



Calvary

MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

OCTOBER 2023

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Calvary Messenger

October 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.**

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Quite Suddenly

Quite suddenly—it may be at the turning of a lane,
 Where I stand to watch a skylark from out the swelling grain,
 That the trump of God shall thrill me, with its call so loud and clear,
 And I'm called to meet Him, Whom of all I hold most dear.

Quite suddenly—it may be as I tread the busy street,
 Strong to endure life's stress and strain, its every call to meet,
 That through the roar of traffic, a trumpet, silvery clear,
 Shall stir my startled senses and proclaim His Coming near.

Quite suddenly—it may be in His house I bend my knee,
 When the kingly voice, long hoped for, comes at last to summon me;
 And the fellowship on earth life that has seemed so passing sweet,
 Proves nothing but the shadow of our meeting round His feet.

Quite suddenly—it may be as I lie in dreamless sleep,
 God's gift to many a sorrowing heart, with no more tears to weep,
 That a call shall break my slumber and the voice sound in my ear;
 "Rise up, my love, and come away! Behold, the Bridegroom's here!"

Author unknown 

Of Owls and Satyrs

A backyard mystery has been ongoing for the last several years. It was not unusual for robins to be peet-peet-peeting in alarm at dusk in the row of 30' tall spruce trees that border our backyard. Was a neighbor's cat threatening their nests? It seemed too early for racoons to be starting their nighttime forays for food. Or were the robins cranky and irritated during their bedtime routine?

One recent evening there was an increased sense of urgency in their alarm calls. I quietly sneaked into the backyard and noticed that the catbirds or brown thrashers had joined them in calling the alarm. The nesting season had ended and surely nothing was threatening their fledglings. As I slowly walked under the trees, I noticed several birds flitting through the branches. But one bird stayed sitting, looking at me with large light-gathering eyes. It had small tufts on the top of its head. Aha! Was this the culprit on all those other evenings? At least it *was* this evening. An Eastern Screech Owl sat staring at me in the growing darkness.

There are three characteristics that come to mind about owls besides their

disc-shaped faces. They are nocturnal, have large eyes that help them see in the dark, and have whisper-soft wings. They are well-equipped to find prey at night. The Eastern Screech Owl is aptly named. Its signature call, likely where it got its name, is described as a "shrill, descending whinny" or a "tremulous, descending wail" that can send shivers up your back depending on the situation. It is one of the smaller owls, only six to 10 inches in height. Owls eat insects, birds, and rodents, among other things, and spit up pellets of undigestible items such as small bones and feathers.

This mystery of the upset robins at bedtime reminded me of the challenges that we may face upon retiring and falling asleep. Young parents face the difficult time of preparing their children for bedtime. This can result in their own tsk-tsking or scolding when children try to do everything else but cooperate in bedtime preparations. As we grow older we may fret in our minds about the state of the world. Are there owls lurking in our spirits as we approach nighttime and the physical darkness so important for a restful sleep?

One of the classes I took at Calvary

Bible School in the late 70s was Bible Geography taught by Willie Wagler. I recall his account of touring the ruins of Babylon and the desolation found there. He referenced Isaiah's prophecy of Babylon in Isaiah 13:19-22. *"And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged."* Brother Willie asked the guide or some local person why no one lives there. The response was quick and simple, "Spooks!" The translators seemed to have a difficult time in finding English names for the creatures mentioned in the original text since we don't have any satyrs or dragons running around in our parts. More recent translations render the owls in this passage as ostriches. But the *"doleful creatures"* were probably none other than owls.

Many "spooky" situations and fears

are caused by the unknown. Physical darkness keeps us from seeing things perfectly and our imagination fills in the rest.

In one of Laura Ingalls Wilder's books, Pa was taking a large load of items, furs, I think, to sell in town, and he carried this huge load on his back. As I recall, he was loaded down so much that he didn't carry his gun. As he walked through the darkness he came upon a clearing in the woods, and he saw what appeared to be a menacing, large bear standing on its hind legs. He put down his pack, picked up a heavy stick, slowly approached the "bear", and brought his club down on the head of the "bear" that turned out to be a stump. Daylight would have taken away his fears and imagination.

Recently, a friend described an event that took place one night in his younger years. The dog was barking in the yard and when this young man looked out the window, he saw a circular object glowing or flashing from time-to-time as it slowly moved across the ground. When it seemed to move at the barking dog, he would run away. My friend decided that there had to be a logical explanation for this and put aside any fears and imaginations and discovered that it was a cellophane balloon that had lost almost all of its helium. As it moved

in the breeze the yard light reflected off of it and caused it to glow or flash.

As things can hide in physical darkness, we also cannot see the spiritual owls and satyrs that may be around us. Indeed, neither do we see the guardian angels surrounding the children of God. Very seldom do humans see the spiritual protection guarding God's people, but when the king of Syria sent "*horses, and chariots, and a great host*" to capture the prophet Elisha, the prophet asked God to open the eyes of his servant who had cried out, "*Alas, my master! How shall we do?*" Elisha responded with, "*Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha*" (II Kings 6:16-17).

How many times has God's angel or even spiritual "*horses and chariots of fire*" protected us both physically and spiritually? We will never know. We may fear the unknown, but we often trust in the things that we can see.

So when you are putting your children to bed and they are restless and fearful, take the time to talk to them about God's care and protection around His people. Psalm 34:7-8

are great verses to sing as a song, "*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*" Ask God to watch over them as you pray out loud when you tuck them in. Live out your trust in His care and protection for your own life and talk about ways that you see God's hand if you narrowly avoided an accident or harm. Recognizing and pointing out these real-life situations of God's protection strengthens your own faith and trust and your children will begin to trust God for themselves.

Once we are empty-nesters and we think about our children and their families, we should refuse to allow our imaginations to fill in the uncertainties of our lives as the day closes and we retire for the night. Let's make sure our spirits are at rest before we put our bodies to rest. May we cease our mental tsk-tsking, and rest in the peace of the promises of God. Meditate on a specific Bible verse or a favorite song as you repose. Our last thoughts before falling asleep can run in our subconscious mind all night long. If sleep is slow in coming, as someone said, "Instead of counting sheep, talk to the Shepherd."

"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

-AY 

Announcement

Faithful Men Seminar

November 11, 2023

Passionate Purity | Preserving Sexual Health

Sexual health describes a view of sexuality that matches what God intended from the beginning of humanity. Sexuality that is healthy is operating as God designed. Anything else is unhealthy. To preserve sexual health means to preserve God's intended purpose and use of sexuality. But how can we preserve something if we don't understand what it is? In this seminar, faithful men will gain a renewed understanding of the big picture of what sexuality was intended to be. They will be reminded of how sexuality became sick long ago and ways available to restore it today. For those men who are fathers, they can learn how to prepare the next generation of Jesus followers to thrive in a sexually captivated world.

The Maker's Design for Sexuality – David Martin, Plain City, OH

Why Is Porn A Problem? – Tom Johnson, Plain City, OH

Fighting Porn – Ben Waldner, Plain City, OH

Developing A Next-Gen Mentality for Sexuality –

Dave Snyder, Plain City, OH

Location: Deeper Life Ministries, 5123 Converse Huff RD Plain City, OH

For more information or to register, please contact Deeper Life Ministries:

(614) 873-1199 or info@dmlmohio.org.

Love is the basic need of human nature,
for without it, life is disrupted emotionally,
mentally, spiritually, and physically.

-KARL MENNINGER



Announcement

Faithful Women Seminar

Saturday, October 7, 2023

Going For The Gold

As fire purifies gold, so God uses adversity to purify women. In this seminar, we will consider how the Lord uses some of the common things in women's lives—relationships, busyness, depression, and life transitions to reveal and refine our hearts and prepare us for service in His kingdom.

Gold and Relationships - *Christine Martin, Plain City, OH*

Calendars, Clutter, and Chaos - *Sylvia Yoder, Somerset, OH*

Living With Hope - *Estalee Anderson, Rochelle, VA*

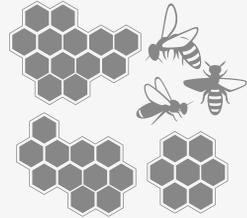
Trust in the Transitions - *Mary Ruth Kipps, Aroda, VA*

Location: Plainview Christian School

8270 Amish Pike, Plain City, OH 43064

*For more information or to register, please contact
Deeper Life Ministries:*

(614) 873-1199 or info@dmlmohio.org.



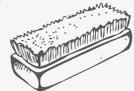
Announcement

Annual Calvary Bible School Cleanup

Come join us in our CBS cleaning November 14-16, 2023, in preparation for the next school year. This is open for the young and older. Our new staff building is up and running and will be included this year so we could really use 45-50 people. If you, your youth group, or other friends could help us, we would really appreciate it. Good food, lodging in the dorms, cleaning supplies, and evening volleyball will be provided.

*If you are interested, contact Lowell Swartzentruber,
(864) 378-3394, so we know how to plan. Please come help us!*

Thank You! Lowell Swartzentruber



Reducing the Load

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

I have been here before. This crossroad looks strangely familiar (again). The signpost has two signs. The one says, “Maintain Speed,” the other, “Slow Down.”

Two years ago in July, I had a health crisis (not Covid) that did not only slow me down, but it also suddenly applied the brakes—hard! At the time, my 83-year-old gall bladder had shrunk to the size of two peanuts and attached itself at two places to my same-aged liver. A mistaken excise by the surgeon caused my medical crisis, and I went in quick succession to the third hospital, the one on the highest level in Indiana. The last trip was two hours by ambulance to Indianapolis. Dr. House gave me a new and internal drain field. One night I had a crisis within a crisis in which I thought I was about to die.

After a 12-day stay, and back in PA, I just did not become well, being halfway recovered a month after discharge. My life was once again at risk, needing to be transferred by ambulance to a high-level hospital in Philadelphia for another eight days. Infection had developed in my

blood. Then I was put on various medications for a whole year. After one and a half years, I was back at that crossroad once again, and once again turned to my left, “Maintain speed.”

Somewhere along the way, my good wife picked up a one-liner in my commentary on Galatians. She copied it and laid it on my desk. **Some of us may need to reduce the load to match the horsepower, without feeling guilty about it!**

Therefore, from all this busyness arises the title “Reducing the Load.” We think of life in 10-year increments, which, for probably most of us, could easily be recognized as “the decades of increase.” The increase begins in a small way—taking a wife. In the course of a little time, a baby is added to the family, then three more babies, then three more. They begin to go to school. Some people need to teach, be on the school board, and its various committees. Then there has been the church all along with calling men to various boards and committees. The same is true of the church’s mission endeavors, plus ever-increasing para-church service projects and

committees that also need men.

There are multiple family vacations and get-togethers, plus time spent with groups of friends. We have not yet even mentioned the work week of our jobs and businesses.



“Hey, partner, have you ever considered reducing the load to match the horsepower?”

My own life is a case in point. All my endeavors were either genuinely fulfilling or monetarily profitable. My life was full and overflowing with God’s good grace and benefits. Sometimes I have felt like a little Solomon by which I could write my own similar version of a personal “Ecclesiastes.” In fact, I have written my own life story, to be published this year.

Men want to be known, remembered, and appreciated. On the other hand, women want to be unconditionally loved and valued. Men want to be significant, while women want to be secure. Under a well-balanced arrangement, the very things that make him significant serve immeasurably to make her

secure. However, life’s excesses can make those to sometimes stop or even go in reverse. An anonymous one-liner says, **“There is more to life than increasing one’s speed!”**

Having written my life story and looking at pictures from long ago, I am now thinking about stewardship. The challenge of stewardship has changed tremendously, even for a low-level enterprise such as farming. My parents were married in 1928, and soon bought a run-down farm. They made a decent living in those 30 years but not until after World War II. Profits were small, and sacrifice was great.

In my 30 years on the same farm, profits were larger than expected, and sacrifice was small. Inflation made a sizeable contribution. My son has now farmed for another 30 years on this same farm and made large investments, adding rented acreage. Our farm is the only one remaining of members at our Weavertown church. The changes are phenomenal.

The same could likely be said about any other businesses in our churches. This little dip into history is to show how life has made more demands on our time and energy. Even we old people must evaluate how we want to live in our sunset years considering health and strength. Invalids younger than ourselves would be delighted if they could do a mere one-half of the

work that some of us are doing.

In this life, we never really exit from our call to be good stewards. Our stewardship is not only about our money, but also about the proper use of time, and the potential of cultivating relationships with people who need us, and giving a measure of support to worthy fund-raising activities. Attending responsibly to our personal health can be a stewardship issue. Years ago a neighbor to Ervin Hershberger said, “If I had known I would live this long, I would have taken better care of myself.” The man was in his 90s and still in good health!

The Bottom Line is that we know well enough that we should make reasonable goals for ourselves. The

big question is, “Are we prepared to be satisfied when those goals are reached?” Some people have arrived at those goals earlier than expected, and then simply added additional goals in an unending escalator. At what point in life should our accomplishments be considered enough, especially those goals that have brought on accumulation? Stewardship also involves distribution in a reasonable and responsible manner. We cannot say how that all should be done. The burden here is to not fail to give it some thought again in our time and place, regardless of our age.

Sometimes we know all too well what we should do; just doing it now is often a different matter. 

music matters

Music That Nurtures the Soul (Part 2 of 2)

Nolan Martin, Quarryville, PA

In Part One, I tried to establish that music affects the health of our souls (mind, will, and emotions) for good or ill. The common belief that music is neutral has falsely reassured many in their musical choices, turning them aside from wise discernment. There is

another common hindrance which keeps many from accepting better criteria for healthy music choices. Frankly stated, that hindrance is a commitment to idols.

What is an idol? In Colossians 3:5, Paul writes that covetousness is idolatry. Covetousness is an intense,

misplaced desire. It is idolatry because it means something has taken a higher status among our passions than God. Things that become idols are often not wrong if kept in the right place. They become idols when elevated to a rank more important than God. A common symptom of idolatry is when someone knowingly makes spiritually unhealthy choices.

Three common idols hold sway in the musical choices of many. They are:

1. Entertainment
2. Coolness factor
3. Emotionalism

The entertainment idol says, "If it's entertaining, it's good; if it's boring, it's bad." Though good music is sometimes entertaining, this is an inadequate criterion for choosing music that nurtures the soul. Those who esteem this idol will end up with a musical diet that is the aural equivalent of stuffing their mouths with Twinkies and potato chips and washing it down with a Red Bull energy drink.

The coolness factor says, "If the music makes me more accepted in popular cliques, it's good." I remember, as an 11 or 12-year-old, being with two friends who were discussing their favorite country music songs and artists. I remember being unable to contribute to the

conversation and fearing they would turn to me for my opinion. I could not have named one country song or artist. To my relief, they did not ask me. But I still remember the dread I felt of being exposed as a country music illiterate. The "coolness factor" idol had beckoned, pressuring me to get with it.

The idol of emotionalism declares, "If the music makes me feel good, it is good." It does not matter if the feeling is connected to reality. It is better if it is not connected to reality and instead provides an escape from unpleasant reality.

To be clear, it is not wrong to be entertained by music. It is not wrong to gain social acceptance by appreciating the same music as your friends. Neither is it wrong to be emotionally moved by music.

It is unwise, however, to hold these as the highest criteria for evaluating music. It is wrong to ignore criteria that would guide one to music that is more spiritually enriching and soul-nurturing. It is idolatrous to persistently follow a set of criteria that often endorses spiritually unhealthy music while excluding soul-nurturing music.

So, what criteria should be used to identify soul-nurturing music? The following table contrasts characteristics of soul-nurturing

music with characteristics of idol-nurturing music. Admittedly, the criteria are not black and white but present broad principles. Coupled with the Spirit's guidance, however, the criteria can help us curate our playlists to benefit our souls.

Soul-Nurturing Music

- Teaches truth
- The music and text agree, pointing to God
- Encourages reflection on God and our relationship to Him
- Integrates mind and emotion
- Encourages a spirit-controlled life

Idol-Nurturing Music

- Undermines truth
- The music and text do not agree in pointing to God
- Promotes escapism
- Elevates instinct, frenzy, and ecstasy over reason
- Reduces inhibitions to sin

First, soul-nurturing music will teach the truth. Music is an effective teaching tool. The Bible tells us to teach one another through song (Colossians 3:16). The powers of darkness also understand the teaching power of music and have used it successfully to undermine truth. A brief survey of the Billboard Hot 100 chart reveals a list of songs with lyrics not fit to print because of bad language, racism, and sexual

innuendo. These are the current most popular songs listened to by millions.

Are Anabaptists among the listeners? In 2017, Tim Stoltzfus surveyed 650 young people from various Anabaptist churches. According to the survey, 36% listened to Country, 34% listened to Pop, and 12% listened to Secular Rock.¹ Based on this survey, I believe that too many Anabaptists are listening to music that deliberately and systematically undermines truth and the foundations of our morality. We must wake up! Has the throbbing beat of this music anesthetized us so much that we do not know or do not care what the lyrics are teaching?

Second, in soul-nurturing music, the music and text agree as they point to God. In idol-nurturing music, the music and text disagree or do not point to God. Composer Lyle Stutzman points out that tone of voice matters when we speak. We respond to it naturally. Relationships can be damaged by saying the right thing the wrong way. People can be held in contempt of court for how they say something.

Music is the same way. Stutzman concludes, "When combined with words, it [music] colors and

¹ <https://timothystoltzfus.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/i-can-tell-something-is-bothering-you1.pdf>

empowers or overpowers the content of the words. If words and music get in an argument, the music always wins.”²

How can you tell how well the music and text agree? Start by asking, “If you just had the text, what kind of music would fit with it?” Then ask, “If you just had the music, what themes or moods would a complimentary text have?” This will be a hard call sometimes, but this will help filter out the worst of the uneasy unions.

Another question to consider is, “What lyrics is the style of music commonly associated with?” Can a music style commonly and effectively paired with sexually explicit lyrics or lyrics that promote tearing down authority structures be sanctified by Christian lyrics? I submit that such a pairing will create an argument between the text and music in which the music will win!

Third, soul-nurturing music will encourage reflection on God and our relationship with Him. The Bible calls us to do this in Psalm 46:10, which says, “*Be still, and know that I am God.*” Paul writes in II Corinthians 13:5, “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.*” Soul-nurturing music will draw our minds toward God, help

us ponder our relationship with God, and inspire us to move closer to Him.

Idol-nurturing music, on the other hand, promotes escapism. Technologically-enhanced recording and slick music videos can mesmerize us. They can create a virtual reality that’s better than life. I have known young people who listen to lots of music but would never sing in a choir though they had the ability. Why sing in a messy choir when you can get an easy pleasure high from high-quality headphones?

But what happens when the pleasure high wears off and the reality of living with broken people in a broken world comes back into focus? Do we listen to music that can sustain our souls amid pain? Or does it act more like a drug to numb pain and block out unpleasant circumstances? This is not soul-nurturing. God made us feel pain. Music should help us see God amid pain, not numb us to it.

Fourth, soul-nurturing music integrates the mind and emotions. Paul sets the example by writing I Corinthians 14:15, “*I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*” Emotions are good but they should be grounded in reason and reality and not only be a response to stirring sounds hitting our ear drums. Since we are called to love the Lord with all our mind,

² <https://radi-call.com/2019/06/24/musical-notes-with-lyle-stutzman-an-interview/>

we should pursue music that helps us think more deeply about reality rather than distract from it.

Idol-nurturing music elevates instinct, frenzy, and ecstasy over reason. The prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel cried aloud, leaped on their altar, and cut themselves until the blood gushed out! Their frenzy continued until the evening sacrifice when Elijah rebuilt the altar of the Lord and prayed that the people would *know* Jehovah was Lord God. When the Lord answered by fire, the people responded by bowing and declaring, “*The Lord, He is the God.*” Arising from the reality they had just witnessed; this emotional outburst was firmly integrated with the reasoning of their minds.

This is not an appeal to seek out highfalutin, academic music. That approach would be as much a mistake as only pursuing music that arouses the emotions through shallow repetition. The best music expresses profound truth and beauty in a way that connects with our intellect *and* emotions. Although comparatively rare, this quality of music does exist and can be found by those not willing to settle for trite emotionalism.

Fifth, soul-nurturing music encourages a Spirit-controlled life. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:18-19,

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” We are to turn aside from excessive alcohol, which impacts our mind and behavior in bad ways, and instead be filled with the Holy Spirit, Who can impact us in good ways. One of those good impacts is an inclination to sing. We should not hold back on this Spirit-given instinct!

Since we are to sing these Spirit-inspired songs to each other, we can assume they will encourage us to be sensitive and yield to the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit inspires us to produce good music, and good music will encourage a Holy Spirit-controlled life.

On the other hand, idol-nurturing music lowers inhibitions to sin. Therefore, we do well to consider whether our chosen music affects us like David’s harp music or the chaotic calf music of the children of Israel.

Those who want to improve their musical diet must do three D’s. They must first **dethrone** any idols that are dictating their music choices. Their passion for spiritual growth must far surpass their passions to be entertained, be cool, or feel ecstatic. Like the three Hebrews on the plain of Dura, they must stand tall when pressured to bow low before the

world's attractive yet feeble idols.

Second, they must **delete** unhealthy music. They must be like the Ephesian converts who burned 50,000 pieces-of-silver worth of occultic books (Acts 19:18-19). Although building a fire was not the hard part, at least that part is not necessary to wipe out digital media. Once the decision is made, all it takes is pressing delete.

Finally, they must **discover** soul-nurturing music to replace what they deleted. The temptation to resurrect the old playlists will be strong. The best way to overcome this temptation is to develop an affection for healthier music that crowds out our old, misplaced affections. Our affections can be changed (Colossians 3:2), but we must be intentional about it.

The Billboard charts of popular music will not help in choosing nurturing music since the world is serving the idols from which we must turn away. (The charts may be helpful in learning what *not* to listen to.) The best way to discover soul-nurturing music is to ask a music lover whose mind, will, and emotions are formed after Christ. Their music-listening habits helped them become who they are. The same habits can help you.

[This two-part article was originally presented in chapel sessions held at Shenandoah Christian Music Camp's OH 2022 PermaCamp. Used by permission.]

<https://www.musiccamp.info/resources/music-that-nurtures-the-soul-part-2-of-2/> 

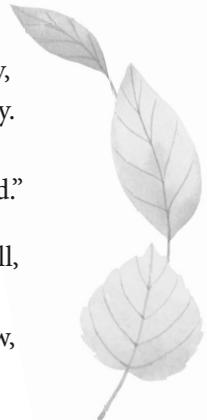
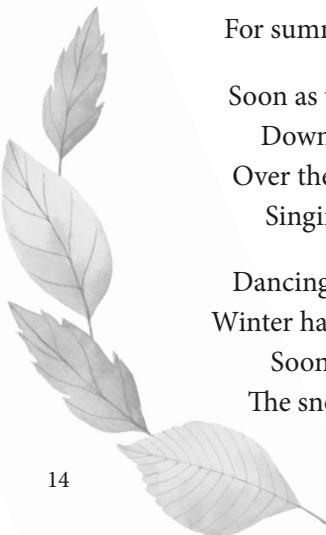
The Wind and the Leaves

“Come, little leaves,” said the wind one day,
“Come over the meadows with me and play.
Put on your dresses of red and gold—
For summer is gone, and the days grow cold.”

Soon as the leaves heard the wind's loud call,
Down they came fluttering one and all.
Over the brown fields they danced and flew,
Singing the soft little songs they knew.

Dancing and whirling, the little leaves went;
Winter had called them, and they were content;
Soon fast asleep in their earthly beds,
The snow laid a coverlet over their heads.

Author Unknown



marriages

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

Clemons-Shank

Bro. Caleb, son of Timothy and Julie (Cook) Clemons, Madison, VA, and Sis. Dorcas Joy, daughter of Ray and Marietta (Schrock) Shank, Rochelle, VA, on August 12, 2023, at Oak Grove Mennonite Church by Lamar Hochstetler.

High-Mast

Bro. JD, son of John and Doreen High, Mount Vernon, IL, and Sis. Rhonda, daughter of John and Ruth Mast, Mountain View, AR, on August 19, 2023, at Arbanna Baptist Church for Shady Lawn Mennonite Church by Michael Mast.

Shirk-Yoder

Bro. Arnold, son of Dana and Carol Jean Shirk, Cass City, MI, and Sis. Hannah, daughter of Aaron and Naomi Yoder, Leesburg, IN, on September 2, 2023, at Clay Street Church by Scott Burkholder.

Stoltzfus-Scaife

Bro. Samuel, son of Aaron and Anna Stoltzfus, Gap, PA, and Sis. Naomi, daughter of Shane and Ruth Scaife, Bridgeton, NJ, on July 1, 2023, at Hardingville Bible Church for Salem County Church by Lee Stoltzfus.

Weaver-Beachy

Bro. Joseph, son of Jonathan and Judith Weaver, Orville, AL, and Sis. Jessica, dau. of Galen and Alta Beachy, Summertown, TN, on June 10, 2023, at the bride's home for Calvary Christian Fellowship by Dwight Miller. 

cradle roll

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

Beachy, Leon and Edith (Miller), Fredonia, KY, eighth child, seventh daughter, Ruthanne Rose, May 25, 2023.

Coblentz, Marlin and Jolene (Troyer), Shreve, OH, first and second children and daughters, Ava Brielle and Ashley Elaine, July 27, 2023.

Eicher, Roy and Twila (Kauffman), Fredonia, KY, first child and son, Kylan Brent, February 7, 2023.

Fisher, Jeremy and Rosalind (Groff), Lott, TX, first child and son, Dominic Rhys, August 24, 2023.

Hochstetler, Dennis and Andrea (Yoder), Auburn, KY, second child and daughter, Aracelia Grace, August 13, 2023.

Jewell, Seth and Melody (Martin), Huntsville, AR, fourth child, third daughter, Kelsey Elaine, July 6, 2023.

Kauffman, Galen and Doreen (Nissley), Paris, TN, second child and daughter, Ashley Rose, July 19, 2023.

Kauffman, Josh and Katie (Raber), Tippecanoe, IN, third child, second daughter, Brooklyn Jade, August 21, 2023.

Kurtz, Julian and Andrea (Peachey), Adams, NY, first child and daughter, Serenity Grace, August 4, 2023.

Martin, Aden and Rebecca (Gerber), Maberly, ON, first child and son, Ryan Jeffrey, June 15, 2023.

Miller, Austin and Marita (Miller), New Concord, OH, third child, first son, Zane Eli, June 4, 2023.

Overholt, David and Charlotte (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, fourth child, second daughter, Jaelyn Rose, August 16, 2023.

Schrock, Ray and Jolene (Wagler), Osgood, IN, third child, second son, Derek Steven, March 10, 2023.

Sommers, Jolan and Emily (Miller), New Philadelphia, OH, first child and son, Nathan Andrew, August 4, 2023.

Stoltzfus, Arlen and Angie (Stoltzfus), Morgantown, PA, fifth child, fourth son, Maciah Paul, January 29, 2023.

Stoltzfus, Glen and Rhoda (Stoltzfus), Mohnton, PA, sixth child, fourth son, Andre Bentley, March 5, 2023.

Stutzman, Paul and LaVerda (Kauffman), Fredonia, KY, second child and son, Jenson Kyle, June 13, 2023.

Swarey, Edwin and Tiffany (Eaton), Auburn, KY, sixth child, fourth daughter, Evelyn Hope, August 4, 2023.

Troyer, Jay and Amy (Schlabach), Owenton, KY, fourth child, third daughter, Destiny Brook, July 14, 2023.

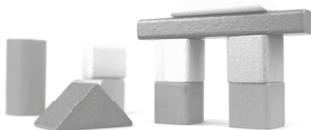
Wagler, JayMark and Emily (Brubaker), Stratford, ON, second child and son, Miles Callum, August 4, 2023.

Weaver, Jon Anthony and Jen (Borntreger), Milan, IN, third child and son, Tyler Durrell, June 12, 2023.

Yoder, Allen and Kayla (Yoder), Baltic, OH, third child, second son, Kendrick Allen, June 22, 2023.

Yoder, Eldon and Tinslie (Wagler), Montezuma, GA, fourth child, third son (one son in heaven), Israel Koen, August 22, 2023.

Yoder, Jamison and Tonya (Chupp), Centreville, MI, second child and son, Onyx Reed, June 28, 2023.



Yoder, Lynford and Jolene (Yoder), Sebringville, ON, third child, second son, Kolten Eugene, July 29, 2023.

Yoder, Michael and Rosina (Zimmerman), Dundee, OH, fifth child, third daughter, Jerusha Dawn, August 2, 2023.

ordinations

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

Bro. Joe Allen Yoder, 44, (wife, Glenda Bender), Rural Retreat, VA, was ordained deacon for Light of Hope Mennonite Church, Wytheville, VA, on April 23, 2023. Preordination messages were given by Adam Overholt. The charge was given by Wayne Yoder, assisted by John Beiler and Raymond Fisher. Tony Zook shared the lot.

Yoder, Ryan and Susan (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, second child and daughter, Sophia Raine, May 23, 2023.

Yoder, Titus and Brenda (Stutzman), Fredonia, KY, fourth child, third son, Caleb Joel, June 19, 2023. 



Bro. Jonathon Yoder, 34, (wife, Donita Ropp), was ordained to the office of deacon on June 25, 2023, for the Still Waters Mennonite Church of Milan, IN. Preordination messages were given by John Kurtz. The charge was given by Paul Weaver, assisted by Jeremy Weaver and Andy Byler. Marvin Mullet shared the lot. 

obituaries

Bontrager, Carolyn (Burkholder), 85, of Shipshewana, IN, died September 1, 2023, at her residence. She was born on July 30, 1938, in Nappanee, IN. On November 7, 1959, in Nappanee, she married Daniel D. Bontrager.

Carolyn was a homemaker and a member of Rosewood Fellowship. She lived a full life serving her family, friends, and many others who crossed her path. She cheerfully supported her husband in his calling as a minister and on the

mission field.

Survivors in addition to her husband are three daughters: Myra (Ben) Birky, Halsey, OR; Virginia (Walter) Hochstetler and Dorothy Bontrager, both of Shipshewana; son, David Bontrager, Shipshewana; eight grandchildren, six great-grandchildren; four sisters, Barbara (Dan) Yoder, Ireland; Ruth (John Mark) Yoder, Berne; Irma (Paul) Miller, Newcomerstown, OH; Susan (Delbert) Schlabach, Ripley, OH; and brother,

Thomas (Linda) Mast, Nappanee.

She was preceded in death by her parents, John and Mabel (Burkholder) Mast, and a great-grandson, Alexander.

The funeral service was held on Sept. 5, 2023, at Fairhaven Mennonite Church, Goshen. Services were conducted by the Rosewood Ministry Team and Pastor Saúl Pacheco. Burial followed in the Rosewood Church Cemetery, Shipshewana.

Bontrager, Eldon E., 91, died August 22, 2023, at Hester Care Center, Hutchinson, KS. He was born May 5, 1932, in Thomas, OK, to Eli S. and Delila (Miller) Bontrager.

Eldon was a farmer and the founder of Bontrager Custom Cabinets. He built kitchens for many homes in the area. For the past 18 years, Eldon was the early morning baker at Carolyn's Essenhaus in Arlington. He did not know a stranger and had an amazing ability to remember names and dates accurately.

Eldon grew up in Oklahoma and often spoke fondly of his boyhood days. He attended a one-room school right next to their farm. A vivid memory was the day the schoolhouse burned down in 1938 when he was in the 1st grade.

When the draft was instated during the Korean War, he went to work in a hospital in Kansas City. He often spoke of those years and how they contributed to strengthening his faith. He came back to marry Mary Ellen Yoder on his 23rd birthday in 1955, and they were privileged to celebrate

68 years together. They began married life in the Hutchinson area and moved to Kalona, IA, for almost three years seeking medical help for Lynette. They returned in January of 1960. Many dreams and hopes were relinquished in the coming years as God called them to a life requiring much grace and endurance caring for their three handicapped daughters.

Eldon worked at Detroit Manufacturing doing plumbing and then building cabinets. Later he was a partner of Prairie Construction and continued doing cabinets and trim work. After their move to Arlington he eventually started building cabinets on his own and Bontrager Custom Cabinets was founded.

In August of 1968 they bought a farm and moved to the Arlington area. To some it seemed they moved to western Kansas. Eldon's friendly personality built many relationships over the years. In 1998 they relocated to a smaller house across the drive to retire...but he did not retire. He continued farming and at age 70 he began working the early shift at Carolyn's Essenhaus. He did that for 18 years and loved it. It was a good fit for him since he was often awake early anyway. He whistled as he fried donuts and assembled pies, and it fell to him to call the waitress if she overslept and needed a nudge. He was also the general maintenance man and fixed many things that malfunctioned. He knew no stranger and enjoyed many a glass of tea at the round table where the locals gathered

daily to solve the world's problems.

Eldon had rheumatic fever as a youth and knew his heart needed special care so he walked several miles almost daily. A pacemaker supported his heart since 2015. He loved to drive around the countryside to check out the fields and see how everyone's crops were doing. Not much escaped his watchful eye. He had a photographic memory and could remember dates and names with amazing accuracy. In these last few years we learned many things about people we did not know.

In 2020 Eldon spent five weeks in the hospital with COVID-19 and his lungs were somewhat compromised since. He desperately wanted to get back to the restaurant and back to work but was never able. He avoided the recliner as long as he could, believing it would cause him to become decrepit. His work was his hobby.

He faithfully led his household in a daily devotional time and was a strong supporter of his church. His many stories about his time in 1-W service inspired

all his children to go into VS and many grandchildren have followed in his footsteps. It was his desire that God be glorified by his life.

Eldon is survived by Mary Ellen, his wife of 68 years, children: Carolyn Bontrager, Arlington; Myron (Ilene), Arlington; Phyllis (Gareth) Yoder, Timpson, TX; Marilyn (Dan) Korver, Ladysmith, WI; daughter-in-law, Mamie Bontrager, Arlington; 27 grandchildren; 52 great-grandchildren; brothers: Vernon (Alta) and Perry; sister, Anna Mae Ropp; and sister-in-law, Esther Bontrager.

He was preceded in death by his parents, children: Lynette Bontrager, LaVon, Faith Bontrager, and Regina Bontrager; three stillborn grandchildren; siblings: Ruby (Alvin) Miller, Henry (Lydia Mae), Joe (Salina), Sarah (stillborn), and Floyd; brother-in-law, Lloyd Ropp; and sister-in-law, Pauline Bontrager.

The funeral was held August 28, 2023, at the Arlington Amish Mennonite Church. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

observations

Bishop Robert Barron gave the commencement address at Hillsdale College's 171st commencement ceremony in May of the current year. I find it interesting that this college which was founded by Free Will Baptist adherents invited a Catholic bishop to speak at this

graduation event.

I found some of Barron's comments and exhortations to be timely and noteworthy. One of the considerations he put to the graduates was in the form of these two questions. "Do we hunger and thirst for righteousness? Or do we seek our own advantage?"

We tend to answer this question in a multitude of little ways today. Certain vocational disciplines are, for instance, quite susceptible to the idea that it is more useful to persuade others, without regard to whether it is true or not, than it is to be clear and forthright. When I refer to vocational disciplines, I'm especially thinking of career politicians and also those who seek to help lawbreakers avoid the consequences of their misdeeds. The financial success of many sales careers hinges on this question as well. Of course, we are very susceptible to the same pull in many less noticeable but equally problematic ways. One way we answer these two questions is by how we answer this question, "Do I seek to live in such a way that is clear and forthright, or rather do I curate what I allow others to see in order to influence them for my advantage?"

Another way that these questions are nobly answered is when we live in such a way that testifies that we are more willing to suffer wrongdoing than we are to do wrong. Barron put it to the graduates this way, "So, there's the question, young graduates. What kind of soul will you have? What kind of person will you be? Will you do whatever it takes to get what you want, or will you accept even great suffering in order to do what is right? Everything else in your

life will flow from your answer to that question."

The answer to these questions in the biblical narrative is sometimes represented in man's tendency toward idolatry. Inasmuch as idolatry amounts to putting our personal advantage above the moral dictates of our Creator and Redeemer, this qualifies as a modern-day, if somewhat insidious, demonstration of idolatry that we can probably all identify with in some way.

Thanks to a reader for forwarding me access to this commencement address at [The Most Important Decision in Life - Imprimis \(hillsdale.edu\)](http://TheMostImportantDecisioninLife-Imprimis(hillsdale.edu)).

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Several years ago I was visiting with a person I had not known here-to-fore. He mentioned several things about himself that he thought might help me to know who he was. One of those was his declaration that he believes that the earth is flat. He said he is aware that this isn't a particularly well-regarded opinion today, but he entreated me not to think that he is a heretic for thinking so.

As I observed the cagey way he presented this belief of his, I supposed that he was used to experiencing considerable push-back. He didn't get much from me because I thought there were other more basic issues

that we agreed and disagreed on, and we didn't have much time together. Many of these other things seemed more important to discuss than the "flat earth theory."

Indeed, not many of us have been far enough away from earth to perceive with our eyes that the earth is generally, though not exactly, spherical. But we do observe with some regularity the shadow that the earth casts on the moon which supports the round shape of the earth. And we have observed photos that we understand to be the earth. But all these details do little to sway those who see all these evidences as an elaborate tapestry of deception cleverly woven to mislead the masses to believe a lie. After all, optical illusions are called illusions for a reason, and photography is subject to being carefully photo-shopped. It is not clear to me exactly why the understanding that the earth is round is such an important belief to discredit. But I think there are some clues.

One scripture that gives helpful perspective to this discussion in the prophet Isaiah's words as recorded in chapter 40, verse 22, where he says of God, "*It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth...*" In Spanish the word "globe" is used and in the Pennsylvania Dutch translation the

word "ring" is used where "circle" is used in KJV. The idea of the earth being spherical didn't start with Christopher Columbus nor was this theory new in his day.

I see little value or virtue in disrespecting the sincerely-held beliefs of folks who think the earth is flat. However, there may be some benefit to noting what company this type of belief tends to keep. It is not uncommon that those who embrace the "flat earth theory" also believe other implausible and irrational things that are even more problematic. If we are able to reject what is objectively clear, it tends to put ourselves into the drivers' seat regarding deciding what constitutes reality. Stating it a bit differently, it makes us more ready to decide what is true rather than discovering it. When we get those two things mixed up, we open ourselves up to a whole range of fantastic conspiracy theories. Let's be careful.

• • • • •

In Vietnam it is estimated that 83% of the women who give birth are aware of the gender of their child prior to birth. In an effort to curb population growth, the government of Vietnam implemented a two-child policy back in 1988 although it is not rigidly enforced. Given that male children are seen as more desirable

than female children, coupled with access to abortion services, the ratio of male babies to female babies is skewed and getting worse. As of this writing there are approximately 3.5% more marriageable men than women. It is estimated that the current trajectory will lead to 10% more men than women seeking marriage in another 35 years or so. It is difficult to grasp the many obvious and subtle ways that this imbalance affects society. An increase in child trafficking, forced prostitution, more openness to gender confusion, and many more societal ills are the bitter harvest of these scrambled and selfish human priorities.

While these comments are specifically addressing the situation in Vietnam, the situation there is not isolated to that region. Other countries and cultures are more or less walking this same path.

• • • • •

The question surrounding which gender that people who identify as transgender should compete with in athletic events is an issue that has occupied an increasing amount of attention in recent news cycles. It is curious that women's rights advocates come down on opposite sides of this issue.

Some argue that those who are born male and now consider themselves

female are indeed female. To deny them the privilege to compete with other females is very unfair and discriminatory.

Others who advocate for women's rights argue that people who are born male can't erase the physical advantage that it brings for certain athletic performances simply by deciding they are now female and undergoing hormonal treatments, etc. Allowing this travesty to proceed as if it was normal is a woeful, and in some cases dangerous, disservice to those women who work hard to distinguish themselves, only to wind up competing with men instead of their peers.

• • • • •

I find it a bit astonishing that people will attempt to describe or assert something that is quite false. This is disturbing when there are hidden things that make the falsehood seem to be true. But sometimes the evidence is quite open and available for all to experience, but the lie is told as if there were conviction and sincerity behind it. Stating that someone who is born one gender can now become another gender and that this is a normal and common situation, is one example.

I should add that there are some conditions that we see in our fallen, sin-cursed world that constitute sad,

but real genetic abnormalities. Christ calls us to relate compassionately to others. This includes people affected in this way. The prior comments do not reference those situations.

I'm referencing calling something normal that is not normal, and referring to our unique, created design as something that was assigned at birth which we have the

liberty to reassign as we see fit.

The debate in the public arena surrounding these issues is pretty much par for the course when we subscribe to the idea that we are free to decide truth rather than invited to discover truth. The beginning points are pretty close together, but the destinations are vastly different!

-RJM



His Devices

Lyle Musser, Denver, PA

The goal of this article is for you to pause for a moment and think like the Devil. In other words, we want to apply II Corinthians 2:11: *“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”* Ignorance of the Devil’s tactics does not bode well for the Christian.

The point of hunting is to kill. The Devil’s goal is to kill, destroy, and devour. I have hunting strategies when I go into the woods and so does the Devil. When learning about the Devil, we often study him from the perspective of the “prey”—he is the roaring lion, and we are the sheep. Let us reverse that in this article and think from the perspective of the predator. Satan is a predator, so understanding where he hides out

and how he catches his prey can help us avoid being his prey. We will look at strategies and systems of trickery that work in hunting as a parallel lesson of the Devil’s pursuit of us.

Fakes are helpful in hunting.

Plastic decoys look like a deer, grunt calls sound like a deer, and bottled scent smells like a deer, but they are strategic lies a hunter uses to draw the deer closer for the kill. We should expect the Devil to lie to us. Interestingly, both the hunter and the Devil present their lies not as outrageous untruths that are obvious but as subtle and as close as possible to the truth so that even the smartest bucks are fooled, and the most knowledgeable men fall prey.

Fence pushers are easy to pattern.

Fences are often used to contain

animals, but in hunting, they are very effective at slightly altering the natural movement of free-roaming game. A strategically-placed fence in hunting aims to divert the deer to the hunter's stand for the kill. Both the hunter and the Devil are hunting creatures of choice. We, like deer, can choose where we roam, but the more we push the fences, the easier we are to pattern, and the more likely we will end up at the Devil's tree stand.

Feed is a drawing factor. Appetites develop for the things that are pleasing to the taste. The multitude of deer feeds, crops, and attractants demonstrate the lengths hunters will go to provide nutrients essential for life. But wait, deer have lived on this continent as far back as our historical records. In fact, the deer herd thrived in much greater numbers at certain times than we have today, even with hunters providing all kinds of palatable yet unnatural foods. Restoring the abundant, natural food sources, such as the chestnut and oak forests taken by disease and deforestation, would profoundly affect regaining a thriving deer herd. More importantly, in our lives, feed is a major drawing factor. In fact, the word "feed" has taken on a whole new meaning with the invention of the internet. It is sad, but some dear Christians reading this article

have developed strong appetites for palatable yet unnatural feeds for Christian digestion. If you could restore the old forests, you could restore the deer herd, and if you would "*ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, ye shall find rest for your souls.*" The old paths for many of us was a restful Sunday afternoon reading the Bible and the church mail representing a nutritional, spiritual diet. For many, this old path has been replaced by an appetite for unnatural, more palatable, but less nutritional feeds of thumbing around on a device. Can you honestly say with Job, "*I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food*"?

Forts are not secure in enemy territory. A key aspect of making a big buck feel at home on your land so you can kill him is to provide thick cover where he feels secure. Your goal is to have a close-up encounter where you can kill this buck, so whatever makes him feel comfortable in an undisturbed "fortress" is to your advantage. It is counterintuitive to feel at home in a place of death, but the goal is to give the buck feelings of security while the hunter sneaks into his stand for the surprise attack. If we compare this to the logic the Devil uses on us, we realize a key tactic of the Devil is to bring comfort, ease,

and security to our lives as we live in his territory. The worldly culture which drives the spirit of the age is the Devil's territory. The more we feel comfortable in the securities of this world, the more likely the Devil's attack will blindside us.

Feelings-driven motives cause guards to go down. The best time to kill a buck is when feelings and hormones of the rut drive him. He loses focus of the truth that an enemy hunter is out to kill him, and he runs around making all kinds of noise and drawing all sorts of hunter attention to himself. In what life situations are you driven by emotional passion which causes you to lose sight of the enemy of your soul? A person in a fit of anger, the trance of lust, the compulsion to gossip, or the stubborn refusal to submit to God-ordained authority is as easy prey for the Devil as a rut-crazed buck crashing through the woods who forgot there is a hunting season.

Fittest and strongest survive. "Survival of the fittest" is often connected to Darwinian evolution. But in everyday life, it is a reality for deer that live among the wolves—the

mature deer that can run fast do not make good wolf venison. An innocent fawn with shorter legs and less experience with escape tactics is tender venison for the wolf. When we say, "the fittest survive," we must reckon with the reality of the ones who do not. In our families and churches, the older and the mature might go into wolf territory and escape. Still, it is a sad day for the church if the older and more mature lead the young and tender into wolf territory, allowing them to escape only because the young and tender get caught. The older, seasoned decision-makers in our homes and churches must make decisions that foster the more tender faith of the younger generation if the church is to continue.

I hope it is hard for us to think like the Devil. On the other hand, maybe this short exercise of temporarily "turning the tables" in our thinking helps us understand how to better avoid the Devil's traps, "*for we are not ignorant of his devices.*"

[From the July/August 2023 KMF Messenger, used with permission] 

When a man is wrapped up in himself, *he makes a pretty small package.*

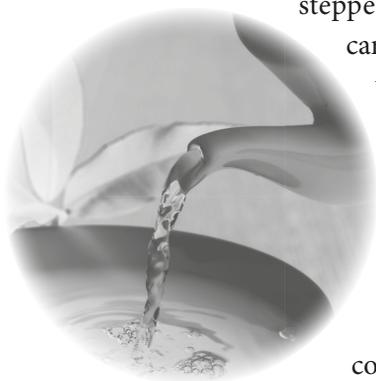
-JOHN RUSKIN



Others First

Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS

I was at a friend's house and needed to use the restroom. She directed me to the master bath instead of the normal spot which was being renovated. I stepped in, admiring the lovely, paneled doors, the carefully-laid tile and the double sink. Clearly, this was the work of a skilled craftsman.



But what I really liked was the missing baseboard trim. You see, this bathroom was part of an addition begun some years before. In the meantime, the cabinet maker had shouldered chairing the building committee, spending uncounted hours in the planning and construction of our spacious, new church house.

And his bathroom trim, among other things, waited.

Isn't this J-O-Y living, where other projects come ahead of your own, the best way to build a church?

I thought it was beautiful. 

mission awareness

Arising Light Asian Ministries Part 2

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

Friedrich wrote a valuable and useful article in preparation for mission work. Read Part One in the September issue of Calvary Messenger. I deeply appreciate Friedrich's honesty and transparency in the following story. -FS

Our Journey to Cambodia (Part 2)

Friedrich Miller, Bakong Village, Siem Reap, Cambodia

We as a couple have been living in Cambodia for two years now. It's been

an incredible privilege, and we've been learning so much. My main responsibility is to manage a SALT financial literacy program. The SALT savings program here serves over two thousand members. We have twelve facilitators who go out to the villages in teams of two to facilitate savings meetings. While our program does not provide any money for savings group members, our staff do receive salaries since it is a full-time job. My work largely consists of providing oversight for the program and staff care. A normal day for me may consist of attending savings groups, preparing for teaching, attending meetings, reviewing the record-keeping, and other random things that come up. On Wednesdays, all of our staff meet for discipleship teaching and SALT program training. My wife and I try to visit the families of our staff members. We also help with responsibilities in the local church as needed.

Our organization's vision is to plant and nurture biblical churches and to live and teach the Bible in harmony with conservative Anabaptist theology. Through CAM's SALT micro-finance program, we have obtained NGO* status to minister here legally. We have two main focuses. We have a local church in which we desire to see local

leadership carrying the work forward in an indigenous way. Then we also have the NGO working alongside the church. The NGO takes a lot of our American staff's time and attention. The deacon in the local church is taking on a lot of the leadership in the local church, but he also has a lead role in the NGO. These two parts of our ministry can indeed complement each other but can also bring quite a few unique challenges. Here is one example.

The church decided to buy a small motorized, tricycle people-hauler—we call it the five-star—to help with transportation for people on Sundays. This five-star has had many mechanical problems. The NGO has a nice mechanic shop and an employed mechanic who is also a member of the local church. When the five-star has problems, the local church assumes that with all the assets in the local NGO, it's a very small task to keep one little machine running. The church usually pays for the parts, but if we Americans in the NGO raise concerns about dependency and how much time our NGO mechanic is spending on church vehicle maintenance, our love for the local brotherhood may be called into question. We need a lot of wisdom from God in knowing how to deal with situations like this.

Doing ministry in a foreign country brings its own set of interesting relational challenges. While we attempt to fit in, we are often reminded that we really do think and process life differently than the people we are working with. Here is one story that I thought might give you a small glimpse into how our different perspectives can affect everyday life.

It's a warm Sunday morning in Cambodia and it's my turn to teach the Sunday school class for the children in the local church. We teach the children at the front of the sanctuary in order to give opportunity for all the adults to also become more familiar with the Bible stories. We've been here a year and a half, and I'm looking forward to the teaching time. I've come to know more of the children and I have a good story prepared for them that I know they will enjoy. Before the service begins, I notice one of our SALT facilitators attending who earlier had attended our church regularly. This brother has a real gift with teaching children how to sing. I tap him on the shoulder and ask him if he could help the children sing two songs after my lesson. He agrees. The service begins as normal. I go ahead with an engaging Bible story and then call this brother to come help me

with the singing. Everything seems to go as I had hoped. The children fully enjoy the singing with their enthusiastic teacher and the service continues.

We come home from church and I question my wisdom in using this brother to teach, knowing that some of the other members have been hurt by this brother in the past, and he is not a full member. I reason that it's probably okay since everyone seemed to enjoy the children's singing.

The following Wednesday evening we had a pastor's meeting, and the deacon made it known that a family in church was very upset by having that SALT facilitator in church on Sunday, and it especially pained them that he was asked to take part in leading the service. I acknowledged my mistake, apologized, and said that I will try to be more careful to only ask full members to help with responsibilities like this going forward. Two days later, on Friday evening, we had our bi-weekly prayer meeting. I felt tension in the room and sensed that some people were not giving me normal eye contact but everybody was still nice and friendly. When prayer request time arrived, one family requested prayer for themselves as they were struggling with bitterness and were having a hard time trying to forgive.

It started dawning on me what they were actually talking about. They also requested prayer for the foreigners and that they would have a lot of wisdom in knowing good people from bad people. Ouch! The prayer meeting continued with everyone acting quite congenial. By this point I was feeling very frustrated by these indirect corrections. It seems I have been publicly rebuked. What have I done?! What shall I do?!

In my mind, I was thinking that leading two songs for the children is a very minimal responsibility in a church service. What's the big deal? In retrospect, I see that I was lifting this brother up into a leadership position and showing him a lot of honor. Having responsibilities of leadership here in Asia puts you on a whole different social level. While I knew relationships between these families were strained, on the surface it seemed like things were okay. The fact is, I haven't known these families for very long, and I don't know all their history. I should have been more sensitive to that. In my upbringing, I've been used to more direct, face-to-face communication, but here that may be considered rude and may cause you to lose face. This isn't always a healthy way of dealing

with conflict, but it's a common part of life here and something that can be really hard to get used to.

In this Asian context, relationships are of crucial importance. Oversights, misunderstandings, and miscommunications are common to mankind, but they are very prone to happen in cross-cultural settings, and the way we respond to these types of situations has the potential to make or break relationships. It's easy to hurt each other unintentionally. Both the local Khmer and we missionaries need to extend a lot of God's grace as we work together for the spreading of the Gospel. We as a couple have increasingly become aware of our need to grow in the area of being more sensitive in relationships. Relationships here seem to be developed slowly and carefully. While this definitely isn't an area of strong natural gifting for us, we keep reminding ourselves to embrace the many opportunities like this for personal and spiritual growth. May we all, regardless of the location of our ministry, continue to "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen*" (1 Peter 3:18).

* non-governmental organization 

It's often the last **key** on the ring that **opens** the door.



A Guide to Godly Gardening

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



Years ago, I clipped the following words from a newspaper, taping them to the backplash in my kitchen: *Behavior permitted is behavior taught. Never complain about what you permitted.* At that time, I was in the middle of mothering little ones. I didn't always perfectly follow the dog-eared paper instruction, but day after day, as the dishwasher splashed over my dirty dishes, those words washed over my awareness. They were etched into my consciousness in that bygone era of scrapping preschoolers, schoolgirl drama, and more.

Those words have kind of rephrased themselves in my current landscape: *Choices have consequences.* What we feed grows. What we permit is what persists and endures. Behavior tolerated is behavior taught. In words from the Bible: *Don't be deceived, whatever a man sows, that is what he'll reap. Give and it will be given unto you.*

I'm reminded of select lines from *Children Learn What They Live*, by Dorothy Law Nolte:

If a child lives with criticism, he

learns to condemn.

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

Can we know for sure that if we rock and sing our babies to sleep, they will understand love and companionship better? That if we seek out our teens for their stories, they'll ask for ours? If relationships matter more to us than wealth or leisure, we'll harvest healthy connection. If we plant consistency, security grows. If our faith is lived out in practical ways, conviction follows.

You fill in the blanks. If wasting time is permitted, expect _____. If physical beauty is highly praised, expect _____. When money flows freely, your children will _____. When we cushion our sons' and daughters' lives with ease and comfort, they will

_____. Bitterness in my life grows into _____. If I overrun my husband's wishes, my sons will _____. If I use words that cut and wound, my children will _____.

Planting and harvesting constitute long-term investments. Some of our child-training efforts have a quick turnover, but much of the grueling work of child rearing doesn't really show until years later. One of my friends who's been blessed with a baby son trailing his older sisters by a number of years, is grateful for their span in ages because she gets to implement those methods that she now knows worked and can let go of the ones that flopped.

And because God is such a liberal and gracious Father, yields come with increase! Not only do we get back what we planted, but an increased measure of the same. Quite literally, harvest time can be out of this world. God allows yields that exponentially multiply our earlier expectations. In our experience, our children give back to us much more than the cost of our initial investment. Our sweat, tears, and hard work are paid back at a high rate of interest. However grueling the initial investment may have been, we are truly undeserving of the deep soul joy of doing life with adult children who make God-honoring choices.

It's been an inspiration for my husband and me to travel in foreign countries where we remember church-planting efforts of some 40-50 years past. We mingle there today with awe and deep emotion as we remember the plowing, seeding, fertilizing, and weeding of long-ago years. Today we watch children and grandchildren following God. God doesn't owe us pictures of future harvests, but it's both sobering and exhilarating when your lifespan encompasses a picture like that! A preview of heaven maybe?

But does the planting always guarantee a desired harvest? No commentary would be complete without this disclaimer. This summer I thought I was planting miniature sunflowers, but instead those *miniatures* now measure 12' tall. I planted green beans that the rabbits chewed. My husband planted corn and watched later as blackbirds spotted and uprooted almost every seedling. Choices have consequences. But our lives and brokenness, after Eden, and redemption, after Calvary, cannot always be reduced to a simple 1,2,3 formula. Our humble and gracious God will not override a person's choice. Some grown children inexplicably turn against what they were programmed with. It's like good seed is sown on infertile soil, but the disappointing harvest leaves us

without any explanation. We turn to the God of all comfort.

God weeps over His children too. He would have the power to rain down fire on all that is wrong, yet refuses to do so, for now. On a future day the tares and wheat will be duly gathered in and separated. Until then, He continues to invite us to abide by the guidelines. We can break God's laws but we cannot change them. We get to choose the planting, but we don't get to choose the results. We don't get to rewrite the first chapters after the story ends badly.

Do you share my impulse to page through a magazine backward, or to want to know the outcome of a story before I get started? I often guiltily give in to that urge for a sneak peek at the end, as a way to get started.

If we *could* page back to the last

chapters of our life stories, might we then adjust the content of our beginning chapters? Is there a way to foreknow the results so that we can adjust the beginning? Following are several ways I've found to *page back* in an effort to help me know if my beginning plan is a good one:

- Study Proverbs, especially, if you want principles in capsule size and easy to understand.
- Observe choices and lives, for sure, at extended family reunions, funerals, and weddings.
- Read memoirs and biographies.
- Journal your aspirations and goals. Reflect on them periodically, modify as necessary. Talk about them.
- Ask people who've seen more of life than you have.

God, help us to honor the law of sowing and reaping!



junior messages

Travels in India

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

We learned:

- Indian people love rice. They eat with their fingers, even soupy curry or masala toppings with rice.

- They remove their shoes when entering a house.

- Feet are considered dirty. Do not touch or bump others with your feet.
- May and June are very warm, humid, and sticky.
- The Indian women are lovely with long black hair and colorful dresses. They wear loose pants under

their dresses. Matching or colorful scarves are part of their outfits. They love jewelry, bracelets, and may wear rings on their toes.

- Peacocks and tigers are India's national bird and animal. Mangos are a loved fruit.

We assisted Marvin and Jenny Kauffman with a three-day SALT Microfinance Forum. When the six men, SALT facilitators, arrived, Jenny happily met them. She put her hands flat together, held up to her chin; "Praise the Lord, brothers," she greeted them. Their response was, "Praise the Lord, sister." ("Namaste" is their greeting.)

That evening we got acquainted with the group over paneer, naan, rice, dahl, and chicken at a restaurant. It was a good time.

Mark and Marvin taught Bible classes. Marvin also taught things about the SALT Program and problems they encounter. The men all spoke English. Marvin and Mark taught slowly, stopping for translations and questions. They loved stories. Mark related how years ago he dreamed he married me. Sunil (the most outgoing of the young men) happily informed me about that.

Jenny and I shopped at the market. There were lots of vendors with wares piled beside the streets, calling out their goods. The street was crowded

with people.

We flagged down a tuk tuk to go home. The man couldn't understand the address on Jenny's GPS and drove around and around, up one street and down another. Finally Jenny decided we will get off. We found a better driver and were relieved when we got back.

The Indian men gave Mark a pen set and Sunil gave me a cute handheld fan. Don and his brother-in-law took us to the airport. We had one late night flight to Delhi.

The next day we explored Green Park with a green lake. Many fruit bats hung from the trees. There were geese on the green water. We saw monkeys and lots of dogs. India treats dogs respectfully, setting out bowls of milk for them. Dogs are not sacred like cows on the streets, yet still there is respect for the life of an animal. In the midst of that I wondered why there are homeless street children?

I was troubled by beggars reaching out pleadingly for aid. Our guide to Old Delhi had no compassion. He feels handouts encourage begging instead of working.

Old Delhi tour

We boarded the crowded metro and headed to Old Delhi. The city was bustling and busy with people and wares. The first stop was an ornate Hindu temple. We washed

our hands and removed our shoes and walked through water to wash our feet. Men and women alike were told to wear a scarf.

Our guide bowed down all the way to the floor at the entrance. We sat cross-legged on the carpeted floor in the main temple area. Mark has some knee problems and stuck his leg out in front of him. A turbaned man tapped him and let him know it was not proper to sit in the temple that way. When we left, a boy poured holy water on our hands.

It was fascinating to walk through Khari Baoli, Asia's largest and oldest spice market, operating since the 17th century. There are piles of spices, nuts, herbs, dates, rice, and tea, arranged artistically. We had to cough and sneeze as our noses tickled from so many spices. I liked the rickshaw ride, man-powered with a bicycle. We climbed many steps of a place that used to be an old castle

with a flat roof with panoramic views of Old Delhi.

That evening we couldn't eat all our restaurant food. A friendly local girl said we could find someone hungry to give it to. A blind musician along the road was happy for food, and our tuk tuk driver knew where homeless youth frequented.

On Saturday we toured the Taj Mahal, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It is opulent and beautiful. It is a huge tomb, built in 1531, over a 22-year span by 20,000 workers. Elephants hauled in the marble stone and other building materials.

That evening we boarded our flight for the long journey home. One flight was 14 hours long. Our seatmate was a man from North Vietnam. We chatted with a girl from China.

God cares for people all over His vast world.

To learn more, Google India's 25 best foods.



youth messages

Be Real

Ryan Stoltzfus, Wytheville, VA

It's Friday night, and a group of youth are gathered on the back porch, enjoying each other and the cool summer evening.

Suddenly, a peculiar notification sound goes off on multiple phones, and the conversation halts. Nearly everyone begins taking photos. The

conversation now limps along as the participants in this photo-taking phenomenon scroll through photos their friends have just taken. It's BeReal time.

BeReal is a trending social media app in which users post one or more unfiltered photos upon receiving the app's notification.¹ The user can then view all his friends' photos after posting his own. BeReal is an explicit reaction to highly curated and edited forms of social media and is marketed as a way to show a more realistic picture of everyday life. Charissa Cheong, from *insider.com*, says that BeReal is "meant to encourage people to be more authentic, instead of trying to present their best selves."²

I'm not here to extol the virtues or vices of new forms of social media. However, I believe the BeReal trend is a small part of a larger movement in contemporary culture—the desire for authenticity and "realness." For some years now, authenticity has been a buzzword among young folks.

And it isn't really surprising.

1. *Is currently trending in Anabaptist circles. It seems that the app has already reached its peak in the world at large and is beginning to lose its appeal.* <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/13/style/bereal-app.html>

2. <https://www.insider.com/what-is-bereal-app-how-does-it-work-2022-4> (accessed 7/26/23)

Today's generation is tired of fakes. They're sick of seeing lives on social media that are obviously fabricated. They're tired of going to church and hearing only positive testimonies. They want to hear how people actually feel. And they want people to act out of that.

The desire for authenticity, honesty, and realness is evident in popular culture. We see it in the songs, T-shirts, bumper stickers, and books of today. Celebrities and singers are judged by how "authentic" they are. According to *USA Today* writer Edward Segarra, people are making "an art of authenticity." For example, Taylor Swift, American pop idol, released the song "Anti-Hero" that was (and still is) immensely popular largely because of Swift's emotional honesty and self-loathing. She says that the song is "all the things that I hate about myself." The song spent eight weeks on the Billboard Hot 100. Prince Harry, estranged member of the British royal family, has gained a significant amount of attention by writing and releasing *Spare*, a vulnerable memoir of his life in the royal family. The takeaway here is that many people today, especially young people, want vulnerability, transparency, and authenticity.

Furthermore, this authenticity is specifically defined as complete

transparency of feeling and emotion. Authenticity is “spilling your guts.” It is about releasing whatever you feel on the inside, whether it be sadness, joy, or rage. The rock music genre is attractive to many people specifically because of authenticity—the singer expresses whatever he or she is feeling, regardless of what anybody else thinks.

And maybe the desire for people to express their feelings isn't all a bad thing. We don't have to read Scripture long to see that honesty and transparency were part of how many faithful people related to God. Think of David's honesty in Psalm 13: “*How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*” (13:1-2 NASB) David, the man after God's own heart, wasn't afraid to tell God exactly how he felt. Job is another example: “*Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse? For then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then I would have been at rest*” (Job 3:9-11 NASB). There are others in Scripture who basically say: “God, I'm tired of life. I don't know what's going on, and

I don't feel like following You. *Where are you?*”

As is evidenced by the Old Testament saints, God wants us to be honest with where we are, and *He wants us to tell Him*. He gives us the space to “spill our guts” and tell Him and our fellow Christians, “I haven't been having a great week.” Or “I don't really feel God right now.” The ability and freedom to express our feelings is perhaps something we should give more space for in our Anabaptist churches today.

But authenticity is about more than just being transparent about our feelings. As *Christianity Today* writer Megan Hill puts it, authenticity is “truth-telling about all areas of life.” We are being fully authentic when we recognize and align ourselves with reality. Take, for example, the story of the 12 spies in Numbers 13. Moses sends 12 men to survey the land of Canaan. On coming back, 10 of the men have distinctly negative reports. They saw the land infested with insurmountable obstacles. And they report what they saw. The other two men saw the same things. Yet they had faith in God and consequently gave the people a radically different report.

Now, which men were more authentic?

Today's culture would probably

respond in favor of the 10 men. They were the ones who spilled their feelings. They were honest about what they thought. The 10 men, if they were living today, could probably have written a song of disgust, self-loathing, and despair and been lauded as examples of authenticity. And yet it seems to me that at the end of the day, Caleb and Joshua were the ones who were authentic because they were aligned with reality. They looked beyond the immediate hopelessness and remembered that God was fighting for them.

This is an example of where “being real” was actually in opposition to the way that they felt. They looked beyond their feelings and saw the reality of God, hope, and His Kingdom. If we keep reading the Psalms, we see that after venting his feelings, the Psalmist turns, and hopes. Back to Psalm 13: *“Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, and my enemy will say, ‘I have overcome him,’ and my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken. **But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; my heart***

shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because He has dealt bountifully with me” (13:3-6 NASB). David, while being honest with his feelings, returns to the reality of God at the end of the Psalm. The chief problem with today’s version of authenticity is that it *stops with feelings*. True Christian authenticity gives space for the honest confession of feelings *while at the same time recognizing that reality is larger than one’s feelings*. As Megan Hill puts it, “Being authentic means that God and His Word define what is real.”

Life is tough, and there are difficulties we will face. God wants us to be honest with Him about our failures, doubts, and disappointments. We should make space in our churches and in our personal interaction with God to be open with our feelings. But we must always remember that Christian authenticity takes into account both the pain that evil brings *and* God’s definite victory over evil. With Job we can be honest about our feelings, and with Caleb and Joshua we can see past the present darkness and despair with eyes of hope. 

‘Tis better to have *loved* and lost
Than never to have *loved* at all.

-ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON



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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

The biggest liar in the world is “they say.”

• • • • •

Love is seeking to make another person happy.

• • • • •

Some people fall for everything and stand for nothing.

• • • • •

Better the shoulder to the wheel than the back to the wall.

• • • • •

When your shoulders are carrying a load of responsibility,
there is no room for chips.

• • • • •

Very often a fight for what is right turns into a quarrel for what is left.

• • • • •

Some men grow under responsibility while others only swell.

• • • • •

He who buries his talent is making a grave mistake.

• • • • •

It takes two to make a quarrel but only one to end it.

• • • • •

Wisdom—common sense to an uncommon degree.

• • • • •

Winners find ways to make things work.

Losers find excuses for why things don't work.