



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

FEBRUARY 2024

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Calvary Messenger

February 2024

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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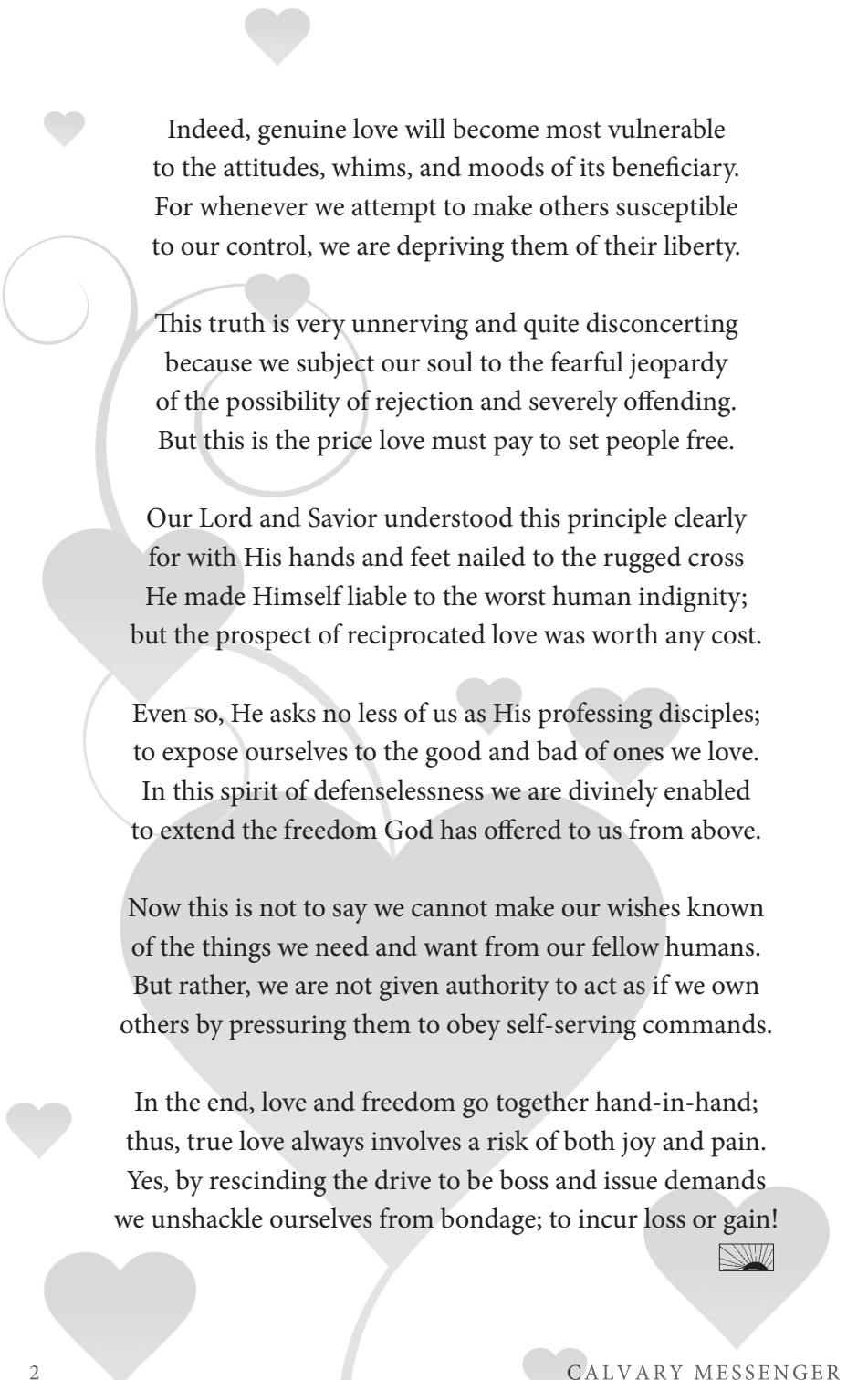
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True Love

Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX

True love always grants its recipient total freedom:

- the freedom to be kind or rude
- the freedom to bless or curse
- the freedom to heal or wound
- the freedom to be honest or deceitful
- the freedom to respect or disrespect
- the freedom to forgive or harbor resentment
- the freedom to be intimate or remain aloof
 - the freedom to accept or reject
- the freedom to admit guilt or cast blame
- the freedom to judge fairly or unfairly
- the freedom to commend or condemn
- the freedom to become better or grow worse
- the freedom to generously give or selfishly take
 - the freedom to trust or doubt
 - the freedom to submit or rebel
 - the freedom to stay or leave

The page is decorated with several light gray hearts of various sizes and a large, elegant swirl that loops around the text. The hearts are scattered across the page, some overlapping the text. The swirl starts near the top left and curves around the central text blocks.

Indeed, genuine love will become most vulnerable to the attitudes, whims, and moods of its beneficiary. For whenever we attempt to make others susceptible to our control, we are depriving them of their liberty.

This truth is very unnerving and quite disconcerting because we subject our soul to the fearful jeopardy of the possibility of rejection and severely offending. But this is the price love must pay to set people free.

Our Lord and Savior understood this principle clearly for with His hands and feet nailed to the rugged cross He made Himself liable to the worst human indignity; but the prospect of reciprocated love was worth any cost.

Even so, He asks no less of us as His professing disciples; to expose ourselves to the good and bad of ones we love. In this spirit of defenselessness we are divinely enabled to extend the freedom God has offered to us from above.

Now this is not to say we cannot make our wishes known of the things we need and want from our fellow humans. But rather, we are not given authority to act as if we own others by pressuring them to obey self-serving commands.

In the end, love and freedom go together hand-in-hand; thus, true love always involves a risk of both joy and pain. Yes, by rescinding the drive to be boss and issue demands we unshackle ourselves from bondage; to incur loss or gain!



The Objectives of Christian Writing

Aaron S. Glick, 1903-1996

“What’s in your hand?” the Savior asked.

*The young man said, “Some ink,
A ballpoint pen, and a note book,
To help make people think.”*

“I’ll take them, use them,” God replied,

*“Just give them all to Me.”
And so began in this person’s life,
A writing ministry.*

*The years pass on, that man is gone.
From pen and his notebook,
His written page continues on.
And as the people look,*

*They sense his presence as they read,
The message he did bring.
God grant that we, like him,
might be a writer for the King.
-Adapted*

God is still speaking to individuals today and saying, “What is in your hand? Give Me the use of it and it will be a blessing in your life and in the lives of others.”

It seems that God calls people who

are busy. There was once a man alone, way out in the desert. But the Lord knew he was there. And He called him one day, busy as he was. This man became the greatest writer in history. His writings influenced more people than any other writer that ever lived. The Lord said unto him, “What is that in your hand?”

The man answered, “A rod” (just an ordinary piece of wood).

But the Lord said, “Let Me have it and direct its use and it will become useful to others also.”

Herein lies the secret of power and effectiveness in the writing ministry. The Lord’s work done the Lord’s way will have the Lord’s supply. “*For we are labourers together with God*” (I Corinthians 3:9). This would indicate that the Lord’s work is a partnership with man (with the Lord as President).

The call to the ministry of Christian writing is not something spectacular. But the faithful exercise of this gift will be rewarded in eternity. “*And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the*

stars for ever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3). This is a big open field for witnessing.

“The pen is mightier than the sword.”¹ More minds are swayed by the printed page today than ever before. Satan knows the value of the printed page. Example: the various cults. It is hard for us to visualize the damage that has been and is being done in the world today by communist propaganda. More lives are influenced, motivated, and directed in this way than by their excessive armaments. Napoleon once said, “I fear three newspapers more than a thousand bayonets.”

Because “the pen is mightier than the sword,” the early church fathers sensed the need for Christian literature to counteract the errors that were creeping into the church. A study of the writings of the Nicene Fathers gives us some idea of the problems that were faced by the early church and how they dealt with them.

The history of the early church and the problems that confronted them does indicate the importance and need of *“earnestly contending for the faith.”* This needs to be done in order to counteract the forces of evil that confront us in the religious world of our day. This can be counteracted by the faithful exercise of the Christian writing ministry. Too many church

1. Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 183

members don't really know what they do believe on many important issues.

As we consider the purpose of Christian writing, we are reminded of the prophet Ezekial in chapter 37:1-4, *“Son of man, can these bones live?”* The material at our disposal for writing can be like dry bones. Something needs to happen to it. It must be brought to life. It must become alive for the writer.

Perhaps the first thing in order of importance in writing is to know what one wishes to say and then say it. It must be something of interest to the reader or it will be passed on unread. It must also be given in an interesting way.

Finally, the purpose of Christian writing is to bring the reader closer to God and to build character in the reader.

There is also great need to teach folks how to find enjoyment in the things of everyday life because too many people are bored with life.

The subject must be largely determined by the need. For children, stories must be on a child's level. For youth it will be character building, perhaps stories of travel, or how to know God's purpose in life. For young parents there is a need for subjects on family living and planning.

To all classes of people, the lessons

to be found in nature should be of real interest. If this job of writing about nature is well done, it will help many people to appreciate nature. This will help to build character. The wonders of nature are as it were unsearchable. It is a known fact that nature lovers are not soon bored with life.

In writing a story of a happening, in order to be interesting to the reader, it needs to be given so the readers can imagine themselves on the scene.

Many folks will dismiss the call to the writing ministry. They will say, "I don't have a talent for writing; I can't write." But what did God say to Moses when he said he couldn't speak? See Exodus 4:10-11.

Perhaps the real reason that most folks feel they are not able to write is because of their emptiness. Many have never read enough of that which

is worthwhile in life. Too many of our people spend more time reading their weekly periodical than the time spent reading their Bible or books that build character.

The Bible teaches that everyone has a talent to be used which should not be buried in the ground. The most scriptural reward for faithful development of one's talents is to be given increased responsibilities that are to be accepted and carried out humbly and faithfully, in dependence on the Lord, for His glory and the good of others. "*Neglect not the gift that is in thee*" (I Timothy 4:14a).

(The above was given at the Virginia Christian Day School Institute, Aroda, VA, November 9, 1973.)

[This article was first printed in the February 1974 issue of Calvary Messenger.]



Announcement

!! Wanted !!

Do you have old *Calvary Messenger* issues that you no longer need? I'm looking for the issues beginning in January 1970 through December 2003 to scan and convert to digital files. Shipping costs will be reimbursed.

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Announcement

Marriage Enrichment Seminar

April 12-14, 2024

Theme: Side by Side – Growing Together in Marriage

TOPICS:

- **Unraveling the Threads** - Ben Waldner
- **Unspoken Obstacles** - David Martin
- **Building Bridges** - David Martin
- **Finding True North** (for the husbands) - Tom Johnson
- **The Power of Partnership** (for the wives) - Christine Martin
- **Life Story** - Josh Woodcock
- **Securely Intimate** - Ben Waldner
- **The Ultimate Love Triangle** - Dave Snyder



Seminar will be held at Deeper Life Ministries in Plain City, OH. Preregistration is required. To register, or for more information regarding the seminar, please call 614-873-1199 or email info@dlmohio.org. Registration deadline is March 29, 2024.

Announcement

Beachy Ministers' Meetings

March 26-28, 2024

Hosted by the Arlington, Cedar Crest, and Center congregations

**To be held at the
Pleasantview Activity Center
5013 S. Dean Rd.
Hutchinson, KS, 67501**

*For information contact:
Brad Nisly – (620) 921-0318
Brad.rosa.nisly@gmail.com*

The Distress of Nations

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Populations and their land areas have engaged my interest now for several years. The population of the United States is 330 million, which has largely clustered in the large swaths of land along the Atlantic and Pacific seaboard. The current population of the world is over 8 billion souls. Statistics of four years ago indicated that this amazing world's population is increasing at 83 million per year. At that rate, another billion would be added by 2035 (83 million x 12 years = nearly 1 billion). Exponentially, the larger the mass, the greater rate of increase can take place, in which every year's increase adds a greater rate of expansion.

Thus, our world population could hit 9 billion by 2035, and 10 billion by 2045. In 2019, scientists predicted that the world will not be able to sustain over 9 or 10 billion people. We believe otherwise, with proper management and stewardship.

Our Lord spoke to His disciples about a future era when there will be *"the distress of nations, with*

perplexity" (Luke 21:25). The context of Luke 21 is prophecy about the horrendous destruction of Jerusalem beginning in A.D. 70, and the end of the world. The parallel passage in Matthew 24 also speaks of that terrible time when *"iniquity shall abound"* (v.12), in which Luther's German says the iniquity of the masses shall take "the upper hand."

Daily newspapers could put HELP! in bold letters over the print on every page. Did you ever take note how bad news sells newspapers? By contrast, every page in our Bible could have HOPE! in bold letters over every page. Speaking of sales, the Bible has been the best-selling book for a long time. Many people read the Bible regularly without changing one line of its message, it having neither retractions nor amendments.

The *"distress of nations"* is forcefully driven by the *"inventors of evil things"* for personal control of one's situation and life, plus having the dominion over territories and the masses living upon it. The multiplicity of inventions becomes an enamored

pursuit by the masses of people upon the earth. Meanwhile, there are political and religious powers in a near-frenzy for control of the expanding population.

China has caught our attention with several recent news items. The population of China is around 1.4 billion people (1,400,000,000). The U.S., by comparison has, in round numbers, only 330,000,000. Thus, China has over four times more people in a relatively similar square mile area (3.7 million square miles). However, the U.S. has a much more people-friendly landscape and productive land area.

Asia Harvest has had a witness presence in China for some years. Here is part of what they say:

- There are an estimated 100 million believers in China. Their head leader, Xi Jinping, has launched a campaign to systematically destroy Christianity since 2016. The economy has been in decline ever since.

- They are stuck with too few young and middle-aged men, hence a seriously declining tax base. The communist control for the one-child family has left them short in paying taxes by upwards to 400 million people, which is urgently needed to sustain their infrastructure, economy, and military.

- Abortion was managed for mostly

having boy babies. Now there are not enough women for marriage. Their young people have little desire for a family. The national population count was recently reduced by 121 million! Some provinces shrink their totals by the millions every year!

- They have over 400 million (400,000,000) facial recognition cameras in order to keep an “eye” on those they target, as a way to keep track of their movements.

- China has strongly promoted going for higher education in order to help assert superiority in the world. They have tens of millions of university graduates who cannot find a job relative to their studies. There is already a noticeable inner decay in their economy, only now the people also talk about the inner rot of their person and their society. Many have lost the desire not only to excel, but also to just do some contributing work.

- The harsh persecution of believers has closed churches, to where people now meet privately in small groups which could appear as only a social gathering.

Here in November 2023, our local newspaper has a report of people from China who are also pressing to enter the U.S., along with many other foreigners. The newspaper says 24,000 Chinese citizens have been

apprehended crossing into the U.S. this year so far. That is more than the total Chinese doing so in the preceding 10 years.

They fly into Ecuador, where they need no visa, then pay traffic smugglers to facilitate their entrance to our country. Chinese citizens are more successful to enter by way of our asylum court system than other countries because China refuses to take them back. By the foregoing report, we can better understand why. China is the worst offender in these matters, our newspaper concludes.

Immigration during the Biden presidency has caused humanitarian crises in some northern big cities, who ironically have Democratic mayors. Many of these big-city people are exasperated and feel overrun by the sudden addition of people by the tens of thousands. Our porous border with Mexico presently does not nearly have enough staff to handle the flood of people in a legal manner.

Another recent article in our newspaper talked of double-digit plane loads of Haitians arriving in Nicaragua as a beginning conduit into the U.S. A December 2023 article said a recent poll in Nicaragua found that one-half of their population wishes to leave their country. Numerous ones

have their bags packed, ready to go when circumstances seem favorable.

A December 17, 2023, report says the homeless population in the U.S. is increasing rapidly, now over 650,000 people, including some families. Inflation is also a cruel tyrant, causing much distress. The distress is rapidly increasing. The median prices for homes in the U.S. have increased every month for the last nine months.

Smuggler guides are scattering their paying clients most everywhere along the Mexico border to the U.S. The border with Arizona has reported 18,900 arrests just last week, which averages out at 2,700 arrests per day. In December 2022, for the whole month, there were only 700, the Border Patrol chief said.

Others are sneaking across where there are gaps in the border wall. The U.S. population has increased by 1,500,000 in 2023, largely by incoming refugees.

The war in Ukraine is becoming overbearing to European nations and the U.S. for needed armaments to hold back belligerent Russia. The war involving Israel and Gaza has evoked a world-wide backlash, causing serious reactions by the press, colleges, and many others, against anyone who is Jewish. There has been great use made of social

media to sling it out with the other side, notably involving either Jews or Muslims.

It appears as though the billions given by the U.S. for other nations' woes, comes from government borrowing. Our national debt is a staggering 32 trillion, with increases every year for many years.

The pattern of our nation's activity is evidently poised to undergo more turmoil at every level of national endeavor. These last four years have brought a rapid acceleration on all fronts of politics, economy, religion, and military exploits. The distresses in these four areas are prophetically

spoken to in Revelation, chapters 16-19. What we are seeing right now in our time is preliminary to events given by our Lord Jesus that pertain to the very climactic era at the end of the world.

The Bottom Line is, quoting the Lord Jesus Christ Who said, "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21:31), and in verse 28, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."



How Many Cups Do You Have?

Nick Drane, Pomfret, CT

Do you know how many cups you have in your home? Can you count them from memory? Consider short and tall glasses, those made of plastic, ceramic, coffee mugs, teacups, perhaps water bottles as well. Do you have a rough estimate in your head? Of course, this is a silly thought exercise, as most of us have more cups than we could possibly recall without heading to the kitchen and checking for ourselves. As seemingly

insignificant and commonplace as a simple cup may appear, it is unprecedented in world history to live in a country where even the poorest among us probably have more cups than we could possibly count. Even the kings and queens of previous centuries likely could not have imagined this!

The Greek philosopher, Diogenes (404-323 B.C.), offers us an interesting lesson that revolves around the illustration of the drinking cup.

Diogenes, sometimes known as Diogenes the Cynic, preached a philosophy of severe poverty and personal austerity as a means of getting closer to wisdom and truth. He thought that dogs, who lived lives of honest, unadorned simplicity, had greater integrity than human beings, whom he accused of living artificially and hypocritically. It is no wonder that Diogenes's philosophy came to be known as "Cynicism" which means "dog-like" when translated from the original Greek.

Diogenes had few possessions and at one point owned nothing more than the cloak on his back and a small cup for drinking water from the springs. One day Diogenes approached a spring and discovered there a small boy not using a cup, but rather drinking water from his hands. Diogenes was convicted by what he saw and immediately shattered his own cup on the ground, berating himself for being less wise than a child. He reasoned that he had failed in his quest to embrace total plainness of living and considered the boy his philosophical superior.

As Christians, we are not expected to live like Diogenes, and one could argue that his level of dog-like austerity is not even desirable. Nevertheless, our Lord clearly calls us to lives of voluntary poverty,

simplicity, plainness, and austerity if we are sincere about seeking His kingdom and salvation.

With this in mind, it is helpful to approach the tale of the cups metaphorically—how many cups are we trying to fill in our lives? It has been said that work expands to fill the time allotted to it, and in this sense the more "cups" we have set before us, the more we feel compelled to fill them with the things of this world. Consider the hobbies, entertainment, friendships, events, trips, and appointments that fill cup after cup, monopolizing our time and energy and drawing us away from doing the work that our Lord has called us to do. We err by thinking that eventually the cups will be "filled" and we will get a break, as this often becomes a perpetual process. Consider our compulsion to fill our economic cup with more and more money as an example.

In 1935, the Gallup organization started polling the American public on a variety of issues. One question that was asked in 1935 was: What are you most worried about? The answer: the economy. This was in the midst of the Great Depression and it stands to reason that the economy would be the top concern of most Americans. However, that same question is posed to Americans today, and we

get the same response—the economy is the top worry. We are not in a depression as we were then, but we as a society still cling to our worries about our bank and retirement accounts above all else. Despite our relative prosperity it seems that our economic cup is never full enough.

The average American today lives better than our forebears in the Depression, but church attendance nationwide is significantly lower than it was then, and our generation is facing an epidemic of depression and anxiety that those in the 1930s could not imagine. Could it be that our prosperity is to blame? In other words, does our metaphorical cup of abundance runneth over to our detriment? Depression-era Americans had to make do with less, expected less, yet were happier and more faithful.

I have observed that many men in our communities will spend an inordinate amount of time away from church and family in order to attend meetings, seminars, and other networking venues in order to fulfill a vague compulsion to “get ahead” by growing their businesses. I have certainly been guilty of this at times as well. These are not poor men but rather men whose work already provides a decent home and amenities for their families with

resources left over for giving. Perhaps many of us subscribe to the idea that more wealth will make us happy, if not explicitly, then subconsciously.

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) and Princeton University conducted a large study on income and emotional well-being, attempting to establish if there is indeed a correlation between the two. They concluded that those who are in extreme poverty are on average unhappier than wealthier individuals, and their happiness does increase as income increases. However, the researchers established that this increase in happiness eventually levels off somewhere around the median income level. This shows that wealth and happiness is not a dollar-for-dollar affair, and billionaires are not necessarily happier than millionaires.

But there is still a problem here to confront, and that is the fact that median income (essentially a “middle-class” life) is different from country-to-country and from decade-to-decade. So what then is the “absolute value” of prosperity that we should attain or limit ourselves to?

In Luke 18, the rich ruler asks our Lord what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds by telling him to keep the commandments. Upon hearing that he has always kept

the commandments, Jesus tells him to sell all that he has and distribute to the poor, adding that it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. Another way of looking at this parable is to say that eternal life is in one direction and worldly riches are in another direction. One cannot pursue opposing directions simultaneously.

Practitioners of some other faiths, particularly Buddhism, would say that the path to salvation lies in having no cups set before us whatsoever, that we must have only one desire: to eliminate all desire. One can see that this is a trap of circular logic and that the very act of getting out of bed in the morning requires some level of desire. Scripture delineates very clearly what types of worldly desires should fill our cups, and in the process provides an absolute value and standard of prosperity:

- *“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”*

- *“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”*

- *“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (I Timothy 6:7-9 KJV).*

If we have reasonable access to food and raiment, we should consider ourselves wealthy enough. I would suggest we add shelter as an extension of raiment since it protects us from the elements, and, of course, access to the Bible and a supportive body of believers. This should be particularly encouraging to the young people in our churches who may be anxious over the future and decisions about schooling, work, friendships, fashions, technology, marriage, family, and much more. The world teaches us to be busybodies constantly on the hunt to “find ourselves” through much activity and stimulation. We should teach our young people to be very selective about the cups they wish to fill, and encourage them to be content above all with food and raiment. We could even say that if one has food, raiment, and Scripture, then one has “made it” in this world, and aside from sharing the good news with others, should not feel overwhelmed to fill so many more cups to overflowing.

*[Based on a recent message Brother Nick preached at Believers Mennonite Church in Hampton, CT] (959) 232-8374
nickdrane@proton.me*



marriages

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

Beachy-Kauffman

Bro. Neil Cristen, son of Philip and Sue Ann Beachy, Millersburg, OH, and Sis. Kathlene Joy, daughter of Raymond and Rose Kauffman, Belleville, PA, on July 15, 2023, at Locust Grove Mennonite for Valley View A. M. Church by Loren Yoder.

Eicher-Graber

Bro. Brent, son of Tim and Judy Eicher, Grabill, IN, and Sis. April, daughter of Melvin and Debbie Graber, Grabill, IN, on July 1, 2023, at Allen County Christian Fellowship for Fellowship Haven Church by Roman Miller.

Herr-Brenneman

Bro. Paul, son of Edwin and the late Judith Herr, Gorin, MO, and Sis. Nadine, daughter of Miriam and the late Philip Brenneman, Millersburg, OH, on November 3, 2023, at Maranatha Fellowship Church for Messiah A. M. Church by Phil Miller.

Jantzi-Verwer

Bro. Cameron, son of Larry and Beatrice Jantzi, Brunner, ON, and Sis. Elizabeth, daughter of James and Margaret Verwer, St. Mary's, ON, on November 4, 2023, at River of Life A. M. Church by Arnold Jantzi.

Ropp-Kuepfer

Bro. Shawn Larry, son of Larry and Susan Ropp, Lucknow, ON, and Sis. Emma Renae, daughter of Jeffrey and Rhoda Kuepfer, Lucknow, ON, on October 14, 2023, at Lucknow Christian Reform Church for Whitechurch A. M. Church by Larry Ropp.

Shenk-Hochstetler

Bro. Wendell, son of Jonathan and Ruth Ann Shenk, Utica, OH, and Sis. Victoria, daughter of Brad and Grace Hochstetler, Woodburn, IN, on August 25, 2023, at the home of the bride for Fellowship Haven Church by Roman Miller.

Stoltzfus-Troyer

Bro. Jevon, son of Mark and Linda Stoltzfus, Honeybrook, PA, and Sis. Lydia, daughter of Hosea and Bernice Troyer, Free Union, VA, on December 9, 2023, at Nortonsville Church of God for Bethesda Fellowship by Elmer Stoltzfus.

Wagler-Graber

Bro. Kenton, son of Travis and Renee Wagler, Odon, IN, and Sis. Jeanette, daughter of Arthur and Regina Graber, Hicksville, OH, on November 11, 2023, at Allen County Christian Church for Fellowship Haven Church, by Roman Miller.



Zook-Kauffman

Bro. Jonathan Lee, son of Marvin and Rachel Zook, Gap, PA, and Sis. Lynita Ruth, daughter of Tim and Ruth Kauffman, Belleville, PA, on November 4, 2023, at Locust Grove Mennonite Church for Valley View A. M. Church by Loren Yoder.



cradle roll

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



Bower, Leon and Donita (Gingerich), Kalona, IA (currently in Farmington, NM), third child, second daughter, Violet Sage, December 7, 2023.

Brenneman, Joel and Sharla (Hooley), Falkville, AL, second child and son, Winston Blake, November 2, 2023.

Eicher, Brian and Liz (Stoll), Hicksville, OH, fifth living child, third son, Klayton Michael, October 19, 2023.

Kauffman, Jeremy and Carolyn (Miller), Mission Home, VA, first child and son, Bradlyn Jeremiah, September 20, 2023.

Kauffman, Levi and Rachel (Stoltzfus), Belleville, PA, first child and daughter, Eliana Ruth (born asleep), September 3, 2023.

Lengacher, Marcus and Glenda (Coblentz), Torrington, WY, eighth child, fourth daughter, Lily Peace (stillborn), May 20, 2023.

Martin, Nelson and Hannah (Miller), Partridge, KS, second child and son, Berend Francis, December 10, 2023.

Miller, Caleb and Rosalyn (Stoltzfus), Auburn, IN, sixth child, third daughter, Aria Brielle, October 14, 2023.

Miller, Daniel and Rachel (Nisley), Warsaw, OH, fifth child, third son, Jahaziel Eli, November 14, 2023.

Miller, Kenneth and Wanda (Mast), Hindsville, AR, third child, second daughter, Laila Drew, December 7, 2023.

Miller, Matthew and Michelle (Miller), Fresno, OH, first child and son, Cody Jacob, November 30, 2023.

Miller, Nathaniel and Ashley (Smucker), Greenville, TN, third child, first daughter, Abigail Rose, December 1, 2023.

Peachey, Matthias and Carmen (Gingerich), Wytheville, VA, third child, second daughter, Ivanna Quinn, October 31, 2023.

Petre, Dennis and Donna (Yoder), Moulton, AL, sixth child, third daughter, Darlisa Gwen (stillborn), August 2, 2023.


Stoltzfus, Nate and Miriam (Troyer), Waterville, NY, third child, first daughter, Samantha Mim, October 26, 2023.

ordinations


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

Bro. Ryan Fisher, 29, (wife, Jennifer Petersheim), was ordained minister for Greene County Mennonite Church on December 10, 2023. Pre-ordination messages were given by Rueben Beiler. The charge was given by Raymond Fisher, assisted by Jeremy Weaver and Floyd Graber. Nathan Yoder shared the lot.

Yoder, David and Cheyenna (Martin), Sutton, AK, first child and son, Griffin Pierre, January 5, 2024.

Yoder, Sylvan and Amy (Miller), Veteran, WY, fourth child, second son, Logan Alex, October 5, 2023. 



Bro. Sylvan Yoder, 33, (wife, Amy Miller), Veteran, WY, was ordained deacon for Torrington Mennonite Church on June 11, 2023. The charge was given by Marcus Lengacher, assisted by Gary Raber and Floyd Lengacher. 

obituaries

Chupp, Ruth, 52, of Limestone, TN, passed away peacefully at her home on November 28, 2023, after courageously battling cancer for eight months. She was born on November 4, 1971, to Paul and Ida Chupp.

Ruth loved the Lord and was a faithful member of Greene County Mennonite Church. During her illness, her calm and patient endurance was an inspiration to everyone. Ruth enjoyed her job at Troyer's Mountain View Country Market. She adored her nieces and nephews and loved little children.

She is survived by her father and

three siblings: Ivan (Carol) Chupp, Holmesville, OH; Emma Chupp and Barb (James) Miller, both of Limestone; and nine nieces and nephews: Annie, Kentlyn, Kaiden, Kaleb, Aliyah Chupp, and Latisha, Janae, Lynford, and Durrell Miller.

She was preceded in death by her dear mother in February 2022.

The funeral service was held at Greene County Mennonite Church on December 2, 2023, with Raymond Fisher officiating. The burial followed in the church cemetery.

Esh, Lylah Nicole, 11, of Cochranville, PA, passed away as result of a vehicle accident on December 24, 2023. She was welcomed into glory and spent Christmas in heaven with Jesus. She was the daughter of John and Dorothy (Stoltzfus) Esh of Cochranville.

She attended Pequea Amish Mennonite Church. She was homeschooled and was in the sixth grade.

She will be remembered for her shy, sweet smile and gentleness with children. She loved the outdoors and animals. She was greatly loved and will be deeply missed by her family and friends.

Surviving besides her parents are five siblings: Christopher, Lukas, Violet, Alison, and Theodore, all at home; paternal grandparents: Aaron and Sadie Esh; maternal grandparents: John and Rebecca Stoltzfus.

The funeral service was held on December 29, 2023, at Pequea Amish Mennonite Church. Interment followed in the adjoining church cemetery.

Hochstetler, Willard Lee, 77, Hicksville, OH, entered into the arms of Jesus peacefully and unexpectedly on November 20, 2023, at St. Rita's Medical Center in Lima, OH. He was born in Hicksville, OH, on September 4, 1946, to Ervin W. and Lizzie Leora (Mullett) Hochstetler. He married Janetta Eicher on October 27, 1967, in New Haven, IN.

Willard was a member of Hicksville Christian Fellowship Church. He was ordained as a minister on August 10, 1980, and retired from preaching in

2012. He loved to tell stories from his childhood and enjoyed to tinker with wood in his shop.

Willard worked as a construction worker, starting in 1968 at Klopfenstein Builders and retiring in 2016 from Timberlin Homes.

Surviving are his wife, Janetta, children: Phillip (Rachel), Edon; Mark (Mary), Westminster, SC; Randy (Lavertta), Grabill, IN; Regina (Nathan) Coblentz, Hicksville; Matthew (Naomi), St. Joe, IN; Charity (Timothy) Coblentz, Hicksville; 20 grandchildren; one great-grandchild; brother, Lonnie (Shirley), Shipshewana, IN; sisters: Mary Lengacher, Jamestown, PA; Sara (Harry) Bender, Hicksville; Ada (Vernon) Beachy, Spencerville, IN; and sister-in-law, Leora Hochstetler, Hicksville.

He was preceded in death by a son, Joshua Jeremy; granddaughter; Brittany Nicole Hochstetler; brother and sister-in-law, Edward (Doris); brother, William, and brother-in-law, LaVern Lengacher.

The funeral service was held on November 26, 2023, at Hicksville Christian Fellowship with Andy Martin, Jadon Yoder, Melvin Roes, and Tim Eicher serving. Burial followed in the church cemetery.


Kauffman, Freida, 85, of Gordonville, PA, entered into rest (after long-time health issues) at Quarryville Presbyterian Retirement Home on March 19, 2023. Born in Lancaster County, PA, she was the daughter of the late Amos K. and Susie (Stoltzfus) Stoltzfus. She was the

wife of the late Paul I. Kauffman.

Freida grew up in the Morgantown area. She received the Lord Jesus in her youth and loved Him all her life. She read and knew her Bible thoroughly. She served as cook at Hillcrest Home, AR. Freida spent nine years as a missionary in Belize with Amish Mennonite Aid and was a member of the Weavertown Amish Mennonite Church. She enjoyed working alongside her husband at Kauffman Fruit Farm, singing, traveling, serving others, and sharing God's love to all. She was an avid Scrabble player, excellent cook, great friend, and mother to many.

She is survived by two sons: Andrew

Luke (Kathleen Bradley), Lititz; Timothy Loyal (Zoila Mejia), East Earl; a daughter, Laura Grace (Kenneth) Miller, Goshen, IN; eight grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, three brothers: Floyd (Marilyn Miller), Gordonville; Amos (Rowena Mast), Mohnton; Freeman (Phyllis Hoover), Thornton, CO; and a sister, Fannie (Roman) Stoltzfus, Paradise.

The funeral service was held at Weavertown Amish Mennonite Church on March 25, 2023, with John Lewis Lapp, Norman Kauffman, and Amos Stoltzfus serving. Interment followed in the adjoining church cemetery. 

observations

A reader of this column forwarded to me an article that someone else had forwarded to him. It was an opinion piece that appeared in the September 29, 2022, issue of the *New York Times*. The title was “The Crisis of Men and Boys” and was written by David Brooks.

Brooks seems to key in on various metrics associated with education, employment, health, and earning that indicate trouble for males in America. Among those he cited are:

- In high school, two thirds of the top 10% of students, by GPA, are girls. About 10% of those in the lowest 10% are boys.

- One third of men, whose formal schooling stopped after high-school, are not part of the work force. The age segment that has experienced the largest decline in employment is the segment from age 24-34. The author didn't point out the raw numbers here. I'll repeat that this group is the one that experienced the largest erosion of employment, not the lowest percentage of employment. There is a difference.

- Men who entered the labor pool in 1983 will earn approximately 10% less in their lifetimes, when adjusted for inflation and other factors, than their peers from a generation earlier. Women of the same age, on the other

hand, will earn about 33% more than those women of the previous generation.

- The increased earnings of middle-class families since 1970 corresponds almost exactly to the increased earnings of women in that time. Women’s earnings have risen but men’s are flat or eroding.

- Almost 75% of people who die “deaths of despair” are men. For every 100 women that perished from COVID-19, there were 184 men who died.

- Poor environments and disadvantaged situations are experienced by many boys and girls. Girls are much more likely to climb out of those settings if given the opportunity than boys are. A range of programs targeting this disadvantaged demographic showed impressive gains in economic progress for girls and women. But these programs did little to affect the boys and men who were offered these options.

Measured academic performance in children is more favorable to girls than to boys. Since the prefrontal cortex of the brain—that part that assesses risk and reward, and self-regulation—matures more quickly in girls than boys. The idea of having boys begin school a year later than girls has long been debated as one way to help close this academic performance gap.

Manufacturing jobs tend to place a premium value on physical capabilities. But with the economy shifting toward service-oriented jobs, the intrinsic value of physical strength that men possess has diminished along with it.

It makes sense that these types of shifts in workplace dynamics has an effect. However, it seems appropriate to consider how other factors might contribute.



During the time period that these studies contemplate, the culture has undergone some profound adjustment as well. Some of this was overdue and some is regrettable. Gender roles is a culturally sensitive subject. There has been a dramatic shift in the last 50 years from the expectation that men should shoulder the primary financial responsibility. That has changed. There are a variety of contributing factors. It is possible that in many cases the women simply desire to contribute as well. When equal pay for equal work is emphasized, regardless of gender, this adds incentive for women’s participation in the workforce.

Too often a woman’s filling a role in the home was seen as something inferior and man’s role as financial provider was superior. It should be noted that to the extent that these

perceptions exist, both men and women are responsible for this misconception. One sad casualty of legitimately correcting these misconceptions is that the pendulum can swing the other way, fostering the perception that men don't have much to offer.

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We should also admit that as a broader culture, we have an embarrassing problem of laziness and lack of initiative among the males in society. I'm sure this exists in women as well, but when men lack initiative and fail to lead by example, a host of problems fill this void. One of them is a generation of little boys growing up who consider this the norm with little incentive to establish new life patterns.

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Where do those of us who name the name of Christ come in here? I don't think it is asking too much of us to expect the body of Christ to show society around us that there is a good and proper way to relate to these challenges. How might that look?

- We celebrate and value the various contributions of the men and women in our midst. This means we will maintain a clear distinction between the scriptural pattern of headship and value we assign to distinct roles. We all, regardless of

our gender, have opportunities in life to lead and to be led. We appreciate both opportunities and recognize the inherent danger that comes from spending all our lives on either side of this equation.

- We joyfully affirm the scriptural directives and principles regarding the roles that God has established. This joyful affirmation also recognizes that careless application of these concepts, in ways that aren't faithful to Scripture, bring a host of other problems.

- That affirmation of value for various roles means that women who are single will usually need to enter the workplace somehow. It also means that men who are single will need to become homemakers somehow. Both of these are legitimate and proper.

- When we have the opportunity to make decisions that affect the pay of those who perform jobs that bring a salary or a wage, we put our "gender-blindness" on. This means that men and women who do the same work should get the same compensation. Certainly, there are factors that can affect wage disparity. But gender, by itself, doesn't really qualify.

- We acknowledge that one result of a materialistic mindset is equating value in monetary terms. Not all meaningful work is financially rewarding. This means that unpaid

work isn't less valuable than work that registers as positive in our bank account. So our talk of value needs to include more than financial value.

- By example and by teaching we cultivate an aspiration in the children that God has given us to be diligent and faithful. This includes a proper sense of enjoyment and satisfaction for a job well done. Work, regardless whether it is in the field, barn, laundry room, kitchen, behind the desk, in the classroom, or the study, are all jobs that are legitimate and proper. They merit cultivating a sense of satisfaction for a job well done. We strive to grow that in our children.

- Somehow our appreciation for everyone's contribution needs to allow for the fact that we all experience limitations. Some perform in ways that leverage their abilities in ways that exceed the effort of those who

don't have those limitations. We also need to appreciate and affirm the diligent effort of those whose faithful stewardship of natural abilities and strengths doesn't generate much revenue. It's easy to see how this applies to those who are handicapped or developmentally challenged. But we all play on the fringes somehow and in some ways. Where that awareness exists, humility comes easier. Humility is inversely proportionate to pride. One is good. The other isn't. We all know which is which.

As we cultivate this emphasis in our homes and churches, the coming generation will be equipped to make an outstanding and coveted contribution to our churches and broader communities. The more confused that society becomes on these issues, the more winsome and outstanding a godly example becomes.



What is Your *Modus Operandi*?

Rodney and Jeanie Martin, Bradford, PA

The term *modus operandi* refers to a particular way or method of doing something, especially one that is characteristic or well-established.¹ It is a way of operating that is habitual, a pattern of doing or thinking a certain way.

1. Languages.oup.com

In the body of Christ, especially in church life, we tend to have specific patterns or ways of thinking and relating. These are default settings that, when left to operate on autopilot, can wear grooves in our minds and relationships that become skewed and inaccurate. Some examples

could be thinking, “I am someone important,” or “I am nobody in the church,” or “I did...so I deserve...,” or “If I do a-b-c, then x-y-z will happen,” or “He hurt me that time, so I don’t think he has my best interest in mind.” The more we think in our own minds about something, the more factual it seems. Our reputations become bigger and more important in our own eyes.

We relate to our fellow believers according to what seems to be fact in our minds. Instead of bringing our lives under the Holy Spirit’s leading and the Word of God, we return to the “grooves” in our minds, the “mode of operation,” and respond and act out of those thoughts. We promote our abilities and agendas, sometimes at the cost of relationships. Our interactions become selfish and sometimes un-Christlike. We begin to compete with our brothers and sisters instead of learning the mind of Christ and becoming more like Him. Resentment and bitterness are quick to follow in the progression. St. Augustine once said, “Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.”²

Let us consider the mother of Zebedee’s children and her sons, who came with a request for Jesus. “*Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s*

2. *Brainyquote.com*

children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, what wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom” (Matthew 20: 20-21). This was an outright request for position and prestige. This mother and her sons were going after recognition and reputation. When the other disciples heard what they were asking, they became indignant toward James and John. Jesus followed with a beautiful explanation of His kingdom and His way of looking at power and authority: “*Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:25-28).

Philippians 2:5-8 says, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the*

likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Jesus was the most unselfish and uncompetitive person on earth. As “little Christs,” with His redemptive power, we have the privilege of cheering for others more than promoting ourselves. Christ can change our *modus operandi* to a less competitive and more humble mindset.

When it comes down to it, our minds stray to worldly ways of operating. But Romans 12:2 tells us, “*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*” We can ask God to renew our minds to discern what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, and He will change our *modus operandi* from a worldly way of thinking to His way of operation.

At the 2022 Beijing Olympics, Finnish cross-country skier Iivo Niskanen made a lasting impression through what he did after crossing the finish line ahead of his competitors, thus winning his third gold medal. Instead of regrouping or celebrating, he waited by the finish line to see each of the others in the race cross the finish line. Twenty minutes later, the final contestant, Carlos Andres

Quintana of Colombia, was greeted by a warm embrace from Niskanen as he came in last.

Niskanen said in an interview, “You need to respect each other as an athlete. Everyone has done lots of work to be here, and it means a lot to take him across the finish line. You need that kind of respect in these Olympic Games. Smaller countries do not have as much budget as the best nations.”³

Niskanen was a great example. He did well in what was his to do; he actually won the race. But he also was humble enough to recognize the efforts and talents of his fellow skiers. Only one person got to the finish line first, but all were recognized and respected when the event was over. Niskanen acknowledged that his fellow skier had fewer resources but cheered for him because he gave what he had.

What is our mindset, our *modus operandi*? Will we allow God to transform our self-centered, competitive focus into one of Christ-like humility?

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

3. [Usatoday.com/story/sports/Olympics/Beijing/2022/02/13/cross-country-skier-shows-sportsmanship-waiting-last-place-finisher/6774807001](https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/Olympics/Beijing/2022/02/13/cross-country-skier-shows-sportsmanship-waiting-last-place-finisher/6774807001)



The Plan of Salvation

Levi Kauffman, 1915-2000

(This article first appeared in the Calvary Messenger in October 1985. AY)

Some 50 years ago, when I was a boy in Kansas, I heard Bishop Jake Miller ask in his sermon, "What must we do to be lost?" He answered, "We need to do nothing to be lost." How true! Doing nothing seals anybody's doom!

The fall of man (Genesis 3) was a universal fall! "*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*" (Romans 5:12). Consequently, "*there is none righteous, no not one: ...They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one...destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known*" (Romans 3:10-17). "*...by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation*" (Romans 5:18a).

Christ has made reconciliation for the fall of Adam (Romans 5:13-21), so that no one goes to hell for Adam's sin. Souls are lost because of their own sin, "*for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). Therefore, man is

lost, and by doing nothing he remains lost.

Sometimes we hear preachers say, "There is nothing that we can do to be saved!" What are they saying? Has man no choice of destiny? Ah, yes, we do have a choice, and our choice determines our destiny!

Jesus said, "*Without me ye can do nothing.*" Without Him we would have no choice! But by shedding His blood for us He has made ample provision for the salvation of all men. John 3:16. However, He does not force it upon us. He does not reduce us to puppets, but He has restored to us the power and the responsibility of choice, even as Adam had in the beginning.

Salvation is not something that we can earn or that we attain by achievement. In that sense there is nothing that we can do to be saved. But we must choose to receive it as an undeserved gift, made available to us only by God's free grace, and obtainable only through faith in Jesus' blood. "*...for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul*" (Leviticus 17:11b). "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given*

among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

After Adam and Eve fell, God promised them a Saviour Who would bruise the head of Satan. Genesis 3:15. Praise God for being such a loving Father! He renewed that promise repeatedly: to Abraham (Genesis 11:18; 12:1-3; 17:19; 22:18), to Isaac (Genesis 26:3,4), to Jacob (Genesis 28:14), to Judah (Genesis 49:10), to Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-19), through the Psalms (2:6-12; 68:18), and the prophets (Isaiah 7:14; 9:2, 6, 7; 11:10; 42:1-3; 52:13-15; 53:1-12). Many of His promises are conditional, but not so with His promise of a Saviour! He waited nearly 4000 years, but the promise was still good. God cannot lie!

Neither did He forget His people during that waiting period. He provided for them a system of blood sacrifices pointing forward to Christ's death on Calvary. When they observed these by faith in God they were forgiven (Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18) by virtue of the promised Messiah. Those sacrifices symbolized the death and shed blood of Christ, even as the bread and cup of our communion service do today.

All humanity had been captured by sin, but after Calvary, when Christ "*ascended up on high, he led captivity captive*" (Ephesians 4:8). The blood

that flowed from His pierced side (John 19:34) was so precious that it reached back to the sin of Adam and forward to the end of the world. God gave the best that Heaven had for our redemption and now He expects us to give our best to serve Him. So let us love the Lord God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. Mark 12:30.

Nothing that we can do will earn salvation for us, but there are some conditions for us to meet before we qualify for the free gift of salvation by grace. One of these is true repentance.

Repentance

John the Baptist, Christ Himself, and the Apostles preached repentance as a primary prerequisite. "*Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,*" was their solemn warning. There were many Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers whom John refused to baptize because they "*rejected the counsel of God against themselves,*" and did not "*bring forth fruits meet for repentance*" (Matthew 3:7, 8; Luke 7:30). That requirement has not changed! In fact, that is the message Jesus sent back from heaven, through John the Revelator to the churches of Asia. Revelation 2 and 3.

Repentance means to not only be sorry for our sins but to be sorry enough to confess and forsake them! We need to be sorry, not because

our sins have been found out, but because we have sinned against God and the church, and have grieved the Holy Spirit. *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”* (II Corinthians 7:10).

Faith

Faith is a must! *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Hebrews 11:6). We must believe that Jesus is the Christ and that He is the perfect Lamb of God, the only sacrifice that can take away sin! The test of faith is faithfulness. We are commanded to be *“good stewards of the manifold grace of God”* (I Peter 4:10), and *“it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (I Corinthians 4:2).

Born Again

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...Except a man be born of water [which is the Word] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John. 3:3-7). *“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”*

(I Corinthians 15:50). Therefore we **MUST** be born again!

As a worm, the unsightly caterpillar crawls around in gutters and filthy places, but when it is transformed into a beautiful butterfly, it delights to be among beautiful, sweet-smelling flowers. Likewise, *“if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (II Corinthians 5:17). Anyone who is born again will have the manifestations of a new life: new desires, new thought patterns, Christian conduct, etc.

I am concerned about the “faith only” doctrine which assumes salvation without fruit. We fully agree that works are not the means unto salvation. *“Not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:9). But God expects good works as a fruit of salvation. *“For we are his workmanship, created [or born again] in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath **before ordained that we should walk in them**”* (v.10).

In Jesus Christ *“we have access by faith into this grace”* (Romans 5:2). But the grace of God is a faithful instructor, *“teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”* (Titus 2:12). In other words, a faith that works is a faith that bears fruit in our

lives; but “*faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*” (James 2:17).

Paul, as well as James, emphasizes works, not as the root but as the fruit of salvation. That is what he means when he says, “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Philippians 2:12b). We are to work

out, put to practice in daily living, what the enabling grace of God makes available to us through Christ and the Holy Spirit. That is a faith that works!

[Submitted by Raymond Kauffman, Virginia Beach, VA, in honor of his father, Levi.]



I Saw a Beautiful Thing

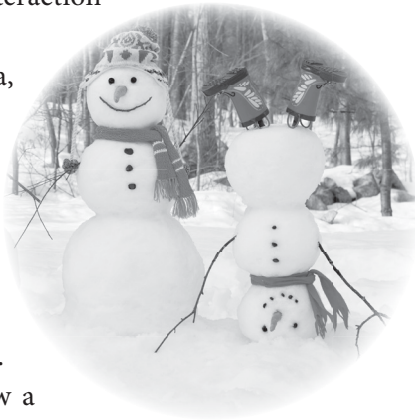
On Being Playful

Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS

It was at the house of friends we had not met before. We collected in the living room, seven adults and a handful of children. Indeed, some of the children began to be a handful: old, childhood games of who can outlast whom. A disparaging word lobbed across the room. Loud truck noises. Just normal, end-of-the-day-in-unfamiliar-spaces interaction between cousins.

Then one of the guests, neither uncle nor grandpa, spoke up, offering advice on how to stand on your head. “If you do it, I will too!” These brave words from a balding 50-year-old stranger quieted the fray, and the youngster who had been cavorting, halted—unsure about committing in the presence of so many witnesses. “Will you try?” the man asked, and the boy nodded shyly. And so they did.

The stranger coached the boys, showing how a triangular space between head and hands on the floor adds stability. And then he demonstrated his skills and stood on his head. When we left the room, three boys tumbled on the floor, each head endangered by his neighbor’s heels! The middle-aged man, by entering into children’s play, had become a friend.



Isn't that beautiful?



The Missionary and the Second Coming of Christ

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thessalonians 4:16-18).

The words of Scripture are always a great comfort to Christian missionaries of all ages (and all blood-washed saints), whether at home or abroad. This Bible passage is especially a comfort to the elderly. At times we call them “shut-ins.” Suddenly, one day or night things will quickly change. *“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...”* (Philippians 3:20, 21).


It can even be a comfort for children who have personally received the Lord Jesus in their hearts and are living for Him. The Greek word for comfort, *parakaleo*, is a verb and holds an endearing meaning: “a calling to one’s side; to call near; to entreat; to encourage; to soothe in distress. In Matthew 2:18 we have an opposite of this word “comfort” when Herod made a proclamation that all children from two years old and under in Bethlehem and surrounding area would be killed. Oh, what sadness, uncontrollable weeping, and no comfort! *“...Because they are not.”*

When Paul wrote the letter to the Thessalonian church, it was the first time that specific details of the second coming of Jesus Christ were spelled out in Scripture, including the Old Testament. The source of Paul’s revelation about the second coming was *“by the word of the Lord.”* Paul describes the importance of

this subject by his opening phrase in 3:13: *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren...”* The readers had possibly thought they would all live to welcome the return of Christ. Unexpectedly, one after another of the believers died. Their hearts were torn not only by bereavement, but that they might never see their loved ones again. “Asleep” means “cessation from activity.” It refers to the body, not the soul.

The order of the events of this great occurrence is first the shout. This is a note of victory, joy, and deliverance! Secondly, we have the voice of the archangel. This likely is Michael. In Revelation 12:7, 8 we read that Michael and his angels fought against the devil and his angels. Satan lost the battle and was cast down on the earth and his angels were cast out with him; *“neither was there place found any more in heaven.”* Thirdly, is the trump of God. Old Testament trumpets were used for a summons to battle or a call to worship. In this case the battle is over. Does this suggest a call to worship? Yes, hallelujah, amen! In Revelation 4; 5; 7:9-17; 11:15-17; 14:1-7; 15:1-4; 16:5-7; 19:1-7; 21; and 22 (there may be more that I missed) are scenes of worship in heaven. Fourthly, the dead in Christ shall rise first. Fifthly, *“then we who*

are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.” Sixthly, *“we will meet the Lord in the air.”* We will *“see Him face to face.”* Seventhly, *“so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* All this will take place *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”* (I Corinthians 15:52). This is an everlasting comfort and a joyful event! Friends, the comfort and joy begin now.

“Caught up” gives the idea of a “force suddenly” exercised and is well-rendered “snatch, pluck, seize, catch away, or up” (Strong’s Concordance). “To meet” implies the welcome of a great person on his arrival. “In the air” signifies that Christ will descend into that area over which Satan reigned (Ephesians 2:2) gaining complete mastery. *“And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”* (19:13,16). *“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus”* (Revelation 22:20). What a comfort for the blood-washed saints, but what a “woe, woe, woe” to the sinner! 

Choosing to Embrace Reality

Sonya Miller, New Philadelphia, OH



I'm not married. I'm no longer a youth. That means I'm single. This is not an article about the woes of being single. While it is my story of navigating singlehood, it is not only that. It is about facing difficult circumstances in life. While it is a story of emotional pain and heartache, it is also a testimony of hope and healing.

I was in emotional anguish. My heart would physically ache with pain. I cried myself to sleep. I cried while I made my bed in the morning. I cried while I washed dishes. This didn't feel normal.

In recent years, I had determined to be upbeat and outward-focused. I was not going to be the one who complained about my circumstances. In my mind, it was that easy. It *had been* easy.

So, when I went to church or social gatherings, I pursued others. "If I take interest in others," I thought, "they'll also take interest in me, and I'll be fine." But when I left these events, I'd find myself in tears on my

way home. Home, to an empty house.

What was wrong with me? Sure, I'd cried before, but before this, after a good cry, I was usually fine. Not anymore. Everything in my life looked difficult. I struggled in more ways than socially, and it weighed on me. My sister married a few weeks priorly and moved out of state. I no longer had her companionship. My social circle was changing.

I had a deep, deep desire to be loved, known, and fully understood. It seemed no one *really* knew what I did each day, what excited me, or what I was struggling with. I wished for someone to do life with. I longed to be pursued. I had no one to debrief with after a good day or a bad day. I just wanted to be cared for and loved on. As one person stated, "The hardest part about being single is knowing I am no one's priority."

I was in bad shape emotionally, so I reached out to my parents and church friends for support. Their support was tremendous as I struggled through this bitter valley.

I wasn't going to put up a façade that I was okay when I was not. It took courage to tell people I was struggling. If you have cried on someone else's couch, you will understand. I reached out for help, and I'm so glad I did.

I invited myself over to my married friend's house. She brewed coffee and served comfort food because she wanted me to feel celebrated. I sat on her couch and told her my pain through tears. She heard me out and told me I'm normal. You see, she was there too. She tells me we *all* long to be loved, known, and understood. She went on to tell me that marriage is not the answer. She kept explaining.

"While marriage may curb the desires to an extent, we married people still face disappointments in our partners. The only person who will ever be able to entirely fulfill our deepest desires is Jesus. Those desires are meant to make us yearn for the One Who *can* fulfill them. We won't experience the fullness and reality of that fulfillment until we are in the very presence of Jesus. We weren't made to stay on this earth anyway."

That didn't take away the pain or change my circumstances, but it helped me understand what I was craving. I was actually craving Jesus! I knew marriage wasn't a cure-all, but

I'd believed it would fix a lot of things. I had idolized marriage.

We singles often compare our hardships to the glamorous moments of our married friends. Married people compare their difficulties with the freedoms of their single friends. In reality, each state has both glamor and pain. I discovered this as I poured out my heart to my married friends. Then they cried as they told me their struggles. Their struggles were different, but we could relate.

We are all craving Jesus. Though we all like to appear *normal*, if we're honest, it's painful sometimes. We do well to share our joys *and* our sorrows. When I shared my struggles with my friends, each one, married or single, showed empathy because they too have walked through deep valleys.

Not all singles feel emotional pain like I did. But I was surprised when I found that many of my single friends, who seemed to be doing fine, were also in deep pain. Some had struggled alone.

I'd been hesitant to share at first for fear of sounding discontent, but I found it was imperative to open up about my pain. Satan wants to isolate us so we feel alone and helpless. There was so much healing when I realized that my struggles were normal. God gave us a church family for this reason.

We were not meant to walk alone.

In my quest for healing, I found so much comfort in the stories of men and women in the Bible who endured pain. Isaiah describes Jesus as “*a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.*” Luke says that Jesus said He was sent to “*heal the brokenhearted.*” Hagar, in unimaginable anguish, was not forgotten by God. She testified saying, “*Thou God seest me.*” God does not remove our pain but walks us through it.

It’s okay to grieve, but we can’t stay there. After a few weeks of searching, crying, processing, and asking for help, I eventually experienced a breakthrough. John Piper’s words say it well. “*Grieve the losses. Then wash your face. Trust God. And embrace the life you have.*”

I’ve moved on, but sometimes the pain comes back to slap me in my face, tearing at my scabs. However, now I take my pain to Jesus. His grace

is greater than my pain.

During barren, painful seasons like I’ve just come through, it is so important to be grounded in truth. God’s Word must dwell in us. Had I not enveloped myself in God’s promises, I would have lost all hope. By God’s grace He sustained me and brought me out on top. He made me a better, stronger person by allowing me to suffer.

We want easy lives, easy circumstances, no stress, and no pain. Jesus never promised easy lives. It will be worth it all when we are in the very presence of Jesus and hear His words, “Well done!”

“*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal*” (II Corinthians 4:17-18 NIV).



junior messages

The Boy Who Loved to Run (Part 1)

Margretta Yoder, Hutchinson, KS

Six-year-old Lopez was growing up in war-torn Sudan. His name meant ‘fast’ and Lopez lived up to this description.

Whenever he helped his mom with jobs, he did them fast! When Lopez woke up one warm Sunday morning in his small hut, he had no warning

that this day would be the last day of his childhood.

The villagers had heard stories of children being captured and taken to be trained to be rebel fighters but never had the rebels come close to their village. But today during their church service, the roar of a motor was heard.

“Give us your children!” came the terrible shout as the rebels pulled up to the church. Lopez and his mom ran, but when the soldiers threatened to shoot, they huddled on the ground. A soldier grabbed Lopez and threw him into the back of a truck along with the rest of the children. The truck drove off amidst the anguished cries of the parents.

This was the first time that Lopez ever rode in a vehicle. The sun shone hot as the truck sped on for hours. Finally, they arrived at camp. The boys were separated from the girls and thrown into a small one-room hut. Mealtimes consisted of a bucket of cooked sorghum mixed with sand. Three other boys looked out for Lopez and showed him how to pick the sand out of the sorghum.

During the day the older boys learned how to use firearms. At night, the boys slept huddled closely together because of the cold and tight quarters. Lopez was grateful for the three friends with whom he could

snuggle close.

One night one of his friends whispered to Lopez, saying, “You will see your mom again.” He had no idea how, but he just anticipated the moment of arriving home and seeing his parents.

That dark, moonless night, Lopez and his three friends escaped through a small hole in the fence that surrounded the camp. They ran for hours through the tall savannah grasses. When morning came, they slept. At night, they ran again. They drank from the gazelle’s drinking holes and snatched up any fruit they could find for food. Lopez had always loved running, but now only six years old, he was stretched to his limits. His legs were cracked and bleeding from the constant running. After running for about a week, Lopez, who was the youngest, felt like he couldn’t go one more step. They had traveled over 60 miles by foot. That day Kenyan border guards spied the boys and mercifully took them to a refugee camp across the Sudan border into Kenya.

Instead of arriving home to his loving parents, Lopez was now a stranger in a large refugee camp which would be his home for the next 10 years.

Lopez’s three friends disappeared. Lopez, only six, was on his own in

a foreign country, living amongst thousands he didn't know. Some boys his age died from shock and lack of care, but Lopez was resilient and quickly adjusted to his new home. He lived in a tent with 10 other boys.

Ration cards supplied by the UN supplied enough food for one meal a week. Life in camp was a fight for survival but Lopez never doubted God was with him. He loved going to church and singing. While worshiping he didn't think about malaria or hunger or the hardships of the camp.

Running and playing soccer were an escape from the realities of life. The boys in camp made a rule that before being allowed on the soccer field, they each had to run around the refugee camp which was a total of 18 miles. This rule wasn't a hardship for Lopez who ran in the hot desert sun and then raced onto the soccer field without as much as a drink.

Lopez heard about the Olympics from some of his friends. He had no idea what the Olympics were but they sounded exciting. One evening, a nearby farmer allowed some camp boys to use his TV to watch the Olympics. Lopez watched the runners with awe; this was the

first time he knew that people ran for sport. As he walked home that night under the stars, he knew that one day he would run for the Olympics and he would be running for the USA.

Every boy dreamed longingly about going to America. But not until the announcement that came one day did Lopez ever dare imagine that his dream might come true. The United States was allowing 3,500 of Sudan's lost boys to go to America. To apply, you had to write an essay in English telling your story. Lopez prayed, "God, I can't do it. You can. Please make my essay stand out."

Lopez didn't know much English, but he was determined. He wrote his story in Swahili and his friends helped him translate it into English. He couldn't even read the essay, but he turned it in. The Lord had a plan for Lopez and on Christmas Day, he heard his name called out. He was so excited—he was going to America.

What about you? You have parents who love you and taught you of Jesus. Will you be willing to run for God no matter what happens?

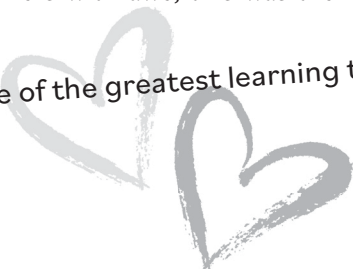
[To be continued]

Resource: Running for My Life, Lopez Lomong



One of the greatest learning tasks is how

to give and receive love.



The Search for Church

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

They sit in a nondescript dusty vehicle in the parking lot of your church. Arriving early, they like to sit and watch people from the congregation going in for services. These are hunters. Not unlike treasure hunters of old, seeking the Holy Grail or the Ark of the Covenant, these are seeking something far more valuable and nearly as mythical—the perfect church. After a sufficient time has passed, they quietly ease from their vehicle and cautiously approach their potential quarry. Slipping into a back pew, armed with hope and often unrealistic expectations, they continue their hunt.

Most of us have encountered these people. There may even have been a time when you were counted among their ranks. Many of us have encountered those who are constantly hopping from church to church trying to find the “perfect” church.

As young people, one of the most important decisions you’ll make is what body of believers you choose

to join. Unless you’re familiar with the Anabaptist circles, you may not understand how “church-centered” our culture is. When we consider a place to live, we often find and choose the church we want to attend, then we find a house and figure out what we’re going to do for a living after that. Our schedules surround church. Much of our day-to-day life involves regular interaction and communication with what I term our “church family.”

The perfect church for me embodies the term “church family.” When I was looking for a church home, I asked myself a few questions. When things are going wrong, tragedy, and illness strike, do they surround you and help you? When there are work projects or work bees to do, do they roll up their sleeves and jump in with gusto? Don’t get caught up in just what they wear or what they preach on Sunday. You need to answer the question, “How do they do life?” It won’t be perfect; it can’t be. Churches are filled with people and people are imperfect. A true commitment to brotherhood, and a willingness to

sacrifice my personal preferences for peace and harmony in the church—that is as close to perfect as I’ve ever experienced.

A perfect fit might be a better way to describe this state of church experience rather than an actual “perfect church.” I’ve been around the plain churches for over 25 years, and I can tell you one thing for certain—there is no such thing as a perfect church here on earth. Churches are full of people, and people are flawed. Someone once defined the perfect marriage as two imperfect people who refuse to give up on each other. Churches can be like that too. There are churches full of imperfect people who refuse to give up on each other and will continue to strive for brotherhood and biblical Christian living on a daily basis. That is what you want to look for. Your main focus shouldn’t be on what you can or can’t have or wear. Your focus should be if these people love each other and are willing to sacrifice for each other.

In almost every church I’ve been in, there is what I call a “core group.” This is the nucleus or true heart of the church. These are the people who are committed to the church 100%. If the church doors are open, they come. If there is a work project, they show up even if it “inconveniences” them. If there is a need, they ask how

they can help. They have a servant heart. They willingly do what needs to be done even if they may not be seen or recognized for doing it. They don’t make excuses when asked to do things, and they don’t complain about or abuse the responsibilities they are given. These people are who you judge a church by. There are and will be outliers, but they don’t represent the true heart of a church. Don’t make the mistake of judging a church by one or two people. As I caveat, I must insert that there are those well-meaning people that represent the “core” of the church who can also try to be controlling and do complain. Again, remember these are flawed humans just like us.

A slightly different way of looking at those two main groups is there are those who give and those who take. You will never get more out of your church experience than you put in. Don’t just look for a church that you can receive from, spiritually, emotionally, and at times materially. Look for one where you are needed and can pour yourself into. Don’t just look for a church that you can “fit” into. Look for somewhere that you can help strengthen and build. Don’t be ornamental; be structural. Find a body of believers that you can “do life” with; somewhere that you feel like you belong. Church is

all about brotherhood, after all. If you don't feel brotherhood, you'll struggle to commit yourself 100% to any church.

I reached out to some youth and some people who work with a lot of different youth on a daily basis. I asked them the question, "How does a young person feel needed in a church?" Here are some of their responses.

- "I know relationship is huge to them. They want to feel pursued and known. Needed? Now I'm not sure about that. I'm not even sure they necessarily want to be needed as much as they want to be valued for their presence rather than what they can do or offer or contribute. They are longing for connection and belonging to a group."

- Another one said, "I think a lot of youth are looking for spiritual life and authenticity in a church. They want to trust each other and hear struggles and answers to prayer. How does God make a difference in Monday to Saturday living?"

- One brother said, "...It's also not very enjoyable when people assume youth just don't think through some things correctly, and that's why they struggle at times. While they may or may not have a different perspective on issues as they get older, most youth do try to think through issues

to the best of their abilities but still struggle to see things the same as their parents."

What I gathered from the responses as a whole is that most youth have a need to belong to something. They covet affirmation and being valued and recognized for what they bring to the church. They want to be included and have their voices and opinions be heard and taken into consideration, not just dismissed because of lack of experience. It isn't their fault they haven't lived as long. Too many churches wait to recognize and value their young people until they are married. Marriage doesn't magically make someone wiser and more mature overnight. I have had multiple older youth express frustration to me that they have no say in church matters while a 20-year-old has a say just because he got married. Youth are not only the church of tomorrow, they are the church of today too.

Who are you in your church? Are you part of the core or heart of the church? Are you committed and present at your church and its functions and events, or are you an outlier? Evaluate where you truly are and what you contribute before climbing into that dusty vehicle and heading out in search of the "Perfect Church."



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Love is blind and marriage is an eye-opener.

• • • • •

Love often intoxicates; marriage always sobers.

• • • • •

The line between self-confidence and conceit is very narrow.

• • • • •

Humility is to make the right estimate of yourself. -Charles Spurgeon

• • • • •

Happiness makes up in height for what it lacks in length. -Robert Frost

• • • • •

Love God completely; love others compassionately; love yourself correctly.

• • • • •

He gave her a look that you could have poured on a waffle. -Ring Lardner

• • • • •

It's what you do when you have nothing to do that reveals what you are.

• • • • •

One of the greatest learning tasks is how to give and receive love.

• • • • •

Never part without kind words. They might be your last.

• • • • •

It's never too late to have a happy childhood.

• • • • •

Listen—or thy tongue will keep thee deaf.