

*The Heartbeat of* 

# The Remnant

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A ministry of  
*The Berean Voice*



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“The Berean Voice” is an outreach ministry of Faith Christian Fellowship, a church located in Holmes County, Ohio. It is operated by a board of directors, which ultimately answers to the elders of the church.

As a non-profit ministry, we desire to work with the Lord, for without Him we can do nothing. We are trusting God to provide for the ongoing work of this magazine and our other outreach projects through the free-will offerings of His people. Would you join us in prayer for this work and ongoing need?

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~ The Berean Voice Board

*It is our goal that the content of this magazine bring honor and glory to God. All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise notated. In the event of discovering any errors in content or detail, please count it to our oversight and kindly bring it to our attention.*

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 Greetings of Christian love to one and all. In this issue of the magazine (Summer 2023)... The Church History article focuses on Bible prophecy pertaining to the end times and some various ways that over the years certain elements of the church got off track from the Biblical teaching as it pertained to their everyday life. In his article, Donny Brechbill, who together with his wife teaches multiple marriage seminars each year, endeavors to zone in on a challenging subject—some of the root problems that they see with women who are struggling in the church. Lee Rufener takes an unapologetic approach in his effort to share some expository teaching on practical ways to have a sanctified home. We have a new writer for the sisters this time who shares a burden on her heart—instilling God's Word in the hearts of the next generation.

Plus, more interesting topics. Enjoy.

If you are edified or encouraged by any of the authors' content, it would be a blessing for you to respond to us by mail or email. We pass this along to our writers for their benefit.

Recently, I was pondering the subject of change. As I have written before, we have gone through a fair bit of change as a family. During the last 1 to 2 years, we moved to another place of residence, I acquired a new job, and finally, praise the Lord, I have mostly recovered from most of the long-term effects of Covid. A special thanks to each one who has prayed for my health.

As I paused in quiet reminiscence, I was surprised by all the things that have changed in the 40-plus years that I can recall from memory. (Even though I am over 50 I really don't remember much from the earliest years of my life.)

As a boy, I rode around in vehicles that had no seat belts and for sure, no airbags. When both of those "lifesaving" devices were first being introduced I well remember the many discussions whether they were truly lifesaving in their effect or whether the opposite was true. All vehicles used to be rear-wheel drive or four-wheel drive. How odd it seemed when the first front-wheel drive cars started to appear. Now we have hybrid vehicles with a push towards fully electric vehicles.

Forty-plus years ago, most farmers had gas-powered tractors with a carburetor or a diesel tractor with a manually powered injector pump. Today, most tractors are equipped with a computer and seemingly miles of wires and electronic this and electronic that. Back then, most farmers were able to maintain or repair their own equipment; now there is a need for diagnostic machines and specialized tools which cost a lot of money and take many hours to learn how to operate. This causes most farmers to rely on the expertise of specialized repairmen which also cost a lot of money.

Then there was Covid. That was a stressful time. Have you noticed what has changed during, after, or as a result of Covid? As I interact with others, routinely someone will say that this or that is different since Covid. Is it just me, or since Covid is the general public less friendly and more private with their interactions? Let's check our own interactions to ensure that we are still being God's "light" and "salt" to this dark world, and that we are not losing our "saltiness". Also, there are help wanted signs everywhere. Why? It seems to me that Covid has encouraged what little work ethic was still flourishing in our society to diminish even further.

Then there is the issue of cell phones and E-bikes. What do these two disconnected products have in common? From my vantage point observing the Amish of Holmes County, these two items have done more to change a people and a culture in a more major way than almost anything else has in recent times.

Where does this all leave us? The Hebrew writer says that *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law* —Hebrews 7:12. So, we see that God changed things as He saw fit, thus, if we need to change to become more Biblical, then we should. But the Apostle Paul says *That we [should] henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine...* —Ephesians 4:14.

*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved* —Matthew 24:12-13. So, let us be vigilant in these end times as change happens more and more around us. May we be among those who shall endure until the end.

# Prophecy and The End Times

by Joshua Yoder  
Big Prairie, OH

Jesus, upon His ascension back into His heavenly home, gave a final directive to His disciples, both to those physically present as He disappeared into the clouds, and to the myriad of believers who would come to know Him down through the ages. The story of His life and His gospel were to be preached unto all the world by those who called Him Lord. This global spreading of the Word, would, in the later vision of John, be proclaimed as one of the prerequisites of Jesus' triumphant return at the end of time. John himself would be seen as a harbinger of these end times, based on Jesus' words as recorded by John ... *If I will that he [John] tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. John 21:22.*

The early Christians, understandably, felt that the return of Christ was imminent, even within the first century. The rapid expansion of Christianity, the complete moral depravity of the Roman culture, and the increasing intensity of persecution against them seemed to point to a swift and triumphant return of their Lord.

Now, two thousand years since Christ gave that promise, His soon return seems just as imminent as it did to the first century believers. Speculation on the time of His return, the manner of it, and the contributing factors are always current and controversial subjects. In the light of this continued earnest expectation of the end times, what have we to learn about our interpretations of prophecy from those who have attempted to decipher the prophetic portions of Scripture in earlier ages?

Jesus' first coming was surrounded and enveloped by perhaps the most recognizable misinterpretation of prophecy in the Bible. Roughly four hundred years of relative silence from God precluded His entry into the world in a physical, human body. His birth would be unnoticed in a society that was not only in desperate need of, but also expecting, a Savior to arrive. Daniel, writing the words God gave him, had told of a Messiah to come, and had even given a time that He would appear. Now, the Jews seethed under Roman rule, hanging their hopes on what they thought would be a sudden and triumphant extermination of the

Roman troops and influence from their lands. To us, it is glaringly obvious that their interpretation of prophecy was not only incorrect, but for many, would lead them astray so that they did not even recognize or acknowledge the true Redeemer that was sent to them.

But what was it that caused this misinterpreted view? To us, it seems completely in order that Jesus would focus on the poor and destitute rather than opposing an occupying army. Jewish historians give an intriguing, but scarcely surprising, answer to the failure of the majority of their people to recognize Christ for who He was.

The religious atmosphere of first century Israel was one defined by corruption, bribery, lust for power, and all the unsavory aspects of a completely politically motivated upper class.

The priests, once chosen by God to be His servants in sanctifying His children, had sunk to buying their positions of service, most notably in the high priest's office, where God had ordained one high priest to serve the people throughout his life. In Jesus' day, however, the responsibilities of leading the children of Israel were divvied out, the role often changing hands on one-year terms. Becoming a high priest was a matter of birth. Most high priests came from several large, influential, and wealthy families, as one often had to buy into the opportunity of this office.

It was not only the high priest's office that was corrupted, but most levels of prominent spiritual leadership were filled by the wealthy elites who had the connections and wealth to be placed into roles of importance amongst the Jews.

This unsavory backdrop gives even more clarity to Jesus' feelings on the religious leaders of His day. These imposters did not hold their priestly positions to serve His Father, they held them for their own gain, turning the temple into a marketplace and holding the common people hostage through their disputes on the minutiae of the Law.

Unsurprisingly, these leaders looked for a Messiah who would fit their goals, their ideals, and their morals, rather than one that would rebuke and chastise them for

their hypocrisy, greed, and selfish ambition. Their view of prophecy had been so twisted and corrupted by their lifestyle that even the miracle of a resurrection could not sway them to view Christ's power as coming from God. This misconstrued expectation of a conquering commander, riding a horse of war over the political enemies of these elites was pandered to the common Jew as well. Centuries of fighting for just the freedom to worship, as in the case of the Maccabees and the Greeks, had deeply imprinted a sense of nationalism into the collective mind of the Jewish people. The ones who bought into it the most were the ones who received the most from this system of exclusive access to God and His promises. To those who were repressed by the stringent and often man-made laws of Jewish society, a God of peace and love who would draw the needy of the world to Him was more welcome than a Saviour who would simply install another earthly government to rule the poor, oppress the widows, and reward the wicked.

This was not the last time an oppressed people would be deceived, as Roman rule would witness another major misstep in the collective interpretations of God's people. This time, the teachings of Jesus and the words of His disciples would be misinterpreted to fit the changing political and religious landscape of fourth century Rome. The year was 306, and Diocletian, one of the most brutal persecutors of Christians in the Roman Empire, had abdicated from his position as Caesar. In his wake, he left three contenders for his throne. One of those vying for the seat of power was a young general, experienced in politics, and power hungry. His name was Constantine, son of a prominent Roman officer and a lowly Greek Christian, Helena.

From his youth, Constantine followed in his father's footsteps, fighting throughout the empire, rising to a rank of general. Now, on campaign in Britain, he turned his eyes to the ultimate prize of a Roman politico, the title of Caesar, and the seat of the emperor.

Constantine's line to the throne was through his father. Diocletian had, during his rule, appointed additional Caesars to aid in ruling the empire. Constantine's father was one of these, and despite being simply appointed to the position, it was expected that his status as a Caesar would pass to his son. Matters were not as simple as a mere transfer of titles, however.

Constantine's rise was bloody, but his grip on power was set, until he remained the sole contender for the throne. The stage was set. He quickly undid the harsh decrees of Diocletian, legalizing Christianity and removing the persecution that had leveled churches, scattered families, and hunted down bishops and other church leadership. Almost overnight, a peace previously unheard of was gifted to these hounded believers.

The changes that Constantine made did not end, however, with merely legalizing Christianity. His sympathies ran deeper, and he made further moves to legitimize it as not only an accepted religion, but as the state religion.

To Christians eager for the return of Christ, this seemed almost unbelievable. In the span of a few short years the government had gone from crucifying, beheading, and torturing them to holding them up as examples to the rest of the empire. The favor seems to have affected the clarity with which they viewed the apparent reconciliation of the world to the church. Not only would they accept a position of power in the empire, but they would also accept Constantine as a benefactor and protector of the church itself. In their minds, the day of the Lord was come, and Constantine was the rod of iron with which God would rule.

And rule he did. The course of the church was soon swayed by this new and outside influence. Constantine sat in on meetings of the bishops, even though at the time he was not baptized nor was he even seeking baptism. The church's new position as a tool of the state brought schisms, in-fighting, and contention at every turn. There remained a remnant, but most of the church would fall under the sway of a man motivated by a hunger for power, wealth, and influence.

Constantine would be baptized before his death, lending him even further credibility in the eyes of a straying church. Now separated from its original identity as sheep in this world, the coming centuries would see "Christians" become ravening wolves, destroying, killing, and corrupting.

In a matter more recently related to us as Anabaptists, the tale of the infamous Muensterites gives us a further example of the perils of misinterpreting prophecy, especially the prophecy regarding the second coming of Christ.

One of the great disadvantages of a heavily persecuted group is a tendency to lack stability, as evidenced by the varying beliefs developed by Anabaptist groups of the movement's first fifty years. Persecution would deprive a congregation of their leaders, who were often those most targeted by the authorities. A missing elder meant less teaching, which in turn led to more difficulty in guidance, and corrective doctrine. Even the most sincere and interconnected groups could fall into errors developed because of the lack of leadership to bring Biblical clarity and balance the brotherhood.

The situation in the Netherlands was of a rather volatile strain approaching the 1530s. Throughout the country, the Catholic Church remained the predominant religion, clinging to their power through ruthless displays of physical force, most often directed towards the minority Protestant congregations. This focus on quelling the Protestant

influence was momentarily successful in this instance, with most of their groups dissolving and reintegrating into the Catholic Church or other groups.

One of the groups that was on the receiving end of this minor diaspora was the fledgling Dutch Anabaptist church. For those Protestants who still refused to join the Catholics, the Anabaptists often became their choice of church, rapidly swelling their ranks. This had a profound effect on the local strain of Anabaptism, which without a doubt was fervent, but quite prone to chaos and upheaval.

By 1534 the tensions of this influx of new believers reached a breaking point, and the Anabaptist church of the Netherlands split into two main factions. The first, led by the two Philips brothers, Dirk and Obbe, adhered to the New Testament teachings of separation from church and state, as well as nonresistance. This would be the church of Menno Simmons, and the root of the Mennonite churches of today.

The other faction held to more radical beliefs, led by Jan Matthysz and Jan of Leiden. These two men became increasingly fanatical in their views of Christ's return, believing that they would be central figures, instrumental in a kingdom that God would set up on Earth.

At the same time, social unrest was brewing, and spilled over in the city of Munster, located in northwest Germany, where the common people rose up, overthrowing their city's government and expelling their Catholic bishop. The two Jans were quick to act, contacting the new leaders of the city, and eventually winning them over to their views.

The Jans moved to Munster in early 1534, and began sending out prophets and messengers, who called all "Anabaptists" to congregate at this "New Jerusalem". The unrest of the area made their message all the more appealing, and thousands streamed into the city, intent in being part of this apocalyptic return of Christ.

There was, in fact, an apocalyptic return on the horizon, but not a return of Christ. This one came in the form of the ousted Catholic bishop, who swiftly set siege to the city. His army would stay there for eighteen months.

Inside the city, Jan Matthysz, proclaiming a vision was given to him for a deliverance of the city, left its walls to parade outside, proclaiming a swift delivery of the enemy into his hands. His vision, however, failed him, as he was swiftly delivered into the hands of the enemy, where he was

beheaded, and his head set on a pike in front Munster's gates.

Inside the walls, Jan of Leiden took leadership, ignoring the famine, death, and chaos that now ran rampant within the besieged walls. Instead, he began promoting polygamy, defending it from the Old Testament, killing at least one woman who refused to marry him, and at one point, having sixteen wives.

This abomination soon led to its required end as the city was overcome, with a heavy slaughter being carried out against its inhabitants. The leaders, Jan of Leiden being the most prominent, were captured, tortured, and killed. Their bodies were hung in iron cages on the tower of St. Lamberts Church, the Catholic church in Munster. To this day, the cages still hang, a bleak reminder of the pride and rashness of the two Jans, determined to see their end-time interpretation fulfilled.

In all three of these examples, the prophecy contained in God's Word was twisted into results that strayed far from the will of God for His children. For the Jews, it caused them to miss the Messiah, failing to recognize the greatest promise God had given them. The fourth century Christians, chafing under the horrific persecution of Diocletian, accepted Constantine as a deliverer, seeing him as a fulfillment of God's judgement against the kingdoms of this world. Instead of peace, they would sink into a state of ungodliness worse than the pagans around them, with the Catholic Church straying into sin more horrible than even their pagan society. Lastly, the troubled visions and interpretations of the 16th century Munsterites would lead them to an awful fate, sullyng the name of the true church.

What have we to learn from these grave errors of those before us? In our time, the end seems imminent, and we are beset with those who would have us believe that we are truly the last of the Christians.

Luke has recorded the instructions of Jesus on this point: *... The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them - Luke 17: 22-23.* Here are instructions for our conduct in the last days. Let us not be running after the rumors of the end times but let us be obedient to the final admonition of our Lord—that we spread the Word of God and the Gospel of His Son, Jesus throughout the world *... and then shall the end come - Matthew 24:14.*

## Drift

by Barry Grant  
Hicksville, OH

I watched as a man attempted to cut a large sheet of plywood in half. He was talking with a few other men while he was cutting, and it seemed that he wasn't too concerned about making the cut straight. I noticed that he continued to cut further and further from the line that he had scratched into the piece of plywood with a nail. After he was several inches off, one of his friends tried to point it out but he pretended to ignore him. He tried to casually guide the old handsaw back towards the line, while continuing to talk with the men, not making a big deal of it. Finally, after he was more than a foot off, he stopped. He knew now that he had a problem, a problem he could not fix.

I had to think, "Is this what we are doing as the church, the bride of Christ?" We are not too serious about drifting off the straight and narrow way; we allow things to come into our midst. We say, "It's not a big deal, let's not be critical." But the longer we wait, the harder it will be to straighten out. At first it shocks us; later it becomes the new normal. How do we tell if we have drifted? It should be as easy as considering where we used to be, and comparing it that with where we are now, then evaluating the change with what the Bible teaches.

Since fighting against drift is not popular, men in the church don't want to do it. Some people in our churches who are drifting towards the world have perfected a feel-good gospel. They go on and on about how close they are getting to Jesus, and how blessed they are, but their direction is clearly not in line with the teachings of Scripture. They're headed towards the world.

There are others who don't want the church to drift, yet they have their own problems—the love of money, covetousness, and a love of pleasure. No one says anything because it seems that nobody wants to hear. A popular response is, "Yes, I know it's not good, but what can we do?" "All churches have problems." Or "Yes, I would never allow that, but I don't feel it's in my place to speak up about it." "It's not for my family, but if others want to do that, it's fine."

We live in a "me" age. Everything is about me. The

conservative, Anabaptist people are getting tangled up in social media, selfies, tweeting, Facebook, and you name it. We love ourselves to the extent that we talk, act, and dress in ways that draw attention to ourselves—we promote ourselves. We talk about looking good, feeling good, and living good. What happened to promoting Jesus? Remember, Jesus said: *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it - Matthew 16:25.*

Why does it seem so hard to tell which direction we are going? If we are all about ourselves, then we are not all about Jesus. If we are into the latest fashions and the nicest cars, trucks, and houses, then we are not all about Jesus. We cannot indulge ourselves in pleasing the flesh, and still say we are Christians.

I was recently asked why some pastors lose their children to the world. In most cases, I believe it's the same reason that many Anabaptists are losing their children to the kingdom of darkness—the fathers have lost a godly vision for their homes. They live a powerless life and allow the world to come in. Maybe they do not have television, but what about the internet? This still allows the influence of the world to come in. Also, Dad spends more time with his business and more time enjoying life than he does seeking the face of God.

Many Americans go on short-term missions. Many times, it seems that the youth who go want to hit the beach or some other pleasure and relaxation as soon as they get off the plane. Why? Because that's what they are either taught or allowed to do back home—seek pleasure. They haven't been taught to deny the flesh; they haven't seen their parents deny the flesh. Some of us might be so far off the mark that we need to do like the carpenter at the beginning of this article—Humble ourselves and start over.

Husbands are pulling their unwilling wives into the world, wives are pushing their husbands into the world, and children are dragging their parents into the world. And unfortunately, since the modern church has thrown off all

forms of discipline and structure, everyone can stay in the church and pollute it with their worldly ideas (at least as long as you smile and say you love Jesus.) Remember the Scriptures: *If ye love me, keep my commandments –John 14:15. And, He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him –1 John 2:4.*

Here are some areas of drift in the church.

### Brotherly love

*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another –John 13:35.*

People have visited our church and asked if we practice the holy kiss. I reply that we do; however, understanding the need to love one another comes first. Many churches are doing away with the holy kiss, which is clearly instructed in the Word. And it seems appropriate because they have stopped loving one another. I don't believe we understand the importance of this topic—having love one for another. When our love causes us to suffer for one another, the world sees it. Often, the reason a brotherhood stops loving each other is because they are not in the fight “together” anymore. They have become independent.

Some of the greatest acts of showing love for one another have happened on the battlefield. Men have jumped on grenades, and they have jumped in front of bullets to save their comrades. Because they have fought together, they look out for each other. What if a soldier marching out to battle would notice a fellow soldier's ammunition clip fall from his gun? What would he do? Would he remain quiet because his comrade might get mad? Or would he remain quiet because he knew that he had his own problems? No. He would help his brother. If ungodly men on the battlefield can practice this, why can't God's people do so in the church? Before I was converted, I was in the military. I chose to suffer for my country. Now that I'm a Christian, I now choose to suffer for my Lord.

### Dress

This is the most obvious, but also the most overlooked. The worldly church says, “It's the heart that counts, so how we appear on the outside doesn't matter”. Are the Anabaptists falling for this? The world used to dress modestly, but television and Hollywood began to promote a focus on the human body. Surely the church wouldn't follow Hollywood. But what is the difference—a woman of the world who is obviously dressed immodestly, or a woman of the church dressed with a cape dress that is form-fitting, and with a little covering hanging skimpily on the back of her head? There is little difference, except the one claims to be a Christian and the other one doesn't. Dear ones, the world is laughing at us.

So how does it all start? Subtly. First remove a pleat here or a gather there, then start using a little less material, finally, start buying brighter bolder colors. The men untuck the shirt, switch to jeans, then skinny jeans, undo a few buttons, grow out the hair a little. Buy a pair of the “cool” name brand shoes, and a cowboy hat. The devil is no fool. If you drop a frog into boiling water, it will jump out quickly. If you boil the water that contains the frog, he will slowly cook to death. Is it too late for us to jump out? With God all things are possible. Brothers and sisters, it is the heart that counts; and if we desire to look like the world, our heart is worldly and needs to be cleaned—cleaned by the ever so powerful blood of Jesus.

### Pleasure

*Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you –James 5:5-6.*

*And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection – Luke 8:14.*

*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away –2 Timothy 3:1-5.*

When we are given to pleasure, we separate ourselves from the sufferings we have been called to, therefore separating us from the reward received from suffering.

Remember, when we give in a little on any issue during our generation, our children will go farther with it. When our children enjoy going to church only because of the volleyball game that's scheduled afterward, it's not good. When they want to go on a mission trip because of the pleasures of the ocean, it's not good. I'm not saying those things are bad, but when they become the focal point, we have a serious problem. Do we enjoy doing the things that God enjoys? Do we enjoy hymn sings anymore? Do we enjoy helping the poor? What about visiting the widows? I believe if the fathers have their priorities right, and they truly love doing the things of God even if the flesh suffers, then so will our children, (the next generation) for which WE are responsible. I often tell people that they don't need to follow Jesus. They can love the world, and the pleasures of this life, but they cannot continue sitting in our church and pretend they are Christians. People might say that's too harsh, but I believe Jesus said the same thing. *I know thy*

*works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth –Revelation 3:15-16.*

This is not a complete list as there are many other ways that the church is drifting towards the world. My prayer is that, first, we could see the problem, and second, we could deal with it. Remember a little leaven leavens the lump. (1 Corinthians 5)

There is a battle that's raging; the kingdom of darkness is pressing in. The devil truly knows he has but a short time. Let us make a stand, put down our white flags, and pick up our swords. Let us remove the traitors, the world, and the sin that has come into the church. Let us purify the church and fight the good fight of faith.

How do we stop the drift? How do we leave behind a faithful generation? First, the fathers need to teach their children, and the leaders in the church need to teach them all. The early Anabaptists met as many times as they could, and that was usually out in the woods, in some woods somewhere. Our church here meets five times a week. Meeting on Sundays only, I believe, shows where our priorities are.

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: – Ephesians 4:11-13.*

It seems that God would give us teachers, pastors, evangelists, prophets, and apostles if we would use them.

Let's make this personal—there could be areas of drift in my life. We need to help each other before we all drift

into ruin. Maybe we can maintain, but we also need to be concerned about our children. If we could get together and be honest with ourselves and with one another about what the scriptures clearly teach, then we would be more careful. If we could study God's Word together, with open hearts and minds, I believe we could strengthen that which remains. I believe if we would fall on our faces before God, He would heal our churches. May God bless us all in a deeper walk with Him.

## Freedom, or Bondage?

Freedom, or bondage—which will it be?

Or are they the same; can someone see?

People love things that money can buy,

They trade their lives, with no reason why.

The bills pile up for comforts and ease;

“What about our wives, or children to please?”

We spend all our days chasing the dollar.

The devil smiles as he tightens our collar.

We need time for God, and our families too.

Maybe less time at work could surely do.

Do we have time for that still small voice?

Or does our money talk, and give us no choice?

We all know the Bible—no work, no eat.

But money will bind us until death we meet.

The more we have, the more we need;

The love of money starts with a seed.

Lying to yourself is a foolish thing—

“Freedom, or bondage?” is the question I bring.



# The Hope of Your Calling

LIVING AS YOUTH WITH AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

by Joel Martin  
Glenmont, OH

*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling...* –Ephesians 1:17-18.

We all have things we pursue in many aspects of our life. We all need to spend time fulfilling our responsibilities at work and at home. As Anabaptist people, we are known to possess a solid work ethic; but that is not all there is to living the Christian life. We may fellowship with likeminded believers from our church or community, but does our Christian life consist of anything more? Does practically living out our Christian life just mean being a member of our church and having personal devotions every day? Are we free to spend most of our day pursuing things that bring worldly gain? Perhaps we think that we need to spend some time as a volunteer or as a missionary in order to have more value in the Kingdom of Heaven.

What is purpose? Do you have purpose? Everyone has things they pursue, whether it is preparing themselves for a certain sport, pursuing a career, or devoting time to a certain hobby. An athlete spends many hours preparing himself for the goal he has set. An individual studying to become a doctor sacrifices many hours of his time with the goal of becoming a physician. What are the things you are pursuing, and do you have a specific goal in mind? More importantly, let's examine whether the time we are investing in our pursuits now will bring an eternal return.

## God has given each of us a responsibility

In Luke 19 is the parable of the nobleman giving his servants talents to invest. Consider the charge he gave his servants in verse 13. *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come* –Luke 19:12-13.

This parable applies to each one of us. Each of us has different responsibilities, from filling our responsibilities at home, to administrative roles in a place of business. While we do not all own equal responsibilities, we have all been given “talents” to use. We all have a place to fill. We should be making the best of the resources we have been given to invest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Back to my question, “Does living our Christian life just mean being a member of our church and having personal devotions once a day?” If the Lord has given each of us resources to invest, then we need to consider what we are doing with the time we are given every day. Often, we can budget plenty of time pursuing materialistic things such as hunting, sports, vehicles, etc. While all these things can be useful and healthy, do the things we are pursuing have eternal gain? We don't seem to be afraid to devote hours of our time on our latest project, however it seems we have a hard time finding a place in our schedule for God's work.

## Personal responsibility

It is easy to have the mindset that, unless we are sacrificing our time in some voluntary capacity in a mission-oriented place, then there is not a lot more than can be done for the Kingdom of Heaven. Is that the reality though? Like the servants in the parable, we have each been given resources that we need to “occupy till the Lord returns”. The Lord has placed each of us in a unique place to serve in His kingdom, whether it is at home, on the job, or on the mission field. We have opportunities around us to exercise those gifts and show the love of Christ. The consideration should be whether I am actually seeing those opportunities or missing them because I am not looking for them. The more time we prioritize serving His Kingdom, the more we will see the needs around us. Remember, there are people around us every day that we can influence for God.

## Recognizing our opportunities

Some time ago, I had a coworker come to my office and

ask me a simple technical question. I was able to answer the question and work resumed as normal. But I had to wonder why he left the shop and came to me. He was within talking distance of multiple other individuals that would have been able to answer his question. Looking back, I realized that I had an opportunity to provide a listening ear and some caring words for this individual. He was facing some serious personal and relational challenges in life, and he needed someone who cared for him. I realized that there was probably a deeper reason he went out of his way to find an answer to his question. Was I the only one there that could have listened and shared with him? Certainly not. It was an opportunity for me. I could have chosen to be annoyed at him because he was taking up my time for something that someone else could have helped him with. But the question is—did I have the humility to recognize that it was an opportunity for me to reach out to him?

## Where do I start?

We all have opportunities around us to exercise our talents. Jesus said: *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men* –Matthew 5:13. Salt always affects its environment no matter what it is used for. If we are compared to salt, then we should be affecting the environment around us all the time. Our Christian life then becomes more than simply going to church or spending some personal time praying and reading the Bible.

Start by asking God to help you see areas where you can serve others in everyday life. You have an opportunity to impact the lives of those around you. It might be your family, coworkers, customers, or people you meet while away from home. The point is, you have the opportunity around you

to offer someone help, to encourage them, or to give them a hand. Are you making the best of those opportunities?

Another thing you should do is evaluate your personal life and the time you spend doing other activities. Are there things you are doing which take up your time and that have no benefit in the Kingdom of God? Maybe God has given you a gift that you are hiding instead of using to invest in His Kingdom. Do you spend time praying and seeking God's will for your life? Do you spend time studying the Word of God? When our personal time with God becomes a higher priority for us, then our time spent pursuing God's Kingdom will also become a higher priority. Is there sin hindering you from living out your Christian life? Confess it. Repent of it. Then... Go, and sin no more!

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God* –Hebrews 12:1-2.

In the beginning of the article, I asked what you are pursuing. Does your life show that fulfilling God's will is your highest priority, or is there something else that takes that spot? *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost* –Romans 15:13. There are people around us that do not have the hope of a better, future life to strive for that we do. It is up to us to share that with others. Ask God for His Spirit to guide you and show you your opportunities. You cannot sit back and wait for the opportunities to come to you; you need to go find them. Go light your world!



# Group Morality vs Godly Judgment

by Glenn Wenger  
Richfield, PA

Sigmund Freud, the “father of psychology” and an enemy of the Christian faith, spent much time reflecting on the “problem” of how to overcome the sense of guilt, which he believed to be the negative by-product of religious teaching. He commented that “only through the solidarity of all the participants (of a group) could the sense of guilt be assuaged.”

Being a member of a group with a common focus or goal has the ability to radically change, not only man’s outlook and views, but also his concept of right and wrong, good and evil, etc. It can indeed rid the soul of its normal God-given sense of guilt as the standards of right and wrong are modified. Some parents have discovered this fact when their young people joined a youth group. Some who previously respected their parents’, the church’s, and God’s authority, no longer held the same convictions. If they joined a group whose focus was to have fun and they believed that the “established” rules, facts, and truth were what stood in the way of fulfilling their carnal desires, then the establishment and their rules became the enemy of the group. Right and wrong are determined by the consensus of the group in respect to its goals. If the goal is pleasure, “It isn’t right for (any authority or any rule) to interfere.”

“The child takes on the characteristic behavior of the group in which he is placed ... he reflects the behavior patterns which are set by the ... leader of the group” (Kurt Lewin, in *A Sociology of Education*).

Although it seems strange, “it is usually easier to change individuals formed into a group than to change any one of them separately”, according to Kurt Lewin. An individual will naturally resist change to his or her personal beliefs. However, one who is already a member of a group with a common goal (which all groups have), will automatically have that resistance broken down, as far as attitudes of the

group are concerned. Example: I am part of this group, so the outlook and opinions of the group are my outlook and opinions. Too often, not one individual of the group will thoroughly examine the group’s beliefs but will take them for granted because they are a part of the group to which he or she belongs.

“One of the most fascinating aspects of group therapy is that everyone is born again, born together in the group”. (Irvin D. Yalom). This can easily be observed among all ages who are part of a group by virtue of common interests.

Adolf Hitler made very effective use of group dynamics with his Hitler Youth groups. Not only was he able to give them a sense of belonging and a cause to support, but he was able to effectively change the moral compass of the youth of his day.

The Bible also records very effective group dynamics and how quickly they can influence people without evidence. In Acts 14:1, we see the group ready to offer sacrifices to Paul as a god, and in the next verse they stoned him. Acts 19 tells of a group yelling “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” for hours. Verse 32 says that most of the people didn’t even know what the fuss was about, but they would have killed for whatever it was. In these examples, possibly not even one individual really stopped to seriously consider what was morally right or wrong. They were taking up the cause of the group. It gave a sense of “rightness” and belonging, just to be a contributing supporter of the cause. But stop and think—the cause, the action, and the consequences should always be carefully considered.

These people were not taking individual responsibility to determine what is morally right and wrong. Too often people don’t, rather they only function as a group. But the Bible tells us that the time will come when we will all be personally held accountable for what we have done in this

life. At that time, what the group believed or did will make no difference. When we (each one of us) will stand one day (at the end of time) before God’s judgement throne, we will be judged according to ... *the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds* –Romans 2:5-6.

As we read in the biblical books of the Kings and the Chronicles, Israel, as a nation, functioned with strong group dynamics. When a good king came to power, the nation in general turned to the Lord. When an evil king came to power, the nation in general turned to idol worship. There were a few exceptions—a few people who thought for themselves—whose allegiance to God was greater than their allegiance to the king or nation.

The Christian church itself is a group, influencing and changing the perspectives and morality of individuals for the right or the wrong. Dependent on the convictions of the group and its leaders, the church can be an influence of godly morality, or it can explain away the Bible’s concepts of good and evil.

There should be a major difference between the Christian church and all other groups regarding how their group dynamics work. The Christian church is a group for the express purpose of turning people’s allegiance and faith to Jesus Christ as revealed in His Word, rather than to the group itself. A church whose goal is to gain converts to itself has failed in its mission as detailed in God’s Word. A church that is successful in turning people from all other allegiances to Jesus Christ is a successful church. Allegiance to Jesus includes obedience to His Word which requires obedience to all authorities, including the church. But the Christian’s obedience to the church is secondary and a result of his obedience to Jesus, not the other way around. If a church is successful in turning its members’ faith and focus to Jesus as revealed in His Word, these members will then be unwilling to allow the church to accept unscriptural modern doctrines, and the church will remain sound in ... *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints* –Jude 1:3.

May each one of us, both collectively and individually, focus our faith on Jesus Christ.



# Thunder, Twisters, and Trust

by Eileen Wenger  
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“My, it’s warm!” exclaimed Mom. “A nice, good rain is what we need to cool things off a bit.”

It was Saturday, near the end of June, and the weather had been particularly hot and humid that day. Ellie’s mother had been cleaning the house and preparing some food for the company that was invited to come for lunch on Sunday after church.

As the afternoon moved into early evening, it felt like it became even hotter, and no breezes were to be found. Ellie’s father was resting in a hammock out on the lawn while the rest of the family tried to find the most comfortable place to seek relief from the heat.

As evening approached, so did the clouds. They arrived suddenly, along with gusts of wind that began to stir up the dust. Lightning started to flash across the sky and the thunder rumbled in the distance.

“Quickly, children!” called Mom. “Put away your toys; it’s about to storm!”

Ellie looked around in alarm. It was getting dark very quickly and the sky looked strange—almost angry. She quickly gathered up her playthings and hurried into the house. Dad was no longer sleeping on the hammock. The wind had almost toppled it over and him along with it! He, too, hurried into the house; the wind causing the door to slam violently behind him. The family gathered on the sunporch to watch the approaching storm. There were windows to the west and south, so they

had a good vantage point from which to watch the coming rain. The wind was blowing with a force that Ellie had never experienced in all her seven years. She noted the concern and alarm on her parents’ faces as they watched and waited.

Then it began to rain. Great sheets of rain were being driven against the windows and Ellie wondered if it was possible that it was raining hard enough to break the glass.

“What was that?” exclaimed Mom as suddenly, a sheet of tin whizzed past the sunporch windows and disappeared beyond the garden.

“I think it’s part of the garage roof,” said Dad in disbelief while peering cautiously through the windows.

Upon hearing this, Mom directed the children to stand by the cellar door. If things got worse, down they would go! Ellie felt so scared. What was going to happen to them? Would their house blow away? Would any of them get hurt?

As abruptly as the storm began, it calmed. The wind stopped, the rain slowed, and very soon the sun was shining again. The family cautiously ventured outdoors to see what all had happened during the storm.

“Look!” said Dad. “The garage roof is gone and so is the south wall!”

“Why does Gerald’s house look so strange?” Mom pointed toward their next-door neighbors. “Why, look! The entire roof is gone from their

house!” Indeed, the roof had been cleanly stripped away and the gable ends stoically stood there, holding up nothing.

The wail of sirens could be heard in the distance and as they looked around the neighborhood, they could see smoke just beyond some trees.

“That’s got to be Melvin’s barn burning!” exclaimed Dad. “I’m going to go see what I can do to help.” He raced for his truck and was soon hurrying out the driveway.

The winds had been so strong that some electric poles were blown over causing the electricity to be disconnected so there were no lights or fans. After the storm had passed the humidity and heat had returned making the night hot and muggy. Yet the grown-ups from the area worked long into the night, helping each other to clean up what they could of the storm damage.

Of special interest was our neighbor Melvin. His barn had collapsed on top of dozens of cattle and then a fire had broken out. The neighbor men tried desperately to rescue what cattle they could, but in the end, many of the steers could not be saved.

Sunday came, but no one went to church. The morning was spent over at Melvin’s, hauling away dead cattle, clearing away burnt hay, and simply just being there for one another. It was hard, grim work. Ellie clearly remembers how awful the smell was. And she could barely bring herself to watch

the loading up of the dead steers. When lunch time came, their company arrived, but no one was very hungry. Ellie’s younger brother sobbed, “All I can think about is those poor steers!”

Ellie was surprised how powerful a storm could be. And scary! Would they experience another twister? Might more buildings collapse, and another barn or house burn down? A seed of fear began to grow in Ellie’s heart. Throughout that summer and for many summers after, every time the rumble of thunder was heard or she heard the words “tornado warning”, her heart would beat faster, and a knot would settle in her stomach. How she dreaded each storm! She wished they would all just pass by their home. Why did God allow storms, anyway?

“You need to trust God, Ellie,” her mother would say. “He’s the One who made the weather, and He is in control of everything that happens. He might not always keep us from experiencing frightening times, but He is always there to take care of us.”

As she grew older, Ellie learned to take this advice to heart. Her fear of storms faded, and, in its place, she developed a fascination with how storms develop and form. Knowing that God is the Master of the wind is still a comfort and an assurance to her. Most of all, as she has learned to trust God in every area of her life, she has found Him to always be faithful. Learning to replace fear with trust always brings peace to the heart.





# Women of Faith

## THE DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

by Donald Brechbill  
Chambersburg, PA

**G**reatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind –2 Timothy 1:4-7.

“Oh God, give us mothers like Eunice and grandmothers like Lois. Give us women who are women of faith. Give us women who know how to stand for truth against the tide of human rationalization that is destroying the lives of so many well-meaning people. Give us women who are unwavering in their loyalty to Jesus Christ, to their husbands, and to their calling to represent the spirit of Jesus in all of life. Amen”.

History has proven that women are as influential as men in forming the fabric of society and of the Christian community. An argument could be made that they exert an even greater influence if you consider the fact that they have a huge role in shaping the values of little children and, whether or not they dress and conduct themselves according to godly modesty, they can influence the morality of the masses of men around them.

Hence the call for women to be women of faith. Not only does a woman's faith influence those around her, but every woman has her own personal journey. Her journey is a search for identity, security, and purpose for her life.

Today's women are inundated with voices that claim to offer the fulfillment that their heart desires. As with their mother Eve, many of these voices appeal to her feminine spirit, but as their mother Eve discovered, unless it is the voice of God, it leads to death and destruction.

The Bible abounds with accounts of women who lived by faith. Consider the harlot Rahab. Bible scholars cannot agree that she was worthy of that title, but it has come down

to us as such. She heard the stories of the God of Israel. When she encountered the spies and heard their ominous prediction for her city she chose to believe.

She was a native of Jericho. Jericho was her home. Jericho had high stone walls and brave defenders. She would have had many reasons to place her faith in that which was familiar to her, and which had sustained her in the past.

She chose to place her faith in the God of Israel. The men of Israel told her that if she would hang a scarlet thread from her window on the wall, her house and her life would be spared. A scarlet thread. Not much by way of identity or security, but Rahab hung her faith on a scarlet thread. That scarlet thread represented the power of the God of Israel and, as we know today, it is a beautiful type of the blood of Jesus.

The call to be a woman of faith is a call to turn away from the ideology of the world and to embrace what in the eyes of the world is a futile remedy—a scarlet thread. Rahab's faith was rooted in her knowledge of the God of Israel and His plan to judge her people. The scarlet thread was her hope of deliverance.

I would like for us to consider how faith in God impacts the primary desires of the feminine heart. Every woman longs for identity, security, and purpose. Jesus has come to meet that heart longing.

### Identity – “Who am I?”

This is a question that everyone is compelled to ask at some point in their life—often in adolescence. Young men tend to carve out their identity based in whom they admire and their vocational inclinations. Young women, especially in our Anabaptist communities, are largely at the mercy of the prominent men in their lives to define their identity.

This is not purely cultural. When God said to Eve, *...thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee* –Genesis 3:16, He was declaring that she and her female descendants would look to the man to define an essential

part of their nature.

Fathers play a key role in the early development of a little girl's identity. Abusive fathers, absent fathers, and indifferent fathers leave in their wake little girls who are uncertain of who they are, or of their value as a person. A father who affirms his daughter's godly femininity gives her a priceless gift. By that, I mean praising her for qualities of feminine virtue, blessing her for efforts to be chaste and modest, and yes, telling her that she is beautiful.

A woman's heart will ultimately turn toward a husband. God said, “Thy desire shall be **to thy husband**”, not **to thy father**. Most women marry thinking that they have at last found their “savior” and rightly so. Did Paul not say in Ephesians chapter five that the husband is “the savior of the body”? Should a wife not expect to receive from her husband love, affirmation, protection, and provision? This is due to her by divine decree. A godly husband will do everything in his power to provide for her in this way.

“Thy desire shall be to thy husband” is given in the context of the fall. It was one of the consequences of the fall. It is a statement without the promise of fulfillment. This leaves us to believe that, although driven by desire, that desire may go unfulfilled.

What is a woman to do if her husband is unwilling or unable to satisfy her heart's desire? What if a woman does not have a husband? She must become a woman of faith. Until a woman has found her identity in Jesus, no man will be able to satisfy the deepest longings of her heart.

Many marriages suffer because the wife expects her husband to meet the deep longings of her heart that only Jesus can fulfill. Many men are made to feel inadequate and withdraw when they are expected to be, and to do, for their wives what only Jesus can do.

### Calling all women to be women of faith

Women of faith are women who know who they are in Christ Jesus. They have found the deepest longings of their feminine heart met in Him. Because their heart longings are satisfied, they have become a well spring of life to their husband, to their children, and to others.

### Security – “Who will protect me?”

Being a woman has always been risky. Women are very vulnerable. In addition to the fact that they are physically more delicate, women are more susceptible to emotional vacillations, and I believe that based on what the Bible has to say about Eve's deception, that women tend to be more vulnerable to spiritual deception (see 1 Timothy 2:14).

This does not make them inferior to men. Their emotional sensitivity makes them more attune to the many realities of relational problems than many men are. In this, their insight can be a positive thing, helping to balance us men

in some of our natural weaknesses. Whatever comparisons we choose to make, I think we can all agree that women need the protection that men offer.

What if the man that is supposed to be protecting you is a coward? We have an example of just such a situation in the Bible. The man's name is Abraham—yes... the father of faith. Even strong men sometimes make cowardly decisions.

Abraham and Sarah were traveling into Egypt. As they neared Egypt, Abraham became afraid for his life. His wife Sarah was a beautiful woman and Abraham was aware that Egypt was a heathen nation with very loose morals. He was afraid that the Egyptians would kill him so they could have his wife. Abraham said to Sarah, *Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee* –Genesis 12:13.

Sarah was indeed Abraham's half-sister. They had the same father, but not the same mother. Abraham's contingency plan leaves Sarah in a very difficult position. We read nothing of Sarah's reaction to Abraham's plan. All we know is that *...Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement* –1 Peter 3:6.

It would appear that Sarah was not afraid. Her faith was not dependent on Abraham's protection. She was relying on a higher power. Sarah's faith gave her a place in the hall of faith in Hebrews chapter 11 and made her Peter's example of how wives are to relate to their husbands.

The substance of this story is in the outcome. Because of Sarah's faith, she was delivered from the hand of Pharaoh, the most powerful world ruler of the day. It was Sarah's faith, not Abraham's, which protected her.

Women look to men for security, and it is right that they should. Men protect their women as best they can. I believe that when men and women are living within their God-given roles, there is a lot of protection and security available; however, we do live in a fallen world. We do not always honorably fulfill our roles and sometimes God allows evil to befall even the most pious.

### Calling all women to be women of faith even as Sarah

Do you have faith to believe that God is bigger than your husband or your father? Are you willing to trust God to overrule where your husband may be weak or even rebellious against God or the church?

A woman of faith is a woman who chooses to trust God in the absence of a reasonable path forward. A woman of faith continues to do what is right, even though it may not be a path of guaranteed security because *...The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me* –Hebrews 13:6.

**Purpose – “Why am I here?”**

This is a question that everyone asks at some point in life. We want our lives to have meaning and purpose. The futility of a meaningless living drives men and women into depression and despair. Living purposefully blesses us and others and brings honor to our Creator.

When men think of living purposefully, they envision... a battle to fight, a mountain to conquer, a noble goal to strive for. We men tend to be vision-oriented and goal-focused.

What does it mean for a woman to live purposefully?

Luke gives us some insight into this in the account of Jesus' visit to the home of Mary and Martha. (See Luke 10:38-42) Jesus would frequently stop by this home when He was passing through Bethany. Here He knew He would find great hospitality and engaging conversation. Today was no exception.

As He relaxed in their sitting room, Mary sat at His feet asking questions and listening intently as He revealed to her the purpose of His life and His future destiny. Mary came to understand things about Jesus that even His disciples had failed to grasp.

Matthew records that when Jesus was dining in the house of Simon a woman, thought to be Mary of Bethany, entered, and knelt and anointed Jesus' feet with expensive ointment. When the disciples complained about “this waste” Jesus said to them: *For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial* –Matthew 26:12.

Where did Mary get this understanding? Was it not when she was “sitting at Jesus feet?”

Martha on the other hand was “cumbered about much serving”. Now Jesus had to eat. Someone needed to prepare food and I am certain that Jesus enjoyed Martha's delicious provisions. But Jesus chided her with “Martha, Martha”. Notice the familial tone of his voice.

He was not judging her nor condemning her. He was challenging her to take time for the important things in life. He commended Mary for she *...hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her* –Luke 10:42.

I would like to suggest that most of our anxiety is of our own making. We set goals for our life that Jesus never required. We place expectations upon ourselves that have no eternal merit. Like Martha, we stress over frivolity, and damage relationships over trivial matters. Yes, supper must be served, and Mary should help, but not to neglect the “better part”.

**Calling all women to be women of faith as Mary who loved to linger at Jesus feet**

Life for a wife and mother is full of pressing demands. Defuse your life of stress and anxiety by spending time listening for the voice of Jesus—that “still small voice” that Elijah finally heard.

Stress and anxiety will melt away in the presence of Jesus. God speaks to us by His Holy Spirit through His Word. If it is a challenge for you to find time to sit down with your Bible, then you can quiet your spirit with your hands in the dishwasher, or while folding the laundry, or as you once again prepare a meal for your family. At times like this you can commune with God. You can pray to your Father in heaven. You can say things like “I love you Lord Jesus, speak to me through Your Word, bring peace to my soul; quiet the wrestlings of my mind; help me to enter into Your rest; give me Your peace.” Then you can listen as His Spirit prompts your spirit with nuggets of truth from the Scriptures that are hidden away in your heart.

**Summary –Calling all women to be women of faith****For your own personal wellbeing:**

Women today are bombarded by self-help resources in the form of books, podcasts, social media, and seminars. Much of it is good and can be helpful, but nothing will replace a personal relationship and a daily walk with Jesus.

**For the wellbeing of your children:**

Today, more than ever we need mothers to be women of faith who can project onto their children that walking with God is real and satisfying. Young Timothy was influenced by the unfeigned faith of his mother and of his grandmother. Never underestimate the effect of the influence of your life on the lives of those who follow you.

**For the strength of your husband:**

Men today need the support of faithful women, especially their wife. A man's daily walk can be fortified or diminished by the woman in his life. It has been said “Behind every successful man is woman”. A man is tremendously influenced for good or ill by the women in his life.

**For the good of the Church:**

Woman of faith, the church needs you. Women bring a grace to the church that is desperately needed. Your prayers are needed. Your testimony gives encouragement. Your song moves our hearts. Your smile gives hope. Your peaceful, joyful countenance of a soul that's at rest in Jesus is an influence that is rivaled by little else in this world.

# Nearer, My God, to Thee

by Joel A Hostetler  
Coshocton, OH

This hymn is universally thought to be one of the greatest hymns ever authored by a woman. It can be found in nearly every hymnal or book of hymns published today. This hymn writer was a woman of great ambition and enjoyment; a person full of life, vivacious, beautiful, talented, and a person who's “exalted character always made a deep impression upon all who knew her”. Although she had a full and productive life, it was short, hastened on by her delicate and frail constitution. This hymn story has touched many lives in times of distress and hardship, including death. It has been used of God to draw the hearts of men from their present distresses, heavenward, to the immortal realities beyond this life.

Sarah Flower Adam was born at Harlow, England on February 22, 1805, to Benjamin and Eliza Flower. When she was five years old, her mother died of consumption, known today as tuberculosis. Sarah and her older sister Eliza also inherited the same physical weakness. Speaking of the hymn writer I quote from *101 Hymn Stories*: “She was also widely known for her many literary accomplishments, though her delicate health was always a handicap for her many ambitions.”

In the year 1834, at the age of 29, Sarah married a prominent inventor and civil engineer, John Brydges. This distinguished couple made their home in London, England for the duration of their marriage, until the hymn writer's death fourteen years later in 1848, at the early age of 43.

Sarah and her older sister Eliza made an outstanding team in the realm of music—writing and composing new songs. The elder sister being an accomplished musician, and the younger the hymn writer. One day their pastor, the Rev. William Johnson Fox, asked these two exceptional sisters if they would help him with the compilation for a new hymnal for his congregation. They committed to the project, and soon were busily occupied in helping him complete the song book. “Together, they contributed thirteen texts and

sixty-two new tunes.”

One day as the two sisters were pressing into the task at hand, the pastor remarked that he wished he could have a hymn written to conclude a sermon he was preparing to preach on the account of Jacob and Esau. Eliza interrupted enthusiastically, “Sarah, now there's an excellent idea for a new hymn for our hymnal. Why don't you write your own hymn about Jacob's dream?”

“Splendid!” replied the pastor. Later that day, after spending much time studying the Genesis account, absorbing the atmosphere, and feeling the dramatic movement of this Old Testament narrative, Sarah began to write. Soon she had versified the complete Biblical story into these five stanzas of the immortal hymn still in use today.

Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee!  
E'en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me;  
Still all my song would be,  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee!  
Though like the wanderer,  
The sun gone down,  
Darkness be over me,  
My rest a stone;  
Yet in my dreams I'd be  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee!  
There let the way appear,  
Steps unto heaven:  
All that Thou send'st to me

In mercy given;  
 Angels to beckon me  
 Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
 Nearer to Thee!  
 Then, with my waking thoughts  
 Bright with Thy praise,  
 Out of my stony griefs  
 Bethel I'll raise;  
 So by my woes to be  
 Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
 Nearer to Thee!  
 Or if on joyful wing  
 Cleaving the sky,  
 Sun, moon, and stars forgot,  
 Upwards I fly,  
 Still all my song shall be,  
 Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
 Nearer to Thee!

This great hymn was written in 1840 and published the next year in the hymn book *Hymns and Anthems* prepared by Rev. Fox, the hymn writer's pastor. The hymn's original tune was a composition of Eliza, Sarah's older sister. In 1844, Rev. James Freeman Clarke introduced the hymn in America, but it did not become well known for another 12 years. At that point the hymn was wedded with the present-day tune "Bethany" composed especially for the text by Lowell Mason, who is sometimes referred to as the father of American church and school music. Other hymns by Mason include "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "A Charge to Keep I Have," "Joy to the World," "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," and "O Day of Rest and Gladness".

Many very interesting accounts have been recorded in conjunction with the use of this hymn, and its effect on those who sang it or heard it sung. In the Boston Peace Jubilee of 1872, which commemorated the end of the civil war,

this hymn, "Nearer, My God to Thee", was sung by 50,000 voices. In 1871, three renowned theologians, Professors Hitchcock, Smith, and Park, were traveling in Palestine, when they heard the faint strains of "Bethany" reach their ears. Regarding this incident, I quote from *A Treasury of Hymn Stories*, "Drawing near, to their amazement, they saw fifty Syrian students standing under some trees in a circle, and singing in Arabic 'Nearer, my God, to Thee,' Professor Hitchcock, speaking afterward of the event, said that the singing of that Christian hymn by those Syrian youths moved him to tears, and affected him more than any singing he had ever heard before".

During the Johnstown City Flood of May 31, 1889 (a tragic disaster that killed over 2,000 people), an unfortunate railroad train rushed into the swirling flood waters. A young woman, prepared to be a missionary, and on her way to the far east, became one of those trapped in a railroad car which was turned up on end. Beyond the hope of rescue, she spoke calmly to the awe-struck crowd as they gazed helplessly at the unfolding tragedy as the car sank beneath the muddy waters. She ended up with prayer and by singing "Nearer, my God, to Thee," in which she was joined by the grieving and sympathizing throng. As she sang, she passed away, coming indeed nearer to her God whom she loved and desired to serve.

Last, but not least, in the wee hours of April 15th, 1912, the story of the sinking of the proud and ill-fated ship, the *Titanic*, brings this song to our memory yet again. Many survivors that witnessed this great tragedy have testified that the hymn "Nearer, my God to Thee" was the final song played before the cold waves of the Atlantic Ocean silenced her forever—as the band played, the great ship sank, plunging into the depths, sending over 1,500 souls into eternity.

In conclusion, it is incredible how much music and singing affect us. As we have seen from some of these accounts, from praise to peril, from thanksgiving to tragedy, from worship to the worst disasters that man may experience, God has given us this priceless gift in the timeless possession of the old-time hymns. May they never lose their luster in our lives or in the lives of our posterity, until that final day when time shall cease to exist.

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. -Jas. 4:8

# NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE 387

BETHANY 6. 4. 6. 4. 6. 6. 6. 4.

Sarah F. Adams, 1840

Lowell Mason, 1856

# A Sanctified Home

by Lee Rufener  
Athens, WI

*For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy ... For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? –1 Corinthians 7:14-16.*

As we gaze across the thoroughfare of homes surrounding us, we grieve as we behold one Christian tragedy after another. Almost every Christian has some near kin who has experienced divorce, a rebellious child, or strained marital relationships. Perhaps we cry out to God as we wonder why it is so, for it is surely not His plan. Herein we behold the apostle Paul bringing out an amazing principle that is little understood and even less employed—a sanctified home. It is what every sincere believer wants and seeks, but few apprehend. Christianity is not a rubber stamp that automatically clones offspring after the same sort. Still the scripture must be true and there must indeed be a sanctifying effect that a true believer brings into a home. This is no guarantee that the unbelieving spouse or the children of the union will be saved, but when a believing husband or wife acts in accordance with the scripture and the Spirit of God, the effect they have on the home will allow God's power to be evident and an avenue of grace is poured into the pathway of all who dwell therein.

Our impotency is not caused due to the lack of God's power, but because our dim understanding is infested and infiltrated with the influences of this present world. Faith in God alone is inevitably a powerful force, while faith injected by human reasoning and impatience will hardly prove any more effective than Abraham and Hagar's attempts to produce a holy and sanctified child.

What then sanctifies the home? Casual observation will notice that merely being a believer isn't enough to accomplish it. To *sanctify* is to make pure and holy. It is a process of filtering and a separation from that which is impure to bring greater purity to the object being sanctified. The Pharisees understood the principle well. They spent many a rigorous hour paying heed to countless miniscule details to make their vessels holy. Still, they were critically unsuccessful.

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is*

*within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also –Matthew 23:25-26.*

## The Inside Sanctified by Faith and Prayer

What a foolish thing it would be for a man to wash only the outside of a cup, which is to be looked at, and to leave the inside dirty, which is to be used. Yet there are those who avoid only the scandalous sins—those that would spoil their reputation with men—but would still allow themselves pride and moral decay in their heart. It is this which renders them odious to the pure and holy God. Such it is when a man or woman seeks to purify their home by superficial cleansing. Pharisaic attempts to root out and remove the surface details and inconsistencies from the lives of their helpmate and children, in order to sanctify them, are generally fruitless.

However quick-sighted they are in other things; Christ calls them blind. In Christ's estimation, those who are not acquainted with the wickedness of their own hearts—those who see not, and hate not, the secret sin that is lodged within—are strangers to sanctification. Self-ignorance is the most shameful and hurtful ignorance. The rule is, "Cleanse first that which is within, to get cleansed from the filthiness of the spirit." Corrupt affections and inclinations, the secret lusts that lurk in the soul, unseen and unobserved, these must first be recognized, mortified, and subdued. If due care is taken concerning that, the outside will, by extension, become clean also. External motives and inducements may keep the outside clean, while the inside remains filthy; but if renewed sanctifying grace makes the inside clean, that will have a lasting and profound influence upon the outside, for the commanding principle is within. If the heart is well kept, all is well, *...for out of it are the issues of life –Proverbs 4:23.*

*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto*

*their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered –1 Peter 3:1-7.*

Here Peter speaks of a wife winning her husband with the due benevolence mentioned in Corinthians. While she has no unconditional guarantee of sanctifying her husband, she certainly will meet with little success without it. Eunice was a Jewess, who, upon embracing faith in Christ, found herself in an unequal yoke with a Greek. We read that unfeigned faith was first wrought in her mother Lois, and that affected Eunice. This, in turn, had a sanctifying effect on young Timothy, who was then prepared for the work of the Lord. We have no record that his father was added to the faith, but one can only imagine the initial turmoil within the breast of this young Jewess as she reverently honored her head and circumcised not her son but rather committed him to prayer. Here brings us to the other vital dimension of home sanctification. While she was not emboldened to teach her husband, she apparently had won his respect enough to allow her to teach her son in the home. This she diligently did... *For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer –1 Timothy 4:5.*

*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness –2 Timothy 3:15-16.*

## The Outside Sanctified by the Word

When the heart of the believer is dealt with first, the visible dimensions of the home fall into place in succession. Worldly influences have little appeal for the budding child of God. The Word of God must take its full place being administered to the children as well as the adults, for they are profitable for sanctification. A husband is to wash his wife and children (as well as himself) by administering the Word of God so that he may sanctify and cleanse his home.

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish –Ephesians 5:25-27.*

When the Word of God is given full authority in the home, it becomes the governing principle around which the home operates. It must be allowed to filter out the media of the masses and the influences of all evil communications, which will corrupt good manners.

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful –Psalm 1:1.*

Individuals within the home may not always appreciate the direction received from it, but submit to it they must, and usually do so heartily. Most of us have received direction from our parents that we did not appreciate at the time but years later have come to grasp the blessedness of their leadership. Leadership that does not lead, is not expressing love, and will leave the home unsanctified and its members disconnected. Though it is rather uncomfortable and inconvenient to ask children to do without what others are partaking in, they are not sanctified by following their peers, but rather by the truth. For us as parents, there is no greater joy than to know that our children walk in truth. Equally so, there is no greater joy for them than to walk in it. Daily family devotions are a cohesive force within the home that is central and integral to home sanctification. We dare not apologize for the authority we give to the Word, nor slack from its use. It is an erroneous Gospel to believe that souls are stifled who are held to the mandates within it.

## Here is Christ's summation of His home.

*I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth –John 17:6-17.*

Christ, as the head of His home, employed no complicated means to the sanctification of His children. His life manifested a constant keeping Himself in the love of God through faith and prayer, and the administration of God's Word to those about Him. At times they stumbled at it, wrestled inwardly, and misunderstood Him, but the keeping force rested not on the laurels of convincing words, adamant force, fun activities, nor prudent reasoning.

While a home must employ these resources from time to time, they of themselves do not carry the sanctifying power. *For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer –1 Timothy 4:5.*

# I Will Hide God's Word in My (Child's) Heart

by Melissa Brubaker  
Lebanon, PA

As sisters in the Lord and born-again believers, I am sure we would all agree that memorizing scripture is important to our spiritual health. I have memorized many, many Scripture verses during my childhood years. Most of the verses that I memorized were taught during a vacation Bible School which I attended each summer.

During the first evening of Bible School, the teachers handed out memory work assignments, often many pages worth. These were not all required but the rewards were appealing. Most years I memorized everything that was assigned. I give these teachers and this Bible School the credit for the wealth of verses I memorized during those years.

Now I am married and have children of my own. The Bible School from my childhood is long past. I realized that if my children were going to memorize Scripture, I would need to make it happen. As moms, many of us know the importance of memorizing God's Word and hiding it, not only in our hearts, but also in our children's hearts.

*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee –Psalm 119:9-11.*

We need God's Word in our hearts to help us with our daily battles with sin. Our children need this as well. Most of our children are not going to memorize scripture without some help from us.

My husband and I did not enter marriage with dreams of memorizing with our children. For our family, it happened almost accidentally. Our oldest children were three and four when my husband suggested that we work with them on memorizing the Christmas story found in Luke 2:1-19. I didn't think they would be able to do it. I thought young children memorized short verses like, "Be ye kind one to

another." We started reciting it together every evening during our family devotions. I was quite surprised when they memorized this passage quickly and easily.

I was intrigued. Should we try again? Easter was approaching so I started working with them on the crucifixion account found in John 19:1-19. Again, they memorized this without much effort. This encouraged me to continue with other passages.

When it came time to homeschool the children, I wanted memorization to be a part of our daily routine. I bought a binder and inserted the printed passages we had memorized as well as the passages I wanted them to memorize. This started a routine that we still do today.

Every day we recite the current passage as well as one we have previously memorized. We also recite it together as a family during our devotion time. I have found that doing it this way results in the family having the passage memorized in about three to four weeks.

At the beginning of a new passage, I read the scripture out loud. As the days go by the children start chiming in more and more. Eventually, I just get them started and only help as they need help. When I think they know the passage I have them recite it to me one by one. If they know it well, they start reciting it to their dad during our family devotions. If they don't know it, we keep on practicing till they do know it. Sometimes I will give the struggling child just a few verses to recite. However, most of them would rather recite the whole thing.

We memorize as a family instead of individually. I don't move on to a new passage until everyone has it memorized or at least memorized to their ability. (Not all children can memorize 19 verses at age three.) Some of our children were barely talking at three years old so verbal Bible memory was hardly possible. Some children will stumble through a passage and need lots of clue words, which is okay if they

are doing their best. Sometimes we go over the same passage again in a few years and they learn it better the second time.

This may sound time-consuming and stressful, but it is not so for us. I spend about five minutes a day working on memory work. We have no time constraints on our memorization so there is no pressure to know it by a certain time. The children have been doing this since they were barely talking, so they are used to it and rarely complain. Since we memorize as a family, it also helps the child who can't memorize as well as another. As a family, we encourage and cheer on the struggling child. He feels a sense of accomplishment even if he struggles through the whole passage.

I give a small reward for each passage memorized. I have a prize box that they can choose from. This does not need to cost much! I often do not spend much more than a dollar. Yard sales and thrift stores are places to purchase items cheaply. Back-to-school sales are nice as well since most children like to have a new pack of crayons or a cute eraser.

As time went by, I found myself becoming discouraged at how quickly the children would forget a memorized passage. I discovered that several years later they often could hardly recite a previously learned passage. I wondered why I was putting in the effort if they were simply going to forget it in a few years. My husband encouraged me to continue. He said that the concepts were still in their hearts even if they could no longer recite the passage. So I continued, but I still hoped for a solution to this problem.

One day I read an article written by another mom who also worked on memorization with her children. In the article she said that it is important to get the memory work out of the short-term memory and into the long-term memory. The solution is actually quite simple. Every day in addition to reciting our new passage, we also recite a previously learned passage. My binder comes in handy for this! All the passages we have learned are in this binder. I use a paper clip to help me remember the passage we just reviewed. Each day the paper clip moves to the next passage. When we reach the end, we start over. This helps to keep the passages fresh in our minds as well as move them to our long-term memory.

I also like to have a theme for each school year. One year my theme was, "Memorize 100 Verses." The children enjoyed watching the number rise as the year progressed. This year we are working on, "The Sermon on the Mount." I divided it into 10 sections. The goal is to complete it in a

year, but if we don't reach that goal it doesn't matter. It is better to go slow and memorize something well than to go fast and not retain what you have learned.

These are the methods I have found helpful for our family. Pray and ask God for ideas that will work well for your family without comparing yourself to other families! Don't underestimate what your children can do. Don't assume that because they are young, they can only memorize a verse or two. Children often do only as well as we expect them to, even the younger ones.

After we have God's Word memorized, we need to use it daily. A blanket that is kept stored away in a closet does no good on a cold, winter night. The writer of Deuteronomy sums this up well—*And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up –Deuteronomy 6:5-7.*

First, we love God. Then we put His Word into our hearts. Finally, we should teach these truths to our children as we go about our daily activities. This passage encompasses it all—sitting, walking, lying down, and rising up. After a passage is memorized, my husband will explain the verses to us during our devotion time. This helps us to understand what we are memorizing.

We do many things by habit because we realize their importance. We brush our teeth, comb our hair, eat breakfast, and do many other things. We do these things daily. They are a regular part of our lives. Because we value them, we make them happen. This is how it should be with scripture memorization. It is too valuable to skip.

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper –Psalm 1:1-3.*

When we delight in God's Word, we will be glad to take time to memorize scripture, and the memorized Word will then bear fruit in its season.

*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not –Galatians 6:9.*

# Cancer

## PART 2

by Vincent “John” Waldron MD  
Gladys, VA

As we discussed in the first part of this two-part series, cancer is not a single entity. Various cancers have general similarities in that they develop from normal cells which mutate to make them grow in an uncontrolled, unnatural fashion, yet each type of cancer behaves in its specific, unique way.

Some cancers are aggressive, and some are much slower growing. Some tend to be localized and are quite slow to spread to other parts of the body, whereas others are likely to show up in locations far from where they began.

It is not possible to make blanket statements about cancers, but in this section, I will discuss some general things about prevention and treatment, then I’ll finish with some thoughts about us as Christians relating to someone who is dealing with cancer.

### Lifestyle Changes to Prevent Cancers

Many of the things that increase the risk of cancer are things that (hopefully) we, as Christian people, are already avoiding.

Tobacco is one such thing. Tobacco, when smoked, increases the risk of lung cancer. It also increases the risk of head cancer, neck cancers, esophageal cancer, stomach cancer, and cancers of the liver and bladder.

Alcohol is another substance that raises the risk of cancer. Liver, voice box, and esophagus cancers are all related to alcohol consumption. Some people claim to drink alcohol for “health benefits,” but there is no safe level of alcohol consumption. Even people who drink moderately have an increased risk of death related to their alcohol usage.<sup>i</sup>

Another thing that should be limited is exposure to ultraviolet radiation. We know that UV radiation increases the risk of skin cancers, so wearing clothing that protects, such as hats and long-sleeved garments, and using sunblock can reduce this risk.

On the positive side of things, healthy eating habits, such

as consuming lots of fruits and vegetables and avoiding highly processed foods, will reduce the risk of colon cancer.<sup>ii</sup> Fiber seems to be a key here and higher levels of dietary fiber are helpful. Additionally, fruits and vegetables are rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals and are supportive of a healthy immune system. It is recommended to eat at least two servings of fruit and five servings of vegetables per day.

It is interesting that while people who eat healthy diets have a decreased risk of cancer, there is little evidence that there are specific vitamins that will prevent cancer. That is, there is little benefit if you eat a very unhealthy diet and then take vitamins in an effort to compensate for your unwise choices.

Prior to doing a controlled test it is always hard to know whether or not a certain supplement will help. Vitamin E is an antioxidant and so it was thought to be helpful in the prevention of cancer. However, it turns out that studies have not shown this to be true. Actually, in high doses, it seems to increase the risk of certain cancers and heart disease.<sup>iii</sup>

Rather than trying to find the right supplements, it is more important to make certain that we are eating healthy diets.

### Chemotherapy

Now, let us move to a brief discussion about different types of treatment for cancer. Chemotherapy is probably what most people think of first. It was first used in the 1940s when doctors used a derivative of nitrogen mustard to treat lymphoma.

Since that time, hundreds of different medications have been developed as chemotherapy, designed to attack the cancer cells. It is hard to generalize about chemotherapy because there are so many different medications designed to treat different cancers and because they have different side effects.

Due to the fact that they attack cells that are rapidly multiplying, many of these drugs tend to make a person’s hair fall out since hair cells are of the rapidly multiplying

type. Nausea, vomiting, and blood count alterations (low white cell counts) are other common side effects.

If a cancer has spread from its initial location, chances are good that it will require more than just one type of medication in order to achieve remission.

Even if a cancer hasn’t spread, surgeons will often recommend doing some chemotherapy ahead of surgery to shrink the tumor and to make surgical removal easier.

While chemotherapy sounds scary, it actually works quite well for certain types of cancers, such as blood cancers (like leukemias), lymphoma, and breast cancer.

These days, cancer doctors test the biopsied cancer cells for genetic markers. As a family doctor, I see these reports but, since I am not a specialist in this field, I find them somewhat confusing. The important thing to remember is that these markers help to predict what the best drugs are to use on a specific type of cancer.

### Surgery

For many years, surgery was the cornerstone of cancer treatment. Cancers that have not spread can be removed entirely, allowing a person to move forward without any further treatment.

Often, by the time that a person’s cancer is discovered, it is too late to completely remove it. Surgery can still be helpful. For one thing, it gives a sample of the cancer for testing to help identify the best treatment. More than that, even if a cancer has spread, there are times that a tumor needs to be removed, simply because of the organs that it is putting pressure on.

I have heard some people claim that it is dangerous for a cancer to be exposed to oxygen. They believe that cancer cells spread faster after the tissues are opened up and exposed to the air during surgery. There is no documented evidence to support this idea. Many people do seem to get sicker after having an exploratory surgery when their cancer is being diagnosed. But the issue isn’t really the air getting into the cancer cells, rather the cancer was most certainly at the point of beginning to exhibit serious symptoms, and the surgery simply brought things to a head. Also, any surgery will be stressful for any person’s body, which will only increase the wearing down of a person’s already taxed strength and vitality—their ability to stay on top of a debilitating illness.

Typically, when a tumor is removed, nearby lymph glands will be sampled to see if they contain cancer cells. This presence, or absence, of cells helps with the “staging” of the cancer (such as “stage 3” or “stage 4”) and will provide insight for further treatment to prevent a chance of recurrence.

### Immunotherapy

One of the newest treatments of cancer is called

immunotherapy. These are medications that rev up a patient’s immune system to clear their body of cancer cells.

This sounds great and you would think the side effects should be minimal. Unfortunately, it doesn’t always work according to plan. Some cancers don’t respond to these sorts of treatments. And as far as side effects go, these medications can result in autoimmune diseases. When a medication is prescribed that makes the immune system extra active (or over-active), sometimes it begins to attack the patient’s own organs. While some of these side effects get better with the cessation of treatment, not all of them go away.

As an example, I had a patient who took immunotherapy for melanoma that had spread to his lymph glands. He was cured of the cancer, but the immunotherapy damaged his saliva glands enough that he has ongoing issues with a dry mouth. At this point, it seems unlikely that he will regain that moisture in his mouth.

### Future Treatments

There will probably be more treatments in the future, targeting specific types of cancers. Something that is currently under investigation are vaccines that would target specific types of cancers. Currently none of these are available except in clinical trials.

### Choosing Wisely

Oncologists (cancer specialists) do not know the future. They talk in terms of percentages. One protocol has an 86 percent chance of achieving a two-year remission from cancer, another only 56 percent. The same thing is true for side effects. While a doctor can tell you that 26 percent of patients get nauseated with a treatment, that doesn’t tell you if you will be one of that 26 percent and whether that nausea will be controllable with anti-nausea medication.

In deciding what course of treatment to choose, you will find no Bible passage to indicate one direction or another. Having a good oncologist who will explain things carefully—both the chance of success and risk of side effects—is key. There are times that you may need to change to a different cancer doctor, simply because the one you have does not take the time that you need to feel comfortable with your treatment.

*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him –James 1:5.* We need wisdom in many areas of our lives, but certainly choosing how to navigate medical decisions is one of those areas. It is a wonderful thing that God has promised to give us the wisdom that we need—if we just ask.

Prayer—both personal prayer and by your church community—is very important. Prayers can be for healing. It can also be for caring, Christian, medical caregivers, and for wisdom in choosing the best treatments.

Sometimes God cures through doctors and medications. Sometimes, He heals in spite of them. Sometimes He decides it is time for us to go home to be with Him, thereby providing us with a new body that is not sick and broken.

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases –Psalm 103:2-3.* With all of the medical technology available to us, it is easy to forget that healing comes from God. All the chemotherapy in the world will not avail if God does not work an act of healing. At the same time, there are many times that God works in miraculous ways to heal despite the dire predictions made by the medical professionals or other well-meaning individuals.

Often the best that a patient can do is to choose (according to their best judgment) the best treatment course (based on success rate and side effects) and then see how things go. If the side effects are too severe or the treatment doesn't seem to be working, there is always the option to change.

Ultimately, when healing comes, regardless of how it comes, it is God that provides that healing. Let us never forget that.

#### Cancer Takes Energy

Relating to someone with cancer is not much different from relating to a person with any other chronic illness. There are differences though.

Both having cancer and receiving treatment for the cancer takes a lot of energy out of a person. While it is important not to ignore someone who has cancer, it is just as important to remember that they do not have endless energy supplies. A ten- or fifteen-minute visit may be all that they can handle. It is best to let them decide the length of visits that they have energy for.

#### Hesitate to Give Advice

Your “cousin” may have had cancer and may have gotten better after taking a particular supplement or visiting a particular clinic. Sharing that information with a person who is dealing with cancer is just one more piece of information for them to process out of a “thousand” others they may have received. It seems as though someone with cancer is often bombarded with advice and recommendations from well-meaning friends and family.

It is hard to figure out what the best thing is to do when a person is already low on energy. Sometimes, cancer patients simply have prayed that God would bless their choices and then have left the outcome in His hands.

If the cancer patient asks for your input, you can give it, but if not, it is probably best to hold off on the temptation to give unsought advice.

#### Listen

There is never a situation where listening isn't beneficial. It is through listening that we allow others to unburden themselves from fears and frustrations. Listening can help the person to put their thoughts into words. More than that, we may hear ways in which we can help.

Maybe it is someone telling you the (too long) story of how their doctor missed their cancer. Or perhaps, it is them telling you about their fears regarding either their cancer or their treatments.

#### Pray

... *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much –James 5:16.* This verse comes in the midst of James talking about anointing with oil, confession of sins, and physical healing.

We can certainly pray for, and with, someone who is dealing with cancer. Listening helps us to know how best we can pray for them. It lets us know what their particular struggle is on a given day and how we can best lift them up to the throne.

The passage in James makes it clear that healing does not come from the oil that is poured over someone, but rather from God's work in their life. The prayer, the faith, and the obedient action is more important than the anointing oil, although all demonstrate a dependence on a God who is always faithful.

#### Do Small Chores

*If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? – James 2:15-16.*

If it is not enough to pray for someone who is dealing with a serious illness, it is certainly not enough to tell them, “God bless you.”

Figuring out what things someone with cancer needs help with may not be easy, but often even little tasks are difficult for them. It could be that they need transportation to a chemotherapy appointment. Maybe they need help with making a meal, with childcare, or with cleaning their house. Helping in whatever ways we can makes a huge difference for those who are dealing with the fatigue and stress of cancer.

More than that, the important thing is that we make the effort to demonstrate our love to those in our church body who are suffering. Paul told the Corinthians that when ... *one member suffer[s], all the members suffer with it... –1 Corinthians 12:26.* Whenever there is a need, the rest of

the local church body has an obligation and should have a deep desire to help in whatever way they can.

#### Be Willing to Keep Your Distance

Chemotherapy can cause a cancer patient to have an extremely weak immune system. A normal white cell count is between 4,000 and 10,000, but during cancer treatments I have seen patient's white cell count drop down to 200. In this scenario, if they catch any type of infection, they will be unable to fight off that infection and will end up in the hospital.

It is important to understand that someone in this condition who chooses to keep their distance is not necessarily trying to avoid fellowship. Rather, they are trying to avoid an unneeded hospital stay for what cancer doctors call a “neutropenic fever” (a febrile illness with a really low white cell count).

In these sorts of situations, phone calls or even text messages go a long way toward helping a brother or sister feel that they are not alone, even when they cannot physically be around other people.

#### Conclusion

I wish I could give a complete run down of every type of cancer out there and the best treatment for each one. That would be beyond my capability and further, it would be outdated within six months' time.

What I can say is that prayer is key. Prayer for the Holy Spirit's leading (see John 16:13), for energy for each day, for healing, and for God's will to be done. Most of all, we need

to pray that God would be glorified in and through us. (See 1 Peter 4:11) There have been so many people who were able to speak to their nurses and doctors about their Lord, even as they dealt with side effects and cancer symptoms.

It is easy to read all the instructions about giving up worrying that is found in Scripture and think that it should be easy to cast our cares on Him (see 1 Peter 5:7). However, it is much harder to put into practice. We may feel one day as though we have conquered fear and wake up the next morning with every bit as much anxiety as we ever had.

It is in this that we desperately need a church community. We are not alone, but we will feel alone unless we have brothers and sisters around us who help us as they are able and who pray for us in our valleys and rejoice with us in our times of victory.

It is only then, that we can come to the place that the Apostle Paul did when he said, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain –Philippians 1:21.* Of course, he was talking about a possible execution, but his resignation to God's will was total. I pray that we too might reach that place, even as we deal with something as difficult as cancer.

Endnotes:

i <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/04-01-2023-no-level-of-alcohol-consumption-is-safe-for-our-health#:~:text=The%20risks%20and%20harms%20associated,that%20does%20not%20affect%20health>.

ii <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22074852/>

iii <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1479533/#:~:text=The%20authors%20of%20this%20trial,interval%20did%20not%20cross%20unity>



# Enduring Faith

A STUDY OF HEBREWS 11:22-38

by Luther Patches

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We sometimes ask, “Will my faith endure through whatever comes into my life?” Many have felt the pain of unexpected trials. Our hearts have a hard time coping with grief and the suffering we know of in the world. Tragedies shatter the sense of control we thought we had. Our confidence feels threatened and our security shaken. We desire a bright future. Undesirable circumstances can cause us to question whether we can trust God. Let us take a closer look at God’s Word regarding persevering in our faith.

The heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11:22-38 understood, as we do, that they were living in a world that could be shaken. There is no hope apart from God. How did they endure when things seemed out of control?

We define endurance as the ability to hold out, to remain, to continue faithful in the gospel of Jesus Christ, to keep on trusting God. The writer of Hebrews appeals to Christians of his generation—and of all future generations—to endure in faith and to not be overcome by fear and doubt. He reveals what brought these heroes of faith successfully through their trials. In this article we will also look at ways we may remain faithful through the circumstances we face.

## 1. A Continuous Focus on God –Joseph and The Parents of Moses

The King and the kingdom which cannot be moved must be our focus. Some of those who had this focus are named in Hebrews chapter 11. The families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived as strangers and pilgrims because they “saw” beyond their circumstances. Joseph is mentioned next in verses 21 and 22. Joseph had God and His kingdom as his focus, and when the hard times came, he endured.

Taken as a slave into Egypt because of the jealousy of his brothers, Joseph faced tremendous adversity, including false accusations and imprisonment. But because Joseph acted with discretion and wisdom, he was eventually made the second-highest ruler over all the land of Egypt! The

beautiful end to this story is found in Genesis, chapters 42-45.

Joseph’s faith enabled him to understand the ways of God. With insight he told his brothers that God had in fact used their evil intent to preserve a nation (Genesis 45:4-8). Joseph saw that the adversity he had experienced was a blessing in disguise. Can we look for the providence of God in our hard circumstances? If we keep our focus on God and endure with patience, we may someday see how God used our circumstances to bring blessing into our future.

Hebrews 11:22 records Joseph’s dying hours. He could have looked back on his promotion and achievements in Egypt, but Joseph’s heart instead was looking forward to the “things hoped for.” He draws attention to the time when the children of Israel would take possession of the land that God promised. Joseph was so certain of this promise that he commanded that his bones be taken along when they departed for Canaan. This would be a public exhibit to his descendants that his heart was agreeing with God.

The circumstances surrounding Moses’ birth are spoken of next. Those circumstances are similar to the culture many face today. Moses was born at a time when Pharaoh was making the lives of the people of God miserable. Fearing their potential strength in numbers, Pharaoh ordered the killing of male babies. What would we have done if we were living at that time? Would we decide not to have children? Amram and Jochebed became the parents of a baby son whom they named Moses. The parents were put in a vulnerable position when they made the decision to keep this baby!

Though God instructs us to obey those in authority over us, we are not expected to obey something that is clearly wrong in light of God’s Word (Acts 4:18-20). We love the story of Moses’ parents hiding him at home three months, and then carefully placing him in the little bulrush boat hidden at the river’s edge. Nothing quiets the mind like a real faith in the Lord who directs the course of history!

God saved Moses’ life in a very unusual way. Through the compassion of Pharaoh’s daughter, Moses was brought out of the water and, amazingly, given back to his mother to be nursed until she would take him into the palace (Exodus 2:1-10). Imagine the godly teaching that was done while Moses was in his parents’ care! The home is where the earliest faith is born; we must not neglect it. This was a window of time when Moses’ parents could teach him about God. The realization of the shortness of that time had to be continually in their minds. Without a doubt, God’s promise of deliverance from Egypt was surely taught to Moses.

## 2. A Regenerated Heart –Moses

A regenerated heart is required for individuals to endure. *But in every nation he that feareth him [God], and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him –Acts 10:35.* It is through this process that we will endure through trials. The fear spoken of here is reverential fear that brings us to faith. We ask God to save us from our sinfulness and to strengthen us to follow His will. He comes through the Holy Spirit into our lives to give us a regenerated heart. This work in our hearts is evidenced by turning in obedience to the Lord and working righteousness.

Moses is an example of this. When Pharaoh’s daughter later brought Moses into Pharaoh’s court, Moses was taught the wisdom of the Egyptians, which likely included the unlawful studies of the magicians of Egypt. The “pleasures of sin” were abundant. The time came when the sinful practices in the Egyptian culture showed stark contrasts to what he had been taught about God’s will for the Israelites.

Sin is often fun, exciting, and amusing. It can feed our pride and satisfy unwholesome physical desires. Often overlooked are the facts that the pleasures of sin will bring punishment and the pleasures of sin are always transient. They are for a season. Then the pleasure passes away. And more is desired. Moses recognized this lifestyle would be a snare to his spiritual identification with God.

It is a serious thing to resist God, who promises eternal blessing. His only intent is to bless us: *...in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore –Psalm 16:11.* Though we may not be esteemed highly by the world’s standard, we have riches that the natural mind can barely fathom.

When Moses was forty years old, in a noble act of self-denial, Moses by faith made the choice to identify with the people of God. In doing so he gave up the honors and pleasures available to him. Though in a unique position of freedom in Pharaoh’s court, he chose to place his heart with God’s people, who at that time were slaves! He saw that the culture of unbelief and the power of superstition could not compare to life with the Spirit of God.

Though troubled by reproach from his adversaries and sometimes by personal stumbling, Moses sought “greater riches” than those of Egypt. We are told he endured these things as “seeing” Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). We catch up with Moses again in the New Testament (Matthew 17:1-3)—and see a glimpse of how his “sight” became a reality!

How is our “sight”? A brother told me he was given an assignment through his employment to attend a business conference. It was held in a city of America known for its wickedness. He would not go out to view the city or the sin. He said, “I was ashamed to even be there.” This wariness, this disdain of evil, is a sign of a regenerated heart.

## 3. A Dependence upon God –Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Jephthah

We rejoice to see the Bible characters endure and God’s objectives not be defeated. The servitude which the children of Israel experienced actually made them stronger for the journey out of Egypt that was ahead of them (Exodus 1:14,19).

Joshua follows next in Hebrews 11. He also followed the Lord. He learned he was not self-sufficient to conquer the land of Canaan which they were entering. When he was brought face to face with the captain of the Lord’s host in Joshua 5:13-15, he fell on his face in an act of humble surrender.

Through realizing our weakness and believing in God’s power, we can be victorious in the difficulties we face. After the Lord caused Gideon to see his own helplessness, his faith became notable (Judges 6:13,15). He also needed to learn that God is not dependent upon numbers. He was strengthened as he realized that he could only succeed if he relied upon the all-sufficient strength of the Lord. Through the Holy Spirit we succeed.

Rahab, Gideon, Barak, David, and others are pointed out in the cloud of witnesses. The term witnesses does not mean that they serve as spectators, but rather that their lives are testimonies to us of their faith and are incentives to us. Many of them did glorious deeds during dark periods of Israel’s history.

Yet we also remember failures in their lives. They were men of like passions with us. We can take courage from that fact when our faith is at a low ebb. Through our failures our character is tested and matured. The courageous actions described in Hebrews 11 do not overlook man’s weakness or his struggles of fear or self-pride, but they show us God’s power to provide endurance.

People of faith sometimes fail through self-confidence, fear, physical allurements, or reliance on carnal methods. These weights hinder us and must be removed in order to



press on in faith. God's Word tells us there are two principal "kingdoms" the Christian is called upon to subdue. One is within and the other without—they are the flesh and the world. These "kingdoms" seek to prevent the people of God from entering into, and enjoying, their rightful inheritance.

The lives of Rahab the harlot, Jephthah the son of a harlot, and others teach us that God is not hindered by our position in life or by sinful actions formerly associated with our lives which we have repented of. Afflictions need not be a barrier for service either. The heart is where character is produced. Spiritual faith is the heart's persuasion of the truth of God. When Rahab accepted the truths she learned, her heart was changed, and this faith saved her from the doom that awaited her city.

Like runners in a race, we can expect to encounter exhausting circumstances. Relational problems, physical or financial setbacks, and feelings of failure and inadequacy all tempt us to give up the race. One name given for God means "Jehovah will provide." How does He supply? One way is by giving us the light (Ephesians 5:5-14). Another way is by equipping us with the armor of light (Ephesians 6:13-18). We are warned to not be as the men of Ephraim who ...*being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle* –Psalm 78:9.

When we read about our friends who were kidnapped and held hostage in Haiti, we were reminded that God's grace to endure will be an everyday supply. During their captivity they faced spiritual warfare which tested them severely. Knowing their sure identity in Christ and praying for unity among their group became a strong position in their spiritual warfare. God acted and provided escape from the gang leaders. Satan's strongholds cannot withstand the power of God! He is able to give victory in trials.

God had consecrated Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. God's unique object lessons supplied Moses with courage and were figurative of cleansing his heart and hands (Exodus 4:1-9). Through this renewed courage Moses obediently kept the Passover and brought God's people through the Red Sea in a miraculous display of God's power (Exodus 14:14-23). To depressed Elijah God also supplied strength: "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee" (1 Kings 19:1-8).

#### 4. A Faith that Accepts Suffering

It is possible to live in faithfulness to the Lord without being freed from physical suffering. The experience of some is not the rule for all. In Hebrews 11:32-39 we see that those who endured pain and death are also commended for their faith. They didn't see the promised relief in this life. But they had faith in their spiritual Redeemer. The strength to endure in such suffering cannot be understood apart from the renewing power and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Those

who were delivered from death are not commended higher than those who were not delivered in this life.

Actively seek what God says about answered prayer in the Bible. We are commanded to believe that God is who He declares Himself to be. Genuinely show evidence of faith in the truth concerning His substitution and salvation. Be encouraged by the way He has identified with us in our struggles. This results in a prayer of childlike trust that says, "Do for me as you would have done for Jesus, for I am authorized by Him to use His name" (compare James 1:5-7). Christ knows the heart of a petitioner because He also prayed in the Garden for His own needs with prayers and supplications.

Praise Him for the unshakable foundation He gives to us (Luke 6:46-49). When we are falsely accused or abused, do not lose hope. We know our salvation and our honor depend on God, and we can pour out our hearts to Him. We can hand over the damages to God's control (Psalm 62:5-8). Others can provide a safe physical and emotional environment when the need arises.

Seek to help others to endure, especially those who are facing trauma and grief. We know of Anabaptist brothers and sisters who opened their homes to refugees from the Russia-Ukraine war. These brothers and sisters saw loss of life, sadness, tragedy, and people's homes and security taken away. Their touch and presence gave a taste of the presence of God to the refugees. Their sacrifice testifies that security is not in this world's wealth or weapons of war. They are witnesses of the "living hope," of an inheritance reserved in Heaven. That is their sword and fortress.

Those who grieve are comforted when others listen to their lament. One of the most precious gifts we can offer people in the midst of tragedies is to weep with them. Christian people can pray with and intercede on behalf of those who are for a time too weak to pray. Realize that in this world we belong to a bigger picture of what is happening. Scriptural examples can renew this understanding and give courage.

The day is coming when all the faithful will see deliverance. Set your hope on this. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ* –1 Peter 1:7.

First Peter 1:3-5 speaks descriptively of the hope we have: *Blessed be the God ... which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time* –1 Peter 1:3-5.

Every stage of life has its beauty and its burdens. As

we walk the Christian life, we will notice that among the seasons of adversity there are also seasons of grace and blessing. May we choose to praise God and trust Him in every season of life. Our faith and endurance will grow as we live in this peace and serve our heavenly Father, because He is truly good.

We must recognize who God is before we can trust Him with our difficulties. It is a lifelong process. This is the God whose promises I am counting on. Can He help me out of my predicament? Jesus, during His walk on earth, was the head of a long line of faithful witnesses. Christ showed in His life the perfect realization of faith. His own faith is our incentive and our example to imitate. We are told to look ...*unto Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God* –Hebrews 12:2. Because He endured, He is called "the author and finisher of our faith."

In the Old Testament, God had promised the children of Israel a land to inherit. Faithful men and women acted upon the conviction that this promise, though yet unseen, was a reality. In the New Testament, God shows Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Jesus today promises His followers an entrance into a heavenly city which cannot be moved (Hebrews 12:27-28). He has conquered death! When we think of some of the darkest moments in recorded history, we desire that heavenly city. We realize the need for this message to shine brightly.

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined* –Isaiah 9:2. Jesus is the promised Messiah and His hand is stretched out to save you. Jesus

understood injustice; He experienced it. As the missionary B.T. Badley wrote:

Show me Thy hands, Lord, when I'm weary,  
When toiling and burdensome seem Thy commands.

If my load should lead to complaining Lord,  
Show me Thy hands.

Thy nail printed hands, Thy cross torn hands,  
My Saviour, show me Thy hands.

Christ, if ever my footsteps should falter,  
And if I be prepared for retreat,

If desert and thorn cause complaining,  
Lord, show me Thy feet.

Thy bleeding feet, Thy nail scarred feet,  
My Jesus, show me Thy feet.

Oh God, dare I show Thee my hands and my feet?

The day is coming when "the government will be upon his shoulder" and darkness and injustice will be banished (Isaiah 9:6-7). Revelation 22:3 concludes, "There shall be no more curse." Will you believe and be a part of that kingdom?

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# Mennonites, Misunderstandings, and Herbal Medicines

MENNONITE LIFE IN THE CONESTOGA VALLEY OF COLONIAL PENNSYLVANIA

by Rick Hess  
Dornsife, PA

This story starts in Switzerland, in the 1500s. A group of Christian believers, desiring to obey Jesus and return to the teachings of the Apostles and the early Church, separated from both the Catholic and Protestant state-run Churches in several Cantons of Switzerland. They were referred to as the Swiss Brethren and were deemed as enemies of the state, by the Catholics and Protestants alike. Their enemies called them “Anabaptists” because they rejected infant baptism. They also refused military service, obeying Christ’s commands to “bless them that persecute you” and “love your enemies”. Many were arrested, imprisoned, tortured mercilessly and finally, many were martyred for not recanting their faith. In the early 1600s, when the authorities could not stop the movement in this manner, they began confiscating the believer’s homes, farms, and belongings, then exiled them from Switzerland.

Europe had just gone through the devastations of the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648). In some places, like the Palatinate (Pfalzland) in Germany, as many as 70% of the inhabitants had died of either war or disease. Many of the Hoffs (house/barn fort enclosures) were burned out and the fields were left uncultivated for years. In the mid-1600s, the local Prince, Elector Ludwig, invited the exiled Swiss Brethren into the Palatinate to help rebuild the farms because of their reputation as excellent husbandmen and tillers of the soil.

There were three official Churches recognized by the Germans: Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed. Although the Swiss Brethren were needed economically, and their faith was tolerated, their churches were not recognized. There were limits on how many of them could meet together at one time, and many times they were not allowed to purchase the farms that they were improving because they were considered foreigners.

The Swiss-operated farms did indeed prosper in time, partly due to their use of a superior crop rotation system, which helped them feed more dairy cattle, and, in turn, allowed them to produce milk through the winters. Another major improvement was the introduction of the legume, clover.

This came from seed which the Dutch Mennonites gifted to them. After about 50 years, the difference the Swiss had made in agriculture was noticeable enough that some frustrated German neighbors accused them of “Fehhexing” (the Pennsylvania Dutch term for witchcraft) the ground (which of course was not true). So, life in the Pfalzland wasn’t getting better for the Swiss Brethren.

In the year 1708, they experienced a bitterly cold, long winter. So cold that some of their stored root crops froze in the cold cellars. Sometime after this, William Penn and the Quakers heard of the plight of these Swiss Anabaptists. In 1682, William Penn had been granted the colony of Pennsylvania and wanted to conduct what he called the “Holy Experiment”. He envisioned a land where all races and religions could dwell together in peace. He had special interest in those groups persecuted by the European State Churches. As a Quaker, he too had suffered persecution by the state church of England. He welcomed Quakers from England, Huguenots from France, Mennonites from Holland, German Baptist, Schwenkfelders and Pietists from Germany, as well as Swiss Brethren and Jews from wherever they were sojourning and/or suffering.

That is the background for our account of Hans Graeff (Groff) who lived from c.1661-1746. Hans had been converted to the faith of the Swiss Brethren, but his wife, Anna (Bare) Graeff had stayed with the Protestant State Church. When the door opened to pioneer in Pennsylvania, Hans was interested in going, but Anna was not. Possibly they planned to have him get settled in over there and then come back for her. Hans first came to Pennsylvania in 1696. Later, Hans ended up leading a small group of the Swiss Brethren (Hans & Christian Herr, Martin Meylin, Jacob Muller, Martin Kendig, Martin Oberholtzer, Wendell Bowman & the Funks to name a few) to Germantown, about seven miles north of Philadelphia in that day, which was the first permanent settlement of the Anabaptists in the New World. Many of those first settlers were from Holland and Sweden and were part of the Mennonite Church of the Netherlands. The Swiss immigrants spent the

winter of 1709 in Germantown—the women doing spinning for the many weavers of Germantown and the men traveling to a new Anabaptist settlement at Skippack, where they were learning many of the skills needed to go to the frontier. It seems that here is where the Swiss Brethren first became known as Mennists or Mennonites.

In 1710, the group moved up to the Conestoga Valley where Hans Groff had previously identified some very rich and well-watered lands, 60 miles west of Germantown and civilization. Life would indeed be difficult. Wolves, bears, panthers, bobcats and other predators abounded. There were also elk, timber bison, and whitetail deer in abundance (which were glad to eat whatever the settlers planted). Huge walnut, hickory, chestnuts, maples, white pines, and oaks, some six feet in diameter and over 100 feet tall, covered much of their new lands (except for some open meadows, left by the native Americans and wetlands). These huge trees would need to be cut down by hand with axes and two-man saws. The closest doctor, apothecary, hardware, or general store was 60 miles away. It would be challenging and dangerous work, but they were free! Free to obey their conscience. Free to practice their religion. Free to own land in this beautiful wilderness. Free to love and witness to their neighbors—the Conestoga tribe and French traders. They received a land patent for 10,000 acres for their families and others that might come later.

Partly due to severe persecution, in 1710, a group of Swiss Brethren moved to the Mannheim area of Germany. Seven years later, in 1717, they made the trip across the Atlantic. There were more than 60 families that came to the Conestoga Valley in the fall of that year, including my ancestors, Hans and Magdalena Hess and their three children (they were eventually blessed with a total of 11). You could say that from then on, the floodgates opened, and masses of Anabaptists fled Europe to “Penn’s Promised Land”. From 1730 and later, as this wilderness became tamed, there were also many Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic people who came over from Germany to find better financial opportunities, filling this part of Pennsylvania with many German-dialect speakers.

I greatly enjoyed speaking with the noted Lancaster County Anabaptist historian, Amos Hoover, while writing this article. He gave many insights and details, but we both agreed, it is challenging to put together all the facts and details from so long ago. Gleaning from a couple authors’ accounts, the story goes something like this:

## Misunderstanding

Sometime, after being in Penn’s woods for a number of years, Hans Groff received word that his wife, Anna (Bare) Groff, back in Europe, had passed away. He was very grieved and mourned, as he didn’t know it and wasn’t there to bury her. In a few years, he married Susanna Kendig. They lived first in the Strasburg area, then built a substantial homestead in

the area now called Groffdale. This union was blessed with nine children.

Years later, a woman showed up in the community and introduced herself as Mrs. Hans Groff. She had become an Anabaptist in Europe and had made the perilous trip across the Atlantic to find her husband. According to her, a person with the same name as herself had died, and the word given to Hans was not true about his first wife’s death. Hans was mortified, although he was innocent regarding his second marriage. He had no desire to be a polygamist or to commit adultery. The frontier church leaders held counsel and gave a recommendation—that the younger, pioneer wife with so many young children needed the husband to provide for them. It is said that Hans didn’t feel clear to stay with either of them but did support both of his wives and their children financially. He was noted as a tireless traveler, riding to Philadelphia with furs then back out into the vast frontier with blankets, brass kettles and other trade good for the Native Americans. If you have heard or read this account with different details, so have I. Only eternity will reveal all these details exactly.

## Medicine

Hans’s first wife chose to live as a single sister in that church community. Instead of becoming bitter with her husband, her God, and her circumstances, she chose a life of service to her neighbors. She lived in a little house, with a small barn (possibly built by Hans for her) on top of a steep hill overlooking Farmersville, called “Cat’s Back Hill”. The ruins of this early 1700s house and barn were still evident less than 50 years ago. Apparently, she was a midwife, before coming to this country and continued in this profession once she was here. She had a lot of experience with growing herbs and making herbal remedies. She was possibly the closest one to being a doctor for many miles around. From what I can find out, she spent her time being a blessing to the local community with her medical knowledge and wisdom, her homemade herbal medicines, and her midwifery. Many of our Lancaster County forefathers may not have survived the rigorous pioneer life if it had not been for this dear Sister’s servanthood and medical knowledge. Interestingly, years later, one of Hans’s sons from the second wife, David Groff, went away to study medicine. Once his studies were completed, he came back as a doctor and helped his father’s first wife minister to the many settlers in fast growing Lancaster County.

This story provides a glimpse into some of the interesting details surrounding the life of conservative Anabaptists just before and during the establishing of Colonial America. There were difficulties involving freedom of religion and worship in their homelands of Europe, but their travels to, and eventual day-to-day living in, a new, free country was acquainted with challenges as well. One encouragement that we can see in this story was the willingness of these individuals to allow God’s principles to guide them each step of the way.

The Heartbeat of  
The Remnant

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And the King shall answer  
and say unto them, Verily  
I say unto you, Inasmuch  
as ye have done it unto  
one of the least of these  
my brethren, ye have  
done it unto me.

Matthew 25:40