



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

Galatians 6:14

APRIL 2012

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Purpose of Calvary Messenger is:
 To propagate sound Biblical doctrine;
 To stimulate a deeper study of God's Word;
 To anchor and fortify the faith of Christians;
 To point lost and dying souls to Christ the 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 Splendor of Lilies

Margaret E. Sangster (1838-1912)

Oh, rare as the splendor of lilies,
And sweet as the violets' breath,
Comes the jubilant morning of Easter,
The triumph of life over death;
And fresh from the earth's quickened bosom
Full baskets of flowers we bring,
And scatter with satin-soft petals
To carpet a path for our King.

In the countless green blades of the meadow,
The sheen of the daffodils' gold,
In the tremulous blue on the mountains,
The opaline mist on the world,
In the tinkle of brooks through the pasture,
The river's strong sweep to the sea,
Are signs of the day that is passing
In gladness to you and to me.

Oh, dawn, in thy splendor of lilies,
Thy fluttering violet breath,
Oh, jubilant morning of Easter,
Thou triumph of life over death!
Then fresh from the earth's quickened bosom
Full baskets of flowers we bring,
And scatter their satin-soft petals
To carpet a path for our King



Doth Not Behave Itself Unseemly

Some time ago I mentioned to a friend that I was frankly surprised that Jesus has not already returned. My friend made a response to my comment. When he paused, I expected the pause to mean that he would be willing to hear from me again. Instead, even though I started saying something several times, he always interrupted me. I finally gave up trying to say anything more.

I found out how hard it is to have a satisfactory conversation with someone who is uncomfortable with other's opinions. He freely gave his opinions. I also noticed that he found a lot wrong with the people around him. Needless to say, that conversation was depressing.

What I had to say wasn't worth much, but I don't think I have to accept that evaluation as final. At Calvary—not on the receiving end of a monologue—I gain understanding of reality. At the cross, I find myself: I'm only a sinner, but I'm saved by grace.

In a second experience a few days ago, I stepped on the elevator to go to the top (fifth) floor at Hutchinson Hospital. A senior lady followed me

on and wanted to go to the third floor. As I punched the "3" button for her, she commented, "So you're going to fifth floor. Why not just keep on going? With the way things are going down here now, I'd like to just keep on going up." I added an affirmative comment as she stepped off.

The lady's desire for heaven is good. While it was also given in the context of how badly things are going down here, I took it to mean that she had made preparations to go to heaven. I'd like to think her comments came from a cleansed heart and redeemed life.

Two contacts, two very different experiences. One pushed me down; the other pulled me up. These conversations raise the issue of manners in conversation. As we know, politeness blesses everyone it touches. So here's the question: *What constitutes good speaking manners?*

First, *humility*. Saying what we have to say should include an unspoken message that says, *I realize that I may not be right in every aspect of my understanding, but this is what I see and think*. If we give our comments from that stance, it makes it easier for people to consider our insights. They are also more likely to give them

serious consideration.

Secondly, *teachableness*. If we have no interest in hearing the other fellow, we may as well not take his time, for conversation that blesses is a two-way street. It involves listening—not just speaking. Words spoken in an atmosphere of: *I have something valuable to contribute, but you don't* leave the second party with negative feelings.

Thirdly, *compassion*. If we would prepare for soul-strengthening interchange, we must prepare our hearts for ministry—not our tongues for harangue. Speakers full of themselves demand time from their subjects and proclaim their ideas without welcoming interaction. But children of God rightly pray for strength to reach out to those with whom they converse. Our fellowmen thrive only if the social atmosphere of word exchange includes the dimension of: *As your fellow human being, I would reach out to you in a civilized way.*

Fourthly, *encouragement*. Positive comment is part of positive contribution. Constant critical comment goes with hogging conversations and it repels us. As my folksy philosopher friend told me many years ago, “Honey draws more flies than vinegar.”

Love, that jewel of virtues, moves forward with humility, teachableness, compassion and encouragement. Love creates a welcome for itself and blesses those it touches.

I try to make conversation that blesses. I remember that speaking is a privilege that I rightly share with my fellow man. Decency requires that I build friendship both by listening and speaking. Politeness says I should consider your thoughts when you offer that privilege to me.

Charity (love) is “seemly” in its behavior. This “seemly” grace is made possible if we have been to Calvary and experienced God’s wonderful grace.

—PLM 

***When you meet temptation,
turn to the right.***



Risks and Risk Takers

Wolfgang Miggiani, Arlington, KS

One of my duties as an emergency room physician is to usher families through situations in which there have been horrible outcomes. Recently, it was my duty to notify the family of a young man who died in a motor vehicle collision (notice, I did not say “accident”) involving an SUV and full-sized pickup. In the SUV, a young man who had just finished college, and his friend were driving down the highway. As they did so, inexplicably the driver of a pickup pulled out in front of them. In that vehicle was the second driver’s wife and daughter, who were hit broadside at full speed, with both vehicles careening and tumbling out of control. Since nobody in either vehicle was wearing a seat belt, all occupants of both cars tumbled around in their vehicles like rocks in a rock tumbler. The young man who died was crushed by his own vehicle, after being partly ejected. His friend escaped with a broken thigh bone. The driver of the second car ranted in a self-induced, drugged stupor, oblivious to the fact that we had to stabilize and medi-vac his brain-

injured wife and his daughter, who was essentially half scalped.

After I broke the news to the family, only the father of the young man felt he was up to seeing his son’s crushed body. As we were viewing the body, he spoke of his son’s well-trimmed beard, and how he had been meticulous in his studies and was starting a new job with a prestigious accounting firm. He mentioned that his son knew better than not buckling up, and that using his seat belt would likely have prevented his early demise...and how they would meet again some day.

This got me to thinking about the senseless waste of life and the decisions that lead to it. As Christians, we take risks every day. Even driving to church involves risk. So how do we know what risks are worth taking? What are lessons to be learned about taking necessary risks?

The tragedy in the ER was caused by recklessness. **The Reckless Risk Taker** has little regard for the physical and spiritual risks and puts the focus on self-centered gains such as selfish cravings for drugs or alcohol, or wanting to appear “cool” to his

buddies by not buckling up, and so on. I'll let you decide who were the reckless risk takers in that situation.

The Bible has its reckless characters, for example, Samson. "Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And He came up and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, *is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, **Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well**" (Judges 14:1-3).

But God is sovereign, and He can use bad decisions for his glory: "But his father and mother knew not that it *was* of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel" (Judges 14:4). Perhaps Samson knew full well what he was doing. At any rate, he is counted a hero of faith in Hebrews 11.

Youthful Risk Takers

"Noodling" is an example of youthful risk taking. Just the other day, our oldest son came home with a 15-pound carp he had caught by noodling. Before he caught it, he

cleared the area with a stick that was snapped in half by a retreating snapping turtle. Then in the deeper portion of the river bend, using his index finger for bait as recommended by his friend, he caught it.

Is it wrong to engage in physical risk? God has put in young men, especially, a drive to provide for their families. This involves physical risk. Ask any mother who sees her son roofing for the first time. The gain is a physical gain—providing materially for the family, whether it be food, shelter, or clothing.

For Youthful Risk Takers, the intent is usually good, but the risks, both physical and sometimes spiritual, are not always well understood, which is when accidents occur and conflicts (such as conflicts about church standards) arise. So even though the river is now low, when it rises, undertow currents can lead to drowning. My conclusion: swimming in the river (and noodling) are risky.

Over a year ago, one of my sons was killed in a Sunday School picnic hay ride. The tractor driver wanted to give the children an enjoyable afternoon, but in the process, excessive risks were taken. It was not terribly difficult to forgive him since his intention was to build the children up spiritually, though he did not carefully consider the risks. There

are too many accidents in our Plain communities. We would do well to encourage our youth to carefully think out the risks.

Calculated Risk Takers

These carefully balance out the risks and the gains. I tend to put myself in this category.

It is hard to believe that about 20 years ago, I was flying supersonic jets and parachuting out of perfectly good airplanes. Back then, the physical gains (the belief that I was defending my country) and selfish gains (having fun flying and enjoying the camaraderie of friends) outweighed any physical risks.

As time goes on, however, getting older and being involved in my line of work, the appeal of calculated risk changes. Having dealt with death (the ultimate physical risk) so often, the physical and selfish (temporal) gains become less important to me and the spiritual (eternal) gains become more important.

Righteous Risk Taker

Jesus was a righteous risk taker. As Luke 11 shows, Jesus understood the physical risk of challenging the religious establishment. He did not consider selfish or physical gains for Himself. The gains (conveyed to us) were all spiritual, through His sacrifice.

Godly Risk Takers

There are many examples of godly risk takers. Those men and women of God sacrificed physical and selfish gains, and did not long consider the physical risks. Think of the martyrs. Think of Gideon (300 men against the vast multitude of Midianites). How were those 300 men chosen? “So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man to his place” (Judges 7:5-7).

Could it be that the ones that were finally chosen were those who were most aware of the risks? They drank from their hands so that they could still be aware of the physical risks (the battle environment). The more reckless would plunge their faces into the water, satisfying their selfish and physical gains and wants, oblivious

to what was going on around them. The main point I see here is that to be a godly risk taker, one must fully understand the risks, then place the spiritual gains above all else. This is called **courage**. C. S. Lewis wrote, “Courage is not simply ONE of the virtues, but the form of EVERY virtue at the testing point.”

Finally, the Bible often gives examples of those who are **Risk Adverse**. They are not truly Risk Takers, since they wish to avoid both physical and spiritual risks. In doing so, while they strive for selfish and physical gain and often achieve neither, they must necessarily forfeit any spiritual gain.

Pilate was merciful, until it became risky.

After Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt to physical and spiritual safety, they could think only of physical and selfish gain, even going so far as wanting to return to slavery, sacrificing their souls, because they didn't like the food. (Numbers 11:5 and 6)

Jesus spoke of risks, specifically commending **Risk Takers** who invest their talents. In Matthew 25:23, we find this: “His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over

many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”

Jesus then spoke also of the **Risk Adverse** (Matthew 25: 24-26): “Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine. His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:”

We finally arrive at the conclusion: the secret of godly, yet risky decision making is using good judgment. Good judgment is not exercised in making decisions with the absence of risk. There is even spiritual risk in dialoging with an atheistic professor. Good judgment is the seeking of God's will in our lives, making informed decisions, fully aware of the risks, and without regard to selfish gains.

It is not our calling in life as Christians, simply not “to make waves.” We are called to take risks, but to do so with the keenest desire that God be with us. Courageous Christians take risks that glorify God.



Israel Report

Donnavon Graber, Jerusalem

According to recently released research, 4 of 5 Israeli Jews, or 80%, believe in God or a higher power. This compares with 74% in the same survey in 1999. This trend agrees with what feels and looks like an increasingly religious population and government. In spite of the growing religious trend, this same survey reveals that 20% of Israelis are either atheistic or agnostic in some form, which compares to 4% in the USA that identify as atheist or agnostic and an additional 11% who claim to have no religion. Sadly, religious Jews consider a Jew who claims to be an atheist to still be a Jew, but they consider a Jew who believes in Jesus as Messiah as most certainly not to be a Jew!

This morning (February 5, 2012) for the 12th time, saboteurs blew up the natural gas pipeline in the Sinai Peninsula that supplies gas to Israel and Jordan. An Egyptian Jihad group has claimed responsibility for the blast in retaliation for the death of their leader who was in Egyptian custody. Because of natural gas supply problems, the practical effect that we see are rapidly climbing rates as the Electrical Authority switches to

burning more expensive fuels.

Just to the northeast of Israel, the conflict in neighboring Syria gains heat and savagery as it seems to have become a bona fide civil war. The Israeli military claims that there are 200,000 rockets and missiles aimed at Israel from surrounding countries. In Egypt, the transition from Mubarak's dictatorship to a new government has become bloody again with nearly 100 killed in riots and demonstrations within the last few days. Iran is apparently continuing to work to develop the nuclear weapon option, while Israel and the USA continue to issue veiled threats towards Iran. You don't have to look far in our neighborhood to realize there is no certainty and stability in mankind. But the fact is that life is very uncertain, no matter what appearances are. In "safe and civilized" Europe, a period of bitter cold has already killed over 260 persons, proving again that danger and death may come from the least expected corner. *"I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: My God; in him will I trust"* (Psalm 91:2).



Foster Care/Adoption

Marcia Yoder

In the US, there are nearly 500,000 children in foster care. Over half of these children will never return to their biological parents. Nearly one-fourth of these are in need of a permanent family right now. Every year an estimated 20,000 teenagers “age out” of the foster care system. This means that they are handed about \$500 (in some cases more) and in most cases left without a home, job, family and means of transportation.

Have you ever considered doing foster care? Have you ever thought about it that when we were commanded to be a father to the fatherless that maybe it meant not only the fatherless, but also those who had fathers and mothers who were abusive and neglectful to them. Maybe it meant for us Christians today to take in under our care hurting children for a week, maybe a couple of months, or a year or even two years, showing them God’s love, and giving them a true home. Or maybe it meant for us to take in these hurting children and giving them a home they can always come back to for the rest of their lives, a home that will always be there for them—no

matter what.

It’s not easy. Many of these children have serious problems. They won’t always be the most well-behaved children in town. Some of them will probably throw temper tantrums. There will be frustrations. It won’t be a smooth road. It’s not an easy job, but it will be one of the most rewarding.

A cry is rising from the towns and cities of the USA. A cry from the neglected, abused, and brokenhearted children of America. They are crying out for a true, loving family who will never leave them. They are asking for you to help fulfill their dreams of having a family to belong to. Will you answer their cries or will you ignore their pleas?

“It’s a big leap of faith, but it’s one of the best leaps we’ve ever taken.” -An adoptive parent

“Families are good, because Mom and Dad and your brothers and sisters love you, more than you can imagine.” -A young foster girl who waits for a family to sponsor her.

For information on foster care and adoption, go to <http://www.heartgalleryofamerica.org/> or visit your local Dept. of Human Services.



A Crisis in Eden

Elmer Schrock, Stuarts Draft, VA

Genesis 3 – That morning was very much like every other morning. Birds sang beautifully. Bright sunshine flooded the garden. Adam was up and about his chores and duties in the garden. Rabbits scurried about playfully. Baby goats frolicked mischievously. A lioness lay lazily in the sunshine taking in its warmth and strength. A serpent moved through the grass ahead of her. All was peaceful and pleasant. In Eden's perfection there was no enmity, violence or danger. Hostility and fear were unknown.

We can hardly imagine what it was like. We have never experienced it. That is how God made it. Then Satan interfered. Today there is violence. Enmity. Hatred. Fear. Lust. Greed. The perfection and tranquility of Eden has been lost. Why?

God told Adam that the whole garden was there for their good. They were permitted to eat from any tree except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. On the day they would eat of that tree, they would surely die. So what? Who would

think of eating of it? God said it and that settled it! No one even thought of disobeying God. Contentment was natural! Blessings flowed richly! Peace reigned supreme!

Adam and Eve loved God's evening visits. He delighted them by showing them new things. Life could not have been better. Nourishing food. No sickness. Cancer, flu, and colds were unheard of. A beautiful atmosphere. Always fresh and clean. Water flowing freely and abundantly from the springs throughout Eden. No threatening thunderstorms. Tornadoes. Hurricanes. Temperatures were always just right for comfort.

One day Eve, perhaps a bit bored, was looking around at all that beauty. All the creatures seemed to be peaceful on the ground or in the trees. Everything was so good. The beauty seemed not to excite her as much any more, but suddenly she noticed something different and exciting. It was a serpent in a tall bush she had never seen before. It had such brilliant colors! The clever movements of this one caught her

attention and held it. Why was this one so different? Her curiosity was aroused!

She was amazed when this creature talked to her in a manner she understood. None of the other creatures had ever communicated with her! She listened. God describes this serpent in Genesis 3:1: "...more subtil than any other creature in the field." Notice the word *subtil*. Other translations say *cunning*. We might say *sneaky*, *deceptive*, or *sly*! This actually describes the character of the one using the serpent to accomplish his purposes. He used the beauty of the colors, the charm of the curvaceous, serpentine body to make his approach to Eve more appealing. It was all deceptively designed to draw her mind from the familiar paths in which she normally moved, to new and different thought patterns with which she was not well acquainted! His intent was to shake her out of her usual mental routine to thoughts that seemed like new horizons and tremendous opportunities. The offer was so appealing and seemed not only right, but adventurous and exciting. That day, on the surface, everything seemed very much like the day before. Nothing seemed different. But trouble was brewing. A crisis was at hand! Something drastic was about to happen!

The stranger asked, "*Has God indeed said you may not eat of every tree in the garden?*" A voice from an animal was fascinating—intriguing. So why wouldn't Eve listen? Eve caught the mistake and attempted to correct it. Her answer was yes and no! Yes, God did say every tree. But He also said, "except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

That was exactly the response the deceptive intruder wanted. Get her started talking, confuse her about what God had actually said. Oppose her enough to forget her reserve and open new avenues of thinking. Inject stuff she had never considered before. Get her off what God had said, and allow her to discover the possibility that they, Adam and she, may be misunderstanding what God did say!

That was the clever design used by God's arch enemy to accomplish his diabolical purposes! He understood human nature right from the start. He watched as God's creation functioned. In his spite for God, he could have destroyed the animal kingdom or the beauty of nature. But what would that accomplish? That would not bring significantly lasting effects. It would only give God another opportunity to glorify Himself. With a spoken word, God would likely restore any part of creation, except man. And furthermore, that would not strike at

the heart of God like tampering with the crowning work of His creation. To derail God's plan for the creatures of free will and choice would cause greater damage to God's plan!

In his subtlety, he focused on the heart of man to draw it away from God. He knew that man was not a robot who functions by instinct. He would tamper with man's power of choice, setting the trap and luring Eve into it with words that confuse her thinking. And he succeeded!

With one lie, Satan succeeded in bringing sin and its misery into the heart of every soul. What was that lie that brought sin and misery into the heart of every soul. What was that lie? He said, "You shall not surely die!" That lie was so significant that under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul said in 2 Thess. 2:11, that in the end time God will send strong delusion among men that they should believe *THE LIE*. Not just any lie, but **THE LIE** that was uttered in Eden to deceive Eve. That lie convinces people even today that God did not really mean what we think He meant. So like Eve, we can ignore what we think He said and do it our way instead! But what are the consequences?

Verse five contains stretched truth. It is not entirely a lie. Your eyes will be opened. Yes, their eyes were opened

and they saw good and evil as never before. They saw the needs of their own bodies and sought to clothe themselves with fig leaves sewn together. They hid themselves in the bushes, thinking that God would not see them as they had come to see themselves. It didn't work! Satan put "frosting" on the promise, but it turned out to be bitter poison. He said, "You shall be like God." That is a partial truth. They became like little gods, worshiping themselves until the shame came. Instead of orbiting around God who created them, they now orbited around themselves. That is what sin still does. We become selfish, desiring to gratify self. Serve self. Live for self. Enthroned self in all we do. And the end product of that is SPIRITUAL DEATH. They did not drop dead at the moment of their disobedience. They lived a long time physically, but their death was the ruined relationship with God their disobedience brought on them.

The consequences of the crisis that wreaked havoc in Eden are still with us today.

In our day, the strange voice does not come via a serpentine creature in the garden. It comes with visual and audible attractions which appeal to self and its pleasure and pride. There are still brilliant colors and charming and captivating movements to arrest

our attention. There are sounds—uncertain and meaningless—and not easily understood. They are designed to get our minds off clear thinking and breeding discontentment with structured and predictable activity. They create a desire for broadened horizons of pleasure, tweaking our curiosity to look beyond expediency, to stuff that thrills the ego and poisons the heart.

Our garden may be called WalMart, Ron's Sports Supplies, Bob's Custom Pickups, but hopefully not, Doug's Videos. Decisions must sometimes be made between peers and principles. The combination of money in the pocket (or credit cards) and available gimmicks, are not conducive to the virtues of contentment with holy living, and wisdom in stewardship principles. Our freedom of choice and availability of trash can lead to investigation of the forbidden, which is tempting for some and reality for others. It need not be either one for us when we have no interest in the

forbidden! We hope most of us don't. But the almost forbidden often whets man's appetite for itself.

It is important to hold our needs up front and to have our wants stashed in the trash can when we stroll the gardens of society. We should get what we need and return to the safer environment that is controlled by biblical values and willing application of Spirit-anointed common sense.

Eve's look at the forbidden fruit was a first response to *the lie!* Today's forbidden fruit can be seen almost without effort. Our struggle is to see what is wholesome and give no consideration to the forbidden stuff displayed so prominently! Our spiritual well-being depends on having the Lord help us do just that!

Paul said in 1 Cor. 10:23, *All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.* What was good for Paul is still good for us today!



***Don't worry about the future.
Go as far as you can, then you'll be
able to see farther.***

marriages

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

Kauffman-Yoder

Bro. Daryl, son of Raymond Kauffman, Belleville, PA, and Sis. Marlene Rose, daughter of Joseph and Linda Yoder, Millersburg, OH, at Maranatha Church, on Nov. 19, 2011, by Robert Miller.

Miller-Kuhns

Bro. Earl Jacob, son of Lester and Lenore Miller, Arcola, IL, and Sis. Sheri Diane, daughter of Edwin and Leona Kuhns, Sullivan, IL, at Otto Center for Trinity Christian Fellowship on Feb. 11, 2012, by Wilbur Gingerich.

Troyer-Miller

Bro. Jonathan, son of Edward and Katie Troyer, of Stuarts Draft, VA, and Sis. Andrea, daughter of Maynard and Shirley Miller, Stuarts Draft, VA, at Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, on Jan. 13, 2012, by Jesse Yoder.

Wagler-Yutzky

Bro. Aaron, son of James and Ruth Wagler, Hartville, OH, and Sis. Teresa, daughter of Ray and Bertha Yutzky, Kalona, IA, at Fairview Mennonite for Sharon Bethel A.M. Church on Feb. 18, 2012, by Homer Zook.

Zook-Troyer

Bro. LaVern, son of Elmer and Susie Zook, Hillsdale, PA, and Sis. Melanie, daughter of John and Mintie Troyer, Frankfort, OH, at Crossroads Christian Church for Little Creek Mennonite Church on Jan. 12, 2012, by John A. Miller.

cradle roll

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

Bender, Derrick and Cynthia Joy (Kinsinger), Accident, MD, third child, second dau., Eden Irene, Feb. 16, 2012.

Graber, Kevin and Mary Anna (Swarey), Odon, IN, third child, second son, Elijah Shane, Jan. 6, 2012.

Hershberger, Kelvin and Beth (Hershberger), Staunton, VA, fifth child, third dau., Chloe Elizabeth, Nov. 15, 2011.

Hostetler, David and Miriam (Yoder), Howe, IN, fifth child, third son, Abner Esle, Feb. 26, 2012.

Mast, Ben and Lori (Kropf), Summersville, KY, third child, second dau., Sierra Renae, Dec. 14, 2011.

Mast, Forrest and Genevieve (Stoll), Summersville, KY, fifth child, fourth dau., Evelyn Fern, Jan. 9, 2012.

Mast, Timothy and Anna Joyce (Troyer), Crossville, TN, (serving in ElCerrito, Mexico), seventh child, fifth dau., Carmen Anne, Dec. 30, 2011.

Miller, George and Evelyn (Yoder), Kalona, IA, first child and dau., Alaina Grace, Feb. 9, 2012.

Miller, Glendon and Lisa (Yutzy), Huntsville, AR, third child and dau., Alayna Diane, Feb. 11, 2012.

Miller, Melvin and Lisa (Schrock), Huntsville, AR, first child and son, Colton Blake, Feb. 21, 2012.

Overholt, Tim and Joyce (Troyer), Adairsville, KY, fifth child, second son, Patrick Rayson, Oct. 29, 2011.

Schmucker, Levi and Angelene (Bontrager), Langdon, KS, third child, first son, Louis Grant, Feb. 10, 2012.

Schrock, Dwight and Lori (Bontrager), Riverside, IA, third child, second son, Carson Dale, Dec. 18, 2011.

Stutzman, Owen and Wanda (Greenauer), Arlington, KS, fourth child, second dau., Adalina Ruth, Feb. 9, 2012.

Wagler, Jeffrey and Kristen (Wagler), Odon, IN, second child and dau., Callie Anne, Jan. 7, 2012.

Wagler, Lester and Lois (Overholt), Lyndon, KS, fourth child, second dau., Patricia Kaye, Jan. 14, 2012.

Wagler, Michael and Lisa (Wagler), Montgomery, IN, fourth child, second son, Clayton, Lane, Jan. 17, 2012.

Weaver, Jeremy and Jennifer (Miller), Wellston, OH, first child and son, Samuel Darius, Nov. 23, 2011.

Yoder, Lawrence and Janet (Troyer), Lott, TX, second child, first dau., Amber Skye, born Jan. 9, 2010, adopted Feb. 3, 2012.

Yoder, Terry L. and Linda Irene (Yoder), Grantsville, MD, third child, first dau., Cheyanne Irene, Feb. 18, 2012.

ordinations

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

Bro. Dan Byler, 53, was ordained as bishop at Lighthouse of Faith Mennonite Church, Huntsville, AR, on Jan. 22, 2012. Preordination messages were given by Donny Swartzentruber, Montezuma, GA. The charge was given by Elmer Gingerich, assisted by Elmer Miller and Charles Hamilton. Ed Yoder was also in the lot.

Bro. Lavern Miller, 39, Middlebury, IN, was ordained as bishop at Rosewood Fellowship, Shipshewana, IN, on Feb. 26, 2012. Preordination messages were given by David M. Yoder, Partridge, KS. The charge was given by David Yoder, assisted by Daniel Bontrager and Glenn Yoder. Wendell Miller was also in the lot.

Bontrager, Joseph LaVon (“LaVon”), 53, died at his home at Arlington, KS, on Feb. 13, 2012. He was born August 7, 1958, son of Eldon and Mary Ellen (Yoder) Bontrager at Washington, Iowa.

He was a member and minister of the Arlington A.M. Church.

On May 1, 1982, he was married to Mamie S. Stoltzfus of Honey Brook, PA. Surviving are his wife, two sons: Gregory LaVon and his wife Trish, Arlington; Grant, of the home; one daughter, Angeline Faith Schmucker and husband Levi, of Langdon, KS; his parents of Arlington; one brother, Myron Bontrager and his wife, Ilene, Arlington, four sisters: Carolyn Bontrager, Arlington; Phyllis Yoder and her husband Gareth, Timpson, TX; Faith Bontrager, El Dorado, KS; and Marilyn Korver and husband Dan of Ladysmith, WI; and four grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by two sisters, Lynette and Regina Bontrager, and a grandson, Michael Gregory Bontrager.

The funeral was held on Feb. 16, with David Yoder, Willis Nisly and Conrad Miller serving. Arlen Mast conducted the committal at the West Center Cemetery.

Peachey, Benjamin Samuel, 82, of Stuarts Draft, VA, died at his home Oct. 31, 2011. He was born Oct. 4, 1929, son of the late Samuel and Sarah (Zook) Peachey.

He was a member of Pilgrim Christian Fellowship.

On Nov. 16, 1950, he was married to Susan Troyer, who preceded him in death on July 14, 2000. Also preceding him in death were son Nelson, and daughter, Nancy (Peachey) Summy, five grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

Surviving are one son, Vernon and Mary Ann Peachey, Rochelle, VA; Edna and William Troyer, Crossville, TN; Martha and Leroy Summy, Shellsburg, PA; and Sadie and Alvin Yoder, Stuarts Draft, VA; a special daughter-in-law, Lydia and Harley Yoder, Stuarts Draft, VA; and son-in-law, Edwin and Lena Summy, Stuarts Draft, VA; 28 grandchildren, and 60 great grandchildren.

The funeral was held on Nov. 7, with Duane Weaver, Simon Schrock, and Bennie Byler serving. Elmer Schrock conducted the committal at the church cemetery.

Thomas, Jack Marland, 81, of Witter, AR, died Jan. 9, 2012. He was born May 30, 1930 at Blanchard, OK, the son of John Franklin and Sadie Gertrude (Lewis) Thomas. He was a retired automobile mechanic.

He was a member of Lighthouse of Faith Mennonite Church, Huntsville, AR.

He served as a medic in the army in Germany during the Korean conflict, where he met his wife Paula.

He was preceded in death by two brothers, Lloyd Thomas and Millard

Thomas; four sisters, Carlos Wood, Sadie Lee Shocklee, Naomi Norton, and Sharon Cunningham.

Survivors include his wife of 57 years, Paula (Emanuel) Thomas and several

nieces and nephews.

The funeral was held at Lighthouse of Faith on January 12, with Dan Byler, Jonathan Miller, and Ed Yoder serving.



observations

Simon Schrock suggests the following item from this column in July, 1990, be reprinted: *The FCM Informer*, (May, 1990) has an article by Wilfred Moutox from which I lift out two quotes: The first is by John Wesley: “I am not afraid that people called Methodists will cease to exist in Europe and America. But I greatly fear they will exist as a dead sect having the form of godliness without the power. This will be the case unless they hold fast to the spirit, discipline, and doctrine which they first set out.” The way modern Methodism has gone gives credibility to Wesley’s concern.

The other is by General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army: “The chief danger of the twentieth century will be Christianity without Christ, religion without the Holy Ghost, forgiveness without repentance, politics without God and heaven without hell.”

These concerns expressed by men

of God in the past have important implication for our time. “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.”



Swartzentruber Amish who started in Holmes-Wayne County, Ohio, now have settlements in various other states. A front-page article in *The Hutchinson News* (1-12-12) brings news from a settlement near Mayfield, KY. It describes a conflict that these people have with a state law. The law requires that slow moving vehicles display the orange and black safety triangle. They steadfastly refuse to comply, saying it violates their religion. Their refusal has caused fines and jail time. Abe Yoder, Grove City, MN, sent me a clipping describing a similar situation in a county adjoining theirs in Minnesota. Some criticize their officers for not enforcing the law. But some feel they should be granted an exemption. This has been done in some states. Bishop Jacob Beachy, Holmes County, OH, tells me that

there the law enforcement does not want a conflict with plain people. They mostly look the other way.

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The following testimony was sent to me by Eli M. Yoder, Sugarcreek, OH. It is the experience of Anna, Mrs. Crist Byler, Canaan, NY:

While living in Zanesville, OH, on a nice, warm summer day, Crist wanted to know if I would mind doing the banking that day. I decided I would do it first before I did my other shopping.

I had gone to the bank, parked, and got out, thinking the bank is not very busy right now. I went in and needed to stand in line for a while because the few tellers they had were busy helping other customers. While standing there, I soon noticed a young man come into the bank and walk just inside the doors. He stopped and just looked around. I tried not to make it too obvious that I was watching him, but something seemed to be amiss with him.

He proceeded further into the bank and stood in the line behind me. From where I was standing, I could see him to the side. He moved around a lot, went over to the wall desk, acting as if he was getting something. Yet all the time I never saw anything in his hands.

While continuing to stand there, I could hear him mumbling something,

but was not sure what all he was saying. I soon saw the tellers and another lady were watching also. Then I realized he was saying something to me.

He asked me what that thing is on my head. It was in a mocking tone, in a voice I was not sure about. The teller soon said she could help me. I was thankful to move forward. I was breathing a prayer all along asking God for protection. The teller seemed to take her time helping me, plus I noticed other people appearing behind the counter from somewhere else.

A couple places farther down, the other teller said she could help him. He walked up asking if they could cash a check for him. The teller asked if he had an account with that bank. He very quickly said, "I asked could you cash a check?" The teller proceeded to say there would be a charge if he did not have an account.

I noticed all eyes seemed to be turned that way, and a man stood behind the teller. The other man repeated the same thing again. Finally, the teller asked if she could see the check. But up to this point he had laid nothing up to be seen.

I was soon done and yet hesitated to go behind the man to go out of the bank. But I proceeded to do so, and right after I got out the door, here comes this man! He came up rather close behind me and said, "That thing

on your head kept me from doing what I wanted . There were angels all around you!” I gave him a knowing eye and quickly walked to my vehicle. He was talking loudly and crossed over to the next parking lot and drove away.

After getting into the van, I had to just sit there for a while; I was so weak. I was trying to grasp what this man was up to. Thank the Lord for His protecting hand! I noticed the bank people were at the door watching. After he drove away, I was sitting there for quite some time yet. I finally managed to get out of the van and talk to the bank people. They had heard him say something when he went out but couldn't understand him.

They were very considerate and wanted to make sure I was alright and could make it home.

I had noticed he went the opposite way I was planning to go, so I felt safe to make it home. The bank closed for a while that afternoon so the workers could get calmed down.

Do we realize how much God's protecting hand is over us, keeping us from harm? It made me realize anew my dependence on God, and that our headship veiling is for a reason. The power on our head is from God, and it kept evil away. I often wondered what scene he saw by what he said. I can honestly say I was somewhat nervous, but yet I felt a protecting and calm hand about me. Let's not lay it aside;

it is God's command in His Word.

I realize that Christian women have been disgraced while wearing a veiling, and yet I believe God honors the faithful observance of this New Testament command. This testimony/experience is not an isolated case. Christian women should wear a covering as an act of willing obedience. To wear it grudgingly is not joyful obedience and may be noticed in the manner in which it is worn.

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John Longhurst is a Canadian columnist who writes regularly for *Mennonite Weekly Review*. In a 2-13 column, he notes that the Canadian government is spending millions to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812.

Frankly, I had little idea about the cause or details of the conflict. His comments and the *World Book Encyclopedia* give some interesting information. This was long before the era of instant communication. Two days before war was declared, the British government stated that they would repeal the laws that were the chief excuse for the fighting. The greatest battle of the war was fought at New Orleans 15 days after a peace treaty had been signed.

The exact cause of this US/Canada conflict is unclear. Both sides are said to have considered themselves the victor.

Canada is celebrating their successful resistance to invaders from the South.

World Book says that this may well be called the War of Faulty Communication. It does seem interesting that for some reason the Canadians find this date worthy of celebration. Not so south of their border.

Writer Longhurst hopes that the commemoration will include recognition of two centuries of peace between the two adjoining countries.

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The Supreme Court of Iowa has ruled in favor of some Old Order Mennonites living near the north border of their state. Mitchell County had passed an ordinance barring vehicles with steel wheels from driving on paved roads. The church considers rubber tired tractors a risk that might lead to cars and trucks.

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According to Entertainment Software Association, members of 72% of all US households play computer or video games. Consumers spent \$25.1 billion on video games, hardware, and accessories in 2010. The average gamer is 37 years old and has been playing games for 12 years. The report says that not all the games are violent. (MWR, 2-13-12)

This last sentence is particularly

noteworthy. We have no way of knowing how much “make believe” violence contributes to the real thing in today’s world. But we do know that violence has become horribly common. The church does well to provide guidelines of safety from this potential monster. What we need even more is the inward transformation that is available to all who seek it sincerely.

• • • • •

Ashland, KS, population 855, is located in sparsely populated southwest Kansas. A hospital called Ashland Health Care Center has been without a physician most of the last three years.

Benjamin Anderson is the hospital’s CEO and has a vision of reaching out to underprivileged people. He recruits personnel with similar concerns, more specifically, service-minded persons. He offered eight weeks of vacation time each year, with partial pay. It is assumed that doctors will want to use that time for overseas mission trips.

They have close contact with two medical facilities in Wichita with similar ideals. They are attracting the attention of persons who are more interested in service than in luxurious lifestyle.

-DLM



CHURCH *in* SOCIETY

Lester Troyer, Stone Lake, WI

Bro. Lester Troyer has been writing for Reaching Out for several decades. He has written for other evangelistic efforts and now has brought many of his writings into a 275-page book, entitled, Church in Society, with this subtitle: Perspectives of an Anabaptist Pastor.

I have Lester's permission to reprint selections from his book in Calvary Messenger, from time to time. Obviously I can't use very much of it because of space limitations. Here I am excerpting a selection from Section IV, which comments on different cultural issues in America.

This book is available from: Mennonite Outreach Ministries, 16131 W. Boylan Rd., Stone Lake, Wisconsin, 54876. (Phone: 715-865-5561). E-mail: lestroyer@emypeople.net Price: \$9.75, plus \$3, S & H. If individuals or groups want multiple copies, you may call for reduced prices.

The Dilemma of Atheism

(pages 174-177)

There are Christian writers and thinkers who claim that no one knows enough facts about nature to rule out the existence of God. Their argument goes like this: At best one may know a mere fraction (less than 1%) of everything there is to know of the natural world. We don't know how many grains of sand are on even one beach in Florida. We don't know the sheer volume of oxygen in the air. We don't know how many ground hogs and water snakes are in Wisconsin, etc. So, the argument goes, the atheist would need to know

everything in nature to prove that God does not exist. (Presumably the evidence for God might be found in what he doesn't know).

Now, for the fallacy of that argument. Everyone (atheists included) believes in builders. Every house is the transformation of various materials into a final completed structure through the intelligence and energy of the builder. However, the builder is not the materials, neither is he the building. The first 1% of the construction provides the same evidence for the builder as does the remaining 99%. Once the job is complete, and the builder has packed

his tools and left, we do not take core samples of the foundation, nor do we take the house apart, looking for evidence of the builder. Has the evidence of a builder disappeared into thin air? Now that we cannot find tangible evidence shall we no longer believe in builders?

But that is not the premise of believing in builders. Neither is that the premise for believing in the Creator. Less than 1% knowledge is totally sufficient. We will not find God's footprints in prehistoric rock, or some leftover lunch that God didn't need, nor in forming materials God left behind from pouring the foundations of the earth. We can reach our conclusions without going through the universe looking for evidence of God. We can be assured that 100% knowledge of construction materials will yield the same results as the 1% already known. No lookout towers need to be built, nor space flights taken to look for a builder, nor to find God.

Even as builders are not houses, so God is not the creation. So the kind of evidence needed to believe in a builder or to believe in God, really is one and the same. The sheer volume of knowledge has nothing to do with it. You may be a complete ignoramus when it comes to construction. Yet this ignorance does not keep you from believing in a builder. However,

if you refuse to believe in builders, no amount of evidence will protect you from the foolishness of your wrong conclusions.

We have just let the atheist off the hook on his degree of scientific knowledge. Are we saying then, that there is no folly in atheism? Indeed we are not. The great folly of the atheist is not in the volume of his knowing. It is the refusal to consider the obvious. He lives under a vast canopy that reverberates with beauty, order, and harmony, yet he defies the possibility of divine cause, insisting instead, that there is no God. He looks in the mirror and sees a complexity of intelligent arrangement beyond comprehension and beyond chance. This evidence points to a Creator, par excellence. Yet he attempts the impossible feat of attributing tremendously complex effects to absolutely no cause at all. Finding himself stuck between believing nothing versus believing in God—well, he chooses nothing. He has just forsaken the sanity of his belief that various building materials never become houses apart from builders. He calmly asserts that he cannot believe in an unseen God, only to leapfrog into insisting that an equally unseen but causeless, unintelligent nothingness is sufficient cause for all that exists. This is not the equivalent of declaring that a newborn calf will

eventually produce milk. It is like blindly insisting that milk (or more accurately, no milk) given millions of years, must ultimately produce a cow. Science is always tortured and violated in the process of claiming to believe nothing but science.

If a boy of eight doesn't know the difference between a pine tree and an oak, yet knows that God made the tree, he is light years ahead of the brilliant naturalist who studies trees for 50 years, and yet doesn't know where the trees come from.

Atheists like to claim that the concept of God only removes the problem of existence by a factor of one. So where did God come from? Every builder pre-exists his house. However, he never becomes part of it. True, he finally builds his last house, and rides off into the sunset. Not so with God. In creating the heavens and the earth all things therein, God also created the time frame in which we exist. We can but move forward at the created time pace toward final destiny. We must expect that God will meet us there. This is not because the Creator shares the time frame of the created (for He is outside of time), but because God is equally present everywhere, whether past, present, or future. Atheists claim it took billions of years of time to produce what exists today. If they don't have

unlimited time, they lose their claim to evolution, and with it, their credibility as atheists. We believers know the difference between billions of years of chance, and the eternal God who has existed, does exist, and will exist forever.

The Bible clearly describes the development of atheism thus: "Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). Since wickedness is contrary to the role for which we were created, it is hardly surprising that wickedness would also discredit the Creator by denying His existence.

An atheist may claim to share many of the same values that Christians do. Perhaps this is one area where plagiarism is helpful. There is nothing inherent in atheism that would logically lend itself to any form of good or morals or ethics. On the other hand, the belief in the Creator God lends itself perfectly to the human need of moral constraints and judgments.

Now for the final dilemma of the atheist. He comes to the end of life. He believes himself unaccountable. He expects to go off into the abyss of nothingness. But faulty logic changes nothing. Unbelief does not cancel his appointment with his Maker (2 Corinthians 4:10).



I Needed the Quiet

Melvin L. Yoder, Gambier, OH

I needed the quiet so He drew me aside.
The doctors considered, and then did confide
The tests all show, you have had a light stroke.
To slow down and relax will be your new yoke.
In peace and quiet, I now spend my day.
He called me aside; He wants it that way.

I needed the quiet so He drew me aside
Into the shadows where we could confide.
Away from the bustle where all the day long
I hurried and worried when active and strong.

I needed the quiet though at first I rebelled,
But gently, so gently, my cross He upheld,
And whispered so gently of spiritual things.
Though weakened in body, my hope still took wings
To heights never dreamed of when active and gay.
He loved me so gently; He drew me away.

I needed the quiet; no grieving my bed.
But a peaceful valley of blessings instead.
A place to grow richer, in Jesus to hide.
I needed the quiet so He drew me aside.

It seems only moments, but now it's a year.
At first it seemed foggy, but now it's so clear.
He drew me aside; He loved me so much.
He wanted to give me his personal touch.
He wanted to show me things I had not had.
He drew me aside, for this I am glad.

We lived a long time in life's faster lane.
He wanted to show me there is really no gain
In riding the world's high, lofty tide.
He cared for my soul, so He drew me aside.

He drew me aside, it was for my own good.
He wanted to test me, and see if I would
Still love and obey Him, and His praises speak.
He drew me aside; He knew what was best.
He taught me in quietness, now comes the real test.

Where will He find me when He comes for his bride?
Will He find me in quietness, or riding the high tide?
Will I be enjoying this world's glamorous success,
Or will I be enjoying the peace of a God-given rest?

(Author's note: As of now, I seem quite well recovered from the light stroke of one year ago. I do struggle with memory loss, but this is quite common for age 79. This stroke slowed my writing attempts, but I am trying to get back on track. MLY. Editor's response: Thank you for writing. Have you not been writing for Calvary Messenger because you were too busy? Now you have time. Please write some more. PLM)



Happily Ever After— The Fairy Tale World of Amish Romance Novels

Jennifer Anderson, Newcomerstown, OH

We are disgusted by the covers and the fact that many people are picking them up and reading about us—the plain people. The woman, who is shown longingly looking with a white covering-type article on her head and an attempt at authentic garb, cut hair and make-up, attracts many people into their pages. We grow a bit crimson when someone asks us if our life is “just like the books.” Yet we find ourselves embarrassingly and stealthily checking them out at the library to read.

It is the closet secret for too many of our people that we read those Amish romance novels. We read them because they are in the Christian book section of our library and it’s about “our people.” Many of our people are avid readers, especially women at home. The romance novels seem innocent enough to read.

According to the Amish tourist magazine, *Amish Heartland*, Bethany House publishers (the first publisher of Amish romance novels), the reading population for Christian literature is 40- to 50-year-old women, most of them being married with children. The article says,

“We think that the tremendous popularity of Amish fiction is due to the longing these women have for a more family-centered home. In that way the Amish stories are aspirational (sic) for them, it is family life and community life in a way that is appealing to them” (Ryder 9).

In general we do not read romance novels because of their content. One minister described romance books as “women’s porn.” Its response is similar to what people label as pornographic for men.

The first and main reason romance books should not be read is that they arouse feelings of lust and desire. Many of the romance books that we see at stores or yard sales, we would not even glance at, but because the Amish series are labeled Christian and use our people as models, we are more apt to read them. The second reason why we do not read romance novels is language and descriptions of physical touch and actions that give enough suggestion and curiosity to activate the imagination impurely. The third reason is that they set inaccurate and unchristian views of love and marriage. Amish romance novels include secular views of love

which focus on the physical and what a person can get out of it. It also focuses strongly on marriage as the reason people should join a church—specifically excluding anything about Christ as the reason to become a member of the church.

Although labeled Christian, we have to question the accuracy of that label. Many Christian or inspirational books in libraries or Christian bookstores are centered on romance, presenting them as the “cleaner” version of love novels. One non-Anabaptist woman said she likes to read Christian romance because you can still get the romantic thrill without it “getting too dirty.” Christian marketing places a strong emphasis on romance and lust and equating it to Christian. Ryder’s article quotes Bethany House as having a “strong presence...in romantic suspense, contemporary romance, and Amish fiction” (Ryder 8) showing the emphasis on romance literature.

Beverly Lewis and Wanda Brunstetter opened the door for the Amish romance craze in the late 90’s. Since then, many authors have been attempting to write Amish novels. Many poor attempts have been made to try to write about Amish and Mennonite life. Many authors pull any connection they can find in order to stamp authenticity to their writings, such as, having

lived in their neighborhood or a long-distant relative was plain. One Mennonite-based series, published by Zondervan, described a Christmas tradition of stringing popcorn to put on the Christmas tree they cut down in the woods. Later, at church, they sang around a candlelit tree, singing German Christmas songs by candle light. In a wedding scene, the church was decked out with flowers and candles, and attendants wearing sandals. This series also had its members having black cars, electricity, and black covering strings, yet had to go to town to the grocery store to use the phone. Even Lewis, in an earlier series, had the Beachys as traditional Amish who were on-the-line about cars.

Romance novels, which are read by women, are packed with feminist ideals. Romance novels center on the female as the protagonist. They are in charge, setting things straight and using men for their desires and wants. In Brunstetter’s *Plain and Fancy*, there is competition between an English woman and an Amish woman over a man. The Amish woman is portrayed as a stop-at-nothing woman to get her man. She verbally and physically pushes him into doing what she wants him to do. Verbal fighting and cross-gender touching is open, initiated by the woman. The English woman responds slightly less strongly than

the Amish woman, yet strongly pouts to get her way to have indoor plumbing. Meanwhile, she portrays the man as a rather simple fellow in response to the woman's antics. Brunstetter also confronts popular, typically non-Amish issues like anorexia and abortion that seem out of place in the genre.

Amish authors have also come on the scene in attempt to copy the craze. Linda Byler, as an "authentic Amish writer," writes a juvenile series that struggles hard against male authority and against cultural expectations for women. Her female characters are take-charge and resist cultural expectations for women within the boundaries of what is expected. Byler, in her later adult fiction series, combines high fantasy with Amish culture. The series combines horse lovers' genre of ranching and the Wild West while being Amish. Byler becomes fluid in her love scene descriptions, of subtle touches, and direct physical touch of unmarried people described as "holding her close," and "folding her soft form," modeled after other popular romance novels (Byler, 351).

Many people are reading these books—Anabaptist and otherwise. Because of them there is a greater awareness of who we are and a greater influx of people who want to and try to become Amish or plain, based on what they have read.

They come in with the images they have read and soon discover that what they have read doesn't match with reality and is not the fairy-tale romance world they read about. Some come into the church wanting a plain wife or husband, and because of the delusion it has caused troubled marriages and relationships, and a loss of Christianity in their life.

Most of us would agree that these novels are not true-to-life—at least we hope not. Most of us would recognize that these writings are merely Protestant romance novels with Amish or Mennonite actors, who think, act, and generally respond as evangelical Christianity would to love, courtship, self, community, and headship, which negates the idea of separation from the world and limiting it to outward form.

We become what we read; our expectations for love, marriage and relationships will be influenced by what we read. They can influence us in rejecting the headship order and our husbands now have to be the "man of our dreams," and good-looking to be good husbands. We begin to focus on our physical appearance as what is important in marriage or relationships, instead of character and God's leading as God teaches. These both undermine the authority of the home and church, blot out true reasons for joining the church, and teach that becoming

a Christian in one short dramatic prayer is going to take away all problems and we live happily ever after.

We become what we read and what we read can undermine the teachings of the Word and destroy our families because we feel unfulfilled because our marriage is not like the story book marriage. We don't ride the emotional thrills the books portray. It creates a value system in our minds that is contrary to the Bible. Amish

romance novels are not Christian. They portray Amish actors in a secular story. They have a cover that attracts, but contains a fairy tale glow of a world of Satan that is destructive.

Byler, Linda, *Wild Horses*, Good Books, Intercourse, PA, 2011.

Ryder, Katherine, *Amish Heartland*, Question and Answer, with Steve Oates, VP of Marketing, Jan., 2012, pages 6-9.



mission awareness

What I Enjoy Doing

Jason Althouse, LaPalmerita, Nicaragua

Jason Althouse serves under Olive Branch Mennonite Missions in Nicaragua. OBMM is sponsored mainly by churches in Keystone Mennonite Fellowship. They have other mission outreaches in South Dakota and Grenada. I love the testimony of this young brother, because from his heart flows deep satisfaction and the joy of a true servant.

May this testimony serve to bring enlightenment and encouragement to the humdrum duties of a voluntary service unit. -FS

Seven years ago I felt the Lord calling me to serve Him in Nicaragua. I thought it would be something that I would enjoy doing and felt the Lord leading in that direction. Indeed, it was something that I enjoy doing and for that reason

I am still here today. I feel very blessed to be able to live in Nicaragua and share with the people here. Each day is full of opportunities to share God's love and help others. That is what I enjoy doing. Here are just a few of the many things that I do from

day to day—things that I enjoy doing.

I enjoy walking down the street in La Palmerita where I live, saying, “Adios,” to those who might be outside their houses or even stopping to chat for a short time.

I enjoy doing community visitation and handing out *Antorchas*, a small bi-monthly booklet that we pass out here. It gives me a lot of opportunities to ask people about their relationship with the Lord and invite them to church.

I enjoy doing personal Bible studies with Julio and Leonardo, two new believers in the church. I enjoy answering their questions about the Bible and looking for the answers if I don’t have them. It is rewarding to see their desire to please the Lord and follow what the Bible says.

I enjoy studying the Bible on my own as I prepare for Wednesday afternoon topics and some messages on Sundays. I enjoy going to church and seeing each one of the people that come. It is humbling to know that they are seeking our help to guide them in the right direction.

I enjoy working alongside the people, doing whatever they might be doing—whether it’s swinging a machete or building fence, helping someone with their school homework or listening to their advice on how to

care for animals.

I enjoy milking a few cows that I have out back. It gives me opportunity to get to know more people and to be able to relate to them on their level. I enjoy living simply, learning to be satisfied with what I have, and making the most of the resources that God has entrusted to me.

Sometimes I do things that aren’t enjoyable but know that they are best and right things to do. Things like loving my enemies and being kind to those who have stolen from me or taken advantage of me. Other times it may be admitting that I was wrong and asking forgiveness for something that I have done or how I have treated someone.

These are just a few of the things that I enjoy doing very much, but this article really isn’t about me. It’s about striving to please God in each of the things that I do and bringing honor and glory to Him. That is really why I am here. That is really what I enjoy doing—pleasing my Father.

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

[From “*The Olive Branch.*” Used by permission.]



Sister-in-law Friendships

Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC

Friendship is a mutual trust and support between two people. Friendship does not happen overnight, even though there are times when we meet a person and experience almost instant camaraderie together. However, this friendship cannot continue to grow unless time and effort are placed into it. We need mutual interests and goals to develop strong friendships. In family relationships we grow up in the same home, we may have similar interests, our values often reflect our family values, and we love the same people. Sisters may not always think exactly the same or enjoy identical activities, but they are bound together by blood and blood ties run deep. We tend to make allowance for our own families' strange and inexplicable behaviors. We give grace to family. However, we also hurt intensely when we feel rejected or misunderstood by our birth family.

Family relationships can become complicated as we add in-law relationships. They can also become beautiful and add character and stability to our family structure. We

must be willing to give and take. Our ways of doing are not always the best or the only way, we want to be open to new personalities, ideas, and methods which can become a great blessing to family structure.

It would seem as if most of the in-law struggles are with us women, as we discussed in the mother-daughter-in-law relationships last month. This may be true because women desire intimacy. We want to be accepted and loved. We crave connection with other women. Is it possible to enter an intact family and feel like you belong? Can you connect with your other sister-in-law in the same family unit, whether she is blood sister or has entered the family through marriage? These are some of the issues we shall examine this month.

Accept that fact that you are different. Since you did not grow up in the same home, you will not always act alike or think alike. That is okay; you don't have to be alike. However, you do have a point of interest since you are now both part of the same family unit. You are going to need to accept each other. Your differences


can blend in harmony. If they don't, you will cause disunity in the family. Do not dwell on the differences but allow those differences to stretch you. Let me hasten to mention to the mother-in-law, your daughters-in-law will each be unique, but you must treat them all with **equal** respect and love. Never talk negatively to either about the other.

Don't set too high expectations. Relationships take time; sometimes we need to let them happen. Be sensitive about the time to talk and the time to be quiet. Don't meddle or give unasked-for advice. Don't compare her to your own sister, however, love her as a sister.

Be positive and encouraging to your sister-in-law. Send her cards and notes. Invite her over to your house for tea. Offer to babysit her children. If she doesn't respond in a positive manner, at least she knows she has a friend. Find a common thread in your relationship and build

on it. Maybe you both enjoy scrap booking or sewing. Talk about those things or spend time doing them together. Try not to intimidate her by talking about your interests and your family all the time. Affirm her whenever you can. Make sure you do not monopolize holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, to spend with your family. Be fair to your in-laws; this has caused hurt in many family relations.

Be a Christian example to her. You will never go wrong by developing godly character in your life. Do not be judgmental or critical. Forgive the wrongs. Be kind. Have patience with each other. Love as Christ loves. God will reward you as you accept the difficult people and circumstances in your life.

I am thankful that God has blessed my life with sisters-in-law which have loved and encouraged me and today, I love them as sisters. I pray that you, too, will be blessed in this way. 

junior messages

The Sweetest Name

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

A doctor in China made it his practice to tell the good news of the Gospel

to all who came to his clinic for help. Before he treated them, he told them about Jesus Christ, the One who

came to love and save all mankind.

The doctor came out to the compound early one morning before the clinic's doors were opened. Many people, including a very old woman stooped with age, were waiting there for him. Dust clung to her clothing, feet, and sandals. The doctor could tell that the old woman had come a very long way for help. He took time that morning to tell the old lady and the others the wonderful story of Jesus. The woman was so attentive to the message that he knew this story of love was touching her heart. Even as the warm rays of sunshine open the rosebud, so her heart was opening to receive the One who loved her and gave His life for her. Tears ran down her dusty cheeks.

After sharing the story of Jesus, the doctor's time was filled with attending to her needs and the needs of the many people who longed for health and healing.

One morning, many weeks later, there was a knock at the busy doctor's door. Upon opening it, he found himself looking into the face of the old woman he had helped and told about Jesus weeks before. He asked her what he could do for her.

Her reply was, "Sir, He has saved me. He has made my life so happy, and I know He lives in my heart. But,

Sir, I have forgotten his name. Could you please tell me his name again?"

The kind doctor repeated the matchless name of Jesus over and over again into the ears of the wrinkled old woman. As he repeated the name of Jesus, she too responded, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." Bowing low in Oriental fashion, she thanked the physician and headed back toward her village. He watched her disappear in the distance and felt a sweet assurance that never again would the woman forget the precious name of Jesus.

When Lela Long heard the story of the old woman who longed to know the name of the one who saved her and made her happy, she was inspired to write these lovely words:

"Jesus is the sweetest name I know,

And He's just the same as His lovely name,

And that's the reason why I love him so;

Oh, Jesus is the sweetest name I know."

[This story is taken from *The Horse That Worked for God*, by Mary Ellen Beachy, 2010. This 249-page devotional book for families may be ordered from Mark and Mary Ellen Beachy, 11095 Pleasant Hill Rd. NW, Dundee, OH, 44624, for \$12.50, postpaid.]



Dear Youth,

Walk into any library or bookstore and you will find lots of attractive products that promise hope and success for anyone willing to delve into the materials. But how will you know which ones are truly helpful and which ones are subtly leading people away from truth? How will you know whether the emphasis in a particular book or seminar is an emphasis that will build true faith? In many ways, we are what we read and hear. Reading from only one genre of authors will tend to push your thinking in that direction. After all, what if the genre I like does not build solid faith? Reading from a variety

of authors, old ones and new ones, deep thinkers and inspirational ones, can help your ideals develop more evenly. Some of the most dangerous people around us are those who have begun reading and thinking but have not thought long enough to see the outcome of such thinking. Ideas produce consequences.

Reading lots in the Bible at the same time we are reading other things can be a big help to us as we increase spiritual knowledge. If we indeed are open to what Christ has to say to us through the Scriptures, this will help us evaluate what we read.

This month's responders have some good advice for us. —EE

This Month's
QUESTION

There are a number of "Christian resources available today that appear useful but actually undermine "the faith once delivered to the saints." How can youth increase spiritual knowledge without also embracing ideas that destroy true Christian faith?

r e s p o n s e f r o m o u r r e a d e r s . . .

While it is true that there are many dangerous views being promoted as Christian doctrine, we should not allow this to keep us from reading and studying what other people have to say. There are several things that can be helpful in discerning truth in “Christian resources.” One thing to keep in mind when reading the writings of a man is that man is fallible—as are his writings. One of the surest ways to discern the truth in a person’s writings is to compare them to the Scripture. If you do not know the Scriptures well enough to compare other writings to it, simply studying Scripture is an excellent way of increasing spiritual knowledge without the danger of embracing false doctrine. Once you know the Scriptures well, you will be able to discern between truth and heresy in other writings. Another safeguard in reading broadly is found in community. If you would like to study more broadly, but doubt your own ability to discern truth, find someone who is willing to discuss the ideas that you have questions about. This person could be a friend or someone close to your own age, but if you are serious about finding

truth, I would recommend finding an older brother or sister in the church whose faith has stood the test of time. My final word of encouragement is: Don’t quit reading. If we are reading objectively, even reading false views can help us understand truth and confront the popular lies that we face in our day-to-day lives.

Kenneth Shenk, Partridge, KS



When I think of this question, my mind immediately goes to all the wonderful biblical information you can get online, and also the many translations of the Bible and the good scriptural books that are available in Christian bookstores. Now, when I bring all this up, I am not saying at all that I think these are evil. Many of these have good in them. I myself like to Google certain things to see what other people have to say. But too often people get wrapped up in getting the latest study Bible saying that this will help them to get a better understanding of Scripture, and they are totally neglecting to go straight to the true source. Even a bank clerk learns how to tell if money is counterfeit by studying the real thing.

Some books out there might

have wonderful thought-provoking things to say but may have slightly false teachings thrown in that to many people go unnoticed and they sometimes form some of their convictions based on what they read in these books. So many people twist Scripture to make it say what they want it to say. I think that if we do our part in keeping a close relationship with God and keeping our hearts open to what He has to say while reading the Bible, then He will help us discern what is true and what is false.

Edith Schmucker, Franklin, KY



In Max Lucado’s children’s story, “The Song of the King,” he tells the tale of three brave warriors who set out to cross a dangerous forest. All they had to guide them was the simple melody the King played on his flute. The forest was filled with evil creatures who mimicked the sound of the King’s flute and tried to lead the travelers off the trail. Only one man made it across. He had chosen the king’s son as his companion, because the prince knew his father’s song so well that nothing could distract him enough to pull him away from the

path.

This story is a children’s story, but its message is true for us as young people and grownups as well. When we know God and know his word, ideas that are not from Him should seem strange to us. We also have the opportunity to walk through the forest with the King’s Son, Jesus. His voice speaks clearly above the noise of the books, podcasts, and other resources that clamor for our attention. Many of the resources out there are helpful and good and many are not. Most of them claim to be led by the Spirit. But how can we tell? How can we distinguish between the good and the bad?

In 1 John 2:24, 25, 27 (AMP), John talks about this. He says, “As for you, keep in your hearts what you have heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the first dwells and remains in you, then you will dwell in the Son and in the Father [*always*]. And this is what He himself has promised us—the life, the eternal [*life*]. I write this to you with reference to those who would deceive you [*seduce and lead you astray*]... But just as His anointing teaches you concerning everything and is

true and is no falsehood, so you must abide in (live in, never depart from) Him [*being rooted in Him, knit to Him*], just as [*His anointing*] has taught you [*to do*].”

No matter how much a person claims to be filled with the Holy Spirit, or how much their ideas appeal to our senses, if what he or she teaches does not line up with the Word of God, it cannot be of God, for what is more Spirit-breathed than the Bible? As we immerse ourselves in God and his Word becomes a part of us, we are changed and begin to hear more clearly the call of the King over the voices of the world.

Hannah Miller, Nickerson, KS



I believe one of the best ways to

increase in spiritual knowledge is to study God’s Word. We need to study and apply all of God’s Word and not just the parts we want to. Matthew 28:20 says, “Teaching them to observe ‘All Things’ whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Some people read the Bible and get out of it that you only have to have faith to be Christian, but if you read more it says in James 2:26, “For as the body without spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” There are a lot of changes in life today, but praise God, that His Word doesn’t change, and those that truly seek Him will find Him.

Ryan Troyer, Weldon, IA

*Next Month’s
QUESTION*

What changes would you expect to see in our churches if everyone was as dedicated to the Kingdom as the poor widow who gave her last two mites?



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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

A man's work is a portrait of himself.

• • • • •

Some people seem to think that elbow grease is a petroleum product.

• • • • •

A different world will not be built by indifferent people.

• • • • •

A fool promises what he will do; a boaster tells you what he has done; the wise man does something and may say very little about it.

• • • • •

Wealth may bring admiration for character qualities that are absent.

• • • • •

When we do what we can, God will do what we can't.

• • • • •

One thing we learn from history is that war creates more problems than it solves.

• • • • •

You cannot reduce another's virtue without reducing your own.

• • • • •

The ideal vacation is one where the fish bite and the mosquitoes don't.

• • • • •

In time of war, the first casualty is truth.