



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

JULY 2024

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Calvary Messenger

July 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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Give Me This Mountain

The challenge now is here, what cause is there to fear,
I will follow to the place where God has called.
And though the task ahead is great, there is no need to wait,
God's command is conquer cities fenced and walled.

This mountain I shall own, but not for me alone,
For my children I shall claim this promised land.
Because the Word of God is sure, the future is secure,
All the pow'r we need is in God's mighty hand.

Take courage and be strong, we'll sing the victor's song,
All the blessings God has promised we may claim.
So let us hasten to obey, our Saviour leads the way,
He will help us win the battle for His Name.

Refrain:

Give me this mountain, give me this mountain,
To the land where giants grow, that's the place I want to go,
Give me this mountain, this very mountain.
I shall conquer in the power of the Lord.

-Frank Garlock 

Give Me This Mountain

Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said” (Joshua 14:12).*

“Just look at those mountains. That’s God staring me right in the face.” These words were said by Curt Bedingfield, an Alaska bush pilot who loves and trusts his God.

Mountains are large, elevated land masses that are characterized by remoteness and inaccessibility. They can be beautiful to behold, but are large, unmoveable objects that restrict the ability to pass over them. We can observe their splendor or be overcome by the obstacles they present.

When the 12 spies entered Canaan to see what they would encounter, Moses gave them instructions in Numbers 13: 17-20. “Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, ‘Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains,

and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land.’ Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.”

After 40 days they returned to Moses with a mixed report. “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit [grapes and pomegranates]. Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.” Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.” But the

men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight" (Numbers 13:27-33).

Consequently, the children of Israel had to turn back to the wilderness and die there as they wished. They spent one year in the wilderness for every day the spies had spent in Canaan.

Obstacles

While the obstacles the 10 unfaithful spies saw were not necessarily physical mountains, they saw the fortified cities and the "men of great stature" as impossible obstacles to overcome. They saw real giants and believed that it was impossible to overcome the obstacles they presented.

I can only assume that Curt Bedingfield, the Alaskan bush pilot, had a crystal clear awareness that mountains can be obstacles, even though his Piper Super Cub could

fly around them. I also assume that he had a clear understanding that God puts obstacles in our paths for a good reason.

So, why does God put "impossible" blocks in our paths? If God had promised the land of Canaan to His children, why were the obstacles so overwhelming to the 10 spies and the majority of the congregation of Israel? God could have easily brought fear to the whole population of the land of Canaan that would have resulted in a mass exodus to make room for the children of Israel.

Maybe the testimonies of Joshua and Caleb give us clues to a few reasons. They "spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: 'The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. **If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.'** Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, **and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them**" (Numbers 14:7-9). They believed that God delighted (loved) in them and was with them. They believed the promises of God. Instead of focusing on the giants in the land, they compared God to the obstacles and saw His Presence in their midst

every day and night in the cloud by day and fire by night. They had seen the glory of God and recognized His splendor waiting to be revealed in conquering these mountains. They saw God looking them in the face as they believed His promises and power.

Splendor

While I have had very little experience in observing the splendor and grandeur of mountains, there were a few times when I began climbing a mountain. My intent was not to reach the top but only to reach what seemed a reasonable goal. It didn't matter if the mountain was part of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia or the Andes Mountains in Chile, I soon realized that my goal was far more distant than I thought. The sheer size and immensity of mountains are part of the splendor we appreciate about them. And we worship the Creator Who is so much greater and glorious than the natural beauty He created. I can only imagine that Curt Bedingfield has daily experiences of worship of the Creator of the mountains he lives among. He sees the Almighty God staring him in the face as he views the splendor of His creation.

What obstacles are you facing in your life right now? There are countless challenges in life: the

daily grind of life, the challenges of raising and supporting a family, relationships, health, aging, and the list goes on. While the daily challenges can be daunting, there is a goal that we should always keep in sight, just as Caleb did after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and five years of conquest in Canaan. Someday, if we have the personal faith and trust in the LORD God as Caleb did, we will be able to enjoy our eternal inheritance, a home in heaven! I'm glad that when we cross the final Jordan River we will not need to drive out the Anakim, but the battle will be over because our Father God and Savior Jesus Christ delighted in us and have been with us in each daily mountain! And we can fall at our Savior's feet and say with Caleb, "Give me this mountain," this eternal inheritance to be forever in the presence and glory of our God and Redeemer.

*"Now therefore, **give me this mountain** of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said" (Joshua 14:12).*

**All Scriptures are from the NKJV.*

-AY 

Announcement

LATE ISSUES

Have you experienced irregularity in receiving the *Calvary Messenger* in the last several months? Maybe you have not received it at all. Here is some information that I have received from Carlisle Printing, who prints and mails *Calvary Messenger*.

Currently, the formatted files go to press on the 12th of the month. (This is three days earlier than had been the case for the last five years.) The finished product is mailed on the 21st or 22nd of the month. This did take place for the May issue, one that we have not received. It seems that the problem lies with the USPS.

If you would like to contact Carlisle Printing, you may do so with either of the following options.

phone: 800.927.4196

email: cservice@cprinting.com

Thank you for your patience.

Aaron Yoder, Editor



the bottom line

When History and Prophecy Intersect

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

For the purposes of this article, I will call him Sonny. While he is now 17, the record of his crime goes back to a street scene in our nearby Lancaster city. Two years ago, he shot a 23-year-old man within several feet from behind, with a

handgun, twice in the head with four additional shots into his fallen body.

Sonny now says he is “truly sorry” for his error(s), having been arrested in 2020 for “robbery, drugs, theft, assault and firing a gun into a house filled with six people.” Now Sonny

is in court, being sentenced from 32 years to life in prison.

Here is the future prophecy part for the purposes of this article. It should concern us as Christians in our time and place, yea, moreover, awaken us to the future reality of the final judgment! The Bible says, *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God”* (Revelation 20:11,12).

Here, then, is the history part. This should also evoke a strong sense of God’s eventual justice in our bosoms, honestly and powerfully, equally unbiased and just. Revelation 20, verse 12 continues: *“and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the (awesome) book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book, according to their works.”*

Right there in those two verses prophecy intersects with history! Every unbeliever and sinner, every evildoer and wicked person will stand there alone some awful day of the greatest, most climactic moment of his life. Saying, “I am truly sorry” will not avail—it is too late. Belatedly confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord will not avail—it is too late. God’s record of every individual life is true

and unbiased. He cannot lie, being immutable and confirmed by the double witness of God’s oath as stated in Hebrews 6.

Sonny had the privilege of remedial efforts from our justice system of juvenile rehabilitation, the judge said. Sonny missed it, he was told. Sonny’s young age spared him from the prosecuting attorney seeking for the death penalty. The judge called the verdict as giving the young man one more chance to live life straight as a citizen but not as a free man for a long time yet to come.

Our nation’s civil laws are a sort of prophecy, in that, you do this, and this is likely what will be dished out to you. The civil and criminal laws are a warning, of sorts, but also intended as a threat. God does not make threats; He solemnly gives warnings and the invitation to repent. The control part of a nation’s laws is to control by fear. Being truly sorry after a crime does not satisfy criminal justice, even as being sorry after civil violations does not rectify civil justice.

The proceedings of the great white throne judgment are a future final judgment in which the records in the books kept by God are the evidences for condemnation. The intersecting of the past lives of sinners is recorded by God for that future, awful, condemning

judgment. The book of life is present, as it seems to us, to affirm as a double witness that each unprepared, unrepentant, unbelieving individual has a justifiable testimony from God by two sources, for the condemnation verdict, that being the book of life, and the books for records of unforgiven sin.

In that day, at that “crisis” judgment (Strong’s), it will be too late to say, “I’m sorry, please forgive me.”

Which brings up another critical, but largely overlooked subject. Even the larger, broad based, conservative Anabaptists strike out much too frequently on this one. That is, most of our church people assume just asking for forgiveness of shortcomings and sins, without any serious consideration of repentance, is their path to being free. This is a parallel subject, but is not our focus in this short article. Repentance is the part basically taught by God’s Word for the offender, not merely asking for forgiveness. The offended may grant the forgiveness, if he so chooses. We repent, God forgives.

The lessons both from history and prophecy are that sin and transgression should be dealt with, will be dealt with if found out, and must be dealt with eventually. God knows all about our sins and the motives in regard to how and why we

came up short. Our nation is farther apart than ever in agreeing on a workable standard of right and wrong.

Nearly everyone agrees that violations of the law, whether in regard to the state, the universal church, or the Bible, should be dealt with. But how it should be approached and carried out is the big question. Our country has a gigantic divide over this basic sense of social order in our time—a growing, gaping divide. Politics cannot handle it, the lawmakers cannot handle it, and even the judges are seldom unanimous on even those finely crafted laws. Why? Because justice is severely flawed by divisive politics.


The seemingly whole range of sins in the last 30 years, in just one short generation, has fractured churches more than ever, considering any group which calls themselves a church. Drawing the boundary inward, even the historically self-proclaimed, Bible-based churches, have overstepped some serious biblical bounds as is acknowledged even by some “prophets” of their own.

The harder part is to hold up the reflective mirror of God’s Word for our own conservative churches. The intersecting of Bible history and Bible prophecy makes a powerful call to the unsaved and backsliders to repent. Bible history can amply

showcase the errors of the nations, and also does so without excusing the church at large. Bible history connects to Bible prophecy if we are at all interested. If the Christians are indifferent to the specifics about the end of the world, why should sinners and those leaving the church have any cause for alarm?

Jesus made connections of history and prophecy. Just one illustration comes to mind. While paging through Matthew, one could also cite other passages. Here is Jesus speaking in Matthew 24:37, “*But as the days of Noe (Noah) were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*” Jesus refers to the *history* of Noah to undergird His *prophecy* as a fact and buttress it as established truth, as recorded in Matthew 24. There Jesus taught His disciples numerous short-term and long-term prophecies. In

fact, every chapter from Matthew 3 to Matthew 26 records one or more future prophecies by our Lord. (A new discovery for me just now.) Every chapter, that is, except Matthew 14.

The Bottom Line is: it seems clear that God has intended for us to surround ourselves, as His dear children, with the historical perspective of the past and the eternal prospect of the future, to our every today. That is one way to be aware and ready in every today for the climactic return of Jesus. The intersecting of prophecy with history is larger than I can comprehend and stronger than I can express. The dual effect of history and prophecy as recorded in the Bible can ennoble its emphasis to our witness as to how we should live in a personal “preparation for that great day.” 



The Better Way

Bill Miller, AZ

The Better Way—John 14

“*I am the way, the truth, and the life....*” (John 14:6).

As we look over the world situation it is obvious that humanity has lost its way. But this is not a new phenomenon. This has been going on since the fall

in the Garden of Eden. When we compare this situation with the text verse it makes us wonder what man is thinking that they would reject the obvious advantages of the solution to all of man’s problems.

When Jesus said that He is the Way, He meant that there is no other way

that works. He meant that there is no other way for man to get along with man, neither for man to get along with God. There is no other way for man to have a functioning marriage and home. He meant that there is no other way for man to be blessing-worthy in his business than doing it His Way. Man cannot even learn anything in this world unless he does it God's Way. The world is constantly trying to discover meaning in life without acknowledging the Creator of life. Try learning what the chemical makeup is of alcohol by studying goat's milk. It doesn't bring you to where you want to be. You have to seek your knowledge God's Way. You have to walk in God's Way or you will suffer the consequences of evil that are prescribed by this very same God. This shows us that God's **Way** is the **Truth**.

And God's Way is the **Truth**. We simply cannot function without truth. Anything without truth is deception and leads to failure and death. Truth is the catalyst that causes change for the better in all of humanity's experiences. Truth brings confession, repentance, and reconciliation. Truth builds confidence in the face of difficulties. Truth shines light into darkness, causing the darkness to flee. Truth allows life to be conceived, to be

nourished, to grow, to be fruitful unto good works, to age appropriately, and to die with dignity. All this is because Jesus is the Authority of life and death.

Truth sustains **Life**. Life brings experience, patience, hope, wisdom, fruits, and finally eternal rewards. It is within this framework that we as God's people find the continual need to do the work of reconciliation, because man's thoughts are evil continually. If we practice the work of reconciliation in the **Way**, the **Truth**, and the **Life** principles, as described in II Peter 1, we will experience the promises of II Peter 1:1-11. Read it. Verse 10 is powerful. Is that not good enough? Is there a better way? Has our historical record been working according to the promised results?

Over the last several years, I have been on a journey of recognizing the impacts of the Anabaptists' efforts in reconciliation between multiple opposing factions. In order to understand the dynamics of these systems of reconciliation, we must first evaluate and compare with Scripture, the dynamics of the historical Anabaptist leadership structure.

Let's turn to the Word to see what it has to teach us. The Apostles Peter and Paul have much to write about the qualifications of the ministry.

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he had been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:5-9). Although there are more Scriptures like this, this Scripture alone suffices to describe the qualifications of bishops, ministers, deacons, and their spouses.

As we start out with this Scripture, it is quite apparent that there is work to be done within the Church of Christ on a continual basis. This work must be done within the context of these qualifications, or sooner or later it will have evidences of failure.

Here are Jesus’ words in Luke 22:24-27, *“And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are*

called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.” You shall be as I am!

As we compare the Scripture in Titus 1 to the Scripture in Luke 22, we find no conflict. In fact they are both speaking the same spiritual language. The one in Titus is more detailed but they complement each other like two gears running in oil. Everything found in Titus is found in Luke. It is simply unscriptural to elevate the ministry onto a pedestal where they are untouchable and uncorrectable. The Church of Jesus Christ is not a business, therefore it has no ordained bosses. It is a sheepfold and has only shepherds.

Looking over the landscape, we find this view and concept in short supply, and the disastrous consequences are all too obvious. When do we want to come back to Scripture and see how it works? It will take a heart and soul cleansing and repentance.

What does the **Way**, the **Truth**, and the **Life** look like in coming to terms with the shortcomings of this system? What would be more rewarding than to see homes and congregations that

have experienced conflict and splits have communion and feet washing again? That would be how it should be. It can and will only happen when the **Way**, the **Truth**, and the **Life** is followed.

It must start with the understanding that all men are created equal in the sight of God. The soil of abuse is fertilized with the ideology of superiority of one group or person over another. Abuses will flourish and grow. The **Way**, the **Truth**, and the **Life**—the *Gospel*—points to Christ as the Revealer of *all* our need for brokenness, our need for repentance, admission of sins, and to humbly serve each other. Without this, there is a barrier to reconciliation to each other and to the very Gospel that enlightens our lives, the lives of our children, and others in our sphere.

This first step is found in I Peter 5:6. *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”* This is a personal call. After humility, we must reach out to those who have been hurt. When Jesus was presented with a personal, sinful situation, His first mode of operation was compassion, not punishment. This takes humility, time, and effort, but it must be done in order to be reconciled. We should not allow them to slide away quietly. Keeping

our apology statement on the tip of the tongue is the only safe place for it. It is also the most fruitful place. Who of us has been so righteous that we should not occasionally read Psalms 51:1, 9-10 *“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out (German: buy back) my transgressions... Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out (German: buy back) all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”* I would venture to say that no one is good enough to never have to pray this prayer. I know I need to read that at times and mean it. There is simply no room in the heart of a Christian for a two-tiered concept of human value. Every Christian is to be tuned to the needs of those around him. He may never look at others, who are different, as a potential problem. Jesus looked at the adulterous woman and the woman at the well as someone He wanted to die for. His first response to both of these was of compassion, not of seeing what kind of punishment He needs to mete out to them. How does our system compare with His? We know His worked.

The next step is to sanctify ourselves through the Word. Set our hearts

aside unto holiness. “*Be ye holy, for I am holy,*” says the Lord. If we sanctify ourselves through the Word, we will not sanctify ourselves according to the neighboring church or the latest popular opinion and movement. True humility and sanctification draw us together into the oneness the Lord Jesus talked about in John 17. It does not shut out fellowship with our neighbor over some petty grievance. It goes according to being one in faith and doctrine, not just in our various practices. Oneness in faith and doctrine will bring oneness in compatibility, if not necessarily in specific practice, because it is ordered by the same Spirit. Try to imagine the power this would bring to the work of the Church in showing the world that we are one in Christ, one in faith and doctrine, and one in love for each other.

Today the main way the world sees this oneness is not within the church but in times of disaster when people from all over come together to help someone. The world should and needs to be able to see this oneness both in these times and inside the church. Our children need to see it as well, and if they do, they will be attracted to the church, and the world will know that we are disciples of Christ, and the ministry of reconciliation will go on and on

as needed.

As the affluence in the Anabaptist community and in our country at large has increased, so has our multiculturalism. Many American churches today have people from numerous communities and even other countries and languages within their membership. This is a very good thing. However, the ministry of reconciliation, over the years, has not kept up with the challenging demand for it. Too often the churches have doubled down on uniformity, discipline, even condescendence, punishment, and rejection, instead of reconciliation. This has proven too often to result in failure to retain the seekers, both our own young people and those from outside the church. This system is super-charged with large amounts of money and power within the organized religious denominations and para-church organizations that parade their greatness.

This is associated with the presumptuous idea that we have the right and indeed the responsibility to establish our own values. Moses discovered at the burning bush that he could not create his own values. He learned that true values are revealed to humanity by the *I AM*, the very Creator of these values, at the appropriate times of necessity. Adam

and Eve did not know the value of wearing clothes until it became apparent to them. This principle does not change because the true values for the inhabitants of earth were established by God at creation, and not by us, our grandparents, or even by the largest and best organized congregation. Wars and church splits happen because people try to establish their own values aside from God. *“From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war among your members? Ye lust and ye have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts”* (James 4:1-3). *“But Jesus called them unto him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles 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).

Looking at the two systems described above, it is actually a “miracle of stupidity” to not follow the way of Jesus in humility and servitude in the pursuit of reconciliation. As Romans 8:16 is true, *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God,”* so it is also true that as church and para-church leaders fail to follow Christian reconciliation instructions, as described in Scripture, those who are recipients of the heavy hand are able to determine in their spirits the ensuing rejection.

The only true reconciliation is when different parties all humbly bow to the same Cross, then take up their own assigned cross and follow the same Saviour, as the only **Way**, the only **Truth**, and the only **Life**. This way has no competition, no revenge, and no condescendence. This way sees God in the face of his neighbor, brother, and sister. This is the *better way*. If Christians don't live this, how will the world ever see it?



Don't put a **promise** in
my ear; put it in my **hand**.

—RUSSIAN PROVERB



marriages

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

Beachy-Stoltzfus

Bro. Mark, son of Paul and Wilma Beachy, Bastrop, TX, and Sis. Melody, daughter of Ben and Marian Stoltzfus, Parkesburg, PA, on March 9, 2024, at Countryside Park, Spanish Lookout, Belize, for Cayo Christian Fellowship, Cayo, Belize, by Ben Stoltzfus.

Jantzi-Hershberger

Bro Jeff, son of Wayne and Judith Jantzi, Blackstone, VA, and Sis. Hadassah, daughter of Paul and Cynthia Hershberger, Hutchinson, KS, on May 18, 2024, at Arlington A.M. Church by Arlen Mast.

Webb-Kauffman

Bro. Adam, son of Mark and Beverly Webb, Rawlings, VA, and Sis. Hannah, daughter of Melvern and Patricia Kauffman, Rawlings, VA, on April 27, 2024, at Smyrna Baptist Church for McKenney Mennonite Church by Tim Miller.



cradle roll

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

Beachy, Neil and Kathlene (Kauffman), Dundee, OH, first child and daughter, Luciana Rose, May 17, 2024.

Helmuth, Andrew and Gina (Hochstedler), Etna Green, IN, fourth child and son, Brooks Easton, May 20, 2024.

Helmuth, Nelson and JoAnn (Herschberger), Arthur, IL, fifth child (one in heaven), third daughter, Brianne Faith, February 27, 2024.

Helmuth, Ross and Jenise (Wittmer), Loogootee, IN, third child, second son, Alaric Chase, November 17, 2023.

Hostetler, Hans and Danella (Schrock), Wellman, IA, second child, first daughter, Iylah Gracie, May 22, 2024.

King, Brent and Sheila (Mast), Goodspring, TN, first child and daughter, Ellie Lace, May 13, 2024.

Kuhns, Ronnie and Sheila (Miller), Washington Courthouse, OH, third child, second daughter, Avrielle Marie, April 21, 2024.

Mast, Aaron and Alicia (Byler), Hutchinson, KS, fourth child, third son, Malakai Archer, May 24, 2024.

Miller, Christopher and Julia (Byler), Guys Mills, PA, fourth and fifth children, second and third sons, Judah Alexander and Jesse Nichols, May 24, 2024.



Miller, Walter and Frieda (Kuepfer), Partridge, KS, second child and son, Rohan Elijah, May 28, 2024.

Near, Johnny and Konni (Shrock), Grove City, MN, first child and daughter, Hailey Rhiann, March 24, 2024.

Peachey, Aaron and Esther (Miller), Mannsville, NY, first child and son, Patrick Shawn, February 8, 2024.

Rocke, Matt and Lisa (Gingerich), Arthur, IL, first child and daughter, Madelyn Renee, February 24, 2024.

Schlabach, Anthony and Kari (Yoder), Lexington, IN, second child and daughter, Margaret Ann, April 12, 2024.

Schrock, Nelson and Diane (Yoder), Hutchinson, KS, fifth child, fourth son, Jesse Elijah, born May 19, 2022, received for adoption, March 6, 2024.


Sommers, Logan and Carla (Schrock), Huntsville, AR, first child and son, Cooper Eli, April 26, 2024.

Stoltzfus, Jay Wendell and Krystal Joy (Lapp), Coatesville, PA, third child, first son, Patrick Finn, April 27, 2024.

Weaver, Johnathan and Deanna (Wagler), Washington, IN, second child, first daughter, Merryn Grace, January 4, 2024.

Yoder, Justin and Missy (Good), Woodville, NY, seventh child, sixth son, Edison Luke, May 28, 2024.

Yoder, Leslie and Katlyn (Yoder), Mannsville, NY, first child and daughter, Briella Nicole, May 11, 2024.

Yoder, Micah and Jayla (Yoder), Hanover, IN, first child and daughter, Serena Brooke, April 12, 2024. 

o b i t u a r y

Taylor, Patricia Marie, 67, of Grove City, MN, passed away on December 1, 2023, at her home. She was born on November 29, 1956, in McLaughlin, SD, to Donald and Geraldine (Schmidt) Hlavinka.

Patty attended Presho High School, graduating in 1975. She continued her education at Oak Hill Christian College in Bemidji, graduating in 1980. While attending college, she met her future

husband, Steven Taylor. They were united in marriage on April 4, 1981, at Oak Hills Christian College Chapel. The union was blessed with four sons (one deceased) and a daughter. They settled down in Minneapolis for several years before moving to Grove City in 1990. The family relocated to Somerset, PA, in 1997 where they lived for 12 years. In 2009, they were on the move again, this time making their home in Fulton, SD, before


finally returning to Grove City in 2017.

Patty was a faithful member of Believers Fellowship Church. She enjoyed children, babysitting frequently, along with gardening, and being surrounded by plants and flowers. She thrived in her kitchen and made excellent pies and cookies. She loved spending time with her family and especially enjoyed being “Nana” to her six grandchildren. She will be remembered for her special ability to make a house a home.

She is survived by Steven, her husband of 42 years, children: Ryan (Rhoda),

Vaughn, MT; Derek, Rapid City, SD; Annamarie (Olbin) Martinez, Mitchell, SD, John, Mitchell, SD; grandchildren: Dontae, Winston, Nevaeh, Dylan, Liam, Alaina; and siblings: Theresa (Stan) Singery and David (Mindy) Hlavinka.

She was preceded in death by her parents, infant son, Zachary, and sister, Peggy Schmidt.

The funeral service was held on December 5, 2023, at Paynesville Evangelical Free Church in Paynesville. Burial followed at Burr Oak Cemetery in Grove City. 

observations

Iventure a guess that most of those in the USA feel quite apprehensive and concerned about this year’s presidential election. Many feel as if this country is at a critical juncture and that much of our future rests on the next Oval Office occupant. About half of the population sees huge problems if one of the main candidates ends up winning the election. Roughly the other half of the population feels similarly if the other party’s candidate would be victorious. This seems like a good time to remind us of a few important things:

1. In Romans the Scripture reminds us that those in government are

described as “...*the minister of God to thee for good.*” Paul’s exhortation wasn’t made to Christians living in a tranquil time of peace and prosperity. Nero wasn’t very friendly toward Christians. If the Roman epistle applied to that time, it’s certainly relevant today.

2. Some feel that our call is to reform government so that it is more righteous. While it would be inappropriate for me to make a broad personal judgment about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of persons who profess Christ and are active in elected government, we do not need to be apologetic in our response to God’s call for us to live according

to Kingdom principles that make it unworkable to hold public office. The negative vibes should reinforce our Kingdom loyalties rather than heighten our angst.

3. The current context should also remind us of the Hebrew writer's thoughts in Hebrews 13:14, "*For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*" It's not that we have no interest in what is happening now. But seeking an eternal perspective helps properly prioritize our current disquietings and concerns. This also serves to reinforce the urgency of investing heavily in the everlasting Kingdom rather than fret and worry about the current state of affairs. Among the concerns and perspectives I've heard expressed in recent months are:

- President Biden's mental and physical ineptitude rooted in his advanced age.

- The Biden family's nefarious financial ties that cloud his ability to carry out his international duties.

- Biden is not doing enough to support Israel.

- Biden's amazing ability to get things done in the face of stiff partisan opposition in Washington.

- Trump's sordid affairs, both personal and financial.

- Trump's willingness to brush aside the rule of law if it obstructs his goals.

- Trump's eagerness to get things done, close the border, exert force in the international arena, etc.

- Many aren't too enthused about Trump's personal life but are quite willing to overlook those things as long as he operates in ways that they see as beneficial. Another way of saying this is that personal life and public life are two separate situations without much, if any, overlap. Problems in one area don't have much to do with the other.

- Many, many citizens express their loyalty in ways that undisputed and acknowledged facts do little to change.

- Some have found great comfort in the court system.

- Some have been dismayed by the favoritism expressed in the court system.

- Many, many folks have expressed dismay at the disregard for the rule of law. But at least people take turns expressing that dismay. Some are outraged by the conduct of those who break the law while protesting things they don't like. Many defend those protests under the umbrella of freedom of speech.

But then others take their turn to express outrage that someone who wants to be president is now a convicted felon and decry his outrageous attempts to "live above the

law.” But many of those who criticized the “lawless” demonstrations defend Trump because the opposition is weaponizing the courts and prosecuting a sincere man who wants to restore our country to a prideful institution. I’m sure that exceptions to this exist, but both political parties provide us with reams of examples that partisan priorities are a better predictor of the priorities embraced than the public benefit of all.

For me this all underscores the fact that I am called to a loyalty and a priority that seek the good of all, that loves my neighbor and my enemy, whose winsome presence calls our friends and neighbors to a better way, who rejects violence and disparaging comments toward those with whom we differ. That is quite different than what we see in the political realm today, don’t you think?

• • • • •

I’ve spent a bit of time reflecting on the example and testimony of one brother whose life could hardly contrast more to some of what is championed today. I’m thinking of the example of the late Sam D. Nisly. Sam left us in the last five years or so, but his example lives on.

I worked with and for Sam about 40 years ago doing concrete work. This afforded an opportunity to observe some things whose significance

grow with time rather than diminish. Sam and his dear wife, Esther, were involved in prison ministry. He had a way of relating to folks behind bars in such a way that communicated care and love and personal value and respect. These contacts often led to offering employment to men who needed work upon their release from prison. Even as naive and young as I was, I think I could clearly discern that when Sam hired these men, the benefit of this employee/employer relationship was heavily stacked in favor of the employee. It also demonstrated clearly to me, as an impressionable youth, that showing God’s love is more important than financial gain.

There are two things that I’m impressed with as I think of how Sam operated. He was very patient, and he was quite cheerful. This was demonstrated towards those he purchased concrete and other supplies from, his customers, and his employees.

Sam was unpretentious. His transportation, equipment, and his tools all seemed geared toward utilitarian ends rather than toward making a hollow impression on others. This is illustrated by an exchange that took place not many months prior to his death. He had acquired another vehicle. A brother in the church

commented to him about the nice wheels that his new ride had. His reply, accompanied by a mischievous smile, was something along the lines of, “That’s why I got it (the car).” Those who knew Sam found great mirth at his “admission,” because it was so resoundingly unrepresentative of the man they knew.

Sam was a loyal, faithful companion to his dear wife. For many years their mutual affection and devotion was evident to those who observed. But his wife’s cognitive ability began to leave her as they aged together. However, even after she seemed to be unaware of her surroundings, his faithfulness and care for her were a tremendous example to those who knew them.

Sam shone as a behind-the-scenes brother. He seemed to be more interested in encouraging someone personally than seeking the spotlight. More than one person who made many bad choices in life, persons who some might have been tempted to write off, testified that Sam was a genuine and godly man.

While Sam seemed to prefer

an inconspicuous supportive and encouraging role, he faithfully took public responsibilities when called to do so. He was a Gideon who was involved in passing out Scriptures. He served in a variety of church offices, including trustee work, teaching Sunday School, and many other things.

While Sam’s example was clear, powerful, and influential, it is possible that his greatest influence for the Kingdom is observed in the influence of his faithful children as they serve in ways different than Sam, but undergirded with the same loyalty to the same God.

• • • • •

I’d venture a guess that if we give some thought to it, we all have a Sam D. Nisly in our lives who has lived life in such a way that inspires us to be the person God wants us to be. It’s probably more beneficial to ponder those blessings than the discouraging backdrop of the current social and political scene. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

–RJM



The **promises** of God are **certain**,

but they do not all mature in ninety days.

–ADONIRAM J. GORDON

And Yet, God Speaks

Judy King, Harrison, AR

She was a good neighbor,
And she loved the Lord,
The phone our connection,
As time would afford.

Various things we talked of,
God-fearing lady was she.
Our spirits were like-minded,
On much we'd agree.

But the time came—my neighbor,
Her mind was never the same.
Her thoughts were confusing,
She didn't know my name.

Yet I know my dear neighbor,
Though her mind does wane still,
God sees her soft heart
To do His sweet will.

(and later)

A cry from the creek bed,
Came one morning so chill,
Was it a fake one,
Or, was it for real?

Was someone in stress?
Or was it a joke?
Was it a bad trick?
Or a provoke?

Then hurried help came
To see all the matter.
What a sight, what a scene!
An ole' ma'am a chatter.

Water around her,
Water so cold!
She sat there so frigid,
Mindless and old.

The old lady's arms,
Were lifted up high,
The bag that she carried,
Must be kept dry.

How did she get there?
Poor Bessie Maze,
She didn't know—
Her mind in a haze.

Then kind hands lifted
Her from water's chill
And brought her to safety
Though wet and cold still!

In the chair Bessie sat.
Out loud she pondered,
“Did my Bible get wet?”
The old lady wondered.

Amazing! The marvel!
Of ole' Bessie Maze—
Thought of her Bible,
E'en through her haze!

Note- Months went by, and we didn't hear of old Bessie. Then the sad news— Bessie was lost. Finally, they found her by yet another creek. This time she was gone—dead! Alzheimer's was the cause of her confusion.



Standard Analysis



Raymond Fisher, Limestone, Tennessee

What is the value of church standards? Some view them as a *fence*, given that both the Psalms and the Gospels speak of pasture, sheep, and the sheepfold. This understanding often tends towards a strong emphasis on maintenance and compliance.

Some view them as *guidelines*. In this model the Colossian epistle could be referenced where allowance is given for personal preferences within the framework of Christian forbearance. This results in wide variations of practice and a blurring of the guidelines themselves.

Still others see them as mostly *human inventions*. They argue that standards ought to be kept to a minimum, lest they interfere with evangelism efforts and distract from the focus of following Jesus. This conclusion often eventually leads to

no standards at all.

What shall we say then? *More importantly, what does the Word of God say?*

The Fence Model

This model has some merit. It is undisputable that holy Christian living must operate within certain boundaries and according to certain ethics. It is also evident that the early church defined current issues and delivered decrees based on principle, doing so in unity. One advantage of this model is that some valuable distinctives remain even after the conviction for them has faded.

But there are also problems that attend this view. A well-fenced pasture with contented cattle may provide restful, beautiful scenery. Yet Scripture abounds with references to God's people in both the Old and New Testaments as being on the move.

So long as the Israelites were more concerned with conquering territory than establishing boundaries, they thrived. It was after conquest ceased that idolatry increased. In the New Testament, we are often encouraged to press onward, to fight on, to run the race.

The Guideline Model

The positive aspect of this view is that it takes the edge off a heavy-handed top-down approach to the administration of standards. It also seems to expect that individually everyone will have the sense to stay well within what is intended and that Christian forbearance will prevail when liberties are taken that stretch the intent and purpose of the guideline.

The downside here is that eventually there arises a contradiction between what is written and what is practiced. In this environment there is cause for dissatisfaction among those who duly honor the guidelines and a seeming disrespect on the side of those who flaunt them. Decisions made regarding relaxing guidelines are a result of non-compliance rather than a thoughtful and orderly process which includes brotherly discussions in which conclusions are reached and unanimously agreed on.

The Minimum Standard Model

With all due consideration, this

model sounds great. After all, should not every true believer be sufficiently spiritual to know where to draw the line on his conduct of life, manner of dress, and definitions of worldliness that will have good outcomes?

Yet the Word teaches us about several more laws of brotherhood that must be considered. One concerns the weak brother. Another is the exercise of submission to the body. A third is the authority vested in the local body of believers. Again, a fourth is the strong exhortation of unity not only in doctrine but also in practice. Yet all of these are given not to be exploited for administrative control or restriction of individual gifts. The minimum standard mentality weakens these New Testament church concepts.

Is there a better understanding?

What if we could draw some value from all three models and construct a fourth? What if we could liken the Apostolic Christian Church as being on a mission, as being led by the Spirit, and as being intentional about being identified as true believers and followers of Jesus? What if by using this model we could unite as local congregations on what this is going to look like for our local body while at the same time respecting others who apply the same principles but in a different way? What if we

could graciously, yet judiciously (not judgmentally), make the distinction between those who comprise the Church of Jesus Christ and those who we must sadly conclude have lost their way? What if our numerous church separations were the actual result of doctrinal heresy or sinful practices rather than over petty personal grievances or opinionated differences?

The Way, the Truth, the Life Model

In being the Church of the Way, we will be concerned about a way of life. This will include how people live, how people dress, and how people make decisions that have eternal consequences. We will not neglect the weak in our considerations and will be willing to forfeit certain liberties for their well-being. We will also be serious about being identified as the people of God and will prescribe certain patterns pertaining to outward things that will fulfill those goals. But even while defining the boundaries, we will bear in mind that time and circumstance may call for these to be amended at some future season. We will also strive to find common ground among the brethren on issues on which we differ, laying down our wills for the sake of the brethren. In walking with those of the Way, we learn humility and exercise submission as a supreme

expression of our love.

In being the Church of the Truth, we will both be promoters and defenders of God's Truth. His Word will be our foundation. The principles contained therein will be honored. We will be unapologetic about standing firm on the doctrine of Christ and the teachings of the Apostles, making no difference. We will endeavor to live out the truth in our churches, homes, and personal lives whether it be in spiritual engagements, recreational activities, or business pursuits.

In being the Church of the Life, we will emphasize the redeemed, resurrected, and transformed life: how that we must live for Christ but also die to self; where the true test of a believer lies not in how great his testimony can be but how the Fruit of the Spirit is produced. We will encourage and expect that each member will maintain a personal relationship with Christ. We will as a church express joyfulness, loving relationships, compassion for the needy, reaching out to those outside of our fellowship as we have opportunity both at home and abroad. We will be patient and sensitive to those who are young in the faith and confirm those who are aged. Neither the ambition of the young nor the experience of the old will be despised. We will also exercise

biblical discipline toward the erring, removing the deadness of sinful living from the Body and doing so in love and humility. The hope that life can once more be restored to the one so ensnared is kept alive through intercessory prayer.

When Jesus said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, He emphasized all three characteristics equally. He did not lift one above another. Neither should we. To do anything otherwise will lead to a church that is imbalanced, lopsided, misfocused, inefficient, and ineffective—a church where the so-called conservatives are criticized for their inconsistencies and where

the motives of the so-called liberals are held in suspicion and doubt. The spirit of strife does not lead to love and peace but division.

Let us then seek that better way. One that nurtures our faith in Christ and life in the Spirit that is complimented by a heritage of faithfulness through biblical doctrine, right living, distinctive appearance, and a viable witness for Jesus in this ever-darkening world of evil and sinful living.

Perhaps in doing so we can maintain a standard of practice in our congregations that is both life-saving and life-giving to the glory of God.

May God help us.



When the **godly** are in authority, the people **rejoice**.

But when the wicked are in power, they groan.

A just king gives **stability** to his nation,
but one who demands bribes destroys it.

When the wicked are in authority, sin increases.

But the **godly** will live to see the tyrant's downfall.

PROVERBS 29:2, 4, 16

A Shared Belonging

Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS

I hung my shawl and scarf in the coat room and stepped through the double doors into the spacious fellowship hall that December morning. My husband was occupied with some detail to see after, so I just stood and watched our people as they straggled through the doors into our new building. Some bustle and others stroll. Some visit, eager to catch up on news and views and others sit in solemn silence. Here comes a smiling young couple with new baby and spacious diaper bag in hand: all three fresh at the beginning of the service. A tall, unhurried farmer patiently coaxes his youngest son to keep moving forward, perhaps adding that the remainder of his story should wait till later. A silvery-haired preacher stands next to the newly finished mailboxes, close to the entrance doors. That's where I saw it.


A large family came in, the ranks swelled by one of their own returned for a visit. A son, spending a year in voluntary service, had been gone

nearly six months. I'd heard of his coming, the anticipation leaking from little sisters to my daughter via their ever-efficient information highway. But what I saw wasn't the joy of little sisters for beloved big brother; it was a flash of joyous recognition, of friendship and belonging that passed between the silvery-haired preacher and this young man. Both immediately stepped toward the other, hands outstretched and eyes lit with love. A truly holy kiss followed as brother met brother. My heart stood still, in praise.

The gift extended and received by both was not necessarily the result of easy camaraderie; it was the fruit of hard work, faithful shepherding, and a teachable heart. What a loss when we can only circulate with those whose age matches our own! As a young woman, I savored any benediction offered by those older whom I admired. But never did I guess how affirmation proffered by one half your age sinks right down into thirsty spaces and waters one's

soul. Now I know. I didn't grasp then how narrow my circle of friendship was when the borders were those "my age." Oh, the joyous breadth when hearty friendship flourishes between those separated by decades!

When we openly delight in others, not only those our age and stage, it's

as if we are adding layers of warmth and belonging to the patchwork quilt of life. Like a closely woven blanket, warm but light—soft not stifling, this love within the brotherhood, between the generations. How can you join in stitching this shared belonging in your church? 

mission awareness

The History of Crique Sarco, Belize, Part I

Amish Mennonite Aid, 1977-1999

Glen Yoder, Middleburg, PA

Never will I forget. After two weary days of travel: by bus, plane, truck, and the final four hours by skiff, we were arriving at our destination. The roar of the outboard engines had subsided to a murmur. Rounding a final bend in the Temash River, there on the bank were gathered a few missionary children and a group of K'ekchi' Indians from the village of Crique Sarco in the subtropical rainforest of southern Belize.

In a very real way, life for our family has never been quite the same since that arrival. But the work of Crique Sarco didn't start at that moment. As possibly most mission work does, it

was first born in the hearts and minds of a few people some years earlier.

Early Years

After numerous exploratory trips to the Toledo District in the late 1960s by missionaries stationed in central Belize, the decision was made to start a school in the remote village of Delores. During the summer of 1968, many trips were made into the bush (forest), hauling the materials, and then building and furnishing the schoolhouse. Sadly, just before school was to begin that fall, the whole project needed to be abandoned due to animosity and threats of physical violence.

Eight rainy seasons came and went,

but the vision never quite died. In 1976, Andy and Edith Mullet and Dorothy Wingard made the trek to see Delores Village. One of two ways to reach the village was to travel 15 miles south on the Caribbean Sea, then 35 miles up the Temash River to Crique Sarco, then walk the final three hours from there. Crique Sarco and its 20-year-old, but poorly-staffed, government medical clinic caught these missionaries' attention.

Permission was soon obtained from the Belize government and the village alcalde (mayor) to place a nurse and begin work there in January 1977. Nurse Dorothy was joined by unit leaders, Ervin and Sarah Sue Yoder, and Elsie Byler who was transferred from Double Head Cabbage. Only they know all of the hard work that went into this beginning.

The main thrust of the work was the clinic and humanitarian aid. Nurse Dorothy began an extensive work in village homes, teaching the principles of nutrition, sanitation, and healthful living. Although on a constant lookout for ways to leave a spiritual influence in the Indians' lives, no efforts were made to begin a mission church. The Indian brethren in the local evangelical (Pentecostal) church requested that the missionaries attend their

services in order to give them further teaching on Bible doctrine.

By September 1981, the Pentecostal leadership had changed their mind and asked the missionaries to discontinue attending. The unit then met in the mission house for worship and invited any other interested persons to attend. When five families responded, Brother Sanford Yoder was contacted in Costa Rica, and he consented to help with organizing this new congregation in the spring of 1982.

Augustine Chub, having been already ordained in the former church, was appointed the new leader. His brother Lucas was assistant pastor, and later, Luciano Bo, the church treasurer. The AMA bishops honored Augustine's request to be re-ordained as a Mennonite pastor. From the very start this was to be the local brethren's church. They were very pleased at having been able to work together and build their own new church house.

Transitions

In the bush, despite a great degree of constant unpredictability, life had its routines that revolved around climate, culture, planting, and harvesting their crops. It seemed one was always wet, either from rain or the high humidity. The average annual rainfall varied from 180 to

240 inches; the highest recorded by AMA missionaries was 250 inches. During our first night there it rained eight inches. The patience of the ladies was sometimes tested when it took four days to dry the laundry.

While floods were common, occasionally an unusual one occurred, such as after receiving 44 inches of rain in 18 days. One year the church benches floated in the church house. In another season 30 head of Mr. Ruben's cattle were washed out of the pasture. The farthest surviving animal was found 15 miles downstream. The mission skiff served as a cattle boat in the rescue efforts. Only two heads were lost.

Living in the middle of the village meant a daily stream of door-callers. The Ervin Barkman family lived here in the mid-1980s. One busy morning Martha counted 43 callers before noon! They usually wanted to buy some item the shops didn't have, or asked, "When are you going to town?" Some Indians walked five hours or more from outlying villages seeking medical help, layette bundles, and other needs.

Visitors from outside the country were also important. Most of them saw the workload and readily helped where they could: teaching, preaching, visitation, or washing clothes. Usually when we took a group

out to Punta Gorda, arrangements had been made to return home with the next group. We looked forward to town days for mail and groceries but their frequency was limited since it was 100 miles of water, round trip. During one busy season we had visitors 56 days straight. After a few days' break, then another stretch of 48 days. It seemed many wanted to see this "storybook" place.

While this meant a lot of extra work, it was also a real blessing, both then and later. It's interesting to observe that many of these visitors, especially youth, have since then served or are serving in missions. It appears that, in addition to the moving of the Spirit, a small "taste of the field" can help. Unfortunately, there were also those visitors, who, by the clothes they wore and the things they said, can very effectively undo the work of many months. "Lord, may they be few."

Not everything that happened was routine. In April 1997, several visits were made to Crique Sarco by a group of Spanish Lookout men interested in exploring ways to channel a new awakening among their group in helping missions. (Spanish Lookout is a large Mennonite community in Belize.) "Would it be possible for us to build you a road?" was the question. Frank Plett, Cornelius Friesen, and

Peter Hein led this effort.

After meeting with the Ministry of Lands and the Ministry of Works, we had permission to proceed. Although the closest road was just six miles away in Corazon Creek, it was decided to come in more directly from Punta Gorda to the northeast to avoid major low ground. Seven miles north of Punta Gorda on the Southern Highway there was already a turnoff for a crude road to the villages of San Philippi and Santa Anna. After crossing the Moho River it led on to Barranco.

That first morning it rained heavily as the dozer truck slogged its way toward the end of the road. It got stuck trying to climb the incline after crossing the low water Santa Anna Bridge. The dozer was unloaded and pushed the semi up the grade. A mile or so later they reached the junction of the footpath that led to Conejo Creek and Sunday Wood Villages. Here the dozer was again unloaded. Thirteen miles of minimally explored bush lay between us and Crique Sarco as we decided not to follow the wandering footpath, but use as direct a route as possible with the help of compass, GPS, and hilltop observation points.

The Frank Plett family temporarily moved to Crique Sarco. Each morning the men were ferried down

the river and up whichever creek was closest to where the work had stopped the previous evening. As the dozer approached a village, school was dismissed so students could watch this (for them and us) world-changing event. It would have been impossible to maintain order in the middle of the village uproar anyway. Housewives came running, begging us to eat at their house and stay for the night. No royalty could have received a bigger welcome!

At the end of two weeks the roar of the machines suddenly lessened, and then stopped altogether. The dozer had reached the north bank of the Temash River, opposite Crique Sarco within 100 yards of where we had aimed. Many thanks were lifted to God for His safety and success.

Now that Crique Sarco had a primitive road, what were they going to do with it? We missionaries could hardly imagine heading for town without wondering how rough the sea might be. At least during the dry season, those trips were now apparently history. Hopefully, it would also impact the life of the Indians in a positive way.

Medical emergencies were another non-routine happening. After Nurse Dorothy's 10 years, Lydia Sullivan arrived to carry on the clinic work. Then came a change in government,

when jobs were only to be given to nationals, whether or not qualified persons existed. Not until December 1996, after Lorene Miller returned from midwife training in Paraguay, did the clinic again have a Mennonite nurse. Ruth Lapp assisted her and us and was our last social worker.

I had the privilege of helping to deliver several babies who appeared in the absence of both a nurse and village health worker. One of the most remarkable saving of a person's life was also in childbirth. Runners bearing a makeshift stretcher carried the mother in from Graham Creek early one morning. The unborn

child had already died. While Nurse Lorene administered IV, we made our fastest boat trip ever—50 miles in one hour and 23 minutes. At the wharf in Punta Gorda, she was whisked off in an old Jeep to the airport where the Wings of Hope plane was waiting. They landed in Belize City just two hours from the time we had left Crique Sarco and the mother's life was saved through emergency surgery. In gratitude, this couple relocated to Crique Sarco and built a house directly across from the mission.

[to be continued]



A Woman After God's Heart

Journey to Enduring Friendships

Lois Troyer, Georgetown, OH



Several months back I challenged us all to think about building bridges among us. Bridges between ages, between callings, rankings and talents, between married and single, and just bridges among us all. I've received a number of powerful suggestions which I hope to share in a future article. Meanwhile, the Lord inspired a friend

to vulnerably share her life journey on the subject of friendship cultivation. The following truths are life-changing and foundational. Thank you, Lois! SS

Friendship comes to us in as many varied forms as there are people on God's beautiful earth and is one of the secrets to a full and satisfying life.

Each relationship is a piece of who we are, impacting our lives by how they fill their little spot in the stained-glass window through which we view life. Sometimes the formation of a particular friendship takes us by surprise. A comradery may spring up where there was no likelihood of it. There is much beauty in having unusual friends in unexpected places. The ability to recognize the varied nuances of friendship, and to learn when to engage or release as we walk upstream in a downstream flow of souls passing through our lives is one of the things that makes us uniquely human.

There are great benefits to having friends in all stages of life. This brings so much perspective and keeps my tunnel vision from taking over. Enjoying an hour of processing life with a 20-year-old, rocking on the porch with a 70-year-old, or picking daffodils with a four-year-old heightens my awareness of what people in other stages of life are experiencing. If you're a young mom in the throes of diapers and tantrums and your friend group consists of the same, that's a wonderful place for moral support. But it's not so great a place for advice on big life decisions or help when your marriage hits a rocky spot. Varied relationships, and those outside your family circle

that have grown organically and are well-tended, are a wonderfully secure sounding board for the hurdles life brings.

My life is made so rich by the many friendships that light my way. There's the gray-haired friend who lends me her hard-earned wisdom and brings temperance to my ideals and despairs. There's the 20-year-old who loves my children and sends my husband and me off on dates. There's the cousin and my bridesmaid who stood with me through both grief and heartache. She embraced who that pain made me and remembers those hard anniversaries. There's the single friend with a clean and quiet house to which I escape on an occasional evening, and we eat good food and cry, laugh, talk, or sit in silence together.

I have not always been a part of so many life-giving relationships. As a teen and into adulthood I struggled to find my place in the world. My friends' approval made me profoundly happy, and their disapproval or exclusion was devastating on the same scale but going the opposite direction. After years of feeling like I was a social flop and always looking for the people who would become my friends, I experienced some health issues and a season of debilitating anxiety and depression. And there in that utter

blackness, when I was gutted and had nothing to offer anyone, several motherly friends spoke life and hope back into me. Line upon line, precept upon precept, they pointed me to Jesus over and over and over. I didn't learn easily. One of them printed pictures of a warty-nosed old man and a beautiful swan and hung them in my kitchen. "When you look in the mirror, you see Mr. Warts," she said, "When God looks at you, He sees the swan."


Slowly, I began to understand who I was in Christ, and with baby steps my world started shifting into place. I filled my life, my mind, and my home with visual reminders of God's love and delight in me. I devoured the stories in the New Testament about Jesus' interactions with women and studied the nuances of His life with them and discovered that they were an important part of His ministry. He nurtured, valued, and protected women wherever He went. He then passed to the other side of the veil after His death, but not before exhibiting His love and my worth in so many ways. These discoveries were life-changing for me. Never one to leave well enough alone, Jesus then showed me that my view of myself lay directly upstream from my view of others. The grace and acceptance I extend to myself

from the hand of Jesus are precursors of what I'm able to extend to others. Then came the gut-punch realization that over the years, my loneliness had often been of my own making. I was expecting from those around me, and even from my husband, what I could only find in Christ: unconditional acceptance and affirmation. No human relationship can bear that weight. In the words of Henry Nouwen, I am the prodigal son every time I search for unconditional love where it cannot be found.

I then needed to embrace humility and to lay down my defenses so God's transforming grace could find me in that hard place of regret. *After all, it's not what we discover about ourselves that defines us, but what we don't allow God to heal and redeem.* I began grasping that God's approval is deeply satisfying, and His beacon of pure love and acceptance dulls the allurements of man's approval. I don't need to be trendy, have a perfectly behaved husband and children, or be a smashing success to quiet that need for approval clamoring in my heart. My ducks can be in a swarm instead of a row, and I am still a beloved and valued daughter. These types of things are battles that are not easily won, but as I began to relax in the embrace of my Father, I began to experience real freedom.

This freedom touches every area of my life but is especially impactful in my relationships. I'm learning what it looks like to find my significance in Christ. When I need to be surrounded by certain people, I'm not free. I can also release people to be ridiculous or exclusive; their rejection or acceptance of me doesn't need to define me. I can talk about my heart and my struggles with less of that crippling shame because I know Whose I am. I'm able to sense when others are hurting in ways I couldn't when I was self-focused. The messy authenticity of a broken and being-redeemed human is gloriously more beautiful than a carefully curated and desperately

maintained fake one. When pride, shame, or fear rules my heart instead of the steady light of redeemed love, my self-focus becomes the idolatry of self-worship, and I won't have the brain space for hanging swans in people's kitchens.

What if you and I grasped that in finding our identity in Christ, we can find each other? What if we learned to be vulnerable and talk about the state of our hearts as easily as we talked about our houseplants? I think then we would have found authenticity, the light in which friendship flourishes and blooms, and the secret to moving beyond the surface to genuine and enduring friendships. 

junior messages

The Mill That Would Not Burn (Part II)

Hannah Eicher, McArthur, OH

After the attempted arson at the sawmill, one would think it would be time for some peace around the establishment. It was not to be.

Sometime after those events took place, the employees at the mill were enjoying a break in the breakroom. Two men entered the office and stood

waiting for service. Ron, the owner, got up and went into the office to talk to them. In a short time he came back to the breakroom and asked Nathan, the office manager, to come join them.

The two men introduced themselves as detectives from a sheriff's office in a neighboring county. They were

inquiring for the whereabouts of Dan Smith, wanted for stealing a trailer.

Nathan and Ron looked at each other. Yes, they knew Dan Smith and also his brother, Nick. The two men were not exactly known for being models of honesty. Nick sold them logs, and they had to constantly be on the lookout for evidence that his were “hot” (a term for dishonestly-obtained) logs. Nick, in fact, had come to the mill recently with a new trailer and had sold them logs. Prior to this, he had told Nathan’s sons that he was getting a new trailer.

They told the detectives what they knew and offered them the opportunity to view security camera footage of Nick’s visit. As they sat in the breakroom and watched the footage, with one detective videoing parts of it, the walkie-talkie on the desk in the office crackled to life. Nathan picked it up. “Go ahead,” he said to the employee in the mill.

The voice on the other end seemed to fill the room. “Nick Smith is here.”

It was a moment stranger than fiction. The stolen trailer was in the parking lot of the mill! “This will work!” one of the detectives said, understating the weight of the situation.

Quickly, they came up with a plan of action. Ron was to go out and get Nick to pull around to the back of

the mill, acting as though this was business as usual. When he came to the office to complete the transaction, the detectives would be waiting to “chat” with him.

Ron went out and performed his part in the plan. Nick, he found, was suffering from back pain and was lying in the back of the truck. His employee was driving. Ron returned to the office to wait for the action to begin.

They waited for some time for Nick to come into the office to complete the deal. His employee came in instead and was immediately questioned. “I don’t know anything about this!” he declared. “I just work for Nick.” The detectives let him off the proverbial hook and he stayed in the office. Nick, however, didn’t come, and the detectives began to worry that he had gotten suspicious and left. They went out to the truck and tapped on the door. Soon they returned with Nick in tow.

Nick walked in the door and looked at his employee. “That trailer’s stolen!” he exclaimed, making a great show of surprise. Nathan wasn’t sure what to think because Nick is a smooth-talking man who can make people believe what he wants them to believe.


But there was really no proof that Nick knew anything of the trailer’s

theft. He declared that Dan had sold him that trailer and he knew nothing about it being stolen. The detectives couldn't directly implicate him. But now they could return the trailer to its owner, and they had a stronger case against Dan.

We heard later that Dan ended up in a psychiatric institution and Nick in jail on some other offense. It probably will never be known for sure what

Nick knew about the trailer theft, though it seems improbable that he was innocent. God is the judge.

We do know, however, that the way of the transgressor is hard. Sin will find you out, and it will take you places that you never dreamed it could.

And one thing is sure. Working at a sawmill, at least the one our story tells of, is not as tame as it looks! 

youth messages

The Love of the Father

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

Her eyes began to droop as the effects of the medication began to set in. Her fear and inhibitions began to fade as her senses dulled. It was time for her to go. We signaled the nurse and asked our daughter if she would like to lie in the little bed they had provided. She agreed and we tucked her in with her fleece blanket and stuffed rabbit. Soon the nurse came and pushed the bed out of the room while my wife and I followed down a few halls until we came to an intersection of the hospital halls. There the nurse uttered those

dreaded words, "It's time for hugs, kisses, and goodbyes. You can't come with us anymore."

My heart caught in my throat, and I struggled to say, "I love you, and we'll see you in a little bit," without choking up. Our daughter smiled sweetly and gestured at us faintly with her hand as the nurse pushed her away and around the corner for surgery. We had just allowed someone to take our child, and we were trusting that they would help her and we would see her soon.

As I sat in the family waiting room while my daughter was in surgery, I

was struck with an overwhelming sense of unworthiness. I was still struggling with the turmoil of my own emotions when it struck me. One day, long ago, God allowed His Son to leave heaven and go to a sinful world—to DIE.

I have watched my children as they suffered pain. But it wasn't pain that I chose for them. I held my children and did my best to calm their fears as doctors worked on them, but it wasn't something I wanted for them. In those instances, I was present, and I knew what was being done was for their health. Even in this situation, although I couldn't be with my daughter in person, I knew what was being done was for her good, she wouldn't feel or remember it, and she would be a healthier little girl as a result.

Sitting in that waiting room, I struggled to wrap my mind around the kind of love it takes to send your child into the hands of sinful men to a known fate. God knew what Jesus was going to experience. He knew about the mocking, the rejection, the sorrow, and the pain. He knew about the fear, the betrayal, and the condemnation. He knew about the exhaustion, the beatings, and the crucifixion. God knew when He sent His Son into the world that it was to die. He wasn't experiencing

all of that for His health or for His personal benefit. It was for us. It was for me, and it was for you. It was for the cashier at the grocery store, the governor at the capitol building, and the infant nestled in his mother's arms. He gave His life—experiencing being forsaken and separated from God so that we wouldn't have to. Everything that Jesus experienced, He and His Father knew beforehand, and They went ahead and did it anyway.

I failed to wrap my mind completely around the depth of that love. However, as I pondered, I began to be convicted. I began to compare the time and attention that I give to God and His Son with the love They showed and the sacrifice They made to redeem me. How can I ever repay it? How can I ever be worthy? What could I possibly do to justify the sacrifice made in my behalf. The answer is—I can't.

The story is told of a boy who would ask his dad to do things with him but his dad never had the time. He didn't have time to go fishing. He didn't have time to play ball. He was always too busy. One day his son came to him and asked how much he was paid for a day at work. The father didn't really want to tell his son, so the son asked what he gets paid for an hour of work. The father replied "\$20."

The boy hurried away and after a short while he returned clutching something in his fingers. “Dad,” he said, “This is all the money that I have. I’ve been saving my money for a bike. How much of your time would this get me?”

The father’s heart broke and he knelt and gathered his son into his arms. “Keep your money,” he said. “I think my glove is around here somewhere. Let’s go play catch.”

Too often, I have to wonder if God feels like the son, and I play the role of the father in the story. Like the father in the story, I often find myself too busy. I don’t take enough time for my children, and I don’t take enough time for God. And yet, God doesn’t coax us with money to spend time with Him because the price was already paid. I Corinthians 6:20 says, *“For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God’s.”*

We don’t deserve it. We cannot earn it, but we must never forget it. The words from the song “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” sums it up for me.

How deep the Father’s love for us,
How vast beyond all measure!
That He should give His only Son,
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss!

The Father turns His face away;
As wounds which marred the
Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the Man upon a cross:
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me
life:
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything:
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ:
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His
reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart:
His wounds have paid my ransom.

Take the time to consider the depth of that love and your response to it. You don’t have to be forgiven of horrible, almost unforgiveable sins to understand God’s love for you. Understand, we are all just one breath away from eternity. Whether you just joined the youth, just got married, or just had your first grandchild, without that love we would be lost.



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You can fix anything but a broken promise.

• • • • •

The best way to compliment your wife is frequently.

• • • • •

Humility is usually one of the qualities left out of the self-made man.

• • • • •

Self-made men should be more careful in selecting the material they use.

• • • • •

He who is the slowest in making a promise is the most faithful in keeping it.

• • • • •

The politician was full of promises that went in one year and out the other.

• • • • •

Certainly, God created man before woman.

But then you always make a rough draft before the final masterpiece.

• • • • •

You can never break God's promises by leaning on them.

• • • • •

The safest way to disagree with your wife is very quietly.

• • • • •

A hundred men may make an encampment,
but it takes a woman to make a home. *Chinese proverb*

• • • • •

God didn't promise an easy voyage but a safe arrival.