



Calvary

M E S S E N G E R

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

Galatians 6:14

DECEMBER 2017

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Calvary Messenger

December 2017

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 Trip

Craig Eicher, Butler, IN

I feel its presence. I can almost hear the river Jordan beckon.
 Its chilly waters lie before me. I can almost see its waves.
 I know what I shall face shortly, but there is no fear; I do not dread.
 For I know and I remain steadfast in this that Jesus saves!

Life has had more than its share of pain and disappointments.
 My heart is oft heavy, but the longer I am here and the older I grow,
 The more I wonder what lies beyond the dividing river.
 The more I wonder and the more I want to know!

As I remember and think back on days of childhood,
 I think on trips now past that took place upon this earth.
 I recall as the parting date grew nearer, ever closer,
 Anticipation mounted with memories golden in their worth!

The excitement of knowing what was just around the corner,
 My siblings and I and the closeness that we'd feel,
 But most of all the enjoyable destination that was coming,
 The security of knowing that Father was at the wheel!

These are memories as precious to my memory as in the making.
 But another journey awaits me as it must every person on this earth.
 This trip begins when I've reached the end of my allotted days,
 At the end of the countdown that began at the moment of my birth!

There'll be a light, a hand to guide me across those currents,
 Christ Himself will be there to bear me up and guide me across.
 I do not fear, for I know my guide and He has never failed me.
 I'm saved by grace alone, and I know I will not suffer loss!

I will quickly transition from one reality to an infinitely grandeur other,
 No more pain, disappointment, loneliness, or a chastening rod.
 I will know such infinite joy and satisfaction when I get there.
 I will but fall asleep to awaken—safe in the arms of God!

[Author's note: This poem was written for and is dedicated to a faithful Christian. I do not know her well, but I do know she has faced more than her fair share of trials on earth which were beyond her control and were not of her own making. She is now facing terminal cancer. I also know that she would leave behind a grieving husband and other loved ones. This poem is written from the perspective of the saint who is approaching imminent death and yet it is also written partly from my own perspective and I'm in good health. It is my hope and prayer that this poem will be an encouragement to anyone and their loved ones who face such trials.]



Concerns From a Voice of Yesteryear

Daniel S. Bontrager (1914-2004)

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4) In contrast, there is no greater burden or sorrow for parents or church leaders than when they become aware that children, brethren, and sisters are deviating and ignoring plain teachings of the Bible and are not walking in truth. The devil, the enemy of truth, has many subtle ways to promote and propagate his lies. Many a person has become victim to his wiles and is unaware of what has happened. One of the devil’s ways is to bring into question the authority and the unchangeableness of God’s Word.

Our burden and concern is for the eternal welfare of the brotherhood and our posterity that they would not follow the evident path of ignoring plain teaching of God’s eternal Word, and by going in this direction be rejected and disappointed when Christ returns to receive His own. Indeed, “how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at

the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?” (Heb. 2:3). “God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers gifts miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” (Heb. 2:4). Through these signs God put his stamp of approval on the four gospels, the Pauline epistles, as well as the writings of James, John, and Jude. “Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12).

Only in recent years am I learning of the inroads of Higher Criticism in Anabaptist circles. Peter calls it “wresting the Scriptures” by those who twist Paul’s writings (2 Peter 3:16b). Paul also in good conscience testifies of his writings, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be

ignorant” (1 Corinthians 14:37-38).

Several areas of drift away from faithfulness I see are:

1. A general attitude of permissiveness in much of society today in moral standards. Many people are rebelling against any kind of restrictions, and are clamoring for acceptance with their ungodly, deviant lifestyle. The crux of the matter seems to be that many churches are failing to take a definite scriptural stand against it. To mention just a few of these practices tolerated today: divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, and premarital sex.

2. God’s Word in separation of the sexes in apparel. The Deuteronomy 22:5 passage was not a ceremonial law that was fulfilled in Christ, but an eternal principle that God gave for the separation of the genders. People that violate this principle may try to justify their actions by saying, “These jeans or slacks I am wearing are made for a woman and not a man.” There may be an element of truth in this statement, but these types of clothing are mannish and are introduced by an ungodly society whose aim is to destroy sex distinction.

3. The violation of the principle of modesty and godliness as taught in Scripture by both Paul and Peter. (Bontrager here quotes the following Scriptures: 1 Timothy 2: 9, 10; 1

Peter 3:3-4. He continues): Braided and plaited hair mentioned in these Scriptures no doubt were practices of vain show and pride. History informs us that the practice was to braid things into the hair for display. Today it is the cutting of the hair forbidden in the Scriptures and the beauty parlor hairdo. An evident gross violation of modesty is the display of semi-nakedness by many in society today, especially in warm weather. The wearing of shorts, with bare legs exposed by both men and women. Men without a shirt, bare from the waist up. It is shocking that many professing Christians are adopting these ungodly practices. A woman was arrested in the mid-1930’s for wearing a garment that exposed her knees. She tried to defend herself in court by saying, “There is nothing bad about my knees.” The judge countered with, “It is against the laws of the state of Arkansas and violation of the law of God.”

4. A very significant doctrine is being disregarded—the doctrine of headship as taught in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. The veiling and long hair for women and short, uncovered hair for men is plainly taught. Men and women will only experience true fulfillment in their Christian experience when they find themselves willing to accept God’s ordained

order.

The things mentioned here are issues that many professing Christians scoff at. God is eternal and His precepts change not. In weakness, I have to express what lies heavy on my heart and what the Bible teaches. For further study, please read Ezekiel 3:17-21 and 33:30-33.

In the name of Christ,

Daniel S. Bontrager, September, 1986

[Seniors Daniel and Elizabeth "Lizzie" (Yoder) Bontrager served for two years with the Mission Interests Committee witness in Poperinge, Belgium. In the middle of this two-

year term, their fiftieth wedding anniversary came up, but the Bontragers stayed in Europe and celebrated a year later in Indiana. Some years before his passing, Daniel, a minister at Woodlawn A.M. Church, wrote a brief memoir, covering his childhood and two-thirds of their 65 years of marriage. He wrote about things that pertained to making a living in rural Goshen, Indiana, but some years later he added a section highlighting his spiritual concerns. I find the first part fascinating and the second part sobering. Recently when his niece, Elaine Yoder, originally from Indiana, traveled with us, she offered us Bro. Daniel's memoirs. The foregoing are Daniel's concerns that I gleaned from the concerns (sometimes rearranged and paraphrased, but all were his thoughts) about the times we live in. Used by permission.

-PLMJ



the bottom line

Of Perfectionist Tendencies

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

The man was accused of having perfectionist tendencies. If he was at his friend's house and saw a picture hanging on the wall that was not perfectly straight, he would unceremoniously straighten it. If a Bible verse was not quoted perfectly, he would "help out" by correcting it. It was best if the folding chairs at an auditorium were mostly set straight. The song books in the racks behind each pew were meant to all be set in

the same way, for certainly everyone knows that, and would certainly appreciate it.

It is commonly known that God wants all things to be done decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:40), and that He gave as a gift to the church, teachers, "for the *perfecting* of the saints" (Ephesians 4:11, 12 Emphasis added). But perfectionist tendencies can be a churchly nuisance. For instance, have you ever

noticed that the higher the quotient of perfectionist tendencies, the higher such a person is to judge with exactness? And why not, because the world's only perfect Teacher said, "but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

Have you ever noticed that those who are perfectionists are seldom rich? Usually not, because they spend too much time setting chairs straight and washing their cars. They might routinely be late for church. But then, we all know someone must needs arrive last of all. At least they are well groomed and well dressed.

Does God have perfectionist tendencies? (Maybe all perfectionists can now relax a little!) God created a perfect world with what we call the balance of nature. All things flourish and proliferate and wondrously reproduce. Day and night have perfect balance, and also the seasons flow seamlessly throughout the years. All of earth's creatures are in perfect relation for size to each other. Imagine flies being the size of sparrows or dogs being the size of a horse!

Here is the goal of this article. God does *not* have perfectionist tendencies, for He *is* perfect. He is perfect in all His ways and at all times. People with perfectionist tendencies can be sloppy enough at times, and quite imperfect at other times. They just tend to be perfect

sporadically. God is perfect in all ways, and all the time. The Bible says, "As for God, His way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30).

God is perfect in His judgment. The Bible says, "And we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth" (Romans 2:2). The judgments of God were perfect since the beginning of time. The judgment of God is one of His mighty attributes, in perfect harmony and power and with perfect cohesion along with His holiness, love, and grace and all of His perfect and blessed attributes.

God's judgments are proclaimed to be with His perfection, "for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth" (Psalm 96:13). God is equally and entirely true and perfect in all His end-time judgments which are prophetically stated to be *world-wide*. The Bible says, "For true and righteous are thy judgments" (Revelation 19:2). The testimony of the messenger says, as John writes, "And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God... for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war" (Revelation 19:9-11).

The perfect judgment of God will also judge all mankind *individually*.

The Bible assures us that there will be a great white throne judgment. All the dead will be raised and will present themselves before God at that awesome event. “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Revelation 19:11-15). This will be a most perfect judgment which no man can gainsay or resist.

We look for perfection in appliances, or furniture, or a vehicle. When we are sick or diseased, we look for a perfect cure. On vacation or at an outdoor wedding, we hope for perfect weather. Perfection seems to be a lost cause on this earth as we deal with earthly things. Perfect flowers don't stay that way, nor do our perfect babies. Even a perfect picture will eventually fade and show its age.

Perfectionist tendencies in people are spoiled and replaced with the wear and tear of use and aging. Being too perfect and demanding, in time, sooner or later, is given to eventually being overtaken with the imperfections of our own humanness and earthiness. Being too perfect can make a person difficult to live with in any sense of reality. We do not live in a perfect world.

We can strive for improvement—none is too good or perfect already for that. We can evaluate our

relationships and perhaps see where we could be more approachable and inclusive. We can be more gracious without compromising on Christian virtues.

Only God is perfect in all His attributes, in all His arrangements of placing people in the church, and superintending the affairs of the nations. There is a place to reaffirm that God is perfect in His plan and placement in my life. God will be perfect in all His future judgment. He will carry out all the end time judgments in a perfect manner. God has perfect knowledge of the life of every person. He knows thoughts, words, and deeds. He doesn't demand perfection of us, unless He desires a perfect love and a perfect faith toward Him, according to our ability in the same.

The Bottom Line is that here and there are persons among us who have perfectionist tendencies (P.T.). The perfectionist part is a part-time profession. Because of the tendency part, it is suggesting an irregular perfection. God does *not* have perfectionist tendencies, because HE IS PERFECT in His entire being and in all His ways. The Bible says, “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (I Corinthians 13:10).

P.S. I have been afflicted with P.T. I know of no cure. A.L.



The Way of Christ

Hector Troyer, Stark City, MO

Learning how to integrate religion into our everyday lives by examining the humanity¹ of Jesus.

Religion has often been a method of seeking to escape or transcend reality. Jesus set a radical example by modeling a religion that was intended to be intricately woven throughout the daily lives of His followers with no real dividing line between the everyday and the sacred. So what can we learn from the way He modeled humanity that is applicable to us today?

*He hath no form nor comeliness; And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him*¹. Jesus was Humility on two feet, humility personified. He was definitely not a “slick” or a “dude.” He had a beard.² He was the polar opposite of personal improvement mantra, “be the most impressive in the room,” “put your best foot forward” and “dress to impress.” Can you imagine Jesus with a personal appearance coach? So what’s the takeaway? What can we learn from the King? ***Our dress,***

manner, posture, and attitude should identify us as humble, approachable, down to earth, not pretentious.

He spent a lot of real time with real people. Some time ago, while browsing through a Bible bookstore, a sentence caught my eye. It went something like this, “He left the ivory palaces of heaven to have a cookout on the beach with his buddies.” That really sounded fishy. But in John 21:5-13 there is a beautiful story of Jesus providing for the physical needs of his friends. Imagine the Creator Himself gathering driftwood and starting a fire on the beach to roast fish for his hardworking friends that would be coming to shore at any time. Jesus used food as a platform for spiritual fellowship. So what’s the takeaway? What can we learn from the King? ***Never underestimate the spiritual power of preparing and sharing food with others.***

Jesus walked with the crowds, teaching as he walked. Consider His conversation on the “Emmaus road”³ or with Zaccheus in the tree⁴

1 Isaiah 53:2

2 Isaiah 50:6

3 Luke 24:13

4 Luke 19:4

or walking past the fig tree⁵ with His disciples and giving them a running lesson on praying in faith. So what's the takeaway? What can we learn from the King? ***Walking has a way of creating conversation and personal interaction. Can we do more?***

The stories of Jesus often portray Him in the desert, garden, wilderness, at sea or on the mountain with the disciples. Uninterrupted time together. Focusing on the disciples. Jesus begins His ultra-famous Sermon on the Mount⁶ by going up, sitting on a mountain and inviting His disciples to gather around. So what's the takeaway? What can we learn from the King? ***Spending time in nature away from unnatural civilization can help to increase our focus on each other.***

I love the thought of Jesus sailing with the fishermen. The King of the universe going along to work... dirt (or water) level interaction with his followers...riding in their little wooden boat...helping with the smelly nets. He most likely even cleaned fish. Picture the most Holy Christ sitting with coarse men around a pile of flopping fish chopping off fish heads and tossing them on the gut heap. So what's the takeaway? What can we learn from the King? ***Working with our hands allows us to get to know each other in very***

5 Matthew 21

6 Matthew 5

wholesome ways. Machinery, offices, and centralized food processing have robbed us of much opportunity to spend meaningful time together.

What about spending time just visiting with Martha and Mary? Could Jesus have helped with the work, instead of just talking? Maybe He did help on some occasions but in one particular lesson He commended Mary for choosing the better thing. So what's the takeaway? What can we learn from the King? ***Just visiting is a powerful tool; we should use it more.***

In Luke 14:7-11 Jesus teaches about humility in seating. In John 13 4 -5, "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." Jesus voluntarily took the servant position of washing the disciples feet. So what's the takeaway? What can we learn from the King? ***Don't be reluctant to do things that may seem to be below our rank.***

Jesus surely was aware of the magnitude of human need around him. Luke 5:15 is telling about the vast needs coming to Jesus, yet in verse 16 He is going away into the wilderness to pray. Is he purposely setting the example for those among us who are overwhelmed with the

pressing human needs around us? He taught His followers to pray and also invited them to pray with Him. So what's the takeaway? What can we learn from the King? ***Take time to pray, teach others to pray, and invite others to pray with us.***

In at least one story Jesus rode on a donkey.⁷ This was not a classy ride. It was a work animal, they trampled seed, turned millstones, and pulled plows. They were the freight trains and transport trucks of ancient time. They were humble animals, with long shaggy ears and a potbelly. So what's the takeaway? What can we learn from the King? ***Don't be too worried about impressing others with your mode of travel.***

“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”⁸ Jesus had no real home. He probably spent a lot of time in other people's houses. While having no house was surely less than convenient, this gave Him extreme mobility. So what's the takeaway? What can we learn? ***Embracing this principle could unclog the arteries of plain population centers. Have we made our earthly heritage more important than expansion of the Kingdom?***

Jesus healed on the Sabbath.⁹ He

7 Matthew 21:7

8 Matthew 8:20

9 Matthew 12

spent time in the synagogue.¹⁰ He chose his confrontations carefully. The Old Testament Sabbath was a sacred day. Jesus purposefully broke the rules to demonstrate uncomfortable love.¹¹ He challenged the Pharisaical compartmentalization, the dividing all of life into comfortable little boxes. Jesus modeled integration, overlaying sabbath principles onto our daily choices. He was less about bringing the sacred down and more about making all of life sacred. So what's the takeaway? What can we learn? ***There are two lessons here. He intentionally engaged other religions. He modeled that in His Kingdom there are no Sabbath days but our whole lives are to be a Sabbath of love and good works.***

Has your religion been a method of seeking to escape or transcend reality? Are you really who you are on Sunday? Do you seek approval of vain men during the week and wear plain clothes to church? Is your everyday life intentionally structured to reflect these examples of Jesus? Does your devotion match your devotions? Let's follow the example of Jesus as He modeled a religion that was intricately woven throughout His daily life with no dividing line between the everyday and the sacred.



10 Mark 1:21

11 John 7:22-24

marriages

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

Beachy-Eash

Bro. Christian, son of Tim and Wilma Beachy, Harrison, AR, and Sis. Frieda, daughter of Marvin and Dorothy Eash, Hutchinson, KS, on Oct. 7, 2017, at Cedar Crest A. M. Church, by Lee Nisly.

Beiler-Stoltzfus

Bro. Jalin, son of Mel and Verna Beiler, Daretown, NJ, and Sis. Rosetta, daughter of Elmer and Liz Stoltzfus, Pilesgrove, NJ, on Sept. 16, 2017, at Union Baptist Temple for Salem County Mennonite Church by Melvin Beiler.

Cross-Miller

Bro. Carrington, son of Duane and Verba Cross, Goshen, IN, and Sis. Michelle, daughter of Jerry and Leanna Miller, Topeka, IN, at Fairhaven Church for Woodlawn Church on June 10, 2017, by Wilbur Yoder.

Fisher-Miller

Bro. Laverne, son of Marv and Kath Fisher, Woodstown, NJ, and Sis. Grace, daughter of Richard and Mary Miller, Woodstown, NJ, at Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Church for Salem County Mennonite Church on Sept. 30, 2017, by Melvin Beiler.

Lehman-Miller

Bro. Aaron, son of Orva and Rosetta Lehman, Shipshewana, IN, and Sis. Eva, daughter of Jerry and Leanna Miller, Topeka, IN, at Woodlawn Church, on August 18, 2017, by Steve Miller

Miller-Gingerich

Bro. Christopher, son of Dale and Cynthia Miller, Plain City, OH, and Sis. Jonita, daughter of Jonathan and the late Renita Gingerich, Plain City, OH, at Shiloh Mennonite Church for Bethesda Fellowship, on Oct. 21, 2017, by Elmer Stoltzfus.

Miller-Lapp

Bro. Myron, son of Herbert and Alma Miller, Walhonding, OH, and Sis. Leona, daughter of Leroy and Naomi Lapp, New Holland, PA, at Summitview Christian Fellowship, on August 26, 2017, by Leroy Lapp.

Mullett-Schrock

Bro. Elmer, son of Larry and Rose Mullet, Sturgis, MI, and Sis. Denise, daughter of Devon and Doris Schrock, Shipshewana, IN, at Fair Haven A. M. Church, Goshen, IN, on Sept. 23, 2017, by Wilbur Yoder.

Overholt-Yoder

Bro. Myron, son of Steve and Kaylene Overholt, Montezuma, GA, and Sis. Danielle, daughter of William and Mary Jane Yoder, Meyersdale, PA, at Cherry Glade Mennonite Church for Mt. View Mennonite Church on August 26, 2017, by Merlin Beachy.

cradle roll

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

Stoltzfus-Lapp

Bro. Jay Wendell, son of Naaman and Marian Stoltzfus, Coatesville, PA, and Sis. Krystal Joy, daughter of Randy and Wilma Lapp, Gap, PA, on Oct. 21, 2017, at Weaverland Mennonite Church for Mine Road A.M. Church by Dave Stoltzfoos.

Yoder-Bontrager

Bro. Jonathan, son of Gerald and Rebecca Yoder, Goshen, IN, and Sis. Jessica, daughter of Lamar and Joanna Bontrager, Wolcottville, IN, at Fairhaven Church for Woodlawn Church on Sept. 9, 2017, by Steve Miller.

Yoder-Sommers

Bro. Steven, son of Leroy and Elsie Yoder, Oakland, MKD, and Sis. Katrina, daughter of Reuben and Miriam Sommers, Salisbury, PA, at Cherry Glace Mennonite Church for Mt. View Mennonite Church, on Sept. 15, 2017, by Merlin Beachy.

Yoder-Yoder

Bro. Lynford, son of Arnold and Sharon Yoder, Millbank, ON, and Sis. Jolene, daughter of Elmer and Pauline Yoder, Paris, TN, at Calvary Christian Fellowship on Sept. 23, 2017, by Arnold Jantzi.



Beachy, Gabriel and Dawn (Hurst), Cedar Creek, TX, seventh child, fourth son, Bryson Grant, Oct. 31, 2017.

Beachy, Gene and Kristina (Bontrager), Middlebury, IN, second child and daughter, Kennedy Ryn Hope, Nov. 11, 2016, Adopted May 16, 2017.

Bontrager, Anthony and Jackie (Yoder), Sturgis, MI, first child and son, Ezekiel Zayne, Sept. 15, 2017.

Eash, Gabriel and Heidi (Wadel), Plain City, OH, fourth child, third daughter, Illana Jewel, Oct. 25, 2017.

Gingerich, Zachary and Allison (Yoder), Plain City, OH, second child and daughter, Leah Grace, Oct. 19, 2017.

Hochstetler, Carl and Kristen (Miller), Elkhart, IN, second child, first daughter, Ellie Lorene, July 25, 2017.

Mast, Duane and Debra (Mast), Melvern, KS, second child, first daughter, Kenzie Brooke, August 17, 2017.

Miller, Andrew and Miriam (Mast), Dundee, OH, sixth child, second daughter, Alaina, August 1, 2017.

Miller, Darrel and Megan (Yoder), Townville, PA, second child and daughter, Amaya Lael, August 12, 2017.

Miller, David and Valerie (Weaver), Hartselle, AL, third child, second son, Eric Benjamin, Oct. 4, 2017.

Miller, Jared and Charlene (Stoltzfoos), New Holland, PA, first child and son, Bronson Elliot, Oct. 10, 2017.

Miller, J. Austin and Marita (Miller), New Concord, OH, first child and daughter, Stella Kate, Oct. 22, 2017.

Miller, Loren and Mandy (Miller), Eden Valley, MN, sixth child, second son, Trenton Earl, Oct. 12, 2017.

Miller, Tim and Heidi (Yoder), Goshen, IN, fifth child, second son, Patrick Troy, July 19, 2017.

Mullet, Marvin and Viola (Miller), Jackson, OH, second child and daughter, Kristin Alise, August 22, 2017.

Otto, Marcus and Nancy (Miller), Crossville, TN, fourth child, third daughter, Sherri Lynelle, Sept. 23, 2017.

Troyer, Jason and Edna (Hochstetler), Harrison, AR, fifth child, second son, Asher Jose, Oct. 30, 2017.

Troyer, Samuel and Charissa (Stoltzfus), Plain City, OH, second child and daughter, Shania Willow, Sept. 15, 2017.

Yoder, Johnny and Kathleen (Byler), Cumberland Furnace, TN, second child and son, Mason Cole, Sept. 24, 2017.

Yoder, Mervin and Jenell (Beachy), Salisbury, PA, seventh child, third daughter, Caroline Amelia, Oct. 8, 2017.

Yutzy, Titus and Sherilyn (Kuepfer), Hutchinson, KS, fifth child, fourth son, Kayden Tate, Oct. 10, 2017.

Zook, Josiah and Amanda (Schlabach), Georgetown, OH, first child and daughter, Abigail Joy, Oct. 15, 2017. 



ordinations

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

Bro. Dwight Miller, 46, (wife, Karen Troyer), Partridge, KS, was ordained as bishop for Center A.M. Church on Oct. 8, 2017. Preordination messages were given by Philip Miller, Dundee, OH.

The charge was given by David Yoder, assisted by Lee Nisly and Arlen Mast. Arlyn Nisly and Julian Nisly were also in the lot.

Bro. Jason Miller, 28, (wife, Carolyn Graber), was ordained as bishop for Providence Mennonite Fellowship, Auburn, KY. On October 29, 2017. Preordination messages were brought by Ernie Yoder, of Strawberry, AR. The charge was given by Leroy Kauffman, assisted by David Yoder, Jr. and Luke Troyer. David Lynn Yoder was also in the lot.

Bro. Rodney Weaver, 28, (wife, Glenda King), of Denmark, SC,

was ordained as minister at Calvary Fellowship Mennonite Church on Oct. 29, 2017. Preordination messages were given by Donnie Brenneman. The charge was given by Virgil Kanagy, assisted by Donnie Brenneman and Manfred McGrath. Sharing the lot was Jesse Miller.

Bro. Jonathan Yoder, 31, (wife, Joanne Beiler) was ordained as minister at Cornerstone Mennonite Church, Oswego, KS. On October 29, 2017. Preordination messages were brought by Michael Mast, Mountain. View, AR. The charge was given by Stan Nisly, assisted by David Yoder and Ronald Miller. Wayne Bontrager was also in the lot. 

o b i t u a r i e s

Byler, Alvin D., 87, of Grove City, MN, died Sept. 29, 2017. He was born in New Wilmington, PA, son of the late Daniel H. and Lena (Byler) Byler.

He was a minister for over 50 years and was a member of Believers Fellowship Church, Grove City, for the last number of years. He was in earlier times also a farmer, carpenter, and businessman.

Alvin was first married to Anna Mary Byler on Dec. 13, 1951. She died on Sept. 17, 1991. Children from that union are: Cora (David) Coblentz, Fredericksburg, OH; Elsie (Tom) Reese, Warrenton, VA; Loretta (Simon) Beachy, Itasca, TX; Leroy (Rhonda) Byler, Remington, VA;

Michael (Wendy) Byler, Middleburg, PA; Barbara (Kenneth) Kauffman, Huntsville, AR; Lydia (Oliver) Hornick, Hagerstown, MD; Stephen (Diane) Byler, Catlett, VA; William (Dorcas) Byler, Brevard, SC; Larry (Kay) Byler, Grantsville, MD; Twila (John) Yoder, Belleville, PA; and Mary Lu (Jerry) Swartzentruber, Casanova, VA; 44 grandchildren, and 31 great grandchildren.

Alvin was married the second time to Fannie E. Yoder, who was first married April 6, 1961, to Joseph N. Miller. He died Oct. 22, 1989. Stepchildren surviving are Marvin (Neva) Miller, Grove City, MN; Lucille Miller, Grove

City, MN; Freeman (Aimee) Miller, Levelland, TX; Frieda (Mark) Chupp, Eden Valley, MN; Dennis (Naomi) Miller, Curtis, WI; Daryl (Kay) Miller, Paynesville, MN; Joseph (Regina) Miller, Eden Valley, MN; and Julia (Jason) Yutzky, Grove City, MN; 38 step grandchildren, and 19 step great grandchildren. He is also survived by a sister, Ada Beachy, and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by a son, Kenneth Allen, a grandchild, Michael Irving Byler, a step grandchild, Benjamin John Miller, brothers Harvey and Henry and a sister, Sylvia Beachy.

A funeral service was held at Grove City on Sept 27, with Melvin Beiler, Verlynn Yoder, Paul Chupp and Abe Yoder serving. The second funeral service and burial were held on Oct. 1 at Faith Christian Fellowship in Catlett, VA, with Melvin Beiler, Bennie Byler, and Joel Barkman serving. Wayne Schrock conducted the committal at the Faith Christian Fellowship Cemetery.

Miller, Fannie (Yoder), 85, of Hutchinson, KS, died in her home Oct. 2, 2017. She was born in rural Hutchinson August 29, 1932, daughter of the late Harmon C. and Lizzie (Garver) Yoder.

She was a devoted charter member of Cedar Crest A.M. Church, Hutchinson. She loved spending time with her sisters and family, making their annual trips to Sarasota, Florida, and growing beautiful gardens. Her life was characterized by a servant's heart and a deep-seated generosity. She seemed to have a non-

judgmental regard for everyone she met.

On May 5, 1953, she was married to Mahlon Miller. He survives. Also surviving are ten children: Janette (Stan) Anderson, Sedalia, MO; Elaine (Phil) Yoder, Costa Rica; Eileen (Kirk) Cottingham, Hutchinson; Shirley (Lyndon) Ropp, Hutchinson; Kathleen (Darrell) Jobson, Okotokos, Alberta; Keith (Sherri) Miller, Tuttle, OK; Delmar (Suzanne) Miller, Arlington, KS; Lucy (Phil) Nisly, Hutchinson, Leonard (Janice) Miller, Hutchinson; and Laverne (April) Miller, Calgary, Alberta. Forty grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren also survive. Two brothers: Crist (Mae) Yoder and Ora (Sharon) Yoder survive and three sisters: Gertie (Melvin) Yoder, Orpha (Calvin) Nisly, and Erma (Owen) Yoder.

She was preceded in death by three brothers: Fred, Harley, and Roy, and a sister, Edna Nisly.

The funeral was held on Oct. 6, with Lee Nisly, Dwight Miller, and Paul Miller serving. James Shetler conducted the committal at West Center Cemetery.

Tice, Henry E., 86, of Grantsville, MD, died Oct. 2, 2017, at his home. He was born in Elk Lick Twp, PA, son of the late Eli D. and Mary (Yoder) Tice.

He was a member of Mountain View Mennonite Church and a minister for 32 years. Other service roles for Henry included Mountain View School board member, School Pastor, volunteer and teacher at State Correctional Institution in Somerset (for which he was recognized

one year as Volunteer of the Year), and grading Bible courses for Gospel Echoes Prison Ministries.

On April 14, 1957, Henry was married to Sarah Marie Beachy. She survives. Children surviving are Kenneth D. (Carol) Tice, Salisbury, PA; Philip J. (Charlotte) Tice, Grantsville; Gerald W. (Loretta) Tice, Grantsville; David N. Tice, Grantsville; Timothy E. (Jencene) Tice, Grantsville; Daniel G. (Darla) Tice, Grantsville; Dorothy L. (Galen) Beitzel, Grantsville; and M. Ruth (Joe) Overholt, Minerva, OH; also 26 grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. Other survivors include five sisters: Lena Beachy, Verda Tice, Martha Beachy, Rachel Wolfe, all of Grantsville and Miriam Bender, Bittinger, MD.

The funeral was held on Oct. 5, at Mountain View Mennonite Church, with Merl Beachy, Menno Yoder, and Jerry Yoder serving. Derrick Bender conducted the committal at the church cemetery.

Troyer, Mary E., 82, of Goshen, IN, formerly of Middlebury, IN, died July 12, 2017. She was born June 25, 1935,

daughter of the late Eli A. and Ida E. (Miller) Miller.

She was a member of Woodlawn A.M. Church, Mary had a great love of reading Scripture and Our Daily Bread. She was a homemaker and she and her husband were independent Shaklee distributors. Mary was a talented artist who enjoyed painting.

On Feb. 26, 1956, she was married to David D. Troyer, Jr. He died Sept. 11, 1999. Surviving are children: Norma (Philip) Baugher, Myerstown, PA; Richard (Bonnie) Troyer, Middlebury, IN; David (Martha) Troyer, Mifflinburg, PA; Delmar (Nancy) Troyer, Ligonier, IN; Verlin Troyer, Palmetto, FL; and John (Sheila) Troyer, Goshen, IN; 34 grandchildren and 28 great grandchildren; two brothers, Mervin (Lola) Miller, LaGrange, IN, and Maynard (Carol) Miller, Goshen, IN.

She was preceded in death by a granddaughter and a great granddaughter.

The funeral was held on July 13, at Woodlawn Church with John Troyer, Steve Miller, and Glen Miller serving. Interment was in the Woodlawn Cemetery; 

observations

Following Hurricane Harvey, The Red Cross received a donation from an unexpected source. About 6,600 inmates incarcerated in Texas pooled their funds and donated \$53,000 to the

hurricane relief effort from their commissary accounts. The victims of the storm and related flooding included hundreds of prison officials, some of whom were at work when the storm hit. Five facilities that are

part of the Texas penal system were damaged by the hurricane. Inmates and officers are both helping with the needed repairs. The financial tally for Texas' Department of Corrections now has grown to include more than \$3,000,000 of overtime wages. These prisoners are leaving an inspiring example by their desire to alleviate human suffering by whatever way they can. Sometimes we're tempted to think that there is little we can do. This group gave an average of \$8, but the tally still grew to \$53,000 when it was all combined!

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At about the same time that this nation's collective attention was trained on the hurricanes this fall, two other catastrophes were unfolding on the other side of the globe. As of September 1, flooding associated with monsoon rains had about one third of Bangladesh under water. The flooding claimed the lives of 142 people in Bangladesh, and estimated 8.5 million people were otherwise impacted.

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In neighboring Myanmar a more sinister event unfolded. In late August of this year, satellite images showed many villages burning in Rakhine State, just next to Bangladesh, where the Rohingya people lived. The Rohingya mostly profess Muslim faith, while the majority of Myanmar

is Buddhist. The legal status of the Rohingya people is a contested discussion. The Rohingya point out that they have lived in the region for over 100 years, with some claiming local history that goes back more than 1,000 years. The government alleges that they arrived from Bangladesh, during the more recent British rule, so they were never granted citizenship, which leaves them quite vulnerable.

In August a faction of Rohingya militants attacked police posts leaving 12 security members dead. The government responded with stated intentions of stamping out militant groups. What followed is described by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" in which many villages were simply burned to the ground. About 500,000 thousand Rohingya people have fled across the border to neighboring Bangladesh to makeshift refugee camps, where the local residents are already dealing with their own crisis related to the monsoon flooding. Media access to the affected areas in Myanmar has been limited, making accurate reports of what is happening difficult to obtain. But the human toll is sobering. The refugee population in Bangladesh represents about half of the Rohingya population in Myanmar. The refugees arrive with chilling accounts of

indiscriminate killings and rape, in addition to the burning and pillaging of personal property by the military.

Aung San Suu Kyi won a Nobel Peace Prize for her democracy advocacy work. She now serves as the de facto leader of Myanmar even though her power to rein in the military activity is very limited. She has come under sharp criticism from world leaders for her refusal to denounce the atrocities of the military against the minority Muslim Rohingya people.

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The Boy Scouts of America recently made the controversial decision to admit girls to their ranks. During the decade of the 70's Boy Scouts membership peaked at around 5 million. Currently there are 2.3 million members. Those in charge hope that this change will bolster membership. One mother who welcomed this decision commented that this is good for her daughters who are more interested in rough and tumble activities, than crafts and feminine things that are more typical with the Girl Scouts. This shift follows the decision of several years ago to allow gay scout leaders and also to welcome transgender boys to their ranks. The Girl Scouts organization joins those who find this development problematic for a variety of reasons.

I'm not sure how the organizers propose to navigate the challenges of integrating the two genders in activities that were designed for boys, including overnight camping trips. I suppose they also needed to consider whether they'd prefer to respond to litigation to include the girls or litigation related to regrettable events as a result of integrating the girls.

The push to blur gender distinction in our society marches on.

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These thoughts were gleaned from a devotional shared by Wendell Glick at a church service this fall. While he was up at night with his daughter who had not yet had her first birthday, he found himself wanting to exhort her to "grow up". Then his thoughts turned to what Jesus said in Matthew 18:3 when he said, "***Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.***" Jesus tells us to "grow down". We grown-ups need to give attention to how this looks for us. This includes trying to differentiate between being "child-like" and "childish".

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Recently, my wife and I were discussing with some friends upcoming events that looked like major and life altering changes for them. In our efforts at commiserating with them we referred to the difficulty

of leaving many good things behind. One of them remarked that even though they are aware that the losses will be significant, they are choosing to focus on the good things that will be new to them, rather than dwelling on the good things they are leaving behind. What a refreshing and healthy perspective!

Life is full of transition and change. This proves to be very difficult and unsettling for some of us. What is it that makes some people able to “roll with the punches” and take change in stride? I’m aware that there’s more to this answer than this simple observation. But, one very important factor in this equation was articulated by this sister when she talked about focusing on what will be gained rather than what will be lost.

The apostle Paul didn’t idealize trying to live in the past. In Phil. 3:13-14 he wrote, ***“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”***

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Grief is one of life’s changes that can be especially difficult to move beyond. The intensity of grief and the manner in which it is processed varies widely from person to person

and situation to situation. Those who try to help us understand the process of grief – and it is a process, not an event – remind us that it is important to acknowledge the loss that has triggered the grief, not just pretend it doesn’t exist.

God’s children who grieve well and transition to a new “normal,” are blessed with a broadened perspective they didn’t have before. That perspective includes an expanded awareness of the beauty of God’s grace for all of life’s circumstances, and a corresponding deeper intimacy with God. Those people also become aware of additional opportunities that life didn’t hold before their valley of grief. The griever is well-acquainted with the question, “Why?” A proper response to grief grows our faith. This faith doesn’t answer all our “Whys?” but enables us to live life fully in spite of our unanswered questions. This comes when we focus on who God is, rather than this world’s imperfections.

People who bid farewell to a loved one who dies in the Lord, take courage in the hope that the departed one is now safe at home. This doesn’t mean that we don’t miss them terribly, but it is proper to acknowledge the dual realities of our sorrow and their gain. None of us relishes the prospect of grief. But the mellowing effect of grief in God’s children who embrace

Him in the process, is a real credit to God and an encouragement to His children.

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A generous reader sent me a subscription to the quarterly called *Plough*. The current issue's cover and much of the content has to do with the 500th anniversary of The Reformation. Peter Mommsen's article where he examines the Anabaptist role in The Reformation is entitled, "The Church We Need Now – Why the Anabaptist Vision Matters". Mommsen writes, "Where the Anabaptists win is in the enduring impact of their ideas, once condemned as subversive. In keeping with the Reformers' *ad fontes* (back to the source) credo, these insights were not innovative, but rather a recovery of early Christianity. I'll examine three here: religious liberty, nonviolence, and community. Each of these is crucial to Christianity's future survival, and essential to what a reformed church looks like today."

Mommsen elaborates on the value and significance of each of these three elements. But he also reminds us that as we highlight the strengths of this movement, we shouldn't overlook its weaknesses. Two that he mentions are a "tendency to legalism" and a "bewildering number of schisms."

The Reformation, as the name indicates, sought to reform what was

wrong. While the doctrinal positions of the early Anabaptists attempted to recover New Testament Christian teaching, they were remarkable because they stood in contrast to the positions of the church at that time. These positions helped to give definition to the movement. Indeed Anabaptist means "one who baptizes again" which was very distinctive and definitive.

In addition to the corrective measures, the Anabaptists were characterized by a love for one another that was deeply loyal and thoroughly sacrificial. Unwavering brotherly love paves the way for the concept of community to flourish.

The early Anabaptists were concerned both with aligning themselves with correct doctrinal positions and practice, as well as brotherly love. Could it be that the schisms that are part of our story, past and present, are sometimes a result of not keeping these twin concepts in proper balance? In Ephesians 4:15 where Paul writes about the spiritual maturity and stability that the church experiences as the gifts are properly employed, he says, "**...But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.**" After all, truth and love are complimentary. Let's not pit them against each other.

-RJM 

If I Could Do It Over

Floyd Stoltzfus

My wife Marilyn and I just returned from three years and six months of service under Amish Mennonite Aid in Belize, Central America. We were stationed in Belize City, the largest city (although not the capital) of this lovely country of which many areas have not been disturbed and disrupted with modern civilization and development.

One of my assignments was serving as assistant pastor of Belize City Christian Fellowship (Mennonite). We lived in the heart of some of the most drug-infested communities in the city. Sin was rampant, raw, and a ruination. In retrospect, I asked myself, "Could have I done more to spread the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ?" Oh yes, we as a unit visited people in their homes, read the Bible, sang, and prayed with them. We handed out Christian literature and Gospel

tracts in the neighborhood. We visited the government hospital and prison on a weekly schedule. We often took community and church youth along to sing for the elderly and shut-ins. We simply did what missionaries are sent to do. But again I asked, "What would I do if I could live those years over again?"

Several thousand years ago darkness (thick darkness) covered the Land of Israel. Here are some thoughts from Nelson's Bible, "Isaiah prophesied of the dimness of Israel's rejection which was especially prevalent in the northern tribal areas of Zebulon and Naphtali, which would suffer greatly under the Assyrian invasion. To those in the darkness of the north, God promises to send a GREAT LIGHT." This prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus' glorious ministry: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land

of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up (Matt. 4:14-16). From that time Jesus began to preach repentance and to pour His energies into training His disciples.

Jesus teaching His disciples reminds me of a young Muslim who was converted and became an enthusiastic follower of Jesus Christ. While living in New York City and attending a Mennonite Church he shared his vision with the pastor of reaching people with the Gospel by walking about witnessing of Jesus in various sections of the city. The pastor gave this energetic man sound Biblical advice. He said you must pray for the Holy Spirit to lead you to a needy street in the city. Then concentrate on just several blocks. Visit homes or businesses in that community seeking out people who would be open to Bible studies and teach them. The young believer had some fruitful success by following the pastor's advice instead of randomly and aimlessly walking among the masses.

I was blessed by the book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert

E. Coleman. Following are several striking questions and thoughts that will help us in our evangelistic efforts if we follow the example of the greatest soul winner, the Lord Jesus. "Why? Why did Jesus deliberately concentrate his life on so few people? With the glowing announcement of John the Baptist ringing in the ears of multitudes, the Master easily could have had an immediate following of thousands. Surely the Son of God could have adopted a more enticing program of mass recruitment. Is it not rather disappointing that one with all the powers of the universe at His command would live and die to save the world, yet in the end have only a few disciples to show for His labors? Jesus was not trying to impress the crowds, but to usher in a kingdom. This meant He needed men who could lead the multitudes."

Jesus centered much of His ministry in preparing the twelve to carry on the work of the church after He leaves with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Coleman says, "We must decide where we want our ministry to count—in the momentary applause of popular recognition or in the reproduction of our lives in a few chosen people who will carry on the work after we

have gone.”

If I could do it over I would put forth more effort in teaching one lost sheep and leading that one to the fresh, cool spring of salvation. It would be important to teach this convert to observe all things

that Jesus commanded. This would include water baptism and becoming an active part in the church. But the work still is not completed until we show this person by example how to evangelize and bring others to Christ and the church. 

helpers at home

Mary, a Woman Who Trusted God

Christmas is a time of reflection on the greatest gift ever given to mankind. It is a time to remember and recount the beautiful story of Jesus’ birth in a manger filled with hay, in a lowly manger in Bethlehem. This amazing story begins with the account of a young virgin girl who loved God with all her heart and found favor with Him.

Mary was a young peasant girl, possibly in her early teens, living with her family in Nazareth. We do not know anything about her family, but believe she came from a godly family where she was acquainted with God and the Old Testament teachings of

the Messiah. She was born of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of King David.

Mary’s story begins in Luke, chapter 1, verse 26. The angel Gabriel is sent to Mary with an important message. I believe God would only have given this message to a young woman who portrayed a meek (or gentle) and quiet spirit. We read in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 4 that these two qualities found in a woman are of great worth or value to God even in today’s world. I believe God desires these graces also be found in our teen-age daughters even as Mary displayed these qualities in her young life. I challenge you mothers, display gentleness and a quiet spirit in your

own lives, teach it to your small children and expect it to be evident in your teen-age daughters.

Gabriel's greeting, in verses 28-30 of Luke 1 assures Mary of her worth in God's sight; she is highly favored by God, He will be with her. She is blessed and she does not need to fear. God chose to affirm His love and delight in her before He gave her a message that would forever change her future and her life. God delights in each of us. Even as He chose Mary, an ordinary, humble woman, so He chooses each of us to carry out his plan and purpose.

The angel then goes on to give Mary this most important news, that she was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah. I like to think that young Jewish girls may have dreamed of being the woman God would choose to be the mother of this very special King. The Bible does not tell us. It does say Mary did not hesitate. She did however, ask an important question, "How will this be possible since I have never had relations with a man". The angel goes on to explain to her, "With God all things are possible". I love Mary's response, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to your word". Mary is actually saying, I am God's servant, He can do anything He desires with my life. She does not question what

the future will hold but she simply acknowledges God and trusts Him for her future. There is a song that says, "Mary, did you know". No, Mary did not know the pain, the suffering, the misunderstandings, the deep grief that would be a part of her life. But, she did know God and believed His plan was good. We do not know where God's plan may take each of us. It may be through pain and suffering, yet we can say as Mary, "I am yours for whatever and however You may choose."

We are not called to be the mother of Jesus. However, God does call each of us to a life of surrender, a life of humble service. It may be as a young mother. I think of the lyrics of a song with these words, "Who is sitting on my high chair?" It may be a preacher, a nurse, a doctor, farmer or a missionary. The song goes on to say we do not know how God will choose to use the child He has entrusted to our care. He does trust us to be diligent in caring for that child. God wants to use you whether you are a woman with children or a woman who longs for children. He has a plan for single women, widowed women, or grandmothers. Whatever place or position you find yourself in life, God has a purpose for you. He is calling you to yield your life, your future to His loving plan.

Later on in chapter 2 of Luke, we

notice twice in verses 19 after the shepherds visit and again in verse 15, after Jesus had been lost at the temple that Mary pondered these things in her heart. I know there are often things on our hearts we can't even share with our closet friends. Like Mary we can be assured, God cares and He understands.

Mary was a woman blessed of God. We would think she had little to offer. She was poor; she came from a humble village; she was young. We don't even know her parents or her background. However, God knew her heart. He saw a woman surrendered to his plan, a woman willing to make

a sacrifice. He saw a woman who would be worthy and able to care for His own beloved Son. It is with a sense of sadness that I am writing this article, today. After 15½ years, I feel it is time for a younger woman to take over writing each month for this column. I have appreciated the many words of encouragement from you my readers. I have enjoyed relating to women and especially to young mothers. My encouragement to each of you is follow God's plan for your life. Choose to live a life of joy. Cherish each moment God gives you. God bless you as you serve Him, faithfully.



junior messages

The Gift of Helping Someone— *The Roof They Carried*

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

What special gift can we give to Jesus this Christmastime?

Helping others may seem small, yet it is a real way to share God's love.

We can pray for God to open our eyes to see needs. We can pray to obey His prompting to help others for the

sake of His high and holy name.

One afternoon Marcellus and I visited Idah, our five-year-old motherless neighbor girl. She was sick—again. She lived with her dani (grandma). It seemed she got malaria way too often. There were not enough mosquito nets to reach around in that

small house full of people. We prayed for her as she lay listlessly on their old ragged sofa. The grandmother was so pleased that we came. Africans believe that visitors bring them a blessing. I was happy to share painkillers and a glass bottle of cold soda for dear little Idah.

When we left their yard, we saw six neighbor men across the road who were struggling to lift a roof. That's right—a real roof, one for a house. The roof was sitting on the ground. They had removed the tin roof (all still in one piece) off a small house. Now they wanted to carry the roof over to a new house they were building. The thing was ridiculously heavy. To top it off, there simply were not enough men to carry that roof.

Marcellus decided to go call our passel of visitors, six young men from America, to come help. They left a game they were playing to give assistance.

The roof was quite a load to carry; they needed all the manpower available. The men spread out around the roof, got it picked up, and began to carry it a quarter mile to the walls of the new house. They went only a short distance and had to stop, because some saplings were blocking their path. The African men called for pongas (machetes). With quick, powerful strokes the little trees were

soon felled. Again they picked up the roof and proceeded.

I had great fun, watching their progress. It was truly a good thing, a God thing, to have the white men helping the black men. They will never forget it. God gave us that wonderful opportunity to assist them and show His love.

The walls of the new house were standing in a dirt yard, surrounded by banana and papaya trees. How could they get the roof on top of those walls? Could they really manage that? The Africans grabbed some long poles, went to the middle of the roof, and began to lift. Those around the edges strained, stood on chairs, and hoisted. Some chairs collapsed, but by working together they got that heavy tin roof up and onto the frame.

Nora, the elderly lady of the new house, and her husband were so pleased and most grateful with the unexpected help. Afterward, Nora went around shaking hands and actually hugging the smiling young men. Everyone went home happy.

Somehow helping to carry that roof and getting it in place was more rewarding than the corn hole game they had been playing.

Helping others for Jesus' sake gives joy and satisfaction like nothing else.

To whom will you show love and care this Christmas season? 

Stop Before You Judge

Gideon Yutzy, Dunmore East, Ireland

If you had to go one week without criticizing anyone, how would you fare?

Not too swimmingly, if you're anything like me. We humans naturally gravitate toward thinking about (and gossiping about) the faults of others. For evidence of this, one needs to look no further than the internet and the newspapers, where people's misdeeds are plastered for all to see with a relentless 24/7 persistence. Sadly, these slandering ways have rubbed off on us in the church.

But we should repent. Unfair judging and gossip, especially if it is about fellow Christians, is a serious matter. Thomas Merton reminds us that the closest we come to committing an unpardonable sin, besides outright blasphemy of God, is to mistreat fellow Christians. They are, after all, not only fellow church members but fellow temples of God Himself¹.

We habitually forget that. And there's a lot more we forget, too. We forget that the world will know we

are Christians *by our* love, not by our ruthlessness. And love, though it is difficult to define, is quite easy to sense when present—or absent. We can prattle on and on about a fellow church member's problems, claiming to have all manner of concerns for his or her spiritual well-being, but if we don't have love for that person, it WILL show! (Please indulge me in my once-a-year all caps.) The absence of love in human relationship is as readily detectable as the absence of a bride at a wedding. Yet we neglect this most important of virtues, the one that binds us together in unity (Colossians 3:14).

We also forget that we are every bit as fallen and weak and blind as the person we would criticize. I invite us all, the next time we are tempted to make hasty judgments about others, to do a simple test: ask ourselves if we ever commit the same error (or a similar one). I predict that in nine cases out of ten we will plead guilty.

Let's suppose I, as a father of three daughters, saw another father neglecting his child when the child was asking him a question or wanting attention. Here is how the conversation

1. The Prophet's Freedom, 1968, Audible audio edition

inside me might progress.

Slanderous part of me: *What a lousy dad John is!*

Redeemed part of me: *Yes, but haven't I also done that to my children?*

Slanderous: *But that's how it used to be. I've changed!*

Redeemed: *Actually, I remember doing it last night.*

Slanderous: *I suppose that's right... Maybe John isn't such a lousy dad after all.*

The point is that our slanderous self can, and must, die a slow death. Of course this is not to say we should never point out where Neighbor John or Cousin Elizabeth could improve. As humans, a primary vehicle of transformation is our interaction with other Spirit-filled humans. If we are never confrontational with each other, how can we change? "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15). The key is that these confrontational interactions must be done *in love*—without love we do not have the right, or the ability, to speak the truth.

Consider further now, three questions we might ask ourselves before making judgments about others:

1) Have I prayed for them? It is an old ruse by now to gather dirt about a third party so that we can "more effectively pray for their situation."

What if instead, when we sense weakness in someone, we pray first? A helpful second step might be going directly to the person in focus and praying with them. And if we never get to the dirt-gathering step, who will lose?

2) How might their circumstances explain their actions? Stephen Covey's famous story of the disruptive children in the subway train comes to mind here. As their father sat idly by, the children grew more and more noisy, even grabbing other passengers' belongings. Finally someone asked the father: "Don't you care that your children are disturbing the peace?" And the father, apologizing but clearly in anguish, explained how just minutes earlier they had left the hospital where the children's mother, his beloved wife of many years, had passed from this life. The air in the subway car changed immediately. How often we, when we get a fuller grasp on the situation, find our harsh looks turning into words of compassion!

3) What can I do to help them succeed? One thing is certain: detached, contemptuous gossip never helps. The honorable path always requires some kind of action, usually from us. (Of course the proverb is true: if we're not part of the problem or the solution, we should stay out of it altogether).

The specific action required from

us will vary with the situation. Sometimes our role is to model, humbly and patiently, a better way. As a character from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* said, "Let your conduct be your only harangue."² At other times our action should be prayer; if it is done non-Pharisaically, prayer is always the right action, though in some instances people need us to accompany our prayer with our time and attention. Still other people might need coaching or empathy or a non-threatening chat or, to venture way outside the box, a backrub. In short, people need us to care. People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care.

Often we criticize in areas in which we have some level of skill and experience (although it's ironic that at other times we criticize most vocally when we are least informed). By all means, if we realize that we possess the skills or knowledge our neighbor lacks, it is right and good for us to pass them on; after all, coaching people is far better than gossiping about them. If we are passing on our life experience with the sole desire of seeing them succeed, they will feel that—and respond.

To summarize: Pray for them, seek to understand their situation, and desire their success. By practicing these we are well on the way to

2. Or as the Dove chocolate wrapper might put it, attributing it to Gandhi for clout: "Be the change you want to see."

effective mutual discipleship. But if we forget all else, let us remember this: People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care, and the absence of love in human relationship is as readily detectable as the absence of a bride at a wedding.

Finally, quoting further from Ephesians 4, the whole point of discipling each other is that "we all attain...to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves." In other words, discipling one another is not mere child's play. There is eternal, cosmic purpose involved.

As C.S. Lewis reminds us in *The Weight of Glory*, "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal." The people we interact with in seemingly ordinary, mundane ways are all on a trajectory to become either "immortal horrors or everlasting splendors." According to Lewis, if we saw any person at the end of their trajectory, we would be tempted either to worship them or turn away in disgust. Ultimately we are helping each other toward one of those destinations in all our everyday interactions.

In light of such a sobering reality, our response should be to live as President Lincoln exhorted us in his second inaugural address: "With malice toward none, with charity for all." In this season of holidays,

we will interact with many people, and at times we might find ourselves discussing people who are absent. When our neighbors' petty faults surface, and without a doubt they will, let us be careful to demonstrate the true spirit of Christmas and show unfaltering charity toward all.

Then we can join, without hypocrisy,

the refrain started by the angels so long ago, *Peace on earth, goodwill to men!*

Writers for Thinking Generation wish to generate, above all else, greater involvement in God's Kingdom—especially among today's Anabaptist young people. Did this month's column evoke a response from you? Contact the writer at gideonutzy@gmail.com 

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Abbreviations used: Ed-Editorial; GE-Guest Editorial; HH-Helpers at Home;

JM-Junior Messages; SM-School Matters; Med-Meditation;

MA-Mission Awareness; Obs-Observations; P-Poem; RR-Reader

Response; Y-Youth or Thinking Generation.

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THOUGHT GEMS

The flower of youth is most beautiful when it bends toward the Son of righteousness.

.....

Let us not be so feverishly active as we serve Christ that we forget to love Him.

.....

At night turn all your worries over to God; He'll be up anyway.

.....

A job well done follows a job well planned.

.....

Words don't break bones, but they do break hearts.

.....

Someone said, "Women's lib tells Adam's rib Satan's fib."

.....

Even though not all can witness for Christ in the same way,
all can witness for Him in some way.

.....

It takes horse sense not to trot with the crowd.

.....

If we are quick to say whatever we like, we shouldn't expect to hear only what we like.

.....

A truly Christian spirit does not take delight in the faults of others.

.....

It may be harder to crush a half-truth than a whole lie.

.....

The same sun that melts ice hardens clay.

.....

The sweetest songs seem to come from wounded hearts.

.....

The most valuable thing we have to spend is time.