



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

Galatians 6:14

MAY 2013

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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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Today Matters

Christina Yoder, Hiddenite, NC

Today is the day the Lord hath made;
Yesterday has vanished away.
Tomorrow never arrives for me;
Today I must live for today.

Job knew the frailty of his Today;
Swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
For James, Today is a vapor.
Gone like a wave crashes on shore.

Once, on a Today I was born;
Some day, on a Today I will die.
To give my all, doing my best,
Never to quit, always to try.

Today, it's important that I
Accept salvation, exhort another,
Search the Scriptures, delight in the Lord,
Take up the cross, help my brother.

Today, Jesus my sins forgives.
Could I do less while I live
But to love and serve my fellowman,
To respect, accept, and forgive?

I must do it Today—Today Matters! 



The Hand That Rocks The Cradle

Mother's Day comes on the 12th. *Mother* is surely one of the sweetest words in our language.

Mother is given the extraordinary task of bringing to life the new generation. She holds the key responsibility of caring for helpless newborns. Hers is the hand that rocks the cradle. Most newborn animals, from horses, cows, and sheep to chickens, dogs, and cats are quite mobile a few hours after arrival. Humans, by contrast, need most of a year to achieve mobility and much longer to reach full maturity.

Animal babies get very little teaching. They know most of what they need to know by instinct. A human mother, however, gets to answer many questions that come to a child's mind. Mother conditions the child's mind with a sense of hope or despair. She teaches respect for others and especially the father, by her example. The future direction of the child's life is *influenced*, *yea determined* by his relationship with the one who carried him under her heart and gave him life.

One time a girl in my English

class had a mother who had abused recreational drugs during pregnancy. This girl thought probably her health was compromised by her mother's choices. So when I assigned a writing project, this student chose to see what she could learn about possible effects of prenatal drug use. That search corroborated her suspicions as to why her lungs were weak. Furthermore, she learned that, barring a miracle of healing, her lungs would never be strong.

Moses' parents

Jochebed stands as a model of godly motherhood. She and Amram, her husband, were Israelites living in Egypt when a cruel Pharaoh ruled over Egypt. They existed in the gall of severely forced labor. When God saw the cruelty they endured at the hand of their masters, He gave them another wealth—more children. This heartless Pharaoh responded to their increased fecundity by laying ever greater burdens on his slaves. He feared an eventual overthrow of his government and in his drive to make sure that no such resistance would be effective, he ordered their midwives to murder all the baby boys.

Amram and Jochebed had two children, Aaron and Miriam. Then they had another son, whom they named Moses. When they observed little Moses, they sensed that he was a child of destiny and decided to disobey Pharaoh. They decided to obey God rather than man. After keeping baby Moses in the house for three months, I imagine his cries were getting too robust to keep his presence a secret.

Then an amazing series of events unfolded that only God could have orchestrated.

Without knowing how God would help them, but wanting to protect her precious baby, Jochebed took action. She made a small basket, waterproofed it, made it comfortable, and sent the baby with his older sister, Miriam, down to the Nile River. Miriam was to place the basket in the river and babysit her precious baby brother. She stood off to the side to see that nothing bad happened to him.

In a strange departure of royal habit, an Egyptian princess came to the Nile River to bathe. It was common for Egyptian royalty to use elaborate bath houses. I imagine that as she waded in, she noticed a strange looking object floating on the river amidst the reeds close to shore. Bending down to get a better look, she was greeted with the startled cry of a young baby. After all, the face

of a stranger was up close and was looking right at him. The princess was startled too. Suddenly she was thrust into a situation that tugged at her heartstrings, yet she was at a loss what to do. She was greatly relieved when Moses' sister, Miriam, walked up and offered to help.

The princess really wanted the baby as her own, but she accepted Miriam's offer to help and so Mama Jochebed got to nurse and care for her precious son and was even paid for doing so for possibly the next seven years. This marked the beginning of godly nurture that Papa Amram and Mama Jochebed gave to their son. Moses needed that. Instead of "cutting his teeth" on the idolatrous worship of the Egyptian court, God was preparing him eventually to serve in one of the most demanding leadership roles the world has ever known. So we see how it was that Jochebed's hand which had rocked the cradle ruled a significant part of the world—God's chosen people!

Lessons from Amram and Jochebed

What can we learn from these courageous parents?

- Human life is precious. God resists man's interference with the beginning and ending of life. Both abortion and euthanasia violate God's authority, which He reserves over life and death. (Revelation 21:8)
- The decision to disobey the

earthly ruler was an act of *faith*, not *rebellion*. Nor did she throw him in the river, and say, “If God wants to use him to deliver Israel, He will spare him.” That would have been *fanaticism*, not *faith*. (Hebrews 11:23)

- The training that Moses was given those first years must have been excellent, for when he had an opportunity to stay in the palace with royalty and live a life of heathen luxury, he chose wisely and cast his lot with God’s people, even though he

expected it would involve suffering. (Hebrews 11:24-26)

- Diligent parenting brings good results. Negligent parenting can only expect disappointing outcomes. (Gal. 6:6, 7)

- “God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.” (Rom. 11:33-36) God is honored when we take steps of obedience and trust Him for outcomes that bring Him greater honor than we imagined or even dared to ask for.

—PLM

reader response

Dear Brethren,

I greatly enjoy your publication. Thank you very much and may God bless your ministry.

Calvin Yoder, Wakarusa, IN



A self-centered leader may ask men to place confidence in him, but a great leader inspires men to put their trust in God and undertake the job themselves.

The Elusiveness of Humility

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Humility is one of those traits that once you think you have it, it gets away. A one-liner from George W. Beiler, my favorite preacher in my boyhood 60 years ago, was, “When humility speaks of itself, it is gone.” Why is that true? Is it like the social game, turned Gospel game, “Now you have it; now you don’t”?

Man’s self glory, self exaltation, and self love and consuming pride are balloon-type vanities that easily pop when handled. Being convicted of such selfish excesses causes some people to make fleshly attempts at being humble. Out of this can come measurable standards of do’s and don’t’s, producing a false humility, which typically appeals to the egotistical and immature.

That is the problem. You decide you have it and it disappears into thin air. Trying to offset our pride and vain glory only produces a false humility. The flip side of false humility is pride. False humility is used to measure things on a human level rather than a needy heart condition on a spiritual level.

Church standards for dress and conduct are for nobler purposes than for the sake of humility. Submission to one another for the sake of brotherhood is the New Testament ideal. Submission for the sake of one’s covenant is commendable. Humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God provides a freedom in submission one to another. It frees us from the performance trap. One cannot fake such a freedom.

Humility is not a prominent New Testament subject. It is not listed in the fruit of the Spirit passage, nor as one of the gifts of the Spirit. Where it is found, it turns up as a rare jewel. Its most outstanding characteristic is how it relates to our relationship to God, more than man-to-man. The primary texts commanding humility are found in James and 1 Peter. James 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” 1 Peter 5:6 says, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time.” These two are the only passages in the

epistles that tell us the “how” and “why” of humility. It is between us and God but of course, it affects how we relate to people. But when the true value and thrust of humility under God are realized, the effect toward people is a result rather than a choice. That fact is a critical component of this analysis.

If an humble spirit is not cultivated under the mighty hand of God, then no amount of effort will make up for it in the sight of man.

Humbling ourselves in the sight of the Lord is our choice. Humility in people relationships, quite surprisingly, is the result. It is rather difficult to get a handle on it. Humility is elusive when people try to generate it by how they dress and live. Eventually, such a show of humility becomes a distraction rather than an attraction—for themselves and for others.

Measuring humility by social standards leaves little room for giving God credit. Man gets the credit by his own fleshly design. Simplicity of dress with some degree of uniformity has merits even in a biblical dimension. Measurable standards are not contrary to the Gospel, but should not be for the sake of humility.

One young boy who sent a note to his preacher. It said, “Dear Pastor,

Please say in your sermon that Peter Peterson was a good boy all week. I am Peter Peterson!”

There was also a preacher who confided to a friend that he had a terrific sermon on humility. He was just waiting to give it some Sunday when the church house was full!

Some start out low and end high, like King David, Job, Peter, Paul, and certainly Christ our Lord, Himself. Some start high and end low, like King Nebuchadnezzar, and King Belshazzar. Some start low, rise and peak high, then hit low, like King Saul, King Solomon, Judas, and Demas.

Humility has much to do with a person’s effectiveness and usefulness. Few people can humbly handle great wealth or high honor or prestigious power. Proverbs says the humble can handle it. For it candidly says in 22:4, “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life.”

Choosing an humble lifestyle will have certain material, social, and religious benefits. Discipline always adds value to character. Self-denial has some exterior, aesthetic value. The problem with trying to effect humility on a man-to-man level begins when it is assumed humility can be prescribed by regulation. Choosing the way of humility as a natural, man-to-man response

has its social benefits. But when it incorrectly assumes that God looks on it with much favor it gives false hope.

We should humble our selves under God—that is the *choice*. Being humble in human relationships—that is the *result*.

No wonder humility is so elusive. Loving people is a choice. Forgiving is a choice. Helping others is a choice. Rejoicing with others is a choice. Being modest is a choice. Being gentle, patient and like-minded—all are choices. But when it comes to humility, it is the gracious result of one who has humbled himself under God.

The contextual verse in James 4 says, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” God does not give grace to the proud, the self-willed, or the rebellious. God does not give grace to the angry person, or to those in bitterness. God does not give grace to the complainers and the unthankful. God cuts short the hypocrites and gives them grace and space, but He makes a place for the humble.

Humility is not exercised by putting ourselves down or pushing ourselves back. It is the agenda that lifts up God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. We lift up the name of Him who saves us. More of Christ and less of

self. We praise Him, glorify Him, and magnify Him. He will exalt us in due time. He will lift us up and do so without our help.

Humility really has more to do with how I respond to God rather than how low I berate myself. Giving credit to God, lifting His holy name, praising His goodness and providence rather than lifting up my name, my efforts, my accomplishments—these are the earmarks of true humility.

One short article like this one will hardly suffice to re-arrange our thinking about what it takes to be humble. Being clothed with humility means cultivating a sense of preferring another above ourselves. We are instructed to condescend to men of low estate. Like Jonathan, who preferred David, but not like Peter, who preferred himself, or a local acquaintance of mine who said he was willing to step aside for anyone superior to himself, should he find one such.

The Bottom Line is that we give more thought to how we ought to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. It is not natural or easy to get our minds off ourselves and the important place we think we deserve among our fellows. It is choosing to cultivate an humble, submissive mind toward God, which results in having more humility among men. 

ANNOUNCEMENT

Request for Testimonies

If you come from a non-Mennonite background and are willing to share your testimony, I would like to make a compilation of testimonies as an encouragement to those who are yet to come into the fold. We also appeal to those who may be questioning biblical practices of the church that they have been surrounded with their entire life.

I hope to form these testimonies into book form, similar to that of the 1991 version of “Christian and Plain,” edited by William R. McGrath. I will be accepting testimonies through July, 2013. Please give prayerful consideration to this opportunity and if you feel so led or if you have questions, please contact me for further information.

Blessings to all,

Keaton E. Becher | 260-849-9048 | kebecher13@wabash.edu



What Is the Gospel?

Ernest Strubhar, Perkins, OK

Several months ago, I was given a recorded message to listen to. After listening once, I decided to listen to part of it again. I wanted to think about what this speaker was saying. I would describe him as an earnest, evangelical, “Lordship-salvation” preacher. He had a powerful message about youth evangelism and

discipleship. I heartily agreed with much of his message, including his clear statement that no discipleship is possible without true conversion. He said:

“The greatest problem with modern evangelism and discipleship efforts is that we don’t know what the Gospel is. The churches of America are full

of people who are not converted because we don't understand and preach the Gospel. Too often we are trying to disciple people who are not converted, trying to train *goats* to act like *sheep*."

No doubt, he knows the evangelical world much better than I do. But I still feel grieved—so grieved—by what he said. Churches are full of unconverted "goats"! It's good to ask ourselves, could that be true of "plain" churches? And, if so, is that because "we don't understand and preach the Gospel"? That statement caught my attention, and I had to ask myself: *Well, what is the Gospel?*

In his message he gave his answer to that question. Here's what he said, in essence:

"Forgiveness presents a tremendous ethical problem. If God is just, He cannot forgive the sinner. No just judge can just forgive a confessed murderer. There is only one way for God to forgive us. God had to become a man. Though this God-man lived a perfect life, He was condemned to death. There on Calvary, our sins were not only imputed to Him. Christ was treated before the judgment bar of God exactly as we sinners deserve to be treated. Jesus cried out, 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?' because the Father turned away from his Son, hid his face from Him. There the Father poured out his wrath on his Son. The Son of God

was crushed under the wrath of his Father, because only in that way could the demands of justice be met, only in that way could the wrath of God be appeased. And only in that way could a just God justify wicked men. That is the only way that God can be just and justifier of them that believe. *If you have never heard of this or heard this, you know very little about the Gospel.*" (The italics are mine. Remember he was speaking.)

As I ponder what he said, some questions come to my mind—questions that I write to get us thinking:

- Where does Scripture tell us that for God to forgive a sinner is an ethical problem? Is there even a hint of this "problem," for example, in Exodus 34:5-7, where God speaks about his gracious forgiveness? Does John see this "problem" when he says that God is "faithful and just (righteous) to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9)? Does Paul, when he observes that God "declare[s] his righteousness for the remission of sins" (Romans 3:25)?

- We are told to forgive others as God forgives us (Eph. 4:32). When we forgive those who offend us or are indebted to us, someone must pay. If so, where does the Bible itself tell us that, and who pays? And if someone pays, where is forgiveness?

- Why do theologians suppose that it is "just" for God to pour out onto his

pure and sinless Son the wrath that we deserved? What kind of “justice” is that? To use the illustration of a human judge, as this preacher did, would we call a judge “just” who, for a crime committed, poured out his “wrath” on an innocent man?

- Is the God of the Bible really like a pagan deity whose wrath must be appeased by a sacrifice? Is there any Scripture that suggests that the Old Testament animal sacrifices were made to appease God’s anger? Does the Bible say that Jesus appeased God’s anger when He died for us? Where does this idea come from?

- Most of all, do the four Gospels even contain the Gospel? Or did Christians from the beginning misname these books? Did Jesus preach the Gospel that this preacher says we must preach? If not, did Jesus Himself misunderstand the Gospel? (This last thought sounds blasphemous to me. But I cannot find even a hint in the Gospels that Jesus preached the “gospel” that our preacher friend says we must preach. So what am I to conclude?)

- Is the Gospel that Jesus preached the same Gospel that the apostles proclaimed to the ends of the earth? Is it the same Gospel they wrote about in the epistles?

- From what the speaker says I infer that he believes that one’s understanding of the Gospels is foundational to true Christianity. Is

that correct, or shall we say that it doesn’t really matter that much what we understand about the Gospel?

- Finally, if the Gospel of Jesus is not the good news that God can now forgive us because He has poured out his wrath on his holy Son—the wrath that we deserved—*what is the Gospel?*

There, that’s my question. *What is the Gospel?*

To begin, I feel certain that we can all agree that the Gospel is good news! It is good news that we sinners—we who are (or once were) bound by sin and condemned to death—can be forgiven. We can be born again and go to heaven. But is that all?

More, the Gospel is the Good News that the Savior has come. The eternal Son of God was made flesh (John 1:14). As a man, Christ Jesus lived a sinless life (Heb. 4:15). He died as a sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 9:26), and gave his life to ransom us from Satan’s kingdom (Mt. 20:28), his stronghold, the fear of death, and delivers those held captive there (Heb. 2:14,15). He brings them out of that kingdom of darkness, where they were held by Satan, into his own kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). All this is included in the Gospel the Bible talks about.

But, it seems to me, even that Gospel is too small. I say this because Jesus never talks about the /gospel as if it is centered on us and our salvation. (Wouldn’t a man-centered

“gospel” be humanism in disguise?) Of course, the Gospel message brings us salvation, but I do not believe that it is *primarily* about *our* salvation, the forgiveness of *our* sins, our *our* deliverance from eternal hell. Such a “gospel of personal salvation,” as I call it, is what is commonly preached today, but is that all there is to the Gospel?

The gospel is the good news that, through Jesus Christ, God’s Kingdom has broken into our sin-cursed world, that his Kingdom will ultimately triumph, no matter how bad things look—and we can be part of it! Let’s listen to the Gospel writers and let them tell us what the Gospel is:

Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand...and Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Mt. 4:17,23). (Jesus) went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him (Luke 1:8).

So we see what Gospel Jesus preached. And if you noticed it, that last sentence gives a clue what Gospel the apostles preached. They preached what they heard—the Gospel of the Kingdom. In their years of training under the Master, that’s what He told them to preach: *And as you go, preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mt. 10:7).* After his

resurrection Jesus’ Gospel message did not change. For forty days He explained his Gospel more fully to his disciples, *speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).* This Gospel is what they went out and preached (Acts 8:12). Paul proclaimed it everywhere he went, right up to the end of his life, just as he told the Ephesian elders, *And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more (Acts 20:25).* As Acts closes, we read that Paul *expounded and testified of the kingdom of God, and that he dwelt two whole years in his own rented house...preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence.... (Acts 28:23, 30,31).* Like Paul, Peter, right up to the end of his life, was still preaching about *the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:11).* And this is precisely what Jesus said we too must preach. *This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come (Matt. 24:14).*

Yes, Jesus taught us to pray, *“Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* But if we look at the whole of Jesus’ teaching, He is not telling us that we must wait for eternity to see his Kingdom, or for

some future millennial Kingdom. Two thousand years ago, Jesus said his Kingdom was “at hand.” It still is, even now. It’s here, at work, overthrowing Satan’s dominion of sin and its curse, and the resulting injustice, suffering, corruption, misery, destruction, sorrow, and crying that we see all around us. The war, the murder, the suicide, the sickness and even death itself—it’s all on the way out. What God made the world to be, it will one day soon become. What God made us to be, we will one day soon become, yes, in that new heaven and new earth wherein dwell righteousness. But the work begins now. The Kingdom is now. And we can be in it now.

Through Christ’s work, God redeems and restores his creation. He conquers his enemies. By Christ Jesus He has *already* established a Kingdom that cannot be overthrown. Indeed, He has already conquered every foe, even death itself. God wins! That’s the Gospel, the good news that Jesus and his apostles preached.

Jesus even now is casting out demons by God’s Spirit, showing us that “the kingdom of God is come.” He has bound that “strong man” (Satan) by entering into his stronghold, death, and He is right now “spoiling” (or plundering) his kingdom, delivering those held captive there. (See Matt. 12:28,29.)

The Gospel of Jesus is the Gospel

of the now-Kingdom! It is something that we are “translated into” (Col. 1:13), here and now! A Kingdom that we become part of, even now, by being born again” (John 3:5). That makes the new birth not an end in itself, not the good news we preach, but the means to the end—entering the Kingdom that we henceforth live in. A Kingdom that we represent daily before a world filled with “groaning and travailing” as it waits for deliverance and redemption (Rom. 8:22).

What a privilege! What a message! And what a challenge it is to be “a city set on a hill,” faithfully picturing the great Kingdom of God! To help keep that in mind so I can make it real in my personal life and in our church life, I try to remember to ask myself, *How can I (we) best represent Christ’s Kingdom in this situation? How can I (we) be a picture here and now of what the world will look like when Christ’s Kingdom is fully realized?*

Jesus summarized his Gospel call in three words, “Repent” and “Follow me.” But his “repent” was always connected to “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17,19). And his “follow me” is the call of a King. Thus his Gospel message was and is “the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God” (Luke 1:8).

Are we preaching the Gospel that Jesus preached, the Gospel of the Kingdom? If not, why not? 

He Ascended Up On High

Clayton Weaver, Bastrop, Texas

As the Apostles looked steadfastly toward heaven when Jesus rose to the sky, they likely wondered what to expect next and when. The comforting words of the two beings in white that Jesus would come in like manner must have put a spring in their step. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

Did they remember the words of Jesus in John 14:3? "I will come again." Let every child of God live for and look for the coming of the day of God wherein He may find us in peace, without spot and blameless.

The ascension of Christ into heaven is very important in God's great work for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done. In John 16:7, Jesus said, "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." Thus Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith and His Spirit in the inner man. We can know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge and be filled with all the fulness of God (Ephesians 3:16-19). Is not this how we want to be found when he comes again in the clouds?

Ephesians 4:10 says, "He ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things." He gave gifts to the church that each member may be edified and be conformed to the image of Christ. Jesus explained this in Mark 13:34, "For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left

his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work and commanded the porter to watch." When He comes again, let us not be found spiritually asleep, but diligently doing the work He gave to us.

Why are we so faint at times and feel like giving up? Hebrews 4:14 can revive our spirits, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." We are also reminded in Hebrews 9:24, that "Christ entered into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us." Through our great High Priest, there is a place in God's presence for all who are cleansed by Jesus' blood and who endure unto the end.

1 Peter 3:22 gives additional details: "Who [Christ] is gone into heaven itself and is on the right hand of God; angels and principalities being subject unto Him." When He is Lord in our hearts and He reigns without rival, we can experience His kingdom and be filled with love and peace that surpasses knowledge and knows no end.

So may we with the Apostles look toward heaven and see Jesus who ascended there. May we find comfort in the words, "He will come again." and while we await His coming, let us be diligent about His business. He fills us with his Spirit to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven.



cradle roll

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

Beiler, Larry Roy and Karla (Mullet), Gap, PA, first child and son, Kendrick Bryant, Feb. 27, 2013.

Bender, Lewis, Jr., and Mary Lois (Wengerd), Paris, TN, first child and son, Joseph Carl, March 18, 2013.

Fehr, Jason and Janelle (Yoder), Cross Hill, SC, first child and dau., Brooklyn Jade, March 7, 2013.

Gerber, Daniel and Renita (Wagler), Millbank, ON, first child and son, Tyler Daniel, Dec. 16, 2012.

Helmuth, Allen and Melody (Yoder), Chappells, SC, ninth child, fourth dau., Alaina Grace, March 22, 2013

Hostetler, Glenn and Kristina (Mast), Cottage Grove, TN, fourth child, third son, Logan Glenn, March 27, 2013.

Lengacher, Sheldon and Alisa (Miller), Lexington, IN, first child and dau., Audrey Rose, March 24, 2013.

Gerber, Glen and Karen (Wagler), Gadshill, ON, sixth child, third dau., Ashley Rose, Dec. 23, 2012.

Martin, Elam and Barbara (Jantzi), Belgrave, ON, eighth child, third dau., Sherilyn Annie, Dec. 24, 2012.

Mast, Michael and Ruth Anne (Overholt), Auburn, KY, seventh child and dau., Bethany Gail, March 4, 2013.

Miller, Dave and Lois (Landis), Sardinia, OH, fifth child (one deceased), third son, Travis Wade, Feb. 27, 2013.

Miller, David III and Charity (Miller), Walnut Creek, OH, fourth child, second son, Braden Andrew, Feb. 11, 2013.

Miller, Jonathan and Malinda (Swarney), Stuarts Draft, VA, fifth and sixth children (twins), Abigail Rose and Adam Jesse, Feb. 21, 2013.

Miller, Marlin and Anna (Miller), Franklin, KY, fourth child (one deceased), first dau., Tracey Elaina, Feb. 2, 2013.

Schlabach, James and Tonya (Kline), Auburn, KY, second child, first son, Kaden Jerell, Jan. 15, 2013.

Troyer, Jonathan and Andrea (Miller), Stuarts Draft, VA, first child and son, Zachary Ryan, Feb. 24, 2013.

Yoder, Ray and Alina (Miller), Minerva, OH, third child and dau., Callie Ann, Dec. 8, 2012.

Yutzy, Titus and Sherilyn (Kuepfer), Nickerson, KS, second and third children (twins), first and second sons, Taylan Andre and Tyson Aaron, March 9, 2013.

ordinations

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

Bro. Gary Burkholder, 57, was reinstated through ordination as minister at Maple Lawn Church, Nappanee, IN, on July 22, 2012. Bro. Daniel Bontrager, Shipshewana, IN, gave preordination messages. The charge was given by Thomas Mast, assisted by Eugene Eicher. Ian Fawcett was also in the lot.

Bro. Alan Overholt, 39, of Franklin, KY, was ordained as minister at Franklin Mennonite Church, Franklin, KY, on Jan. 27, 2013. Preordination messages were given by Jim Yoder, Clarkson, KY. The charge was given by Jonathan Overholt, assisted by Lavern Eash, and Jim Yoder. James Overholt shared the lot.

obituaries

Barton, Sylvia Idolly (Maine), 54, died of a heart attack on Feb. 7, 2012. She was born July 19, 1957, daughter of the late Gloria and Eurel Maine.

Sylvia was a member of Belize City Fellowship.

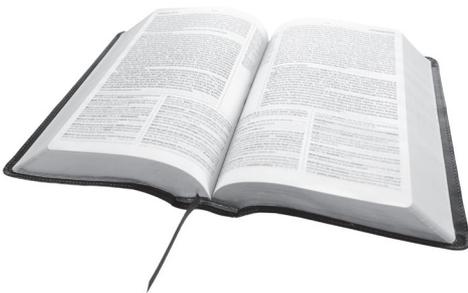
She leaves to mourn three daughters: Chandoni Lakshman, Mrs. Michelle Aldana, and Mrs. Emily Ysaguirre; two sons: Evan Welch and Stephen Clarke; four brothers: Wilford, Mark, Joseph, and David Maine; five sisters: Mrs. Radiance Henry, Mrs. Sharon Mejia, Mrs. Grace Latchman, Mrs. Ruth Castillo, and Mrs. Lydia Esquiliano. Her sons-in-law Groshel Aldana and Uzen Ysaguirre and daughter-in-law, Rochelle Welch and grandchildren and great grandchild also remain to mourn her passing.

The funeral was held at Pilgrim Mennonite Church in Hattievile, on Feb. 10, with Bishop Louis Ysaguirre serving.

Hewlett, Karen Lillian (Panton), 55, of Hattievile, Belize, died on Oct. 19, 2012. She was born June 25, 1957, to Janice and the late Clifford Panton.

Karen was baptized in her youth and was a member of Pilgrim Fellowship Mennonite Church.

She was married to Wilhelm Hewlett in 1978. Surviving are children: Starla Hewlett Steven, Devin, and Javan



Hewlett; six grandchildren; sisters: Mrs. Arlene Ysaguirre, Mrs. Anita Graham, Mrs. Jacqueline Sutherland, Sonia, Avis, Alaine, Rondean, and Danette Panton, brothers: Kenrick, Leroy, Steve, and Martin King; Alfred, Eton, Herbert, and Edmond Panton.

The funeral was held on Oct. 2, with Bishop Louis (Hughdelle) Ysaguirre serving.

Maine, Eurel Sylvester, 78, of Hattieville, Belize, died of heart failure on April 26, 2012. He was born May 20, 1932, to James and Adina Maine, in Jamaica.

Eurel was a member of Pilgrim Fellowship Mennonite Church in Hattieville.

On April 22, 1961, Eurel was married to Gloria Maine, who survives. Also surviving are five daughters: Mrs. Radiance Henry, Mrs. Grace Latchman, Mrs. Sharon Mejia, Mrs. Ruth Castillo, and Mrs. Lydia Esquiliano; three sons: Mark, Joseph, and David Maine; also a stepson, Wilford Augustus; 32 grandchildren, and 12 great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by a daughter, Mrs. Sylvia Barton.

The funeral was held on May 1, 2012, at his home church in Hattieville with Bishop Louis Ysaguirre serving.

Troyer, Adin J., 72, of Sugarcreek, OH, died at his home on Feb. 16, 2013, after

an extended illness. Adin was born August 19, 1940, in Sugarcreek, Ohio, son of the late John J. and Ada B. (Hostetler) Troyer.

He was a member of Messiah Amish Mennonite Church. He was ordained as minister in 1967 and effectively gave his time and effort to evangelistic work in many conservative Anabaptist churches. He was also a self-employed mason for more than 50 years.

On Nov. 11, 1960, he was married to Leona Hershberger. She survives. Also surviving are one daughter: Emeline (Robert) Miller, Shreve; four sons: Tyrannus (Ella Byler) Troyer, Millersburg; Darius (Lois Stutzman) Troyer, Sugarcreek; Jeriah (LeAnna Kaufman) Troyer, Sugarcreek; and Javan Troyer, Sugarcreek, and six grandchildren. Other survivors include a brother, Jonas (Katie Beachy), Sugarcreek; sisters: Mary (Wayne Miller), Walnut Creek; and Viola (Jake Weaver), Sugarcreek; sisters-in-law, Amanda (Miller) Troyer and Karen (Schlabach) Troyer.

He was preceded in death by brothers Vernon (and Fannie) Troyer, Marvin Troyer, and Norman Troyer.

The funeral was held on Feb. 19, at Messiah A.M. Church, with Philip Miller and Adin's other fellow ministers serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

[See the account of Eric Beachy's final visit with Bro. Adin on page 24] 

Time (3-4-13) has a lengthy article exploring the high cost of medical health care in this country. Steve Brill has spent seven months doing an in-depth investigation on the subject. He asks, “Why does America spend more on health care than the next 10 highest spending countries combined?”

The editor says hospitals and health care offer services at prices that very often bear little relation to the costs. For every member of Congress there are more than seven lobbyists working for the health care industry. The article cites a case history, Sean Recchi, 42, who was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Total cost in advance for a recommended treatment plan and initial dose of chemotherapy was \$83,900 and lab tests were listed at \$18,000. With Medicare these tests would have cost a few hundred dollars.

Jonathan Blum says that Central Florida is overflowing with Medicare patients. Hospitals are expanding and advertising for Medicare patients. He says, “Hospitals don’t lose money on Medicare patients.” Total compensation for the president, M. L. Andrus last year was \$1,845,000.

Excessive salaries, unregulated drug companies, and some hospitals seem to be the chief offenders in the unruly financial monster. Much more could be said, but it is still true that the love of money (greed, covetousness) is still a root that is altogether evil.

I have reasons to believe that there are many persons in the medical profession who would not want to participate in any financial wrongdoing. When circumstances permit, persons have found a big difference by making price comparisons for major medical procedures.

•••••

Recently sitting in a waiting room in a medical facility, a title on a *Reader’s Digest* caught my attention.”50 Secrets Surgeons Won’t Tell You.” Inside were seven pages dealing with various subjects of interest to patients. Titles include:

- Choose the Best Doctor
- Before You Go Under the Knife
- What Surgeons Hide From You
- Is This Really Necessary?
- What Hospitals Don’t Want You to Know

Space limitations will limit my observations to relatively few

highlights: To choose your doctor hospital employees should be able to give unbiased counsel. If there is a question, don't hesitate to seek a second opinion. Even well-trained doctors are human. One doctor confesses that for a doctor to lose a patient, especially an untimely death, is very hard. He says, "We are vulnerable to depression and other problems. Lawsuits are a black cloud hanging over us." Sixty-one percent of doctors over age 55 have been sued at least once. Because of the threat of lawsuits, doctors generally have considerable expense for lawsuit insurance.

In 2011, the mean average annual income of a U. S. surgeon was \$265,000. I find the RD article unusual in that the comments are offered by fellow medical practitioners.

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Amos Yoder, 96, is pictured in *World* magazine (3-9-13). In the picture he is seated, apparently reading an issue of *World*. He, with his wife, Sara, 92, live at Grove City, MN. Their daughter, Dorcas (Mrs. Paul Smucker, OR) reports, "He loves to know what's going on in the world. But it's not just curiosity, he wants to pray specifically for those he's just read about."

Dorcas reported after a recent visit, he prayed for Hurricane Sandy

victims, for the relief efforts of refugees around the world, for the persecuted church in Africa, for missionaries around the world, for their local church, for their grandchildren, for CAM (Christian Aid Ministries), for President Obama, and for the Justice Department.

Joel Belz, founder/writer is obviously impressed with Amos Yoder's prayerful interest in local and national needs. He appeals to Amos to add to his prayers: busy, young moms who also read *World* magazine. "God knows how much these moms need a faithful old man's prayers."

• • • • •

There are things in our national history that are totally foreign to the Spirit of Christ. But the present efforts to remove or delete all references to God or religion on government signs or documents is a recent development.

Buhler, Kansas, is located in Reno County. Many residents are descendants of Russian Mennonites who came to the prairie states in 1874 and following. The entrance to the town has displayed the sign stating, "Traditional Values, Progressive Ideas." The sign also included a cross.

Recently the city was notified that the cross on the sign violates the principle of separation of church and state. The city reluctantly decided to

comply rather than get involved in costly litigation.



The seed for the above comment came from a column that appeared on the “Ponderings and Musings” page of *The Budget*, some time prior to President’s Day in February. It included tidbits of both George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

When Washington had guests on Sunday at Mt. Vernon, this was not a reason to skip going to church. He would invite the visitors to go to church with him. He offered the following prayer after his inauguration in 1789: “Almighty God, we make an earnest prayer that thou wilt keep us in thy holy protection, that thou wilt incline the hearts of citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government to entertain brotherly love and affection, for their fellow citizens and for the United States at large.”

When Lincoln was told that the welfare of the nation depends on God and Abe Lincoln, he commented: “You are half right.” He also rejected the idea that there is some middle ground between right and wrong—as vain as the search for a man that is neither dead nor alive.

As a lawyer, Lincoln believed that justice should be tempered with mercy. When a would-be client

wanted his help to collect \$600 from a widowed mother of six children, he replied that he would not take the case. Though the client may well have legal claim to the \$600, he said that he believes that the money belongs as much to the mother and her fatherless children as it does to him. “You must remember that some things are legally right that are not morally right. Let me offer you some advice for which I will charge you nothing. You seem to be a sprightly, energetic man. We would advise you to try to make \$600 some other way.” The above items are gleaned from items submitted to “Ponderings and Musings” by Mrs. Albert Stutzman, Goshen, IN.



The April Mexico Mennonite Update reports that Mennonites from Mexico are still exploring settlement possibilities in Russia. Soil there looks black and productive, but is not being farmed. The land has been laid off in plots of about 46 acres each and is priced at about \$80 per acre. The government has not set a limit on how many parcels of land one may own.

At this date (3-26-13) we have no information how much freedom would be granted these Old Colony Mennonites.

History reports that Mennonite

settlers who went there in the late 1700's were granted freedom of religion, but on the condition that they would not evangelize. This seems to have resulted in an isolationist mentality that lacked spiritual vigor. Materialism and self-centeredness in some cases became serious problems. Present-day Mennonites deserve our prayers that history would help them make wise decisions.

• • • • •

Following is the appeal that Ken Miller prepared for the presiding judge for his March 4 sentencing. I commend Brother Ken for his respectful tone in addressing the one who was legally his judge. His

expression of regret that he cannot in good conscience fully cooperate is part of that tone.

His kind explanation of gender specific roles for family and society is a much needed witness. His love and willingness to serve those who disagree with him makes one wonder who would be helped if he were to spend time in prison.

Ken is presently free to be with his family while an appeal for a change of venue is being processed. The appeal maintains that the trial should have been in Virginia, instead of Vermont. It is expected that the appeal process could take at least two years.

—DLM 

Ken Miller's Pre-Sentencing Letter, dated February 14, 2013

Addressed to The Honorable William K. Sessions

In Burlington, Vermont

Your Honor, I am grateful for the opportunity of speaking to the Court. After more than three weeks of incarceration, with plenty of time for prayer, reflection, and study of the Scriptures, I find my faith and conscience and moral convictions considerably

strengthened. My position remains the same. I am unable for reasons of faith and conscience (which I shall try to outline more fully) to answer certain questions before the Federal Grand Jury. I take no delight in burdening the Court, but find myself compelled to this position by my

deeply held moral beliefs.

Your Honor, at my last hearing, the Court clearly articulated the implications of continued non-cooperation. I went back to my cell that night, and with much anguish and many tears, considered very seriously what Your Honor had said. Still, the fact remains, that to testify would require me to compromise my faith, violate my conscience, and go against my deeply held moral beliefs. May I elaborate?

Your Honor, The U.S. Prosecutor has stated, in essence, that he doesn't think my faith is sincere, that I am like a drug dealer in a gang, refusing to testify for criminal reasons, and that my religion is merely a cloak for my actions. Your Honor, with all due respect, the U.S. prosecutor is badly mistaken. I think an examination of my life will show that my faith in Jesus Christ as Co-Creator and Savior of the world, informs and affects every part of my life.

By His grace and mercy, which is available for all of us, He has transformed my life. He fills my inner person with His peaceful presence. He has made me a citizen of His kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven. I love Him more and more. The earthly life of Jesus is my example and pattern. I accept His teachings as authoritative and relevant for today,

to be obeyed by all true followers of Jesus.

Can I be permitted to give a few examples of how Jesus' teaching affects me in real life? Your Honor, the reason I and my people cannot swear the oath, even in a court setting such as this this one, is because Jesus taught a new standard of honesty which forbids all swearing of oaths. The reason I and my people seek to love our enemies and to do good to those who would harm us, instead of retaliating or going to war, is because Jesus—by His teachings and example taught us to love. By His love in us we can practice forgiveness, even in extreme cases such as in the school shooting at Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, some years ago.

I and my people do not have television in our homes because Jesus taught a new and higher morality in which lust is adultery, and we do not want to put in front of our families material that would violate Jesus' standard. I and my people dress the way we do is because of the Apostles' teaching on modesty and non-conformity to fashion. Our ladies cover their heads in obedience to the Apostles Paul's teaching in his first letter to the Corinthian church. I hope it can be understood that I and my people take the Scriptures seriously and that we sincerely seek

to obey Christ in all of life.

Regarding the issues at the heart of the matter before the Court, I and my people believe the New Testament clearly indicates that as Co-Creator of the world, Jesus co-authored with His Father the basic social elements of the human race—marriage, family and parenthood. As articulated in the Genesis account, God defines marriage, family and parenthood in gender-specific terms such as “man” and “woman,” “male” and “female,” “father” and “mother.”

As God incarnate, Jesus of Nazareth, in His earthly ministry, confirmed the order established at the beginning of the human race. In His teaching on marriage, family and parenting, Jesus also spoke in gender-specific terms such as male and female, husband and wife, father and mother. The apostles Jesus chose to carry on His ministry after he ascended back to heaven also affirmed—without exception—the moral and family order as it was established at Creation. I can speak with certainty about these matters, Your Honor, having read through the Bible many times. For two thousand years, the Church has upheld the moral and family order established by God.

Only in the last several decades have clergy and churches—almost

exclusively in the West—adopted a radically revisionist approach to the Scriptures on these matters, and approach that would most certainly have been rejected by the Church fathers in the first centuries after Christ.

The vast majority of peoples all over the world still believe in God’s original design for marriage, family, and parenthood, and by His grace, imperfectly to be sure, we seek to live out our understanding of God’s order. The family unit is integral to our way of life and large families with 6 to 8 children or more, are not uncommon. Now we, and many like us, find ourselves in the middle of a great cultural shift. Here in America, which has less than 5% of the world’s population, there are great changes taking place, changes that are having an increasing effect on the rest of the world. We view these changes with great sadness.

It is obvious to us that there are forces in Western society that are seeking to re-engineer and redefine marriage, family, and parenthood. These forces seem to be operating through all the agencies of our society, through the media, the entertainment world, the educational system, through modern psychology, through law and government, and even through churches. It seems

these forces are coordinated, determined and relentless. Whoever does not conform to the new agenda or whoever speaks in defense of God's original design is liable to be marginalized or penalized in some way. Your Honor, the bottom line is: I cannot with a clear conscience cooperate with the forces that would punish someone who, in an attempt to honor God's order, acted according to their own faith and conscience. To cooperate would be inconsistent with my own moral beliefs and would be inconsistent with the teachings of Christ's Kingdom. We Amish and Mennonites have no political agenda at all. We refrain from political activity. My actions in the Lisa Miller case were not in any way politically motivated.

Furthermore, we take very seriously and literally Jesus' commandment that says "love your enemies." We therefore do not hate homosexuals, nor do we want to cause them harm. So how did I get involved in the Lisa Miller case? Would Your Honor allow me to explain? I had never met Lisa Miller before September, 2009, when she suddenly came to me for help. She had been given my name by a friend. She told me that the Vermont family court wanted to take her daughter, Isabella, away from her and give her to another woman, Janet Jenkins,

with whom Lisa had once had a brief lesbian relationship. She told me that the laws of our state, Virginia, did not recognize civil unions between members of the same sex. However, Vermont was still trying to take her daughter away from her.

So what I faced was a woman in distress who needed help to protect her daughter from what seemed to be an inhumane Vermont court decree. I did not know about the visitation order at that time. I was under the impression that Lisa Miller was out of options, that the court order was imminent and likely to happen within days, that the only way Lisa Miller could keep her daughter was to flee immediately. As I pastor accustomed to helping those who come to me in need, I had great sympathy for her plight as I understood it and my moral convictions were aroused. Whatever actions were taken were taken entirely to prevent that future transfer of custody, not to frustrate existing parental rights, which—due to the complexity and apparent urgency of the matter—I did not understand very well at the time. I was therefore surprised when the transfer of custody didn't happen for two months.

Your Honor, I have ill will toward no one. I have nothing but love in my heart for individuals or communities

who do not see things as I and my people do. I only wish the love and mercy and the transforming power of Jesus of Nazareth upon all of us poor sinners. If part of my sentence could include service to the gay community—such as to persons suffering from AIDS—I would welcome such an opportunity to demonstrate such love to my fellow man. I have only love and respect for the U.S. prosecutors. They are extremely good at what they do.

In conclusion, if it is true that my actions flow out of my faith in Jesus, and from my deeply held moral beliefs—and I sincerely think they do—then it must follow that whatever judgment is being brought against me by the United States of America, is judgment on my faith and conscience and deeply held

moral beliefs.

Your Honor, I have concluded there is no other option for me but to face that judgment by the grace of God. In the words of Martin Luther, “Here I stand. I can do no other.”

Your Honor, if further incarceration is deemed necessary, I would respectfully plead to be allowed to spend a little time with my family before turning myself in to whatever facility is assigned.

May God bless you, Your Honor.

[I commend Bro. Ken Miller for these courageous words and this politically-incorrect stand. “...let God be true but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4). May God bless Ken and Linda and their family, as Ken has now been granted respite until a new trial is scheduled. May God’s will be done! -PLM]



My Last Visit with Adin Troyer

Eric Beachy, Millersburg, OH

Tears are the signal of the end and the seeds of hope for the future.

It’s late, but I need to write lest I forget the poignancy of today’s moment.

I confess, I didn’t want to go. The approach of death is a cruel and most bitter march as it painfully creeps

closer one day at a time. I would just as soon have the memories of the healthy human being rather than be confronted with the ravages of disease and the necessity and the mockery it makes of former vigor and health.

Mom urged me to go. If it hadn’t been for that, I would have done my business in town and left without

seeing him. However, I did go and I'm glad I did. You see, as hard as this paradox is to live through and comprehend, it is in the deepest pain and the sharpest of agonies that pure gold of character is formed. Today, I was privileged to see that gold in the life of a man that some people revere as a legend and who has certainly lived well.

As I entered, he was lying down on his recliner. His waxen face looked so unlike the vibrant appearance of the man I had seen eight weeks earlier. Six weeks ago, his prognosis looked good and his recovery seemed almost certain. He had even thought of again resuming his preaching assignments in church until cancer struck back. Now, he barely has the strength to leave his recliner.

The steroids, which are assigned to decrease the swelling of the tumor, make it impossible for food to stay down. There he lies, he who was a brick mason for 50 years and who always has been healthy and fit, now dependent on others for care.

For a few minutes, I sat with him. Young and in the bloom of youth, I contrasted sharply with him. He talked freely of the pain that keeps him awake at night and there was no deception in his voice. There was a note of joy in his voice when he spoke of the loving care of his wife and the support of the local congregation.

With tears, he shared the struggle of accepting his sudden reversal of fate.

Tears dimmed my eyes, as well. *Why? Why? Why?* seemed to be all that my mind could produce. My brain spun, trying to find something to share, something that would make sense of it all. His voice gained some of its usual booming quality as he declared, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). This truth, spoken by a man who proclaimed God's truth across many pulpits and who experienced a darker night of the soul than anything I've ever known, both caught me off guard and, in a strange way, soothed my soul but it did nothing to prevent fresh tears from welling up. "How," I asked him, "how can I, as a young man, gain a living knowledge of that truth without having to go through what you currently are?"

"It's not easy," was his response, "but when you get there, you will know the fullness of God's grace."

He asked me about my studies and inquired about my life as a student. This diverted us and gave us something to else talk about. Inevitably, however, the conversation swung back around to him. The time came when I knew I needed to go and yet, I delayed. I wanted to stay, as if my presence in that living room could somehow keep him alive at least on the level that he was. The thought was

a sham. I could feel myself mentally groping for something—anything that would stabilize me and give me an easy exit from that room, but none existed. Reality stared me in the face—the reality that this was probably the very last conversation I would have with this man until heaven’s golden morning. From such reality there is NO easy way out.

Before leaving, I prayed with him. The words were thick on my tongue and my voice choked with tears as I attempted to articulate a blessing from the Father for his life. In my muddled mental state, that prayer seemed to run in circles. Rising from prayer, there was one final thing. I thought, Oh, throw me down a flight of stairs rather than make me go through this. I’ll take a whipping of stinging nettles and a rinsing of iodine rather than face what I had to face then. I couldn’t just leave and jauntily say, “See ya’ later” or “See ya’ next Sunday” or “Get well soon,” especially not when someone has Stage Four cancer and I live three hours distant. His position did not allow for an effectual embrace or I would have given it. Limplly, I put out my hand. He grasped it with his large one and again, I was aware of the hint of his former strength. I couldn’t seem to meet his gaze, “Good-bye,” I choked, “Good-bye until we meet again above.”

“Good-bye, Eric,” his voice cracked

under his own emotions. “Live well and live for Him.” If I would have had my shoes on and if it had not been impolite to do so, I would have sprinted from that room, trying to get as far away as possible from this reality. Yet, I didn’t.

Leaving his house and walking down the sidewalk, sobs threatened to rip my chest apart. In the privacy of my car, I threw my head back and allowed the tears to flow. They were tears of grief at seeing a powerful man of God coming to his end. They were also cleansing tears in seeing a legend preparing to meet his Maker with a serenity and wisdom that I wished for.

In a sense, I felt as if I had witnessed something vitally important: the passing of the torch of faith. Except today, I was one who was given the torch to run with. Looking back, I feel like that was the purpose of my visit. Deep within, I feel as if Brother Adin Troyer personally handed the torch to me and said, “Here, it’s your turn. Run and run well.”

Now, all that is left is to run well with the hope of the eternal morning in view.

[This was originally written as a personal journal. Daniel Miller, Harrison, AR, submitted them, with Eric Beachy’s permission, for publication. Thank you, Daniel. Thank you and God bless you, Eric! -PLM]



The Farmer and His Cow

A Parable

Wendall Schrock

One day a farmer took a stroll into the pasture and observed his choice cow. He was fond of this cow and reflected back in his mind a few short years when this bovine was a small calf. How she had loved the warm bottled formula as she aggressively made short work of her ration at each feeding. It was enjoyable and rewarding to see this young energetic life become weaned and grow up and develop into a healthy young cow.

One characteristic of this cow was that she loved to stretch her neck through the barbed-wire fence and graze at her leisure. The farmer, feeling a heart full of compassion and not desiring to see injury inflicted upon the cow's neck, decided to move the fence. So he graciously extended the boundaries fifteen feet towards the shoulder of the road. *Now*, he thought, *my cow can certainly enjoy all the grazing she was longing for before I moved the fence.*

A few days later he returned to the pasture, and again he noticed the cow with her neck through the fence. *What shall I do?* He thought. *This cow seems to have a mind of her own. But*

I don't want to be cruel, and I want to be known as a kind farmer.... So he moved the fence to the very edge of the road. Certainly this cow was mature enough and would be aware of impending danger of passing vehicles. There was nothing edifying outside of the fence. It would only make sense that she would now be at peace with the enlarged pasture.

However, it seemed like the cow had developed practices which became bad habits and these habits directed her to make unwise choices. Still straining at the boundaries and longingly looking beyond, the cow pushed, squirmed, and bawled because she was constrained against her will. The farmer, throwing up his hands, said, "I love this cow but I cannot stand to see her chafing, nor bear to hear the complaining because her desires are not being met." And so he removed the fence.

The cow's next step was into the path of a swiftly-moving truck.

Who carries the responsibility of the demise of the cow? The loving farmer was just trying to be gracious and not confine his cow nor stifle her desires. But....

Now I ask several questions: Do we chafe, cringe, complain, bellow at fences in our lives? Do we enjoy things outside of the fence when we have good freedom and fulfillment on the inside? Do we seek to find enjoyment “just outside the fence”? Are we blinded to impending dangers because of our own desires and have no sensitivity to the heart of our loving watchmen? Have our little actions led to practices which result in a “it’s not such a big deal”

attitude? Do we short-change ourselves of the satisfaction, joy, and safety of the boundaries placed in our lives.?

Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do their work with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

[From *The Midwest Focus*, March-April, 2013. Used by permission.] 

mission awareness

A Brief History and Purpose of Grace Press

Grace Press, Inc. has sent thousands of copies of literature into Russia, Ukraine, Iran, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Egypt, and elsewhere. Pequea Amish Mennonite Church endorses the mission statement of this organization and the sound biblical literature they distribute. They operate on freewill offerings. Their address is 2175 Division Highway, Ephrata, PA, 17522. The following articles are taken from their newsletter with permission. —FS

Grace Press is a Christian publisher. It is operated by a self-perpetuating board of directors organized in 1989 from the Nationwide Mennonite Fellowship churches. The headquarters are located near Ephrata, PA, which

consists of a building containing printing machinery, a bookstore, and a warehouse.

The stated purpose of Grace Press, Inc., is as follows:

a. To plainly set forth the teachings of the Bible

b. To proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the initial requirement for salvation

c. To help sincere, born again Christians discern between truth and error in trends in life and thought in Christendom.

d. To strengthen those whose conservative convictions are challenged through lack of support or undermining influences.

e. To provide sound, scriptural, original, and translated literature for mission outreaches in various languages.

f. To promote the Bible in various languages.

What began as a vision to provide Scriptures for the formerly-restricted, Russian-speaking countries, has grown into providing not only Scriptures, but also other translated literature in numerous languages. Since many other organizations are providing Bibles, Grace Press is printing a wide variety of literature including evangelistic and doctrinal material, children's books, edifying stories, and biographical accounts.

Grace Press places a special emphasis on providing teaching on subjects that many publishers neglect. This includes subjects such as nonresistance, separation of church and state, holy living, modest dress, the Christian home, and the errors of "once saved, always saved." Some literature is sent to existing conservative Mennonite

mission churches. Generally it is for free distribution. In some cases, the literature is subsidized so it can be sold at a price affordable by the local people.

As a publisher, Grace Press is not a church planting organization, but is much in harmony with these efforts by faithful churches. It is our goal to encourage faithful churches to hold forth the torch of truth. Where such churches do not already exist, it would be our desire to see biblical churches established.

Through literature, seeds can be planted and seeking souls can be led to scriptural values and godly practices. Grace Press is involved with literature distribution in countries where believers are presently persecuted or have been in the recent past. In some of these places it would not be conducive for families from America to move there. Church planting efforts could close the door to ever be permitted into such a country again. Yet, ironically, in some cases publishing and book sales can be a legal way to do business. This opens a door for further teaching, if done cautiously.

A TRIP TO EGYPT

(A firsthand report by a brother sent from Grace Press)

We had heard about churches in Upper Egypt where believers dress modestly. We wanted to see them. Sturdy young men, who had come to meet us, appeared in the train station, grabbed our bags, and fanned out

through the crowd.

“We have lots of ruins to see,” our hosts informed us.

“No, we came to visit the believers,” we replied. This answer pleased them. After church that night we sat with a group of youth until one o'clock. They asked searching questions about our faith and practice. We discovered that two of them had been beaten and served time in jail for witnessing for Christ.

The next morning we went further into the country. I preached to a group of women who were heavily veiled. The elder of the church challenged them to look at my wife. He said it is not necessary to go “western” just because we live in modern times. After services they rushed forward to smother my wife with kisses. Women in these communities greet each other by kissing three to six times. The men greet by two kisses, one on each cheek. The hospitality was outstanding! A robed and turbaned man with his dashing, robed son pushed platter after platter of food to us.

The next day we went to a bigger city. There was more delicious food, more preaching, and more late night circles of conversation, listening to the hopes and fears of the believers. They thought they were the only ones in the world who were holding to such things as simplicity and modesty. They were encouraged by their contact with us. They shared concerns about the

worldliness creeping into some of the city churches.

In Egypt, converts from Islam to Christianity face incredible persecution, especially from their own families. Sharia law encourages this. Because of persecution, converts are not safe with their life companions unless they are also converted. We heard of one man whose wife attempted to poison him three times in the last thirteen years. Muslim background believers often cannot keep jobs. Holding a job reveals your identity and relatives can track you down. If you change your identity, you lose your educational credits which are necessary for jobs in Egypt. It would be unlawful for churches to shield or aid converts. What can they do? How can they feed their children? How can they send their children to school? Hence the depression and misery. If both parents are converted, at least they have each other. They often emigrate to another part of the country to hide from their families.

The administration of Grace Press requests prayers of supporters to know how to answer the many opportunities to sow the seeds of the Gospel in various parts of the world. In Upper Egypt it is our desire to give encouragement and teaching to believers. If there are strong local churches, they are better able to reach out to those around them in ways we foreigners cannot.



Characteristics of a Proverbs 31 Woman

Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC

Since May is the month of Mother's Day, I felt it would be appropriate to look at the qualities or the characteristics of a godly woman. I can't think of a better place to look for these qualities than in God's word, specifically in Proverbs 31.

I used to think this was written by a man in honor of his wife or mother. However, according to the beginning of the chapter, these are the words of a mother as she teaches her young son, a prince. She was telling him what he should look for in the young lady who would become his wife. It is not written by a man who has not experienced a woman's work, but by a woman who has known the responsibility of motherhood. Remember this does not happen in a week or a month, even in five years. It is talking about everything a woman has been and accomplished in a lifetime. Take courage, you are a Proverbs 31 woman in the making. God is not finished with you yet.

We will look for 11 traits of a wise woman portrayed in Proverbs 31.

•Virtuous (verse 10)

Virtuous means having or showing high moral standards. It also means *able, capable, strong, powerful, efficient, good, and worthy*. I believe she is a woman of inner beauty. 1 Peter 3:4 refers to her as a woman of great price in God's sight. This godly woman will spend time with God. She will define her priorities and lifestyle in accordance with God's Word and His will for her.

•Trustworthy (verses 11,12)

The heart of the husband safely trusts in her. The husband can have full confidence that his wife cares about his heart. He does not need to worry or wonder about her faithfulness, about her management of the home, children, and even the finances. A trustworthy woman is one who is loyal. She will stand by her husband at all times, showing her love and support. She will be careful to guard his confidences and will listen to his heart. She will do him good, always looking out for his good. What a challenge!

•Diligent (verses 13-16, 19, 24, 27)

These verses make me tired just by reading them. However, I believe they are simply saying that a godly woman is willing to work hard to meet the needs of her family. She must be willing to have a servant heart, laying aside her own needs and wants for the sake of her family. This thought is not popular. We are told to take care of ourselves and I am not advocating that your family takes advantage of you. I believe children need to learn to work alongside of, and to respect their mother. Yet, many times we will need to work even if we are tired or do not feel like it. Ask God for grace for those times. He has given me strength many times when I thought I could not go any further. At other times He has urged me to rest and let the work wait or not get done that day.

•**Motivated** (verse 17)

Motivation includes being willing and ready. A motivated woman encircles (girds) herself with strength. She does all that she can to maintain a healthy body and mentally alert and healthy mind. She makes good use of her time and tries not to procrastinate. She is a woman of strength and purpose.

•**Thrifty** (verse 18)

Thrifty is a word we are all familiar with. For those who have learned to practice thriftiness, the thought of

future economic depression does not feel as frightening. It includes making do with what you have, being willing to cut costs by buying at outlet or thrift stores, preparing simple meals, living on a budget, reusing instead of buying disposable, gardening and preserving foods, and living more like our parents and grandparents did years ago. Thriftiness is a challenge; try it.

•**Reaching out in kindness** (verse 20)

We women have so many opportunities to reach out in kindness and love. Sewing has been a part of our history for many years, both at home and in sewing circles. There are so many humanitarian organizations that need blankets and clothing to pass out in other countries. There are needs in our own country. Some people are hungry and cold—and even homeless. We have been sheltered in our communities, but today the world is coming to our back door. Refugees and immigrants are looking for a better way of life. Are we willing to reach out in faith to such?

I see that I'm not going to be able to finish this month, so I will try to conclude this study next month.

God bless each mother or each woman with a mother heart as you strive to be a Proverbs 31 woman!



An Unusual Tourist Attraction

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

On a warm summer evening in June our family sat on the green grass in a nice park in Austin, Texas. Crowds of other people were there. With the approach of dusk, everyone looked eagerly toward to the Congress Avenue Bridge that spanned the nearby Colorado River.

The 947-foot bridge in Austin, is famous for the millions of bats that roost beneath it. At dusk the bats come flying out from the vertical crevices. After they got started, soon there were shimmering clouds of dark bats flying by. They swooped, curved, and gracefully disappeared over the city. I thought of how many insects all those bats might consume in Texas that night! Later, I learned that bats (worldwide) eat an estimated 10,000 to 30,000 pounds of insects each night.

Have you ever seen a bat? What do you know about them? Bats are such amazing and interesting creatures. You probably don't see them often. They roost in dark places like caves and attics. Some bats even roost in trees. They hang upside down when

they are resting. Imagine yourself trying to sleep like that!

Bats come out only at night. That makes them seem mysterious and even rather spooky. They look quite intriguing and amazing. The face of some bats looks like a miniature bear or dog! Bats have a furry body, with wings that are covered by smooth, flexible skin.

There is only one mammal that can fly and, believe it or not—that is the bat! Bat mothers actually have milk for their babies. The females generally have one baby a year, although some species may have two. Some bat babies cling to their mother and she carries them along when she goes out to feed. What a ride! She has no cozy nest for her babies. They just hold on to her or the home roost. Some baby bats cling to their mother for several weeks. They nurse for six to eight weeks.

There are more than 900 species of bats. Most bats live in the tropics where they can find food year around. Fortunately for us, 40 species live in the United States and Canada.

Bats are really a blessing because

they eat so many insects. A keen sense of smell helps them find food. They catch most of their food as they fly. Some bats eat scary things like scorpions and spiders. Others eat lizards, small birds, and tree frogs. Bats like fruit and even enjoy nectar from flowers. Just like bees, they pollinate flowers.

What are the bat's enemies? Hopefully not you! Bats are very valuable. They are our friends because they eat so many pesky bugs, mosquitoes and other insects. If you ever see a bat, don't run for the broom and swat it to death. Bats have plenty of enemies, however. Cats, hawks, snakes, owls, and weasels like bats for lunch. We wouldn't think that bats would be good to munch.

People are afraid of vampire bats because they suck blood. Thankfully, it is very rare for them to bite humans. They do bite animals, though. With their razor-sharp teeth they scoop out a tiny piece of skin. Then they happily suck the blood from the wound.

The flying fox is the largest bat. Its body is about the size of a pigeon and its wingspan is more than five feet. The flying fox uses its teeth to dig into tropical fruits like mangoes, papayas, and bananas. Do you think such a good diet keeps them healthy?

North American bats have a wingspan of some 12 inches, just

the length of a ruler. God made their wings just perfect for high speeds and amazing maneuvers. Some bats can climb to altitudes of 10,000 feet. Assisted by tail winds, they can zoom along at speeds up to 65 miles per hour in flight! Though they have strong wings, they have weak legs. Some species cannot even walk.

Imagine with me how cute the smallest bat is! It is about the size of a bumblebee! It makes its home in Thailand and is called Kitt's Hog Nose Bat.

Another amazing thing about bats is their ability to fly in groups of a quarter million (250,000) without bumping into each other. They can fly through dark forests and even black caves without having any "bat accidents"! God equipped them with "sonar" or "echolocation," which is sending out sound waves too high-pitched for our ears. They hear the echoes coming back and thus they know the distance, direction, and size of the objects in their path. They can fly in total darkness. God gave them the ability to know just where to go.

Whether you are privileged to watch a million bats glide through the twilight skies in Austin, Texas, or see one lone bat swoop and glide in the evening sky near your home, pause and praise your Creator for the marvel of bats, the Masters of the Nighttime Skies.



Growing in Favor with God and Man

In the Gospel of Luke it is recorded that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. This is basically the only thing we know about Jesus in his teen years. Interestingly, very similar words are used to describe the prophet Samuel when he was a young man.

These words about Jesus and Samuel are significant. Many times people who are in favor with man are not in favor with God. Conversely, some people who strive to be in favor with God are not in favor with man.

What are we to learn from these testimonies of Jesus and Samuel? Is it really possible to be in favor with God and man? Doesn't the Apostle John tell us in 1 John 3 that we should not be surprised if the world hates us?

As we read through the Gospels we learn that Jesus' favor among people was not always the greatest. At first crowds followed Him and He was very popular. But at some point during his public ministry people began to oppose him. Jesus was particularly hated, yea despised, by some religious leaders. Possibly some of these religious leaders were

the same ones who were impressed with his questions at age 12.

Samuel too was eventually despised by the people he was called to serve. The Israelites wanted a king to rule over them rather than a prophet. God told Samuel that the Israelites had not rejected him as prophet—they had rejected the One who had appointed Samuel as prophet.

There is something we can learn as we study the lives of these two men. People tend to appreciate youth who stand for God and relate well to others. But when these same youth get older and begin declaring the Word of the Lord in ways that make people uncomfortable, they can face much rejection from their peers, especially from those who aren't living the way they should. Anyone old or young who loves and serves God will only be in favor with those who appreciate the things God appreciates.

The Apostle Peter tells us that anyone who lives godly *will* suffer persecution. This might not be major persecution and it might not happen at all stages of our lives, but it *will* happen.

Let's be people who love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Let's love our relatives, our spiritual brothers and sisters, and our neighbors the way we love ourselves. Even if some people sneer at us, those

who love the things God loves and hate the things God hates, will notice that we are growing in favor with God and man.

Thank you for the responses to this month's question. —EE

This Month's
QUESTION **How can youth “grow in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man”?**

r e s p o n s e f r o m o u r r e a d e r s . . .

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How?

- Read your Bible daily
- Pray
- Obey your authorities

Is it just me, or have you heard similar answers for any questions you have asked? Let me be clear, these are very good answers but they are not broken down into “shoe leather.” I say this because you and I can do all three of these and not be in submission to God. As long as I perform the above, everything is peachy, right? No, I must have direct access to Jesus’ heartbeat. I have to die to self daily and strive for godly perfection. And, yes, this is easier said than done. If I had a microwavable answer for you I would share it in a heartbeat.

Now go back and look at the question again...

What words stand out to you? Which ones seem to weigh the most? The words that seem key to me are *grow*, *wisdom*, *stature*, and *favor*. Can we put these four words into a blender and expect a saint to come out? I do not believe so. Being a Christian is a journey we walk and strive for daily. Here are definitions of the words *grow*, *wisdom*, *stature*, and *favor*:

Grow: A new life, a flower lifting its petals in the direction of the Son, a child maturing into an adult.

Wisdom: Not being book smart, but God smart; not basing decisions and actions on personal emotions.

Stature: *Grow* and *stature* should be cousins. If you do not grow, you will be of little stature. Your spiritual life will be shallow.

Favor: Having a peaceful, unselfish

spirit, Jesus being the perfect example. It does not mean everyone you meet is going to love you; it means being okay with your circumstances. I think of someone behind the scenes doing the grueling job faithfully and cheerfully. How I apply this will directly affect the yield of God's harvest. I am not on His earth to see how much glory I can receive, but how much I can do for God!

God does not call the qualified; He qualifies the called. In order for us to grow in stature and wisdom, and in favor with God and man, we allow God to direct our every thought and action. If we follow our own way, we cannot grow. If we are unable to grow, favor with God is impossible. This will result in discord with fellowmen. Thus, wisdom cannot be bought. It comes straight from the Father. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).

Danae Graber, Amboy, IN

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I believe this verse is saying that Jesus grew mentally, spiritually, physically, and socially. He was fully human in the sense that He had to develop like other people his age, and yet, He was fully God. This brings some interesting questions to mind. "Did Jesus ever fail a test?" "Did He ever saw a 2X4 too short or hit his thumb with the hammer?"

Growing in favor with God and man should be something we strive for. God's favor is his unchanged disposition towards his children that brings blessings to our lives or turns our obstacles into blessings. Our relationships with our authorities and other people often indicate how things are between us and God. I think of the triangle illustration, if God is at the tip of the triangle and the two lines extending from the angle represent me and my fellow man. Experiencing God's love also frees us from demanding that kind of love from others and makes us more likable.

Gretal Miller, Aroda, VA 

Luck may seem to explain how you got a job, but it won't explain how you keep it.

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He who sows seeds of kindness can anticipate an ongoing harvest.

• • • • •

Laughter is some of the sweetest music ever to greet the human ear.

• • • • •

The law of gravity is one law everyone obeys.

• • • • •

The lazier a man is, the more he'll do tomorrow.

• • • • •

Exaggeration is often a thin skin of falsehood stretched over a half truth.

• • • • •

Laughter is the shock absorber that smooths out the bumps of life.

• • • • •

Life holds a cup to be filled more than one to be drained.

• • • • •

Take a tip from nature—your ears aren't made to shut, but your mouth is!

• • • • •

Beware of the doctor who takes more interest in your *purse* than your *pulse*.

• • • • •

To evaluate a man's character, observe him with a woman, a flat tire, and a child.

• • • • •

Middle age may be thought of as an awkward stage when Father Time starts catching up with Mother Nature.