



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

## FEBRUARY 2023

Meditation	
<i>Dawning</i> .....	1
Guest Editorial	
<i>Ever Notice How We Pray?</i> .....	2
The Bottom Line	
<i>Unconditional Surrender</i> .....	6
Exceptional Learners Among Us.....	9
A Forgotten Side of God.....	13
Marriages.....	16
Cradle Roll.....	17
Ordinations .....	18
Obituaries .....	19
Observations .....	21
Mission Awareness	
<i>Bearing Precious Seed (Part 2)</i> .....	25
A Woman After God's Heart	
<i>She Has Done What She Could</i> .....	29
Junior Messages	
<i>A Friend to the Fatherless</i> .....	33
Youth Messages	
<i>Not As I Do</i> .....	34
Thought Gems .....	back cover

Calvary Messenger

February 2023

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

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

#### **Board of Directors**

*(Calvary Publications, Inc.)*  
 Matthew Raber, Chairman  
 Mark Webb, Vice-Chairman  
 Enos D. Stutzman, Treasurer  
 Galen Stutzman  
 Nathan Fisher

Material for *Calvary Messenger*, marriages, births, ordinations, obituaries, and general articles—send to the *Editor*. Other material—mail to their respective *Editors*.

**Subscriptions**, renewals, changes of address, etc.—mail to **Circulation Manager**.

**When you move**, please notify the Circulation Manager one month in advance, giving your old and new address in full, so that your mailing label can be properly corrected and your credit be kept in order.

This periodical is digitally available at [calvarymessenger.org](http://calvarymessenger.org).

**Editor:** Aaron D. Yoder  
 5188 W. 825 N., Leesburg, IN 46538  
 Ph: 574-646-2123; Fax: 800-956-7850  
[calvary.messenger.19@gmail.com](mailto:calvary.messenger.19@gmail.com)

**Contributing Editors:**  
 Simon Schrock, Enos D. Stutzman,  
 Aaron Lapp, Ronald J. Miller

**Missions Editor:** Floyd Stoltzfus  
 3750 E. Newport Rd.  
 Gordonville, PA 17529

**Youth Messages Editor:** Josh Kooistra  
 2445 Rough & Ready Rd.  
 New Concord, OH 43762  
[cm youtheditor@gmail.com](mailto:cm youtheditor@gmail.com)

**Junior Messages Editor:**  
 Mrs. Mary Ellen Beachy  
 11095 Pleasant Hill Rd.  
 Dundee, OH 44624  
[maryellenbeachy@icloud.com](mailto:maryellenbeachy@icloud.com)

**Women's Editor:**  
 Mrs. Susan Schlabach  
 7184 W. Henry Rd., Ripley, OH 45167  
[skschlabach@gmail.com](mailto:skschlabach@gmail.com)

**Circulation Manager/Treasurer:**  
 Enos D. Stutzman  
 7498 Woods West Ave.,  
 London, OH 43140  
 Ph: 614-460-9222  
[enosnmary@gmail.com](mailto:enosnmary@gmail.com)


Calvary Messenger (USPS 767-160) is published monthly by Calvary Publications. Subscription rates are: 1 year (U.S.) \$12.50, 3 years (U.S.) \$36.00. For congregations using the every-home-plan, \$11.00 per year to individual addresses. With a renewal at \$12.50 for 1 year, you may use a 1-year gift subscription free. Second class postage at Sugar creek, Ohio. Postmaster: Send address changes to Calvary Publications, Inc., 7498 Woods West Ave., London, OH 43140.

## Dawning

*Michelle King, Port Royal, PA*

With grateful heart, I rest at quiet dawning.  
The long, dark night has faded into gold.  
In quietude, I view the daylight breaking.  
Content within, my Maker I behold.  
Rest now in peace, while dawn glows into glamour.  
The soul has woken from the sleeping night.  
Behold, creation robed in glorious splendor.  
The dewdrops glisten with a radiant light.

Oh, glorious song, that rises with the morning!  
Sing to my heart the peaceful song of rest.  
Oh, precious Word, with gracious thought and warning,  
Show me the path both narrower and blessed.  
Oh, lovely view, remind me of the heavenly!  
The warblers sing in chorus to their King.  
Oh, gracious Lord, Thy world portrays Thy beauty;  
With joy I rise, let all our music ring!

The daylight dies, the night prevails with shadow.  
The tranquil rest of earth is short and still.  
Oh, brilliant morn from heaven, dawn aglow,  
For night will die when darkness is distilled.  
Oh, glamorous morn! Oh, golden, lovely morning!  
When I shall wake in heaven's perfect day.  
Eternal rest and heaven's brilliant singing  
Will rise with joy as shadows fall away. 

## Ever Notice How We Pray?

Simon Schrock, Fairfax, VA

There I was, caught between two opinions, I listened to the person on my right, and then to the one on my left. They were far apart in their thinking. Nothing could be said to bring them together. Since the hour was late and more words would be of no help, I called for prayer, inviting everyone to take part. The one on my right began praying. Then it turned into a sermon. He got his last words at us without interruption. Then the one on the left began. It was a long drawn-out affair, but a definite slam and final passing of opinion. Each prayed for God to show His will. They were really saying, *I'm right, but You show him*. Here were two people so set in their thinking and so bent on changing the other one, they couldn't even pray to God without getting at each other. They both seemed to be saying they had the Spirit's direct and final revelation, and of course, the final word. There can be no God-sent blessings to sermon prayers like that.

An examination of our prayers is

in order. When we have a problem among ourselves, we pray. That is good and proper. But how do we pray? Sometimes we end up giving God the orders and telling Him how to settle the dispute. The one on the left prays for God's will, really meaning his own will and opinion. And so does the brother on the other side of the issue. It really turns out that two sides of an issue are being pushed with prayer, each hoping to display the greatest portion of faith and to win the issue. What we really have in mind may be a selfish victory, hoping to win and be considered a man of God with all the honors of Saint Paul.

To top it off, we release our gifted humble language to hide behind while we do our Pharisee type of praying. We mix in words of humility to coat over our self-righteousness. We use prayer in a shrewd way to get our final word at the other person. We pray, *Open the blind eyes*. (But we really mean his eyes, not our own.) *Anoint our eyes with eye salve that we*

*may see.* (I can see, but make the rest see what I see.) *Lord, wake us up.* (I'm awake, but awaken my brother.) *Lord, help us not to be like the Pharisees.* (I see so many of them are.) Then for a final coat of self-righteous lather, we remind ourselves that we aren't like the publican. We ease our conscience by explaining to God we really are asking for mercy. Since God doesn't bless this kind of prayer, we return to defending our pet gripes and issues.

Another case in point: We have a prayer meeting, and we bring up a request for a wayward brother. Again, that is good and proper. We all pray, asking God to change the man now. Then we figure we had better give God a hand, so we tell the man we prayed for him.

It is possible for a child of God to pray all the described prayers and be in absolute humility and right with God and man. The wording of our prayers is not the point of examination but the attitudes that cause the wordings. God accepts our oral blunders in prayer, and one would never want to offend another Christian by judging the wording of his public prayer. But a growing Christian will want to examine what is underneath the words. Is it an honest fellowship with God? Is it a public expression of true worship?

Pat Towey is a young Christian who

has not yet reached the point in his Christian life of being self-righteous. He hasn't learned the professional *our dear gracious Father in heaven* terms yet. (Somehow, I'm hoping he won't learn them.) When he leads in public prayer, he talks to God in simple language we understand and that God understands. He makes it prayer. He doesn't use these moments as an opportunity to tell the audience that he has the Spirit's final revelation. He is glad to be accepted with God and the believers. His prayer is a simple one of thanksgiving, and a self-giving type of prayer so many of us miss.

Let us examine that point of self-giving. Many Christians would like to become a great prophet like Isaiah but are not willing to go through the total self-stripping experience of honestly saying, "*Here am I, send me*" (Isaiah 6:8). Some Christians are set on being a Paul, and repeat the acts he did. But self-righteous thinking keeps them from the starting point of being a God-used man in the seventies. Paul was totally helpless and cried, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" (Acts 9:6). But that kind of praying is a bit hard for Christians, especially since we can help ourselves so well, know so much truth, and are so nearly like Paul already. Nonsense! God can't use us to be His people for this time until

we give ourselves to Him.

That night when I was caught between two opinions, we prayed. But lacking was the attitude and prayer of telling God, *Here I am, show me; I may be wrong*. Instead it was attitudes of, *I am right, Lord, show him*. What would happen in conflicts if we honestly asked God to show us where we have been wrong and have irritated the conflict? Just what would happen in your life if you asked God from the depth of your heart to open your blind eyes, and to anoint them with eye salve so you can see all the self-righteous “Phariseism” in yourself. God will answer this kind of prayer. But so few Christians experience it. Since conflicts begin with self-righteous attitudes, each Christian should personally experience this kind of answer to a self-giving prayer.

Now back to praying the prodigal into the kingdom. It has its merits. It is God’s will for the Christian to intercede for another. But we stop our prayers short. We give orders. That is not enough. God’s Spirit may be working with an unsaved person you don’t even know. We should tell God, “Here is my life, my mind, my lips. Lead me to the seeking soul You are working with.” Somehow, in our order-calling prayers, we forget God is the Operator of things. The Spirit of

God prepares souls to receive Him. I believe many souls have missed a new life in Christ because we called only orders and failed to tell God, “Use me, and lead me to the seeking soul.” Our prayers are incomplete until we give ourselves to be freely used in building His kingdom. He answers that kind of prayer.

When we continue to call out only orders, we limit our usefulness in God’s kingdom. Our *orders only* prevent us from becoming all God wants us to become.

Do you want to build the church? Sure, you want to help others find life. It could be that the first step to church-building may be toning down orders to God. Then give yourself. Totally. Give yourself completely into His hands. Have you ever noticed how we pray? Are you dissatisfied with it? Perhaps you could start improvement right where you are, right with you. That is where a responsible person starts.

From the depth of your heart, ask God to show you the self-righteousness in yourself. Then give yourself. Pray, *here I am, lead me to the seeking soul*. When you pray that prayer, you just may have some rewarding surprises for that that day.

[Reprinted from the September 1970 issue of *Calvary Messenger*.]



## Announcement

### Beachy Ministers Meeting

April 4-6, 2023

Hosted by the Mine Road Amish Mennonite Church  
(assisted by Pequea and Weavertown congregations)

To be held at Ridgeview Mennonite Church  
3723 Ridge Rd, Gordonville, PA 17529

For information contact:  
Floyd King • 717-587-2578  
[floydking74@gmail.com](mailto:floydking74@gmail.com)



## Announcement

***Are you looking for education that develops more than your intellect?***

Faith Builders Training Institute offers an education that aims to shape students toward whole-hearted love for God and faithful commitment to His church.

The Institute offers three tracks of study:  
Teacher Apprenticing • Christian Ministries • General Studies.

Each track includes our core curriculum that helps students to see themselves and the world in proper relation to God. We want our students to develop the capacities and skills they need to join the work God is doing in the world through His church.

Join us for two years of study starting in August 2023! Our application deadline is March 1, 2023. Download an application at [fbep.org/apply](http://fbep.org/apply).

Learn about our numerous scholarships at [fbep.org/admissions/scholarships](http://fbep.org/admissions/scholarships).

Numerous colleges and universities award credit for work from Faith Builders. Depending on their degree program, Faith Builders alumni have begun four-year degree programs as sophomores or even juniors.

[fbep@fbep.org](mailto:fbep@fbep.org) • 814-789-4518 extension 220



## Unconditional Surrender

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Christian Aid Ministries began with billboard evangelism in 2006. They now have 1,275 large billboards in the U. S. and Canada.

Their persistent messages make thousands of people either mad or glad. Motivated callers can phone men who will answer questions, give biblical counsel, and sometimes take some verbal artillery over their phone.

One of the on-target messages for our day is near us on Rt. 30, where I see it almost every day. It is very simple, attractive, forthright, applicable, and basic. It applies to saint and sinner. We are driving along, and suddenly, there it is! Find peace. Surrender to Jesus. Two periods. No question marks, no exclamation points, and no semi-colons.

This is about as basic as it gets for a gospel message for one's first move to becoming a Christian. We as conservative Anabaptists have largely taken up a Protestant message

when it comes to preaching a basic message. Three subjects of routine and nearly every-Sunday emphasis comes to mind. Very frequently, we preachers will call on people to accept Jesus (when we intend for people to respond and be saved), preaching an easy believism to be saved, and for all Christians to be more diligent to understand the Bible. Some of this is spoken and emphasized beyond a balanced emphasis or a balanced ration of soul food for either sinner or saint.

Really, the Bible message is about God accepting *us* more so than we accepting Jesus. *Believing* on Jesus as the sole means for Christian living can overlook the integral part of obedience whereby various doctrines are sidelined, neglected, and even mocked by numerous church bodies. The third concern is regarding the overt use of the word *understand*, in both our writings and some of our preaching. It is subtle, and surely not intended. However, in some cases it has been a primary



emphasis, where we are called on to understand, being mentioned up to 40 times in one sermon. Also, in one article in an Anabaptist publication, understanding was given 27 times. The problem comes when it replaces the call to *believe* the principles and doctrine of God's Word. In the sermons, books, and articles being referred to, the words "faith" or "believe" are hardly mentioned at all. Do we intend our understanding to be a basic response to God and His Word instead of believing God? I hope not.

What is this war in the hearts of people that justifies the call to surrender? Even in the church? James says, "*From whence come wars and fightings among you?*" We know the letter written by James was to the churches of his day. Fighting requires taking sides that results in wars. Wars, by their very nature, tend to escalate. (Witness the summertime water battle, or the wintertime snowball fight.)

The current war in Ukraine instigated by Russia is a terrible war, worse than any of us at a safe distance can comprehend. It has gone on for almost one agonizing year. How or when will it end? Someone will need to surrender or else the perpetrators discontinue their bombardment.

War is a consumptive waster. It is

also an expensive teacher. In games, there are winners and losers. In war, history declares all kinds of winners and losers. In a real sense, in wars all are losers; there are no real winners. In wars among the nations, those who surrender are said to be the losers. In our personal lives, those who surrender their wills to God are the very ones who gain! The war referred to in the book of James is a call to overcome the war of lusts in our members.

For the thousands who drive past the billboards (CAM estimates 20 million per day), what are the various wars in their hearts? Atheists and agnostics call in, some of them are very angry that anyone would advertise that there even is the Holy Lord God. Abortion activists are at war with civility and with God. Abortion is the murder of the unborn. All kinds of addictions are at war with the law, with the addictive material supply chain, and even at war with themselves. Many people are inwardly at war with their sexual lusts that are consuming their thoughts, time, money, and going against what is right.

Some people, even some plain people, are at war with the government over bothersome regulations. Some fight over money matters, in the world for sure and

regrettably, also some in the church. Many are in a silent war against moral impurity. Some in the church are at war with the covenant they made with their congregation. The sad part is when the provisions for victory are despised, scorned, and rejected, until it manifests itself in some regrettable attitudes and some shameful actions.

Toward the excruciating end of the Civil War, the southern general, Robert E. Lee, sent word to the northern general, Ulysses S. Grant, "What terms could you accept for our surrender?"


General Grant replied, "Nothing short of unconditional surrender." Those are also the terms set by our Lord regarding the fightings and wars of humankind. Our Lord has made it clear that there can be no negotiating where we can retain some of our pet interests.

James has clearly addressed this to the church, as written to the brethren in 1:2, and in this arresting billboard style of hoisting up a dire warning in James 4:1-10. He uses the leadoff word of "ye" in verses two, three, four, and five. He blames them for laughing when they should be crying and weeping. This friendship with the world, he says, is from the devil. The prolonged crisis is because of prayerlessness, lack of resolve, and

no tears of repentance, confession, and surrender.

There it is. An extension of verse nine could say how to *draw nigh* to God, how to be *cleansed* within, and how to *weep* both over past sins and for victory over the consumptive lusts. That lengthy war made a wasteland of the soul. Draw nigh in repentance, be cleansed by confession, and weep in surrender.

Paul writes, "*What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?*" (Romans 6:21a). None! In the orchard of the soul, the war against lusts has reduced itself to a "scorched-earth" delusion. See the weeping in the song, "Must I go and empty-handed, must I meet my Savior so?" Both evangelism and revival come by repentance, confession, and surrender.

This **Bottom Line** is a call to all preachers everywhere to preach a balanced gospel. Simply put, we could arrange our own hearts with less non-stop emphasis on accepting Jesus, the no-fault assurance of easy "believism," allowing people to flirt with the world in certain gray areas of life. In its place, it is urgent in this late hour to preach, unapologetically, a balanced message of repentance, confession, and surrender! And by that, find a higher level of peace for both saint and sinner. 

# Exceptional Learners Among Us

Lynell Nissley, Lancaster, PA

**W**ho are they and how can we help them? *Motivated by her experience as a child, Lynell Nissley has studied the way some children learn differently and how parents and teachers can help them thrive. Lynell graduated from the FBTI Christian Ministries program in 2010 and teaches a course about exceptional learners in Summer Term as her family's schedule allows. Lynell assesses exceptional learners in the Lancaster, PA, area and is a consultant for their educators.*

I was in eighth grade when my parents introduced my younger brothers and me to ADHD. My fifth grade brother was newly diagnosed, and it was a relief to my brother and parents to have an overdue explanation for his difficulties.

This was my first deep experience with the world of exceptional learners, and it made one fact startlingly clear to me: challenges at school can be completely unrelated to intelligence. Until then, I had the childish assumption that my peers who struggled in school must not be as smart as I. But I knew my brother was brilliant—we spent

mealtimes discussing perpetual motion machines, and conversations with cousins included debates about science, math, or language concepts that stretched our middle-school knowledge to the max. And yet, this knowledgeable, articulate brother of mine spent every waking hour of the school year doing schoolwork, pulling good grades but enduring unimaginable levels of stress to do so.

In high school, I decided to become an advocate for students like my brother. Over the subsequent decade, God led me through years of tutoring, teaching, attending Faith Builders and additional higher education, and into the incredibly rewarding field of doing exactly that: evaluating all manner of exceptional learners so I could provide guidance and answers for struggling students and their parents, teachers, and schools.

So how do you identify and enable the exceptional learners in your community? It would take a book (or more) to fully answer that question, but here are a few guidelines and ideas.

## **Defining Exceptional Learners**

One definition for “exceptional” is “deviating from the norm”(MW.com), or in other words, different

from average. Simply put, what works for most students is not working for these. One word of caution: if you have a very small class, you do not have a “norm.” There are too few students to have a good sense for what average is. I have seen this work both ways in small schools. Sometimes in these schools, it’s easy to conclude incorrectly that a student is struggling when his few peers are exceptionally above average. Other times, it’s harder to notice how deeply a student is struggling because his peers are above average. However, in a class of 15-20 students, the outlying one, two, or three exceptional students can be more evident.

### **Areas of Exceptionality**

Academic challenges, commonly called learning disabilities, can manifest in any area. Approximately 80% of students with a learning disability have a specific type called dyslexia, which causes difficulties with phonological (sound) awareness, reading decoding, reading fluency, and/or spelling. Dyslexia frequently appears to cause difficulties with reading comprehension. However, if the same material is read aloud, these students can answer the questions as well as their peers. Therefore, it is not a comprehension difficulty. It is rooted in their difficulty of decoding: sounding out the words produced

by these otherwise meaningless squiggles we call letters, and doing so accurately and rapidly enough to still have mental energy left for understanding. In virtually every case, dyslexia also causes difficulty with spelling—encoding the sounds of our spoken language back into the correct letters.

Broader language-based learning disabilities can affect both comprehension and/or expression for both oral and written forms. In comprehension difficulties, listening comprehension is no better than reading comprehension. These students may read aloud as accurately and quickly as peers, but they cannot answer questions or retell what they just read or heard. The comprehension breakdown can occur at a word level (weak vocabulary), sentence level, or paragraph-and-larger level. Another breakdown is when the students struggle to express themselves verbally and through writing. They might struggle with oral expression and have difficulty retelling even familiar Bible stories. Sometimes, these students understand reasonably well, and when given multiple choice questions or asked to point to pictures for vocabulary terms, they can do so. But given open-ended questions or asked to express thoughts in paragraph form, they struggle.

Math learning disabilities often occur in one or more of three areas. Math fact fluency is knowing basic math facts accurately and quickly. Math computation is doing longer calculations, from long addition to fraction calculations through solving algebraic equations. Math concepts and applications includes solving story problems; using time, money, and measurement, understanding fraction and decimal values, grasping the concepts in trigonometry, and beyond. Sometimes math difficulties occur in multiple categories, but often, there is a primary area that is the weakest and it bleeds into the other areas of math.

Behavioral challenges include the myriad of non-academic actions necessary to be successful in the school setting. “Behavior” in this context is not a moral term indicating right and wrong. Rather, it refers to all the other actions that allow a child to demonstrate (or not) his academic knowledge. This can include the attention and organization concerns my brother encountered, or hyperactivity and impulsivity. Social and language difficulties emerge with the autism spectrum. Trauma histories create their own flood of attachment and social difficulties. Genetic predisposition to anxiety, depression, Obsessive Compulsive

Disorder, eating disorders, and other challenges can impact a student’s success, particularly during the high school years.

Significant exceptionalities can occur with genetic mutations or deletions, such as Down syndrome. Medical events, like a significant traumatic brain injury, or the consequences of others’ choices, such as prenatal drug and alcohol exposure, have long-term impacts on brain development. Many other times, intellectual disabilities occur for no known reason. The implications of significant exceptionalities often reach well beyond academic learning and affect functioning in other areas of life.

### **Enabling Exceptional Learners**

If you or someone you care about has a known (or suspected) diagnosis, learn all you can about that condition. Teachers and parents are all busy, but one of the most loving things you can do for the children in your care is to know them fully as God created them. That includes learning to know about any exceptionalities they are encountering. Some of the characteristics of the label will not apply, but other characteristics will shed significant light on the mysteries, grace for the struggles, and guidance for moving forward.

Find more experienced parents and teachers to learn from. What

has worked for them with specific challenges? What resources did they find helpful to equip themselves? How did they go about getting a diagnosis, if needed? What programs or techniques or accommodations allowed their students to blossom into all God created them to be? The Anabaptist community is continuing to increase the available resources for exceptional students. Examples include websites like The Dock ([www.thedockforlearning.org](http://www.thedockforlearning.org)), workshops offered at a myriad of teacher seminars around the country, and in-depth classes at Faith Builder's annual Summer Term.

Look for trustworthy, research-proven methods for interventions. The scientific literature on learning disabilities has come far in the last 30 years. Dyslexia, in particular, has an incredible research base. Sally Shaywitz's *Overcoming Dyslexia* provides foundational life-transforming information. There are proven methods of help available for almost any exceptionality. But the proven methods require a lot of individualized instruction from a dedicated teacher, parent, and/or counselor, depending on the condition. Beware of the "cure all" or magic bullet. As much as we all want the fastest solution, if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

### **What Families and Schools Must Remember**

No matter the challenges they present, exceptional children are not intentionally making your life difficult. Particularly in certain situations, such as the students who are forever acting without thinking or reacting out of trauma, it can seem like an "adult vs. child" situation. Nobody ever wins that conflict. As difficult as your life may seem due to these children in your home or classroom, their lives are even more challenging, typically through no choice of their own. Seek compassion through understanding.

Every child can learn. Not every child will learn the same material at the same age with the same type of instruction. But absolutely every child can take a step forward from their current location to more knowledge and stronger skills—in academics, behavior, social skills, emotional development, and spiritual understanding. Our job as parents and teachers is to figure out their current skills and shepherd them in their next individualized steps. This may require different methods and/or paces of instruction, different expectations for proof of learning, different types of responses to their behaviors, or different professional resources used, such as trauma/

attachment counselors, speech therapists, or medical doctors.

There is hope—for you, for your child, for your student, for this precious child’s future. Prayerfully seek support and direction from those who have

walked this road. And remember, few things will have as much eternal impact as the imprint you leave on this child’s soul. Make yours an imprint of love and understanding.

[lynell@cairneducation.com](mailto:lynell@cairneducation.com)



## A Forgotten Side of God

*Linford Bontrager, Goshen, IN*

**W**ho is God? In general, Christianity, along with a world that is void of a true knowledge of God, is ignorant or has forgotten a side of God. It’s a side of God that is not popular nor politically correct both in the secular and religious culture of today.

In an attempt to objectify God and to make Him palatable in our postmodern world with its warped human sensibilities and political correctness, mankind has left behind certain characteristics and qualities of God. In emphasizing God’s goodness and love, (indeed God is love, the source of all true love) have we failed to give attention to those qualities of God, such as His anger and hatred of sin and wickedness which often do not appeal to our human sensibilities, cultural, and religious framework?

God has been made to be someone whom He is not; or to be absent of certain characteristics, thus developing a concept of God of

our making. We create an image of God that is deficient, doing spite to the completeness of His person. Consequently, there is the violating of the second commandment in creating mentally an image of God that is not according to Who He is.

Humans have the tendency to make and consider God to be like unto themselves. In Psalm 50:21b (NKJV) God says, “*You thought that I was altogether like you; but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes.*” When we are making God to be like us, we usually set aside those attributes of God that do not fit the “frame” of what we think God should be like.

God Himself is the Judge. He is the King and Judge of the universe, the Sovereign. Do we fully understand what it means to be sovereign? I think not. Reality would prove otherwise. In short, a sovereign can do anything he pleases; he is not subject to, nor required to answer to anyone.

With limited understanding, vision, and a comprehensive scope of God, humanity has frequently put God on trial. We are guilty of shameless boldness in attempting to confront God, questioning Him, and doing so with arrogance, disrespect, and unthankfulness. Who are we to judge God?

Important to be remembered is that vengeance belongs to God. Do we understand what all that implies and encompasses? Vengeance, in belonging to God as the Sovereign, makes way for His action as a warrior. A warrior? Yes. In dealing with sin, wickedness, and His enemies, His steps of action in *warring against* are His prerogative; His holy righteous nature calls for it.

In Psalm 94:1-4, 8-11 the writer says, *“O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs—O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render punishment to the proud. Lord, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph? They utter speech, and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves. Understand, you senseless among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who instructs (disciplines) the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches*

*man knowledge? The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.”*

God is often judged by unsubmitive and arrogant people. Sometimes by certain bitter and angry, or “attempting to be” atheistic persons, God is judged as morally delinquent even to the point of sometimes calling God a moral monster. But who are we to judge God? The whole picture is not seen. We are like ants crawling on a famous artist’s painting looking at the painting under our feet. And from that perspective, some are saying, “If this is how life is, then...,” and God is blasphemed, cursed, and spoken of in disrepute. “O, God, help us to see the larger picture; but if the full picture can’t be seen, cause us all the more to trust You completely.”

Who is God? Let us recognize and realize His holiness and His wrath, that is, His settled righteous indignation and firm opposition to sin. God is holy, thrice holy; that is, He is other, transcendent, above and beyond, separate from all sin and unrighteousness. That holiness demands God’s response towards sin; and it requires a response from us.

The anger of God is spoken of frequently in the Scriptures. But have we relegated that to near non-existence? Have we neglected attributes of God due to our wanting



God to fit our image, frame, or box—of what we want God to be like. Are the warrior-like qualities of God uncomfortable to our minds?


When we realize the holy and righteous anger of God, it can cause us ever more to appreciate His love, graciousness, and mercy. Additionally, the fear of God becomes a reality in our lives, affecting how we live. God is King and in the Kingdom of God there are rules and laws to follow and obey. We love our great King and out of that love relationship we choose to obey Him and His kingdom rules. Working together with that love is the fear of God which is missing in many. The fear of God involves a number of facets—one is to have a dread of and wanting to avoid His righteous wrath and judgment.

We must see God in His wholeness, in all of His glory. Do we know God as Paul did? In Romans 11:33-36, Paul bursts forth with clarity and exultation regarding God, saying, *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be*

*glory forever. Amen.”*

Since God is sovereign, He can do anything He wants, correct? We’d do best to respect God as the Sovereign that He is. He is Someone not to be trifled with. Vengeance belongs to Him. All sin has its payday. But praise God, there is a way to have our sins taken to the judgment beforehand, taken to the Cross of Jesus! There, our sins were and are judged, and we can be exonerated and justified.

Either we are rebelling against or submitting to God. To put our relationship to God in perspective, let’s remember that our next breath is in His hands; it is but by the mercy of God that we have our next breath. When “bad” things happen to us or our loved ones, were it not for the mercy of God, worse things would happen.

God most certainly wants us to know and realize His attributes of love, compassion, graciousness, and goodness. In Exodus 34, God proclaimed, *“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”* These qualities of God we revel in and all the more as we realize and understand the often-forgotten side of God, the holy, righteous wrath and judgment of God. 

## marriages

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

### **Byler-Beachy**

Bro. Naaman, son of Enos and Donna Byler, Mt. Perry, OH, and Sis. Marie, daughter of Ivan and Judith Beachy, Oskaloosa, KS, on October 28, 2022, at Wester Hills Church for Ebenezer A.M. Church by Enos Byler.

### **Eicher-Sommers**

Bro. Merlin, son of Ervin and Irene Eicher, Oswego, KS, and Sis. Sonya, daughter of David and Yvonne Sommers, Oswego, KS, on December 3, 2022, at Wesley Methodist Church for Cornerstone Mennonite Church by Stan Nisly.

### **King-Stoltzfus**

Bro. Justin, son of Raymond and Rachel King, Castile, NY, and Sis. Andrea, daughter of Dathan and Wilma Stoltzfus, Perry, NY, on October 29, 2022, at Old Paths Chapel for Silver Lake Mennonite Church by Dathan Stoltzfus.

### **Schrock-Nissley**

Bro. Daryl, son of Devon and Doris Schrock, Goshen, IN, and Sis. Colette, daughter of Gary and Tina Nissley, Shipshewana, IN, on August 27, 2022, at Fairhaven Mennonite Church for Rosewood Fellowship by Lavern Miller.

A blessing that is  
*shared* is not  
halved but *doubled*.

### **Schrock-Overholt**

Bro. Stephen, son of Elvin and Elverda Schrock, Riverton, WY, and Sis. Leah, daughter of Lawrence and BethAnne Overholt, Lyndon, KS, on November 4, 2022, at Lyndon A.M. Church by Lawrence Overholt.

### **Swartzentruber-Yoder**

Bro. Dustin, son of Abner and Miriam Swartzentruber, Oakland, MD, and Sis. Delores, daughter of William and Martha Yoder, Oakland, MD, on December 3, 2022, at Cherry Glade Mennonite Church for Mountain View Mennonite Church by Jerry Yoder.

### **Weaver-Miller**

Bro. Tyler, son of Irvin Jr. and Laverda Weaver, Blackville, SC, and Sis. Miranda, daughter of Marion and Marlene Miller, New Concord, OH, on November 19, 2022, at Cornerstone Full Gospel Church for Heritage Mennonite Church by Jonathan Raber.

### **Weaver-Webb**

Bro. Jason, son of Eldon and Susanna Weaver, Kokomo, IN, and Sis. Tiffany, daughter of David and Ruth Webb, Auburn, IN, on November 5, 2022, at Auburn Church of the Nazarene by Mark Eicher.

### **Yoder-Graber**

Bro. Irvin Yoder, Montezuma, GA, and Sis. Laura (Yoder) Graber, Amboy, IN, on December 10, 2022, at Bethany Fellowship Church by Donny Swartzentruber.

### **Yoder-Yoder**

Bro. Micah, son of Lonnie and Violet Yoder, Lexington, IN, and Sis. Jayla, daughter of Eugene and Rose Yoder, Oskaloosa, KS, on December 10, 2022, at Ebenezer A.M. Church by David L. Yoder.



## **cradle roll**

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

**Byler**, Andrew and Andrea (Nisley), Meadville, PA, fourth child, second daughter, Hollis Josephine, December 20, 2022.

**Byler**, Kevin and Rhoda (King), Martinsburg, OH, second child, first son, Ezra Peterson, December 6, 2022.

**Graber**, Brandon and Nioma (Stutzman), Lovington, IL, third child, second daughter, Makenna Joy, November 30, 2022.

**Herschberger**, Ervin and Regina (Schrock), Sullivan, IL, fourth child and daughter, Aliyah Faith, November 23, 2022.

**Kauffman**, Kevin and Martha (Hochstetler), Casa Grande, AZ, first child and daughter, Rhylee Dawn, August 25, 2022.

**Miller**, Brandon and Rosanna (Stoltzfus), Dundee, OH, sixth child, fourth daughter (one son deceased), Claire Susanna, December 2, 2022.

**Miller**, Joe and Karinda (Sommers), Hiddenite, NC, fifth child, third daughter, Kiana Skye, October 18, 2022.

**Miller**, Jon and Emilene (Yoder), Hiddenite, NC, fourth child, second son (stillborn), Zachary David, May 23, 2022.

**Mullett**, Elmer and Donice (Schrock), Sturgis, MI, second child, first son, Koltyn Steele, December 2, 2022.

**Reynolds**, David and Rhoda (Beachy), Fresno, OH, second child, first son, Osrik Dawson, December 10, 2022.

**Schrock**, Matt and Ella (Peight), Lexington, IN, third child and son, Kyle Lamar, November 17, 2022.


**Stoltzfus**, Marcus and Dawn (Knepp), Abbeville, SC, second child, first daughter, Wrenley Clare, December 26, 2022.

**Weaver**, Melvin Jr. and Laura (Miller), Sturgis, MI, fourth child, second son, Kylan Eric, November 23, 2022.

**Webb**, Colton and Erica (Wagler), Cross Hill, SC, third child, second daughter, Harper Alice, July 21, 2022.


**Yoder**, Eli and Judy (Mast), Sturgis, MI, sixth child, fifth daughter (two deceased), Khloe RaeLynn, November 22, 2022.

**Yoder**, Luke and Esther (Smoker), Free Union, VA, fourth child, first daughter, Victoria Esther, November 13, 2022.

**Zook**, Matthew and Carrie (Hostetler), Martinsburg, OH, first child and son, Arthur Grey, August 15, 2022. 



**Bro. Philip Miller**, 35, (wife, Jessica Graber), Oskaloosa, KS, was ordained minister for Ebenezer A.M. Church on November 20, 2022. Preordination messages were given by Nelson Troyer. The charge was given by David L. Yoder. Tristan Yoder shared the lot.

**Bro. James Yoder**, 42, (wife, Elsie Yoder), Paris, TN, was ordained minister for Calvary Christian Fellowship on November 13, 2022. Preordination messages were given by Dwight Miller and Gary Miller. The charge was given by Dwight Miller assisted by Michael Yoder and Gary Miller. Ralph Yoder and Lovel Mejia shared the lot. 

## ordinations

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

**Bro. Elvin Fisher**, 40, (wife, Sara Lynn Esh), Honey Grove, PA, was ordained minister at Shade Mountain Christian Fellowship Church on October 30, 2022. The charge was given by Daniel Fisher, assisted by Leroy Yoder and Arlin Kurtz. Abner Petersheim, Steve Stoltzfoos, and Jared Coulter shared the lot.

*Life is short, and we never have too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are traveling the dark journey with us.*

*Oh, be swift to love, make haste to be kind!*

-HENRI FRÉDÉRIC AMIEL

**Blank**, Jacob K., 82, of Perry, NY, passed away on October 25, 2022. He was born in New Holland, PA, on June 21, 1940, to the late Henry L. and Malinda (Kauffman) Blank. On January 18, 1964, he married Elizabeth J. Miller.

He was a member of the Silver Lake Mennonite Church.

He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, two daughters: Beulah (Steven) Stoltzfus, Perry; Cheryl (Steven) Lantz, Iva, SC; two sons: Ron (Shirley), Intercourse, PA; Kevin (Angela), Uganda, Africa; three sisters: Katie Stoltzfus, Lizzie Yoder, Fannie (Melvin) Stoltzfus; two brothers: Christian (Lizzie), Henry (Anna Mary); two sisters-in-law: Lizzie Blank, Anne Blank; 14 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by four brothers: Samuel, Amos, Sylvan (Lizzie), Alvin (Anna Mary); and two brothers-in-law: Omar Stoltzfus and Israel Yoder.

The funeral service was held October 31, 2022, at the Valley Chapel with interment in the Silver Lake Mennonite Church Cemetery.

**Bontrager**, Ella A., 93, of Arthur, IL, passed away on December 11, 2022, at The Arthur Home. She was born August 9, 1929, to Adlai B. and Katie (Mast) Miller in Arthur, IL. She married Raymond C. Bontrager on December 14, 1948. They cherished 73 years together until his passing on February 7, 2022.

Ella was a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. She helped her husband on the farm near Sullivan, IL. She enjoyed making quilts and made a quilt for each of her grandchildren.

Ella and Ray were two of the founding members of Pleasant View Church in 1958, where she was a faithful member.

She is survived by her four children: Marie (Dan) Kuhns, Arthur; Ruth (Gary) Kuhns, Tuscola; Kenneth (Goldie), Sullivan; Judy (Darrel) Herschberger, Tuscola; daughter-in-law, Esther (Nelson) Kurtz, Sullivan; 22 grandchildren, 48 great-grandchildren, a great-great-grandchild, and sister-in-law, Alta Miller, Arcola.

She was preceded in death by her husband, parents, two sons: Willis and Ernest; a grandson, Mark Bontrager; six siblings: Lena (Adlai) Yoder, Henry (Mattie) Miller, Lucy (Ben) Schrock, Sovilla Miller, Fred Miller, and Daniel (Laura) (Ardyth) Miller.

The funeral service was held at Pleasant View Church on December 14, 2022, with Matthew Bontrager officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

**Miller**, Edna C., 82, of Baltic, OH, passed away at the Aultman Hospital on August 29, 2022, after an extended illness of genetic and congestive heart failure. She was born on March 27, 1940, to the late Chris A. and Cora (Troyer) Miller. On September 14, 1961, she married

Noah J. Miller, who survives.

Edna accepted Christ in her youth and remained faithful unto the end. She was a loving wife, mother, and grandmother, and a faithful charter member of Meadows of Light A.M. Church. She enjoyed gardening and spending time with her grandchildren.

In addition to her husband, Noah, of 61 years, she is survived by her children: Anna Marie (Jonathan) Gingerich, Plain City; Josias Lael (Sharon), Baltic; six grandchildren: Jonita (Chris) Miller, Jolynn (Kathryn) Gingerich, Micah (Maria) Gingerich, Lance, Jaden, Kylie Miller; two great-grandchildren; a sister, Verba (late Eli) Yoder, Clare, MI; stepbrothers: Eli (Laura) Weaver, Bob (Sue) Weaver; stepbrother-in-law, Ivan (late Miriam) Yoder, and stepsister-in-law, Janie (late Dennis) Weaver.

She was preceded in death by her daughter, Renita Faye Gingerich; three stillborn children: Delilah, Jeffrey, Jason; her stepmother, Ada (Weaver) Miller; stepsister, Miriam Yoder; stepbrother, Dennis Weaver; and brother-in-law, Eli Yoder.

The funeral service was held at Meadows of Light A.M. Church September 1, 2022, with Roman Mullet, Bobby Miller, and James R. Mullet officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery, with Floyd Yoder serving.

**Steckly**, Aaron W., passed away peacefully at his home in Newton, ON, on November 4, 2022, on his 88th birthday.

Aaron was a faithful member of Fairhaven A.M. Church.

He was the beloved husband of Elsie (Kuepfer) for 56 years, and the loving father of Ronald (deceased 2009) (Sharon), David (Tammy), Steven, Stanley (Barbara), and Catherine (Tony) Gerber. He was the beloved grandfather of Matthew, Jeffrey, Mary, Jennifer, Michael, Jonathan, Melody, Jason, Brittany, Jonathan David, Kaylin, Donovan, Kristen and Alyssa Steckly, Ryder Steckly-Gerber, and three great-grandchildren; Emma, Kaitlyn, and Copeland Steckly. He is also lovingly remembered by brothers and sisters: Nancy Steckly, Allan Steckly, Beatrice Steckly, Irene (Ben) Steckly, and Valentine (Marlean) Steckly.

He was predeceased by grandson Joel Steckly; brothers and sisters: Dorothy (Simon) Kuepfer, Ephraim (Ruth) Steckly, Solomon (Jean) Steckly, Samuel Steckly, and Mary and Harold in infancy.

The funeral service was held November 8, 2022, at Faith Mennonite Church. Burial was at Mornington A.M. Cemetery.



God often digs the wells of *joy*

WITH THE SPADE OF SORROW.



In 1922, Mennonites from Canada migrated to Mexico where they initially established the Manitoba and Swift Current colonies. This migration was in response to perceived threats in Canada to the faith and lifestyle traditions and isolation that they wished to preserve.

In August of 2022, they celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the arrival of these first Mennonite migrants to Mexico with a five-day celebration in Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua. Thousands participated in this celebration that included visitors from Bolivia, Colombia, Argentina, Paraguay, Belize, Germany, the USA, and Canada. Belize and the Latin America countries are countries where there has been subsequent migration of Mennonites.

Those who gathered for this celebration included consular representatives from Germany, the USA, and Canada. The Bank of Mexico announced plans to issue a 20-peso coin commemorating the 100-year anniversary of the arrival of the Mennonites in Mexico.

• • • • •

Then President John F. Kennedy is quoted to have said, “War will exist until that distant day when the

conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige as the warrior does today.”

In 1940 the Civilian Public Service (CPS) program was launched. This was a profound accommodation extended by the US government to those who objected to military involvement on the basis of conscience. The 1-W program that followed, early in the 1950s, was similar, in that it offered an alternative to military service for those who couldn’t participate in that way. I will not here delve into the similarities and differences of these programs. All that I know about these, I’ve either been told or have read, since I was born in 1965. It strikes me that most of those who read this periodical are probably similarly familiar with these programs.

Our youngest son turned 18 on his last birthday. My father was about as old as Ethan is now when he began his CPS time. Dad was approximately 18 years and four months old when he began his 13-month time in CPS. He served in both Gulfport, Mississippi, and Dennison, Iowa. Most of the CPS camps were involved with soil conservation or forestry.

Some of those who served with

CPS struggled to see their work as being of vital national importance. The 1-W program that followed offered a broader range of service opportunities. Tweaking the offerings for those pursuing public service as an alternative to military service was widely appreciated by those who served. I'd like to offer a few musings and reflections as I pondered these things.

• • • • •

Some of those who served in these alternative service programs served in mental health facilities and were jolted by the lack of humane care and basic human dignity offered in these facilities. The spotlight that was shone on these shortcomings, as a result of this conscientious objector involvement, provided a significant impetus for major reforms in the standards of care provided to mental patients today.

• • • • •

There were about 7,000 men who served from various peace churches in the CPS program. Not all, and maybe it would be better to say, not many, of the CPS placements were camps that were very friendly to the young faith of those who were uprooted from their homes, churches, and communities. Unfortunately, not all who served with CPS returned to the faith tradition they left when they served.

Concern for this dynamic nourished a desire to provide an alternative to these CPS and 1-W opportunities that would provide a more stable and nurturing environment. It would be simplistic to say that this is *the* reason these church-sponsored opportunities exist for our youth today. But at the same time, it would be improper to overlook the significant role that this awareness played in the genesis of these efforts.

• • • • •

I'd be faced with a variety of conflicting sentiments if I were to send my 18-year-old son off to a CPS camp. I even tend to think that a better age for serving in a church VS program is a bit later than 18 years old. But if I were faced with the obligation of choosing which of these two I'd prefer, there is no hesitation. In a flash, I'd prefer to see him serve at Hillcrest, Faith Mission, Mountain View, or a similar effort than go off to some distant place with folks who may or may not be sympathetic to the values we've embraced.

It's been said before, but I'll say it again, if the factors of obligatory service (the priority of a supportive setting in which to serve) would present themselves again along with the allowance for that service to be performed in a church-sponsored



setting, we'd be scrambling. We don't presently have nearly enough units for our people to serve if voluntary service would somehow become mandatory rather than voluntary.

• • • • •

Conservative Anabaptist Service Program (CASP) is a program that resulted as various church leaders contemplated the potential difficulty we could face if these aforementioned factors would converge on us again. Various church affiliations operate a variety of CASP programs. The one that I'm most familiar with runs in Hutchinson, Kansas, for the first months of each calendar year. Teams volunteer for four weeks, and they are involved in projects in and around Hutchinson. These teams consist of a couple who organizes the work projects, another couple who arranges for the domestic and culinary needs of the crew, and fewer than a dozen young men.

Sometimes it has been a struggle to find the necessary people willing to fill out these teams. Just recently we learned that the funding for the current project in Hutchinson is inadequate to finish the course of activities for this year.

CASP was seen as a type of project that could very quickly be scaled up and easily replicated if the need arose. In the meantime, those who

serve gain a blessing and those who are served receive a blessing.

• • • • •

Just yesterday a brother related an account to me as it was told him. A worker at a factory where he earned a handsome hourly wage was searching for part-time work because of an announced furlough at the factory where he was employed. He inquired if one of his acquaintances could hire him as a construction worker for a short time. After some deliberation, the construction owner decided he could offer him short-term work for \$35 per hour. The job seeker declined, saying he wouldn't be willing to work for such a small wage. After the short-term factory furlough was extended to nine weeks, the furloughed worker thought on his rejection of the offer for \$35 per hour and recanted. But when he went back to his construction friend, the position he previously rejected had already been taken by someone else and was no longer available.

This illustrates the fact that economic prosperity tends to weaken overall interest in opportunities that don't pay as well if earning is a priority. This includes almost all volunteer and other service and mission endeavors. It seems to me that when freedoms are high and money is sufficient, our collective willingness should outstrip

the opportunities to serve. But what is observed is that when the economy is sluggish and opportunities are fewer, more people are willing to consider the benefits of non-remunerative service. If that observation is accurate, why is it thus? And what does it say about us if it is? I'll let you all ponder the implications of the answers to these questions. These answers don't reassure me quite as much as I wish they would.

• • • • •

The prophet Micah prophetically speaks of a time in the future in chapter four, verse three, where he says, *“And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”*

Repurposing the destructive and murderous war instruments of swords and spears into the useful tools of plowshares and pruninghooks is rich in imagery and significance. This resonates deeply with those who have responded to Christ's call to be builders and peacemakers rather than destroyers and murderers. I'd like to leave us with three questions as we ponder the implications of this peacemaking, non-violent, “useful-building” priority that we profess.

1. Does the staffing reality in our volunteer and mission opportunities reflect that priority?

2. The pride of independence, competition, and personal advancement are all pretty carnal. Have we beaten those inherent instruments of destruction and mayhem into useful tools in building God's Kingdom here and now? What does the history of church divisions and splits offer as testimony to that priority? These implications are far more immediate and practical than the involvement in war is for many of us today. Is it appropriate to say we are opposed to war but germinate the same carnal seeds of destruction and division in our hearts?

3. If I was called to offer validation and documentation in support of my CO position today, would my evidence stand up to the scrutiny of an investigation? I remember the late Ed Yoder talking about memories he had of investigators circulating in his boyhood home community to verify whether CO claims were legitimate. Some young folks who claimed CO status back in the day didn't offer supporting evidence of that position and weren't granted the privilege. If my profession is one of peace, but my life is one of careless living or of contention, my life gives mixed signals at best.

-RJM 

## Bearing Precious Seed (Part 2)

*Daniel Miller, serving in the Middle East*

*(It would be interesting for you to read Part 1 to get the blessing of Part 2. FS)*

I'd like to briefly summarize a few of the main points in Nik Ripken's book, *The Insanity of Obedience* (a book I highly recommend that you read).

- The New Testament is clear that Christian believers should be involved in telling, proclaiming, and demonstrating the Gospel. But it seems like believers themselves have added the seemingly mandatory element of a harvest. Christian workers feel like they have to have a measurable response to the Gospel in order to evaluate their efforts and to demonstrate success.

This makes sense, of course, if we look at seed sowing like a business where you make decisions based on what is successful, what brings about desired results, and so on.

- Sowing the Word of God is not a business and never should become that! And while it is only normal that we desire to see a harvest, we have to remember that God is asking us to be obedient to His call whether or not we see that harvest.

- If we demand of God, or of other seed sowers, a spiritual harvest, then *we will tend to primarily spread the seed in places where response to the Gospel is more likely or in places where response is already happening*. At the same time, we will tend to stay away from places where response to the Gospel is less likely. What does this mean in reality? It means something that I believe is very tragic.

It means that the people who have been unengaged and unreached for generations will likely stay unengaged and unreached.

Ripken says and I quote, "Astoundingly, the vast majority of overseas workers today reside in environments which are already defined as 'Christian' and therefore have a significant believing witness."

Now Ripken was speaking specifically in the context of foreign missions. But for those of us who are serving God in our own home communities, this also begs a question. How many of the seeds that we sow are sown just within

our own families, our churches, and among other Christian people in our communities, and how many of the seeds are being sown among the unchurched, scoffers, agnostics, and the poor?

We are not saying that God's will is not that we plant seeds everywhere. We just said that this was important! But focusing on areas that seem fruitful, and ignoring "hard" soil where there has been almost no harvest, is not a balanced approach. Who are we to say in which soil seeds will germinate? Some seeds take *a long time* to produce fruit! This is true in the natural world, and it's also true in the spiritual world.

Anyone who has gardened knows that seeds do not germinate immediately. There is a waiting period. Maybe the soil is good soil, but it's lacking water. Maybe there is a rock that is blocking the seed from penetrating the soil so it has to take the long way to reach daylight.

Recently, scientists collected date palm seeds from an Israeli desert that were 2,000 years old. They were able to sprout those seeds and grow seven date palm trees. Those seeds were there all those years, just waiting for the right conditions in which to germinate, sprout, and bring forth more seeds.

*Too Hard for God* is an inspiring

book written by Charles Marsh about the 45 years that he and his family spent working in a North African country. Christian workers first went there in 1881 and sowed seeds for almost 100 years with very hard labor and very little fruit. When one young girl finally did accept the Gospel message, her family poisoned her and buried her in the garden. But in the last few decades, over 100 years after the seeds began to be sown, there has been a tremendous harvest in that country. Many of the seeds planted years ago have germinated and there is a thriving church.

In his book, Marsh recalls a poem that was very meaningful to him during his 45 years of sowing seeds in this hard soil.

I wanted to sow in a fertile field  
That bordered a pleasant land.

Where fellowships sweet their joys  
would yield,

And comforts be mine to  
command.

He gave me instead, a barren spot  
In a land that was wild and drear.

Where peril and hardship must be  
my lot—

Afar from all I held dear.

But I learned that the field of His  
choice was fair,

Far better than any beside.

For the Master, also, labored there—

My Strength, my Companion, and Guide.

We may not be guaranteed that we will see a harvest, but we are guaranteed that He will be with us.

The soil of the human heart cannot be seen with the eye. It is impossible for us to know in which lives our seeds will flourish and take root. But one thing is certain, if you allow yourself to become discouraged, if you look at your life or ministry the way I look at my garden plot and say it's not worth it, **then there will be no harvest.** Because there is one way and only one way to guarantee that there will be no harvest, and that is if you stop sowing seeds.

Now you may be thinking about those text verses that we read at the beginning, *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"* (Psalm 126:5,6). Don't these verses give us the promise of a harvest?

Let's look at the verses a bit more closely. They give us the picture of a poor farmer, possibly one whose last crop did poorly. He may have needed

everything that his crop produced for his own use, but he knew that if he wanted to have a future harvest, he would need to save some seeds. So he did. He kept back a bit of his crop so that he would have seed for the next planting. This was indeed "precious seed." He sowed it with both sadness and hope, and his hope was not in vain. The seed was productive. It yielded a bountiful harvest and brought him joy.

As sowers of the Word of God, we too consider our seed to be precious. And likely many of you can tell of times when sowing it has been difficult and has caused you sleepless nights and times of tears. You may have found yourself despairing because you didn't see results, and you wondered, "What am I doing wrong? Is this seed really as effective as I say it is? Is this whole endeavor, this desire to serve the Lord and share His Word, a waste of time?"

In times like that, the promise of verse six that there will be a harvest is very heartening. It is encouraging to know that someday some of the seeds will bear fruit.

But do you know something else? Those verses don't say when the day of harvest and rejoicing will be. There is no guarantee that it will be this year or next year. There is no promise that it will be in the next 10, 20, or 50

years. It doesn't even say that it will be in this lifetime. Maybe it will be in eternity! You may labor your whole life and not see the harvest of the seeds you have sown, but this does not mean that sowing seeds is not important or that you should give up!

Can you imagine what it will be like in heaven to know the effect of the seeds that you planted? Maybe things you had long forgotten or never really even thought about as seeds have germinated and flourished unknown to you here on earth, but in heaven, everything will be revealed. Can you imagine the joy to know that the struggles of life and the hardships you endured to sow the Word of God were not in vain?

Oh, there'll be joy when the work is done,


Joy when the reapers gather home,  
Bringing the sheaves at set of sun—  
To the New Jerusalem.

Joy, joy, joy, there'll be joy by and by,

Joy, joy, joy, where the joys never die.

Joy, joy, joy, for the day draweth nigh

When the workers gather home.

So, to you, my friends, fellow sowers of the Word of God, let me remind you that there is power in the seed you have been given—the precious multiplying Word of God. There are endless possibilities for sowing seeds, from the time you rise in the morning until you go to bed at night, from the beginning of life until the end. And if you have been faithful in sowing the seed, you will experience the joy of harvest! Maybe in this lifetime and maybe not. But if you have been faithful in sowing seeds, eternity will be a time of joy for you! And so my final advice to all of you, be the Hilda Hamlins of your world. Liberally scatter precious seed wherever you walk, and **never give up!** 

*[used by permission]*

You can give without *loving,*  
but you cannot love without *giving.*

-AMY CARMICHAEL

# She Has Done What She Could

*Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH*



Let's look in on a scene at the home of Simon the leper in Bethany. An aroma permeates the room where we watch a lady, whose name we don't know, crouching at Jesus' feet, anointing them with a lavish oil. Where in the world did she get the money for this extravagance? Was it her dowry, her life savings, or her inheritance? She comes under the criticism of masculine observers for what they call wastefulness. Despite their sharp tones, Jesus quickly rises to her defense. He points out that this woman knew and understood something that they did not. He points out that her adoration and worship turned into an act of service for her Master. It is an honor to speak of her, as Jesus said we would. With this sister's act of reverence and service in our focus, let's think about what it looks like when we love our Master so much that it inspires us to serve in sometimes challenging ways.

Before we consider various ways to serve, let's first consider the fact that there are two distinctly contrasting

motivations. Motivation makes all the difference. First, we can serve out of the wealth of our love for Christ. However, we can also serve out of an idolatrous love for ourselves and love for our own reputation. While the act may look similar at times, the end falls out worlds apart.

Let's first consider what it looks like when we understand who we are in Christ and are motivated by our love for Him. When we serve out of our wholeness, we are free to admit that we enjoy a responsibility given to us and consider it an honor to serve. It is not prideful to respond with enthusiasm when asked to do something. I remember being refreshed by the sincerity and humility of a minister of the Gospel who, when asked to preach at a neighboring congregation, admitted that he loved to preach and considered it a privilege. Or another pastor when someone asked him how long he'd been preaching, responded, "Not long enough."

In our serving, we *must* embrace

*humility*. I speak of costly personal experience, having been ranked as an overachiever. It was important to me to make a difference, and to be noticed. (Do you catch the idolatrous spirit going on here?) God faithfully used relentless and painful ways to show me who I really was. I was a make-it-happen person. Over time, God has helped me see the messy and hurtful trail we movers and shakers sometimes leave behind when we trample others who are quietly serving in the background. If our motivation is leaving a name for ourselves, we are more consumed with the calling than with the One Who calls us. Our serving must not be about who *we* are. Our serving must be all about Who *God* is. Key concepts here are *humility* and *wholeness*.

Here are several tests to see if our motivation is godly or idolatrous. Let's say I think of an idea, project, or brainstorm that would look good. Meanwhile, someone else picks it up and runs with it. Am I able to applaud that person with my whole being? Can I praise her and initiate the cheerleading that she's doing an amazing job? We dare not let our responsibilities become *our own* project or identity. Our focus needs to be more *we* and less *me*. Or another small test of misplaced

identity in serving could be when we are asked to serve, but we respond with "She could do this so much better than I can!"

In humility, I recognize that God has given me an abundance of sharing possibilities, even some that perhaps only *I* can offer. As a whole person, I am free to be the channel through which Christ blesses my sister. What an incredible honor—to be a part of that exchange! As we consider the parable of the stewards to whom talents were given, not only is it an honor but a life-altering responsibility. Our spiritual success depends on whether we take God's assignments (our talents) seriously or not.

When we understand who we are in Christ, we are free to reach out to minister to *all* those around us, including those in authority and leadership over us. They are not the *untouchables*. Wives of leaders often live with loneliness and misunderstandings, and in some church cultures are viewed as the *untouchables*, maybe almost sacred. I cringed once when I heard someone describe a minister's wife as being "closer to the kingdom."

Allow your leader's wife to be a normal person with normal needs and vulnerabilities. Her toddlers make messes too and cry at night. Her



teens may be making questionable choices. She values friendship too. She didn't campaign for this job.

But don't use her position for your advantage. Dialogue with her in an effort to hear her heart but not with the subtle intention of passing on vibes, hopefully all the way to her husband. Don't trespass where you are not invited. Don't manipulate with relationship.

Few things put more wind in your leaders' sails than if you volunteer *before* being asked. Don't be afraid to take initiative in planning things. Teach Sunday school, coordinate a mother/daughter event, mentor a struggling young person, or quickly help to fill a meal sign-up sheet.

I've been blessed to be part of a church group where I've been the recipient of many of the things I'm mentioning here. Presently, I have the honor of meeting monthly with three other sisters, single and married. We process life together, taking turns talking and listening, and mostly we push each other toward God. As sisters, there is no greater gift we can give than to nudge each other toward God in the processes of life. If your leader's wife is a mentor, I venture to say she craves a mentor as well.

Thank your pastor for the message just like you might expect him to thank you for a meal you prepared.

Have your children take notes during the message and be attentive. Stay awake. Show alertness and interest. A preacher notices. I know. I'm married to one, and he tells me if he observed the congregation fighting sleep.

Pray for your leaders and tell them you are praying. Ask them how you can best pray for them. They answer for your souls, God's Word says. This burden is not lightly disposed of. Aaron and Hur lifted Moses's arms. Could the ways that we hold up our leaders' arms make the difference between defeat and spiritual victory?

There are gifts that are baked. There are gifts in the shape of plastic that cost money. And there are gifts that cost time. Yet, having said all that, there is one most significant blessing you can offer your leaders. Your personal fervent walk with God way outshines any physical token you can offer. There is no sweeter aroma than that of a life deeply committed to God, even willing to do hard things. After all, every one of us is equally ordained—unto good works. *Pursue God as if your life depended on it, because it does.* Allow your leaders to glimpse your walk with God. Give testimony, maintain a soft sensitive heart, be vulnerable, and easily entreated. We can all serve with our words, words that speak life. Every one of us can be an encourager. Don't

set trends that tax your leaders, but set trends that lead to a hunger and thirst for God.

Show up. This kindness applies to all sisters, not just for leaders' wives. A vivid illustration of this gift was a time when I faced a potentially life-altering medical diagnosis. At prayer meeting, this jolting news was shared with our church family. The next morning, a handful of ladies brought the tangible presence of God into my living room when they showed up to talk, cry, and pray with me. Don't be afraid to be present. Show up.


In our serving, are we cumbered or dragged down? Do we run around as if we were human *doings* instead of human *beings*? When we complain to the Master that our sister is not as busy in kingdom work as we might think appropriate, can we hear Jesus' answer to our words?

I have a dream that in our sisterhoods we could practice something I'm going to call the *revolving care act*. Think of a hospital scene where some are in beds while others minister healing. When I am ill and suffering, you empathize and run to my rescue. When you suffer, I remember my own healing and minister grace and mercy to you and am willing to walk with you until you're out of the hospital bed and back on staff. In this exchange

lies the hope for our continued healing. None of us is always in bed (hopefully), neither are we always on staff. We take turns needing care and giving care.

In conclusion, I again make mention of three ladies in the Gospels, who all understood serving, who anointed Jesus, and were motivated by their love for their Master: Mary Magdalene, Lazarus's sister Mary, and a lady without a name in Matthew and Mark. Christ validated and defended them as women that was way bigger in that culture than we have ever experienced. They were willing to break through cultural barriers and criticism to show their adoration for Christ. They became vulnerable. Money was not their guiding influence. They understood truths about the Messiah that the religious scholars did not.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus said her memory would always be spoken of. She was a forward thinker (His burial). I'd like to think that as He agonized in Gethsemane a day or two later, the aroma of this anointing perfumed His senses. Her love for her Master led her to acts of service.

Christ said of her, "She hath done what she could." It would be my ultimate joy that one day Christ would rise to our defense by saying, "She has done what she could." 

## A Friend to the Fatherless

*Mary Jane Beachy, Millersburg, OH, with Mary Ellen Beachy*

**T**his true story shows what one young couple did in their church to share the love of Jesus.

Ring, ring, ring. Jane picked up the phone.

“Hi, Jane, this is Freeman. Emily and I are going for a picnic this evening at Yoder’s pond. We want to fish too. Would Jay like to join us? We have plenty of food.”

“I am sure he would be delighted to go,” answered Jane. “What time should he be ready?”

“We will come at 5:30. See you all soon,” responded Freeman.

“Thank you so much. He will be ready,” Jane happily said. “How thoughtful of you to take my son along.”

Jay was nearby. “Mom, what was that call all about?” he curiously inquired.

“That was Freeman,” Jane smiled. “They want to take you along on a picnic.”

Nine-year-old Jay jumped for joy. “I love to fish. I like good picnic food, and Freeman and Emily are always so nice to me.” He ran to get his fishing

gear and eagerly waited for his ride.

While waiting, Jay thought about his dad who passed away two months ago. “Life has been different since my dad died. Somehow it has not been so happy. Why did my dad have to have arthritis? Why could my dad never wrestle, play, or work with me? It doesn’t seem fair. At least my dad read many stories to me. I did like that, and I know he loved me. Still, it is lonely without a dad.”

The evening was such a happy one. When Jay came back home, he told his mother, “We had such a good evening. It was peaceful and pretty by the pond. Emily makes the best cookies, and the fish were biting. I hope to always be friends with Freeman.”

One day when Jay was 12, he bounded into the house, yelling for his mother. “Mom, Mom, Freeman called. He wants to teach me how to hunt squirrel and also deer. He will show me how to handle a gun. Can I go, Mom? Please?”

Jane smiled and nodded, “Yes.”

“Mom, I am so glad Dad got me that BB gun when I was eight. I can shoot

pretty good already. Remember that groundhog I shot and stunned one day? I shot sparrows and even a cricket in all my practice.” Jay and his mother remembered and laughed together.


Jay was thrilled when Freeman took time to teach him how to hunt. Squirrel and deer hunting took time and patience as they quietly waited for the animals to come by.

“Mom,” Jay stated one day, “I need to take a hunter’s safety course before I can really hunt. Can I do that soon? Mom, please?”

Some evenings, while he still needed supervision, Jay’s mother went into the woods with him to hunt small game.

Jay felt valued and loved that Freeman took time to hunt with him. He always reported to his mother what they did. They saw a squirrel in a tree one evening and with careful aim, Jay brought it down and proudly carried it home for his mother to cook.

Freeman and Emily eventually had children of their own, yet they still often included Jay. Doing things with them brought sunshine to Jay and his mother.

What can you do for Jesus? Will you take notice of people who may be lonely? Have you ever considered doing something to help a fatherless child who needs someone to stand by his side and be his friend? 

## youth messages

### Not As I Do

*Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH*

**D**o as I say; not as I do. This old adage indicates that the hearer should obey the commands but not imitate the actions of the speaker. It originates from Matthew 23:1-3. Jesus was telling the people to observe what the Pharisees said to observe but not to act as they did, because their actions didn’t match what they themselves preached. It’s easy for all of us (not just youth) to hold others to a higher

standard than we do ourselves. Digital media and entertainment have permeated many aspects of our lives today. What is our stance in regards to the perils that these can pose?

In his book, *Tech Talk*, Gary Miller makes this statement. “I have never met a young believer who thought that watching immorality, nudity, or violence on the screen would enhance one’s walk with the Lord. No one is

that foolish. All of us understand that constantly imbibing material that is diametrically opposed to Christianity will hinder our walk with Jesus.” Gary then goes on to describe two common beliefs that are a direct result of a casual approach to electronic entertainment. The first is, “I have a good grasp on life and understand the dangers.” The second is, “Others are not as careful as I am.” Although these statements may be true in some cases, to latch on to them as personal truths is to walk a dangerous road.

In a recent discussion surrounding the use of digital media and entertainment in our homes, one youth brother shared that youth would like to talk through the why and the dangers that others see and have experienced. In addition, he said that he feels they as youth can for the most part navigate the dangers that leaders often try to control with rules. At the same time, he admitted that youth probably wouldn’t want their children exposed to those same dangers. This brother is not alone in his views. Other youth probably feel much the same way.

In today’s world, access to digital entertainment is almost instantaneous. Smartphones have opened a Pandora’s box of TV, movies, and sports. As a result, people are

watching things they wouldn’t have had access to in the past. This didn’t happen overnight. Many streaming services are included with data plans for smartphones at no extra cost. Social media contains more and more short videos known as “reels” or “shorts.” The commercials that we are forced to endure, before watching that instructional or informational video we searched, are designed to pique our interest, and the people who design them are very good at what they do. The result of the small compromises made over an extended period of time is that we now accept these things as commonplace in our lives. These things aren’t all evil of themselves, but the possible erosion of values should not be overlooked.

Numerous studies have been done that prove the same thing—people have a tendency to overestimate their own abilities. One of them showed that 90% of college professors thought they were above-average teachers while another found that out of 800,000 high school students, only 1% thought their social skills were below average. Although these studies were not referencing our response to and interaction with digital media and entertainment, they do support the two common beliefs that I mentioned earlier from Gary Miller—the majority of

people feel that they have superior self-control or better discernment. I have caught myself feeling that my upbringing and experiences in life gave me that advantage. Unfortunately, our best intentions can end up in conflict with the way our brains are naturally attracted to digital media and entertainment.

In February 2022, Mayo Clinic published an article detailing the negative effect social media use has on young people. The article cites several studies that were done proving that using social media at least three times a day contributed to poor mental health and well-being in teens. It also made this statement, "...social media use can also negatively affect teens, distracting them, disrupting their sleep, and exposing them to bullying, rumor spreading, unrealistic views of other people's lives, and peer pressure." Some people use social media as a marketing platform. Others use it simply to connect with friends and family that aren't nearby. Few people who use social media are real in their posts or photos. A lot of content is staged, and many people portray a false picturesque lifestyle.

An article posted on medium.com in August 2017 said that according to studies, the average viewer remembers 95% of the message when it is watched, whereas only 10%

when read. Our eyes are attracted to movement, so videos naturally catch our attention. Not only do they grab attention, they keep it because they combine movement, sound, and text (subtitles). Videos can pack a lot of information into a smaller package. It's been said that a one-minute video is worth 1.8 million words. Our brains process visuals 60,000 times faster than text. Videos tell stories, and the human brain loves stories. They elicit strong emotional responses that make people want to share, comment, and like those videos.

I've heard the argument that because of how videos affect us and how our brains process the information, they can be used for the benefit of the Kingdom of God. This may be true, but what percentage of the digital media and entertainment available is edifying or encourages us in our walk with God? More often it is funny videos designed to hold our attention or TV shows with plots and characters designed to trigger the emotional connection that keeps us coming back for more. Digital media and entertainment at their core are designed in such a way as to make us "addicted" and keep us engaged.

We know that electronic entertainment can be dangerous, and many of us have experienced the dangers and negative effects

first hand. Why then do we think that we can navigate the perils of electronic entertainment and not be affected? **Proverbs 6:27** says, “*Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?*” We need to consider the impact that it has on ourselves and those around us. In my own experience I have been encouraged by some electronic entertainment, and I have used social media to keep up with some of my friends that I wouldn’t otherwise. There are some positives, but the scale swings farther the other way. I’ve experienced the distance that it can put between people in the same room—two people only inches away from each other but miles apart. Children get ignored or pushed to the side when their parents are wrapped up in watching something or scrolling through social media. Many of us know what it feels like to get pushed to the side in favor of something digital. Anyone who has experienced that doesn’t want that feeling for others either.

What limits are you setting for yourself? What safety measures are you implementing? Some churches have accountability groups to encourage openness, discussion, and transparency. If your church doesn’t have that, suggest it to your ministry, find some other likeminded people

and form your own accountability group, or just make yourself accountable to a brother or sister whom you trust in the church. We need to carefully consider the long-term effects that the digital world is having on our lives. I have seen the negative impact that unmonitored digital entertainment can have on children. I have experienced firsthand the negative impact that unmonitored digital entertainment can have on youth. Small amounts of digital entertainment, though considered harmless, can soon lead to the development of an appetite and then a craving for it. Are we doing things now that we don’t want our children to do? As a wise man once said, “What we do in moderation, our children will do in excess.” What would Jesus tell those who follow after us?

*Sources:* <https://oit.williams.edu/files/201%2/using-images-effectively.pdf>

<https://www.smithlawco.com/blog/2017/december/do-most-drivers-really-think-they-are-above-aver/>

<https://medium.com/@slicevideo/this-is-why-video-is-the-most-engaging-type-of-content-e5ca46d5cef1>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/tween-and-teen-health/in-depth/teens-and-social-media-use/art-20474437#:~:text=Social%20media%20harms,much%20social%20media%20teens%20use.>



(USPS 767-160)  
Carlisle Printing  
2673 Township Rd. 421  
Sugarcreek, OH 44681

Periodicals

## THOUGHT GEMS

A smile adds face value.

• • • • •

It's not polite to talk with a full mouth or an empty head.

• • • • •

Be careful of your thoughts; they may break into actions at any time.

• • • • •

Those who have the most to say usually say it with the fewest words.

• • • • •

If you *take* your problems to the Lord, that is natural. If you *give* your problems to the Lord, that is spiritual.

• • • • •

Tact is the ability to stand on your own two feet without stepping on anybody's toes.

• • • • •

If a man goes through life and only earns money, he is not a success.

• • • • •

We show whom we love by what we do with what we have.

• • • • •

Privilege and responsibility are two sides of the same coin.

• • • • •

Never stretch the truth—it may snap back in your face.

• • • • •

Truth that is out of balance is heresy.