie Miller, Shreve, OH, and Sis. Joanna Renae, daughter of Joseph and Linda Yoder, Millersburg, OH, at Gospel Haven for Peniel Christian Fellowship, Holmesville, OH, on June 3, 2006, by Nathan Yoder.

Nissley-Eshleman

Bro. Ervin, son of LeRoy and Lydia Nissley, Catlett, VA, and Sis. Carrie, daughter of Neal and Lorraine Eshleman, Richland, PA, at Harmony Church, Millington, MD, on August 12, 2006.

Yoder-Helmuth

Bro. Mark Wayne, son of Tim and Treva Yoder, Whiteville, TN, and Sis. Ellen, daughter of L. J. Rose Mary Helmuth, Whiteville, TN, at Brownsville, TN, on July 21, 2006, by Lavern Eash.

Beachy, Nathan and Joy (Stoltzfus), Dover, DE, third child, second dau., Kaylene Grace, Sept. 9, 2006.

Czekalski, John and Karen (Matts), Salem, MO, sixth child, fourth dau., Hannah Louise, Oct. 14, 2006.

Gingerich, Kendall and Diane (Miller), Plain City, OH, first child and son, Kaden Scott, Oct. 13, 2006.

Hochstetler, Paul and Sarah (Yoder), Martinsburg, OH, third child and son, Adrian Quinn, Sept. 19, 2006.

Hostetler, Loren and Berneice (Otto), Martinsburg, OH, second child, first son, Landon Eli, Sept. 2, 2006.

Jantzi, Michael Bruce and Twila Carol (Yoder), Stanardsville, VA, second child, first dau., Alyssa Faith, Sept. 30, 2006.

Lapp, Edward and Rita (Miller), Quaker City, OH, second child and dau., Katy Lynn, Oct. 4, 2006.

Miller, Ellis and Lynita (Miller), Dhaka, Bangladesh/Hutchinson, KS, third child, first dau., Kirsten Raquel, Oct 6, 2006.

Miller, Lucas and Julianna (Mullet), Aroda, Va, second child and son, Micah James, Oct. 28, 2006.

Peachey, Bob and Barbie (Stoltzfus), McClure, PA, fourth child, third dau., Kimberly Ann, Sept. 24, 2006.

Plank, Dennis and Marjorie (Hostetler), Montezuma, GA, second child, first son, Trent Durell, Oct. 23, 2006.

Smucker, Steven and Christina (Hershberger), Lott, TX, first child and son, Zachary James, Sept. 18, 2006.

Stoltzfus, Aaron and Anna (Zook), Gap, PA, tenth child, third dau., Sharon Joy, June 16, 2006.

Stoltzfus, Amos Lee and Priscilla (Stoltzfus), Bridgeton, NJ, sixth child, second son, Wendell Duane, May 22, 2006.

Stoltzfus, Tim and Sara (Ropp), Harrison, AR, seventh child, third son, Jonathan Duane, Oct. 6, 2006.

Webb, Mark and Beverly (Hochstetler), Aroda, VA, seventh child, sixth dau., Amelia Kristine, June 20, 2006.

Yoder, Carlin and Mary Beth (Gingrich), Leon, IA, second child and son, Reagan Eli, Sept. 23, 2006.

Yoder, Jonathan and Joyce (Miller), Dunmore East, Co. Waterford, Ireland, second child and son, Joseph Daniel, July 18, 2006.

Yoder, Lawane and Esther (Helmuth), Sturgis, MI, third child, first dau., Karina Dawn, July 18, 2006.

Yoder, Mark and Martha (Stoltzfus), Whiteville, TN, fourth child, third dau., Serena Lin, June 19, 2006.

Yoder, Steven and Daisy (Beiler), Pratts, VA, second child and dau., Johanna Grace, Oct. 7, 2006.

Yoder, Verlynn and Laurel (Martin), Grove City, MN, fourth child, third son, Donovan James, Sept. 16, 2006.

Zook, Marvin and Marie (Troyer), Centerville, PA, third child, first dau., Amanda, Sept. 23, 2006.

Criticism from a friend is better than flattery from an enemy.

ordinations

Bro. Jason Miller, 33, Millersburg, OH, was ordained to the office of deacon at Peniel Christian Fellowship on August 27, 2006. Preordination messages were brought by Robert Burkholder, Cynthiana, KY.

The charge was given by Nathan Yoder, assisted by Mose Miller and Ervin Hostetler. Firmen Coblentz was also in the lot.

obituary

Stoltzfus, Angelica Joy, two months, of Esperanza Village, Cayo, Belize, died August 31, 2006. She died seven hours after surgery for a congenital heart defect and is now safely resting in the arms of Jesus. She was born July 1, 2006, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, daughter of Ben and Marian Stoltzfus, and two weeks later, returned with her family to the mission in Cayo, Belize, where they are presently serving.

Surviving in addition to her parents are siblings: Melody, Marnita, Anna

observations

Philippians 4:8 instructs Christians to concentrate on things that are noble and virtuous. The preceding verses instruct us to be joyful, generous, considerate and gentle. Verse six reminds us that we

Bro. Jay Yoder, 30, was ordained to office of minister at Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Aroda, VA. Preordination messages were brought by Nathan Yoder.

The charge was given by Tim Miller, assisted by Samuel Hochstetler. David Martin and Lamar Hochstetler were also in the lot.

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

Elizabeth, John Paul, Diane, Jeffrey, Sherilyn, Daniel, Serena, Kristalyn, all of Cayo, Belize; maternal grandparents: John and Elizabeth Beiler, Honey Brook, PA; paternal grandparents: Paul and Anna Stoltzfus, Morgantown, PA.

Funeral services were held at West Haven A.M. Church, New Holland, PA, on September 3, with Lee Stoltzfus, Marvin Fisher, Ivan Stoltzfus, and Reuben Beiler serving. Burial was in the adjoining cemetery.

need not be anxious or worrisome, but rather bring our requests to God. This combination brings the peace of God that can be experienced, even if not fully understood or explained.

Why is that we should cultivate

thoughts that are good, positive and noble? We all know that there is much around us that is the exact opposite of all this. But the person who saturates his mind with all that's wrong in the world carries a burden that belongs to God. Such a personality does not reflect the joy that is the birthright of every true Christian. But looking at the larger message of the Word it becomes clear that there are many things we should not do. There are many examples that we should not follow.

1 Corinthians 10:6-10 specifically mentions five things we should not do. Must we conclude that positive teaching and positive thinking need also be realistic? This seems to mean that we want to be aware of dangers and seek to guard ourselves accordingly. It also means that we are willing to point out dangers that could hardly be considered positive teaching. Such awareness needs not rob us of our joy in life, our trust in God or our peace with God and man.



The above is a rather long preface to three non-local incidents that were recently reported to me. It seems to me that these experiences can be helpful to us who want to be teachable. They are being used with permission of persons who witnessed them first hand.

A certain man became alienated from the church. He became very bitter toward the church and continued in this state for some 15 years. During a community evangelistic effort, he responded to the invitation. He became a changed man.

He returned to the church a broken man. He told the church, "I was the judge; you were all guilty; but really I was guilty." He sought forgiveness and reconciliation.

Another incident involved a couple who was dissatisfied with the church and decided to take their growing family where things were more to their liking. Three or four years later, they returned. The husband and father asked permission to apologize to their former church. Some things were not going well with their family. The parents were disappointed when some of their older children found church fellowship where Christian nonresistance is, at best, seriously compromised. They felt they need to do something different for the sake of the younger children. An important part of this man's confession was: "I was rebellious."

I fear that the sin of rebellion is more subtle and serious than we often realize. See 1 Samuel 15:22, 23. A deceitful heart and a critical spirit seem to add up to rebellion and distorted thinking.

A third incident involves a young brother who lived at home with his parents. He seemed to be a stable Christian and a supportive member in the church. Rather suddenly, his parents noticed a mysterious change taking place in his attitude. His earlier support and stability were no longer evident. It seemed that he was spending long hours on the telephone during the night. When Father investigated he discovered that his son was participating in a “chat line.” A major emphasis of that chat-line conversation was to discredit church leaders and undermined church loyalty. This young man has now left the church.

Modern technology can be useful for the Christian. Our enemy is eager to use any available avenue to work against Christ and His people. Let us by God’s grace guard our homes accordingly.



The effects of the October 2 tragedy in the Amish school at Nickel Mines, PA, has sent reverberations throughout much of the world.

Our mission workers in Ireland report that several hundred people expressed their condolences to them. Frieda Yoder, a local sister teaching in China, reports that the news reached her very quickly. The Christlike response of forgiveness became a topic

of conversation.

The Amish have gotten much media attention over the years. Often what is different—their nonconformed lifestyle—is highlighted. This time their commitment to forgiveness, returning good for evil was the main issue.

If Billy Graham would have issued a statement on Christian forgiveness it would have gotten respectful attention. But it could not have come close to being as powerful a message as this was.

The Mennonite press, the secular media and many columnists took note of the response of forgiveness as different from the conflict and violence so prevalent in our world.

I am impressed that we surely need clear statements of faith and doctrine, but obedient actions speak much louder than words. I am also impressed that we should not look down on others who do things a bit differently than we do. Let us remember that others have access to the same Word of God as we do. It is so important that we all follow that Word with honest hearts.



Academic mainstream in Kansas is embarrassed by the publicity that has been generated by our state board of education. A majority of the ten-member board have voted that

biological science education should mention “intelligent design” as a possible explanation for the origin of things.

That the publicity is widespread is verified by a news item sent to me by Paul Yoder from Belgium. The headline says: “God Created the World in Kansas.” The brief article states that students in Kansas will be taught that Darwin’s theory of evolution has not been proven and that the universe may have been created by a higher power—in other words, God did. The tone of the article is clearly condescending.

This is being written on November 4, just a few days before the election. It appears likely that education board majority would shift in favor of dropping this provision. If schools are required to teach something contradictory to what is taught in church it should not surprise us that children become confused. Many also become indifferent to the church and are more easily attracted to drugs and other harmful practices.

Let us be thankful that the state allows us to send our children to church schools or to teach them at home.

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One need not be a scientist to notice that some things being offered as scientific are nothing more than

“science, falsely so called” (1 Timothy 6:20).

Reaching Out (fourth quarter, 2006) has an excellent article entitled, “Genesis and the Church’s Theology” by Lester Troyer. I draw this summary from that article:

All matter consists of energy. Everything in the universe is packed tight with energy. This energy can be harnessed for useful purposes. (Regrettably, also for destruction, such as bombs.) But the evolutionist’s god—time and chance—cannot convert energy back into matter. And neither can the most brilliant scientist do so.

May our lives reflect the awareness that we came from God and our spirits will return to Him. (Ecclesiastes 12).

• • • • •

Thanks to Abe Spicher, Middlebury, IN, for calling attention to an article in *USA Today* (Oct. 5, 2006). The article is about Wendy McDonnell, Lebec, CA, and her business of making head coverings for Christian women that are not necessarily conservative Anabaptists. Ms. McDonnell is quoted: “It all kind of goes hand in hand. The modesty. The home schooling. The home churching. Covering...It’s part of a huge movement,” she says.


The article mentions that Bap-

tists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Catholics participate in this revival of an earlier practice. “Hair covering is generating a lot of traffic on the Internet highway.” Modest clothing is also getting significant attention. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 is clearly the basis for this movement. Part of the headline says: “Christian women who ‘cover’ are finding modest clothing and each other online.”

One section has this caption: “What does the Bible say about it?”

It then goes to considerable length to say what scholars say about it. The gist of this section is summed up in this quote: “They were wearing veils because the culture said to, not because they were Christian.”

Isn't it interesting that in the latter half of this chapter Paul teaches the importance of observing communion “until He come”? Paul refers to the night of crucifixion with considerable detail. Not because he had been there, but because he could say, “For I have received of the Lord Jesus that which I also delivered unto you...” I know of no Christian group that would reject the importance of communion. But modern culture is not fond of either the principle or the practice of the first 16 verses of Chapter 11.

It is appropriate for us to ask how well we are doing in joyfully and eagerly modeling this important principle. —DLM 

Whose Righteousness Counts?

David Gingerich · Hazleton, IA

A highland widow, unable to pay her rent, was threatened with eviction. One day she set out with her only child to walk some ten miles over the mountain to the home of friends who would help her.

When she started out, the weather was warm and bright. But on the mountain, she got caught in a terrible snow storm. She never reached her destination. She was found the next day at the summit of the pass, where

the storm was the fiercest, lying in the snow, stripped almost to nakedness, dead. In a sheltered nook nearby was her child, safe and well, wrapped in the clothes her mother had taken from her own body.

Is this not a picture of the salvation and love of God through Christ for us? We had no other escape for our sins. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye

were healed” (1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:5).

This child had no reason to boast for having survived that day. Her good fortune lay in her mother’s love and what she had done. So, likewise, those who will be in heaven will cry, saying, “Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing” (Revelation 5:12). That will not be a time of glorying in ourselves and what we have done, but in what someone else has done. (Luke 12:10)

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus tells us of a self-righteous Pharisee and a repentant Publican, who both “went up into the temple to pray. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” Not that it is wrong to do these things, but he passed over “judgment and the love of God,” (Luke 11:39-42).

The Publican, realizing what he was in himself, stood afar off, and would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. Jesus said, “I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.”

Those are the ones that God helps, who become as little children, and cry to God for help. They realize their own insufficiency and constant need for power greater than their own. No more can any of us survive spiritually without God’s help than a newborn baby can survive without its mother. God’s Holy Spirit, who brought us into the Kingdom, must care for us. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). I can console myself that because I am Mennonite or Amish I’m alright. But I should remember that God is able “of these stones to raise up children” (Matthew 3:9).


I might trust in going to church regularly, wearing plain clothes, and giving money to the poor, but in Christ Jesus only faith which works by love avails anything (Galatians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 13).

If Jesus is my Lord and Savior, should not my foremost desire and ambition be to please Him? We should all examine ourselves: are we doing what we’re doing because of rules and traditions, or are we doing it from a heart’s desire to please Him who was wounded for our transgressions?

Paul thinks over his experience in Philippians 3:1-10. In verse 9, he says he desires to be found in Him,

not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Our minds can get only a little grasp of the righteousness and purity of the One whose commandment is, “That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

How thankful we can be that Jesus will reign in eternity, and not the destroyer, Satan. All men have sinned

and come short of the glory of God. God declared that no sin shall be in His holy presence, but He provided a remedy. Instead of casting us out, He sent us the Light, Who said, “Who-soever believeth in him should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46). God made His intentions clear when He said, “Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 9:33). 

mission awareness

Principles in Church Planting—Part 2

Floyd Stoltzfus

In the previous article we went upstream where the waters of church doctrine and life were fresh and not muddied with all sorts of personal interpretations and applications. We discovered five principles in Acts that portray God’s plan in church planting for every age and culture.

1) The early disciples rested in the PROMISE of the Father.

2) These disciples continued in PRAYER and supplication.

3) These believers were united “with one accord” under the Lordship of Christ, forming a strong PARTNERSHIP.

4) The Holy Spirit endowed these saints with a divine POWER to fulfill the ministry assigned by their precious Lord.

5) This “dunamis” which is also divine enablement moved them to action in going out in the streets of Jerusalem and doing PERSONAL EVANGELISM.

6. PREACHING

Peter exercised godly wisdom in not leaving the people to doubt or to mock this new, life-changing dynamic outpouring of the Holy Spirit. “But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and

all that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:14-16). Peter quoted a passage from Joel as a springboard for this message to preach the risen Christ. He used words from a Psalm to reinforce history’s great event—the resurrection of Christ.

God has used the foolishness of preaching to reach down into the human family and bring people face to face with Himself. Someone has written, “Since preaching originated in the mind of God, and is His own distinctive medium for reaching the hearts of men with a message that is calculated to save the soul, it is obviously His prerogative to set the standards.” It is alarming indeed when a soft-pedaled, 15-20 minute sermon that only tickles the ears of the listeners is substituted for sound biblical preaching that calls for a verdict. This is not to say that short messages are not suitable under certain assignments, but to be controlled by this time frame as a normal pattern for a Sunday morning worship service falls short of the conception of preaching which God has revealed in His Word.

“Thus saith the Lord” occurs ap-

proximately 2,000 times in the Bible. This phrase is appropriate to bring God’s Word to His people. We would do well to use it more often. In our time, we hear it more commonly, “The Bible says...” Paul instructed Timothy thus, “I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word...” (2 Tim. 4:1,2). The word charge is weighty. It means to testify and exhort earnestly or repeatedly; to be emphatic!

At the Feast of Tabernacles, Israel gathered to hear the Word of God. Ezra stood on a pulpit of wood and read from the books of Moses—the Torah—from morning to midday. The people stood when he opened the Book. They lifted up their hands. “They bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.” A group of men “read in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” The people mourned and wept “when they heard the words of the law” (Neh. 8:6b, 8, 9c).

Reading the Scripture, dynamic preaching, and clear, biblical teaching has brought genuine revival from ancient times. It happened again on the Day of Pentecost when God used some rugged fishermen, a despised

tax collector, and others who had been changed by the fire of God in their hearts, a fire that could not be quenched, so that 3,000 souls were converted and baptized.

7. PROBING

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart...” (Acts 2:37a). Spirit-filled preaching couple with prayer and meditation in the Holy Word in God’s timing, brings a **probing** by the Holy Spirit.

A probe is a slender, blunt surgical instrument for exploring a wound. It can also refer to a searching examination or an investigation into corruption. Peter did not bring about this probing by himself. The Word of God was the blunt, surgical instrument used by the Holy Spirit through the words of Peter to explore the wound of sin in the hearts of men and women. (See Hebrews 4:12)

The prayers of the 120 who gathered to wait for the Holy Spirit’s coming, the personal evangelism and now the preaching brought about a searching, convicting examination of the Holy Spirit in people’s hearts. They cried, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37b).

After the probing, painful surgical knife comes the healing formula—the balm of Gilead: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). The word for in this verse is better understood on account of or on the basis of.

Jesus as our Great Surgeon does not repair our old heart but forgives our sins (cancels the debt) and gives us a new heart.

(to be continued)



Looking Up

Ernest Strubhar · Perkins, OK

In a game of “I spy” with young children, I find that the best place to hide the object is up high, for example, on top of a curtain rod.

Many evolutionists are like children playing “I spy.” In their “game” they forget to look up. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dickerson admits as much, when he writes about modern

science: “Science is fundamentally a game. It is a game with one overriding and defining rule: [to] see how far and to what extent we can explain the behavior of the physical and material universe in terms of purely physical and material causes, without mocking the supernatural.”

To that add the voice of a lead-


ing promoter of neo-Darwinism, geneticist Richard Lewontin: “We take the side of science ...*in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment...to materialism. [Materialism: the theory that physical matter is the only reality. –Ed.] It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive.... Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.” (Italics in original)

Such men will never find the truth. They refuse to look up.

In my quest to understand life and

the world around me, I start by looking up. I acknowledge the Creator God. I believe Jesus who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). I accept the Bible as God’s Word, inspired in the sense that God gave it inerrantly to men.

Were these men fallible? Yes. Did they have the scientific knowledge that men have today? No, but these “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). God’s Word is not primarily a scientific book. Yet what they spoke does not contradict true science. Indeed, it gives a solid foundation for scientific research.

Every atom, every living cell, every star in heaven testifies of our Creator. Even our seven-day week testifies that in “in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11). 

Comfort from Psalm 73

Verna Yoder · Wickenburg, AZ

Sis. Verna Yoder, the editor’s cousin, responded to the need for her 80-year-old mother Edna’s care. Of course, when Verna became willing to leave Arizona and live again in Kansas for several years, little did she know that she was undertaking such a major

assignment. The Lord wonderfully provided for Aunt Edna through the tender ministrations of Verna for ten years.

Some time after Aunt Edna’s “graduation” in January, 2003, just a few weeks after her 90th birthday, Verna

went back to her home in Arizona. The strength that had been given her to care for her mother soon seemed to wane. She has since become nearly totally dependent on others for her care.

Verna has been having terrible back pain. Her health deteriorated to where she was not always able to attend church. It has been a real struggle for her to give up quilting, sewing and house work. She is again sometimes able to attend services but when she does she must be seated on a recliner. The sisters of the church bring in most of her meals and do all of her cleaning. To accept such dependence has not been easy.


Some time ago, her pastor, Lyle Kropf, assigned to Verna and another sister a study together in the Psalms on "Worship." Verna's paraphrase is a result of that study.

Psalm 73, according to my experience:

1. Truly God is good to all His children, even to those who serve Him faithfully.
2. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped, I had nearly lost my foothold, in discouragement.
3. For I was envious of the healthy, when I saw the work they could perform.
4. They do not have to struggle with their frail backs; their bodies are

healthy and strong.

5. They are free of back pain and don't have to be continually cautious of overdoing or working too hard.
6. The wicked healthy are proud of their accomplishments. They are becoming rich and boast about it.
7. They labor without excruciating pain and are not sympathetic to the frail in body.
8. They are corrupt and boast of their money-making schemes. They have never had to run from one doctor to another, receiving no answers while the pain continues.
9. The severe muscle spasms make even sitting or walking difficult, lying in bed month after month.
10. They have always been able to rely on their own strength, never having been sick.
11. Saying, "We don't need God; how much knowledge does He have?"
12. They continue in their own brazen ways, increasing in riches all the time.
13. Have I been serving the Lord in vain? Why has He made my "tent" so flimsy? Why have I been chosen to be chastened and suffer daily?
14. Why can't I do my own work, laundry, cooking, cleaning or at

- least be able to drive myself to doctor's appointments?
15. As painful as it was, I had to lay down my pride and allow my brothers and sisters in Christ to serve me, and they continue to do so faithfully as the months pass by.
 16. When I was trying to understand why the suffering continued month after month, it was too painful for me to talk about.
 17. Until I went into the Sanctuary of God and looked at life from God's perspective, then understood I their end.
 18. When I thought they had life so easy and pain-free, could go wherever they wanted to, I then saw them on the slippery path to hell with their final steps going to destruction.
 19. They will travel that path alone and be consumed with terrors indescribable.
 20. All of the medical tests and treatments I was so weary of were nothing compared to the Lord's judgment awaiting them.
 21. My heart was convicted and my conscience smote me.
 22. I had focused on self rather than on the sufficiency of Christ.
 23. Your unchanging presence is with me as my condition deteriorates. You hold my hand and steady my tottering footsteps.
 24. You are transporting me in my journey, as I venture into new territory keeping my eyes on the final goal.
 25. If I search through heaven and earth, there is no one else who can give me the fulfillment and encouragement to go on.
 26. At times I falter in weakness when I am just totally exhausted and weary with pain and pain medication, but at those times God gives me the strength to continue "fighting the good fight."
 27. How precious to know that life will not end with this frail body, but eternal life awaits me.
 28. Father, when nothing else seems to help, please embrace me in your loving arms, reminding me of your love and the many promises in your Word that are mine to claim. I will continue to trust you and seek to encourage others no matter what life may bring.
- [This paraphrase was first published in *Midwest Mennonite Focus*. Used by permission.] 

Leisure is better when it is taken as an opportunity to do something special, not an opportunity to do nothing.

Independence Day

Steve Swartzentruber · Abbeville, SC

[As subjects of Christ's Kingdom, we sometimes find ourselves trying to explain a minority position. Several good things come out of such situations: We think more carefully of why we stand where we do. We also think about how we might explain it so that it makes sense to someone who places God and Country on nearly the same level.

May we search our own hearts with the song writer's question: "Am I a soldier of the cross; a follower of the Lamb and shall I fear to own His cause or blush to speak His name?" A later stanza gives a response of Christian courage: "Sure I must fight if I would reign; increase my courage, Lord. I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word."

Bro. Steve Swartzentruber is currently Discipleship Leader at Mountain View Nursing Home at Aroda, VA. We praise God that our service units give thoughtful attention to the spiritual needs of their volunteers. Thank you, Steve, for giving us permission to reprint the following from Mountain View Echoes, July, August, 2006. -PLM]

Recently, our nation celebrated Independence Day. Since July 4th fell on a class night, we looked at some of its history. Here

are some things we discussed:

How shall we Christians, who purpose to follow a nonresistant lifestyle, properly celebrate and/or respect this holiday? Other questions that were brought forward had no easy answers. We agreed that we need to be careful in how we relate to those who have friends and/or family that are, or have been, in the armed forces.

If you had a son who was killed by a drunk driver and someone made remarks about drinking and driving, your ears would perk up! You'd tend to be rather sensitive as to how the person speaks about it.

When we speak of the current situation in Iraq, we need to remember that there are lots of military folks over there. They have loved ones at home. How do they feel when they hear folks speak their minds negatively on this situation?


How do folks respond to you when you tell them you are nonresistant? Are we sharing our convictions in a calloused, uncaring way? Do we have convictions or merely convenient preferences?

Some time back, I was called upon for jury service. When I presented the judge with my statement, "Because of my deeply held beliefs, I

cannot serve on a jury,” he replied with this, “I understand your position. Now listen to my position—if you never sat through a jury trial, you will sit through this one. Since your beliefs don’t allow you to serve on a jury, you will be an observer. Then if you ever end up in court, for whatever reason, you will have a better understanding of what goes on.” He continued with, “I have had people say that they have beliefs such as yours and they really fussed about what I require. However, this is how I handle your position.”

I was hopeful that it wasn’t any of

our people that had presented themselves in an uncooperative way! I was also challenged to again check myself as to why I can’t serve on a jury. We like to be thrifty people, but does the dislike for jury service have more to do with time than with principle?

What about our rights? Do we act nonresistant as long as nobody messes with our rights? What rights do we as Christians have? I am thankful for our right to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus. Let’s be reminded to think and walk and talk with attitudes that reflect that hope and that relationship. 

A Good Report

Lavina Gingerich · Mountain View, AR


If we keep up with the news at all, we hear many bad reports. We may wonder if there is any good taking place in the world around us. If we let ourselves focus on all the evil that’s reported, it can be depressing, repulsive or at least disappointing.

Recent travels took us through the large Atlanta airport, which was swarming with people from all over. We didn’t expect to find any Christian influences there!

After going through the lengthy ordeal of security and customs, we found the gate where we would board the last plane on our itinerary. Suddenly I caught the faint sounds

of music drifting across the sound system. I stopped to listen...to soft strains...of a Christmas carol...none other than “Silent Night.” What a pleasant surprise!

We had heard so much unwelcome noise along the way—sounds and sights we tried to avoid hearing and seeing. Now these soft strains were powerful enough to stop us in our tracks! It brought a feeling of peace and tranquility in my heart that night amidst the noisy, frenzied atmosphere of a busy airport.

How refreshing to be able to give a good report! 

Giving

Mary June Glick

As we approach this Christmas season we think of it as a time of giving. God gave the best that heaven could offer, His own Son in the form of a baby. Women identify with the Christmas story because God used a woman to carry this helpless baby in her womb, then to care for him as an innocent child. Mary was willing to give all that she had—her body, her reputation, her future—to the plan that God had for her.

When the angel appeared to her she responded with “be it unto me according to thy word.” There was no hesitation except to inquire “how shall these things be, seeing I don’t know a man?” (meaning she had no intimate relationship with a man) The angel assured her that with God nothing is impossible.

I love the story of Mary—maybe because I was given her name. I see in her a woman who was totally committed to God and ready to obey. She was willing to give whatever was needed to fulfill God’s purpose for His Son and for her own life as well. I believe God can use women today to share His love and compassion with our families, our neighbors, and our

own church family.

Christmas is a beautiful time to give of ourselves to others. Christmas has become commercialized and filled with greed. Television and other means of advertising give the mistaken idea that we deserve the best whether or not we need it or can afford it.

Many people think they need to give their children the things they couldn’t have as children. I overheard several ladies talking while I was shopping. They lamented the fact that they didn’t know what to buy for their grandchildren, because they seemed already to have everything. They decided that they would simply give money so they can buy what they want.

I’m not saying that money is not a good gift. I just felt disturbed with the idea that children have so much that they don’t appreciate a simple gift. Mothers have a beautiful opportunity when their children are small to teach them that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Choose to make this Christmas a time of giving.

1. Give to those who may not receive a gift. This could be the elderly per-

son in your community or a family that is struggling financially, children overseas, and so on.

2. *Give by expressing appreciation to those who served you in the past year.* Your teacher, pastor, mailman, and doctor will appreciate a note of appreciation as much as anything.

3. *Give of yourself in helping others.* Many people just need someone to lighten a load whether it is in a physical or emotional way.

4. *Give to those you love.* Your family and friends appreciate your gift of love.


What should I give?

1. *Give within your means; don't go into debt to give.*

2. *Homemade gifts are a gift from the heart.* You can bake cookies, cakes,

etc., for gifts. I know one woman who made pie crusts for gifts. Jars filled with various mixes make attractive gifts. Fill pretty plates, bowls, mugs, candy dishes, or tins and wrap in plastic wrap and place a bow on top. Use the creativity within you.

3. *Give gifts to your children that will teach them to be gentle, kind and good.* Never give war toys or games of violence. Give gifts that teach them to be creative, to learn to work, and to be helpful. Books are good gifts. Hi-tech should not take the place of reading.

4. *Give because Christ gave to you.* Christmas will bless you and others as you make Christ the focus of your giving. 

junior messages

All Is Calm

Anita Yoder

Joseph, would you please help me in the shop tonight? Caroline and Andreas are already sewing. I need you to cut out more gloves.”

“Yes, Father,” Joseph responded with a sigh. “I think I will be cutting out gloves in my sleep tonight. I’ve done so many.”

“How many finished gloves do we have ready for the fair? Have you counted them?” Father asked.

“Yesterday I finished 20 pairs.” Joseph followed Father to the shop. “I haven’t counted the rest of the inventory. Do you want me to do that now?”

“No, just let that go for now. Start cutting,” urged Father.

All of the Strasser children worked together to make fine chamois skin gloves. When the weather turned colder, they took them to markets and

fairs. The children loved to go along to help sell gloves at the booth.

At the booth, Caroline hummed as she straightened the gloves and added more to the stack.

“What are you humming?” Amalie dug her hands into some large gloves and clapped her hands. “Do you think I could sell some if I tried it this way?”

“Humm-m, I don’t know,” Caroline answered absentmindedly to both questions.

“I know what song you were humming. It’s ‘Silent Night, Holy Night.’” Amalie leaned closer to Caroline and watched her work.

“Remember Uncle Karl from Oberndorf taught us that song. Father Joseph wrote it for the Christmas Eve service the time their organ quit working.” Amalie’s eyes sparkled.

“That is it, you sweet one,” Caroline smiled her approval.

“Do you care if we sing, Father?” Amalie asked excitedly.

“Sing?” Father looked at his young

daughter in surprise. “I guess not, maybe just maybe, that will draw a crowd.”

So Caroline, Joseph, Andreas, and little Amalie started singing. “Silent night, holy night...all is calm, all is bright...”

People glanced in their direction in glad surprise. Soon they had a little audience and more glove buyers.

Then the Strasser family worked with more ambition. They wondered, *Did singing really help?*

The next week they tried it again. People came back to hear them sing. They sang their special song any time it was requested, and soon became known as the “Strasser children that sing.”

They were asked to sing it for royalty. Caroline, Joseph, Andreas, and Amalie sang “Silent Night, Holy Night” for the king and queen.

In this way the message of Christ’s birth spread in Austria in the early 1800’s. How are you doing it today?



youth messages

Dear Parents, Grandparents, and other Adults:

I address with respect those who are attempting by the grace of God to train and equip godly children and grandchildren. In consideration

of the present times and in consideration of your role, you are in a very crucial position to prepare the oncoming generation in some very

important areas. Thus, I submit these thoughts:

We need help to know how we can be relevant in an increasingly globalized world. We need help to know how to cross cultural barriers in far away places as well as how to do this in our increasingly “Greek” [unbelieving] society in America. In shifting from primarily agricultural-related occupations to other vocations, we need help to know how we can live and work without surrendering to a way of life that has a strong pull towards wealth. We desperately need a practical vision of the Kingdom of God that puts our work and all we do into perspective; yet, more important, a vision that directs and motivates our work and all we do.

We need help in knowing who we are in the 21st century. In our history, we once were called Radical Reformers. Later, we became “the quiet in the land.” In our turbulent world, how can we be active Kingdom ambas-

sadors—not people who integrate comfortably with society, but people who challenge it as Jesus did?

We need help to “be” and see internally (spiritually) so that the external expressions of who we are internally matches it. As one who has been privileged to ask questions respectfully of my parents, I desire you to actively engage the sincere questions that come from the younger generation, and even take initiative in retrieving their questions from them. Listening to young people’s questions and discussing those questions with them are valuable opportunities for you to have an influence on their world after you are no longer physically and mentally able to do so. Acknowledging that you don’t have an answer to a question is better than sidestepping it or minimizing it. Finally, I express my gratefulness for the strong desire that so many of you have to exemplify what it means to be Christian. Thank you.

—Darrell Yoder, *Free Union, VA*

Dear Youth,

I suspect that not just youth read this section. I expect that there are quite a few adults who read this section also. Perhaps Darrell’s address caught your attention. For those of you who don’t know Darrell, he is presently trying to discover ways that

the Gospel can be spread in cultures quite different from our own.

Perhaps you have heard of Jonathan Pinkham, a young man from Tennessee who takes the Gospel to Native Americans who live in a canyon in Mexico that is five times

the size of the Grand Canyon. Jonathan can see whole villages further down the canyon which have never heard anything remotely close to the Gospel. Jonathan says that if 200 men would give their lives in doing what he is doing, they might be able to make a small scratch in the needs there.

To serve in such countries requires personal vision, courage, and perseverance. Such work doesn't pay well. It doesn't help a person buy a new vehicle, a new house, or allow much time for socializing with friends at home.

When a person seeks to acknowledge God in all he does, "wages" are the last thing on his mind. Surely, there are risks one takes when he leaves his comfortable style of life, but there are risks in staying at home, too. People who avoid taking risks for God also have accidents, lose fingers, get cancer, and get sick on the stomach. So, why not use our lives to bless others with truth and a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus?

Why not care about a few people who will probably go to hell unless

they repent? Besides, do you know of anyone who has pursued a comfortable style of life who is filled with peace, joy, and contentment? They aren't to be found. For some reason, God is not nearly as concerned about our living comfortably as we are.

I'm writing these few lines to nudge those of you who need some encouragement right now to take that next step of faith for God. Maybe you need courage to take a loaf of bread to that homeless man that you see each day at the gas station. Maybe you need courage to go the second mile with your relatives and friends. Whatever the next step is for you, this is your encouragement.

These people need the Gospel too. They need to see the Gospel lived out by people they can relate to. A person who is active in spreading the Gospel at home will be a useful vineyard laborer anywhere God calls him.

May God's Spirit guide your heart and mind as you drive to work, lay awake at night, or kneel beside your bed, and ponder what steps of faith God wants you to take next.

—EE

Next Month's
QUESTION

If you met someone who said they could never be good enough to be a Christian, what would you tell them?

Please send your responses by December 20.



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- In cases where the disseminator or security holder is a trustee, include in items 10 and 11 the name of the person or corporation for whom the trustee is acting. Also include the names and addresses of individuals who are disseminators and/or are held in trust or for whom the trustee is acting.
- Be sure to furnish all circulation information called for in item 15. Free circulation must be shown in items 15b, e, and f.
- Item 15c, Copies not Distributed, must include (1) newspaper copies regularly stated on Form 3541, and returned to the publisher; (2) illustrated materials from news reports, and (3) copies for office use, libraries, schools, and all other copies not distributed.
- Information given for Periodicals Publication is in general or requested publication. This Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation must be published, if it can be printed in any issue in October, or, if the publication is not published during October, in the first issue printed after October.
- In item 16, indicate the date of the last issue in which this Statement of Ownership will be published.
- Item 17 must be signed.

Failure to file or publish a statement of ownership may lead to suspension of Periodicals authorization.
PS Form 3526, October 2006 (Reverse)

THOUGHT GEMS

Venture must follow vision.

It is not enough to stare up the steps; we must step up the stairs.

• • • • •

Moses was not an ordinary law giver—
he kept the Ten Commandments brief.

• • • • •

The Christmas shoppers' complaint seems to be one of long standing.

• • • • •

A person worse than the quitter is the one who won't start.

• • • • •

Courage is not the absence of fear, but the conquest of it.

• • • • •

It requires compassion, not big muscles, to lift another's discouragement.

• • • • •

Money brings happiness to those who find happiness earning it.

• • • • •

Those who ignore health in pursuit of wealth often wind up losing both.

• • • • •

Faith is like a bridge from this world to the next.

• • • • •

God promises a safe landing, but not a calm voyage.

(USPS 767-160)
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Periodicals