



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

*Galatians 6:14*

## NOVEMBER 2024

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Calvary Messenger

November 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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## The Untamed

*Richard Stoltzfoos, Burgettstown, PA*

Wind-whipped, the sea strains like an ox—  
Untamed and thrusting with its horns,  
Unused to harness, heaving hard  
Against the yoke, kicking the thorns.

A tiny howdah on its back  
Holds twelve drawn faces pasty gray,  
A boat upon leviathan,  
A wild ride of spray and sway.

Each beast, snake, sea thing having tamed,  
The Son of Man now takes His route.  
His feet firm striding on its heads,  
The muzzled monster rolls about.

This Spirit calls the loudest one,  
The sailors watching warily,  
“Come to Me, Peter, shed your doubt,  
Step out, and rule the beast with Me.” 

## Generosity and the Cedar Waxwing

Last month we looked at the hummingbird's apparent greedy tendency to keep others from eating from a feeder even while the one guarding the feeder was not enjoying the liquid energy. Maybe this tiny bird is just especially careful to keep others from eating from the same feeder because of the high amount of energy needed to feed its own body. This month let's look at another bird that has decidedly opposite traits and seems to be an example of generosity and sharing. Here are a few ornithology facts and quotes.

The Cedar Waxwing is "a silky, smooth songbird with a black mask, tan head and breast, yellow belly, and grayish-brown upperparts. The tail has a yellow band at the tip, and some wing feathers have waxy red tips."<sup>1</sup>

"Cedar Waxwings are often heard before they're seen, so learn their high-pitched call notes. Look for them low in berry bushes, high in evergreens, or along rivers and over ponds. Be sure to check big flocks of small birds: waxwings are similar to starlings in size and shape, and often

form big unruly flocks that grow, shrink, divide, and rejoin like starling flocks."<sup>2</sup>

"The Cedar Waxwing is one of the few North American birds that specializes in eating fruit. It can survive on fruit alone for several months. Brown-headed Cowbirds that are raised in Cedar Waxwing nests typically don't survive, in part because the cowbird chicks can't develop on such a high-fruit diet. Because they eat so much fruit, Cedar Waxwings occasionally become intoxicated or even die when they run across overripe berries that have started to ferment and produce alcohol."<sup>3</sup>

One common habit of the Cedar Waxwing is to pass a fruit from one bird to another. Often this is a mating ritual, but it has been observed when a row of birds are sitting close together. At times, the fruit gets passed back along the same row of birds to the bird who began the sharing procedure. This habit was the inspiration to use this bird for an example of generosity in contrast to

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1. Malcolm Gold, *Macaulay Library*, Minnesota, June 7, 2014

2. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Cedar\\_Waxwing/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Cedar_Waxwing/overview)

3. *ibid*



the hummingbird that keeps others from enjoying food that it has found. How can we overcome the tendency of the greedy hummingbird and become more like the generous Cedar Waxwing mentioned above? Are there inherent blessings received by sharing God's blessings with others?

How do I stop being so greedy? I can practice gratitude and generosity to overcome greed.

### **Be grateful**

Gratitude helps you appreciate what you already have and reduces your desire for more. This month we are looking forward to celebrating Thanksgiving Day. This day is especially focused on gratitude for the blessings we enjoy, but do we actually celebrate this day in the true spirit of gratefulness? (Beware of Black Friday that somehow seems to be the antithesis of the spirit of thanksgiving when people rush to grab bargains, often greedily crowding out others.)

As we noted last month, the hummingbird, that was keeping others away from the feeder, didn't have anything to do with putting out the feeder or keeping it filled. Surely, we humans should be able to realize that the blessings we enjoy are gifts from God. In the book of Ephesians, Paul admonishes the church at Ephesus to be filled with

the Spirit of God and thank God for "all things," including the difficult things in life as well as the blessings of grace and salvation because of the mercy of God, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). In Isaiah 63, "the prophet connects the preceding mercies of God to the Jews with the present prospect he has of their redemption by the Messiah; thus making a circle in which eternal goodness revolves."<sup>4</sup> "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses" (Isaiah 63:7). We can easily believe that the good things we enjoy, both physical and spiritual, are results of our hard work and wise choices. We can as easily forget that first of all, it is God Who blessed us with an easily accessible "bird feeder" that He filled and continues to regularly fill "according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses."

When we truly understand that the blessings we enjoy are gifts from God,

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4. Adam Clark's Commentary on Isaiah 63:7

it is easier to overcome selfishness and greed and to be willing to pass the “fruit” to whoever is beside us, whether a bird of “like feather” or of a “different feather.” And as noted in last month’s article, “The Power of Mine,” it’s best to hold our valuables loosely. *“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.”*

### **Be generous**

Our generosity to others is one of the greatest ways we can thank and honor God for the rich gifts we enjoy. This should be a greater impetus to generosity than to see if the “fruit” will be passed back to us. These verses show us that generosity honors our generous Creator.

*“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:2).

*“But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”* (Hebrews 13:16 NKJV).

Are there inherent blessings received by sharing God’s blessings with others? God’s blessings to His people shouldn’t be confused with the prosperity Gospel often preached today, but faithfulness to God does result in a contentment

and satisfaction in this life and an eternal reward. Both the Old and New Testament promise some type of “fruit” being passed back to us because of our generosity to others. The bitter “fruit” of stinginess will likewise be passed back to us.

*“He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given”* (Proverbs 19:17 NKJV).

*“Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard”* (Proverbs 21:13).

*“He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor”* (Proverbs 22:9 NKJV).

*“He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse”* (Proverbs 28:27).

*“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again”* (Luke 6:38).

May the true spirit of thanksgiving be an everyday trait and habit as we share with others the blessings that God has given us, not because of anything we have done, but because of His love, mercy, and grace.

*“The love in your heart wasn’t put there to stay. Love isn’t love ‘til you give it away.” -Oscar Hammerstein*

-AY 

# Helping People in Need Seminar

January 21-23, 2025

*The Modern Christian in a Crumbling Society*

## Tuesday

**Being a Digital Disciple** (Protecting Your Faith in the Digital Era)

**Securing Your Heart** (Overcoming the Negative Influences of Social Media)

**The Illusion of Emotional Needs** (Rediscovering God's Sufficiency)

**Debt-Free Living** (Breaking the Chains of Financial Burden)

## Wednesday

**Understanding LGBTQ Activism**

**Navigating Cultural Shift**

**Nourishing Body and Soul** (Breaking Free From Eating Disorders)

**Confronting the Silent Epidemic** (Verbal Abuse in Relationships)

**Finding Hope in Uncertain Times** (A Christian Perspective on Government Mandates)

## Thursday

**Engaging with Secularism** (A Christian Response to a Changing World)

**Understanding Accountability Groups** (Strengthening Faith and Personal Growth)

**Principles of Effective Accountability** (Principles For Christian Accountability)

**More Than Conquerors** (Overcoming the World Through Jesus)

*Location: Washington State, hosted by the area German Baptist Churches. Speakers are all from Deeper Life Ministries and Fresh Start Training Center*

For more information please contact Deeper Life Ministries:  
(614) 873-1199 or [info@dmlmohio.org](mailto:info@dmlmohio.org)



## 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

# The What and Why of the Bible

*Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA*

Quiz:

1. Which word, “what” or “why,” has the most entries in the Bible?
2. How many times does God say “why” He made things thus in the creation of the earth?
3. Where is “what” used for the first time in the Bible?
4. To whom did God explain “why” for the first time?
5. Who was the first to bring up the “why” idea, God or Satan?
6. Does God give a “why” concept to most of His commandments?

7. Multiple choice:

- a. Parents should always tell little children the “why” of every command.
- b. Parents should never tell “why” a child should obey.
- c. Parents should carefully use discretion when giving the “why” part.

Make your choices before you continue reading. Parents could use this quiz for family devotions or at the table. It could be used by a Bible study group, as a quiz at a reunion,



or with any group of people.

The seed for this study came from the title of a book sent to me by a business with whom I have had some association in the past. The title, *Start With Why*, caused a few wheels to turn in my head. I scanned the book, suspecting a humanist business philosophy. I could not find it to be an off-road philosophy, or find it to be wrong as I had suspected.

My mental inquiry asks, “Did God start with “why?” Or did His program for creating the earth, and man then to live and increase upon that earth, begin with a “what” platform?

Answer to quiz question # 1. “What” has nine and one-half columns of individual listings of Bible references in *Strong’s Concordance*, but only two and one-half columns of “why.” In the “what” count, I also included “whatsoever.”

Answer 2. The biblical record clearly and adequately says “what” God had done in the entire creation without “why” He made all things thus. The “why” was not needed. If man needs to know, God did give us minds to think well enough how to figure it out, at least in part. That study keeps revealing the awesome mind of God before He created all things, during those six days, and, of course, always since that time.

Man has spent many lifetimes to

figure out a small portion of it and still stands there baffled to even try to think, and push the imagination besides, to divide the additionally comprehensible from the multiplied incomprehensible!

Answer 3. “What” first appears in the Bible at Genesis 2:9. It says, “*And out of the ground [plain dirt] the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them.*”

Answer 4. “Why” is first recorded when God asked Cain a piercing question. Actually, God asked two questions: “*Why art thou wroth? and Why is thy countenance fallen?*” (Genesis 4:6). Then God came a bit later with, “*Where is Abel thy brother?*” Next question, “*What hast thou done?*” Sooner or later, the “what” must be dealt with. “What” is more basic than “why.” Parents, school teachers, employers, and all in leadership should take note of this basic principle. (This is a principle I missed in my book, *Creation Principles*).

Answer 5. God was the first to say “why” they should not eat of the forbidden fruit, based on a factual and justifiable reason. Satan, then, attacked the “why” of God’s single restriction and hammered on God’s “why,” not the “what” of

the command. Purpose? If one can knock down the reason God gave for abstaining, then the command itself is made null and void, as in having no real basis in man's making the "why" itself without basis. We should well consider, that in our informed, methodical, analytical times, this kind of enemy attack is used by Satan even today against some of the clear commands of Jesus, and likewise of the Apostles.

Answer 6. I have not tabulated all of the Bible's commandments, only doing so in the New Testament. We can think of some commandments where God does give a reason why, but somehow it does not seem as though God would routinely do so. Knowing God, we are confident that God has good reasons for His directives to us, reasons that would be justifiable according to His holiness and love, as well as to His justice and the law of the harvest.

Answer 7, a and b. For parents to never say the "why" of our stated "what" would neither be loving, respectful, nor in the best interests for the nurture of the child. But for the parent to always feel a need to give a reason for every "what" the child should or must do, would not nurture well a growing child. It would give a false dependency. Remember, the discipline of our

children should be along the same lines and principles as God is known to do to His children.

Answer 7c. Discretion should be used by the parents, rather than always giving a reason to every "why" of the child to the parents' "what," which would not build good character in either the child or the parent. For parents who do so, the child likely will—

- Resort to making the parents' directives as being negotiable.
- Assume, if no reason is given, that the command is optional.
- Slide sideways into making irresponsible exceptions for himself.

There are basically two kinds of questions employed by either a child or an adult. The one kind is to further justify the person to whom the question is directed. The other kind is given in an attempt to justify the thinking of the one asking the question. Parents should differentiate between those two basic approaches. When a child asks a question as a means for his own self-justification, the persons in charge should simply give an affirmation of the "what" of the issue, not more about the "why." Unless, of course, there is a way to answer the "why" by turning it into a teaching moment. An unnecessary "why" question, for the most part, can or should not be regarded. There

are justifiable questions, for instance, such as when the child does not understand what he was told to do.

Trite and unreasonable answers should be avoided, but we should rather turn the inquiry into concepts that can keep the issue in the arena of matter-of-fact conversation. We should do what we can, as parents, teachers, or pastors, to have the kind of welcome dialogue that produces light rather than estranged heat and sparks.

A more comprehensive study from the Bible would well inform us of how God dealt with individual sinners, even prophets, priests, and kings, as well as families, ethnic groups, and nations. Our own administrations, home, school, church, mission stations, etc. could also be instructed in some of the ways God has chastised His erring people, but on the other hand, prospered others, with its attendant “whats” and “whys.”

Any subject I have taken up in this 30-year Bottom Line series has never been concluded by me as having exhausted the subject, nor that I should suppose my word is the final “say” to these matters. I do not say the writer of the book for business

people was necessarily all wrong for his title, *Start with Why*. It seemed interesting to see that God started with “what” He did, whereas that author emphasized that man should begin with, “Why should I be in business?” And that from a secular viewpoint.

The good part about a discussion of “why” we give importance to our church’s various expressions and programs, could help to clarify or sharpen our purposes and goals. It could be that a few “whys and wherefores” could be helpful to be more inclined to what God has purposed for us in our time and place.

The Bottom Line is that it is seen as immature on the part of our children to most times require a “why” for that which they are told to do. For us adults, some of us might also profit from the same lesson in that which our Heavenly Father enjoins upon us in His Word that we should be ready to do. Like the wayward Saul of Tarsus. When Jesus stopped him on his way to Damascus, Saul said, “*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*” That is a primary question. That is the shortest route in getting down to a profitable business (or busyness) with God!



*Happiness* comes when we stop wailing about the troubles we have and offer *thanks* for all the troubles we don't have.

# The Value of Reflecting on our Past

*Jonathan Reimer, Spanish Lookout, Belize*

I assume it is clear to most people that just aimlessly going through life without a goal will not result in the most meaningful and productive life. However, do we realize that in order to live an effective, goal-oriented life we also need an understanding of our history? I don't often think about how important it is for me to look back and evaluate my history. But as I started thinking about this topic of reflecting on my past and understanding the setting out of which my roots have come to be, I soon realized that looking back into my history has a lot of value. Especially, as I think about my Anabaptist faith, I see how valuable it is to know why I hold the beliefs I do and where those beliefs come from.

One of the first things that come to mind as I think about the value of looking back at the roots of my Anabaptist beliefs is that it clarifies my current beliefs. It is easy for me to live a certain way because that is the way I was trained, and that is what I came to see as good and right. For example, as I grew up I

always believed that Anabaptism was the right faith tradition to be a part of. I looked out at other faith traditions from the perspective that Anabaptism was the best view of life to hold. Over the years I have never majorly doubted whether being an Anabaptist was right, neither have I deeply considered leaving the Anabaptist faith. But I have sometimes wondered what the significance is of believing what I believe. I found it clarifying to study the early Anabaptist story, and to understand the setting out of which the Anabaptist tradition took root. Looking at what the early Anabaptists came to believe by diligently reading the Scriptures helps me to see what the foundation of my beliefs is. The early Anabaptists had to be very clear about what they believed because they were making drastic changes to the things they had grown up believing in the Catholic and Protestant churches. I find their clear statements of faith to be convincing and strengthening to my faith.

Looking back to the setting out of which I have come also makes me grounded in a community and a significant story. Or in other words, I find out that I am participating in a valuable story as I live in the Anabaptist community. This story that I am part of reaches way beyond myself, and it reaches way beyond my local church. The Anabaptist story is firmly rooted in Jesus Christ, and finds its direction in the Scriptures. I believe that the start of the Anabaptist story in 1525 came out of a deep concern to be obedient to God. And though the first several decades within this story were extremely bloody, God blessed the story and made it grow. Over the years God has guided the community in this story, taking them through times of persecution and into times of prosperity and safety. Throughout this whole time, the Anabaptist community strove to be faithful to God and His Word, with a desire to be God's witnesses to the world. The whole story is not equally beautiful at all points. Within this story there have been heartaches from church splits. In other cases parts of the Anabaptist community muddled up their witness for Christ and assimilated into the world. But despite these failures, and other pressures from outside, the

Anabaptist community continues to seek a way of life that glorifies God.

So, as I look at the history of the Anabaptists, I am motivated to participate in the Anabaptist community and its story. I am especially encouraged by the powerful stories of the early Anabaptist martyrs whose commitments to God cost them their lives. In addition to being encouraged by the stories of the martyrs, I am encouraged by all the other early Anabaptists who were persecuted and severely opposed and yet remained faithful to God. I think that out of these times came some of the clearest definitions of the Anabaptist faith that are found within the Anabaptist story.

Another value of looking back is that it shapes my perspective. It helps me to see my faith and commitments in a different light. Looking back at the faith of the early Anabaptists gives me a reference point with which I can evaluate what I am experiencing presently. That does not mean that the past was either better or worse than the present. I do not need to compare the present with the past in that way. But since the times and the circumstances were different five hundred years ago, certain aspects of the Anabaptists' lives and their faith were different. For example, a fundamental difference



between our time and the start of the Anabaptist movement is simply what the consequences are of being Anabaptist.

For the early Anabaptists, living the Anabaptist faith meant almost sure persecution, whereas for us today it is relatively safe to be an Anabaptist. Does this not affect how we think about our faith? I imagine that having the imminence of persecution looming over my head while choosing to be baptized as an Anabaptist would definitely clarify my convictions significantly. It would make me take my faith more seriously, I think. So, from this perspective I can look at my own convictions and see that I probably face more danger of becoming complacent through the comforts of the world than I would have if I lived in the sixteenth century. Or in those circumstances of mine where I feel that the costs of being an Anabaptist are high, I can evaluate these feelings in the light of the higher costs of the early Anabaptists.

I think of another way that looking back shapes my perspective. It helps me to look at my life more realistically. Earlier this semester as I wrote an essay about Menno Simons, I realized that I had had an unrealistically positive impression of him as I grew up. I tended to think

of Menno Simons, and of others of the early Anabaptists for that matter, as superior Christians who lived more perfectly than I can today. But I came to realize, by studying about Menno Simons, that he had some rather unorthodox beliefs. And all the other Anabaptist leaders failed in their own ways as well. This doesn't justify my own failings, but rather helps me to look at my walk of faith more realistically, knowing that I will fail at times in the Christian life. The question is whether I will respond to my failures by accepting the redemption God offers, or whether I will let myself despair in my failures, or whether I will ignore the truth about my failures and continue in them. In fact, it is more likely that I will be able to see my own failures clearly if I look back at my roots and seek to gain a broader perspective on life.

Looking back over my history also gives me wisdom. I can learn from the mistakes and successes of my forefathers. Earlier this semester, as I read the writings of early Anabaptists like Pilgram Marpeck, Peter Riedemann, Dirk Philips, and Menno Simons, I gained wisdom from their biblical exegeses and from their beliefs about truth.

I also find myself being humbled when I consider where I have come

from. First of all, I can see that God is the One Who ordered all of history, and He is the One Who orders my life as well. Seeing how great God's work is helps me to see how insignificant my work is. It humbles me to realize that I am a part of God's story through His gift of grace. Looking back I also soon realize how little I know. I quickly realize how very dependent I am on others who have gone before me. If I had to figure out everything about my faith by myself, I wouldn't get very far. I would be foolish to ignore how the early Anabaptists, or the founders of my church group, or my forefathers have shaped me. To look back at my roots and accept both the negative and the positive parts of my story promotes an attitude of humility.

And finally, another value of looking back is that it calls me towards gratitude. I am thankful for the way God has faithfully directed the story I am part of. I am thankful

for the deep commitments that the early Anabaptists had to God. I am thankful for all the writings of Anabaptists in the past that continue to speak to us as we read them today. Additionally, I am thankful that my forefathers remained faithful to God. I don't know how intentionally they thought about how their life and legacy would affect their descendants. But it makes me want to evaluate how my life will impact the trajectory that my descendants will take.

In conclusion, I think that looking back in order to seek to discover my roots has immense value. In fact, I would argue that looking back is just as important as making goals for the future. We establish a surer foundation for our present and future if we are aware of where we came from. This exercise in evaluating the value of looking back inspires me to ponder this topic more throughout my life.



*[Written for a class at Faith Builders.]*

The Lord has given us two ends, they have a common link;  
For with the bottom end we sit, and with the other think.

Success in life depends upon, which end you choose to use,

You'll discover this, my friend, heads you win, and tails you lose!

## marriages

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

### **Bontrager-Mast**

Bro. Cameron, son of Lavon and Vesta Bontrager, Kalona, IA, and Sis. Lanita, daughter of DJ and Lucy Mast, Dickson, TN, on September 21, 2024, at the Cameron Bontrager farm, Kalona, IA, for Sharon Bethel Mennonite Church by Lavon Bontrager.

### **Flora-Bontrager**

Bro. Grant, son of Doug and Lori Flora, Modesto, CA, and Sis. Tiffany, daughter of Lavon and Vesta Bontrager, Kalona, IA, on September 7, 2024, at Upper Deer Creek Mennonite Church for Sharon Bethel Mennonite Church by Derek Wise.

### **Kuepfer-Gerber**

Bro. Justin, son of Calvin and Martha Kuepfer, Milverton, ON, and Sis. Bethany, daughter of Timothy and Marybeth Gerber, Gadshill, ON, on September 7, 2024, at Cedar Grove A.M. Church by John Gerber.

### **Schlabach-Miller**

Bro. Willis, Sugarcreek, OH, son of Thomas and Linda Schlabach, and Sis. Sonya, New Philadelphia, OH, daughter of Paul Leroy and Miriam Joy Miller, on July 20, 2024, at Maranatha Fellowship by Paul Leroy Miller.

### **Stoltzfus- Miller**

Bro. Arlin, son of Wilmer and Thelma Stoltzfus, Greeneville, TN, and Sis. Julia, daughter of David and Sara Miller, Maysville, WV, on August 31, 2024, at Parkview Mennonite Church for North Fork Mennonite Church by Marcus Kauffman.

### **Troyer-Yoder**

Bro. Austin, son of David and Rhoda Troyer, Leesburg, OH, and Sis. Sharon, daughter of Lyndon and Martha Yoder, Winchester, OH, on September 28, 2024, at Sardinia Church of Christ, Sardinia, OH, for Still Waters Mennonite Church by Marcus Yoder.

### **Yoder-Coblentz**

Bro. Wynston, son of Laurel and the late Verlynn Yoder, Grove City, MN, and Sis. Erika, daughter of Ed and Kathy Coblentz, Greeneville, TN, on August 10, 2024, at First Baptist Church for Greene County Mennonite Church by Raymond Fisher.

### **Yoder-Petersheim**

Bro. Lee, son of David and Brenda Yoder, Auburn, KY, and Sis. Krista, daughter of Alva and Marion Petersheim, Chuckey, TN, on August 17, 2024, at First Baptist Church for Greene County Mennonite Church by Raymond Fisher.



## cradle roll

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



**Barkman**, Wes and Cheryl (Miller), Washington, IA, first child and son, Myles Hudson, March 28, 2024.

**Byler**, Steven and Kari (Garber), Huntsville, AR, first child and son, William Jack, August 21, 2024.

**Coblentz**, Jalin and Marietta (Lambright), Hadley, PA, third child, first daughter, Kiara Shaye, June 22, 2024.

**Gerber**, Daniel and Renita (Wagler), Millbank, ON, fifth child, second daughter, Kendra Rose, August 7, 2024.

**Graber**, Josh and Allison (Beachy), Auburn, KY, fourth child, third son, Tucker Jordan, September 4, 2024.

**Helmuth**, Galen and Edith (Beachy), Belvidere, TN, fifth child, second son, Karson Wade, August 22, 2024.

**Hilty**, Lucas and Anne (Yoder), Guys Mills, PA, fifth child and son, Evan Russell, September 13, 2024.

**Hostetler**, Jason and Donna (Yoder), Danville, AL, fifth child, second son, Lincoln Cole, September 11, 2024.

**Kurtz**, Timothy and Hannah (Waldner), Adams, NY, first child and daughter, Emma Julia, September 14, 2024.

**Lapp**, John Alan and Lydia Ruth (Stoltzfus), Holtwood, PA, sixth child, fifth son, Colson Myles, September 13, 2024.

**Miller**, Brandon and Rosanna (Stoltzfus), Sugarcreek, OH, seventh child, third son, Luke Everett, August 17, 2024.

**Miller**, Caleb and Ashley (Stutzman), Fresno, OH, first child and daughter, Annika Elise, August 19, 2024.

**Nuñez**, Jorge and Amelia (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, second child and son, Liam Rafael, July 3, 2024.

**Ropp**, Michael and Connie (Bontrager), Kalona, IA, fifth child, third daughter, Allison Blessing, July 5, 2024.

**Sharp**, Darius and Charity (Swarey), Adams, NY, second child, first son, Isaiah Kent, August 26, 2024.

**Stanciuc**, Marius and Audrey (Landis), Denver, PA, second child, first son, Matteo Pierre, August 7, 2024.

**Troyer**, Jonathan and Andrea (Miller), Stuarts Draft, VA, sixth child, first daughter, Nicole Brooke, September 12, 2024.

**Wengerd**, Micah and Katrina (Nisley), Guys Mills, PA, first child and son, Alaric Jude, September 3, 2024.

**Yoder**, Derek and LaNita (Wingard), Montezuma, GA, third child, first daughter, Gracelyn Joy, August 12, 2024.

**Yoder**, Joshua and Darlene (Albertson), Bluffton, IN, fourth child, second daughter, Keturah Grace, August 19, 2024.

**Yoder**, Karl and Rachel (Jantzi), Wesley, AR, second child, first daughter, Shianne Rose, July 16, 2024.

**Yoder**, Kevin and Rhoda (Beiler), Wesley, AR, third child, second daughter, Malena Sue, July 25, 2024.

**Yoder**, Tim and Rose (Yoder), Big Prairie, OH, fourth child, third son, Keith Azriel, September 20, 2024.

**Yoder**, Victor and Joanna (Overholt), Montezuma, GA, first child and son, Zaydrick Floyd, June 27, 2024.

**Zook**, Joseph and Catherine (Gingerich), Cumberland, OH, fifth child, second son, Victor Levi, August 26, 2024.



## ordinations

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

**Bro. Steve Eash**, 42, (wife, AnnaLouise Tyler), Whiteville, TN, was ordained deacon for Whiteville Mennonite Church on September 15, 2024. Preordination messages were given by Vernon Troyer. The charge was given by Kevin Yoder,

assisted by Paul Overholt and Perry Miller. Jerald Knepp shared the lot.

**Bro. Melvern Kauffman**, 54, (wife, Patricia Whitt), was ordained to the office of bishop for McKenney Mennonite Church, Rawlings, VA, on June 16, 2024. Preordination messages were brought by Tim Weaver, Jonathan Martin, and Merle Beachy. The charge was given by Tim Miller, assisted by Marcus Kauffman and Jonathan Martin.

**Bro. David Reynolds**, 39, (wife, Rhoda Beachy), was called by God through the voice of the church and ordained deacon for Meadows of Light Amish Mennonite Church, Coshocton, OH, on August 11, 2024. Preordination messages were given by Ray Yoder. The charge was given by James R. Mullet, assisted by Phil Miller and Paul Leroy Miller.



## obituaries

**Hostetler**, William, 84, of Auburn, KY, gained his heavenly body with no more pain and suffering on September 17, 2024. He was born July 8, 1940, to the late Simon and Susie (Plank) Hostetler in Haven, KS. He married Sarah Mast on October 8, 1959.

Survivors include his wife, Sarah, four sons: Edwin (Esther) and Eli (Wilma), both of Auburn; Elton (Alta), Cynthia; John (Joanna), Twin Bridges, MT; five daughters: Edna (Nick) Vandervort, Cresco, IA; Kathryn (Julian) Swarey, Unionville, MO; JoAnna (Glenn) Yoder,

McMinnville, TN; Miriam (David) Graber, Sheridan, MT; Viola (Sam) Peachy, Bellville, PA; three sisters: Wilma (John Henry) Whetstone, Irvington; Betty (David) Yoder, Crofton; Ida (Moses) Graber, Jamesport, MO; four brothers: Noah (Katherine), Rexford, MT; Chester (Irene), Monta Vista, CO; Lester, Sarasota, FL; Eli, Jamesport, MO; two sons-in-laws, Henry Shrock, Windsor, MO; Richard Schlabach, Guthrie; 68 grandchildren, 71 great-grandchildren, step-daughter-in-law, Valerie Schlabach, and four step-grandchildren.



He was preceded in death by two daughters: Esther Shrock and Wilma Schlabach; granddaughter, Julie Wagler; infant grandson, Eric Yoder; sister, Edna Yutz; and a brother, Levi Hostetler.

Before his stroke in 2009, William lived a full and active life. His children, grandchildren, traveling, and his cows were his main interests. Many precious memories were made working together on the farm with lots of fun trips and outings mixed in. He will be greatly missed, but the family also rejoices that he has gained his heavenly body with no more pain and suffering.

The funeral service was held on September 21, 2024, at Providence Mennonite Fellowship with Jason Miller and David Yoder serving. The burial followed in the church cemetery.

**Kauffman**, Jonas, 101, formerly of Gordonville, PA, went home to be with Jesus on May 1, 2024, at Lincoln Christian Home. We believe he responded gladly to the long-awaited call to “come home, son.” He entered heaven to the words of the song “Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me” with his family by his side. Jonas was born on July 18, 1922, and was married on November 16, 1948, to Elizabeth Beiler who passed away in January 2015.

He was a faithful member of Weavertown A. M. Church and found much joy in attending church, interacting in the men’s Sunday school class and encouraging his friends. Jonas was blessed with good health for many years and enjoyed volunteering at Christian Aid Ministries

and cutting patches for comforters. He had an adventurous spirit and enjoyed traveling and celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday by taking a hot air balloon ride with his son and a granddaughter. But his biggest passion was his love for Jesus and the Word. He thanked God for his salvation in many of his prayers and prayed for his family and the staff at Lincoln home by name. He wasn’t afraid to share Jesus with those around him and had a deep burden for the salvation of others.

He is survived by three children: Sue (Ralph) Miller, Daleville, VA; Melvin (Esther), Lancaster; Jane (Nathan) Kauffman, Mt Pleasant; 11 grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren, and a sister, Mary Lantz, Gap.

He was preceded in death by a son, Elmer (late husband of Janette Kauffman), two sisters, Fannie Flaud and Katie Riehl, and one brother, Jacob.

His funeral was held at Weavertown Church on May 4, 2024.

This verse sums up his life and testimony:

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus,  
All the glory evermore to Him.  
When the race is complete,  
Still my lips shall repeat,  
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

**Miller**, John C., 92, of Newcomerstown, OH, passed away at his residence on September 1, 2024, after a short period of declining health. He was born on January 15, 1932, to the late Crist and Sarah (Raber) Miller. On February 17, 1955, he married Mary H. Shetler who preceded

him in death on February 11, 2012.

John was a member of Salem A. M. Church in Bakersville. He was a retired farmer and cabinet maker and also loved technology. He really missed his wife, Mary, after her passing and dearly loved all his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. John always enjoyed having visitors at the house, especially on Sunday evenings. He was ready to go and be with his Savior.

He is survived by his two sons: Paul (EmmaLou), Newcomerstown, and Dale (Sue), both of Newcomerstown; three daughters: Vera (Steve) Yoder, Gambier, Esther (Dave) Yoder, Newcomerstown; Lois Miller, Gambier; 21 grandchildren; 42 great-grandchildren; a brother, Atlee; and a sister, Katie Ann Yoder.

He was preceded in death by three sons: Vernon, Mark, and Joshua; a grandson, Lavon Miller; brothers: Mose, Neal, Eli, Alvin, and Crist; and a sister, Susie Miller.

The funeral service was held at Maranatha Fellowship on September 4, 2024, with Bobby Miller officiating. The burial was at the Salem Church Cemetery.

**Thomas**, Ira, 93, of Goshen, IN, passed away peacefully, on August 25, 2024, at his residence. He was born on September 11, 1930, in Custer County, OK, to Ben and Lovina (Mullet) Thomas. On October 7, 1952, in Custer County, he married Susie Beachy. Susie died October 6, 2016.

Surviving are four daughters: Sharon (Marvin) Weirich, Middlebury; Linda (Samuel) Miller, Strawberry, AR; Leona (Tim) Beachy, Columbia City; Lisa

(Kevin) Sharick, Union City, MI; son, Edward (Melissa), Middlebury; 19 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren; and sister, Lovina Stutzman, Goshen.

He was preceded in death by his parents, wife, son, Marion Thomas; great-granddaughter, Layla Miller; three sisters: Katie Bontrager, Amanda Stutzman, Miriam Miller; three brothers: Pete, Martin, and Benjamin "Benny."

He was a member of Woodlawn Church and owner of Miller Door & Trim for 20 years. He had a creative mind that was reflected through his unique woodworking, a passion that allowed him to gift family members with beautiful furniture to pass down for generations. He had a servant heart that led him to serve on many Christian Aid Ministries trips in the US and internationally and was generous with his resources to bless others.

The funeral service was held at Woodlawn Church on August 29, 2024, with the Woodlawn ministers, grandson, Caleb Weirich, and grandson-in-law, Jason Miller, serving. The burial followed at the Thomas Cemetery, Goshen.

**Yoder**, P. Sanford, 62, of Benton, OH, passed away unexpectedly at his residence on July 13, 2024, from a suspected heart attack. He was born on June 15, 1962, to the late Kore E. and Emma Ruth (Speicher) Yoder. On May 22, 2010, he married Laura Schlabach.

Sanford enjoyed singing, woodworking, and working in the yard and garden. He was employed at Hiland Woodworking and was a member of

Grace Haven Fellowship.

In addition to his wife, Laura, he is survived by his siblings: Sylvan (Susie), McVeytown, PA; Salome (Glen) Yoder, Middleburg, PA; brothers-in-law: Samuel (Salome) Detweiler, McVeytown, PA; Perry (late Judy) Beachy, Winfield, PA; and father-in-law, Roy (late Anna) Schlabach of Shreve.

In addition to his parents, he was

preceded in death by his siblings: Annas, Mary Ellen Yoder, Lois Detweiler, Judy Beachy; stepmother, Annie (Sharp) Yoder; and mother-in-law, Anna Schlabach.

The funeral service was held at Gospel Haven Mennonite Church on July 16, 2024, with David Yoder officiating. Burial followed in the Grace Haven Cemetery.



## observations

Putting ink to paper about an election that will occur more than a month from this writing and read about the time the election is unfolding, brings with it the risk that whatever comments are made might seem a bit stale and irrelevant by that time. But since it is on our minds, to a greater or lesser degree, it seems prudent to remind ourselves of some things that don't change. Among things that don't change, I'm reminded that:

1. God is on His throne. His tenure is not subject to the whimsical notions of a temperamental electorate.

2. The Christian's primary citizenship is in heaven.

3. The scriptural injunction for us to pray for civil leaders is not partisan-specific.

4. Life teaches us that a large slice of our apprehension associated with the future is simply because

it is unknown. Usually, things that we fear in the future are not as dire as fear would have us to believe. Furthermore, God's grace is available for every circumstance that His children experience.

5. On this side of eternity, the future of God's children is always brighter than the present. That doesn't mean that we won't experience some excruciating things. It only means that we should remember that grace is always available, and in the grand, eternal scheme of things, the best is yet to come.

6. The prayers, example, testimony, and Kingdom advocacy, that God's children are called to, make us quite effective agents of change in our communities. This enduring capacity to influence positive change in our sphere of influence is potentially far more productive and worthwhile than zeroing in on one day of canceling

each other out at the ballot box.

May these unchanging realities buoy our spirits amid the uncertainties of this election cycle and for all our tomorrows.

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When I wrote the last column, the 2024 hurricane season had been rather quiet up to that time. Since then, activity in the Atlantic basin has experienced significantly more seasonal storm activity. Hurricane Helene was a remarkable behemoth of a storm when it roared ashore in north Florida as a category 4 hurricane with winds in excess of 140 mph. The damage on the coast was thorough and sobering. But the flooding, wind, and flood damage that it left beyond the coast as it crossed the Florida panhandle, Georgia, the Carolinas, and western Tennessee spread the property damage and deaths to much more than the coastline. Some areas experienced as much as two feet of rain and catastrophic flooding. More than 200 persons perished. The clean-up efforts have scarcely begun to be evaluated and begun. Nobody can bring back the lives that were lost. But the rebuilding and clean-up will undoubtedly be an arduous undertaking that will involve an enormous investment of resources, both human and financial.

Meanwhile, here in Kansas we'd

love to have more rain. We certainly are subject to the elements.

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On October 1, Jimmy Carter became the first person to celebrate his 100th birthday after serving as President of the USA.

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Some years ago a friend sent me some results of research published in Science Daily related to alcohol consumption. That study indicated that light alcohol drinkers (less than one drink per day) experience a slightly more favorable mortality rate than non-drinkers. Some researchers guessed that light alcohol consumption might actually give some disease protection and lower stress levels. A closer look at statistics provides some helpful insight into these numbers. The University of Colorado Boulder and the University of Colorado Denver did a study on this to find if a person's reason for abstaining from alcohol could influence these statistics. Those who didn't drink due to religious or moral reasons and because of family responsibilities had a statistical mortality rate similar to light drinkers. Those who abstained primarily because they didn't like the taste had a 17% higher mortality rate than light drinkers. When "being an alcoholic" and "problems with drinking" were

part of the reasons for abstaining, the mortality rate jumped to 38% higher than light drinkers. This suggests that other factors have a greater favorable influence on mortality rates than alcohol consumption. The researchers cautioned that non-drinkers shouldn't expect their mortality rate to fall if they begin light consumption of alcohol. Furthermore, as the rate of alcohol consumption increases, the mortality rate accelerates.

There has also been considerable debate about the causes of alcoholism. Some suggest that alcoholics have a genetic or chemical predisposition to this condition. Others feel that alcoholism is simply the result of poor self-discipline. This much seems certain: many would like to quit drinking and find themselves powerless to stop. The policy of abstaining from alcohol continues to serve us very well. Some of us have lived in settings where this wasn't practiced and have relatives or acquaintances who are alcoholics. The person who never takes the first drink doesn't need to wonder if he or she will become an alcoholic.

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Scripture provides us with a wonderful alternative to inebriation. When one becomes drunken, full control of one's capacities are surrendered. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul

admonishes the Ephesians this way, *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."*

What Paul concedes with this exhortation is that it isn't wrong to be under the power of something else. However, it surely shouldn't be alcohol but rather to be filled with, and by implication, operate under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings to the believer peace, guidance, assurance, hope, conviction, etc. in spades. This is so much better than trying to forget one's problems or seeking thrills via alcohol.

Alcohol consumption among our people was pretty much non-negotiable in my memory. However, I hear comments here and there that indicate this position could use some reinforcing.

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Recently, a lonely neighbor man in his 70s, whom I'll call Al, joined us for the evening meal. This gentleman has lived a life that likely none of us would envy. He described his father as one who moved when he didn't get along with his neighbors. As his father neared retirement, he took his own life. Al never married. He said he never really felt love. He joined the Navy and spent time deployed during the Vietnam war. After returning home, he and his brother went into business together here in Labette



County, KS. But as retirement age approached for the brothers, Al's brother took his own life like his father had done.

When I consider the things that Al has experienced in his life, the unsettled childhood, the distant father, suicides, war, social rejection, and lack of love, I experience quite a mixture of sentiments. I feel really sympathetic for Al. He's quite knowledgeable of Scripture and makes a profession of belief in God. But his impression of God is that He's a God Who is more powerful and distant than loving. These impressions are not surprising, given his past.

I'm also struck with how privileged I've been. Neither Al nor I chose where or when we were born.

While I am not able to define

specifically the ways that Al's time in the military contributed to his current situation, he talks about it in ways that indicate a deep impact. He's quite a storyteller, but he frequently omits details in his recounting with a comment along the lines of, "and other things I don't want to talk about."

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Let's remember to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ—and others too—who are experiencing the ravages of war around the world. The destruction is reprehensible and the lives lost are tragic. But there is a long toll that is often paid by those who are close enough to experience the trauma but survive physically. I need to pray more for these people in these situations.

—RJM 

## Sanctification

*Denver Yoder, Somerset, OH*

**S**anctification is God's will for us (I Thessalonians 4:3). The word *sanctification* is related to the word *saint*; both words have to do with *holiness*. To *sanctify* something is to set it apart for a special use. To *sanctify* a person is to make him holy.

Jesus had a lot to say about sanctification in John 17. Jesus said we become sanctified through and by application of the truth of

God's word. In Christian theology, sanctification is a state of separation unto God. All believers enter into this state when they experience the new birth and are reborn of God.

You are in Christ Jesus Who is made unto us wisdom and sanctification (I Corinthians 1:30). Sanctification mentioned in this verse is a once-for-ever separation of believers unto God (as we remain faithful). It

is a work God performs, and an intricate part of our salvation and our connection with God. Theologians refer to this state of holiness before God as “positional” sanctification. It is also justification.

We can be positionally holy and set free from sin through Christ’s blood—yet we still sin (I John 1:10). This is why Scriptures refer to sanctification as practical experience of separation unto God.

Progressive or experiential sanctification is the effect of obedience to the Word of God in our lives. It is growing in the Lord in spiritual maturity. God started His work of making us like Christ, and He will perfect it if we allow Him. This type of sanctification must be earnestly pursued by the believer and is affected by diligent application of God’s Word.

Before our salvation experience, our behavior gave witness to our bent toward worldliness in separation from God. But now as a sanctified believer, our behavior must bear witness to our relationship with God in separation from the world and all the powers of darkness.

Step-by-step, those who are being sanctified are becoming more like Christ. God guides us to maturity in practical progressive holiness. When sanctification culminates in

its fullness, we will be glorified in God’s presence, “*For we shall see Him as He is.*”

After we repent and accept Christ as Lord of our lives, we become sanctified, and the process of sanctification begins. A hallmark of true sanctification is the concern for committed pursuit toward continual spiritual growth.

Sanctification is not only hearing or feeling the call to repentance, but subjecting our lives to the transforming call of the Gospel. It is not only a lip profession, but changing our very lives including our private personal lives.

Sanctification affects the clothes we wear, the food or drink we purchase when we eat at restaurants, and the words we speak. Few things give away our hearts as do our words. Becoming sanctified is also a life of adding (II Peter 1:5-9). If we fail in producing the expected fruit of sanctification, it is because we are missing essential character qualities mentioned in II Peter.

As a result of the work of Christ, everything we need for godly sanctification has been placed into our storehouse. We have been given everything we need to think, desire, and speak in a God-honoring manner. The Gospel identity and its amazing resources are a powerful

defense in the war for our souls.

God and His commandments have not changed. Sinful nature beneath its modern exterior is still the same. The message of the Scripture is still as relevant today as when Paul first unrolled his scroll and preached at Corinth. Sinful hearts, that seek to be sanctified, still find God's message of forgiveness as the only answer to life's most fundamental problems.

The devil often wins daily skirmishes with us by clouding our vision of true sanctification. Recently, a newspaper article said that in Philadelphia, PA, 3500 people were classed as homeless—content to scrounge only enough food for today. Many people lack true sanctification and live as if they were spiritually homeless. They live as a survivalist—only-for-the-moment existence. They do not think about change or the pursuit of genuine sanctification.

We are taught to grow spiritually in the Scriptures, but growth does not

come in lightning bolts or magical encounters. Rather, it comes by humble and obedient application of God's Word to the specifics of everyday living.

In our sanctification God calls us to stand fast, forsake, trust, put off and put on, obey, put to death, and resist. True sanctification will bring us to the same point as Peter came when he fully realized he had denied Christ; he went out and wept bitterly. When the Word and Spirit of God convicts, a sanctified heart will respond in true resignation and obedience.

Sanctification is not an option. It is not something we can apply at random as we will. It must affect every area of our lives—nothing is left untouched.

Therefore to him that knoweth of an area in his life that is not fully sanctified, and he doeth not sanctify it, to him it is sin. Whether it is personal sin, to parents, church, or civil government (James 4:17 paraphrased).



## I Saw a Beautiful Thing

### Inviting

*Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS*



**M**y friend is unmarried. Her nest is small but comfortable and family members live nearby. A woman of

unusual business acumen, she finds joy in her work. Her church family is well-established—an active and stable congregation. But for my friend it has

been a place of disappointment and unmet expectations; where is she to find intimate fellowship? What can she do to flourish here? These are some of the questions with which she wrestles.

She has set for herself, in this context, the goal to host people from church once a month. She dreams of varied gatherings: weekday evenings, Sunday lunches, campfire suppers, and Sunday evening snack. One approach already employed is to prepare food and invite whoever is seated beside her in the pew! She watches for folks on the fringes, those not included in conversation, and inquires if they would like to come over. Of course, there are considerations of space and suitability, but this openhanded hospitality is not the result of careful planning; it is not sticking with known factors and familiar faces. It is about trusting the Lord to orchestrate connections into which His life can speak and with prayer for an expanded sense of what might constitute family.

I was inspired. Friends, it's not about certain culinary skills or tasteful décor. It's not the perfect combination of guests or being the perfect hostess! Isn't it about inviting others to join us in feasting on the goodness of our generous Father? What a centerpiece that would be for your table! What satisfying conversation that might

unfold! Jesus taught in Luke 14 that we are to invite those who cannot repay us with an invitation. While it is right to invite our friends, relatives, or rich neighbors also, if we start there, is it likely we'll have time to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind as Jesus instructed? *Go look it up and read it; ask the Lord how this should look at your house.*

This riveting vision of hospitality is from the journal of another young woman:

"[I want] some way of living and being and loving that makes a safe place from which people can go out trusting and eager and come back satisfied... a welcome and belonging that draws people into the welcome Jesus gives...children, absolutely: those innocent malleable people whose foundational grasp of reality is still being formed. Families are meant for them, to give them a true picture of God...but not only for them. Families are for those whose experience has taught them that life hurts, they are alone, and the world is a deeply unsafe place to exist. Families are for them, to reframe their worlds, to call out hope they didn't know was still there in secret corners of their hearts, to fight against the skewed representation of reality they've been given. And by claiming them and making room for them, fighting for them and refusing

to leave them alone—to draw their eyes finally to the One Who does these things for us all.”

So that’s the **beauty** that stirs my heart—I invite because He first invited me. Returning invitation where she has felt excluded. A plan to implement stated values. Willingness

to allow God to direct who comes to eat food prepared in faith. The hope that in Christ, family is bigger than commonly defined among us. And alongside these aspirations, the longing to find a welcome at your table, and in your heart, for her. Are you inviting?



## mission awareness

# ABCs of Missionary Preparation (Part 2)

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

*Missionary preparation is paramount to Christian service. Worship of our Heavenly Father is an apex to the preparation. Read and reread all of Brother Steiner’s seasoned thoughts, but especially the paragraphs under “Prayer and Fasting.” I can also highly recommend the books that he suggested for additional reading on this weighty subject.*

*I quote E. M. Bounds, “The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men; men whom the Holy Ghost can use; men mighty in prayer.” I will add: men filled with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit and praying in Jesus’ Name, Amen. -FS*

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**E**ach year, hundreds of missionaries move to new areas, hoping to make a difference there for the Kingdom

of God. Some prepare with degrees and graduate programs, while 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 nine more of the 26 ABCs to help missionaries prepare for effective service.

### **Instructional experience**

– Teaching is part of the Great Commission and a missionary’s weekly, if not daily, task. Prior experience instructing others makes adjustment to mission life a little easier. Take any opportunities you have to teach Sunday school, give devotionals and topics, or teach vacation Bible school. Teachers with classroom experience also have an advantage.

Books like *Teaching to Change Lives* by Howard Hendricks, *Seven Laws of*

*the Learner* by Bruce Wilkinson, and *The Seven Laws of Teaching* by John Milton Gregory, help you prepare for and evaluate your teaching experiences. *Plain Speaking* by David Bercot is a basic resource to guide you in preparing devotionals and sermons.

**Job skills** – Mission vehicles break down. Light switches need to be replaced. Crowds need to be fed. Clothing begs to be sewn. Familiarity or experience in practical job skills is a tremendous asset to missionaries, especially those living in areas where skilled services are not readily available. Accounting, keyboarding, and computer literacy are also useful skills. Developing a wide array of practical skills and experience now will increase one’s usefulness at a place of service later.

**Keep humble** – Years ago, I asked a lifetime missionary to Africa to share one lesson he had learned during his 40-plus years there. I can still show you the exact location where he shocked my young mind with his response. “I learned that God accomplishes more in spite of us than through us.”

Moving into a mission house does not make you a better Christian than anyone else. Pride turns others away and keeps us from reaching maximum effectiveness in our

calling. It is God’s work, and He has given us the wonderful privilege of being a part of it.

What can one do? Make it your prayer for God to keep you humble. Then, recognize difficulty and failure as His tools in that work. Spend time in the Word and prayer, allowing that to permeate your life. Also, ask trustworthy friends for input on your attitudes and actions. A.W. Tozer noted, “A Pharisee is hard on others and easy on himself, but a spiritual man is easy on others and hard on himself.”

**Language learning** – “I’d give anything to be able to speak Chinese the way you do,” said the new missionary to the veteran.

“Anything except for ten years of intense study and daily practice,” came the reply.

Yes, language learning is hard work, but you can start now. Many community colleges offer language classes. Software, such as Rosetta Stone or Duolingo, offers a do-it-yourself approach for the self-disciplined. Finding local speakers of your desired language and interacting with them through study or social events allows you to learn and build relationships at the same time. As Brewster and Brewster point out in *Language Learning Is Communication—Is Ministry*, learning



a language can be a ministry rather than an obstacle. Start now!

**Money** – Finances keep many people at home. Those who desire to serve abroad need to consider a lifestyle and habits that will allow them to serve without hindrance. Minimizing debt, avoiding extravagant purchases, and curtailing expensive hobbies are good practices for all Christians, and especially for those who desire the freedom to serve. Learning to live simply makes financial sense and allows us to serve with less distraction.

These habits are developed in our youth and are best established long before we begin the process to go abroad. Ask someone you trust to evaluate your spending habits. Read several books by Gary Miller, including *Charting a Course in Your Youth*, *Kingdom-Focused Finances*, and *The Other Side of the Wall*.

**Newsletters** – Sign up for mission newsletters in your area of interest and from other missions across the world. Reading news, articles, and requests from organizations keeps us abreast with God's work in many places. It gives us perspective of the work to be done and how we are a part of a world-wide effort. It also encourages the growth of our personal burden for the souls of men. Just remember that being informed

of the work is no substitute for being involved in the work.

**Openness** – Begin your journey abroad by communicating with your local church and its leadership. Develop openness in those relations *now*, so that you have a foundation established. Then when you have an opportunity for service, ask for their advice and blessing *before* you make plans, and respect any concerns they have. Ask them to keep you accountable as you go. Involving your local church and leaders follows the pattern given in Acts and keeps you from much heartache. Opening yourself to this depth of relationship at home also prepares you for good relationships with your authorities at your place of service.

All potential missionaries, but especially youth, should discuss plans with their parents. Do they feel you are ready? Do they have any concerns? Do they have suggestions for a place or type of service? Asking for their input and blessing is a sign of maturity and respect.

We also do well to seek an open relationship with several older, mature Christians in our lives. Find these advisors or mentors now and ask their input as you prepare for the future. Then when you have a service opportunity, involve them in the decision and maintain contact

with them as you serve.

**Prayer and fasting** – These disciplines are the hidden work of missionaries. Develop habits of prayer and fasting now so that they are a part of your life and you understand their value before you go.


Studying and praying the prayers in the Bible is one of the most enlightening efforts you can undertake. These prayers go beyond the “Bless so-and-so,” to specific and Spirit-led prayer. While we don’t enjoy hardship and suffering, they are some of the best teachers of prayer.

Fasting too, helps us move past the earthly normals and focus on heavenly realities. Start by fasting one meal at a time, and then work toward an entire day. During your fast, don’t be surprised when your favorite pastry shows up at work, or someone offers you a tempting snack. Satan desires to use these opportunities to trip you. Set your personal rules and end-time, and then stick to them.

Several helpful books are *God’s*

*Chosen Fast* by Arthur Wallis, *Let Us Pray* by Watchman Nee, the life-story of James Fraser, called *Mountain Rain*, by Eileen Crossman, and the biography, *Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*, by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor.

**Quiet time** – Stop! Be still! Quiet time with God should be the supreme rejuvenating habit of a Christian. Make time each day to leave responsibilities and spend invigorating time with God. This habit is best developed in your youth, before you face the pressures of ministry, marriage, and mission life.

We Christians do well to find other activities that are life-giving as well. Find recreational activities, such as photography, music, plants, or writing, that rejuvenate you and bring blessing to others. “Burning out for God” rarely produces fruitful ministry or personal growth and should be avoided. 

*To be concluded*  
*[Used by permission]*

## A Woman After God’s Heart

### Stories About God’s Children (Part 2 of 2)

*Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH*



*Last month I related several short, true stories that tell about ways the*

*Kingdom of God comes to earth, and about the enemy wanting to convince*

*us otherwise. Think of it this way: we are God's children telling each other stories about God being real in us and around us—God's Kingdom, here and now. All of us have many stories, to be sure, but this article concludes the brief series begun last month. SS*

**I**n the late 90s our family served at a maternity clinic in South America. We were privileged to work alongside committed servants of God who had left their North American families to change the world in Paraguay. There were impressive numbers of babies born in the clinic during those years. The patients, who delivered babies at our facility, were invited to engage with one of our staff in a short devotional and prayer and receive a personal Bible to take home. Our staff conducted devotionals in the waiting areas, addressing large groups of captive patients. Singing rang from our hallways.

Many times, as we would meet families from our area of rural Paraguay, stories surfaced about the loving attention they received at our clinic. There were many accounts of lives having been impacted during those decades, in ways beyond adding babies to their families.

However, I clearly remember when several of the nurses and aides came to us, genuinely concerned. "We feel

like we're not really doing anything for God. We just do our work, day after day after day. We don't see how delivering babies can really make a difference for the Kingdom of God."

**The temptation to think their work is too small doesn't only burden mothers of young children. The enemy's temptations are same-old, same-old, no matter where we live.**

• • • • •

We sat at a hardwood furniture dealers' event lunch table with an elderly couple from the southern part of the state. We exchanged stories about how God had led us both into similar vocations and despite a few trials along the way, we both felt assuredly that we'd been called to be lighthouses right where we were. This was his story.

His furniture store had done well enough over the years that he'd actually been inspired to open a second location, bringing Amish-made furniture into the capital city of the neighboring state. Local gentlemen visited him in the new location, eager for conversation and friendship. Eventually, there was more than coffee around the table with this handful of men. Their time together developed into Bible studies they grew to love on a regular basis.

After several years, our furniture-

selling friend was compelled to break the news to the local gentlemen that he and his wife needed to close this second store. Limits of time and health constraints did not allow them to keep it open.

The local Bible study fellows begged him to consider what a different place this locality had become since the opening of his business. Since his store's beginning, the drug dealers no longer roamed these streets. The prostitutes had disappeared. Didn't he realize what a change had come to this part of the city?

**Be the change you want to see in the world.**

• • • • •

We'll call her Ruthie. She was a unique lady. She was so unusual, in fact, that just talking with her was difficult at times because she processed life so differently than the people around her. When she was nervous, she laughed embarrassingly loud in public. Though a member in a Baptist church, she was especially enamored with the Mennonites and wrote us a letter to praise our church's modesty. But Ruthie's health deteriorated and due to hard experiences in her childhood she didn't trust just anybody to care for her.

One of my friends took Ruthie into her care, responding repeatedly to her requests for assistance. Sometimes my

friend went even further than Ruthie's requests. She trimmed Ruthie's toenails and soaked her misshapen feet. She cleaned out the pet rabbit cage in Ruthie's apartment. She made Ruthie's apartment more comfortable. My friend brought Jesus to Ruthie even when it meant engaging in smelly, disagreeable tasks.

Eventually Ruthie died. She did not die as a socially well-adjusted, highly-functioning person. But Ruthie died, perfectly confident that Jesus loved her for who she was, because one of Jesus' followers washed her feet.

Ruthie's story doesn't end with fireworks and applause. However, it reminds us that God's Kingdom grows both ways. Many times, the greater payback comes from the growth that happens in our own hearts.

**We love, because He first loved us.**

• • • • •

*The Stoltzfus Story* in summary:

Nicholas Stoltzfus was born to a German Lutheran family and was baptized as an infant. His father died when Nicholas was very young, and although his mother remarried and raised children with a stepfather, it was like Nicholas had lost a place to belong, without a family to care for him and for sure any hopes for an inheritance. An Anabaptist family in Germany in the early 1700s offered him a place to call home and

employment on their farm. Nicholas stated: "I became familiar with their quiet ways and embraced them as my own." It's easy to see that these Anabaptists provided Nicholas with more than just a job. His personal family losses were restored among these caring people.


Eventually, Nicholas married one of his employer's daughters. In that locality at that time, the Anabaptists were scorned and a people without rights to own land. To join them meant Nicholas would be leaving the accepted Lutheran faith, exchanging it for one that was not legally accepted, and so he was forced to move out of the country. Nicholas and his wife moved to Pennsylvania in 1766.

Today, 'Stoltzfus' with its varied spellings is the most common Amish surname in eastern Pennsylvania. They are direct descendants from Nicholas Stoltzfus who kept his

surname from his Lutheran birth father. We also note that a family whose name is less well-known today, valued and cared for a youth who had no father and no hopes of an inheritance. In obedience to the Scriptures, Nicholas had been a stranger, and they took him in. Their Christ-likeness shaped many people in years to come.

***"But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:34).***

• • • • •

You have your own stories like these. Listen for them. Collect them. Write them down. Reflect on them. Tell them to your friends. Tell the Kingdom of God stories to your grandchildren. *"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."* 

## junior messages

# More Stories from ARC Ministry in Texas

*Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH*

**W**hat is the Darién Gap? The Darién Gap is the only land bridge,

approximately 70 miles, between North and South America. There are no roads through the Darién. To

cross on foot is difficult and often underestimated. It is one of the rainiest and most dangerous places on earth. Migrants have no choice but to travel by foot. Dangers include wildlife: crocodiles, pumas, and pit vipers. The viper's venom is so deadly a person can die in 10 minutes from being bitten. There are steep mountains, turbulent rivers, dense forests, and high levels of humidity and precipitation. Crossing the Darién is not free. Cartels charge the migrants hundreds of dollars to cross.

One man told Mark his group of only men crossed the Darién in three and a half days. Other groups with women and children may take much longer. Sometimes they need to wait for rivers to go down.

The road to the United States for many desperate migrants is of long duration, dangerous, and difficult. Those who work at the border often hear short snippets of migrant stories.

A man from Venezuela was so overjoyed to finally be in the US that he kissed the brick wall. He called his mother in Venezuela and took a selfie with us for her.

A group of eight people from Honduras were on a bus that was stopped by kidnappers. They were pulled off the bus at Matamoros, Mexico, close to Brownsville, TX. Their captors demanded \$22,000 for

their release. Desperately, they placed a call to their sister back in Honduras. She took out a loan for them.

Josh is fluent in Spanish. He enjoys working at ARC. His heart went out to the African man he met one morning. This tall, young man from Morocco left home four months ago. Somewhere enroute, he too was kidnapped. He felt much fear when they tied him up. His ear was slit from his captors' meanness. He had to pay \$2,500 for ransom. He was traveling alone to NY and came through immigrations with only a travel purse slung over his shoulder. The kidnappers had taken everything. Eventually, he was able to buy nice clothes, find a motel, and a place to shower. It was a privilege to give him a French Bible. What will life in the United States hold for him?

Ellen had worked in Haiti for eight years prior to coming to ARC. Talking to Haitians is her joy. One lady said, "I remember seeing you at the clinic in Haiti." Ellen loves to be of help to the needy migrants.

Mark worked in El Salvador years ago. An El Salvadoran man came through the border. Mark struck up a conversation. The man was from Santa Ana. Mark asked him if he knew Mennonites. Yes, he knew Philip Glick; his dad had worked for him. He also knew Philip's brothers,



Paul and Ernest.

One evening at the border we met a Cuban mother and her daughter. They only had passports and papers. The group they traveled with had been kidnapped in Mexico and held captive a number of days till friends or relatives could send money for them to be released. The cartels demanded \$2,000 apiece. They were not given food but only a small amount of water to drink. They borrowed Mark's cell phone. Thankfully, they had a phone number to call relatives. The mother was crying as she talked. They said they had no money, so how could they get a taxi? Josh walked with them to the taxi. He would have helped them but the taxi man had kindness in his veins. He didn't charge them and drove them to Catholic Charities where they can stay for the night at no cost.

A man from Venezuela pulled up his shirt to show Mark a red, angry welt on his lower back. "The people who kidnapped us beat the men with a ball bat, and they told us if we don't pay what they demand, they will kill us," he told Mark.

It seems there is no one to speak up for the migrants in Mexico where the police collaborate in taking advantage of the poor.

## **Prayers of the Migrant**

-Shelly Weaver

One evening at the border we met a Venezuelan grandma. She had traveled to the US with her two teenaged granddaughters. From a town in Colombia, they boated on the Caribbean to the entrance of the Darién Gap. She told this story.

"A few days before, a boat making the same trip had overturned and seven people drowned. This was naturally on my mind, but I have a strong faith." The water was rough when we set out. I started praying. The boat captain thought my praying was ridiculous and unnecessary. But as I prayed, the waves grew smaller. If I stopped praying, the waves rose. When I started praying, they calmed down. Then the motors quit. Now everyone was scared, including the captain. People were desperately considering swimming, even though they were nowhere close to land. Once more I prayed and prayed, and the motors started.

"When we arrived at the Darién Gap, I prayed that my granddaughters and I wouldn't see anything traumatic as we hiked through. Others in their group reported seeing bodies, but we saw nothing like that."

Her testimony was a praise to our great God.



## Where Are You?

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

Shortly after the fall, Adam and his wife were hiding. They could feel their separation from God. *“And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?”* (Genesis 3:9).

In a recent business meeting, someone shared a saying I had heard before but needed to hear again. “You have to figure out where you are before you can figure out how to get where you want to go.” This applies to multiple areas of life. If you don’t have a signal and your GPS doesn’t know where you are, it won’t be able to get you to your destination. If you have a goal to save a certain amount of money for a purchase, you need to know how much money you have in order to figure out how much more you need to earn. Whatever your goal or destination, you have to know where you are in order to figure out how to get where you’re going.

As I pondered his words over the next few months, I began to realize just how true his words were and to take a hard look at myself and ask the question, “Where am I?” In the context of our lives as Christians,

that question has nothing to do with our physical location and everything to do with our spiritual condition. It’s easy to become lax with where we are in our walk with God and our relationship with His Son Jesus Christ. Satisfaction is a dangerous ideology in regard to our spiritual walk. Thomas Edison said, “Show me a thoroughly satisfied man and I will show you a failure.” We should always be pushing for growth and maturity in our spiritual lives. When we become comfortable and complacent in our Christian lives, we are ripe for apostasy and self-justification.

There are many ways that we can become complacent in our spiritual lives. One of the most common things is that when things are going well, we begin to subconsciously feel that we have our lives together, God blessed us, and everything is great. As a result, and since things are going well, we don’t feel that we need to ask God for anything, and we don’t spend enough time talking with Him. In my own experience, when I have gone through some of the toughest times in my life is when I have been

forced to rely more on God and that has drawn me closer to Him.

Another way that we become complacent is when we begin to compare ourselves to others. I've heard of several young people who told the leaders in their communities that as long as they look like they are okay and are following the standard then they don't get a second glance. We can do something similar. We can look around and quietly think to ourselves, "We're doing pretty good. Everyone in our family looks acceptable and is in good standing. Things are good at work. We are the quintessential family. Whatever we are doing seems to be good enough, so we'll just keep doing it."

A third way that we can become complacent in our spiritual lives is when we get so busy that God begins to "play second fiddle." This can happen so quickly. A particularly busy season of life can have us rolling out of bed and hitting the ground running in the morning and then going from one appointment to the next with barely enough time in between to eat (or breathe, it seems). We get home from work about 15 minutes later than we wanted. We run through the shower and then head off for youth activities. Our schedule is so full that we leave no room for God. Without time in our

schedule to cultivate our relationship with God, it won't grow.

The question that is then raised is, "How do we keep from becoming complacent and neglecting our relationship with God?" The first thing that comes to mind is the word *priority*. I've encountered more than a few people who often complained of being broke and not having time for things. However, more often than not they had a way of making time for and affording what they wanted. If you really want to do better and give your relationship with God the attention it deserves, then plan on it. Set your alarm a half hour earlier. Maybe set a reminder or notification for the evening so you don't forget. Have you ever tried skipping a meal and spending that time in communion with God instead? Denying physical desires in order to feed spiritual needs can have tremendous impact when done for the right reasons. Habits aren't formed overnight. If you are trying to lose weight or get stronger, one intense workout isn't going to make that big a difference. My personal experience is that consistency is more important than intensity. One three-hour session of fasting and prayer can have an impact on your spiritual life, but not to the extent that 20-30 minutes a day for a week will.

Evaluate where you are. Consider where you want to be and formulate a plan to reach that goal. This isn't just for youth. It's a challenge for all of us whether we are an eighth grader or an 80-year-old. God is calling us to Him and wants to have a relationship with us. Where are you? Are you walking daily with God like Enoch? Are you wandering the wilderness like Moses? Are you ready to face a trial like Job? Have you been called to go somewhere like Jonah? Have you been asked to do something that looks impossible like Gideon? Perhaps you've been given a task

that looks time-consuming like Noah. Wherever you are, seek God and trust that He will give you the strength to see that through as long as you continue to put Him first. God wants that relationship with us. God didn't ask Adam where he was because He was curious. He asked because He wanted to talk to him. Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights on Mt. Horeb talking with God. God wants that time with you. He's in the same place He's always been, and He hasn't changed His contact information. The question is, "Where are you?"



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## THOUGHT GEMS

He who laughs, lasts.

• • • • •

Death—the poor man's doctor. *German proverb*

• • • • •

Too many people remind you of French bread—one long loaf.

• • • • •

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where influence stops.

*Henry Adams*

• • • • •

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

• • • • •

What this country needs is more leaders who know what this country needs.

• • • • •

The man who strays away from common sense will end up dead!

*Proverbs 21:16*

• • • • •

Life's road is rough, but you can make it; hold out your hand,  
and God will take it.

• • • • •

A schoolteacher is one who must take a lot of live wires  
and see that they are grounded.

• • • • •

When we work, we work; when we pray, God works.