



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

*Galatians 6:14*

## OCTOBER 2024

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Calvary Messenger

October 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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# Life's Duties

Shannon Stoltzfus, Coatesville, PA

Mine is the duty  
Of labor and toil,  
My hands the work to bear,  
To work the works of Him Who  
sent me,  
Not to others my life compare.

The truth is clear,  
Reality sweet,  
That one must not toil alone.  
Because His Presence hovers o'er  
me,  
I find strength, let fears begone.

The Secret Place,  
The Clifted Rock,  
When the pressures 'round me  
beat,  
Is where I turn to, let faith arise,  
My soul finds REST, oh sweet  
retreat.

My God, my Hope,  
Grant me the lot,  
What e'er my portion be,  
Help me to fully drink the cup  
Of all thy plans for me.

I will not fret,  
I cannot murmur,  
But will instead Thy FACE behold,  
While I fulfill life's little duties,  
Thy love shall more and more  
unfold.

I trust my Lord,  
His face I see,  
Although my eyes are dim,  
I know He is right here, right now,  
My tasks have worth in HIM.



## Greedy Dive-bombers

It was at dawn on a quiet weekend morning when I heard the whirr of a hummingbird’s wings. It came to the feeder to break its fast with a quick drink of sweet syrup. After a few nervous sips as it became accustomed to my presence, it sat on the perch for a longer drink. However, its breakfast was soon interrupted by a dive-bomb by another one of its species. After a few skirmishes, chatters, and clashes of wings, the first bird flew away to safety. Meanwhile, the imposter didn’t take a drink but sat within feet of the feeder to guard the food source. When another one approached the feeder, it dashed at it and the battle continued. After none appeared while the greedy one was close by, it flew 30 feet away and watched from a nearby tree. Again and again, it chased off other birds from the feeder.

Why would this tiny bundle of energy refuse to let others drink when there were four stations at the feeder? Was it afraid the others would drink all of its food? A ruby-throated hummingbird weighs between 0.1 to 0.2 ounces, which is less than

the weight of a nickel.<sup>1</sup> Everything about a “hummer” is small, except for its appetite. “Saying someone eats like a bird has always been a misnomer, because birds have big appetites. Even by normal bird standards, though, ruby-throated hummingbirds are big eaters. They have to eat at least half their body weight in sugar every day, and they typically feed five to eight times every hour.”<sup>2</sup> So, hummers need lots of food. But is that why they keep others from eating? Maybe it’s because their tiny brain, a real birdbrain, cannot reason that there is enough food at the feeder for all the hummers in its neighborhood. Or was this particular hummer a greedy little sinner?

Greed is an “intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth, power, or food.”<sup>3</sup> Or, greed is “reprehensible acquisitiveness; insatiable desire for wealth,” or “excessive desire to acquire or possess more (especially more material

1. <https://www.reconnectwithnature.org/news-events/the-buzz/5-things-about-hummingbirds/>

2. *Ibid*

3. *Merriam-Webster*

wealth) than one needs or deserves.”<sup>4</sup> “Greed is often connected with money, a desire to acquire as much of it as possible, but it can refer to that kind of urge toward anything, like food or material possessions. When you see greed, it’s an ugly thing.”<sup>5</sup>

Is greed a sin? If it is, surely it must be very uncommon. Have you ever heard someone confess to being greedy? The word “greedy” is used five times in the Bible (KJV). A well-known verse refers to the qualifications of leaders, “*Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre*” (I Timothy 3:8). But a more common synonym of greed is covetousness. Surely, the tenth commandment is not a common sin among us, “*Thou shalt not covet*” (Exodus 20:17). The New Testament confirms the sinfulness of greed or covetousness, listing it with what seem to us as “bad sins.” “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*” (I Corinthians

6:9-10). “*For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*” (Ephesians 5:5).

Why is greed or covetousness such a condemned character trait? Isn’t it just making sure we have enough for our own needs? Or maybe just a little more? Maybe the answer is in Ephesians 5:5, which calls a covetous man an idolater. Surely, we do not bow down at the shrine of possessions or money. We wouldn’t think of praying to the “god” of things or stuff, would we? After all, this just sounds like the American dream, doesn’t it? Isn’t amassing everything I can and using all my energies for gain my personal right?

There is a trait in greed or covetousness that goes beyond providing for our own needs with enough to help God’s work advance. Notice the words “reprehensible, insatiable,” and “excessive desire to acquire or possess more than one needs or deserves” noted in the definition given in the third paragraph. Maybe the hummingbird is a good example. The greedy one wanted *more than it could consume* and wanted to *keep others from having any* as well. It hadn’t done anything to provide the sugary liquid in the feeder. It just didn’t

4. *Vocabulary.com*

5. *Ibid*

want anyone else to enjoy what someone (my wife) had made available for all the little hummers in our neighborhood. (Using the hummingbird as an example of greed isn't making a judgment call on its morality. I believe animals act out of their animal instincts which may

have taken a turn for the worse after the Fall in the Garden.)

What is the opposite of greed? How do I stop being so greedy? I will save that for a succeeding discourse.

“To be content with what we possess is the greatest and most secure of riches.” -Cicero

-AY 

## Announcement

# Faithful Men's Seminar

November 1-2, 2024



## Passionate Purity – Preserving Sexual Health

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

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

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

**Fighting Porn** – Ben Waldner, Plain City, OH

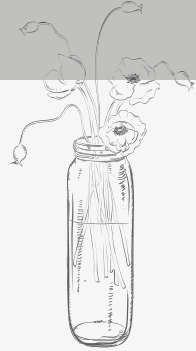
**Developing A Next-Gen Mentality for Sexuality** – Dave Snyder,  
Plain City, OH

**Location: Ontario, Canada**

**Hosted by the Ontario Midwest Churches and Deeper Life Ministries**

For more information please contact Deeper Life Ministries:

(614) 873-1199 or [info@dlmohio.org](mailto:info@dlmohio.org)



# Serenity in Serving

Mary, Martha, & the Master

## Faithful Women Seminar

Saturday, October 5, 2024

9:00 Opening and Worship Time

9:30 **Lord, Don't You Care?** Busyness & Burnout –*Christine Martin, Rochelle, VA*

Many women deal with time pressures and feeling spread thin in many directions. Here, drawing from Martha's experience, we will explore how to think about busyness, burnout, and the Lord's care for us in the midst of many responsibilities.

10:15 Break

10:45 **Faithful Priorities** Wisdom for the To-Do List –*Estalee Anderson, Rochelle, VA*

Amid life's constant demands and distractions, how can we anchor our priorities in what truly matters? This topic will explore the concept of living with "Mary's heart" in a "Martha's world," learning to discern and commit to priorities that are rooted in deep and heartfelt connection with Jesus.

11:30 Lunch

1:00 Worship Time and Offering

1:20 **Seeking One Thing** Personal Life Experiences –*MaryAnn Zook, Wytheville, VA*

–*Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH*

In this session, we will hear two women's testimonies about their personal life experiences and what they learned through it about seeking the Lord as Mary did.

2:05 Break

2:35 **Open Hearts, Open Homes** Everyday Hospitality –*Charissa Troyer,*

*Plain City, OH*

The essence of hospitality lies not in perfection but in genuine care. Here, we will seek to identify with Martha's hosting experience, explore how everyday God-pleasing hospitality looks, and learn tips to host in warm and gracious ways.

*Hosted by and held at Deeper Life Ministries, Plain City, OH.*

*To register or for more information please call 614-873-1199*

*or email [info@dmlmohio.org](mailto:info@dmlmohio.org).*

*There is no charge for this seminar.*

*A freewill offering will be taken to cover expenses.*



## ***Annual Calvary Bible School Cleanup***

Come join us in our CBS cleaning on November 11-13, 2024, in preparation for the next school year. This is open for young and older. Our staff building will be included this year so we could really use 45-50 people. If you, your youth group, or other friends could help us, we would really appreciate it. Good food, lodging in the dorms, cleaning supplies, and evening volleyball will be provided.

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

## **the bottom line**

# **Cremation and Its Associations**

*Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA*

In this past while, we have seen increasing incidences of morticians advertising their services either as traditional burials or crematory endings. As cultures are subject to being revolutionary in practice, they also become evolutionary, along with a needed justification away from God. Everything a person does, or even says, must have a plausible justification, either in thought or word, or both.

A minister I know suggested

getting an Amish-built coffin when he dies and choosing cremation to leave this earth as the cheapest way possible. (He has since deceased but did not go that route.) A daughter of one of our church sisters had her body cremated and specified having her ashes buried above the burial site of her mother at our Weavertown Church's cemetery. A well-known pastor who frequently visited our congregation with his wife and children, and was a long-time friend of our family, died, and the family



contacted me to preach at his funeral by his request. I had commitments away from home at that time and could not be present. I later heard that he had requested that his body be cremated. I was appalled! Even now, it brings tears to my eyes and grief to my soul.

What does the Bible say? We will begin with the New Testament, and work back in time to the creation. For all practical purposes, an article here cannot present the amount of material, evidence, examples, and emphasis as one could do in a sermon.

- The deceased body is said to be a seed. *“But some man will say, how are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened [made alive], except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body”* (I Corinthians 15:35-38).

Cremation is destroying the seed, the dead body, reducing it to ashes, not dust. However, even so, that body will still rise in the final judgment of God. The eternal and fixed plan of God is for every dead body to be reduced to dust, not ashes.

- The human body is the temple of God. *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God [this earthly body], and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”* (I Corinthians 3:16-17). Defiling this temple of God is the subject here in this text. To defile is to alter, violate its chastity, to change form. Strongs defines it as: to shrivel or wither, to ruin or destroy.

Being the temple of God, where He (God) dwells by His Spirit, verifies God’s sanctification and ownership. This human body shall not be marred by tattoos, cuttings, piercing by rings on the ears, nose, lips, eyebrows, nor anywhere else by any means for non-surgical procedures (Deuteronomy 14:1-2). It is all an abomination to God; He hates it. In death, the body shall be granted all due respect, even honor, as being representative of the intended former dwelling place of God.

The fire of God is reserved for the ungodly men at the end of the world. *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against [until] the day of judgment [of condemnation] and perdition of ungodly men”* (II Peter 3:7). People being burned by fire, as an act of

God, has always signified their condemnation, their just sentence, their final end, their eternal disgrace, dishonor, and horrific disapproval by a holy God, Who redeems and secures in bliss and rest for His own. Those who repent and believe the Gospel are saved from both the condemnation judgment and the eternal fire of hell.

*“Reserved unto fire”* is declared for those who had failed to appeal to His mercy and grace by repentance of sin and faith in the sacrifice of Jesus for sinners. The repentance part is crucial for man’s part in becoming right with God, which in recent years is very often absent in the preaching in our churches.

Burning the body of the deceased is reminiscent of hell fire itself, and should cause us as believers in God and His Word to not even consider cremation as an option for the final disposition of the body of those departed. The association of cremation as an end to a body is an association to hell fire that we should clearly and conscientiously avoid.

God has chosen to teach mankind by representations in life of eternal realities, and making us God-conscious in the life we live now. Cremation is one of those representations.

We have these representations in

the Bible:

- Creation—the eternal re-creation in heaven
- Plagues in Egypt—plagues upon the wicked in earth’s final judgment
- Baptism—Israelites passing in the Red Sea
- Communion—Jesus having died to atone for our sins
- Marriage—being joined to Christ, the Bridegroom of the church
- Birth of babies—our need of being born again for eternal life
- Parables—Jesus taught truth by numerous representations
- Cremation—representation of ultimate disgrace and dishonor
- Cremation—representation of being gone and forgotten by man
- Cremation—representation of hell fire, an eternal reality

Bible history has multiple instances of bodies being burned by God Almighty, or otherwise disposed without a burial. Ecclesiastes 6:4 says that one who is born premature, as being lifeless, is better than one who dies without having a burial. In either of these two cases, there is no respect shown nor a place set aside as a remembrance of life. The Bible says that wicked King Jehoiakim shall be buried like a donkey (Jeremiah 22:19). That was known as the garbage heap outside Jerusalem where dead animals were cast along

with all other disposables, a place of continual smoldering and burning and its accompanying reeking smells. It was that detestable, never-ending fire, which Jesus likened to hell, saying a number of times, “*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:43-48), from dead animals disposed of there.

- Joshua 7:15,25. Achan, along with his sons and daughters were burned with fire.

- II Kings 21:17-24. King Ahab’s descendants shall die and not be buried, because of his unceasing evils. The Bible says that those died in the city, the dogs shall eat, and those who died in the country shall be a feast for the birds.

- Psalm 79:1-5. Israel’s lament for those who had no burial.

- Psalm 83:9-10. Sisera and Jabin perished and the bodies were treated as dung.

- Jeremiah 49:2. The sins of the Ammonites was so great that the prophecy included the extremity of burning their daughters with fire to wipe out their posterity. It was the sign of extreme punishment for the exclusion of remembrance and eternal condemnation.

Cremation is one of man’s ways to wipe out any memorial or remembrance of the life of the deceased. There have been people

who also assumed that having bodies cremated would make any resurrection impossible, hence as a way to undo appearing in a future judgment. We know that God is neither hindered nor frustrated about bringing all to the final judgment, even if their ashes were widely scattered over thousands of miles of remote mountains, or over the vast oceans at their deepest depths.

- Wicked Moab was punished with fire upon their city and people because they, mind you, burned the bones of the king of Edom, himself also having been an ungodly man (Amos 2:1-2).

The idols of the heathen (non-Jewish) nations were taken, along with the people they conquered with their lands, and those idols were to be burned, as stated by God in Deuteronomy 7:5, 25, and as done by David in I Chronicles 14:12, and by Jehu in II Kings 10:26-28. Reducing the idols to ashes was the best way, not to merely reduce their immediate remembrance, but the memory of them completely. Burning of anything is the surest way to do it, a very strong reason against cremation. You see the association by reducing whatever being undesired as any way of remembering. There is the far-out association that even God cannot remember them, find them,

and bring them to judgment.

In Exodus 32, Aaron, by popular consensus, made a molten calf. Moses, in holy consternation, came down to them, burned that calf idol, ground it to powder, and scattered it upon the water of the land. Remembrance gone, right? No! Moses forced them to drink of this polluted water. This lesson is that the burning of the molten calf did not cancel the memory of it, or make atonement for their trespass in worship.

In Genesis 23:19, Abraham bought the cave at Machpelah as the place to bury the body of his wife, Sarah. This whole chapter is devoted to that special move, showing the importance of burial. Abraham also was buried there, and later Isaac, his son. His son, Jacob, told his sons to bury him there.

In Genesis 5:26, Joseph died and was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt. Three hundred years later, they carried that coffin to Palestine as its final resting place. The Bible says that God buried the body of Moses after he died, at an undisclosed location. Jesus died, being witnessed as a fact. They saw where and how His body was buried.

Cremation is pagan in origin, and was widely practiced in Asian countries. Heathenism dulls the senses to the finer issues in regard to

the sanctity both of life and of death. Current figures show that 55% of the deceased in the U.S. are cremated, and it is increasing. It is projected to become more commonplace as time goes on, and maybe level off more or less in another 50 years to 80%. We say, as God-honoring and Bible-believing people, we should be prepared to be settled in our minds and be conversant in our talk to have a ready witness against this evil practice. Some of our people are already faced with this issue. It is much better to address this ahead of time as a preventative rather than try to deal with it after choices are made for its use.

Some people consider it because it is cheaper than a traditional funeral. But, if cheaper is better, we do not routinely go the cheaper route in regard to choosing medical procedures as a way to add another year, or several years, to our lives. Cremation might cost several thousand less dollars, whereas some treatments or operations might cost upwards to several hundred thousand dollars as a way to live longer.


To cut costs, many in poorer countries bury their dead within 24 hours. Our neighbors had what is called a “green burial,” by which the body was placed in a green body bag, and buried thus. Then there

is also what is called “human body composting,” which is now legal in six states. It will transfer the body, bones and all, to dust. It is said to be “earth friendly,” which can be stored, or used in your garden for growing whatever (Google).

It remains, that, by life or by death, we want to be God-conscious about our Maker and Redeemer. For it is God who inhabits eternity, and has, as it were, placed eternity in our hearts. Even the heathen, and false religions with them, routinely have an awareness of life after death. Generally, they pursue it as a place or an experience of betterment, based on doing the best you can, at least a bit above the average person of the general society. These things are human-centered, including the ways of body disposal, without considering God, and the associated judgment before Him at the end of life. All of life has an association with God that clearly includes the birth of babies, proper food and living habits, personal health and hygiene, appealing to the medical professions for needed corrections and physical well-being, and eventually a proper Christian burial.

There is a bit of mystery about our origin, our birth, and maybe even somewhat about our lives. But there is much greater mystery

about death, and what every living soul will face some day after we die. That will especially be about death itself, our resurrection, the final judgment, and the Christian’s eternal state of immortality. I wrote a book on what the Bible teaches on those four things. The believer’s prospect of the future should not be marred by a cremation of our body. Dying in the Lord is heightened by the evidence of dying, having a God-honoring funeral, accompanied by a final viewing, and proceeding to the graveside with family and friends to share in the witness of seeing the body laid in the grave, and then hearing the solemn words of committing the spirit and soul to God, our Maker and Redeemer.

**The Bottom Line** is that there is something sacred in an elevated way about a God-centered funeral in a church house, concluding with a burial in a cemetery, with the primary spokesmen being ordained church pastors. Children should not be permitted to frolic and play in a cemetery. Adults should refrain from cemetery jokes, jokes about the devil, angels, or Peter’s gate, etc. in regard to the afterlife. The prophecies by God of the future are meant to evoke the utmost seriousness in our lives and in those who hear us. It is a grave error to laugh when we should weep. 

# The Power of Mine

*Lyle Musser, Denver, PA*

I can just see it happening: Mom walks across the living room and takes a sharp object from the nine-month-old who screams in protest as Mom carefully takes it from her grip. Mom explains that the broken toy with sharp edges could hurt, and quickly offers a replacement.

Where did the nine-month-old learn to grasp and hold things as mine? And how did she learn to communicate it so eloquently? She can't talk, but everything about her body language communicates that she is the possessor, and others dare not mess with "her things." Before she can even properly hold things, her heart is set to grasp, grab, and hold things as mine. At nine months old, she has the mindset that she is the owner and possessor of all things within her reach. True, many of the things within her reach are for her use, but she certainly has no right to act as though she is the ultimate owner.

Now let me take you to a situation that is happening as I write [September 2017]. Two weeks ago Houston, Texas, was slammed by Hurricane Harvey. This storm dumped a record-breaking 51.88" of

rain. The devastation is tremendous. Yesterday, Hurricane Irma and its category 5 winds ravaged a few islands in the Caribbean. By late today it's going to hit Florida.

Right now, thousands if not millions of people are at a clarifying moment in their lives. First, the storm will affect them. Second, the orders to evacuate are mandatory. (It sounds grim when the officials warn those who stay to take a permanent marker and write their names and social security numbers on their arms.) Third, the amount of stuff they can take is limited.

Right now, those in the path of the storm are roaming the house to determine what goes and what stays. In the last 48 hours, the size of their holdings has shrunk from the size of their estate to the size of their vehicle. It's not just valuables that are being clarified—but also values. If you learned yesterday that you had to flee today, what valuables would you hold onto as mine and which would you leave behind, knowing you can either do without them or replace them?

## **Covetousness—It's Inborn**

We can learn a lot from these two scenarios. The nine-month-

old teaches us that covetousness is inborn. Our selfish human desires cause us to reach, grab, acquire, grasp, and hang onto things with a stingy frown and nasty scream that threatens anyone who dares to take the stuff that we call mine. Fleeing a hurricane teaches us that the things we hold are temporary. No matter how tightly we hold them, we cannot secure them if the true Owner—God—decides to take them back. The Biblical word for covetousness originally comes from two words that mean “more in quantity” and “to have or to hold.” Covetousness at its roots means “to hold more.” This basic root definition is aimed squarely at the rich as the ones who literally “hold more.” However, its overtones suggest that a person who does not “hold more” but has an eager desire to grasp more is also covetous.

### **A Temporary Stay on Covetousness**

Covetousness as an activity (“holding more”) applies more directly to the rich. Covetousness as a desire (eager to “hold more”) applies more directly to the less wealthy—especially to those who aspire toward greater wealth and want to catch up to the standard or social status of someone else.

When God aimed Hurricane Irma at south Florida a few days ago, He

also enacted a temporary stay on covetousness. Suddenly, people who were ambitiously acquiring more last week experienced the reverse of covetousness (“holding less”) this week. It’s amazing how one small act of God, spinning out a category 5 hurricane, immediately clarifies the values of those in the path of the storm.

On the other hand, God’s people should not need a storm to enact a temporary stay on covetousness. It should be permanent in our lives. We know that a permanent stay on covetousness has been enacted in our lives when, through contentment, joy, and thanksgiving, we honor God as the Owner, Giver, and sometimes Taker of all things. We recognize that all of “our” things have been given by God. We grasp “our” valuables like wet bars of soap—not so loose with an “I don’t care” attitude that they just slide out of our hands, but not so tight that our impulse to control them shoots them out of our grasp.

A balanced grip is always a challenge, as our nature is to move toward extremes. Rather, we must have the attitude of Job when he said: *“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD”* (Job 1:21).

As the storm rages in Florida, I expect to hear heroic stories just like we heard from Houston two weeks ago. Stories that highlighted compassion, bravery, and generosity as people took their own resources such as kayaks, fishing boats, and large construction equipment and used them to rescue those who were trapped. Tragedy tears down the selfish hold on “our” things and motivates even the ungodly to employ their resources as a blessing to those in need. May God’s people be part of ministering compassion to those who are devastated by the storms of life.

We must, however, be sure that our compassion is not just reserved for

times of tragedy. It should not take a tragedy for us to see needs and loosen our hold on “our” things as we use them to help others. God’s people should be motivated by compassion all the time, using the resources given to our care to bless the lives of others. We may not hold much, and the things we do hold may seem very common, causing us to shrink back with excuses of inadequacy. God does not demand greatness; He only asks as He did Moses, “*What is that in thine hand?*” (Exodus 4:2). If we, like Moses, hold something as common as a rod, God can use it mightily when we offer it up in service to Him.

*[Reprinted with permission from “Anabaptist Financial.”]*



AUTUMN

The katydid says it as plain as can be,  
And the crickets are singing it under the tree;  
In the aster’s blue eyes you may read the same hint,  
Just as clearly as if you had seen it in print;  
And the corn sighs it too, as it waves in the sun,  
That autumn is here, and summer is done.

-PERSIS GARDINER





## marriages

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

### **Hostetler-Nisly**

Bro. Andy, son of Benjamin and Frannie Hostetler, Middlefield, OH, and Sis. Rodica, daughter of Keith and Dorothy Nisly, Partridge, KS, on June 2, 2023, at Plainview Mennonite Church for Cedar Crest A.M. Church by Lee Nisly.

### **Miller-Beachy**

Bro. Arlyn, son of Roman and Ruth Miller, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Lynita, daughter of Jacob and Luann Beachy, Hutchinson, KS, on May 6, 2023, at Plainview Mennonite Church for Cedar Crest A.M. Church by Lee Nisly.

### **Miller-Mast**

Bro. Joshua, son of Barbara and the late Paul Miller, Paris, TN, and Sis. Monica, daughter of Jason and Eunice Mast, Crossville, TN, on July 27, 2024, at the Methodist Church for Mount Moriah Mennonite Church by John Ray Miller.

### **Miller-Miller**

Bro. Lonnie, son of Delmar and Rhoda Miller, Owenton, KY, and Sis. LeEtta, daughter of Samuel and Wilma Miller, Owenton, KY, on June 21, 2024, at Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church for Owenton Amish Mennonite Church by Joshua Yoder.



### **Peachey-Nisly**

Bro. Brent, son of Michael and Regina Peachey, Centerville, PA, and Sis. Allison, daughter of Lee and Yvonne Nisly, Hutchinson, KS, on June 17, 2023, at Cedar Crest A.M. Church by Lee Nisly.

### **Raber-Stoltzfus**

Bro. Bryce, son of Jonathan and Susan Raber, New Concord, OH, and Sis. Katelyn, daughter of Dave and Leah Ruth Stoltzfus, Honey Brook, PA, on April 6, 2024, at Brick Lane Community Church for Summit View Christian Fellowship by Dave Stoltzfus.

### **Schmucker-King**

Bro. Derek, son of Abner and Angela Schmucker, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Anita, daughter of Jake and Joyce King, Arlington, KS, on January 13, 2024, at Cedar Crest A.M. Church by Lee Nisly.

### **Weaver-Yoder**

Bro. Joshua, son of Freeman and Mary Ann Weaver, Cullman, AL, and Sis. Alanna, daughter of Isaac and Vicki Yoder, Chappells, SC, on August 24, 2024, at Laurel Hill Baptist Church for Cross Hill Mennonite Church by Jay Stoll.



## cradle roll

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

**Bontrager**, Wayne and Linda (Miller), Parsons, KS, seventh child, fourth daughter, Emily Ruth, August 6, 2024.

**Byler**, Linnford and Amber (Martin), Whiteville, TN, seventh child, fourth daughter, Fiona Joy, August 4, 2024.

**Hostetler**, Amos, Jr. and Kristina (Miller), Partridge, KS, first child and son, Zayne Archer, July 29, 2024.

**Kauffman**, Dwayne and Marcia (Wagler), Fredonia, KY, third child and son, Coleson Blake, May 2, 2024.

**King**, Enos and Lois (Yoder), Partridge, KS, fourth child, second son, Malachi Reed, July 15, 2024.

**Miller**, Arlyn and Lynita (Beachy), Hutchinson, KS, first child and son, Hudson Cole, May 24, 2024.

**Miller**, Daniel and Lillian (Eash), Arlington, KS, second child, first daughter, Elizabeth Ariel, January 24, 2024.

**Miller**, Darren and Jennifer (Miller), Partridge, KS, second child, first son, Isaac Vaughn, November 28, 2023.

**Miller**, Hosea and Wanda (Yoder), Owenton, KY, first child and son, Kaleb Everit, August 3, 2024.

**Miller**, Jordan Earl and Racine Lynette (Mast), Cross Hill, SC, currently serving in El Salvador, first child and son, Archer Thomas, April 28, 2024.

**Miller**, Randall and Rachel (Miller), Hutchinson, KS, third child, second son, Finley Emrys, June 6, 2024.

**Shetler**, Tony and Norma (Miller), Partridge, KS, second child and daughter, Janessa Kate, January 23, 2024.


**Stutzman**, Marcus and Joanne (Martinez), Fredonia, KY, third child, second son, Trenton Wade, June 27, 2024.

**Wright**, Barrett and Marla (Martin), Rochelle, VA, fifth child and son, Copper Edison, August 30, 2024.

**Yoder**, Jeffery and Tabitha (Graber), Fredonia, KY, first child and daughter, Natalie Jane, June 6, 2024.

**Yoder**, Jeremy and Melanie (Miller), South Hutchinson, KS, first child and son, Flint Emerson, May 30, 2024.

**Yoder**, Joni and Andrea (Eash), Georgetown, OH, fourth child, first son, Dominic Zane, August 3, 2024.

 The Light of the World knows no power failures.

**Yoder**, Matthew and Heidi (Yoder), Owenton, KY, second child and daughter, Cadence Christina, August 2, 2024.

**Yoder**, Neal and Lilly (Yoder), Oskaloosa, KS, second child and daughter, Oaklyne Saige, July 9, 2024.

**Yoder**, Timothy and Margretta (Beachy), Hutchinson, KS, fourth child, second daughter, Annalise Hope, July 8, 2024.

**Yoder**, Philip and Jessica (Graber), Oskaloosa, KS, seventh child, fourth son, Isaac Rowen, July 27, 2024.

**Yoder**, Wendall and Donna (Wagler), Oskaloosa, KS, first child and son, Bryson Wendall, July 18, 2024.

**Zimmerman**, Nelson and Ellen (Hurst), Green Spring, WV, thirteenth child, eighth daughter, Eulalia Peace, July 16, 2024.



## ordination

*May the grace of God be upon our brother as he ministers faithfully. Let us pray for him.*

**Bro. Steve Stoltzfus**, 54, (wife, Linda Fisher), Bridgeton, NJ, was ordained deacon for Salem Co. Mennonite Church on April 7, 2024. Preordination messages were given by Ben Miller. The charge was given by Melvin Beiler, assisted by Lee Stoltzfus and Ben Stoltzfus. Micah Beiler shared the lot.



## obituaries

**Kuhns**, Harvey B., 94, of Tuscola, IL, passed away peacefully on August 1, 2024, at his home surrounded by his family. He was born on August 28, 1929, to Ben M. and Sadie (Yoder) Kuhns, Arthur, IL. He married Verna Kauffman on June 17, 1948, in Arthur, IL. She passed away on July 3, 2015, after 67 years of marriage.

He is survived by six children: Mary Kathryn (Dan) Gingerich, Abbeville, SC; Edna Mae, Tuscola; Elsie (Alva) Miller, Arthur; Gary (Ruth), Tuscola; Wilma (Wesley) Yoder, Arthur; Duane

(Irene), Arthur; 14 grandchildren, 31 great-grandchildren, two brothers: Jerry, Arthur; Omer (Barbara), Sullivan; and one sister: Mary Miller, Arthur.

Harvey was preceded in death by his wife, Verna, parents, four brothers: Menno, Levi, Abe, and Henry, and one sister, Anna Kauffman.

Harvey was a lifelong farmer and was still able to enjoy driving the combine during the 2023 season, working alongside three generations of his descendants.

The family lived in Grove City, MN,

in the 1960s, where Harvey farmed and learned the carpentry trade. He later put those skills to use doing numerous building projects for family, friends, and neighbors. He especially enjoyed the many trips he made to help rebuild houses with Mennonite Disaster Service after natural disasters. A highlight of his later years was doing taxi service for his many Amish friends.

Harvey was a member of Pleasant View Church. His motto was, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

The funeral service was held at Pleasant View Church on August 5, 2024, with Matt Bontrager, Bill Yoder, and Paul Plank serving. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

**Yoder**, Darla Janae, 16 months, Owenton, KY, went to be with Jesus on June 1, 2024, at Frankfort Regional Medical Center as a result of a barrel train/tractor accident at a family reunion. She was born on January 6, 2023, to Leland and Donna (Stutzman) Yoder.

Darla will be missed deeply by her entire community, especially her parents, siblings: Ellis, Charlotte, and Shannon Yoder; grandparents: Jerry and Laura Fern Stutzman, Leitchfield, KY; Vernon and Mary Margaret Yoder, Roodhouse, IL; eight uncles, four aunts, and numerous cousins.

She was preceded in death by her

sister, Laurie Jewel (stillborn), and two cousins, Marlene and Dallas Eicher.

The funeral service was held on June 3, 2024, at Owenton Amish Mennonite Church. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

**Yoder**, Mary Edna, 93, Hutchinson, KS, died April 11, 2024, at her home. She was born August 17, 1930, in LaGrange, IN, to Albert M. and Saloma (Troyer) Yoder. On January 20, 1955, Mary married Fred H. Yoder in Hutchinson, KS. They shared over 49 years of marriage prior to his death on March 24, 2004.

Mary was a homemaker. She was a member of Cedar Crest Amish Mennonite Church.

Mary is survived by her children: Harry F. (Susan), Susan Kay (Richard) Yoder, Wayne F. (Michelle), Wilbur Lee Yoder, Willard Dee (Gertie), Ruth Anne (Keith) Hershberger, Calvin Jay (Rebecca), and David Leon (Renita); 30 grandchildren; and 58 great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, and siblings: Melvin Yoder, Mervin Yoder, Mae Yoder, Harry Yoder, Cathryn Miller, and Thomas Yoder.

The funeral service was held April 14, 2024, at Cedar Crest Amish Mennonite Church with the local ministry officiating. Burial followed in the West Center Cemetery.



*Gentle words fall lightly,* but they have great weight.

In the July 3 letter to *The Budget* from Scio, Ohio, submitted by Sam and Becky Yoder, they recount a noteworthy incident.

The scribes told of a relative of theirs who was a grandfather who lived in a residence attached to his daughter and son-in-law's house when he passed away. The family included a son who was described in the writing as "a 'special' little boy." At the time his grandfather breathed his last, the young lad pointed up three times and said, "There he goes." Someone asked him what he saw and who goes. He replied that it was Grandpa who was going up to the little children.

Enos Stutzman pointed out this incident to me and said it reminds him of what Jesus said in Luke 10:21, *"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."*

We live in a world where some people are very attuned to perceive things that most others simply miss. People possess an incredible variety in how they are able to express what

they perceive. Some are completely non-verbal while others are able to "paint" intricate pictures with their words. I remember how our sleeping babies would smile broadly and sometimes even chuckle while their eyes were tightly closed. We often wondered what those little babies were dreaming or seeing that delighted them so. These episodes sometimes happened before they expressed these sentiments while fully awake.

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Some of us need to be reminded that no matter how capable and proficient we are at some things, there is always someone who is better at something than we are. Others of us need to be reminded that we are gifted in ways that surpass others. The variety in giftings and abilities is part of the wonderful design that our Creator has graced His people with. Wouldn't it be boring if we all shared the same strengths and weaknesses? Furthermore, we all benefit from the diversity of strengths that others share with us. I can't help but suppose that God designed things this way to remind us how much we need each other and how much we need God.

• • • • •

Rick Clark is a fifth-generation farmer in Warren County, Indiana, who farms approximately 7,000 acres of primarily corn, soybeans, wheat, and alfalfa. About 10 years ago, he began the transition to farming methods focused on regenerating the soil. Currently, his operation is regenerative, organic, and no-till. Not many producers operate with all three of these characteristics.

Overall he has seen his yields decrease a bit but his profits rise. One example is that eliminating tillage has reduced his diesel fuel costs by about \$2.7 million dollars per year. Clark says that aside from the increased soil health that he's seen on his acreage, his decisions are based on maximizing profitability rather than maximizing yield. In situations where inputs are negligible or small, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that while yield and profit are always somewhat related, yield is not a very reliable indicator of profit.

Another way that the farm is further reducing inputs is by working on his goal of eliminating the cost of seed purchases. Clark saves seed from crops grown in his fields to plant the next year's crops. Of course, this means that they do not utilize hybrids or GMO seeds. By saving the best seed from his own crops, he theorizes that over time his own

crops will develop traits that make them particularly well-suited to his context of timing of the seasons, moisture, temperature, and soil profile, etc.

I am not a biologist or an agronomist, but I've often wondered how you can expect to harvest crops from the soil year after year without adding nutrients back into the ecosystem via commercial fertilizers. However, those who have focused on regenerative agriculture practices seek to replenish those nutrients through the use of beneficial plantings, including nitrogen-fixing legumes and cover crops, that draw nutrients from the atmosphere and convert nutrients from the soil into available plant nutrition. But possibly the biggest provider of plant nutrition is a vigorous population of microbes that flourishes when microbial life is properly fed and is not knocked back by adding chemicals to the soil that are lethal to this microflora. The process of feeding the microbes is further enhanced when livestock is part of the ecosystem. The combined effect on the plants of measured grazing, trampling, and excrement that is left behind by livestock all contribute to soil health. This health is seen in a more available nutrition for the plants and better drought resistance

since the soils are better able to assimilate and store moisture when it comes due to increased organic content in the soils. The proponents of regenerative agriculture give these and other factors as reasons that the soil is actually built up and improved through these practices rather than depleted.

Any operator who explores the feasibility of transitioning from conventional crop production to this sort of focus will quickly observe that the successful regenerative approach follows a careful and studied cooperation with God's creative design. It involves feeding the soil in ways that might be more inconvenient than hiring fertilizer application and herbicide professionals to make sure that the right things are growing.

Gabe Brown, a farmer from North Dakota, wrote a book entitled, *From Dirt to Soil*, that presents an interesting description of regenerative agricultural.

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Climatologists predicted a very active hurricane season, which runs from June 1 through November 30 for the Atlantic Ocean for 2024. The general consensus among forecasters was that this season would bring 20-25 named storms, some of them unusually potent. This would be

about twice the current 20-year rolling average. We are not finished with the hurricane season as of yet, but as of this writing the results have been unusually mild rather than remarkably severe.

It is possible that part of the reason for the decline in hurricane activity this year is that a patch of ocean water situated close to the equator off the west coast of Africa experienced a large decline in temperature this summer. The surface temperature dropped between 10 and 15 degrees for reasons that leaves those who study these things profoundly mystified. The forecasters have no explanation for this cool-down of ocean water. The area where this cooler water temperature has been observed is near to where weather disturbances often originate that migrate westward across the Atlantic Ocean. Some of these systems become tropical storms and some even become hurricanes. Maybe the cooler ocean water temperatures near Africa are part of the explanation for the calm hurricane season. Now if someone could just figure out why the water cooled so much.

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I've heard some comments to the effect that weather forecasters are among the few vocational disciplines in which such stark and

frequent inaccuracies are tolerated. I admit that I enjoy weather details enough that I like to make my own estimations about the weather without the benefit of instruments that today's meteorologists have

access to. But it's not likely that anybody would confuse my interest in these things with any degree of accuracy regarding my estimation of future weather events and trends.



## I Saw a Beautiful Thing

### Of Gains and Losses

*Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS*

**T**he words of the disciples echo in my heart as I try to grasp what God has allowed. “*To what purpose is this waste?*” How is our wise, powerful, and good Father glorified by the death of an unborn infant—a baby seemingly given in answer to the earnest prayers of an older brother? How will this build up faith in God’s goodness? Was there no more direct, clear route to show God’s care for a small boy? One less costly for his parents, for the extended family, for all who are a part of this grief?

“*To what purpose is this waste?*” The disciples were indignant about the extravagant offering and adoration of the woman who anointed Jesus. What good was accomplished by pouring out a costly perfume,

only to have it evaporate? All that expenditure leaving just a memory, a fragrance in the house? “Feeding the poor with the funds from selling the perfume—now that would have done some good.” Thus I imagine their conversation.

I, too, feel indignant, bent out of shape by this unexpected loss. The Greek word translated “*had indignation*,” as the KJV describes their response, is related to our English word *angle*. Bent, as an arm is angled. I do not wish to bend my arm to embrace this pain, nor is it easy to bow my head in worship. Why the months of hopeful preparations if this was to be the end? Where is the good in this? A small grave in the ground. A huge hole in the heart. Anger and unbelief to be wrestled



to the ground day and night. The outrage of a gift offered, and snatched away.

But wait: is this the end? In the shock of bereavement, it is easy to tally what was taken. What good gifts might be uncovered as we walk by faith in this shadowy place of mourning? To begin, this child is the first of the family safely Home! Second, the death of a loved one does much to sharpen our understanding of the reality of Heaven. If this loss helps us all to live for the life that is coming, is that not a great gift given?

And third, I believe grief shared deepens relationships. Our small church worked together to prepare for this, the first burial at our yet-unfinished building site. Each family offered their strengths: some spent hours mowing and moving a fence since the cemetery was as yet a pasture. Others picked up cow chips.

Women and girls showed their love by washing windows and cleaning for the family. One brother sawed and measured for a tiny casket—his first small one. Another family arranged for fishing with Robert’s brothers, and biking to the park. The food committee whirled into action.

Mowing and meetings and building a little casket. Cleaning house and doing laundry and fishing with children. Food preparation and private prayers. One tiny person, in his death, brought us together in ways no adult has yet. Is this a loss? One tiny body, buried in hope of the resurrection—like an acorn dropped into fertile soil of trusting hearts, this death can grow into an oak that gives shelter! Here, in the shade of this grief, we proclaim the *goodness* of a God Who does not explain His ways.

*Isn't this beautiful?* 

## Why We Don't Vote

**A**lthough there were forms of representative government in ancient times, government of the people by the people as we know it today is relatively recent. Democracy was not practiced in Bible times, so we

do not have Scriptures that address voting specifically. We do have many New Testament passages, however, that address how Christians are to view worldly government and civil officials.

Early Anabaptists avoided serving

in government where force was used, and most conservative Mennonites, Beachy, Amish, River Brethren, German Baptists, and similar groups still do. This paper will offer the reasons we traditionally have not voted.

### **1. Two kingdoms**

Jesus and the apostles clearly taught a distinction between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. Jesus told Pilate, “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18:36). He told His disciples, “*You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant*” (Matthew 20:25, 26). The next two points expand on the differences between the two kingdoms.

### **2. Different missions**

The two kingdoms have different missions. Jesus’ followers are to be salt and light in the world, inviting unbelievers to follow Jesus (Matthew 5:13, 14; 28:18-20). The state is “*God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil*” (Romans 13:4).

### **3. Different methods**

The two kingdoms use different methods to accomplish their mission. Jesus taught His followers, “*Love your*

*enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*” (Matthew 5:44). The state uses force, and “*he does not bear the sword in vain*” (Romans 13:4). When Peter used a sword to defend Jesus, Jesus rebuked him saying, “*Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword*” (Matthew 26:52). Jesus told Pilate, “*If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight. . . but now, My kingdom is not from here*” (John 18:36).

### **4. Authorizing force**

Voting is participation in governing the kingdoms of this world. By our vote, we are authorizing a politician to make laws and to enforce those laws on believers and unbelievers alike. A vote may not seem like an act of force, but it is an authorization of force. In contrast, followers of Jesus are in a spiritual battle against evil. Our “weapons” are not swords and guns. We put on the “armor” of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and God’s Word. See Paul’s description in Ephesians 6:10–18 and II Corinthians 10:3–6.

### **5. Blurred lines**

If we enter the governing process by voting, what valid objection can we offer against governing at any other level? If we authorize another

person to make and enforce a law, how can we not also be the person to make and enforce the law? If by our vote we elect civil authorities to positions in which they have the power to declare war, how does it make sense if we refuse to participate in shooting and bombing the enemy? We seem to be saying, “I won’t put my life on the line, but I want others to do so for me.”

### **6. Marred testimony**

By voting, we confuse our witness to our neighbors. Our lifestyle testifies that we are not of this world. This shows in the way we do business, in our appearance, and in our refusal to retaliate against those who would harm us. Why would we want to step into the world’s political system to vote for others to do what we say would be wrong for us to do? How does that make sense to our neighbors?

### **7. God’s sovereignty**

For followers of Jesus, voting is a departure from trust in God as the One who sets up rulers for His purposes. Daniel testified to King Nebuchadnezzar that God “*changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings*” (Daniel 2:21). But Nebuchadnezzar was a proud man, and so God made him insane for a time, causing him to live outdoors like an animal “*till*

*you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses*” (Daniel 4:25). Conservative Anabaptists have been pressured at times to vote out of fear—for example, in the early years of our country when the Quakers were about to lose control of the government of Pennsylvania, or more recently when John F. Kennedy (a Catholic) was running for President. In both cases, the Anabaptist voters were not able to prevent what they feared. How much better it is to trust that God can raise up and put down rulers as He sees best!

### **8. Our clear responsibility**

New Testament writers give instructions for how we are to relate to worldly governments and their leaders, but nowhere do they assume we are to participate in governing. We are to pray for rulers (I Timothy 2:1, 2). We are to obey them unless they ask us to do what is morally wrong (Romans 13; Titus 3:1; I Peter 2:13–17; Acts 5:29). We are to pay taxes (Matthew 22:15–21; Romans 13:7). We are to respect them and not speak evil of them (Acts 23:5; Romans 13:1, 2).

### **9. Witness of the early church**

Until the merging of church and state in the fourth century, early church leaders spoke against participation in politics. Tertullian

(160-220 A.D.), recognizing the incongruence of a follower of Jesus attempting to enforce the laws of the state, wrote, “Shall he apply the chain, the prison, the torture, and the punishment—he who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs?”<sup>1</sup> Writing to civil leaders, he explained how church leaders viewed participation in politics: “In us, all ardor in the pursuit of glory and honor is dead. So we have no pressing inducement to take part in your public meetings. Nor is there anything more entirely foreign to us than affairs of state.”<sup>2</sup>

### **10. Witness of the early Anabaptists**


The early Anabaptists did not participate in politics. Article 6 of the Schleithem Confession (1527) includes these words: “It is not appropriate for a Christian to serve as a magistrate because of these points: The government magistracy is according to the flesh, but the Christians’ is according to the Spirit; their houses and dwelling remain in this world, but the Christians’ are in heaven; their citizenship is in this world, but the Christians’ citizenship is in heaven; the weapons of their conflict and war are carnal

1. Bercot, David. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*. (Hendrickson Publishers: Peabody, Massachusetts, 1998) p. 545  
2. *Ibid.* p. 545

and against the flesh only, but the Christians’ weapons are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil. The worldlings are armed with steel and iron, but the Christians are armed with the armor of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God.”<sup>3</sup>

As followers of Jesus, we are expected to live as salt, being a righteous preservative in a corrupt culture. Let’s let our light shine, showing by our words and actions the good ways of Jesus. Let’s pray earnestly that God will give us the civil leaders who will carry out His purposes. Let’s trust that if God could call the Persian King Cyrus “*My shepherd*” (Isaiah 44:28), He is fully able to raise up whom He wills today and work His purposes even through evil leaders. And let’s give ourselves to the mission Jesus gave us, inviting the lost, forgiving those who harm us, and showing God’s love to everyone, including our enemies.

### **Writing team**

*Steven Brubaker (PA), Merle Burkholder (ON), John Coblentz (PA), Matt Landis (PA), Gary Miller (ID), Marvin Wengerd (OH), and David Yoder (KS)* 

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3. <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/schleithem>

# ABCs of Missionary Preparation

## (Part 1)

*Craig Steiner, Santa Elena, Cayo District, Belize*

“Gird thyself and serve me,” said the Lord Jesus in His parable on service (Luke 17:8). “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning,” commanded Jesus Christ (Luke 12:35) in the context of seeking first the Kingdom of God in light of His second coming. *Digesting this well-written material on Missionary Preparation is valuable for all Christians at home or abroad. This is the first installment of a three-part article.*

*Craig and Rebecca Steiner and two sons live in Santa Elena, Belize. Craig had served as a teacher for a number of years at the United Christian Mission School in Santa Elena. This school is under the auspices of Midwest Mennonite Fellowship. Craig is no longer teaching at the school, but they as a family have decided to make Belize their home. He is employed remotely as a tech man for EmyPeople several days a week and is also a writer for Christian Aid Ministries in the SALT program. Craig is deacon*

*at the Santa Elena United Christian (Mennonite) Mission. -Floyd Stoltzfus*

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Each year, hundreds of missionaries move to a new area, hoping to make a difference there for the Kingdom of God. Some prepare with graduate studies, and others do little more than pack their bags. While many roles don't require a degree, we do well to prepare more than our luggage. Here are the first eight of 26 ABCs to help missionaries prepare for effective service.

**Amiable** – Work on being friendly, sociable, and congenial. People all over the world appreciate amiable people, and welcome them to speak into their lives. Co-missionaries also thank God for co-workers who have this trait and are easy to get along with, since about 80% of missionaries return home due to relationship difficulties.

Work on resolving any past or current difficult relationships before you head to your place of service.

*Getting Along with People God's Way* by John Coblenz is an excellent relationship resource. Also, ask several people around you, Christian and non-Christian, to identify some of your weak areas. Then, work on them. Keep the messenger from interfering with the Message.

**Bible Study** – To be involved in God's work, you must spend time in God's Word. This must be a daily, life-giving habit. Read for your own personal benefit. Find a systematic way of working your way through your Bible. Develop personal convictions that guide your daily affairs. Also, study so you can share with others. George Müller said, "The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts. I solemnly state this from the experience of 54 years."

Memorizing Scripture, while requiring effort, provides the Spirit with additional resources for use when you are teaching or witnessing. The book *Ten Peas in a Pod* by Arnold Pent III recounts the story of a family of avid Scripture readers who memorized large portions of the Bible at a young age. This book provides inspiration and instruction for reading and memorizing the Bible.

**Counseling** – Missionaries will

find experience and training in counseling, discipling, and mentoring helpful. When we become Christians, we still need lots of work in our lives. God uses caring individuals to guide us and help us work on our issues. Missionaries must prepare for this work with a personal walk with God, a heart of love and compassion for others, and a thorough knowledge of biblical truth. Some situations may merit specific training, although practical experience caring for others is helpful for all workers. Find people around you now and invest in them. Purchase recordings from a Helping People In Need Seminar, or download recordings on mentoring from [thedockforlearning.org](http://thedockforlearning.org). *As Iron Sharpens Iron* by Howard Hendricks provides helpful insights for discipling.

**Distractions** – While taking training to receive my driver's license, we had to watch a video about distracted driving. In it, the driver stopped at a traffic light and adjusted his radio for several seconds. Moments later he glanced back up to find a camel on the crosswalk directly in front of his car! One little distraction can cause big problems.

Christians wanting to be effective in God's work must honestly look at distractions in their lives. What

takes my focus off of God? Phones, hobbies, social media, movies, sleep, and food are among the most common distractors. Identify yours and work on them before you go.

**Education** – Classroom education provides students with a foundation for the rest of their lives. And increasingly, a high school diploma or GED is required to gain legal status to reside in other countries. Some countries even require a college degree to be able to work in the country. Staying in school and completing your education while in your youth is much easier than returning years later and trying to do remedial work to gain a needed diploma. Care should be taken not to lose the vision while studying.

**Fruit of the Spirit** – Read Galatians 5:22-23 every day for a month. Memorize it. Study each characteristic and choose one of the nine to specifically practice each day. Remember that fruit is a by-product, not something you can force to happen. Ask God to help you develop in these areas. Allow His Spirit to work. Cultivate the soil of your heart and give your soul the water and proper nutrients for fruit development.

**Good health habits** – Missionaries often work closely (literally) with others, and must take care not to be

an offense. Cultivate good habits of health, hygiene, and cleanliness now, so that they will already be a part of you as you move to a new setting. Don't let your poor hygiene ruin your fragrance of Christ.

**Housekeeping skills** – Blessed are the youth who can cook, clean, and sew, for they are the envy of many. This applies equally to both genders. To be pitied is the young man who never learned to clean the bathroom or iron his clothes. While doing voluntary service, many youth who once bemoaned household chores gain a new appreciation for what their parents taught them. Ask a parent, sibling, or spouse to teach you.

Housekeeping is a discipline as well as a skill. One seasoned missionary noted that the state of our spiritual life often resembles the state of our bedroom. Both are guided by the same personal discipline and both are needful for missionaries.

To be continued

*[Used by permission]*

*Christians should be laborers and ambassadors in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and should find these points helpful in ministry. This series focuses specifically on missionaries who are preparing to move to a new area, especially abroad. FS*



## Stories About God's Children (Part 1 of 2)

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



My grandchildren ask for stories. They're not as interested that the stories teach them something, they just want exciting stories. "Tell us when you were naughty, or when Mama was naughty, or when you were scared," they beg on and on. I'm beginning to slip in more character-building stories in an effort to offset the mischievous ones.

Jesus told stories. He drew verbal pictures or told stories to show us what God's Kingdom would look like on earth. The Kingdom of God or of Heaven is like a land owner, a child, one who plants seeds, a lady sweeping her house, a wedding, and many, many more word pictures. In His teaching prayer, Jesus prayed that His Father's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. In other words, that would be His Kingdom on earth.

One of those Kingdom-of-heaven-come-to-earth instructions is that we should become like children. While there are childlike qualities that take effort and sanctification for us adults,

there is, however, one childlike attribute we all possess without trying. We are attracted to stories. Even gray heads are eager for stories. We're like my grandchildren, when in a sleepy audience, the speaker stirs his drowsy listeners with, "I have a story to tell..." and our collective heads snap up in attention!

Another reason stories shine as teaching tools is that they are easier to remember than black and white truths. So much so, that regretfully, we sometimes remember a story better than the lesson it was supposed to teach.

Assuming on our mutual childlikeness, for this month and next, I'll be relating true short stories that have encouraged me to reflect on ways that the Kingdom of God has come to earth, and about times when the enemy wants to tell us otherwise. These are not the Messiah's parables which pack limitless height, depth, and latitude. Rather, think of these stories in this context: The Teacher is expounding Truth. Then the *children* begin to wave their hands



enthusiastically, eager to give their understanding of what He's saying. We are the children, taking our turns to tell about occasions where we've watched God's Kingdom come, here and now.



In the 70s and 80s a single lady, with grit and determination, moved to Honduras, intent on serving her Master in whatever ways He opened to her. She supported herself and the foster girls she cared for by baking pastries, then selling the pastries and vegetables at a market stand in Tegucigalpa. At the stand one day, she chatted with an inquisitive young man, inviting him to church. He visited her church, and eventually grew into a devoted follower of Christ. He fell in love with and married one of the young ladies. These many years later, their family lives for God in Missouri.

Fast forward to ARC ministries at the Mexican/Texas border. One of the young men on staff who ministers well to Spanish-speaking incoming immigrants is the dedicated-to-God son of this couple. It began with a lady who *cast her bread on the water* at a market stand.

***“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (Ecclesiastes 11:1).***



When our children were small, we answered phones that hung on the wall. Eventually, if we were fortunate, we owned a phone with a long cord. We were happy if it was a very long cord so that the movements of a toddler could be monitored by the mama who was tethered to the phone. This phone would ring any time of the day, but assuredly during naptime. We didn't have the luxury of not answering back then because there was no way to know who might be calling. We ran to answer. After all, it might be a husband, a mother-in-law, or the church hotline. Too many times, it was a telemarketer wanting to sell windows or life insurance.

I recall a conversation with a busy mama of stairstep little ones, with whom I was discussing our time constraints as mothers and about telephones that interrupted naptimes. We talked about feeling like we weren't "getting out there" to really make a difference for God and to grow His Kingdom. She shared some strategies for combating that sense of uselessness and it has served me for a lifetime.

"I've learned that if I can't get out of my four walls to let my light shine, I'll take what comes to me. Right now, we're enduring an avalanche of telemarketing calls, so I've begun witnessing to them. I

tell them about my personal hope in Jesus and ask them if they can identify. When I do get out to buy groceries from time to time, I like to make sure my encounters there are positive reflections of my joy and hope in Christ. If we moms think we need more occasions to impact the world besides training our children and loving our husbands, the opportunities are there if we look for them.”

**Mothers are tempted to think their realm of influence is so small.**



A friend from my church uses food from her kitchen to show Jesus’ love to a neighbor man who lives by himself. Occasionally and unannounced, she prepares an additional plate of dinner and asks one of their children to deliver it to—let’s call him Jake.

It had been some time since his last warm, cooked, Mennonite meal, so she decided that this would be a good evening for a *Jake supper*.


Her son hurried to deliver the neighborly supper across the creek. But wait, what was he hearing? It had just dumped rain and the usually relaxed creek raged wildly. But there was a stranger noise. Was he imagining things or was there a man’s voice calling out in the distance?

The supper-delivering son sprinted down close to where Jake’s

driveway ended in the creek. His eyes incredulously caught the sight of Jake’s minivan submerged in the raucous swollen creek, downstream from where Jake’s driveway met the water. He heard the desperate calling out more clearly now.

By late that evening, the family who served Jake supper saved his life first. Elderly Jake, in a risk-taking plunge, had attempted to cross the creek as he always did. He was using a different vehicle than normal and in the presence of unusually abundant waters, he helplessly felt his vehicle being swept downstream. Jake wore a prosthetic leg, so his mobility was compromised even on solid ground. Jake waited. He called out, sitting in his van surrounded by dark, swirling water. The van had washed down the creek a way, and he didn’t know if a sudden torrent of water energy would carry him on to the Ohio River. Jake hollered for hours. Apparently, the neighbors couldn’t hear him yelling over the summer sounds of mowers and machinery.

And so, the Holy Spirit nudged Jake’s caring friends to bring him supper. They were obedient and in doing so, winched him out of death’s jaws on that watery night.

**Cultivate sensitivity to the Holy Spirit’s voice. Sometimes small things become big things.** 

## The ARC Ministry Snapshots

*Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH*

**W**e all have heard the story of Noah's ark. But what is ARC, Anabaptist Refugee Committee? Who works there, and why?

ARC ministry focuses on helping refugees from around the world. They have a base in Minneapolis, Minnesota and one in San Juan, Texas.

There are myriads of people who flee their home country due to economic instability, war, lawlessness, gangs, drug cartels, and more. They want a better life, income, and dependable food sources. They desire freedom and medical care for their families. They pursue America as the promised land.

But the path to get to the USA for most is long, hard, expensive, and fraught with danger. The ARC team in Texas meets the people who get here legally as they come out of the immigration office. They assist by answering questions: how to get bus and airline tickets, where to get a motel, or directions to the Catholic Charities lodging facility. ARC shares

water, sandwiches, and bananas. They hand out Bibles and gospel literature.

Family groups wait outside the immigration office till all of their people are processed; some wait and wait for hours. They wait for Zelle money transfers from relatives or friends. Many feel lost in the world. Some are broke. ARC staff gives them a face of welcome, kindness, and love in America.

There have been families with nowhere to go who have been placed in Anabaptist communities.

### **Splashes of sunshine**

The youth who volunteer for ARC are courageous. They strike up conversations with strangers. They brave the summer heat on six-hour shifts. They keep a record of the countries the migrants are from. To date they have recorded 32 countries since ARC in Texas started in June 2023.

"Children at the border are the most rewarding," Judy said, "They help me learn more Spanish. Two small brothers giggled and laughed

as they played with globos (balloons) that I gave them. I blow bubbles to cheer the children. They may not have had anything to play with for weeks. Sometimes we play with jenga blocks, and the boys love a soccer ball. They teach me Spanish words, and I teach them English.”

The administrator at ARC, Joel Miller, has researched and visited many motels in the area. He found the best deal at the Clarion Motel: free breakfast and free shuttle rides to the airport. That information is ready to give those who need lodging.

Judy was happy when she could understand and speak Spanish well enough to help a man know which hotel close to the airport was the best option.

#### **Gracias a Dios** (Thanks to God)

Mark enjoyed the first morning that he helped at the border. It was encouraging to see a Christian family, who had just come through immigrations, bow their heads and thank the Lord for helping them survive their journey. Mark told them they are here by the grace of God. They affirmed that and then their son recited Psalm 91 in Spanish. Mark loved that.

He spoke with an elderly Cuban couple who was waiting for their two granddaughters to come through the immigration office. When they came

walking out, their grandmother cried and hugged them.

#### **The only one left**

We hear many stories at the border. Juan Carlos, a man in his twenties, was from Columbia. He told Kyle, “My parents died. A brother got sick and died. Another brother and a sister were killed by cartels. I decided to leave Columbia. I went through many hard times in my journey (es muy difcil). In Mexico I was kidnapped. Once I had money to give the cartels, I was released. I am the only one left of my family.”

This man had an amazing attitude. He remarked, “With God it is possible to keep going.”

Kyle has a heart of care. The words he spoke to Juan Carlos and others offer a ray of hope at the border.

#### **Robbed in broad daylight**

Before coming to ARC, Rosemary worked in Haiti. She speaks Haitian Creole well. She and others can easily determine which migrants are from Haiti. They light up when they hear their own language. Rosemary is happy she can help them. Today she heard a sad story from a Haitian brother and sister who were in their twenties.

This brother and sister finally reached Mexico. They needed to find a way to get to the next town or city. Cyclists work as taxis. Two men on

cycles told them they will take them where they need to go. They paid the fee and got on the cycles. First they drove on the tarmac road and then eventually down a small path to a deserted place with trees. There they were roughly tied up and robbed of all they had with them, including their phones. Then they untied them and roared off, leaving them to find their own way in an unfamiliar land. The brother and sister were badly frightened. They walked and walked, and finally, they got to a town and had courage to ask to borrow a phone.

Most of the immigrants have friends or relatives who assist them financially to come to America. I don't know how they got to the border, but they did. They told Rosemary about the terrible things that happened to them.

Will we care and reach out to the poor and strangers?

ARC is often in need of more volunteers. People who love God, want to serve, and can speak Spanish or Haitian Creole are a real asset. How is God calling us to love strangers?

*Anabaptist Refugee Committee* <https://arcministry.org>



## youth messages

# Better Than Butting Heads

*Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH*

In today's world we often hear the term "rights." We hear it used referring to "my rights," "her rights," or "their rights." People protest that their "rights" are being infringed on. If someone is arrested, they have a "right" to an attorney. All this talk of rights and what is "just" and what we "deserve" has a way of worming its way into the church. This is dangerous ground to take a stand on. Churches can quickly become divided with a perceived

slight because two situations are not being handled exactly the same. The argument is that it isn't "fair" or it isn't "right." Sometimes the conflict arises when multiple solutions are presented for resolving a single situation and the ones whose ideas aren't chosen decide that it isn't fair and choose to sulk. Other times it's a simple conflict of interest or disagreement on application of principle. Small perceived slights and disagreements can become full-

blown conflicts in a short time.

As youth, conflicts and disagreements are often centered around rules and guidelines in the church or at home. Those rules may differ from other's homes or simply "don't make sense." We argue our case by using other friends and acquaintances as examples for what we think should be allowed. Sometimes conflicts arise in relationships because everyone wants things done their way. They can come up in a group setting with someone trying to run or influence everything by griping and complaining about plans when they aren't what they wanted or suggested.

Ulrich Zwingli, a leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland in the early 1500s, and Martin Luther, (the catalyst for the Reformation), were locked in a serious dispute, and Zwingli was at a loss in trying to resolve the conflict. He found the solution one morning while gazing at the side of a mountain.

Zwingli observed two goats approaching each other on a narrow path on the mountainside, one going up and the other going down. Upon seeing one another they stopped, then lowered their heads. It appeared they were about to charge each other. However, instead of butting heads, the goat ascending the mountain lay down on the path. The descending

goat was able to step over the other's back, and the animals were able to proceed unimpeded.

If the goats had chosen to butt heads, one may have prevailed. But the result might also have been disastrous for both. So one bowed before the other, in effect humbling itself, which eventually enabled it to advance higher.<sup>1</sup>

Some say it's simple to sort out differences and conflicts. "One side just has to give up, lay down their rights or preferences, and then it will be fine." Right? If only it were that easy. In order for one to lay down their rights, they must practice humility, a trait that does not come naturally to us humans. Let's look at a few reasons that we need to "lie down" as the ascending goat in our story exhibited.

First, we need to exercise "lying down" in order to maintain peace in the brotherhood. Romans 12:18 says, "*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*" We should never compromise on truth or principles, but there is a place for finding a good compromise when dealing with application of principle. Peace among the brotherhood is more important than me getting what I want. Peace in the brotherhood

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1. <https://www.cbmcint.com/a-solution-better-than-butting-heads/>

makes our ministry team's job much easier. Romans 12:10 says "*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*" When we put others above ourselves, we are practicing the "*in honour preferring*" mentioned in verse 10.

Secondly, it's common to want things done a certain way because that is how we were raised or it's just how we've always done it, we're used to it, and want it to stay that way. This way of thinking has a way of sheltering those influenced by it, but throughout history, we can see instances where sticking your head in the sand because you don't want to admit that there might be a better way or one equally as good has led to things falling apart. Being willing to admit that we might be wrong is a way that we "lie down" and it takes humility to be able to do that. Romans 12:16 says "*Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*" I once heard someone say, "It doesn't have to be done my way as long as the end result is the same."

Human nature pushes us to fight for what we want. We fight to survive, we fight to live, we fight for the perceived "rights" that were mentioned earlier. When the presidential candidate

Donald Trump was shot, his first reaction upon gaining his feet was to put his fist in the air and to shout, "Fight, fight, fight!" Our Adamic nature is selfish by default and our natural inclination will always be to try to come out on top. However, Paul is calling us here in Romans to be willing to lay those things down to promote peace.

What are some ways that we can "lie down?" What are potential areas we can "butt heads?" I know a church brother who said when he was younger he didn't want to part his hair the way the church required. His argument was that it was such a little thing that it shouldn't be a big deal if he doesn't do it. A wise evangelist asked him if it was such a little thing why he didn't just do it. It made him think. You could ask why leadership is making a big deal over a little thing, or you could submit in regard to the little thing and save everyone the stress and hassle of dealing with the conflict. Maybe you and your parents don't see eye-to-eye on a standard. Perhaps your ministry has counseled you not to do something or go somewhere. Would you do it anyway? Will you choose to butt heads with those God put in authority over you? God rarely blesses us for choosing to butt heads when we have the option not to. 

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## THOUGHT GEMS

The Bread of Life needs no butter.

• • • • •

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.

• • • • •

Charity gives itself rich; covetousness hoards itself poor.

• • • • •

The abundant life is often smothered by the abundant things of this life.

• • • • •

Life is tragic for the person who has plenty to live on but nothing to live for.

• • • • •

In a world full of people who couldn't care less, be someone who cares more.

• • • • •

The upper crust is just a bunch of crumbs stuck together with their own dough.

• • • • •

Life is either what you make of it or what it makes of you.

• • • • •

Life is what happens while you're making other plans.

• • • • •

A good rule for going through life  
is to keep the heart a little softer than the head.

• • • • •

God promises no loaves to the loafer.