



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

Galatians 6:14

JULY 2008

Meditation

The Secret of Youth 1

Editorial

Pressures on God's Flock..... 2

The Shepherd and His Sheep 5

Ministers Meeting Messages–2008..... 10

Marriages 14

Cradle Roll..... 14

Ordinations 15

Obituaries 16

Observations 18

Building a Solid Foundation–Part Two 21

Seeing the Truth..... 24

Assimilated? 25

Where Shall I Work? 27

Mission Awareness

A Muslim's Encounter with Christ..... 27

Helpers at Home

Summer..... 30

Junior Messages

The Man in White–Part 3..... 32

Youth Messages

Cultivating Fervent Beliefs..... 34

Thought Gems back cover

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

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The Secret of Youth

Irene Miller, Townville, PA

*Youth, you are but a fleeting moment
In the passing of my life!
If I know you but in body,
I shall lose you by and by;
But if I will plant thy flower
In the garden of my soul,
I shall always bear thy mark
On my face and in my heart!*

*If, while I am young in years,
I wear thee outwardly alone
And waste your precious life within
On empty, vain pursuits of self,
I shall bear no sign of you
When I am old and silver-haired.
And if I invest you not
In the Master's blessed will,
But pursue the passing world
Or some other cause or king
I may guess an empty future
Will await me after you.*

*I am young, but age is coming;
Life is short and soon will end!
The youth that grows in my heart
Must be redeemed to last forever.
"O Lord, renew my tender youth
And sanctify it for your sake!
Guide my passion and potential,
That I your Kingdom may embrace!"*



Pressures on God's Flock

Life is challenging! Jesus said it would be so but promised He'd go with us. He left us many precious promises (without expiration dates) that we are to take with us on life's journey.

God cannot lie, but we can. He cannot be fooled, but we can. Unfortunately, men sometimes give God credit for things that must sadden His heart. In our eagerness to be successful, we may think popularity and success are signs of God's approval. We may look good in the eyes of the world while at the same time, in the eyes of God, be little more than well-inflated egos. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he included this warning: "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Galatians 6:3). When he wrote to the Corinthians, he warned them of another form of self-deception, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Satan is an experienced foe who studies our weaknesses. He contrives tricks and schemes to confuse us. If he fails to make us stumble one way, he tries something else.

The Russian Baptists

Satan's persistence is illustrated by the experiences of the unregistered Christian believers of the former Soviet Union, commonly called Baptists. These precious people suffered bravely for many years under an atheistic government. Some were imprisoned, yet many of them stood firmly upon the promises and provisions of God. When the Communist government finally collapsed in the late 1980's, it brought wonderful relief to these believers.

In the years that followed the Communist collapse, a significant number of them chose to emigrate from Russia to the United States. After a time of living in America, some of these Russian Baptist parents became aware that they were being confronted by a new evil strategy. They began to see that the faith Communism could not tear away from their families by force, was being quietly stolen by ease and materialism.

They attempted home schooling, but with little success, since most of them spoke very limited English. They then approached conservative Anabaptists with this plea, "Please

provide Christian schools for us!” It is for this need that schools near Sacramento, California, and Wasilla, Alaska, (as well as other locations) were organized to provide Christian education for Russian Baptist children, with the hope of eventually turning these schools over to immigrant family members.

It is admirable that these spiritually-sensitive parents who had endured much suffering for Christ did not ignore the new pressures bearing down upon their families. They did something about it!

How are we doing?

How are we conservative Anabaptists who have lived in America for many generations dealing with the hazards around us? What are these hazards? Here are some I see:

•**Desire for Public Acclaim.** We are sometimes given public commendation. We cannot help that. But Jesus warned us, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). Acclaim can make us feel that we are doing better than we actually are.

•**Nationalistic Fervor.** Jesus made it abundantly clear that His Kingdom is separate from the kingdoms of this world. If we follow the steps of faith of Christians in apostolic times, we will not spend our energies in

political activities or in warfare. Our “citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:20 RSV). We have been assigned Kingdom interests.

•**Lack of Intimacy with God.** God has promised to go with us. Let us claim that promise. “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5b). With Him, we are never alone. Without Him, we may have the moral support of many, but if our choices do not align with the Scriptures, we are still walking outside the blessing of God, and will not arrive at our desired destination.

•**Downsizing Difficult Tasks.** Jesus asks us to be witnesses for Him. Some say good deeds are like good words and that if we have good deeds we may keep quiet about Christ. Have we ever heard or read of a Christian martyr who did not speak his faith? I doubt that we ever will. A true witness testifies through both deeds and words. The Apostles did that. They lived out the Gospel, but they also said, “We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). Even though verbal testimony does not stand alone, it is absolutely essential. Praise Jesus, He has assured us that as we do His work His way, He will go with us to the end of time! (Matthew 28:20).

•**Fear of Persecution.** Surely, man naturally reasons, there is a way of going to heaven without suffering pain or misunderstanding. Paul addressed such cowardice in his instruction in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” The resistance we face in America in recent times has not been as harsh and direct as was the persecution in Communist Russia and is even now in other parts of the world. We do, however, face real and relentless pressures to live for time rather than eternity.

•**Disrespect for Precedent.** For valid Christian experience, conviction is required. But before conviction can come, we must embrace truth. The insights of the generations who went before us can help us find our way. Surely we don’t expect each new generation to “re-invent the wheel.” To simply copy old patterns can be powerless, but to lightly push aside our parents’ insights and solutions is not wise, either. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 indicates that Paul recommended some predictability in the early church. He instructed them (and us), “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”

•**Love for Riches.** Have we forgotten that love for riches has a distinctly downward pull? (Matthew

13:2). Riches may only be servant. They must never become master. When riches become master, we may even begin to think we have earned “the good life.” The Apostle Paul pointed out that love for riches caused some people of his time: 1) “to err from the faith” and 2) “to pierce themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10). That is still the way it works. It takes us off track and it brings misery!

•**Love for Pleasure.** Jesus indicates that “the riches and pleasures of this life” can choke the good seed of the Kingdom. (Luke 8:14). What materialism does not choke out, love for pleasure may snatch away. Play, in moderation, refreshes but play in excess does not. Excessive play is like excess in other things; it is a thief stealing God’s treasures from us and our children.

Dealing with the Pressure

Let us take into proper account the wisdom of Jesus’ words: “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15b).

Apostasy sometimes shows up with a smile. If smiling does not get us to surrender, the real villain, Satan, may use ridicule. I fear that some of us may be more intimidated by a finger of mockery pointing at us than were the brave Christians in


Communist Russia with the barrel of a gun pointing at them.

We are under pressure. When open suffering for Christ comes upon us, God seeks substantial materials. Only “gold, silver and precious stones” (1 Corinthians 3:12) can go through the fires of suffering without loss. May He find these fireproof gems in our lives.

Let us be vigilant about the dangers

around us. Let us fervently ask God for His presence, His protection and His power. He will help us!

• • • • •

Reminder to reporters: Please report births, marriages, deaths and ordinations in a timely manner. Let us make these items fit the description of Current Events rather than Ancient History. Thank you! –PLM 

The Shepherd and His Sheep

Samuel Beachy, Belvidere, TN

1. The Good Shepherd. Why is Jesus called The Good Shepherd? He certainly is that. Many prophets told of the coming Messiah. Isaiah 9 tells us about Jesus’ coming to earth as a babe. But this was not the end of God’s plan. Jesus was to grow up and become a man. He went about doing good—healing the sick and preaching the Word of God. In Isaiah 40:11, it says, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

The Shepherd has given His life for the sheep. “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:1). Jesus made a tremendous sacrifice for our sins. In the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed in earnest. He was in great agony. He

knew God had called Him to die for the sins of the whole world. His spirit was willing, but His flesh was human. His sweat became as great crops of blood falling down to the ground. Judas betrayed Him; Peter denied Him. When He needed the disciples the most, they deserted Him.

He had an unfair trial in which He was scourged, mocked, and sentenced to die by crucifixion. Jesus suffered extreme pain. He had power to come down from the cross, and to name those who struck Him. He had power to disappear when Judas came to betray Him. But because of His great love for mankind, He did none of these. He died on the cross for our sins.

God used wicked men to fulfill salvation’s plan. “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified

the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8). When Jesus arose from the dead Satan was defeated. Now we can go forth, experiencing resurrection power in our life. Satan was defeated by the blood of Jesus Christ. Now we are given His power. Satan cannot stand before the blood of Jesus. Claiming the blood of Jesus is the key to victory for the Christian. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11).

When we consider what Jesus did for us, He certainly is the Good Shepherd. He has done so much for us. We owe Him our whole heart and life. The Shepherd is looking for sheep willing to follow Him.

2. The Lost Lamb. Picture in your minds a shepherd looking for a lost lamb. The shepherd may know the general area where the lamb has gone. This lamb made a wrong choice to leave the flock. When the lamb first escaped, things looked good to it. As it continued to walk through the woods and the thickets; every step took it farther from safety and nearer to destruction. Scratches and bruises covered its body. It became weaker each step of the way. Finally, it realized that it was lost and doomed.

It cried out, hoping the shepherd would hear its cry. Crying out is the

first step toward freedom. Imagine the joy of the shepherd and his lamb when they meet. As a shepherd searches for his lambs, so the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, searches for the lost sheep or people of the world.

The life of sin is a hard life. It leaves scratches and bruises on our life. Many today take their own way. They run from the Shepherd. They are prodigals, who go out into the world of sin. Sin prevails in their lives. They keep on searching for something to satisfy their inner longings. Sin does not satisfy. For some, they willingly obey the call of God. But others seem to have to come the very end of themselves before they cry out to God.

Jesus invites us to come to Him, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). The Good Shepherd stands with outstretched arms ready to receive anyone who will call on the name of Jesus. “Come as you are; just come and He will save you.” There is no problem too big for God. The Shepherd died on the cross for our sins. He gave His life so that we can live eternally. Coming to God is the first step in the Christian life. We must confess our sins and renounce Satan and works of darkness. But it doesn’t stop there, there is much work for the child of God to do. He must tell others about

the Good Shepherd and how He gave his life for the sheep.

3. Wolves—enemies of the sheep.

Sometimes in the Scriptures, “wolves” describes Satan and his followers. We, as Christians, are as sheep among wolves. Acts 20:29 says, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” The devil delights in sending grievous wolves into our homes and churches. He is raising havoc today. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

Deception is prevalent. It is important that the Christian recognizes deception. In John 10, it mentions the thief, robbers, the hireling and the wolf. These different names describe enemies of sheep. Because of salvation’s plan, Satan is very angry at the Good Shepherd and His sheep. Satan was defeated when Christ arose from the dead. Now he is very diligent in trying to destroy Christians. He comes in many sly ways. His ways are demonstrated in some medicines and healing methods. Some things may heal, but that does not make them right.

It is important to keep up our guard at all times. The enemy knows our weakness. With great fury he hurls his darts at us.

The fire of God in our lives must be kept burning brightly. The story is told of a man alone in the dark. The wolves are closing in on him. His only protection is to keep the fire beside him burning brightly. With the wolves afraid of fire, the brighter the fire, the farther the wolves stay back. If this man lets his fire go out, it means death for him. Protection is found by keeping the fire burning brightly.

How can we maintain God’s protection? By keeping God’s fire burning in our hearts. Spending time in prayer and reading and studying the Scriptures is a great aid in keeping the fire burning. Is our fire burning as it did when we first believed? What makes our fires grow dim? Prayer and Bible reading add good fuel to the fire. Keeping our eyes on Jesus is very important. If we lust after the things our flesh desires, it lowers our defenses and our “fires may burn low and go out.”

God provides a fold for His sheep. Folds are used for sheep’s protection. Ezekiel 34:14 says, “I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.” God promised Israel a good fold to protect them from their enemies.

Jesus gives us power to live above

sin. We have the resurrection power of Jesus which defeated Satan and His power gives us the power necessary to defeat Satan.

4. The Shepherd's chastening. Jesus cares about us, but He also chastens us. Why does He do this? Chastening is God's way of producing better fruit in our lives. He wants to make us more pure and holy. Chastening will only produce desirable fruit if it is accepted. If it is accepted it produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Chastening is somewhat like a road construction process. When we see "Road Construction Ahead" we may cringe and prepare for inconvenience. Road construction takes time. Travelers sometimes have to wait. But without that necessary inconvenience, the roads would deteriorate and eventually become impassable.

As it is with roads, so it is in life. Chastening, though unpleasant, is essential for a pure Christian life. It takes daily maintenance to be faithful to God. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:7).

The Lord chastens those He loves. To us, it is punishment, but God chastens us to enhance our walk with Him. When we accept it as coming from His Father heart of love, we can produce more fruit for God.

Shepherds must also chasten their sheep at times. One day a visitor stopped by to chat with a shepherd. He noticed lying beside the shepherd a lamb with a broken leg. "What happened to that poor lamb's leg?" he asked.

"I broke it." explained the shepherd.

"Why would you do such a cruel thing?"

"My lamb had a bad habit," he said, "it would wander away from the rest of the flock. It would not listen to me when I called for the sheep to come to me. As a last resort, I broke its leg. Every day I carry it to and from the pasture. When the lamb's leg heals, it will be a very obedient lamb. When its leg was broken, its stubborn will was also broken. This lamb will now be much more useful to me, since it will heed my voice."

We may have "broken leg" experiences. Although these times are unpleasant, they can yield very precious fruit. We may be lacking in the fruit of trusting our Shepherd or fully obeying God's Word. God may allow circumstances to come that try us out. We may feel discouraged or depressed, but let us just trust in God. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5b).

5. Knowing our Shepherd. We can know God, but just knowing the

Scriptures will not save us. Although knowing is important, it is of utmost importance to obey God. We need to place a full trust and confidence in God, even though our circumstances are difficult.

As we meet people we can get an idea whether or not they know the Shepherd. If God is controlling our lives, those around us can see the peace of God reigning in our hearts. We cannot make our lights shine; we can only let them shine.

Once in a meeting, people were taking turns reciting passages of Scripture. One young man got up and recited Psalm 23. The people clapped and cheered, congratulating his good performance. Then an old man got up and recited the same Psalm. His lips faltered as he endeavored to recite it. When he finished, the people were moved—some to tears. What made the difference? The older man knew the Shepherd, not just the shepherd psalm.


Do you know the Shepherd? We cannot really know Him with a half-hearted choice. It must be a total commitment for a lifetime. As we proceed, we must also make a daily choice to deny those fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

God is holy and because of His

holiness, He cannot tolerate sin. 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

Great peace and joy come from trusting the Shepherd. He has a boundless supply of blessings for His children He wants to open up the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing. We must follow our Shepherd if we would receive these blessings.

Psalm 23 mentions rich benefits from the Shepherd for his sheep: green pastures, still waters, a boundless supply of food and refreshment. So it is for us in the Word of God. He restores our souls. When we face difficult times He protects us. It is important that we are committed to God regardless of what comes into our lives.

Best of all, we can have the hope of eternal life. The Christian life is not just a life worth *dying* with, it is a life worth *living* with. Jesus has done so much for us, what can we give Him in return? We can give him many things, but most of all, He wants our whole heart and life. We owe all our life to Jesus. May we echo the words of Isaiah when the Lord called him, “Here am I, send me.” 

Ministers' Meeting Messages—2008

This is a condensation of a message preached at the annual ministers' meetings, March 25-27, 2008, near Arthur, IL, at Otto Center. The complete set of eight cassette tapes or nine CD's is available from SON Recordings, 10100 Piper Lane, Bristow, VA, 20136, for \$5, postpaid.

2. The Whole Armor of God

Philip Miller
Dundee, OH

The whole armor of God is described in Ephesians 6:10-18. The fact that we are supplied with an armor, indicates that we are at war. Satan has declared a war, not against flesh and blood, but against our spiritual welfare. Christians are soldiers in the army of God.

There have been many declarations of flesh-and-blood war in history. In the United States, Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution says: "Congress has the power to declare war." And our United States, on April 6, 1917, declared war on Germany. On Dec. 7, 1941, the U.S. declared war on Austria and Hungary. The next day, the U. S. declared war on Japan and three days after that, on Germany and Italy. Thus it was that our nation got involved in World War II. Since then, United States of America has been engaged in various wars. Much blood has been shed, costing the lives of countless soldiers and citizens.

We are also engaged in a war, but not in a flesh-and-blood war. It is a spiritual battle. Let us note the spiritual battle depicted in Revelation 12:7-9, 17. That old serpent, the devil and Satan, (and his angels) who deceives the whole world, was cast out of heaven. He was wroth with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God. He is down here on planet earth, sharing space with you and me. If you have not realized that, you are either half asleep or not in touch with reality. We are at war!

The war that is raging is between truth and falsehood. It is between right and wrong, light and darkness, life and death. It is a war for the souls of man. The Good News is that God has won the victory. Depending which side we are on tonight, we stand to benefit from that fact.

Ephesians 6 speaks about the wiles (methods, tricks) of the devil. He uses such subtle means and methods to try to get us to fall. Don't expect a fair warfare. He uses every method, fair or foul, to try to get us to fall. In military strategy, it is always unwise to underestimate the power of the enemy. The same is true in spiritual warfare. Are you persuaded that there is a battle going on? That we have an enemy of our souls? Unless we realize the reality of the war we are in, we

will not see the importance of putting on the whole armor of God.

What is the whole armor of God? When Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, he was tied to a Roman soldier. He was under house arrest. Very likely this soldier's armor brought this metaphor to Paul's mind as he wrote to the Ephesians. The armor of God provides a word picture that symbolizes the combat equipment of a Christian soldier who fights not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness. It is a spiritual armor for a spiritual battle. The armor is God's protection for us from the enemy.

When Paul used this word picture, his readers were used to seeing Roman soldiers in full armor. "Whole armor" is one word in the Greek, meaning "full armor." From that word we get our English word, Panoply, which means a complete suit of armor. (complete defense) Today we might say: "full coverage" or a complete protection plan. The phrase: "We've got you covered!" says the same thing. The protection is complete—from head to toe! God is able to keep us from falling!

The idea of "putting on" the armor of God is not a hypothetical word. It means to put it on. The original word gives the sense of sinking into a garment or to envelope oneself with clothing. Does that not also indicate that we have a part to do? God has provided it;

we need not manufacture it. We are to put it on. We are to avail ourselves of the whole armor of God.

How do we put it on? By embracing, obeying and applying the whole Gospel from the Creation to His Second Coming and everything in between! Churches and individuals tend to be stronger in one area and weaker in another. They may be strong on principle but weak on application or vice versa. We may emphasize *being* over *doing*, for instance. We tend to have pet hobby horses, don't we? We could take this belt of truth and teach only that. It is important, but that by itself will not give us the full coverage we need. All the other parts of the armor are important, but they are not to be worn in isolation from each other. If we emphasize one by itself, we are not putting on the full armor of God.

If we don't put on the full armor, we become vulnerable to the enemy. It doesn't take a very big crack in the armor for Satan to get in and destroy. Goliath was a giant at least "nine foot nine." He was covered from head to toe. But he had a little opening in his armor and David's stone found that opening and brought him down. Pride was probably the crack in Goliath's armor. Isn't pride one of the worst cracks in the churches today? Even in the lives of ministers, is not pride a crack for the enemy of our souls to get in? The list of "cracks" could go on.

The whole point of putting on the

armor is **to stand**. This is a military term that means to resist the enemy, to hold the position, and to offer no surrender. Don't give in! Why, if we are to stand and not retreat, do we see individuals and churches no longer standing? Why are some falling in defeat and despair? Is it because God's armor is not sufficient? Absolutely not! The failure is ours. Nothing is lacking in God's armor.

Standing requires commitment. Commitment is a tough word. It holds a "fight-to-the-finish" mentality. Commitment is a call to arms. Commitment means to resist the enemy, to hold our position, and offer no surrender.

Standing also requires conviction. Conviction is not a mere option, it is a requirement. Conviction stands on the premise that truth will prevail, that the Word is a powerful sword and has the last word, and that our faith needs to be living and vibrant. If our churches are to be strong, we must have strong convictions "on the ministers' bench." We can blame our young people, the world, or the influence of other churches, but I wonder if not our lack of conviction as preachers and leaders may carry the greater blame. How can we expect to hold the line if we do not have personal conviction on the issues we face? We may demand a conforming to certain guidelines, but if we lack personal conviction, we will not

stand for long. Eventually, we will retreat or fall.

The three Hebrew children in Daniel stood the test. Everyone else was bowing down but they stood. Everyone else was allowing it, everyone else was not holding their position, everyone else was bowing-- but they stood! With God's protective armor, we too can stand. We can hold our position without apology!

Let me briefly mention the parts of the Christian's armor:

- The first piece is **the belt of truth**. This held the other parts of the armor together. (Some believe that the order these pieces of armor are given is the order in which the Roman soldier put them on.) Satan is a liar, but the truth will prevail. The believer's life that is controlled by that truth will be victorious over the lie.

- The second piece is **the breastplate of righteousness**. It was made from metal plates or chains, covering the body from the neck to the waist, both front and back. This symbolizes our righteousness in Christ as well as our righteous walk in Christ. An upright life can fortify us against Satan's attacks.

- The third piece is **the shoes of the gospel of peace**. Roman soldiers wore sandals that had hobnails in their soles to give them better footing. We must be at peace with God and one another to be victorious. But this symbol also carries another meaning: We must be

ready to share the Gospel wherever we go. The victorious Christian is a witnessing Christian.

•The fourth piece is **the shield of faith**. This shield was large, usually about four feet by two feet, covered by either tough leather or metal. As the soldier held it before him, it deflected the spears, arrows, and fiery darts of the enemy. The edges of those shields were so constructed that an entire line of soldiers could interlock their shields and advance toward the enemy like a wall. Can you imagine all of us lined up here tonight with our shields of faith interlocked and moving forward together?

•The fifth piece of equipment is **the helmet of salvation**. This was a cap made of thick leather or brass, usually crowned with a crest or an ornament. It would guard the head from a blow by a sword or a battle axe. This helmet is the hope of our salvation. It is to preserve us in the day of battle. A soldier without hope of victory will not fight very effectively. We need that helmet of salvation.

•The sixth and last piece is **the sword of the Spirit**. The sword was an essential part of the soldier's armor. The Roman soldier wore on his belt a short sword to be used for close, hand-to-hand combat. The Christian's sword is the Word of God. In Hebrews 4:12, the Word of God is compared to a sword. It says it is sharp and able to pierce the in-

ner man just as the material sword can pierce the body. The more the physical sword is used, the duller it gets. But the more the spiritual sword—the Word of God—is used, the sharper it gets!

As we scroll down over the different parts of the armor, we realize that all of these together make up the whole armor of God. This armor comes as a complete package. The parts are not for individual sale. It offers full protection. As we look at these different parts of the armor, and consider them all together, does not a certain picture begin to form in our minds? What really is this armor of God?

Is it not a picture of Jesus Christ? He is our armor and our defense. He not only *provides* our defense; He *is* our defense. He is the whole armor! He is the truth. He is our righteousness. He is our peace. His faithfulness makes faith possible for us. He is our salvation. He is the Word of God. Jesus Christ not only provides the armor—He is the armor. Notice Romans 13:14: “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” The same Greek word used in Hebrews 6:11 is used here in Romans 13:14 meaning “put ye on.” Envelope yourself in Him. Sink down into the garment called Jesus.

May God help us put on this armor—Jesus Christ! He will help us stand tall and will lead us to victory.



marriages

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

Byler-Yoder

Bro. Dwilin, son of Enos and Rhoda Byler, Guys Mills, PA, and Sis. Lisa, daughter of John and Carol Yoder, Townville, PA, at Plainview Gospel Fellowship on May 3, 2008, by Ervin Miller.

King-Stoltzfus

Bro. Christian, son of David and Linda King, Parkesburg, PA, and Sis. Rose, daughter of Daniel and Sadie Mae Stoltzfus, Gap, PA, at Weavertown Church for Westhaven A.M. Church, on April 19, 2008, by Lee Stoltzfus.

Knepp-Stoltzfus

Bro. Jerald Dean, son of Ernest and Delilah Knepp, Whiteville, TN, and Sis. Jennifer Elaine, daughter of Ivan and Katrina Stoltzfus, Middleburg, PA, at Bunkertown Brethren Church for Shekinah Christian Fellowship, on May 3, 2008, by Ray Byers.

Stoltzfus-Yutz

Bro. Johnny, son of Steve and Anna Stoltzfus, Gap, PA, and Sis. Gloria, daughter of Ray and Bertha Yutz, Kalona, IA, were married at Fairview Church for Sharon Bethel Church on April 19, 2008, by Delmar Bontrager.

Yoder-Beachy

Bro. Keith, son of Marvin and Fannie Yoder, Abbeville, SC, and Sis. Hannah, daughter of Paul and Erma Beachy, Millersburg, OH, at Maranatha Church, by Ernest Hochstetler, March 29, 2008.

cradle roll

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

Birky, Aaron and Elaine (Mast), Vaughn, MT, first child and dau., Veronica Joy, May 5, 2008.

Brenneman, Daniel and Marlene (Hochstetler), Virginia Beach, VA, fourth child and dau., Judith Anne, March 20, 2008.

Coblentz, Leon and Kaylene (Miller), Leitchfield, KY, first child and dau., Meryah Laine, May 14, 2008.

Fisher, Marvin and Angela (Stoll), Due West, SC, first child and son, Zachary Chase, May 8, 2008.

Gingerich, Jason and Angela (Grabber), Sarasota, FL, fourth child, second dau., Holly Mikaela, adopted May 16, 2008; born Feb. 8, 2005.

Kaufman, Laban and Julie (Alsbaugh), Middlefield, OH, fifth child, fourth dau., Mariah Grace, March 4, 2008.

Knepp, Kristin and Rebecca (Esh), Sarasota, FL, second child, first son, Mason William, May 8, 2008.

Lengacher, Marcus and Glenda (Coblentz), Summersville, KY, first child and son, Rylan Marcus, May 11, 2008.

Miller, Steven and Anita (Smucker), Lott, TX, fourth child, second son, Cody Ray, March 19, 2008.

Miller, Wendell and Darlene (Hostetler), Shipshewana, IN, fourth child, third son, Wyatt Lee, May 18, 2008.

O'Neil, David and Bertha (Nissley). Catlett, VA, first child and son, Roman David, May 22, 2008.

Peachey, Roger and Heidi (Troyer), Plain City, OH, second child, first dau., Maria Leanne, April 11, 2008.

Sensenig, Scott and Wanda (Schrock), Shipshewana, IN, sixth child, fourth son, (one son deceased), Alex Trent, May 14, 2008.

Stoltzfus, Larion and Cheryl (Spicher), Millington, MD, second child, first son, Jaden Lamar, April, 3, 2008.

Wagler, Milan and Grace (Beachy), Cottage Grove, TN, third child, second dau., Monica Faith, May 4, 2008.

Yoder, Ivan and Cindy (Mast), Sugar-creek, OH, third child, second dau., Angie, May 2, 2008.

Yoder, John Dale and Karen (Kreider), Belvidere, TN, fifth child, second dau., Karen Jewel, May 14, 2008.

Yutzy, Jason and Julie (Miller), Grove City, MN, first child and dau., Veronica Elizabeth, April 24, 2008.

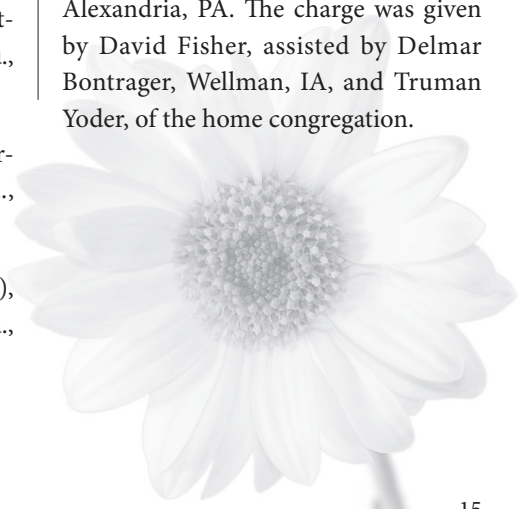
Zook, Jonathan and Geraldine (Lapp), Chesapeake, VA, third child and son, Elijah John, May 10, 2008.

ordinations

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

Bro. Howard Eichorn, 28, was called by voice of the church and ordained as deacon at Fellowship Haven Church, Woodburn, IND. on April 27, 2008. Preordination messages were brought by Paul L. Miller, of Sugarcreek, OH. The charge was given by Eugene Eicher, assisted by Paul Miller and Homer Zook.

Bro. Alton Garber, 40, was called by voice of the church and ordained as deacon at Gospel Light Fellowship, Lincoln, MO, on April 20, 2008. Preordination messages were given by David Fisher, Alexandria, PA. The charge was given by David Fisher, assisted by Delmar Bontrager, Wellman, IA, and Truman Yoder, of the home congregation.



Miller, Arden Daniel, 57, of Washington, IA, formerly of Kalona, died Dec. 29, 2007, at the Washington County Hospital following a lengthy illness. He was born Oct. 28, 1950, son of Sarah (Mast) and the late Edward F. Miller.

He attended hospital school in Iowa City. He lived at REM in Kalona several years before moving to Washington. He attended Adult Center, Systems Unlimited and WCDC and enjoyed music.

Survivors include his mother, Sarah Helmuth and her husband, Eli, Kalona; one brother, David Lee (Martha) Miller, Kalona; five sisters: Lucy (Roman) Stoltzfoos, Lancaster, PA; Elaine Miller, Kalona; Evelyn (Steven) Miller, Hutchinson, KS; Nancy Miller, Iowa City; and Louise Miller, Kalona; 26 nieces and nephews; three great nieces and three great nephews. He was preceded in death by his sister, Mary Catherine Miller and two brothers in infancy.

The funeral was at Sharon Bethel Church. Burial was in the Sharon Bethel Cemetery.

Miller, Barbara Anna (Zook), 73, of Paris, TN, died unexpectedly of a massive heart attack at her home on May 9, 2008. She was born in Dover, DE, Jan. 16, 1935, daughter of the late Amos C. and Mollie (Byler) Zook.

She was a member of Bethel Fellowship Mennonite Church, Cottage Grove, TN.

On Oct. 12, 1961, she was married to

Raymond A. Miller, who survives. Also surviving are two sons: Melvin (Connie) Miller, Shipshewana, IN; Daniel (Cristine) Miller, Cottage Grove, TN; two daughters: Kathryn Miller, Goshen, IN; Rebecca (Douglas) Potter, North Adams, MI; and 13 grandchildren. Other survivors include three brothers: Crist (Irene) Zook, Greenwood, DE; Henry (Esther) Zook, Kalona, IA; Allen (Vera) Zook, Lebanon, PA; three sisters: Florence (Alva) Miller, Cottage Grove, TN; Mary Jane (Leroy) Beachy, Millersburg, OH; and Katie (Edward) Troyer, Bloomfield, MO. She was preceded in death by one sister, Lydia Schrock; one brother-in-law, Eli Miller; and one granddaughter.

The funeral was held on May 13 at Calvary Christian Fellowship with Vernon Troyer, Leon Wagler and John Mast serving. Burial was in the adjacent New Boston cemetery.

Schwartz, Abraham B. (Abe), 78, died of respiratory complications on May 11, 2008, at his home in rural Nottawa, MI. He was born in Berne, IN, on Sept. 14, 1929, son of the late John and Barbara Schwartz.

He was a member and minister at Pilgrim Fellowship, Nottawa. From 1957 to 1969, he and his wife were missionaries in Mt. View, AR, where he was ordained as minister in 1958. After that, they moved to River Forest Nursing Home, Sturgis, MI, for several years. He also served on the board of Missions Interest Committee. Abe had a vision for

Christian education and founded Nottawa Christian School in 1974. In 1982, he launched Basic Christian Education which provides individualized curriculum to many small schools.

On Oct. 16, 1955, Abe was married to Lydia Mae Miller in Goshen, IN. She survives. Their children are Merle (Norma) Schwartz, Sturgis, MI; Paul (Michelle) Schwartz, Sturgis; and Karen (Chuck) Gray, Marydel, DE. Also surviving are 10 grandchildren. Other survivors include a sister, Rachel Hostetler; brothers, Amos and Joe; and in-laws, nieces, and nephews.

He was preceded in death by brothers: Peter, Jacob, Christian, Simon, John, Jr., Solomon, Samuel, and Melvin; and sisters: Elizabeth, Mary, Barbara, Rosa, and Sylvia.

The funeral was held on May 16 at Calvary Chapel, with John Miller, Paul Beachy, Norman Yoder and Gordon Henke serving. The committal at the burial in the Pilgrim Fellowship Church cemetery was conducted by Delbert Miller.

Swartzentruber, Lloyd J., 76, of Montezuma, GA, died of heart failure at The Medical Center in Macon, GA, March 27, 2008. He was born in Virginia Beach, VA, September 24, 1931, son of the late Jonas C. and Anna (Miller) Swartzentruber.

He was a member of Montezuma Mennonite Church. His love for others was expressed in many deeds of helpfulness in the community.

On August 28, 1952, he was married to Viola Yoder. She survives. Also surviving are two sons: Dennis ((Marlene) Swartzentruber, Suceava, Romania; and Lloyd Daniel "Donnie" and Bertha (Wingard) Swartzentruber, Montezuma; and one daughter, Brenda Kaye, Montezuma; 10 grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Other survivors include five brothers: Eldon; Norman; and Ray, all of Abbeville, SC; Daniel, Montezuma; Merlin, Ware Shoals, SC; and three sisters: Catherine (Mrs. Joe Troyer), Farmville, VA; Susan (widow of the late Daniel Yoder), Deer Lodge, TN; and Bertha (Mrs. Allen Yoder), Fairview, MO.

The funeral was held on March 30, with David Swartzentruber and Irvin Yoder serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Yoder, Bertha Grace, 69, of Montezuma, GA, died on Nov. 18, 2007, at the Flint River Community Hospital following a stroke. She was born March 17, 1938, in Norfolk, VA, daughter of the late Simon L. and Lydia E. Yoder.

She was a member of Montezuma Mennonite Church. She worked in the Montezuma Nursing Home for 18 years and then in the Americus Hospital until a tumor on her spine left her paralyzed from the waist down. She spent the last seven years of her life in the Montezuma Health Care Facility.

Survivors are three brothers: Denver S. Yoder, Hartselle, AL; Galen S. Yoder, and Gerald S. Yoder, both of Costa Rica;

four sisters: Thelma Yoder, Dublin, GA; Anna, (Mrs. Henry Hershberger), Honea Path, SC; Pauline (Mrs. Allen Yoder), Montezuma, GA; and Marilyn (Mrs. William Yoder), Belleville, PA; as well as many nieces and nephews, who loved her dearly.

She was preceded in death by two brothers, Elmer and Paul (infant) and one sister, Dorothy.

The funeral was held Nov. 21, with Lee Whitt and Donnie Swartzentruber serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Yoder, Robert Lee, 16, of Montezuma, GA, died from injuries sustained in a farming accident November 15, 2007. He was born Feb. 19, 1991, son of Rufus and Naomi (Swartzentruber) Yoder at Montezuma.

He was a member of Montezuma Mennonite Church and the Youth Choir. One of Robert's favorite songs was "Somewhere in the Skies," which was practiced several hours before his death.

He is survived by his parents; three brothers: Mervin (and wife Jenell) Yoder, Salisbury, PA; John and Ethan Yoder, Montezuma; two sisters: Glenda (Mrs. Kevin Yoder), Pickens, SC; Cynthia (Mrs. Ron Kuhns), Montezuma; two nieces and three nephews; maternal grandparents: Enos and Lena Swartzentruber of Montezuma and a host of uncles, aunts and cousins.

The funeral was held on Nov. 18, with Donnie Swartzentruber and Irvin Yoder serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

The Call of SSS (Selective Service System) was written by Lyle Hostetler, Shelbyville, MO. The author served as a conscientious objector during the 1-W era. He is a presently an Amish Mennonite bishop.

Because of Lyle's observation and experience he strongly feels that our young men are entitled to service opportunities that are more sheltered and more structured than was the case in his own experience. He has been a leader in what has become the Conservative Anabaptist Service Program (CASP). This 91-page book is an eloquent expression of that vision and concern.

The three draftees are fictional as are their parents and ministers. But the author does well in depicting them as real people. The book reflects familiarity with the present guidelines governing SSS.

The author does not want to give the impression that a draft is pending or imminent. But he is very concerned that our young people understand the importance of living their lives in a manner consistent with their interest in CO eligibility.

Draft boards are instructed to review each case individually. Church membership without a corresponding lifestyle is not considered valid.

It is noteworthy that a small number of Amish leaders had access to this manuscript before it was printed. They felt so positive about the book that they made plans to provide copies for every Amish minister. It would be a worthy goal and ideal for every young man, his parents, and all the ministers in our reading constituency to read this book

The story is fast-moving, interesting and its message is much needed.

The book should be available at your local bookstore for \$8.95; or you may order it direct from the author. Phone 573-633-1019. Add \$2 for shipping.



A man I recently met in an airport was originally from Romania. So he had first-person experience living under a dictatorship that was not friendly to Christians. His wife and home-schooled children were with him. He had a ready Christian testimony.

He is grateful for the freedoms that they enjoy in this country. But it was sobering to hear him say that he considers these freedoms a greater threat to authentic Christianity than the persecution they experienced earlier. How could this be? Let us consider the following implications:

- Serious persecution tends to weed out those who are merely nominal (in

name only) Christians.

- A climate of freedom is friendly to an attitude of gradual conformity to the spirit of the age.

- Let us remember that allowing the culture to press us into its mold is contrary to making the spirit of Christ and the teachings of the New Testament our standard.

- To recognize and address such trends in a firm and helpful manner is an urgent and grave need. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” This was written to all seven of the churches in Asia--Revelation 2 and 3.

- Nonetheless, let us be profoundly grateful for the many God-given freedoms. By God’s abundant grace, it is possible to serve God acceptably in spite of many underserved freedoms.



Bill Graves is president and CEO of the American Trucking association. He is also former governor of Kansas. To save high-priced fuel and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, he would favor reducing the speed limit for all vehicles to 65 m.p.h. A truck traveling at 75 m.p.h., burns 27% more fuel than one going 65. There is a corresponding decrease in carbon dioxide emissions.

It is estimated that this speed reduction and several other common

sense adjustments would save 86 billion gallons of fuel and prevent 900 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions over a ten-year period.

It is also noteworthy that the high fuel prices have brought fresh impetus to a large number of would-be investors. Clean energy and economy seem to be primary considerations.

• • • • •

Principal Jody McCloud spoke briefly on September 1, 2000, before a football game at Roane County High School in Kingston, TN.

He said: **“It has always been the custom at Roane County High School football games, to say a prayer and play the National Anthem, to honor God and Country.**

“Due to a recent ruling by the Supreme Court, I am told that saying a prayer is a violation of Federal Case Law. As I understand the law at this time, I can use this public facility to approve of sexual perversion and call it ‘an alternate lifestyle,’ and if someone is offended, that’s OK.

“I can use it to condone sexual promiscuity, [and even encourage immorality] and I can call it ‘safe sex.’

“I can even us this public facility to present the merits of killing an unborn baby as a ‘viable means of birth control.’ If someone is

offended, no problem...

“I can designate a school day as ‘Earth Day’ and involve students in activities to worship religiously and praise the goddess ‘Mother Earth’ and call it ‘ecology.’

“I can use literature, videos, and presentations in the classroom that depict people with strong, traditional Christian convictions as ‘simple minded’ and ‘ignorant’ and call it ‘enlightenment.’

“However, if anyone uses this facility to honor GOD and asks HIM to bless this event with safety and good sportsmanship, then Federal Case Law is violated.

“This appears to be inconsistent at best, and at worst, diabolical. Apparently, we are to be tolerant of everything and anyone, except GOD and HIS Commandments.

“Nevertheless, as a school principal, I frequently ask staff and students to abide by rules with which they do not necessarily agree. For me to do otherwise would be inconsistent, at best, and at worst, hypocritical. I suffer from that affliction enough unintentionally. I certainly do not need to add an intentional transgression.

“For this reason, I shall ‘Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s,’ and refrain from praying at this time.


“However, if you feel inspired to honor, praise and thank GOD and ask HIM, in the name of JESUS, to Bless this event, please feel free to do so. As far as I know, that’s not against the law—yet.”

One by one, the people in the stands bowed their head, held hands with one another and began to pray.

They prayed in the stands. They prayed in the team huddles. They prayed at the concession stand and they prayed in the Announcer’s Box!

They didn’t pray in the Supreme Court of the United States of America—the seat of “Justice” in the “one nation, under GOD.”

Somehow, Kingston, Tennessee remembered what so many have forgotten. We are given the Freedom OF Religion, not the Freedom **FROM** Religion. Praise GOD that HIS remnant remains!

JESUS said, “If you are ashamed of ME before men, then I will be ashamed of you before my MY FATHER.” –DLM 

Building on a Solid Foundation—Part Two of a Condensation

Lowell Miller, Nickerson, KS

This continues a condensation of the keynote address given at Hutchinson, KS, at the area-wide Christian education meeting on January 19, 2008.

Technology. Another phenomenon that impacts our traditional historical Anabaptist positions is technology. I don’t see technology as a world view in and of itself. But it is a major force in today’s world. Our response to technology will impact our world views. Probably more changes in technology have come in the last twenty years than came in the twenty centuries before that.

Many of our homes have computers and cell phones. Modern technology

offers much more: Text messaging, instant messaging, e-mail, blue booths, blackberries, Ipods, MP3’s, video games, and DVD’s. There are probably other things that I have not mentioned. These things bring a whole lot of possibilities with them and not all of them are positive. We have access to information that was not possible even very recently. Communication is now available that exceeds what we had only a decade ago. We have access to entertainment that was never possible before. We

don't know the net effect of all these things. I do have some cautions, however. One is simply the issue of **time**. Most of these technologies take time. Even something good or neutral that displaces better things is a net loss. Our family time is at a premium. In many of these activities only one person participates. Much of technology I see as no friend to the family.

Instant communication with dozens of people across the world during the course of a day...novel? Yes. Beneficial? I don't know. What will be the long-term effect of extended computer games? What do they do to the child's development of creativity? His initiative? His sensitivity? What about the music and entertainment possibilities? It goes without saying that many of the things technology is used for is not neutral, but is an active part of the system of the world. How do we control this "camel whose nose is now sticking through our front door?" We need parents, teachers, and leaders who are willing to look at technology's hard issues. Leaving everything to chance and apathy will yield its harvest. It will not be a good one. There are good uses for technology. Technology is here to stay. We don't know what all the long-term implications of technology are. But as parents and teachers, we must

give it our careful attention. It is and will continue to impact our historical Anabaptist world view.

Authors. As Anabaptists, we have been influenced in the last 30 years by mainstream evangelical thought. Some of this influence has been helpful. Some less so. Bill Gothard, James Dobson, and many others have influenced our people. What about John Eldredge, Bruce Wilkinson, or Rick Warren? It is good for us to measure any of these people and their teachings against the Gospel of the Kingdom that Christ taught and that the early church lived.

Popular Protestant World Views. Cheap grace. One popular brand of gospel that is preached is where a person is offered much with little cost. It promises the benefits of Christianity without the pain. In some way, the seeker accepts Christ then goes on living like he did before, only now he is assured he is glory-bound. Cheap grace emphasizes *grace* at the expense of *discipleship*. It is the *crown* without the *cross*. It gives *good feeling* without *obedience*.

We, as finite beings, will probably never fully understand God's grace. It is free but it is not cheap. It cost the precious blood of Jesus. Grace is a gift. Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"

Our works don't merit salvation, but "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (verse 10). We validate our faith by living in the transforming power of the resurrected Christ.

Easy grace. Painless Christianity. Somehow, it all seems at odds with the tribulations that Jesus said were in store for His disciples. And our Anabaptist forefathers didn't find the cost of discipleship a cheap thing. Cheap grace is a popular, worldly view.

Prosperity Gospel. There is another movement or world view that is called the **prosperity gospel**. This says that if you are a faithful follower of God, He will reward you abundantly financially. Some time ago, I tried to list all the passages in the New Testament that speak of possessions and wealth. In the Old Testament, the physical and spiritual were seemingly intertwined. (Much like the church and state of the old covenant.) As Israel followed God, He would bless them. Their crops would do well. Their wives would have babies. They

were blessed. Those who preach the prosperity gospel would like to apply that principle to their lives today. If I do this for God, He should reward me with a Cadillac.

There are ways that God may help you save money if you don't squander your money on alcohol or gambling. But a careful reading of the New Testament doesn't give support to the prosperity gospel. In Matthew 6, we are told to lay up treasures in heaven. In chapter 13, we are told that riches are deceitful. In Luke 12:5, we are told that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. In 1 Timothy 6, we are warned about the perils of simply *wanting* to be rich.

The prosperity gospel is a popular gospel. It says: You can have Christianity without the pain of sacrifice. In fact, you can tell how much God approves of you by the size of your bank account. By extension, the prosperity gospel would have those who are poor in earthly goods to be poor in spiritual life. The prosperity gospel is a prominent world view accepted by many Christian people, and is not unheard of in our circles.

To be continued....

*Be grateful for open doors of opportunity
and for friends who oil the hinges.*

Seeing the Truth

Theodore Yoder, Farmington, NM

You say, we are inexpert, unlearned, and know not the Scriptures. I reply: The Word is plain and needs no interpretation.”

—Menno Simons

“The Word is plain.” This was the rallying cry of the Anabaptists. The keys to truth are not held by priests and popes, to unlock and interpret the mysteries of the Word as they see best. Every plain man can understand the words of life for himself. As followers of the Anabaptist faith, we share this belief.

But though the Scriptures are as plain as the light of day, many men who read the Bible still walk in darkness. Why is this? The Scriptures are not dark, but the fallen hearts of men invent strange devices whereby they hide themselves from the truth, even when looking right at the pages of Scripture. Here are just a few of them:

Many approach the Scriptures with a pair of glasses called **double vision**. One lens shows them God’s Word, while the other lens is a mirror that shows them self. This results in severe eyestrain, which causes these people to act in strange ways. With one foot they step towards heaven, and with

the other they stride towards the world. Oh, that the resulting stumbles and tumbles would break their glasses and let them see clearly again!

Others descend upon the Bible with a microscope called **prove my point**. They painstakingly scrutinize the pages of the Bible until they find the verse they are looking for. “Aha!” they carefully snip out their specimen, and carry it around in their pocket to startle and impress others. Another name for this approach is pride, and it never reveals the truth.


Another group of people contemplate truth through a pair of backward binoculars called **complacency**. Seen through this instrument, the Word becomes a small, tidy object about a hundred yards off. It’s still near enough to solace the viewer every time he glances at it, but not near enough to interfere with his chosen way of life. Owners of these binoculars beware! Eventually you may stray so far that you will not even be able to see truth through the right end of your instrument.

Some individuals stare at the Scriptures through the sunglasses of

bitterness. These sunglasses darken with time, and eventually become so dark that no light at all can reach the wearer until they are removed.

Is man always doomed to look through these perverting instruments? Not at all! There is an antidote to all of them—repentance. If we would see truth unveiled, we must cry out to Christ to cleanse us from sin and help us get rid of the

blindness that keep us from seeing. Then Christ sends the Holy Spirit, of whom He said, “*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth*” (John 16:13). Only with this Spirit of truth can we behold the Scriptures with an open face, free from encumbrances.

[From *The Literature Lamplighter*, May-June, 2008. Used by permission.] 

Assimilated?

Robert Stauffer, Black Duck, MN

Late the other morning my grandson and I were in our “honey house” extracting honey when someone walked past the window. The couple had seen the sign at the end of our driveway and wanted to buy some maple syrup and honey. I washed up and walked with them over to our house where we have these items ready for sale.

Following their purchase, the man turned to me and inquired if he could ask a personal question. I indicated he could.

So he asked, “Are you Mennonites?”

I answered that we are. Then he went on to express his surprise to discover Mennonite people here in northern Minnesota. He grew up in the southern part of our state and had been

acquainted with Mennonites there.

Then, with what seemed to be wistfulness, he said, “I don’t know what happened to them. Either they moved away or perhaps they were assimilated into our culture.”

The customer needed to be on his way, and in a few minutes, he was gone. I was left pondering this thing of being assimilated into our culture. We had just come back from a trip and were still processing the joys and sorrows we had experienced. There were joys over seeing Christian friends from years before who are still faithfully serving the Lord. There were children who have grown up and obediently embraced the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and who, because of their relationship with the

Lord, were not ashamed to “come out and be separate” from the world.


There were also sorrows experienced on the trip. The customer that morning had described it so well—Mennonites being assimilated into the world. Where we were once known to dress modestly as the Bible teaches, we now see men in shorts and women in “shrink-wrap.” Where we were once known as people who live simply and lay up our treasures in heaven, it seems those things have been exchanged for some extravagant houses, big business, and a mad scramble to insure that the end of life is comfortable. It appears sometimes that sports scores command more interest than the souls of sinners, and the midweek ball game may draw a larger crowd than the midweek prayer meeting. Various polls have revealed that a high percentage of professing Christians live little or no differently from the world—little difference in values, little difference in morals, and little difference in priorities.

What has happened to Jesus’ teaching that the Christian is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16)? In the mad rush to identify with the lowest common denominator as it relates to Biblical application, what has happened to

Jesus’ words that to whom much is given, much shall be required (Luke 12:48)? Jesus said if the salt loses its ability to flavor, to cleanse, and to preserve it is good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of man.

We as Mennonites are not separate from the world for the sake of being separate. We are separate because of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and our heritage of attempting to faithfully apply the Scriptures to daily living. We do not cower before the world’s hatred or disapproval because Jesus said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of this world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18,19).

James writes with bold and clear language: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

God’s mandate for His disciples has not changed. Let us not be ashamed to live wholeheartedly for the Lord. Let us be the salt and light God enables us to be. How else will the world be preserved and shown the Light? 

Where Shall I Work?

Author Unknown

“Father, where shall I work today?”
And my love flowed warm and free;
Then He pointed out a humble spot,
And said, “Tend that for Me.”

I answered quickly, “Oh no, not that.
Why no one would ever see,
No matter how well my work was done;
Not that little place for me.”

And the word He spoke, it was not stern,
He answered me tenderly,
“Ah, little one, search that heart of thine,
Art thou working for them—or Me?
Nazareth was a little place,
And so was Galilee.”



mission awareness

A Muslim's Encounter with Christ

A true anonymous account

The following account was told by a converted Muslim, through an interpreter. It is given as it was told but is somewhat condensed. This account should remind us to pray for the many who are in the darkness of Islam, as well as those who have become believers and are persecuted by their family and government for their stand for Christ. This testimony reminds us of Psalm 40:2: “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.” First published by Grace Press. Used by permission.

I was raised in the Muslim religion and was taught to pray and fast and do good works to be accepted with God. By the time I was fifteen or sixteen years old, I

was a fanatically religious person. I perceived Christians as people who worshiped more than one god. They were permissive people who ate pork. I did not have vengeful feelings

toward them. I wanted them to have the true religion, Islam. I prayed with tears for the Christians.

Since childhood I had made it a point not to have close relationships with Christians, since I believed that they are not pure people in God's eyes. At the same time I was not happy or satisfied. In spite of all my efforts, I felt a barrier between me and God. I was sure the only way to know God was through the Koran and Islam. Because I had pride, I did not share my emptiness with others.

Finally I got a Bible. The first thing I read was Song of Solomon, chapter 4. It was shocking to me; I was so confident that I was in the right religion and that Christianity was a permissive religion. Yet, I was asking myself, *Are all Christians wrong in their beliefs? Would God allow His Son to be insulted and crucified? Is this the only way of salvation?* This was the beginning of my search.

I decided to take a stand. I wanted to know God and know happiness. I needed to answer the question, "If Jesus provided the true work on the cross the Koran is false. That could be the only true way."

The Koran confirms that Jesus Christ can create and resurrect from the dead. He is all-knowing and can heal leprosy and can create birds from the dust. But the Koran denies the work of redemption on Christ on the cross. I did not want to go to a priest or a Sheikh. I wanted it directly

from God. This required submission to God, and I wanted it announced to me directly from God and to give up all preconceived ideas. This was shortly before I was to be married to a Muslim girl, but I did not feel happy and I did not know why.

I lived close to the sea. One day I went away from everyone down to the sea. I was very sad that day. I had a feeling that God would give me specific direction. I was frustrated. In spite of the fact that I had been fasting and praying all these years, I still had no relationship with God. So on this day I went away from everybody. I did not pray a regular Islamic prayer. I started talking to God as I would to a person standing in front of me. I was speaking and struggling for a relationship—to be able to talk to Him and have the warmth and feeling of a personal relationship. I wept and prayed, "I really need you in my life. Am I on the right side or the wrong side?"

It seemed then that God took me into a trance, as He did with Adam when He took a rib from his side and with Abraham when the great horror of darkness fell upon him. I felt as though I were in a place surrounded by a high fence. Birds of carrion were over me. I heard sounds of weeping and gnashing of teeth. I heard voices as of monkeys and pigs, but it was the voices of people suffering and in deep pain. I was in mud up to my chest. I did not know where I was or how I got there. It seemed my feet were tied

to heavy stones. Birds were eating the flesh of the people. A black cloud covered the place with a bad smell.

I cried for someone who could get me out, someone who could give me freedom. I saw a man who was the person in charge of the place. He looked like a fox, a wild animal. I asked, "Who is this?" I heard a voice from heaven like thunder, not like the voice of a man. The voice from heaven told me that the people I heard were those who have followed and been deceived by the false prophet Mohammed, and that I was also on that path. I do not know why, but I had a strong confidence that the voice was from "Jesus, Son of Mary," as the Koran says. I did not know the name, but I had confidence He could save me. I felt that the heat of that place could kill me, so I cried for help. A light flashed, and at the same time I felt a hand. I asked: "Who are you?" The answer came: "**I am the way, the truth, and the life.**"

At that moment I came out of the trance. I put my hands on my body to see if I was dead or alive. I wept as never before. I felt clean as never before. I saw life with new eyes. I loved the whole creation. Hatred toward others disappeared. I said, "God, let me know your Gospel—to know it, to understand it, to witness to others. Let me read the Bible with new eyes." I made a covenant with Him, ready to leave off the old life to begin the new.

I left everything and began to freely

witness. Then I went to a monastery for a few months. I knew this is not where God wanted me to stay indefinitely, but He worked to break my pride and ego there. He taught me to be happy and satisfied where I am, whether or not I have food or money. I felt I was buried there—unable to testify to others—but I did not know where else to go.

After that I lived in a cemetery for seven months. This was a Muslim burial ground that had small shelters where homeless people lived. I had only the Bible with me. It was a dangerous place where killing went on, but He kept me safe. I slept on the floor. People brought bread in memory of the dead. This is what I ate. One day I was resting and complaining to God: "Does everyone who comes to You need to live like this?" But I was speaking as to a friend. I wept inside. I thought I would become paralyzed. "God, help me out of this place, as You did before." So I felt a person come to me, but it was like a form with a crown of thorns. The message was "I am trying to train you to endure hardships." So I became happy. "God, forgive me," I said. He was preparing me for greater trials.

I went to church in the city. People were looking at me because I was very strange-looking. That was not important to me because I was hearing a very lovely message. The sermon was about the sacrifices in the Old Testament. I was happy as I was leaving the church. I met a young man


who was giving invitations to Gospel meetings. I walked twenty kilometers to the meetings, a walk of over three hours. I sat on the back bench so no one would see me and ask who I was. There was a strong message about Christ. I felt very encouraged. I began to go to church on Monday evenings and Friday mornings. I listened, but I did not know people. I thought these meetings were just for me. My relationship with God reached a new horizon. But I was afraid to tell people who I was.

I went to meetings in another place. A brother from a nearby village befriended me at that meeting. I felt his true Christian love. He introduced me to the teachings of this church group. I felt sad because the Christians were afraid of me and kept their distance.

At one service I stood up and prayed joyfully and thanked the Lord for life and love. Brother Joseph spoke to Brother Jacob, who had befriended me, and he told him about me. I told them, "I want to break bread with you."

They smiled as though to say, "Not yet." They said that I needed to be part of a local church first. I did not understand what they meant by all of this.

I began to attend the nearest assembly, which was not far way. I began to grow in my walk with the Lord. I was baptized and became part of the church. Eventually the Lord provided me with my promised wife, who was also converted from a Muslim background. We had troubles with our paperwork, for we did not want to get married as Muslims, but the Lord did incredible things for us. We went through many troubles, but the Lord made a way for us. He gave us a place to live in the city. We will probably face a lot of troubles in our lives. We have a heart for people who come from an Islamic background. We know others like this.

In relating to Muslims, I focus only on the cross. The Koran teaches that Adam fell from the highest to the lowest state, but gives no solution to the fall. The Bible gives the solution: In Christ, all are made alive! 

helpers at home

Summer

Mary June Glick

Summer is here which means "No School" for the children. We envision long summer evenings, picnics, family reunions, and camping, traveling, swimming, and other fun times with the family.

Along with the fun is the extra work of mowing the lawn, weeding the garden, canning and freezing food, plus the regular routine of household duties. Our schedules can become so busy that instead of enjoying happy

times with our family we become frustrated and uptight. The happy memories we were planning to create with our family may become a distant dream as we struggle through each day. If this has been your experience, **stop** and contemplate what you really want for your family this summer.

Do you want to pack into your summer all the extra activities you possibly can or do you want to be a relaxed and disciplined mother of contented children? I believe there is more pressure on mothers today than I experienced as a young mother. It is easy for children to observe the pleasure craze that seems to be part of today's culture and become caught up in the desire to keep up with their friends.

Is it possible to have happy, contented children without the constant extras that have become a part of our (including Mennonite) culture? I believe it is, but we need to come back to a simpler lifestyle and teach our children the joy of being contented with what we have. I am not an expert on this subject, but I would like to share some ideas that you may want to incorporate into your summer plans:

Build a schedule into your day.

It's easy to let the children sleep late but it may help to have breakfast at a planned time and all start together

on the day's activities. Give each child regular chores and teach the principle of work completed before play.

Teach your child to enjoy ordinary play.

There are so many simple games to enjoy that children should never be bored, such as hopscotch, jumping rope, kick-the-can, freeze tag, "cooley over," baseball—the list goes on and on. They can build a tree house or throw a blanket over the wash line for a tent. Using their imagination will supply hours of fun. Instill love for nature. Bird watching, identifying butterflies, a walk through the woods, or studying the stars at night not only instills a love for nature but is an excellent source for teaching about the Creator God.

Plan special times as a family. These do not need to be expensive activities, but you can enjoy many simple activities together. You could go camping or roast hot dogs and marshmallows in your own backyard—or farther away. Visit local museums or the zoo; go for hikes. It may challenge your creativity to do something all of your children will enjoy.

I trust these ideas will whet your appetite for enjoyable times and that you will enjoy this summer with the family God has entrusted to your care.



The Man in White—Part 3 of 6

Roseanne Peachey

Mohammed struggled with the dreams he was having. Was Jesus Christ the true God? His father thought all Christians were foolish. He loved his father and couldn't bear to hurt him.

In Mohammed's final dream Jesus Christ was saying with loving affirmation, "Mohammed, this book is from God. All of these chapters and verses are God's Word. Have you ever heard of the way, the truth, and the life?" Jesus continued speaking, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am also the life. No one can come to God except through me!"

Mohammed's heart filled with awe at how Jesus spoke with such powerful authority, as if He held the keys to death and life itself.

"Mohammed," Jesus said with great power in His voice, "I have come to give you eternal life! If you accept Me as your Lord and Savior, you will become a child of God."

Mohammed gazed at Jesus in amazement, "Does God have children?"

"God's children are born from His

Spirit, not from the flesh. Do you believe God?" Jesus inquired.

"Yes, I believe in God," he replied.

Jesus continued, "You must believe also in Me. In this world you will have many trials, but rejoice, for I have overcome the world. Would you like to receive Me?" Jesus extended His hand toward Mohammed, who still in his dream, reached out and touched Jesus' outstretched hand.

"Yes, Lord, I will receive You."

Suddenly, he awoke from his dream. "Was it just a dream?" he whispered into the dark night. Out of the stillness a voice said warmly, "I love you, my son!" Mohammed bolted out of his cot, trembling like a windswept leaf. Yes, he recognized it as the same voice in his dreams—the wonderful voice of Jesus Christ!

"Lord Jesus, are you here?" he called out, but there was no reply. Mohammed blindly stumbled outside. In his heart of hearts, he knew that Jesus was calling his name and that his many dreams were God's way of telling him to give his life to Jesus.

Beads of hot perspiration

began running down his face as he remembered his father's loud commanding voice saying many times, "Mohammed, you must always remain a Muslim, because it is right. Allah will reward you for your endurance. You must never listen to any foolish Christian talk about their god, the prophet, Isa!" (Jesus Christ)

Mohammed's mind seemed to burn with a thousand conflicting emotions. In his mind's eye, he could see his father's rage and the rejection that would follow. He loved his father immensely and could hardly bear the thought of hurting him. But then came the shining face of Jesus Christ, whose voice rang with deep authority and power, "Mohammed, I am the way, the truth, and the life! I have come to give you eternal life!" In that moment, his mind was made up. He would say "Yes" to Jesus Christ. He arose from the dusty ground and washed his face with cool water. Tomorrow he would secretly go and see Jonathan, a Christian man in the nearby village.

"You must waste no time," Jonathan advised Mohammed the next day. "You must accept Jesus as your own Savior! I believe God has been calling you through your dreams to be His son." So there, in the humble pasture of Jonathan's farm, Mohammed knelt for the first time before the true God. With tears streaming down his face,

he wept. "Forgive me, Lord, I am a sinner. I accept the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior for the rest of my life." Jonathan gave him a Holy Bible and he marveled at how the words of Jesus in his dream corresponded perfectly with the verses in the Bible. He had never felt such pure peace and joy. All his fears vanished, as snow that disappears by the warmth of the sun. He felt no fear when announcing to his family that night, "I have become a Christian. Please do the same because it is only Jesus Christ who came to save us and He is real."

In the days and weeks that followed, his father and relatives scorned and laughed at him. His mother tried to coax him that he should not be so fickle as to go by dreams and feelings.

Mohammed would always say bravely with a new boldness, "I will follow only Jesus!"

Early one morning, his father woke him and said with a strange coldness, "Come outside with me." Mohammed was startled to see his family and relatives gathered around him in a wide circle.

"Sit down," his father commanded. Then he extended a cup toward him and said, "You will drink this, and drink all of it."

Mohammed felt a horrifying stab of icy fear. *Surely, this is a deadly poison*, he thought.

To be continued...

Dear Youth,

Have you ever wondered how a person who appeared “sound and settled” could throw away everything they stood for in a short amount of time? Have you ever wondered how a person could be so dogmatic about something that has no Biblical basis? Have you ever wondered how it is that some people become cynical and skeptical about nearly everyone and everything?

There is no better time than youth, to develop the habit of cultivating fervent beliefs. The following article was written as a term paper for Christian Worldview and Ethics class at CBS in 2008.

—EE

Cultivating Fervent Beliefs

“For at the window of my house, I looked through and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding.” (Proverbs 7:6-7) Don’t we all feel like we greatly lack understanding and wisdom at times? How do we get understanding and know assuredly what we believe? How can

we know that what we believe and what is really the truth--not some false doctrine? How do we come to the place where we can be truly and without a shadow of a doubt certain about where we stand?

We have many questions but the Bible has so many answers! “For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” (Proverbs 2:6) “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments. . . “(1 Kings 3:12) God has given us promises in His Word that this understanding and wisdom is attainable. It takes willingness on our part, however, to go through the three-step process that God has set up for us. This process takes us from being ignorant to becoming a humble person useful for His Kingdom. Using the story of Job, his wife, and three friends, I will take you through this three-step process, and also show you some wrong side roads that can be taken. These counterfeit roads will not make you a useful worker for Him, and will only lead to destruction.

The very first step is LEARNING. We are simple, ignorant human beings and God has blessed us with the wonderful opportunity of learning many, many things. We must apply ourselves, or we will not be able to learn anything. The way we learn is through studying the Bible and memorizing Scriptures. Job obviously knew a lot about God and who He was. He did not have the Bible like we have today, but he very likely had been taught very thoroughly and properly about the ways of God. When Job's wife told him to "...Curse God and die," (Job 2:9) his reply was, "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10) Reading and memorizing Scripture is so essential to a Christian's growth. As we read, the Holy Spirit can show us and convict us about areas in our life that need to be changed.

This brings us to the second step called STRUGGLING. "I applied mine heart to know and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things." (Ecclesiastes 7:25) When we begin to search diligently, with an open heart and mind, we will probably come upon many things that will make us ask questions, feel troubled, and struggle. This struggling can be confusing to a person,

and he may feel like something is wrong with him. I know, because it's happened to me. Job struggled too. After he had lost all his possessions and children, he began asking many questions. "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, "There is a man child conceived. Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?" (Job 3:3,11) But let me give you good news! When you are struggling, it means the Holy Spirit has spoken to you, and the struggle that results within you is not sinful. In fact, it's a sign that you are growing spiritually! This struggling step is probably the most crucial step. What you do with your struggles will determine whether or not you will become a humble, effective person.

There are two counterfeit roads you can take. The first road is when you completely skip this struggling step. You will likely become one of two people: a dogmatic person or a gullible person. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them

which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.” (Romans 2:17-20) “From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” (1 Timothy 1:6-7)

When we come upon a truth and become excited about it and convinced that this is the only way and no one can change our mind. . . watch out! If you have not experienced it and it has not changed your heart, it is only head knowledge. You will probably become dogmatic, insisting everyone must also learn and understand what you have just learned. Just like Job’s three friends, you may believe you have got it all figured out, and are not willing and open to other people’s concerns. This is what Eliphaz had to say: “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.” (Job 4:7-8) Eliphaz thought he knew how God operated. By his statements to Job, he declares that Job did something terrible and sinned greatly. His reasoning behind this was that when something bad

happens to a person, it means God is punishing him for something bad he did. This was a “truth” (an untruth rather) Eliphaz had picked up somewhere. Because he had not struggled with it and experienced it in his own life, he did not realize the fallacy of his argument. Thus he became dogmatic.

We can also become gullible. If we have not really experienced the truth or struggled with it, we will be unsure of where we stand. When something comes along that looks better or more appealing, we will jump at the opportunity. “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.” (Ephesians 4:14) Such people have developed apparent beliefs, not fervent ones.


There is another counterfeit road that is easy to take when we struggle with something. Instead of committing it to God and simply accepting the truth, we may become skeptics. “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Timothy 3:7) After losing all her possessions and children, Job’s wife certainly had reason to struggle and question! And that was legitimate. But what she did with that struggle

was detrimental. She became skeptical and doubtful, telling Job to “... Curse God and die.” (Job 2:9) We get stuck in the habit of questioning God’s wisdom and sovereignty. This is a terrible rut to get into and will never bring us to humble effectiveness. We must follow through with the third step.

The third step is CONFIRMING. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). When the Spirit of God shows us things in our life, and we struggle and wrestle, and question, we must take all of those things and, by faith, give them all over to Him. Give them to the One who can supply all our needs and knows exactly what He is doing. Our finite minds cannot understand everything about an infinite God. We cannot grasp or comprehend it. We must, therefore, take the truth we have learned, apply it and commit it to the One who is able to keep us. Job, after he struggled, also had to go

through the final step of confirming. “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” (Job 19:25-26) His problems had not gone away, neither had his questions been fully answered. Yet he committed everything to His Redeemer. Our questions may not be answered and our struggles may not be over, but if we follow through with the confirmation step, God will bless us with humble effectiveness.

This three-step process is not a one-time deal. It is a lifelong process! It is called spiritual growth. As you read and study the Bible, the Spirit speaks to you, you struggle and question, you confirm and God changes your heart, and you grow! Each time you go through these steps, you acquire fervent beliefs and your faith strengthens.

With confidence and full assurance, we can then say with Job, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” (Job 19:25) 

Next Month's **QUESTION**

The Apostle James writes, “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” What are some root problems we might have, that could produce this type of anger?

THOUGHT GEMS

A man with a “burning ambition” is not likely to get “fired.”

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A good sense of humor does not make a joke of everything, but it notes absurdities in the humdrum of life.

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If you would hear kind echoes, let your words be kind.

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Boredom can come when people get unlimited mileage out of a limited vocabulary.

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It's more difficult to be a consistent liar than to just always tell the truth.

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When you meet temptation, turn to the right and go straight.

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Nothing makes marriage rust like distrust.

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The cost of allergy treatment is nothing to sneeze at.

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Youth looks ahead; old age looks back; and middle age often looks tired.

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An open mind, like an open window, should be equipped with a screen to keep the bugs out.

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The man who never makes mistakes must get awfully tired doing nothing.

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