



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

*Galatians 6:14*

## AUGUST 2024

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Calvary Messenger

August 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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## Plain Colors

*Richard Stoltzfoos, Burgettstown, PA*

A gallery has plain white walls  
And quiet, black-tiled floor,  
While careful works adorn the halls  
And passers-by adore.

The wall and floor don't draw the eye  
Or rest a restless heart;  
They serve the painting's purpose by  
Promoting higher art.

My brothers' black-and-white clothes serve  
As wall and floor to grace,  
For skins and leaves do not deserve  
Our focus, but the face.

Each face is like a melody  
Which all, in course of time,  
Become a fine polyphony,  
God's work of art sublime.



## Of Voles and Moles

It's been several years since I first noticed them. Narrow, two-inch-wide runways ran out into the grass from a hole in the ditch. Hmm, were those made by ground squirrels? Sometime later they appeared on the lawn side of our driveway. I kept my eyes open for the chipmunk-like 13-lined ground squirrel native to our area. Surely, I would be able to see one sometime when it stood up for a look around. However, no such sight occurred. After some investigation, I discovered that the critters responsible for these highways in the lawn were voles, a small rodent also known as meadow or field mice. They continue to spread to other parts of the lawn.

I was grateful that this infestation was not one of moles, small insectivores that burrow in the soil looking for earthworms, beetle grubs, and other animals which live in the soil. This powerful little burrower is well known for mounds of soil left on top of the ground as part of his excavation underground. This animal's presence is much more obvious than the herbivore cousin, the vole.

Both of these creatures live underground or in some unobtrusive place. And while they are only living the way their Creator made them, they can become a nuisance if there is a large infestation of them.

There are many things in life that can go unnoticed for a length of time. While these things are not under the grass, they are underground in other ways. They can be in our personal lives, families, or churches. Sometimes these things may be sinful, but as with voles and moles, they may be habits or tendencies that only become a nuisance or problem when there is an infestation or they get out of hand.

The Apostle Paul begins the fifth chapter in Ephesians with a pathway to walk and follow. We shouldn't keep this pathway underground but rather make it a visible example to others as we follow God. *"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"* (Ephesians 5:1-2 NIV).

Paul continues with a list of things that he says are improper or out of place for God's people. However, he



clearly states several sins that will keep us from receiving any inheritance in God's Kingdom. I chose the NIV because I can easily be so familiar with terms of certain supposedly "lesser" sins, like covetousness, that I forget their pervasiveness and sinfulness until they are expressed in more common terms like greed. *"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: no immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God"* (Ephesians 5:3-5 NIV). Do we try to keep these underground and hidden? Sooner or later we will likely deposit a pile of evidence on the surface for all to see.

The Hebrew writer refers to weights and the *"sin which doth so easily beset us."* These hindrances can both be hidden sins or obvious paths visible to all. *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and*

*finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Paul reminds us that as Christians (little Christs), we should put off the old ways and live the way of life in Christ in true righteousness and holiness. *"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"* (Ephesians 4:17-24 NIV).

There are other things that may not be sinful but can become a problem if they get out of hand. Most of us have

personal habits and tendencies that can become irritating or obnoxious to others if we don't keep them in check. Sometime ago while teaching school, we teachers set up cameras to video ourselves while teaching. While painful to watch, it can quickly become evident if we have habits of speech, motions, or gesturing that should be eliminated. It really is not necessary to scratch your nose or ear that often when you speak. Those things and worse things can become well-worn trails in the lawns of our lives.

Other demographics that can have habits or tendencies are age groups, family groups, or vocation-similar groups. Whether there are certain words we use, things we talk about, or values we have, they can become a problem when there is an "infestation" or get out of hand. Developing cross-generational friendships and interests can keep us from developing "runways in the lawn" as do voles and moles.

It is always difficult to attempt to remove bad habits and sins without replacing them with good. And there are runways or trails in our lives that should be clear and well-worn. These are evidences of the Holy Spirit directing our habits and lives. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,*

*faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"* (Galatians 5:22-24).

Peter admonishes us to grow in our faith and with diligence keep perfecting our habits and lives.

II Peter 1:5 *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;*

*6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;*

*7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*

*8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*

*10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:*

*11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."*

These "runways in the lawn" will take us all the way to our eternal home!





## Announcement

### **Single Ladies' Seminar**

August 2-4, 2024

#### **“Sisters in Community”**

**Singleness: A Lonely Gift?** - Valerie Steiner

**Investing in Church** - Elona Martin


**Single and Pure: Relating to Men** - Yolanda Miller

**Treasuring Family** - Karen Gingerich

**Enriching Friendships** - Vicki Kauffman

**Relationships for God's Glory** - Irene Bontrager

*The seminar will be held at Deeper Life Ministries in Plain City, OH. Preregistration is required. To register, or for more information regarding the seminar, please call 614-873-1199 or email [info@dmlmohio.org](mailto:info@dmlmohio.org). Registration deadline is July 12, 2024.*



## the bottom line

### **Connected**

*Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA*

**H**e had no home, but somehow he survived as a vagrant, overnighing under the bridge. By day, he held up a sign at an intersection, hoping for a dollar or somebody's leftover donut. She was worse off, being a woman.

Her lot was reduced to a succession of public restrooms, and overnights wherever her kind huddled for what semblance of safety they could secure. Food was always a big question.

Homelessness is a huge problem in our world, even in some of our rural

counties. Our cities, of any size, see it as a growing problem. Our own nearby Lancaster City has almost 600 people who are homeless every day and every night. Homeless shelters are not the answer for all of them; some homeless people despise their regimen.

These homeless people are disconnected. Then there are many people in prison, seriously disconnected. We know a few of them. We think of the multiplied thousands who are refugees in many countries of the world. Untold grief is their lot; disconnected from their country, their houses and community, their jobs and business, and even their freedom and individuality. Their losses are without calculation.

For all of the saddest words of tongue or pen,

The saddest are these, "It might have been."

*-John Greenleaf Whittier*

Most of us have a heritage that is, upon due reflection, priceless. We were born into the arms of riches and plenty, surpluses and hoarding. Poverty or riches are altogether relative. Being the seemingly poorest people in my church is related to what? Obviously, it is in relation to the seemingly richest people in my church.

How we view our station in life

is wholly dependent on our people connection first of all. We all were born into a family but not of our choosing, of course. Our "world" of recognition revolves around people. There is, first of all, family and church. That soon is followed by school and nearby neighbors. Expansion of connectedness follows by pursuing interests and travel. What we become is largely dependent on our various connections and how we choose to pursue them. As a little example, those connections nearly doubled 16 years ago when Esther and I were married, each of us for our second marriage.

In regard to our forebears, where would the farthest reaches of our connections take us? Tracing it back to my distant past, my memory goes back to my maternal and paternal grandparents. Going forward includes my seven children, 40 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren (not counting Esther's progeny).

But going way, way, way back, my original forebears were the very first man and woman, Adam and Eve, handcrafted and fashioned by God Himself. The fabulous record of the Bible has genealogies put in place from Adam all the way forward to the virgin birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The names for all these people in the Old Testament make for the



most difficult reading of the whole Bible. Yet, the Biblical genealogies are important for the overall record. For all people of all time, it is our own human connection to God! *“We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”* God fashioned us by His divine purpose, while in our mother’s womb, as David says in Psalm 139:13, “built in my mother’s womb” (German).

If there were no record of genealogies or a continuous history on record of people groups from the beginning of time, scoffers, atheists, and agnostics would mock the godly. They would throw up their hands and strike down any claims of God having a godly seed since the dawn of time’s first day. They would point to large gaps of time as inconclusive evidence as any reliable record of the Bible’s history of people and events. The record of the four Gospels of the life of Christ in an unbroken line is also very important to prove, demonstrate, and verify His humanity and deity. Despite that, there are learned people who write and speak great swelling words of derogatory dissertations against the very Son of God. Though they were made by Him, and given a world of fruitful seasons and natural beauty for their benefit, yet they mock the very evident existence of Jesus as

having been fully a man like us.

All this is about our connectedness to people in ages past and through them to God Himself. Now what about our future, our posterity, and of the world as a whole? Obviously, God has a plan for the end of man, and a complete and comprehensive plan for the future of the world. If (since) God is trustworthy for His record of origins and how people should live in the present, is there ever any need for Christians to take interest in prophecies in His Word concerning the close of the age? That surely will have huge implications for the future generations of every one of us, and having an escapable implication for us now in how we should live.


We are content to let the future in God’s hands, of course. That is not our burden here. We are concerned about raising a generation that has little interest in what the Bible declares a truth concerning the future of the world. And that includes both us in our lives, and that of our future children.

Families will keep on connecting until the end of the world. We cannot change that, or claim it as not important to our salvation, or that it makes no difference what you believe about the future as some have said.

Many of our typical families have four generations of people living at

any given moment, where one set of grandparents has 20-80 descendants (mine) and some many more. The somber and serious interests of old age should go beyond glibly saying future prophecy “will all pan out all right.” A faith response to all that the Bible has spoken is more critical to our own descendants than some of us have allowed as true. For the continuity of faith, it will be encouraged by “grandpa’s faith” and “grandma’s prayers,” appropriately spoken of at their funeral. But it needs more than that for the benefit of salvation and holy living by our descendants.

**The Bottom Line** is that the

connectedness of our time presents both danger and blessing for each of us. There are many subtle means to connect to the world and its octopus-like tentacles of connection. Thank God, the multiplicity of God-honoring connections are readily available through Christian organizations of church, missions, Bible schools, publishing, music, investment programs, counseling centers, and various Christian interest seminars. The challenge of our modern times in these last days is to cultivate a singular involvement in the Kingdom of Christ. “*When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*” – Jesus. 

## Dementia

*Vincent “John” Waldron, MD, Gladys, VA*

It is so hard,” the man sitting across from me said. “We’ve been married for nearly 50 years, but I never expected anything like this?”

“What is going on?” I asked Al, sympathetically.

“It’s Lisa,” he said. “You know her memory has been slipping for a little while. Well, we went to the

neurologist like you told us to, and they ordered a whole bunch of tests and a brain scan of some sort. Then, they told her she had dementia.”

“I thought that was what was going on,” I replied.

“I know you told us that,” Al said. “Well, there are times she doesn’t recognize me. She looks at me blankly like she is wondering

what crazy stranger has gotten into her house.”

“That’s got to be hard,” I said.

“The only thing I’ve found that brings her back to herself is to go outside and call her on her cell phone. I tell her to come out to the garage, I’ve got something to show her. Somehow when I do that, it brings her back to the present and lets her know who I am—for a little bit, anyway.”

We moved on to talking about other things, but I could tell that Al’s heart was breaking. His wife of 48 years looked the same as ever on the outside and yet, she was a completely different person.

I’d like to explore some of the challenges in dealing with dementia.

### **Dementia in the Bible**

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 gives a somewhat dismal view of the aging process. *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors*

*shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it?”*

In this passage, the poetic description seems to speak of loss of teeth, loss of hearing, unsteady gait, and general frailty. It is hard to say if any of these images speak of memory loss. What is certain is that the passage begins with a command: *“Remember!”*

This is not the only place in Scripture where humans are commanded to remember. Over and over, we are told to remember God. We are to make certain that we instruct our children about Him. *“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way,*

*and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).*

The time may come when we are not able to remember anymore. The most important thing—even as we think about the subject of dementia—is that we remember the One Who made us and follow Him with all our hearts.

### **What Dementia Is**

Dementia is any illness that causes a loss of memory, reasoning, and social functioning. Most people think mostly of the loss of memory. I suppose this is because early in the illness other people notice things like difficulty finding words and frequent repetition of stories.

Social functioning is often maintained until late in the illness. If you ask someone with mild dementia if they know today’s date, they will likely answer, “Oh, you know, I stopped paying attention to things like that when I retired.”

The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer’s dementia—at least 70 percent of people who have progressive memory loss have Alzheimer’s dementia. Alzheimer’s seems to be related to proteins called amyloid, which get deposited in the brain and prevent nerve cells from communicating with each other.

Other causes are vascular dementia, where blockages in the blood vessels

in the brain cause the death of nerve cells. Lewy Body Dementia is a sort of memory loss that is associated with Parkinson’s Disease. Approximately 80 percent of people with Parkinson’s Disease will eventually develop dementia.

### **Diagnosing Dementia**

If family members suspect someone is developing memory loss, the best thing is to bring them to their primary care provider for an evaluation. Along with doing a physical exam, the doctor will typically do things like have the patient draw a clock and do a mini mental status exam, which asks the patient to answer a lot of simple questions and do some short-term recall of items. Blood tests including a thyroid and Vitamin B12 level would be done. A brain scan or ultrasound of the neck arteries might be done as well. The goal is to identify areas that can be treated and take care of those.

### **Eliminate Medications**

Many medications increase the risk of memory issues. As people get older, trying to avoid these medications is helpful to prevent the development of dementia.

Anticholinergic medications are probably the biggest culprit that I encounter. The most common of these medications are older antihistamines like diphenhydramine

(used as either a sleep aid or allergy pill) and doxylamine (used as a sleep aid). In one study, patients who took an anticholinergic medication for the equivalent of three years had a significantly higher risk of dementia than patients who took these sorts of medications for less than three months.<sup>1</sup> Older depression medications can also fall into this category.

Anxiety medications, called benzodiazepines, have also been associated with memory issues. Studies indicate that patients who take these medications have a higher risk of developing dementia than patients who do not take them.<sup>2</sup>

Seizure medications may make thinking ability worse as well. Having a seizure disorder seems to increase the risk of dementia, but certain older medications like valproate and gabapentin seem to make it harder for older people to think clearly, and shifting to lower-risk seizure medications is in order (if possible) for older people.

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1. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2091745#:~:text=Conclusions%20and%20Relevance%20Higher%20cumulative,minimize%20anticholinergic%20use%20over%20time>.

2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6325366/>

There are times when someone needs to take medication, but as patients get older, it is important to think about the risks of those medications. There is a list of medications that are wisest to avoid for patients over 65 years of age, called the Beers List. Substituting similar medications with fewer side effects or using lower doses is recommended.<sup>3</sup>

### Medical Treatments

The first rule when dealing with dementia is to make certain that all of the metabolic things are in as good control as possible. So, if someone has diabetes, it is best to make certain that their sugar is in as good control as possible. If someone has high blood pressure, make certain that it is well-regulated (this is particularly true if someone has vascular dementia).

There are several different classes of medications that are approved for treating dementia. One group is the cholinesterase inhibitors. These medications raise the level of a chemical called acetylcholine in the brain and peripheral nervous system. These medications are certainly not miracle drugs and at best they seem to slow the progression of memory

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3. <https://sbgg.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/1-American-Geriatrics-Society-2023.pdf>



loss and do not really restore previous brain function.

The other medication is called memantine. It works by targeting the glutamate receptor in the brain. Just as with the cholinesterase inhibitors, the effects are not huge and the end result only slows the memory loss.

Both of these medications are generic, and it is reasonable to try them and see how someone responds to them.

One last medication to mention is called lecanemab. It is an IV infusion that targets amyloid, a kind of protein that develops in the brain of people with Alzheimer's dementia. The medication seems to work quite well at clearing amyloid from patients' brains. This medication is very expensive (\$26,500 per year) and it has been linked to an increase in strokes. In the studies, dementia symptoms were only slowed by about 30 percent compared with a placebo.

There are no other medications currently approved to treat dementia.

### **Non-medication Therapies**

There are several things that people can do to help slow the progression of dementia. These can be helpful for people who have a strong family history of dementia and want to prevent its onset.

Cardiovascular exercise is very important. Doctors mention exercise

in relation to nearly every chronic illness because it has been shown to work. In the case of dementia, people who exercise regularly have about 30 percent decreased risk of developing the disease. Regular exercise seems to slow the progression of dementia.<sup>4</sup>

Doing puzzles that require mental activity, like Sudoku or crossword puzzles, seems to help slow the progression of memory loss and may also reduce the chance of developing dementia.

Lastly, it is helpful to learn something new. People who learn a new skill or focus on learning a new language help their memories quite a bit. A study compared older people who learned a new skill with people who went to social events. The point seems to be that our brains need to be pushed to create new pathways or they will tend to break down.<sup>5</sup>

### **Caring for Someone with Dementia**

Caring for someone with dementia is challenging in a number of ways. It is often difficult to know how much independence to allow the person. There have been many books written on this subject, but there are a few

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4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3258000/>

5. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4154531/>

things that are worth mentioning. It is important to avoid dangerous things. The two most dangerous things for someone with faulty memory are driving and cooking. Both of these seem commonplace, and the person may seem to be doing fine, but they can become a problem very quickly.

The danger of driving a car or a buggy is twofold. First, some people freeze at certain points, not remembering how to do a particular skill. This can be a problem, not only for them but also for others on the road.

Second, older people can start off on short journeys to a local store or restaurant and end up getting lost. I have had patients who ended up driving around for hours trying to find their way home when they got confused driving to town.

Cooking, of course, really comes down to a question of remembering to set timers and take things off the stove or out of the oven at the appropriate time.

Many times, people who have dementia do not realize how much their abilities have slipped and resist the idea that they need to give up the car keys. Maybe it simply comes down to a loss of independence, but it is hard to face the fact that you are no longer safe behind the wheel.

Try to keep things the same within the room and the home. Even small changes in room arrangement can be enough to upset the situation. Taking someone out of their home—for instance, admitting them to the hospital—often makes things a lot worse. Suddenly, confusion that only seemed mild before is now extremely high.

If there is a fruit of the Spirit that is key for dealing with someone with dementia, it is patience. None of us has as much patience as we need, as dementia spreads that patience awfully thin.

People with dementia often act like children on a long trip. They ask over and over when they are going home. They wonder where dead relatives are or why the children aren't home yet. No amount of explanation helps, because only a minute or two after they ask the question, they have forgotten the answer and are asking again.

Their skills often wax and wane. One day, they can button their shirt, and the next day, that skill seems to have flown out the window. It is easy to believe that they aren't "trying hard" and that they could do more if they would only make the effort.

Unfortunately, the fact that someone with dementia could do something yesterday doesn't mean

that they can remember how to do it today. Getting upset with them only makes these things worse as it adds anxiety to a person who already lacks the memory of how to do a skill.

As much as possible, answer the person gently even if it is the 53<sup>rd</sup> time that you have answered the same question. Use distractions as well. If there is an activity that they can still do, such as sewing or jigsaw puzzles (even children's puzzles with really big pieces), get them to do it. Late in the illness, letting them look at books with pretty pictures or sometimes even giving them a baby doll to hold can help settle them and distract them from their anxieties of the moment.

### **Get Others to Help**

It is easy to become frustrated. Trying to provide all of the care needed by yourself is not a long-term solution. Dementia care is a marathon and not a sprint. Many people live for years after the diagnosis, and even though their physical body remains relatively strong, they require more and more care.

One of the blessings of having family connections and church communities is that we have people who are available to provide assistance.

Having family members or friends

step in to give you some respite is key to not becoming seriously burned out or even angry with someone that you care about. It is best to take some time away periodically before you are mentally depleted. You may think you are doing fairly well, but all of us have a tendency to get weary in well doing if we never get a break.

### **Conclusion**

I wish there were more medical solutions for dementia. Perhaps more will come later. For now, medications are quite limited.

The key is to put the fruit of the Spirit into practice. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law”* (Galatians 5:22-23).

Even on the most frustrating days, people who are dealing with severe memory loss need love, gentleness, and patience from their family members. It is only through the Holy Spirit's power that we can provide the care that is needed for someone whose body is strong, but who no longer even recognizes you.

*[Reprinted with permission from The Heartbeat of the Remnant, Spring 2024.]*



## *Your Beautiful Neighbor*

Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS



She moves with studied grace,  
Her life stretched taut across the generations.  
"Grandma" to precious souls scattered far;  
Faithful caregiver to those next door,  
Lonely and full of years.

She lives serene within her space.  
No blaring trumpets heralding the sacrifices,  
The dailiness of laying down her life:  
An unsung hero whose quiet life speaks volumes  
To all who listen.

Who is this faithful woman, crowned with virtues?  
Can you discern the stage where  
unselfconsciously she plays her roles?  
Have you not guessed?  
She is your neighbor and sits beside you in the pew:

**RISE UP AND CALL HER BLESSED.** 

## marriages

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

### **Beiler-Stoltzfus**

Bro. David, son of Calvin and Verna Beiler, Gap, PA, and Sis. Andrea, daughter of Dan and Naomi Stoltzfus, Romney, WV, on May 4, 2024, at Believers Victory Center for Slanesville Mennonite Church by Dan Stoltzfus.

### **Hershberger-Troyer**

Bro. Andre', son of Michael and Gloria Hershberger, Newcomerstown, OH, and Sis. Janessa, daughter of Philip and Rachel Troyer, Stonecreek, OH, on May 25, 2024, at Maranatha Fellowship for Salem Amish Mennonite by James R. Mullet.

### **King-Byler**

Bro. Andrew, son of Mahlon and Elsie King, Princess Ann, MD, and Sis. Crystal, daughter of Robert and Katie Byler, Drasco, AR, on June 7, 2024, at Arbanna Baptist Church for Shady Lawn Church by Michael Mast.

### **Stoltzfus-Garman**

Bro. Joseph, son of Willy and Myma Stoltzfus, Gap, PA, and Sis. Courtney, daughter of Larry and Jolene Garman, Ronks, PA, on June 7, 2024, at Pequea Amish Mennonite Church by Ben Stoltzfus.

### **Yoder-Graber**

Bro. Ben, son of Jim and Rose Yoder, Riverton, WY, and Sis. Jessica, daughter of Titus and Hannah Graber, Torrington, WY, on March 22, 2024, at Sunrise Church for Torrington Mennonite Church by Marcus Lengacher.

### **Yoder-Hochstedler**

Bro. Allen, son of Ernest and Leona Yoder, Clayton, IL, and Sis. Marissa, daughter of Morris and Anna Hochstedler, Torrington, WY, on May 24, 2024, at Sunrise Church for Torrington Mennonite Church by Marcus Lengacher.



When Thomas A. Edison's desk was opened after his death, this card was found among his papers:

*"When down in the mouth, remember Jonah.*

*He came out all right."*



## cradle roll

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

**Beachy**, Joseph and Rhoda (Miller), Lexington, IN, third child, second son, Ryan Joseph, May 19, 2024.

**Eash**, Anthony and Esta (Beiler), Romney, WV, third child, second son, Landon Bently, May 23, 2024.

**Gerber**, Alvin and Juanita (Ropp), Bluevale, ON, fifth child and son, Marcus James, May 7, 2024.

**Gerber**, Edwin and Kaitlyn (Ropp), Wingham, ON, second child, first daughter, Mallory Kate, May 29, 2024.

**Jantzi**, Harold and Arianna (Good), McKenney, VA, first child and son, Jasper Reed, June 12, 2024.

**Kauffman**, Kevin and Stephanie (Miller), Lott, TX, second child and daughter, Pearl Naomi, June 15, 2024.

**Kauffman**, Zachary and Samantha (Yoder), Belleville, PA, second child, first daughter, Amanda Grace, June 1, 2024.

**King**, Jason and Rosalie (Byler), Gap, PA, fifth child, first son, Bennett Joel, May 6, 2024.

**Lebold**, Joshua and Debbie (Ropp), Lucknow, ON, fourth child, third son, Bradley John, March 28, 2024.

**Lengacher**, Sheldon and Alisa (Miller), Lexington, IN, seventh child, first son, Granite Lamar, June 13, 2024.

**Marner**, Fred and Sheena (Morton), Arthur, IL, first child and daughter, Valentine Selah, May 9, 2024.

**McGrath**, Chris and Rosanna (King), Taylorsville, NC, second child and daughter, Adalyn Grace, June 3, 2024.

**Miller**, Kenton and Crystal (Hostetler), Rio Vista, TX, fifth child, third daughter, Kelsey Brynn, June 26, 2024.

**Miller**, Myron and Leona (Lapp), New Holland, PA, third child, second daughter, Kaylee Grace, May 26, 2024.

**Miller**, Nathan and Marietta (Schrock), Torrington, WY, sixth child, third daughter, Stephanie Anne, June 5, 2024.

**Stoltzfus**, Randall and Leanne (Fisher), Romney, WV, first child and son, Connor Blake, June 5, 2024.

**Swartzentruber**, Wendell and Mary (Beachy), Montezuma, GA, seventh child, sixth daughter, Hazel Reya, April 17, 2024.



**Rose**, Scott and Judith (Yoder), Hillsboro, TX, fourth child, second son, Gladius Lavene, June 6, 2024.

**Villalobos**, Charles and Loretta (Miller), Itasca, TX, seventh child, fifth daughter, Evalynn April Shante, April 24, 2024.


**Wengerd**, Dave and Kate (Hershberger), Fresno, OH, second child, first son, Dominic Lee, May 20, 2024.

**Yoder**, Aaron and Megan (Miller), Oswego, KS, fourth child, second daughter, Caroline Elise, June 19, 2024.

**Yoder**, Merlin and Rhoda (Mast), Greeneville, TN, second child, first son, Peyton Elliott, June 6, 2024.

**Yoder**, Tim and Ruth (Miller), Wytheville, VA, seventh child, third son, Trevor Hans, April 14, 2024.

**Zook**, Justin and Jessica (Esh), Dobson, NC, fourth child, second son, Lincoln Cole, April 29, 2024.

**Zook**, Randall and Mary (Yoder), Wytheville, VA, fourth child, first son, Kolten Alexander, May 18, 2024. 

## obituaries

**Bontrager**, Perry E, 98, of Kalona, IA, passed from this life on May 26, 2024, at the Parkview Nursing Home, Wellman, IA. Perry was born on July 16, 1925, in Fayette County, IA, to Edward and Elizabeth (Miller) Bontrager. On December 9, 1948, he married Gertie Yoder in Fairbanks, IA. Gertie passed away on June 14, 2001. On June 29, 2002, Perry married Martha Schlabach.

Perry and Gertie lived in Buchanan County, IA, for the first five years of their married life and then lived a short time in Elkhart County, IN, and Jamesport, MO. They returned to Buchanan County for five years before moving to Kalona in 1960.

In 1962 Perry and Gertie joined the Sharon Bethel Amish Mennonite Church. While crops and farm animals, such as hogs and chickens, were the mainstays of Perry's livelihood, he was known to take on many side projects, including construction work, truck toppers, Belgian horses, and PVC fencing. He loved auctions of all types and accumulated a collection of antiques from the many auctions he attended.

Perry loved to travel. His trips included Central and South America, Germany, Europe, Haiti, and Africa. They wintered several years in Phoenix, AZ, and spent many winters in Pinecraft, FL. Perry and Martha traveled to Hawaii, Alaska, and

the northeast and western United States.

Survivors include his wife, Martha, seven children: Edna Fern (Earl) Peachey, Mattawana, PA; Amos Leroy (Fannie) Bontrager, Wellman; Laura Mae (Dannie) Gingerich, Arthur, IL; Rosella (Larry) Schrock, Kalona; Viola Elaine (Glenn) Coblentz, Wauseon, OH; Loretta Joy (Wayne) Fisher, Clarkrange, TN; Linda Sue (Dave) Petersheim, New Providence, PA; son-in-law, Moses Mast, Virginia Beach, VA; 28 grandchildren, and 54 great-grandchildren.

Perry was preceded in death by his parents, his first wife, Gertie, daughter, Anna Mabel (Moses) Mast, great-grandson, Vincent Lane Peachey, six brothers: William, Enos, Harry, Joe, Edward, Andrew; and three sisters: Fannie, Sarah, and Edna.

The funeral service was held at the Sharon Bethel Church on May 30, 2024, with Delmar Bontrager, Matt Peachey, and Leighton Yoder serving. The burial followed at the East Union Cemetery.

**Miller**, Willis L., 101, Hutchinson, KS, entered his heavenly home on June 14, 2024. He was born September 15, 1922, in rural Hutchinson to Levi D. and Clara (Nisly) Miller.

Willis placed his faith in Jesus Christ in his youth, was baptized, and lived conscientiously for God all his days. He was a faithful charter member of Cedar Crest Amish Mennonite Church. He invested many years of voluntary service for Gospel Echoes Prison Ministry Correspondence Courses, Choice Books,

and MCC Relief Sale. Willis was a dairy farmer, carpenter, and was employed by Center Township, retiring on their Golden Anniversary. God graciously allowed him to be a three-time cancer survivor.

On August 31, 1944, he married Susie May Beachy in Hutchinson. They were blessed with 72 years of marriage prior to her death on March 6, 2017.

Surviving are his children: Clara, Hutchinson; Alvin (Mary), Sarasota, FL; three grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild. Other survivors include a brother, Paul (Martha), Partridge, and sisters: Mary Beachy, Kalona, IA; and Emma Troyer, Partridge.

He was predeceased by his parents, sister, Elizabeth Wagler, and brothers: Edwin, Harry, Perry, David, Mahlon, Daniel, and Fred.

The funeral service was held on June 17, 2024, at Cedar Crest Amish Mennonite Church, with Lee Nisly, Donald Miller, and Brad Nisly serving. Interment was at West Center Cemetery with James Shetler serving.


**Yoder**, Ervin W., 81, of Cottage Grove, TN, died May 25, 2024, in Batesville, AR. He was born on July 2, 1942, in Hartville, OH, to the late Wallace V. and Ida Ellen Yoder. He married Louise K. Otto on July 23, 1962. She preceded him in death on November 27, 2020.

He is survived by seven children: Samuel, (Mary Ann), Hillsboro, IN; Brenda (Duane) Yoder, Carrier Mills, IL; Michael (Virginia); Mary Kathryn

(Jonathan) Miller, both of Cottage Grove; Mark (Dorothea), Goshen, IN; Jason, Cottage Grove; Kevin (Faledra), Harrison, AR; 25 grandchildren and 29 great-grandchildren. He is also survived by a sister, Martha (Alfred) Gingerich, Manton, MI; brothers: Elmer (Edna), Hartville ,OH; Vernon (Mary Margaret), Roodhouse, IL; and sister-in-law, Arlene Yoder, Hartville, OH.

In addition to his wife, Ervin was preceded in death by brothers: Leroy, Alvin, and John Henry; a sister, Mary Ellen Wagler; three grandsons: Jeffrey Miller, Keith Yoder, Dallas Yoder; and a granddaughter, Sheila Yoder.

Ervin served in the ministry for many years, first with the New Boston church in Cottage Grove and later with Calvary Fellowship. He and his wife, along with the two youngest boys, served at the mission church in Australia in the late 90s. Ervin was known for his love of singing and preaching, often reciting poetry during his sermons. He retired from preaching in 2018 when dementia began to affect his mind.

The funeral service was held on May 28, 2024, at Bethel Fellowship with Lester Otto and Marlin Wagler serving. Burial was in the New Boston cemetery in Cottage Grove. 

## observations

In 1969, an 80-year-old man by the name of R. G. LeTourneau died. He spent his younger years occupied in a variety of vocational efforts including working as a woodcutter, bricklayer, farmhand, and miner. These varied occupations contributed in a variety of ways to the vocational expertise he later became famous for. He was married to Evelyn Peterson when he was almost 30 years old. LeTourneau didn't serve in the military because of a neck injury he had sustained in an automobile accident.

LeTourneau's business acumen was not outstanding in the early days. However, as LeTourneau zeroed in on his interest in earth-moving equipment, his gifts and influence grew by leaps and bounds. In addition to LeTourneau's extremely successful and prominent contribution to the earth-moving and excavation industry, he was widely known as an outspoken and unapologetic Christian. His business associates referred to him as God's businessman. A verse he often cited was Matthew 6:33, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of*

*God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

In fact his signature often included the text reference, “Matt. 6:33.” In addition to his business ventures, he was very involved with the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church and was president of the Christian Business Men’s Committee. He also served as president of Gideons International for a time. He is well-known for the fact that he gave 90% of his considerable earnings to support a variety of Christian ministries.

A brother in our local congregation studied at LeTourneau University in Longview, TX, several decades ago. Knowing a bit about LeTourneau’s bent toward engineering and design, it isn’t surprising that he was instrumental in establishing a college that facilitated the things near to his heart, like the field of engineering, in an outspoken Christian environment. This brother retired in recent years from a career as an engineer for John Deere. I wonder how many other folks have worked in the mechanical engineering field due in part to LeTourneau’s contribution and influence in that industry.

But I also wonder how many folks R. G. LeTourneau has influenced to take seriously the proposition that pursuing the Kingdom of God

and His righteousness is man’s first responsibility here on earth.

• • • • •

At this writing our little granddaughter is in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Freeman Hospital in Joplin, MO. Several days after her birth, she picked up rhinovirus. While this virus isn’t often problematic for otherwise healthy adults, the delicate nature of infants’ respiratory systems makes them particularly vulnerable to this virus. If things continue progressing in a favorable direction, it is possible that her stay in the NICU will be 10 days to two weeks.

One of the things this experience has given our family is the opportunity to observe firsthand the work of the Ronald McDonald House in Joplin. I’m confident that a number of *Calvary Messenger* readers have their own firsthand experience and impressions with this ministry. I know very little about its origins and what the ongoing relationship is between McDonald’s Corporation and these facilities. I understand that not all Ronald McDonald houses are the same, but would like to comment on the one in Joplin, MO.

This facility is located a block or two from the main hospital entrance. There are 10 to 12 motel-style rooms available for the families of children



up to age 21 who are hospitalized. There is a suggested donation of \$10 per family per day to aid in defraying the costs of running the place. But those who are unable to pay are not turned away. This one in Joplin is operated entirely with volunteer staff. The costs to run the house amount to between \$25,000 and \$30,000 per month.

This house has a nice courtyard with picnic tables that get used when the weather is suitable, as well as a well-appointed sitting room with an impressive library of children's books. There is also a huge selection of toys in a toy room, since many families with hospitalized children also have children who aren't hospitalized. Various amenities seem to cater to the little folks who have occasion to stay at the Ronald McDonald House. The fully furnished kitchen, refrigerators, and freezers are stocked with food provided by churches, civic groups, individuals, and corporate entities, including restaurants so that those staying there do not need to leave to find meals, or spend a lot of time in personal food preparation. Whatever is there is offered free-of-charge as part of the ministry.

During the time that our daughter and her husband have been there, they've had access to food brought

in by local restaurants, sandwiches and fixings by interested individuals, and lasagna meals by a church group. This is in addition to various frozen food items that can be microwaved or heated in the oven as needed.



Our little granddaughter, who is in the NICU, has three older siblings who have been staying at our house. But it has been such a wonderful blessing for the parents to be able to be so close to the little baby, about an hour away from home, without needing to choose between the added pressure of expensive local lodging options or the stress of frequent shuttling back and forth an hour each direction. It seems like a woeful understatement to say that the Ronald McDonald House has been a tremendous blessing for this young family at a time of uncertainty and great need!

It makes me wonder how many similar stories could be told. The gentleman manning the front desk last evening when we were there said they are very grateful and appreciative for the support and donations of food items for use by those staying there. I'm inclined to try to find a way to respond favorably to this opportunity. It's only in the last couple of weeks that this changed from something I'd merely heard

about, to observing the incredible blessing and effect that Ronald McDonald House is to folks at a difficult time in their lives.

• • • • •


Walt Merrell is a retired public prosecuting attorney who commented in a recent interview that many criminals don't think things through very thoroughly prior to their criminal activity. Maybe his comment should be amended to say that those who are apprehended often encounter unforeseen factors that make them pretty easy to apprehend and convict. A couple of examples he gave are as follows:

One individual on probation who was apprehended had illicit drugs and drug paraphernalia in his pants pockets. He insisted on his innocence and it went to trial. His defense was centered around his assertion that the pants he was wearing were not his pants.

A different case involved a mother and her adult son who resided together and apparently decided to burn their house down and collect insurance. So that they wouldn't arouse undue suspicion by purchasing gasoline, they arranged for a friend to give them a ride to a Dollar General store a couple of blocks from their house. There they purchased the

entire inventory of 22 bottles of rubbing alcohol after inquiring if there might not be more that weren't yet out on the shelf. But 22 bottles was all that store had at the time. They returned home and decided to start the fire in the mechanical room. They poured out all 22 bottles of the quite flammable alcohol and set the empty bottles around the nearby kitchen, lit the fire, and closed the door to the mechanical room. The fire started all right. But by closing the door the oxygen-deprived fire sputtered and smoked furiously. The fire department arrived and doused the fire. But the empty alcohol bottles and the video from the cash register at Dollar General and the testimony of the one who provided transportation wove a very incriminating tale. Now the house is mostly ruined but still standing. The previous inhabitants didn't collect any of the anticipated insurance settlement. However, depending on how the sentencing from the criminal charges is laid out, that could provide some near-term answers to their housing needs.

• • • • •

A quote attributed to William Wilberforce seems as pertinent today as it did when he said it, "Of all things, guard against neglecting God in the secret place of prayer." 

# Respect: a School Issue

Brooke Stoltzfus, New Columbia, PA

**W**hat is respect? According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, respect means "to feel or show honor or esteem for and to hold in high regard." A lack of respect in a school can cause ignorance, lack of ambition, and rampant disobedience.

A school can be compared to a military. The officers must follow the guidelines that their superiors have laid down, much like the teachers. The regular soldier, or student, is expected to respect his commanding officer, follow his orders, and obey the basic rules, whether they are spelled out or implied.

One thing a school's staff must learn is the balance between being a friend to the student and keeping their place of authority and respect in the classroom. The teacher must require the respect of their students not only for themselves but also for their colleagues. Joking with the students about other teachers does not encourage respect for any teacher. Teachers who continually

make "innocent" jokes about certain students will not have the respect of their students. These things will quickly destroy the students' respect.

Fortunately, there are some things that can build a student's respect for his teacher. If the teacher listens to and tries to understand the complications in a student's life, he will quickly gain his students' respect because they will know he cares about them. Another way to build respect is consistency. If a teacher consistently upholds the rules, students will feel safe because they know what their teacher expects and how to meet those expectations. This safe feeling will produce respect for this teacher. The most important role of a teacher is to be a good example of a follower of Christ, keeping in mind the mental and spiritual well-being of the students.

Students are often admonished to be respectful, but they may not feel like it in many instances. Just as a soldier must obey his commanding officers, students must realize that all they have to do to be respectful

is to obey in a cheerful manner. Disrespect may not seem detrimental right now, but someday it will reap bad habits that will follow them for the rest of their lives.

Staff and students are not the only cause of disrespect in schools. Parents also have a large impact on the atmosphere of the school. If parents do not show respect for the teachers, whether face-to-face or at home, how can they expect their child to be respectful to the teachers at school? Parents can also cause many problems by siding with their child immediately in a student-versus-teacher situation.

This can cause the student to be more disrespectful because he knows he will have his parents' support. Parents are the backing of the school; their support of the staff is essential to student respect in the school.

Rather than allowing a lack of respect to reign in schools, each of us, whether staff member, student, or parent, can learn to be honest and encouraging. We are the body of Christ. Romans 12:10 exhorts us to love and show honor to one another. Those are the keys to upholding respect in our schools.

*[Written for the Christian Writing class at SMBI, 2024.]*



## mission awareness

# The History of Crique Sarco, Belize, Part 2

*Amish Mennonite Aid, 1977-1999*

*Glen Yoder, Middleburg, PA*

*[To digest all the details of this interesting story read Part One in last month's issue of Calvary Messenger. - FS]*

### **Trials of Life**

**I**n the winter of 1998 on a routine visit, one of the mission board members asked Glen, "What

has happened to you? You seem to have aged dramatically since we were here last." Then I realized I had gone quickly, though subtly, from being able to walk many bush miles in a day, to being able to barely tolerate the pressure of a single bed sheet because of full body pain.

Our son, Tim, and I had very recently returned from the beginning of Hurricane Mitch relief work in Honduras. Tons of rice, beans, and corn were being sent over in larger boats, but smaller skiffs were desperately needed to travel up coastal rivers and make food deliveries to the otherwise unreachable communities. While there, we lived at a Honduran Naval Base. Perhaps something was “caught” there? Or maybe it was caused by a beef worm on my head in prior months?

Extensive medical testing was done in Guatemala City over the next three months. They discovered a massive infection, but neither its exact cause nor cure was diagnosed. At the end of May 1999 our family left Crique Sarco for further testing in the States.

James and Pauline Miller were visiting northern Belize and consented to extend their stay and help out the first several weeks of our absence. The Jonathon Gingerich family, who was serving at Scotland Halfmoon Village in northern Belize at the time, then spent a few weeks in Crique Sarco until the arrival of the Alvin Schlabach family. Alvin and Irene and family had served here from 1991-1994.

By September it became apparent that my medical problem was not easily solved, so we traveled back

down to Belize and brought our things home. In the ensuing months the AMA mission board made the decision to close the work in Crique Sarco. Perhaps the two primary reasons were that no missionary replacements had as yet been found, and the remoteness of the location with required boat travel, made this a rather expensive operation with fuel costing over \$5.00 a gallon (Belize). There also appeared to be a decreasing level of spiritual interest among the nationals. While every church has its growing pains, mission churches face the added burden of frequent mission personnel changes. The Crique Sarco Mennonite Church was no exception.

As preparations for closing the mission were developing, leaders of Caribbean Light and Truth Mission, also located in Toledo District, indicated a willingness to supply an ordained Indian brother to continue the church leadership. When the temporarily-placed Schlabach family left in December 1999, the Mariano Max family moved into the mission house, having arrived from Santa Teresa.

Shortly thereafter, the mission house, guest houses, skiff, and other things, were sold to Dr. Kerfoot Walker of Punta Gorda. He was interested in using these facilities to

accommodate medical teams visiting the village and outlying areas. The Max family then moved into the former Mennonite school house and built a small, thatched kitchen nearby.

The Max family lived in the village nearly two years before moving back to Santa Teresa. It seems they had only received limited acceptance by their own people, and a key member of the family found it hard to call Crique Sarco “home.” Meanwhile, church attendance had further declined. Village leaders in Santa Teresa had also kept threatening Mariano with fines if he didn’t return for fajina (village chopping) on a regular basis.

### **Crique Sarco Today**

We visited Crique Sarco some years later. In many ways nothing has changed. The names of the Tom Wagler family are still witnessed from the sidewalk, for example. Of one thing we were reminded very vividly—the overwhelming hospitality of the Indian people.

A very noticeable change is the road to the village. Buses are used to make daily trips to Punta Gorda. Nearly a dozen men now have driver’s licenses. The Ministry of Works built a steel bridge over the Temash River.

The village economy seems to be improving slowly. Quite a number of new board houses have been built

with wooden floors several feet off the ground. At least three shops and several corn mills help meet village needs. The government has buried a water line from the river to the school house to supplement water needs during the dry season. A public well has also been dug for the town water supply.

Were these 22 years of hard work just a dreadful waste? Consider with me a few additional facts.

There are a number of believers, and regular services are held in the village in a Baptist Church and a Church of the Nazarene. The singing by the congregation and the message by our son, Timothy, was such an inspiration! Tears rolled down our cheeks. They could hardly stop giving out song numbers and singing and seemed very reluctant to end the service.

Augustine Chub (now deceased) earlier moved four miles from the village along the new road. He worked with a group that is called the House of Prayer and was actively involved in evangelism in other villages. He was faithful in teaching the practical doctrines of wearing the veiling, feet washing, and other Bible teachings that were generally untaught.


The children’s songs learned at the mission and Saturday story time are



being sung in the Catholic school. One of their teachers, who is a sincere believer, grew up under former missionaries and is actively teaching the Bible to his students.

There were a few villagers who accepted Christ in their older years and have now passed on to meet their Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Does it matter that not all of them had the opportunity to visibly have been a part of the mission church?

God is not finished working in the village of Crique Sarco. On this visit

to Crique Sarco, one morning in need of some water, I grabbed a bucket and headed for the river. In passing a house someone's voice came over the battery-powered radio singing, "Precious Memories." Ah yes, no matter what happens in the future, the missionaries who lived here will have precious memories. On the way back from the river, the singing had changed to "In the Sweet By and By." By God's grace we shall indeed meet our beloved Indian brothers and sisters "on that beautiful shore." 

## A Woman After God's Heart

### Bridges

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



**T**ricia reached for the door knob, willing herself not to turn and run. She had come to chat with Sarah, an older lady from her church. It wasn't like she knew Sarah extremely well, but there was something about her that had drawn her in. Tricia felt that if any older lady in church would "get her," Sarah would. She was about to find out!

Two hours and a cup of mint tea later, Tricia knew that her gut feeling

about Sarah's "getting her" had been so right. Sarah hadn't overwhelmed her with any bone-rattling, world-shifting revelations, but she had listened. She had asked probing questions. She hadn't scolded. She hadn't interrupted. She had actually listened quite a lot. And after listening, she had also shared stories, many from her own years of experience.

On her way home, Tricia mused about why her time with Sarah had

*been so calming and inspirational. It was like the turmoil and indecision Tricia had taken to Sarah's house had evaporated in her living room. When Tricia began to understand that her own questions and insecurities had been faced by masses of young ladies before her, it offered her an over-arching peace. Other young ladies had wrestled these fears head-on and came out at good places. Rest, that was it. Soul-rest and reassurance, knowing that the battle wasn't unique to her. It was still a battle, yet it didn't feel nearly as hopeless. She also began to grasp a larger picture. She knew assuredly she'd been heard and deeply cared for in Sarah's living room. Why had it taken so much courage and time to set up this talk-date?*

In his message *Why I Am a Conservative Anabaptist and Intend to Remain One*, Merle Burkholder suggests that to the degree to which we are intentional about creating community, and strengthening relationships, so will our church communities be sustainable. Our grandparents lived life with their church brothers and sisters. Quiltings, work bees, and meeting each other's needs happened naturally all week. The challenge we have today is that we rarely see each other outside of church services. Chatting about green beans and dress patterns before and

after services on Sunday doesn't feed our souls deeply or build community. Meaningful relationships call for more intentionality than ever before and is one of the biggest challenges we face. We digitize many of our conversations by texting or sending pictures instead of leaning in on the porch and looking into each other's eyes. This is not all wrong, but are we able to evaluate what our hearts hunger for? How can we *do discipleship* in 2024? How can we nurture strong relationships?

Merle Burkholder continues that many who leave the conservative Anabaptists leave over a lack of relationship. In a world that doesn't have strong families and is starving for connection, one of the things that will make us most attractive is our care for each other. Jesus said that is one of our identifiers.

While we talk about our hunger for heart-connection and for stimulating conversation beyond the abundant green beans, let's wrestle with this further by mentioning the gaps among us. Gaps gape between the child-less and the child-full. Between youth and older. Between varied cultural backgrounds. Between single and married, and between the busy and the retired. Or, the gap between the open-faced person and the introvert who wants to hide.

It does not feel praiseworthy to me when a sister says, “I see you as having life all neatly buttoned-up-like. Surely you don’t struggle with that!” Instead, it’s like I hear her saying, “You have not been needy enough, honest enough, or free and humble enough to admit your own poverty.” I don’t mean running ourselves down to each other, but I *am* suggesting that we be truthful about the struggle and pitch the masks. It may include asking for input, prayer, support, and advice. It’s called vulnerability. Lois Troyer reminded us in last month’s article: “*the messy authenticity of a broken and being-redeemed human is gloriously more beautiful than a carefully-curated and desperately-maintained fake one.*”

It’s the hard times that can drive us together or pry us apart. For sure, they reveal what’s in us. Not unusually, when we pray for ministry opportunities, God allows difficulties, either in me or in them. During times of loss and sadness, hearts are soft and easily ministered to. Sad occasions are God’s invitations to move in on someone. Seize it! Go! Feed! Touch! Pray! Pour your love like oil into their wounds. Refuse to listen to the fearful voices that whimper, “I don’t want to intrude, she probably prefers to be alone.” Learn to move when the Holy Spirit

nudges. Don’t overstay, don’t advise, just pour the oil. The oil may be a hug, prayer in person, flowers, supper, or whatever God shows you. And when it’s your turn to be sad, embrace vulnerability. Allow another to pour the oil. Ministry goes both ways.

For those who think in full-color pictures, following are actual stories and suggestions. Thank you to the *relationship-nurturing ladies* who offered feedback.

•*Mrs. Stoltzfus was new to the area. As a youthful bride she wasn’t sure how she’d get to know the older ladies in her congregation. She spoke of it to one of the older sisters who quickly invited her to a day of visitation. The two cruised the countryside, visiting the older ladies in an introductory kind of way. These sisters have been friends ever since.*

•*A new Mrs. Miller was advised (by her mother) to attend the sisters’ sewing circle of the church community she’d moved to, half a country away. Even so, her wise mama was surprised when only days after the honeymoon, she tried calling her daughter and discovered that she was already dutifully attending her first sewing! A current bride in another state reaches out to busy moms. Her mother advised her to do so.*

•*Sometimes inviting only one family as meal guests allows for more*

personal interaction and makes guests feel especially valued. Also remember to support scheduled sisterhood events that are already in place. Adding more activities doesn't necessarily guarantee more heart-connectedness.

•At Miss Miller's church the youth girls' accountability groups invite an older sister to join them and lead with an inspiration. At Church A, youth girls merge with the older ladies in Sunday school classes. All ages mix as prayer partners. Several ladies invite young and old for impromptu coffee breaks with unhurried conversation. Church B meets in small groups to share about books they are reading. At Church C, young ladies reach out to older mentors. At Church D, the grandmothers shuttle the schoolchildren to and from school.

•A young lady ventures: we can tell if you are genuinely interested in our

lives. Can you stay involved in our lives while you're in Florida? She also asks: is our newfangled techy world intimidating to those who are older?

•Grandma remembers the youth at Bible School and in VS with snail-mail letters, cards, and money. A retired couple prays daily for a long list of friends, and tells them so.

Mrs. Byler will keep us thinking for a while with this conclusion:

•No matter in what stage of life, when a lady gets ahold of the fact that there's a principle in God's Word with a huge blessing attached to it, delightful relationship follows. It's not so much about doing this or doing that, but we learn to open our hearts to each other as we together long to follow God's Word. It changes everything when we begin to grasp God's principles. When we have open hearts that long after God, nurturing relationships happen.



*It matters not what you do—*

Make a nation or a shoe;

For he who does an honest thing

In God's pure sight is ranked a **KING**.

—JOHN PARNELL



## The Christian's God Has Power

*Friedrich and Renita Miller with Mary Ellen Beachy*

**D**o SALT Savings Groups have an impact for God in Cambodia?

On a hot, sunny morning two Cambodian men on a cycle motored into the village of Varin. They had traveled 120 kilometers (80 miles), over dirty, dusty roads to a poor village to meet with their SALT Savings Group. The group gathered together in the shade under one of the houses, and the women sat at a low, wooden table. They listened attentively to the Word of God that the SALT men shared. Children hanging around on the fringes were listening too.

These people, poor country folk, knew how to work. They planted rice and potatoes and other greens. The border of Thailand was not far away. Adults often went there for jobs while grandparents cared for the children at home. In this village of 300 families, most of the people were Buddhists.

Srey Narin was expecting a baby and was worried because she was

overdue. There were no reputable hospitals nearby, only a small government clinic. Would her precious baby survive?

At the SALT Saving Group meeting, this lady asked Samraich, the SALT facilitator, to have a special prayer for her and the baby. The men and other women in the group gathered around Srey Narin and implored God for protection and a safe delivery of the expected baby.

Several days later, a strong, healthy baby was born. Srey Narin rejoiced. She thanked the Lord. This direct answer to prayer brought her to the realization that it is the Christian's God, the living God, Who really has power to answer her prayers. She now believes in Jesus and is joining a small group of believers to worship once a week.

God answered more prayers in this remote village. Many of the people planted cassava. The sun shone hot day after day, and the cassava plants needed rain to grow and thrive. Would there be a major crop failure

because the rains did not come? The villagers worried. They watched the sky for signs of rain. Other surrounding provinces and villages were receiving rain.

“Why not gather together and pray for rain?” someone in the savings group suggested. They met and prayed, asking God to send rain and bless their dry fields of cassava. Several days later the clouds opened and refreshing rain fell from the sky. It soaked into the dry fields, and they could nearly see the green plants growing.

Oh, their hearts rejoiced, God answered their prayer. The cassava crop was growing well. The members of the SALT group called Samraich.

“Samraich, we gathered and prayed for rain,” they said with excitement in their voices. “God sent us rain; God sent His rain. We believe in your God!”

Another woman in this village had land to sell. She had invested in this land, developed it, and wanted to resell it. She had it on the market for a long time, but nobody seemed interested. She prayed and asked God that she could sell the land at a good price. Shortly after she prayed, God answered her prayer. She rejoiced and thanked the Lord.

God answered another prayer for a family with three sons. Their nine-year-old son had a very

painful earache. The local clinic tried everything they could. The parents began wondering if they'd have to travel to a big city for better medical care. The mother had heard how God was answering prayers for people in their village. She brought her boy to Samraich and Kimsan after the savings group's meeting and asked them to pray for her son. They pleaded with God to grant healing to this young boy. There was no immediate change, but the next week when the SALT men came back to Varin the family exclaimed that the earache was gone. It was another time of praise to Jesus!

Shortly after this, two of this boy's brothers got sick. The nine-year-old prayed for his brothers in the name of Jesus. They were healed. Later this boy started to get sick again. He told Samraich, “I prayed for my brothers, but I forgot to ask God to keep me from getting sick again!” What wonderful faith, the faith of a child!

Pray for Samraich and Kimsan, the SALT facilitators, for courage and wisdom as they continue to minister and teach the dear people in Varin. The villagers are hungry for truth. They stand amazed at the power of God.

Praise the Lord, God is moving in SALT Savings Groups in Cambodia!





## Leaving Your Mark

*Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH*

Recently, a friend and former co-worker related something to me that happened in his work. He was working on some modifications to a building we had constructed back when we worked together. My friend's attention was drawn to a mark that was visible on a board nearby. Upon closer examination, he said it dawned on him exactly what it was—my footprint. I used to get harassed about being one of the only fellows wearing basketball shoes to build pole barns. It didn't cross my mind that something as simple as a footprint would still be there after more than a decade, let alone be recognized specifically as mine.

I pondered that conversation on the way home that night. I thought of all the jobs I had done with that crew and the myriad of other jobs that probably had my mark on them. Marks that I had left unintentionally. I thought of all the times I wrote my girlfriend's name on purlins and

trusses while we were courting—marks that I left on purpose.

I couldn't ignore the parallels to the broader scope of our lives. Throughout our lives we are constantly given opportunities to leave our mark whether we recognize those opportunities or not. I've seen people leave their mark on a school, and I've seen people leave their mark on a church. I know someone personally who left her mark on a country. All of those were about leaving your mark on the lives of people. I've had people who left their mark on my life, and I'm sure you have too.

Some people leave bigger marks on our lives than others. Parents leave some of the biggest and longest-lasting marks on our lives. Our parents influence so many different things about us. Most children are genetically similar to their parents, and genetic traits can influence everything from our looks to food preferences, the games we enjoy, whether we get irritable when we're

hungry, if we are likely to have a pet, and the amount of caffeine we consume. However, the people that we are around influence a lot of our behavior, mannerisms, speech, and habits. In some adoption cases, children will have similar speech, behavior, and mannerisms to their family members even though they technically aren't related. My parents have made a major impact or mark in my life and continue to do so.

My mind went to others who left their mark on my life. I thought of my fifth-grade teacher, Dwayne, who took me hunting for the first time, let me drive a truck for the first time, and gave me the only "whippin" I ever received in school. There was Matt, my eighth-grade teacher who became a good friend and later a co-teacher on the mission field and with whom I've shared more than a few laughs. My older siblings helped me navigate the social norms of youth. They showed me what to do and not to do, even allowing me to hang around when they had friends over. There are the students I taught in Belize and seeing how they coped with the home situations some of them had. I thought of my friend, Casey, whose life here on earth was cut short in a tragic accident, but nevertheless will always be an inspiration to me. There was the 80-year-old Brother Juan in

the mountains of Guatemala who shared of the best of his meager food while we helped on a new church building (it was good even if there was a cricket floating in the coffee). I thought of my grandparents whom I learned from in different ways. I'll never forget the phone call I had with my grandfather the day before he died. I thought of my brother, Joel, who through his relative happiness despite his disabilities challenged me to be more thankful for my life. Those are just a few of the many people who have left a mark on my life.

Circumstances or experiences often leave marks, and not all marks are pleasant. Death has a way of leaving an impression on people. Losing someone close to you can have a way of changing our lives or at least our outlook on life. I've gotten calls about friends my age who have suddenly entered eternity without any warning or expectation. Those experiences have a way of putting life in perspective. I have friends who have lost parents, siblings, nieces and nephews, and children. I've seen a man die, and I've been the first one to check for signs of life for someone who has passed away. I've even spoken to a murderer. Those experiences leave a mark.

I've experienced relationship trauma. I didn't know what emotional

pain was until God allowed me to go through that. Broken relationships, shattered hopes, and the death of a dream leave wounds. They heal, but there are still scars. Without that, I wouldn't be able to relate to and understand other people who go through those things.

Proverbs 27:6 says, "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*" Have you ever had one of those difficult conversations? Someone who cares enough about you to talk to you about something they see in your life? If you really care about someone then you talk to them directly, in person. I vividly remember the men who have done that for me. Thankfully, I was able to recognize it for what it was. They cared enough about me to talk to me even though it might have jeopardized our relationship.

Sometimes those marks don't feel so good even though they benefit us. But it's not what happens to us but how we choose to react to it. There is an old saying, "The same hot water that can make a potato soft makes an egg hard." And an old cliché that goes along with that is, "You can let it make you bitter or better."

What about the flip side? Where have I left my mark? Ponder that thought with me for a few minutes. I'm not talking about my literal shoe

print or penciled heart and initials in the rafters of some barn, but where has my mark been left in the life or lives of others? Do I go out of my way to leave a positive mark in the lives of others, or am I content just letting things happen organically? What am I doing now that is leaving a mark? Is it positive? If it isn't, what can I change to make that happen? If I have an opportunity to let someone know that they had a positive impact in my life, do I take it?

Those who know me well will tell you that I'm a relational person. A few years back, I came to the conclusion that people and relationships are the most important things in life. When we were born, we arrived on earth with absolutely nothing. When God calls us to eternity, we can't take a single belonging with us. There is only one thing that we can "take with us" to heaven—the people whose lives we have influenced for God. The best thing you can leave behind when you go is also the only thing that you can take with you.

So, how do we do that? How do we leave our mark in such a way that it points others to Jesus? How do we put this concept into shoe leather?

First of all, we have to make sure that we have God written all over us. I used to have a motto that said, "Be the moon—reflect the Son."

People need to see that we identify with Jesus. They need to see that we have something that they want. We need to cultivate a joy bordering on pervasiveness that people can't ignore. I recently heard a message on joy. If someone sees you in the grocery store or the hardware store, what is it about you that draws them? Your aura should radiate Jesus and the truth that He is in your life.

I think we all understand that it is difficult to maintain that joyful demeanor and positive impact on other people. I had a co-worker once who stopped me and informed me that he was almost afraid to ask me a question because I was stalking around with a furrowed brow and a frown on my face. That was a wake-up call for me. It's easy to get so self-absorbed that we forget about the people around us and the impact that our attitudes and actions can have on them.

I always thought that being a Christian and having that daily walk with Jesus was something that would come easier with age and maturity. I definitely have more of the age, but I don't necessarily find it easier than it was when I was younger. It still takes effort.

Maybe you think maintaining your walk with the Lord will get easier as you grow older. I hate to break it to

you, but for most of us, it doesn't. So, don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today. There is no better time like the present. Work diligently on your relationship with Jesus so that He can leave His mark on others through you. Don't wait. Be intentional about it—starting now. Listen to God.

Have you ever had someone come to mind for no apparent reason? I have. When it happens, I started praying for those people and then reaching out to them to let them know that God had put them on my mind. I don't let them know every time but enough to remind them that someone cares. I might not be leaving a big mark, but it's a start. Any mark—small or large—makes a difference in a person's life.

Every day we brush shoulders with people who may or may not know God. We are constantly presented with opportunities to leave our mark, however small, on the lives of those around us. What will other people say about us one day? Consider the footprints you are leaving. You never know where or when you'll leave your mark. You probably will not find out on this side of eternity of all the people whose lives you left your mark on. Jesus was in the business of leaving marks and we should be too.



## THOUGHT GEMS

The hardest thing to give is in.

• • • • •

Hats off to the past; sleeves up for the future.

• • • • •

Never live in hope and expectation with your arms folded.

• • • • •

The really happy man is the one who can enjoy the scenery even  
when he has to take a detour.

• • • • •

The best bridge between hope and despair is often a good night's sleep.

• • • • •

Happiness is not the absence of conflict but the ability to cope with it.

• • • • •

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

• • • • •

An honest man is the noblest work of God. *-Alexander Pope*

• • • • •

When it comes to giving, some people stop at nothing.

• • • • •

Lost hope is the undertaker's best friend.

• • • • •

The badge of honesty is simplicity.