



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

MAY 2024

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Calvary Messenger

May 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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An Hour to Talk


Richard Stoltzfoos, Burgettstown, PA

The thought! an hour to talk with You
In form and flesh, to take a walk—
I'd barter all my bank account,
My Lord, for half an hour to talk.

How should the true church worship God?
Which church has found the nearest path?
What has ours lost? What has it gained?
Which church, if any, earns Your wrath?

Should arch and glass adorn a church?
The poor, three hundred pennies less?
I will not let these questions go,
These angels bent to break and bless.

How can the churches reconcile?
Must they be ever severed limbs?
To reach the lost, what strategy?
Is witnessing just singing hymns?

I pray to grow into Your love.
Your heart is large, my questions small.
Show me the size of Your great heart,
And I will run, and will not fall. 

God's Sovereign Work in the World

Caleb Crider, Strasburg, VA

To what extent is God involved in happenings on earth? Is He truly sovereign over all events or does He merely sit back and watch as situations develop?

We may not completely or accurately understand the concept of God's sovereignty, but it is a bedrock truth that we should embrace as God's children. If God were not sovereign, He could not be God. At the same time, we believe He has granted humans the freedom of choice. We also believe that He has granted Satan and his demons a measure of the same freedom.

Peter is our example here. Notice how seamlessly Peter weaves together God's sovereign will and man's actions in this statement from his Pentecost sermon: *"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death"* (Acts 2:23 NKJV).

Peter attributes Jesus' death to God's purpose, while also accusing the Jews who were involved. The fact that it was God's plan for Jesus to die didn't absolve the Jews of guilt.

Two models

One model for thinking about God's sovereignty in relation to man's free will is the "train track model." In a sermon entitled "Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility," Charles Spurgeon said:

"These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring."¹

I prefer the "first and second things" model for thinking about God's sovereignty. In an essay entitled "A Mennonite Thinks About Knowing," Steven Brubaker lists several models for thinking about concepts that are related to each other. These include the balance model, the knife-edge model, the tension model, the road-

1. <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/sovereign-grace-and-mans-responsibility/>

ditch model, and the first and second things model. Brubaker writes:

“The first and second things model is an attempt to illustrate the proper relationship between two beliefs, ideas, or values that should not exist independently of each other or be separated, but in which one should provide an anchor, a focus, and a context for the other.”²

When two beliefs or ideas are paired, the more fundamental and important belief is labeled a “first thing” and the other is a “second thing.” This allows beliefs to be paired without implying that they are equal. Brubaker mentions several examples of paired beliefs to which the first and second things model can be applied:

- God’s sovereignty and man’s freedom
- Right living and right thinking
- Being good and doing good
- God’s transcendence over His creation and God’s presence in His creation

I think the first and second things model works well for thinking about God’s sovereignty and our freedom of choice. While they are related, God’s sovereignty is more fundamental and anchors the pair.

2. <https://www.fbep.org/blog/a-menno-nite-thinks-about-knowing/>

God at work: Pharaoh

We understand that both God and Satan are at work in the world. While I don’t believe humans are mere pawns, unseen forces greater than we are at work around and through us.

The Bible gives us many glimpses of God’s work in human hearts and affairs. Let’s look at several of them, starting with God’s interactions with Pharaoh leading up to the Exodus.

One purpose of the plagues upon Egypt was to help Pharaoh do the right thing—obey God. Yet his heart was hardened in response to them. After plagues two, four, and five, the Bible’s wording is that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

The language changes starting with the sixth plague. After plagues six, eight, nine, and 10, the Bible says that God Himself hardened Pharaoh’s heart. This may seem unfair to us, but when God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, He didn’t overrule Pharaoh’s will. Rather, He worked in accordance with Pharaoh’s will to bring Himself glory.

A New Testament parallel may be Romans 1:28 where Paul says that when people have rejected God to a certain degree, God gives them over to a reprobate mind. While I don’t understand exactly what that means, is it not also an exercise in God’s sovereignty in which He works in

alignment with the will of the person involved?

Another way of looking at this is that God in His sovereignty has established in advance the consequences of resisting Him. When people resist God, they become increasingly hard-hearted.

God at work: David

David didn't win an election to become Israel's king. He understood that God had plucked him out of obscurity for the job, choosing him to be a type of the coming eternal King. David said, "*The Lord God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel*" (1 Chronicles 28:4).

In the same speech, David also stated that God had chosen Solomon. These were God's sovereign choices, continuing a series of selections that God had begun centuries before: the choice of Abraham, the choice of Jacob over Esau, the choice of Moses, and many others. Yet we understand that each person God chooses must make choices in response to God's call.

When David evacuated Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion, he left his friend Hushai in the city as an undercover agent and as a counterweight to Ahithophel, David's counselor, who was now advising Absalom. David prayed that God

would turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness (II Samuel 15:31 NKJV).

When Hushai and Ahithophel gave conflicting advice, God caused Absalom to take Hushai's advice which, unbeknownst to Absalom, had been given with the goal of buying David more time to escape. Second Samuel 17:14 says, "*For the Lord had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring disaster on Absalom*" (NKJV).

When David's grandson Rehoboam ascended to the throne, he rejected the people's plea to rule with a lighter hand than Solomon had. As a result, the nation was split in two. But 1 Kings 12:15 tells us that God was working through Rehoboam's choice: "*So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn of events was from the Lord*" (NKJV).

God at work: today

These brief glimpses behind the curtain give us confidence that God will continue to orchestrate human events even in our day. God works through people to accomplish His purpose, moving their hearts but not rendering meaningless their ability to choose.

Sometime God will exercise His sovereignty to bring to a head the rebellion that Satan is leading. He will work through people like He

did in the examples above to bring about His will. God holds the reins of history in His hands and will bring the age to a conclusion in the time and way He chooses.


This is my Father's world:

O let me ne'er forget

That though the wrong seems oft so strong,

God is the Ruler yet. (Maltbie D. Babcock)

"Keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the

appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen" (1 Timothy 6:14-16 ESV). 

[Reprinted from the March/April issue of Life Lines. Used with permission.]

Announcement



2024 Youth Fellowship Meetings

Northeast – Maranatha Fellowship, Sugarcreek, OH - July 26-28, 2024

West – Leon Salem Mennonite Church - July 26-28, 2024

Southeast – Oak Grove Mennonite Church - July 26-28, 2024

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the bottom line

The Magnifying Glass

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

As a writer, I look for origins to the subject at hand. For this subject of the simple magnifying glass, I resort

to my limited and basic education: dictionary and encyclopedia. I go in far enough to get my feet wet, then at waist deep, I am still enjoying myself,

but when it's over my shoulders it begins to take my breath away.

Glass is made mostly of sand, soda, and lime. Corning Glass Works has developed more than 100,000 kinds of glass! Simply profound, but not profoundly simple.

Glass was mentioned to Job by Elihu, quoted from Job 37:18, "*Hast thou with him spread out the sky which is strong, and as a molten looking glass?*" The looking glass refers to a mirror (German). It is thought that Job's era was prior to Abraham, but written in the Solomonic era (Unger's). Women's glasses (mirrors) are mentioned in Isaiah 3:23 as an additional vanity. Legend has it that eye glasses were invented by the Chinese as early as 500 B.C.

New Testament references translate glass to being a mirror. Glass features in Revelation are to be decorative, as an aid to magnify the beauty and glory of heaven.

Now about the magnifying glass; it is not spoken of in the Bible to my knowledge. Curving the glass lens provides for the enlargement of any object on which it is focused. Its lens is chosen for the enlargement of a picture, or an actual object, and can easily be carried in a pocket or purse for routine use.

This article is a follow-up of last month's "The Puzzle," noting how

people, under stress, magnify their troubles. By it, they lose a proper perspective, that is, seeing their problem(s) in a make-believe world of fatalism. They expect bad things to happen and persevere. As the scenario unfolds, it perpetuates itself and becomes worse, and is enlarged by that magnifying glass.

The word magnify, in Greek, is "megaluna," in which Strong's has 10 words beginning with the prefix "mega." Webster lists 24 words with the prefix "mega," meaning "great, powerful, large, mighty, beyond number." Strong's would add "to make great by declaration," and "a class of greatness that belongs to divinity, as to God Himself."

A true perspective allows our thoughts to accept living in a fallen world, it being imperfect and inclined toward sin and wickedness. A true perspective realizes the dynamic of offenses—I do and say things that can cause others to be offended. The offense could have been both happening unknowingly and also unintentionally. The closer our relationships, the more likely there could be an offense or over-stepping an invisible line. The same is true in a church, multiple-employee business, or community. The magnifying glass enlarges where it is directed.

Somehow, a robust and welcoming

fellowship with the “fellows in my ship” can easily absorb, without much further thought, otherwise problematic and overtly-slanted remarks, whereas, those who are held as being suspicious of my worth, can be judged as having a “pick on me to no communal good.” A more mature faith in God will help us cultivate a more reasonable and growing faith in others, whoever they be, and however were the seeming slights of the past. The magnifying glass enlarges where it is directed.

Sometimes, we are our own life’s worst problem. As in using a magnifying glass to call attention to my own person, in grooming, or in dress. Or in making sure people know about my work, travels, philosophical ideas, business pursuits, political ideologies, or doctrinal leanings. All of these can easily extend to magnifying how wrong or ridiculous people are who hold or practice with equal fervency an opposite view or position. The magnifying glass enlarges where it directed.

Therefore, our perspective is partly shaped by our upbringing, partly by our culture, partly by our teachers, partly by our friends, whom we have chosen and cater to, partly by our national citizenship, and partly by our developing goals. For we know only in part, we do and rightly say

only in part, we evaluate fairly only in part, we plan a good future only in part, and we judge others realistically only in part. The magnifying glass enlarges where it is directed.

The world of people in Noah’s time magnified themselves along with their achievements and inventions and at the last were destroyed in a worldwide flood. Nebuchadnezzar magnified himself with his smarts and kingdom and was demoted to eat grass like an ox, *“till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws”* (Daniel 4:33). Saul magnified himself above the words of Samuel, which were given by God. He was dismissed as king, going down in disgrace as the first king of Israel. Korah magnified himself by his stout words against his cousins, Moses and Aaron. By the Word of the Lord through Moses, the earth opened and swallowed Korah, his sympathizers, and their families. They thus were cast alive and went *“down quick into the pit”* (Numbers 16). The lessons in the Bible are clear to establish and verify the first of the historical and primary Ten Commandments, *“I am the Lord thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me...for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God”* (Exodus 20:2-5).

We have the decline/incline principle. As one declines from

one facet of life, he inclines toward another facet. Or a step toward self is a step away from God. The proud magnify self; the humble glorify God.

The Bible says, “*O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together* (Psalm 34:3). The context goes from a personal commitment and declaration—“*I will bless the LORD at all times*: (vs.1), to saying, “*My soul shall make her boast in the Lord*” (vs. 2), to a call to those with him, “*O magnify the Lord with me*” (vs.3).

The exuberance of his soul magnetizes others with him to make manifest the worthy exaltation of the Holy Lord God, manifold times! Amen!

Bless the Lord = Boast in the Lord = Magnify the Lord!

II Samuel 7 records a major development that arises to the heaven of heavens, even to the very throne of God, and to God Himself, Who rules and reigns over the whole world. The prophet Nathan is the intermediary between God and David about David’s proposition to build a house as the earthly dwelling place for God. David, the king, remembering what God did to King Saul just prior to David, is humbled by reason of God’s mercy toward him and toward Israel for His name’s sake. The prophet Nathan had just informed David that

God has accepted his desire to build a house for Jehovah God.

- In David’s response with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, he first discredits himself, though he was the king of Israel (vss. 18-21).

- He extols the person of Jehovah God, giving all credit to Him (vs. 22).

- He highlights the magnificent work of God (vs. 23).

- He expands how He chose Israel as the people of God forever (vs.24).

- David magnifies God’s worthy name forever (vs. 26).

- And in acknowledgement of revealing this great breakthrough, David in great exclamation, accepts the magnanimous overture from God (vs. 25).

I Chronicles 17 is a parallel Scripture of this great detailed event, a very fitting passage for the dedication of a church house or institution. “*For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people forever; and thou, Lord, becamest their God. Therefore now, LORD, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house be established forever, and do as thou hast said. Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified forever...*” (vss. 22-24).

The Bottom Line this time is of a personal nature. As I come to the close of these few lines, I sense

a personal inadequacy through my years, to what degree I cannot say, to express the awe and wonder and majesty of the Holy Lord God. Commensurate to that is the failure to express in greater magnitude the great mercy of God, and His

lovingkindness toward me all my years, and especially in the seemingly extended sunset years of my life. I borrow these words, but yet in awe toward God, I invite you to “*magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!*”



school matters

Keeping the Vision for Christian Education, (Part 2)

When is my Child Truly Educated?

Marvin Kauffman, Weldon, IA

[Continued from last month.]

To maintain our vision for a genuinely Christian education, we need to think well about what it means for a child to be truly educated, else our huge investment in time and money will produce merely “*wood, hay, and stubble.*”

The truly educated child will eventually see himself as fallen and needing a Savior. But long before he will understand his need of a Savior, he needs to see himself as a unique creation of God with particular gifts and abilities that God wants him to develop.

We must always recognize and promote the concept that achievement in academics and/or sports is not the

measure of a man’s character or his worth in the eyes of God. Rather, his success is measured by faithfulness in using and developing what God has given him. Children may be very diligent and gifted in areas that tend to be overlooked in the school setting. I remember a third grader telling me, “I guess I’m just stupid.” But the older he got the more obvious it became that he was very gifted in “seeing into things” and managing his business, family, and church responsibilities well.

The truly educated child will see the world as God sees it—a world created and sustained by God—and that the events of history are orchestrated by the hand of God.

That basic conviction is incredibly countercultural in our day! Public

education is based on humanistic philosophy, concluding that the earth and man somehow evolved out of nothing, man is his own god, and there is no source of truth and authority outside of man himself.

At the birth of the early Church, secular humanism was already alive and well in the Hellenistic philosophies of the Greeks that carried into the Roman culture. The idea of a man who is supposed to be the Son of God being crucified for the sins of the world, and that this dead man would rise again, was absolute foolishness to their humanistic way of reasoning.

God used common men like Peter, John, and Paul, who were not educated in Greek philosophy, but were thoroughly educated in the Scriptures and by Jesus Christ Himself. He used the preaching of the cross, the power of the Gospel, which was considered foolish to the Greeks, to confound their so-called wisdom of the day. *“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty”* (I Corinthians 1:23, 27).

In Ephesus, Paul was accused of turning the world upside down,

though he actually turned it right side up! According to historical and archeological records, Ephesus had a huge library full of the wisdom of the day. Imagine Paul walking into that library. He shakes his head and muses, “These people really don’t know anything, because they don’t know Jesus, and I’m here to tell them.” Much of Paul’s success lay in the fact that he was convinced that he didn’t need what they had, all their luxury, their elaborate architecture, their sensual entertainment, and the wisdom of this world, but rather they needed what he had!

If our children are truly educated, they will understand that they do *not* need what our self-centered, humanistic society has to offer, but rather our world needs what the children of the Kingdom have to offer. They need the message of the Gospel and the transforming power of Jesus Christ!

This is a crucial point and it is imperative that our children “get” that. We could, however, ask ourselves how well our own generation has embraced that reality, which reaches into a number of different areas and affects our entire lifestyle, including what we value in the education of our children. We need to think well about our philosophy of education and how much we really need of

the knowledge of this world. Are we willing to rethink whether we are actually giving our children the tools they need for Kingdom building, or whether we're merely focused on meeting the requirements of the state in a Christian context?

A child is truly educated when he comes to know God, through Jesus Christ, Who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

While we do not promote child evangelism in our schools, we need to maintain the vision for education that helps create a God-consciousness in our children—a God-consciousness that leads them to a growing awareness that they are lost and need a Savior.

A child is truly educated if he goes on to glorify God by faithfully serving Him and fulfilling the purpose God has for Him.


The goal of secular education is wealth, power, and prestige. We need to help our children develop a vision that is much higher and much more worthy of their life investment. Our children need to learn from us, primarily by example, that we are not here to serve ourselves; we're not here to simply enjoy the American dream—a big house, nice cars and trucks, and big bank accounts. The Lord may see fit to give us some of

those blessings, but that is not the goal of godly education. And when He does give those blessings, they are to be used unreservedly to minister to the poor and bring the Gospel to the world.

We are training our children for God's work long before they come to know Him personally and are really committed to serve Him. All of character-building and all of basic academic and life skills that we teach them both at school and at home from “little up” are essential for equipping them to serve.

Our intent is that by the time they come to the age of accountability, they already have a basic awareness that life is not all about “me.” Our goal is that they already have a head start in being equipped to do God's work wherever and in whatever capacity He calls them.

In summary, we need to maintain a vision for:

- an education that is God-centered rather than man-centered,
- an education that will lead our children to see the world and themselves as God sees them,
- an education that will lead them toward experiencing the transforming work of Jesus Christ in their own lives,
- and an education that will give them tools for Kingdom work. 



Good Singing at Weddings

Wendell Nisly, Harrisonburg, VA

(Wendell Nisly leads the work of Shenandoah Music Camp in Harrisonburg, VA. These comments reflect his thoughts about wedding music. In fact, the thought that “our music must be outstanding” may not add to the beginning of a good Christian marriage. It is, of course, very special to those getting married. PLM)

Do you have suggestions on how to plan wedding music?

I am an enthusiastic proponent of congregational singing at weddings. Married life is community life; you will need your community throughout the rest of your lives together. You honor your guests when you let them sing in your ceremony. Congregational singing that is carefully chosen and thoughtfully led can be an immensely beautiful and worshipful experience. Here’s a bonus: substantial congregational singing can greatly simplify planning for you and rehearsal for any singing ensemble you may recruit.

If you do have “special singing” by a small, select ensemble, consider two

things as you choose music.

First, consider your wedding guests and not just the kind of music you enjoy. You are inviting guests, not merely to be an audience at your concert, but to be active participants in your wedding and your life. What music will *they* enjoy?

Second, consider the ensemble. Beware of too many and too difficult pieces. Great music sung poorly (because it is too difficult or under-rehearsed) creates distracting, white-knuckle moments for all present. Think also about the amount of work you are asking of your singers, particularly if they are doing this gratis.

Your guests have contributed greatly to your lives. Honor them in your music selection process. When sung beautifully, that music can draw people into itself, and then beyond itself to the One Who alone is beautiful, the Bridegroom to Whom all healthy marriages point.

[Submitted for publication by Paul L. Miller, Partridge, KS. Used with permission.]



If We Truly Believed

Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX

If we truly believe that our local church is the actual Bride of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ:

- we would use the most beautiful adjectives when describing her.
- we would quickly rise to her defense whenever anyone attempts to oppose her.
- we could not remain aloof when others belittle, ridicule, discredit, or unduly criticize her.
- we would rather downplay her faults and instead, extol her godly virtues.
- we would gladly worship her Husband and readily submit to His authority.
- we would rejoice with her when she gives birth to another child.
- we would weep with her when one of her children goes astray.
- we would do everything possible to develop and maintain a healthy relationship with her children.
- we would shower her with all our loving affection.
- we would humbly accept

her painful rebukes as a sincere expression of her loving care.

- we would bless her every morning and thank God for her every night.
- we would consider no material possession, time, or personal talent too great a sacrifice for her well-being.

If after reading the above list of positive thoughts and actions, you are thinking, “It appears as if he is speaking of his mother,” then you have made a correct judgment. Yes, for the sacred Scripture* tells us that the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem, is our spiritual mother. Therefore, seeing how much we as humans love, respect, and appreciate our earthly mothers, who are with us only for a transient phase, how much more then should we properly treat and highly regard the Church, the Bride of Christ, who cares for us today, and will continue to do so throughout eternity!

*Galatians 4:24-26, Revelation 21 

The best thing you can give someone is a chance.

marriages

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

Troyer-Miller

Bro. Dylan, son of Allen and Brenda Troyer, OH, and Sis. Andrea, daughter of Mose and Rachel Miller, Crossville, TN, on December 16, 2023, at First United Methodist Church for Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church by John Ray Miller.

Yoder-Hege

Bro. Weston, son of Reuben and Martha Yoder, Monterey, TN, and Sis. Lynette, daughter of Conrad and Katrina Hege, Shippensburg, PA, on February 17, 2024, at Pike Mennonite Church for Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church by Wendall Martin.



cradle roll

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

Beachy, Peter Jr. and Melody (Sommers), Salisbury, PA, seventh child, fifth daughter, Briana Arelle, March 24, 2024.

Beiler, Duane and Samantha (Hochstetler), Leesburg, OH, third child, second son, Dakota Jamison, March 29, 2024.

Coulter, Jake and Brenda (Peachy), Honey Grove, PA, second child, first son, Felix Malachi, March 2, 2024.

Garber, Verlin and Larissa (Yoder), Danville, AL (serving in Liberia), fifth child, second son, Winston Dietrich, February 28, 2024.

Graber, Keith and Delores (Byler), Scranton, KS, fifth child, fourth son, Kendall Wade, March 4, 2024.

Kline, Jeffrey and Erica (Schlabach), Scranton, KS, first child and son, Tyler James, February 22, 2024.

Knepp, Jeremy and Krista (Stoltzfus), Crockett, VA, fourth child, third son, Blake Alexander, March 4, 2024.

Korver, Kelvin and Denise (Yoder), Nottawa, MI, fourth child, second son, Wyatt Joel, January 16, 2024.

Mast, Hans and Beth (Smucker), Hutchinson, KS, second child and daughter, Olivia Kate, March 18, 2024.

Nisly, Larry and Amy (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, seventh child, fourth son, Trey Phillip, October 24, 2023.

Petersheim, Michael and Melissa (Sommers), Salisbury, PA, seventh child, third daughter, Abigail Heather, March 27, 2024.



CALVARY MESSENGER

Raber, Owen and Carol (Miller), Hillsboro, OH, fourth child, second daughter, Madison Faith, February 5, 2024.

Riehl, Jaydon and Janaya (Reed), Penn Yan, NY, first child and son, Cedar Boe, October 17, 2023.

Stoll, Eric and Frieda (Smoker) Pulaski, TN, fifth child, third son, Gabriel Eliot, March 8, 2024.

Stoltzfus, Bryan and Lori (Wengerd), Greeneville, TN, first child and son, Callum Joe, March 10, 2024.

Stoltzfus, Daniel and Ruth Ann (Stoltzfus), Coatesville, PA, third child, second son, Jaxton Luke, December 25, 2023.

Stoltzfus, Keith and Cynthia (Eichorn), Southside, AR, first child and daughter, Emery Victoria, March 14, 2024.

Troyer, Dwight and Melora (Yeager), Waynesboro, VA, second child and son, Cohen Hayes, February 29, 2024.

Troyer, Jeremiah and Rose (Smucker), Plain City, OH, second child and daughter, Jade Oakley, March 20, 2024.


Weaver, Rodney and Glenda (King), Denmark, SC, sixth child, fourth daughter, Hailey Lynn, February 21, 2024.

Yoder, Andrew and Judith (Swartzentruber), Montezuma, GA, eighth and ninth children, fifth and sixth daughters, twins: Lyric Aria and (late) Lana Ryann, November 6, 2023.

Yoder, Jerry and Franie (Yoder), Lyndon, KS, sixth child, third daughter, Apphia Grace, January 12, 2024.

Yoder, LaVon and Angela (Yoder), Salisbury, PA, fifth child, third daughter, Chloe Brielle, March 24, 2024.

Yoder, Philip and Kristal (Hershberger), Greeneville, TN, second child and son, Jamien Ray, March 10, 2024.

Zook, Jeremy and Abby (Stoltzfus), Rural Retreat, VA, first child and son, Nial Jonathan, February 28, 2024. 

ordinations

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

Bro. Omar Glick, 40, (wife, Wilma Blank), Narvon, PA, was ordained minister at Pequea Amish Mennonite Church, Narvon, PA, on March 3, 2024. Preordination messages were brought by Thomas Mast and Mark Kurtz. The charge was given by Ben A. Stoltzfus, assisted by Floyd King and Glen Miller. John Esh and Tim Petersheim shared the lot.

Bro. Josiah Zook, 34, (wife, Amanda Schlabach), drew the lot and was ordained as deacon at Dunmore East Christian Fellowship in Ireland on March 17, 2024. Preordination messages

were given by Andrew Miller and Titus Miller from Suceava, Romania. The charge was given by Anthony Miller, assisted by Titus Miller.



obituaries

Beiler, Elizabeth A. “Betsy,” 70, of Narvon, PA, passed away at the Wellspan York Memorial Hospital in York, PA, on March 27, 2024. She was born in Lancaster, PA, on August 29, 1953. Betsy was the daughter of the late Jonas K. and Elizabeth F. (Stoltzfus) Beiler.

She was a foster mother for 14 years. Her foster son, John Chuko, and his family still have a loving relationship with Betsy. Betsy worked at Tel Hai Retirement Community for many years in the housekeeping department. She later worked at Garden Spot Village for 20 years.

Betsy enjoyed traveling, embroidery, reading, her cats, and interacting with nephews and nieces, and was like a grandmother to John’s children, Karliegh, Kylah, and Anya. She was a member of the Pequea Amish Mennonite Church in Narvon.

She was preceded in death by a brother and sister-in-law, Aaron and Mary Beiler.

Betsy is survived by her siblings: Ben (Sarah), Narvon; Priscilla (Daniel) Fisher, Elverson; Fannie (Gideon) Petersheim, Narvon; Jonas (Wanda), Coatesville; Edwin (Judith), New Berlin; and numerous nephews and nieces.

The funeral service was held March 30, 2024, at Pequea Amish Mennonite Church. Interment followed at the adjoining cemetery.

Chupp, Freida, 58, of Eden Valley, MN, died unexpectedly January 3, 2024, at her home. Freida was born November 4, 1965, in Lewisburg, PA, to Joseph and Fannie (Yoder) Miller. Her family moved to Minnesota in 1974. On July 17, 1987, she was united in marriage to Mark Chupp, and they were blessed with seven children.

Freida was a faithful member of Believer’s Fellowship Mennonite Church. She had a servant’s heart and would go out of her way to serve her family, church, and community. Freida followed the “path of Jesus” and positively touched the lives of people everywhere she went.

Freida was a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and an excellent cook! She loved spending time with her children and grandchildren. Freida enjoyed being outdoors, tending to her garden and flowers. She also enjoyed watching birds and wildlife. Camping with her family was always a highlight.

Surviving are her husband, Mark,

children: Jeffrey (Mary), Grove City; Renee Chupp, Blackville, SC; Michael (Rosanna), Paynesville; Nathan (Glenda), Grove City; Wesley (Marita), Paynesville; Bradley (Lucy), Atwater; Emily Chupp, Eden Valley; eight grandchildren: Carrie, Colton, Alyssa, Kowyn, Candace, Jaelynn, Jaxon, Adalynn; and her mother, Fannie Miller Byler, Grove City. Also surviving are her siblings: Marvin (Neva) Miller, Grove City; Lucille Miller, Grove City; Freeman (Aimee) Miller, Levelland, TX; Dennis (Naomi) Miller, Edgar, WI; Daryl (Kay) Miller, Paynesville; Joe (Regina) Miller, Eden Valley, Julie (Jason) Yutzy, Grove City; and mother-in-law, Nancy Chupp, Eden Valley.

Freida was preceded in death by her father, Joseph Miller, stepfather, Alvin Byler, and father-in-law, Harvey Chupp.

Her funeral was held on January 8, 2024, at Paynesville Evangelical Free Church in Paynesville. Burial followed in Burr Oak Cemetery, rural Grove City.

Coblentz, Savilla Marie, 83, of Uniontown, OH, passed away at her home surrounded by her family on February 25, 2024. She was born November 17, 1940, to Andrew K. and Clara (Sommers) Lapp. On April 9, 1964, she married Henry J. Coblentz, who survives.

Savilla enjoyed quilting, tending to her garden, and playing her harmonica. Savilla especially enjoyed being with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She is survived by her children: Janet (John) Troyer, Anna Mae (Arlen)

Bontrager, Atlee (Cindy), Becky (Matthew) Zook; 16 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren; brother, Loren (Liz) Lapp; sisters: Rebecca (Dennis) Day, Vera (John) Helmuth, Martha Sommers, Arlene (John Henry) Yoder, Christine Herd; and sister-in-law, Martha Lapp.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her stepmother, Emma Coblentz Lapp, brother, Jonathan Lapp, sister, Sara Jane Weaver, brothers-in-law: Levi Weaver and John Henry Yoder, and a stillborn great-granddaughter.

The funeral service was held on February 28, 2024, at Hartville Conservative Mennonite Church with Tom Wagler, Mark Wagler, and Elmer Yoder serving. Interment followed at Oak Grove Cemetery.

Yoder, Floyd, 92, of Montezuma, GA, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family, on January 9, 2024. Floyd was born on June 1, 1931, in Lynnhaven, VA, to the late Enos and Mary (Miller) Yoder. On September 30, 1952, he married the late Katie Weaver. They spent 59 joyful years together, before her passing on November 2, 2011.

His life reflected his love for his Lord. He loved his family and friends, and his life revolved around them.

Surviving are his eight children: Marvin (Miriam), Montezuma; Sarah (Clarence) Yoder, Hickory, KY; Mary (Lewis) Plank; Louis (Kathy); Brenda (Nelson) Yoder; Larry (Emily); Barbara Jean (Ernest) Swartzentruber; and

Loretta (Steve) Esh, all of Montezuma. Floyd was blessed with 56 grandchildren, 129 great-grandchildren, and four great-great-grandchildren. He is also survived by four sisters: Sadie Beachy, Vernie (Mahlon) Weaver, Alta Kauffman, and Mary (Gerald) Yoder.

Preceding him in death are a daughter, Ruby (Elmer) Swartzentruber; three grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; five brothers: Edwin, Claude, Allen, Melvin, and Norman Yoder.

The funeral service was held on January 1, 2024, at the Montezuma Church fellowship hall. Interment followed in the church cemetery.


Yoder, Lana Ryann was born, along with her twin sister (Lyric Aria), on November 6, 2023, to Andrew and Judith (Swartzentruber) Yoder of Montezuma,

GA, at the Macon Medical Center in Macon, GA.

Lana lived only a few minutes before passing on to be with Jesus. It was early in the pregnancy that abnormalities were observed by ultrasound that brought concern to her family. After several more ultrasounds and testing it was determined that baby “B” (Lana) had a condition called anencephaly and it would be fatal—usually at birth.

Lana is survived by her parents, seven siblings: Kendall, Leanna, Kaylee, Lanelle, Kameron, Lawson, and twin sister, Lyric.

She was preceded in death by one sister, Chloe.

A graveside service was held on November 14, 2023, at the Montezuma Mennonite Church Cemetery. 

observations

As of April 1, the minimum wage increased to \$20 per hour in the state of California for employees of fast food restaurants chains with 60 or more stores nationwide. This news was accompanied by reports of Big Mac meals costing \$18 and widespread layoffs of workers. If these reports are accurate, it would indicate that this potential effect on fast food prices and job availability might both move in an undesirable direction.

Many operators have indicated that this wage adjustment will obligate them to raise the prices of the menu offerings in order to offset the additional wage cost. And some are trying to mitigate the increased cost of labor by reduced staffing numbers and more automation. Still others expect they will need to close shop. However, time will tell how this all plays out. Given that the previous minimum wage was \$16 per hour, the substantial 25% increase

in the minimum wage is not as large as it would be in many areas of the country if the minimum wage went to \$20 per hour.

The debate rages regarding what these workers should be paid. One school of thought says that this sort of work is not suitable for a destination career but is more suited to those just old enough to be entering the labor market.

Another way of looking at it is that any wage earner should receive a livable wage.

Most of us would struggle to operate a multi-person household in today's economy with the sole wage earner flipping hamburgers at McDonalds. But for many households, income from this sort of job is one piece of the financial puzzle rather than being the only source of income. Whether it should be that way or not is fodder for discussion. But the idea of raising a family with the income of one breadwinner's earnings is sort of an outlier in today's economy. I'm not enough of an economist to state which is cause and which is effect, but it shouldn't surprise us that wages are lower where the expectation exists that multiple income streams are normal and needed.

I also acknowledge that what feels normal for me is different than society's normal. I'm very grateful for

the fact that I grew up in a tradition rooted in Scripture, in which the default expectation is that our wives are not expected to enter the work force. I'm choosing not to enumerate how and why exceptions to this default expectation exist, but the overarching tradition has served us well and continues to do so.

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Some years ago, I heard a comment something along these lines, "Sometimes life's most important lessons come bundled with the most painful circumstances."

This comment states an observation rather than an absolute law. I don't recall the setting where I heard that comment or who made it. But I remember that the comment was made to support the idea that we shouldn't always do all we can to shield someone from the painful results of wrong choices that were made because this might short-circuit the prospective learning opportunity.

This awareness starts when children are small. They should learn that a quick apology for wrong doing is important. But sometimes that apology won't eliminate all the repercussions that were set in motion by the initial transgression. I think we've likely all heard children, if not our own selves when we were small, offer a quick, insincere apology in

order to avoid punishment.

But at some time we need to learn that remorse and even repentance do not erase all the results of wrongdoing. Whether it's lung cancer for the regretful smoker, coronary disease for the one who overeats, or the remorse of a criminal before the judge who is slated to prescribe a sentence, adults should have learned this. Forgiveness is always attainable. But the results are often an unavoidable component of the timeless law of sowing and reaping.



The aforementioned reminders are particularly useful for those of us who have made wrong choices. However, a different point of emphasis is needed for us when we've experienced wrong at the hands of others. The same law of sowing and reaping still applies.

However, the Christian who experiences wrong at the hands of others has available an inexhaustible supply of grace that enables the aggrieved to extend forgiveness. No, this isn't fun, neither does it feel natural because we often wish to make the other person pay for wronging me. But the Scriptures remind us that "*Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*" Our responsibility is to forgive. The Lord has made Himself responsible to mete out due recompense.



I'm thinking of another type of situation that has caused some pretty vigorous debate in church circles, including, but not limited to the Anabaptist community. How should the church relate to a person's conduct that not only wrongs another person, but places himself under the jurisdiction of civil authorities because a law has been broken?

At the risk of seeming to be too cut and dried, I suggest that the church has a responsibility to work with the party who has been wronged and the party who has done wrong. But where that wrongdoing involves an infraction of a law, the action of the church doesn't necessarily replace the responsibility of civil government to bring appropriate consequences to bear.

If a brother robs another through misrepresentation of the facts or through some fraud, the church should be keen that this type of stealing is processed properly. This should include thorough repentance on the part of the one who did wrong but also returning what was stolen. Even then, a person, in such a case, will need to answer to the magistrates if a law has been broken. This example feels clear.

But when someone violates another person's free will by taking

advantage of another sexually, this has profound implications. Many of us have likely heard of times in which a simple apology is all that has been required for the wrongdoer to return to normal life, whatever that is. However, personal violation of this nature can never be returned like personal property can. These cases are complicated and extremely difficult. Our churches should be brimming with goodwill, love, and forgiveness. Those who commit sin and repent should experience that in

full measure in our midst. However, where a person's transgressions place him or her under the scrutiny of civil authorities, it's good to remember that while our duty is to forgive, the God-given responsibility of civil authorities is a bit different. Our impulse to "obligate" the state to act like the church is asked to act might be well-intentioned, but it also misses the mark.

May God give us a full measure of His grace, love, forgiveness, and wisdom in these difficult situations.

—RJM



The Gift of Neurodivergence

Trent Clugston, Fincastle, VA

Introduction

We have likely all had an experience in our lives in which we saw a child misbehaving in a grocery store or a doctor's office. The embarrassed parent quickly says something like, "I'm sorry, they cannot help it. They have ADHD." Or maybe they say something like "They have autism and cannot control their emotions." I'm also sure most of us have had similar thoughts about these diagnoses being excuses for poor parenting. Because of the way in which our society has latched onto the labels in such situations, some

people have reacted and believe that these things are made up entirely and simply are not real. So, are these diagnoses actually real? Or are they psychiatric terms used to medicate children into submission? To fully understand these conditions, we must step back and understand exactly what is happening in the human brain of neurodivergent people.

What is Neurodivergence

Neurodivergence is a sociological classification for a variety of medical conditions in which the brain does not process information in the same way as a neurotypical person or a person without these conditions.

These conditions are evidenced by differences in mental function, learning styles, sensory processing, communication styles, and behaviors. Some of the conditions that are considered neurodivergent are Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Tourette's syndrome, and Dyslexia. Dyslexia has long been recognized in our Anabaptist settings because of the impact that it has on learning and reading. Conditions such as Autism and ADHD, however, have not been as widely recognized or accepted within our Anabaptist setting because of some of the over-diagnosing that has happened in this country. We have to understand that some people have similarities to these diagnoses but are not necessarily neurodivergent. When diagnosing neurodivergent conditions, healthcare providers search for patterns of thought processes and behaviors that correlate with these conditions and not individual symptoms.

While there is evidence that these diagnoses have been over-diagnosed in some settings, there is also evidence that they do exist as well. There is not only diagnostic and behavioral data but MRI brain imaging and postmortem studies that have shown structural differences in people with these diagnoses. Alvarez-Jimenez et. al. (2019) noted that in people

with autism spectrum disorder, there were changes noted both at the cellular level, such as neuron size changes, as well as changes more globally, such as differences in the thickness of gray and white matter, in people diagnosed with ASD. There have also been studies that show similar changes in the brains of those with ADHD and other neurodivergent diagnoses. There is evidence specifically in ADHD of a deficit of a neurochemical called dopamine.

While there are classifications for things like these disorders, it is important to recognize that each of these neurodivergent individuals will present in various ways. Each is a unique individual, and no two persons will be exactly the same. This is likely one reason why it is difficult to understand or to grasp these disorders because there is not a clear delineation of symptoms or manifestations of any of these diagnoses. Whereas, many medical diagnoses present at least in similar ways, mental health diagnoses have been known to present in many different ways. Many mental health conditions are viewed on a spectrum or range of symptoms for this very reason.

God created Neurodivergence

We have identified that there is evidence that these neurodivergent

conditions are real, albeit possibly over-diagnosed. So how then do we view them when they surface in our Anabaptist communities? The first thing that I believe is that God has created each person, and they are unique and loved. The second thing that I believe is that God has a plan for each of our lives. He has created us with the gifts and abilities to fulfill that calling He has given us. We speak often about spiritual gifts and how each person contributes within the church. We also understand that we do not expect the person who cannot carry a tune to be our primary song leader. This would be very demoralizing to that person. In the same way, not accepting the gifts and limitations of those with neurodivergence would also be demoralizing. I believe that we must accept them as God has created people with neurodivergent conditions for His glory. Just as we would with all of our brothers and sisters, we must call each other to personal, emotional, and spiritual growth regardless of how we process information. Knowledge and understanding of these neurodivergent conditions, however, may help us be more successful in our encouragement.

Neurodivergence is a Gift

Much of our knowledge of these conditions has been focused over

the years on many negative facets. These negatives are a very big part of the life of those with neurodivergent diagnoses. Those diagnosed with dyslexia have an incredibly difficult time learning to read. One person who suffered with this condition told me once that it was like looking at your book in a mirror. Another person told me that their dyslexia manifested as chunks missing from words, so they had to try to guess sometimes what the word is with only part of the word present. They said that more would be missing if they were more tired, stressed, or had a headache. This made things like documentation in their work very challenging. Autism can manifest as non-verbal children or children who are very sensitive to neurostimulations such as noise, light, or activity. People diagnosed with ADHD can often be impulsive or hyperactive. Sometimes, people with ADHD will completely “space out” or not hear what is happening around them. They will often be disorganized and forget important tasks or appointments. People with Tourette’s syndrome often have tics or will say things in the middle of their sentences that are sometimes very inappropriate.

While these challenges are real, there is a whole other side to these

challenges. The other side is the gifts that God has granted people who are challenged with neurodivergent brain processes. For example, those with autism spectrum disorders are known to have incredible concentration. They are tuned into fine details and have been known to have incredible memories. Those with dyslexia, while they may struggle to read, are incredible visual thinkers. They are also known to have very high 3D imaging in their mind. They are extremely creative artistically and have strong mechanical skills. Those with ADHD are often extremely creative. They can hyperfocus on complex tasks and complete them in record time. They have an energy and passion. Those who have Tourette's syndrome have incredible observation skills and cognitive control. Because of these attributes they are usually highly empathic individuals.

God has created each person, whether neurotypical or neurodivergent, a unique individual that He is calling to Himself. He has created them to be a part of and contribute to His Kingdom. While it may look different for each person based on their individual needs, people with neurodivergent brains can be a huge asset to the local church. Our church is currently in a building

project. No one has ever asked me to complete excavating or to lead out on a framing work project. They simply are not things that I would be very good at because I have not learned them or I am not gifted in them. However, there are other things that I have been asked to be part of because they are more closely related to things in which I have been gifted. So, with neurodivergent folks, there are many things that they can do well. Their role and input may not look the same as everyone else in our churches. However, we need to ensure that they feel the same love and acceptance as those who are neurotypical.

Raising a Neurodivergent Child

While all parents have had situations in which a child has left them embarrassed in a store or at church, there is a clear difference between the behaviors of someone with one of these challenges. There are things that happen that are not socially acceptable in our society and churches at times. While these social norms are important, we must consider why they are being broken and look more holistically at how to address them.

Raising children has its own challenges. Each child brings a unique personality to the family that adds color and joy to the family. Our four children all have very

distinct differences and yet our family would not be the same without each one. However, the needs of those with neurodivergent minds are different than those who are more neurotypical. This will also be true in our churches and schools as well.

One of the first things that is needed with these types of challenges is clear structure and boundaries. Often, a child with ADHD will intentionally push a boundary, if it isn't clearly defined, to see exactly where the line is. This is not always done as an act of rebellion or defiance, but these children find freedom in clear, structured boundaries. Some children with ADHD will do things to make their parents or teachers upset. They push them to the point of frustration because it gives them a certain dopamine rush when this happens. Unfortunately, it can also be very emotionally damaging to them as well as they are often very sensitive to the frustration that they create.

Another thing that is common in people with these types of challenges is overstimulation. This can come in many ways. Sometimes we find that too many evenings away or late nights cause increased behaviors and challenges. Loud environments such as gatherings or banquets can cause someone with neurodivergent challenges to become overwhelmed.

While this does not excuse poor behavior, it is helpful to understand this when correcting the behavior.

This sounds like it would be very challenging, and it certainly can be. It takes a lot of energy to keep up each day with children who have been gifted with a neurodivergent condition. It can be emotionally draining to try to understand what is happening in their minds and to be empathetic and yet set expectations that are realistic and godly. However, it is also exhausting to have a neurodivergent mind and to keep up with the different way in which the brain works and the constant neurostimulation that others do not have.

For those parenting a neurodivergent child, the work you are doing is not in vain. There are times when I wonder if we are making an impact. However, it is true that while it can be challenging to be consistent, this is the most impactful thing that you can do with a neurodivergent child. Have consistent structure at home, consistent boundaries and rules, and consistent discipline if the structure or boundaries are broken. While these things will not seem impactful at first, over time we can see evidence that these things bring a sense of calmness and peace even in the midst of the chaos. A neurodivergent person will

feel security deep within himself from this consistent environment in ways that he cannot explain. Seeing a neurodivergent child start to understand and recognize his need to decrease stimulation or practice emotional regulation is rewarding because these are life skills that will assist them throughout their lives.

Finally, and most importantly, prayer and connection with God are extremely important. In order to properly keep our composure and focus, we must be connected to the One Who created each of these special people. While it may be hard to find that time alone with God in a house full of busy children, it is imperative to stay grounded so that we can stay consistent and structured. This connection with God will help us remain calm and composed on the days when things get a little more chaotic. It will also give us a grateful heart for the gifts that people with these challenges bring each day.

Conclusion

One of the most impactful things that someone told us once was, “Imagine the impact that they can have in God’s Kingdom once they learn to harness all that energy.” This was one of the most encouraging things that we could possibly have heard. It is documented that those

with ADHD receive 200% more negative feedback in their childhood. So, to hear someone optimistically speaking truth and life was very refreshing to our weary hearts at that time. God can use those with these conditions to build His Church and His Kingdom.

Whether you are a person with a neurodivergent diagnosis and wonder what is wrong or if you are a parent or teacher who is struggling to know how to relate to your child, you can know that God said that they are fearfully and wonderfully made. God has a plan to use each person in His Kingdom if they will submit to His Word. There is a great opportunity for neurodivergent individuals to impact the world through these gifts and abilities that God has given to them. Neurodivergent conditions truly are gifts that bless many if we accept and cherish those with these gifts and provide the environments that they need to develop and thrive.

References:

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Autism spectrum disorder characterization in children by capturing local-regional brain changes in MRI. *Medical Physics*, 47(1), 119–131. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mp.13901>



Julia Teaches Me

Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS

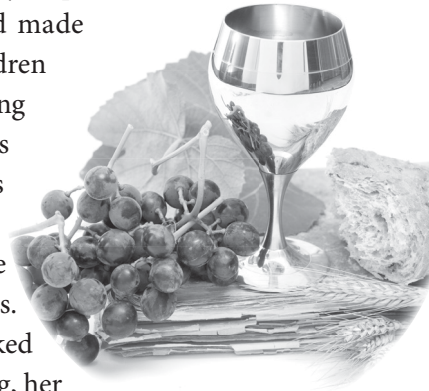
Though it was years ago, I can still see her clearly. She sat in the back of the auditorium that Sunday morning, her lovely hair with its coppery tints curling at temple and nape. Her blue eyes were closed in concentration as she joined the congregation, singing “Just As I Am.” Today, the song was liberated from its usual spot as an invitation hymn at a revival: it was a heartfelt prayer offered while filing past to receive the bread at communion. *Just as I am, I come.*

Her spot was near the center aisle, and I was down the row from her. Unmarried and in her 30s, Julia still loved all things snuggly and fuzzy and small, often crooning aloud in delight. Her sunny disposition and easy chuckle offset a slight handicap, and made her easy to love. You should have seen the children cluster around her after church, eagerly anticipating the sweet feast that tumbled from her capacious handbag! To my small daughter, her name was simply, “The Candy Lady.”

But that day, it was not the candies that were the sweetest thing about her, neither the coppery curls. It was her posture that gripped my heart. She rocked slightly forward and backward in time to the song, her cupped hands raised in worship. I was stunned by the beauty and congruence of the scene. Altogether unconscious of being seen, she was present to One. What beautiful childlikeness! What fragrant innocence! What powerful vulnerability! *Just as I am, I come.* Strengthened by her example, I come. Weary of self-consciousness, I come...often childish instead of childlike, I come...aware of guilt, I come...afraid of weakness, I come.

Julia died over ten years ago, but I frequently call to mind the beauty of her worship. Today, I take my cue from her and lift my cupped hands: *Just as I am, I come.*

And He thinks I am beautiful.



What Is a Furlough?

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

Furlough—what is it? What does it mean to be “on furlough?” Furlough has been defined as “an absence from the position and place of specific missionary appointment for a designated time period. It involves shifting geographical location, but not a change in the appointed missionary responsibility.

“The purposes of furlough are to rest, restore health, and recreate. It is to refit, ‘re-prepare’ for future service. It represents the international mission task, especially during opportunities for recruitment of qualified, God-called people. It gives the opportunity to report to your partners and home churches like Paul and Barnabas after they returned from their missionary journey in Asia Minor. *‘And when they had come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them. And there they abode long time with the disciples’*” (Acts 14:27-28). (from Wycliffe Bible Translators)

It may be necessary as a home church to provide a place to live

and a vehicle for the missionary household. I remember the humbling experience as a family on furlough of opening the refrigerator door and seeing the abundance of delicious foods to enjoy. We were often hosted by church families and relatives for meals and fellowship which gave us an opportunity to reconnect (especially with the host’s children and ours) and to share stories that happened on the mission field in daily life. It was always important for us parents to implant within the hearts of our children to say “thank you” after every visit and that these people are in no way indebted to us or that missionaries are some special, exceptional people. We are laborers together with God.

Last summer we were privileged to have one of our daughters and her husband and family at our house for one week. They are serving on the foreign field. One day the boys and Grandpa erected our tent in the backyard. Daddy, the boys, and Grandpa slept in the tent that night. I shared stories, we quoted

Bible verses, and prayed. They will probably never forget that blessed experience! The next day we packed a picnic lunch and visited Lake Tobias, north of Harrisburg. It has 150 acres of grassland and wooded area with many kinds of wildlife. It is both interesting and educational! Furloughs can be fun and memorable. However, for the missionaries, their station of service is often a welcome sight when returning.

It is courteous and kind to welcome and give recognition to the missionary family or young people visiting or returning from a term of service. It may be suitable for the missionary pastor to preach or the young brother to conduct a devotional. Perhaps a slide showing of their ministry could be scheduled. I clearly remember in my youth, missionaries from northwestern Ontario enthusiastically sharing slides of the Northern Light Gospel Mission and the great needs of the First Nations people. I noticed a young married man from our church shedding tears because of the Holy Spirit's call to preach the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. That brother and his family later moved to establish a church in a city mission. The Sewing Circle may be an opportune time for sisters to share about God's work on the field.

It appears as though Jonah took his furlough before obeying the Lord's call to preach at Nineveh. First, he took his rest in the lower level of the boat as it rocked back and forth. Next, he had a reviving experience in the belly of the whale. But his last furlough did not end well. He was displeased exceedingly, and he was very angry (4:1). God prepared a gourd as an object lesson to help Jonah grasp how deeply God loves the Ninevites. It was a comforting shadow for Jonah *"to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd"* (4:6). But God wanted to teach Jonah a deep lesson. He prepared a worm and it smote the gourd and it died (4:7). Jonah rocked back and forth, like his experience on the ship to Tarshish, from being very angry to being exceedingly glad, and then even talking back to God, *"I do well to be angry, even unto death"* (4:9b). Poor Jonah, this book ends on a sad note. But it describes the heart of God's everlasting love, even for the Gentile world. Yes, even for you and me! Delete the attitudes of anger toward the people group God has called you to and ask Him for compassion of the Holy Spirit.

Invest in a blessed furlough. Even during this time, spend time by yourselves away from your church families and relatives. Jesus calls us

to this: “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert (deserted by themselves -footnote) *place and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat*” (Mark 6:31).

More than anything, furloughs are good opportunities to encourage home folks to pray and to pray fervently and not forget to PRAY!



A Woman After God's Heart

Holy, Needy Mothers

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



When we think of God in the fire and smoke on Sinai or splitting rocks with an earthquake, we're not thinking about God being like a mother. But when we think of Him as a hen gathering her chicks under her wings, as helping a child learn to walk by taking his or her arms (Hosea 11:3), or as one who doesn't forget her nursing infant, we're looking at His mothering qualities. As women created in God's image, we are daughters of Eve, mother of all living. The maternal part of God is not any less a part of us if we haven't birthed a baby. Having been created in the image of God makes us all *mother-beings*.

I'm not dismissing the biology of being a mother, but rather, calling out the variations in motherhood. While the biology of conception, pregnancy,

and delivery of a human being from one's own body is astounding and life-changing, I emphasize that abundant *mothering* happens aside from this biological marvel.

I have been nurtured by too many mothers to name. My father, having been wed thrice, gave me three mothers, but that was just the beginning. I was mothered by my older sisters through crucial stretches. When our family opened a bakery, a collection of aunts and cousins steadied my amateur efforts, like a *mother* would have. I've been spiritually and physically *mothered* by ladies in church and by exemplary ladies in mission settings. My spiritual mothers include influential authors like Amy Carmichael and Elizabeth Elliott. My daughters have *mothered* me at times. All these ladies possessed the maternal attributes of God.

Let's consider the sometimes-unnamed *mothers* among us: the single *dean-mother* who oversees young ladies at a Bible school or place of service. The single *aunt-mother* who rocks, feeds, cleans, and comforts children of absent shopping mothers or going-out-to-eat mothers. I think of the *teacher-mother* who may spend more productive hours with the young ones than do the mothers who birthed them. I'm mindful of a missionary couple who hasn't borne biological children, yet when they walk their village they are surrounded by a train of *their children*. In church, they have more in number and darker-skinned children than they could have possibly given birth to. There are *nurse-mothers*, *missionary-mothers*, *teacher-mothers*, *mentor-mothers*, *office-mothers*, *counselor-mothers*, *foster-mothers*, *nutritional-mothers*, *aunt-mothers*, *step-mothers*, even as there are *grand-mothers*. We carry the burden and pleasure of motherhood within our creation DNA. Thanks to God and Eve, we are all mothers.

Alas, motherhood isn't the only thing that Eve passed on to us. I suggest that all of us were, figuratively, standing with her when she questioned whether God had provided everything she needed. I have also craved the forbidden and

doubted God's commands. I, with Eve, have courted the deep-down idea that God is deliberately keeping something good from me. And do you suppose we have used our influence to persuade someone close to us to also distrust God?

And so, our godlike *mother-ness* is shipwrecked by our own efforts. Since Eden, we perpetually bend away from God. We chase other gods. We dress ourselves, and others, with an artificial identity. In 2024, the Garden of Eden catastrophe may look like the following examples. A young mom despairs that her giftings can't be exercised because she's busy wiping messes and unscrambling toddlers. A single woman questions God's goodness since no man cherishes her. And grandma stresses that no one is benefiting from the space she occupies.

And so, by way of our fallen *mother-ness*, we find ourselves on His project board, over and over, as He calls us back to the original design. Hebrews 12:10 states that God disciplines us for our good, to make us more holy, like Him. It's a severe mercy when God chips away at our unholiness. He calls us to holiness in the small, dirty, and inconvenient, like spilled mop water or a malfunctioning printer. And He calls us to holiness in the larger heartache of relational


brokenness, health-break, sinful choices, and rejection.

I watch my houseplants lean toward the window day after day. I turn them half circle, and the next day they lean again, toward the light. As I do the houseplant maneuver, I think about how He urges me to lean toward the Light. In my relationships, in my disappointments, in my harried schedule, and in my unanswered questions, I can choose to lean toward the Light.

For another God-visual, I think about resting under a weighted blanket. When restlessness complicates sleep, I feel the weighted blanket pressing down on every inch of me. It takes too much effort to change position, so I let the blanket have the last word, giving in to rest. With a blanket, God shows me how restful life can be when I remember that not one inch

of my life escapes His permission, His observation, and His grace.

It is in the context of my mother-ness that I grieve my own undoneness. And in that same context I experience His abundance and sufficiency. He redeems my broken identity to the degree that I surrender to Him. He lovingly restores whom He created me to be.

We are all mothers by God's original design, yet desperately needy by our own fallenness. The gentle life-changing maneuvers of a patient Father invites us to lean toward the Light. He transforms us from hopelessness to holiness. This happens day after day, again and again. *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory"* (II Corinthians 3:18 NKJV). 

junior messages

A Mother's Song

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

This story dates back to the mid-1700s. Indian massacres and kidnappings were a horrible revenge to the white people. In this story, a mother's love lasted through long, hard years. A mother's

song re-united her with her daughter.

Nine-year-old Regina, the pet of the Leininger family, loved when her *mutter* and all of them sang together in the evening as the pine and sycamore logs crackled and glowed

in the rough stone fireplace of their lonely cabin.

“What shall I sing, *kinder*?” the strong woman of German heredity queried.

Regina pondered her mother’s suggestion for a minute. “Oh *mutter*, sing what you dost always sing, ‘*Allein, Doch Nicht Allein Bin Ich*,” Regina pleaded.

The *mutter* took the high notes as all the family joined in singing the old hymn.

Alone, yet not alone I am,
Though in this solitude so drear,
I feel my Saviour always nigh;
He comes the weary hours to cheer,
I am with Him, and He with me—
Even here alone I cannot be.

A blessed peace filled the hearts of those in the tiny cabin. Regina pleaded for one more, “Sing again, one more, *mutter*. Sing, ‘*Jesus, Evermore I Love*.”

Sweet music filled the lonely cabin as the family song rose to their heavenly Father before retiring into quiet slumber, a prelude to a tomorrow which would forever alter their lives.

The morning of October 16, 1755, marked a year since the Leiningers built their cabin in the wilderness, near the present town of Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, beside Penns Creek. The Delaware Indians of the area

were madly upset that their territory was being given away to white settlers without their consent.

After breakfast that morning the pioneer mother and one of her sons left for the mill, walking along a lonely forest path.

Regina and her sister, Barbara, were washing the dishes when blood-curdling whoops filled the air. So suddenly, so quickly, the father and his son were tomahawked, scalped, and died right there in the clearing of the small cabin while the young girls stared and shrieked in horror. Regina and Barbara were tied up and dragged into the forest. They looked back and saw their home aflame.

Long, sad days went by. The sisters were guarded constantly and joined with an ever-increasing number of forlorn child prisoners. The ones who were strong enough to carry burdens had babies strapped on their backs.

The Indians marched them westward and any pathway was avoided. The rough way cut and bruised their feet. Eventually, frequent halts were made at Indian villages. The white children were given to Indian parents who had lost children in warfare.

What a sad day when the sisters were torn from each other. Barbara was forced to walk through the wilderness all the way to Ohio. For

three and a half years Barbara served her Indian mistress. Then she and her best friend, Maria Le Roy, and two young white men escaped. Their flight through the forest for more than 150 miles was full of danger, hunger, and fatigue. Barbara could still sing the hymns her mother had taught her. Her songs rose, beseeching God for His help. Was it a miracle that they found their way to Fort Duquesne? In time, they were reunited with their families.

For nine, long, difficult years Regina was a slave girl to an old Indian woman. The child she had carried for many miles on her back grew big enough to help her in their struggle for life. They fought starvation, digging in the fields and woods for roots, garlic, and anything edible they could find. When winter came, Regina hunted like a wild beast for field mice, rats, and any small animal to stave off the pangs of hunger.

Despite the hardships, Regina grew tall and strong and bronzed under the sun. She was a beautiful Indian maiden. She forgot even her mother's face, but treasured her mother's songs in her heart. While alone in the forest, with the young girl she had carried westward, she remembered the hymns and repeated those words as a plea for deliverance.

There dawned in her soul a trusting faith that someday she would be released from bondage.

Regina was nearly 19 when Colonel Bouquet pushed into remote Indian fortresses, even beyond Ohio, commanding the conquered chiefs to immediately surrender every white prisoner. Word was sent throughout Pennsylvania, to any family who had lost loved ones, to come and claim their own. An immense crowd of white settlers gathered, young and old, and a large congregation of brown-skinned people who had been seized and taken captive so many years ago.

Mrs. Leininger stood there. Would she find her daughter? How could she identify the Regina she loved, the little girl of 10, so good and gentle, whose pleasure was singing the old German hymns so many years ago.

The gray-haired mother stepped forward, her face aglow with the longing of mother love. She sang the timeless words: "Alone, yet not alone am I, though in this solitude so dread..."

A tall, beautiful girl, her Indian name, Sawquehanna, the White Lily, stepped out from the captives. She ran toward the singing woman and joined in her song. "I feel my Savior always nigh, He comes the weary hours to cheer." They finished

the stanza together, “I am with Him and He with me, e’en here alone I cannot be.”

Their music wafted to the heavens. God the Father looked on and smiled.

The longing mother held out her aching arms and drew to her bosom the child for whom she had so longed,

mourned, wept, and prayed for.

Regina cried, “*Mutter, mutter*, I remember them all,” and she sang the rest of the hymn, “Jesus, evermore I love.”

Resource: Joe Wheeler, What’s So Good About Tough Times? (Waterbrook Press, 2001) pp.17-34



youth messages

When God Wants Your Attention

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy

father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3:1-6).

As youth, it seems that many of us come to a place like Moses was here in Exodus chapter three. We know the story of Moses’s life. He didn’t have a typical start in life with being illegal and then crocodile bait before being rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter. He was raised by his parents for a few years and then was taken to Pharaoh’s house as the foster son of the aforementioned Pharaoh’s daughter. He was given a secular education and likely witnessed things that went against what he had been taught as a young boy. Finally, as a young man (likely

mid-twenties) Moses witnessed a Hebrew being mistreated by an Egyptian and thought he had finally found his calling as a protector and champion. He murdered the Egyptian and after realizing that his crime was discovered, hightailed it to the desert to begin his life as an outlaw. Moses, while on the run, met a girl, got married, and settled into life as a shepherd for the next 40 years deep in the desert; so deep in fact, the Scriptures use the term “*backside of the desert.*” Socially and economically, he was in the desert. He did the same thing day after day for 40 years—herd sheep. The sheep didn’t even belong to him, but they were his father-in-law’s sheep. Moses had fallen quite far from being the foster grandson of Pharaoh.

If you give the situation only a cursory glance, you would say that Moses was stuck and just going through the motions. Yet somewhere deep inside, he was still being drawn to God. Verse one says that he came to the mountain of God. What drew him there? It looked like Moses was stuck. Nothing significant was going on in his life, but God was still preparing him. Forty years of diligently caring for and herding sheep was exactly what he needed to prepare him for what God had for him next. When Moses first notices

the bush, his response is, “*I will now turn aside, and see this great sight.*” Moses had spent the last 40 years being alert and paying attention to his surroundings to protect and provide for the sheep under his care. Moses could have said “That bush is strange and I want nothing to do with it.” Instead, he responded when God tried to get his attention. He turned aside to see.

Peradventure you feel like you are going through the motions. Your life doesn’t have the purpose that you thought it would. You aren’t experiencing the fulfillment that we all crave. God is preparing you for something. Maybe it is another 40 years of shepherding. Consider how often Moses wanted to throw his hands up, give up on herding Israelites, and go back to herding sheep. He probably thought back many times to his burning bush experience.

He approached the bush cautiously and upon hearing the voice of God, immediately averted his gaze and removed his shoes. “Why would God speak to a murderer and fugitive-nobody like me?” he may have thought. Then God identified Himself.

“*I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*” Abraham, who

was too afraid to tell the truth about Sarah being his wife because she was so beautiful. Who didn't trust God's timing and had Ishmael with Hagar. Isaac, who also lied about his wife and played favorites with his sons. Jacob, who was a liar and a cheat, who also played favorites with his sons and could indirectly be blamed for them being in Egypt in the first place. All of them were imperfect men whom God was able to use for His plan. God isn't just the God of the perfect, He is the God of redemption. He can use people who may think they are beyond redemption. That is how God identified Himself. It seems that Moses understood the message. God could use anyone regardless of their history or past choices, regardless of the murder he had committed or his perceived lack of skill in speaking and leading, and regardless of whether or not he thought he was qualified for the job. When Moses submitted to the path that God had chosen for his life, God was finally able to use him.

Consider how often God tries to get our attention with a "burning bush," and we miss it. Perhaps we just don't recognize it for what it is, or we are so self-absorbed that we don't hear God's wake-up call. We should be like Moses was with his sheep, alert and observant. If we aren't, we may very

well miss a burning bush moment when it comes along or simply label it an accident, coincidence, or chance encounter. There is no such thing as a coincidence with God, especially when His children are listening and waiting for direction and guidance from Him.

Some people don't find their calling until they are a bit older. I know a former missionary who started her ministry at the age of 40. I was at her 80th birthday party while she was still serving on the mission field. Moses was around 80 when he started leading the children of Israel. Noah started building the ark at around 500 years old and spent 100 years building it. Jesus didn't start his earthly ministry until He was 30. However, not everyone's impact waits until they are older. The little maid was just that, a little maid. Daniel and his three friends were young men. David was young when he killed Goliath. Esther was a young woman as well. History indicates that Jesus' disciples weren't very old either. We know many of them weren't educated and didn't have their life together, and God still used them. We never know when God will call us to fulfill a duty or function of some kind. Remain faithful and watchful where God has you, and perhaps, you'll encounter your own burning bush.



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• • • • •

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