

Summer 2024

The Heartbeat of



The Remnant

A ministry of
The Berean Voice



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Purpose Statement

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 answer 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 noted. 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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From the EDITOR



I can still smell the tantalizing cacophony of odors as I clutched my father's strong hand, weaving our way through the masses of tourists that crowded the building. The vendors at the Green Dragon Farmer's Market in Ephrata, PA, were trying their best to entice buyers with their rows of fresh fish over ice, cheeses of every variety, deli meat and sandwiches, and piles of fresh fruit. And, oh, the candy! My young preschool mind had never seen so many delectable sweets in one place at one time.

The past two days for me were like the boy at the candy store. I had the privilege of attending Christian Aid Ministries' first Annual Writers' Conference. I brushed shoulders with well-known authors such as Katrina Hoover Lee, Johnny Miller, and Ruthann Stelfox. I chatted with aspiring writers and seasoned school teachers. I had the opportunity to sit under hours of inspirational and educational workshops on how to write to communicate, using realistic dialog, descriptive writing, and much more. We all had one common goal in mind. Together, we share and learn how to effectively communicate what is in our hearts, and through the power of the written word, transmit those thoughts to your hearts.


The Heartbeat of the Remnant is a means to communicate inspirational thoughts to eager readers scattered across the globe. Courageous writers step forward with pen and paper or keyboard and monitor and help spread the Good News of the Word of God with caution, correction, and edification. Yet, we need more such writers. We need young believers who bravely submit their first children's stories. Seasoned grandfathers who bring words of admonishment to the younger generation. Mothers who share experiences and trials with other mothers who are in the throes of raising little ones. Youth encouraging fellow youth to press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Fathers who with a concerned eye watch the world pressing in on the Christian homes. Together, these aspiring writers will produce a periodical that will endure on the family coffee table for many years. I encourage you, fellow believers, to give it a try. Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa wrote, "Failure is a teacher, and at the end of your life, what do you think you'll feel worst about, failing or never trying?"

The Berean Voice has a goal to provide printed material that will help readers navigate through the varied and difficult seasons of life. All our material is available at no charge, but we are dependent on the donations of our supporters. Here is a list of books we have available:

- The Power of the Love of Truth
- Christian Counseling- Counterfeit?
- The Heart of God
- Free Indeed!
- Pilgrims and Politics
- Cup & Cross
- The High Cost of Holistic Healing
- Secrets of Successful Writing
- The Catholic Connection
- Psychiatry and Mood altering Medications
- The Mennonite Church and Modernism

In 2017 and 2018, the Berean Voice printed a series of vaccine articles in *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* magazine. These articles were a sincere effort to examine various aspects of vaccine usage with an unbiased approach. We attempted to present the facts as clearly as possible and let the readers draw their own conclusions.

Since then, we have received numerous requests from our readers to publish all the vaccine articles in a booklet, which we agreed to do. But then along came 2019, bringing coronavirus with it. This monumental event upended the vaccine debate and ushered in a frenzied rush to market COVID-19 remedies, many of which were not properly tested. We put the printing on hold, unsure whether to include information on these new and unproven COVID-19 "vaccines." As time progressed and the deadly nature of COVID-19 abated, we decided to publish the original vaccine articles in a booklet without any additional articles on the COVID-19 debate. We are pleased that the project is nearing completion and will be announced when it is released.

Blessings to all,

Edward Martin



The Christian Humanist

By Barry Grant

Shelbyville, Indiana

Do you believe in miracles? Do you believe in the supernatural? What about divine intervention? Or a better question might be, have you seen God working in your life? Do others see God working in your life?

My brother was working in the greenhouse when a customer walked in and marveled at the beauty of all the plants. He then exclaimed how impressed he was at all our hard work. My brother responded with, “Some plant, some water, but God gives the increase.” To which the customer responded with, “No, no, don’t give the credit to God. You came out here and did all this work. You planted, watered, and fertilized all these plants, and you all deserve the credit, not God!” The reason the man felt this way is because he was a humanist.

What is Humanism?

The dictionary defines humanism like this; an outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. Humanist beliefs stress the potential value and goodness of human beings, emphasize common human needs, and seek solely rational ways of solving human problems.

If God does exist, then we will have to recognize this fact and answer to Him. Humanists attempt to prove that God does not exist, so they can freely live their lives as they

please. According to humanism, there is no God. If so, then we, the human race, are superior to God. Everything is for us and our ultimate happiness. This is the definition of humanism.

Two Types of Humanism

There are two types of humanistic beliefs, and we will look at both. The first belief is the theory that there is no God. In reality, this seems to be the only rational way to be a humanist. Everything is created by man and for man. There are no other factors or supernatural involvement. Everything happens by reason and common sense. There is a logical explanation for everything that happens. Of course, some things do not make sense, but humanists brush those aside and look only at the things that can be explained. Like the plants in the greenhouse, they look at all that man does and ignore the supernatural part of a plant springing forth with new life. Scientists around the world are working diligently to put human reasoning into everything that has ever happened, even the creation of the world. Scientists, with all their learning and wisdom, attempt to give logical explanations for why natural disasters and global crises happen. If they can explain everything, then they can rule out God and His existence. This allows the human race to do as it pleases without

eternal consequences. This, in turn leads to a great sense of false peace.

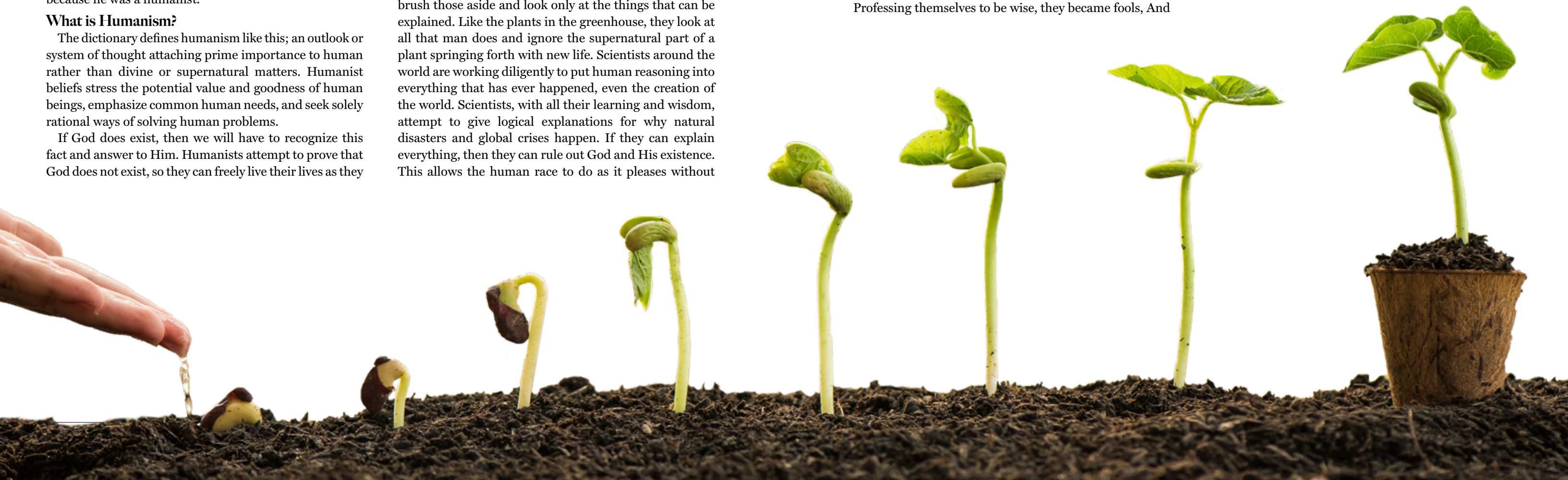
The humanists, with all their reasoning, mock the very existence of God. If you go to most colleges in America and talk to people about Christianity, they laugh at you and mock the fact that Christians actually believe in God.

The second type of humanistic belief is a theory of humanism that acknowledges the existence of God. One anthropologist argued that humanism is a project of modernity and a secularized continuation of Western Christian theology. But if you ask people what they think humanism means, you will likely get different responses, and it becomes very confusing. But why the confusion? Because people are trying to be Christian humanists. Christian Humanism has frequently been criticized for its vagueness and difficulty to define. The reason it has become so confusing is that people want to believe in God but also believe in themselves and that the world revolves around them.

In Romans, we read, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And

changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Romans 1:18-32).

So how can one be a humanist and believe in God? This



is where we hit a little closer to home. This type of humanist believes God wants him to be happy. He believes in a Creator God but does not believe he has to serve Him In reality. He doesn't believe in the true God but, in his mind, created a fictitious god that does not exist. This allows him to live for himself and his own happiness. This type of person will talk about God, go to church, sing songs, and say prayers. However, he will look only to man for all his needs. If he is sick, he calls a doctor. If he needs money, he goes to the banker. If the need is a break from reality, he takes a vacation or retreat. He lives life for his own happiness and then thanks God though he did not look to God for his needs. These people are dependent on themselves. They have confidence in themselves.

Here is an example: A Christian plants a garden and takes care of it each day. He waters and fertilizes weeds and prunes. Finally, his plants all begin to bear fruit, nice fruit. He thanks God for the plentiful harvest. His neighbor, an atheistic humanist, also planted a garden. He, too, went out each day and watered, pruned, weeded, and fertilized. He also received a bountiful harvest. This man, however, boasted of all that he had accomplished. Both men did the same things and had similar results. One gave God the credit, and one credited himself. He will say he accomplished the same thing without God that his neighbor did with God. Christians know that he is wrong and that he actually did need God to grow his garden.

When something happens that requires supernatural intervention, the Christian humanist prays and asks others to pray. However, he does not believe God will answer their prayers and instantly gets to work to solve his problem, with only human reasoning. Then, if the problem is resolved, he thanks God for it. This type of humanism has confused the modern world. It has caused unbelievers to mock the Christian faith and to call it a false religion with no power.

The Christian does not believe in human reasoning. The Christian believes that the God of heaven is the reason for everything. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16). We are nothing without Him, and without Him, we can do nothing. Christianity is the opposite of humanism. When the Christian does something supernatural, something the humanist or atheist cannot do, then we have something that will confound the wise.

When the neighbor sees the Christian loving his enemies, forgiving someone who wronged him, and doing things that he cannot do, he then begins to wonder where the power to do these things came from. This then leads him to the Father. When there is nothing supernatural that we are doing, he is confused.

What About Us?

I fear that we are falling into this trap of 'Christian Humanism.' We talk the talk; we say we believe in God. We go to church, sing songs, and say prayers. However, from outward appearances, we trust in ourselves. Because we have centered our lives around ourselves and our well-being, the God of heaven does not hear us. Our prayers are not answered, and the time on our knees is a struggle at best. We go through the motions because that is how we've been taught, but our faith lies in human reasoning.

It can be extremely difficult to seek the Lord while living in a humanistic society. A society that has perfected the pursuit of liberty and happiness. Slowly, the church is caving to the ways of this world.

A minister from China was visiting the churches in America. Before departing back to China, he was asked what impressed him most about the churches in America. He replied, "I am amazed at what all they have accomplished without God."

We would do well to simplify the modern definition of humanism. The humanist proudly denies that there is a God when he boasts of his own strength and abilities. He proclaims the great accomplishments of man and mocks the humble Christian.

The Christian denies himself, picks up his cross, and follows his Master. The Christian thinks nothing of himself or the ability of man, confidently admitting that he is merely dust and back to that dust he will quickly go. The Christian looks for the good in others and trusts God for all his daily needs and cares.

Christians believe they are merely servants to their master. They are hated by the world and despised by most, rejected. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. (John 15:18)" To them, this life is not the pursuit of happiness. The things of this world do not even interest them. Their joy and peace comes solely from serving their master, from pleasing their Heavenly Father. To the world, they are strange. Fools. To God, they are His dear children.

God is still looking for people today who will put their trust in Him. He is looking over all the earth for someone, somewhere, who will put aside human reasoning and common sense and obey the voice from heaven. God wants men with faith who will step out into the supernatural, like Abraham, Moses, David, and the thousands of believers that followed. Someone who will deny himself and this world and follow the Savior.

When this life is over, the humanists, whether they say they believe in God or not, will perish. And the Christians will go on to live forever in glory.

Humanist? Christian? Christian Humanist? Which one are you?

ALL NATURE SINGS

and 'round me rings the music of the spheres.

Lee Rufener

Athens, Wisconsin

Our Father's world is a world unspoiled by human invention and intervention. While sin and technology have warped and stolen many lovely things from the human race, there abide still a few that remain unmarred by civilization. Little children in the fresh innocence of their unsoiled morning top the ranks as a bit of heaven on earth and call all observers heavenward. Another is the fowl of the air as prescribed in Genesis. Paul pleaded with the Corinthian church, "Doth not nature itself teach you?" We are exhorted to consider the lilies, the ravens,

and the grass of the field. Each of these bears a significant dimension of the eternal God in their existence and gives us definition to their Creator. Perhaps all of nature can give us snapshots into heavenly places if we had the time and eyes to observe it.

Birds hold a unique place in God's creation, for their sphere is in the heavens. Man may mount on the wings of a plane and evade the lower earth for a few hours, but the heavens will never be a place of his common dominion. The birds are a picture of a heavenly race, for they are



at home there. They are a natural representation of the saints and angels of God and so we do well to give them due attention. While there may be dozens of lessons to be drawn from these vessels of grace and beauty, one of the most prominent and outstanding virtues will be observed in the song that they raise. Many animals dwelling on the earth are virtually mute. Of the ones that do speak, it is often to threaten or express complaint. “Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? Or loweth the ox over his fodder?” (Job 6:5). When they are happy and content, they have no message to convey. The dog barks at an intruder to drive him away, while the cat mews for attention. They speak when they are threatened or dissatisfied, in fear or in pain. Similarly, the earthly human shares its nature with the mammals of the field.

Birds are diverse. They exercise their joyous vocals so much that they are the epitome of happiness. The expression “happy as a lark” is so common a term that it is used by people who have never even ventured to the meadow to see or hear a lark. While some may inform us that these songs are mere mating calls and have little to do with their feelings, we cannot escape the inner conviction that, whether mating or not, these birds delight in bearing a jubilant expression of joy and we do well to let them teach us. “Is any merry? Let him sing psalms” (James 5:13). The birds do this incessantly and it seems impossible to draw any other conclusion but that they are happy while doing so. Wander near the nest of a swallow and you will find that they have ways of expressing depreciation as well. The killdeer also has no qualms with expressing rash disfavor to those who intrude their domain, but these are not to be mistaken as songs. The singing birds are a beautiful painted picture of the saints and angels of God.

How little knowledge of heaven is committed to our understanding. The scenes of heavens described and laid out before us in Revelations can hardly bring our finite minds into its infinite realm. One dimension that we can connect with is that it is a place filled with singing. Little wonder, for it is the culminating end of the contented and joy-filled saints of God, and there they will sing a new song. Nearly every scene at the throne in Revelations is marked by some dimension of praise. “And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God” (Ps 40:3). On 22 occasions, the Scriptures reiterate the phrase, I will sing.

It is the nature of the birds to sing. It is their waking thought as morning guilds the sky, and it flows from within them like a fountain. Not all of their songs are alike. Some are elaborate in their duration, meter, and pitch, while others are plain. Some merely chirp with a merry heart. The robin opens up the choir in early spring, but his song is soon surpassed in beauty by the song sparrow and again by the rose-breasted grosbeak. The song of the wren trumps

them all for longevity and vibrancy. The canary sings in a cage, while the nightingale sings in the dark. The robins sing in the rain. The buntings fill in the heat of the day when other birds are silent. As diverse as their song may be, they all commonly burst forth in exuberant happiness. It is here that they shall instruct us.

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph 5:19). The advent of Christ was marked by the angelic host announcing peace and goodwill toward men. All those who will bear His name must deliver the same tidings. In John 4, we happen upon the scene at Jacob’s well, where Christ asks the woman for a drink. Her reply seems to bear a tinge of bitterness. “Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” Though she esteemed herself as a spiritual person and willingly followed Him into religious discourse, she had no song. Like the well that they speak over, her water was buried deep below the surface and how laborious the effort to bring it forth. Christ offers another alternative. “But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

The well of Christ is an artesian well. One needs neither pitcher nor labor to draw it out, for it spews forth abundantly on its own accord. While Christ is probably speaking of the Spirit as in John 7:38, surely this may be just as applicable to a joy-laden heart. What is a more apt outpouring to flow from a Christ-inspired wellspring than the rapture of a song? “Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart” (Is 65:14). Now this should all seem plain enough to understand and easy enough to do but, alas, we find we have a constant and persistent adversary who seeks to thwart our song. We are not unaware of his devices...

Sin. Not all birds sing. There are some whose visage is black as sin. These only seem to screech and scream and are no example for the saints of God to emulate. The babbling noise we hear emanating from many passing vehicles certainly parallels the songs of such foul fowl. “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Rev 18:2). These abundant creatures are the fallen spirits, the fowls waiting to devour the seed sown by the wayside. Of such are the worthless black-birds, starlings, and grackles. The crows show themselves also at the roadside, feeding on rotting carcasses. Often you will find them in large numbers feeding themselves on the corn the farmer painstakingly planted for himself. So transgresses the selfish soul in his pursuit of happiness, feeding gleefully on the calamity of another and exploiting their sin. He bears no song, for his day is constantly clouded by the misdeeds of others who cross his path.

Neglect. The cowbird is also black (the female is brown/

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly
in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing
one another in psalms and hymns
and spiritual songs,
singing with grace in your hearts
to the Lord.

COLOSSIANS 3:16

gray). She will be found sitting on a high vantage, shamelessly calling to her lovers by her shrill screeching. She then has the audacity to lay her egg in another bird’s nest, forcing them to raise her offspring. This is certainly a fitting emblem for a good number of females in our day. Though justified by circumstances, these women care not for their own, but are products of neglect. They have no lullaby to share with their young, for they have escorted them to the nest of another while her mind is preoccupied with work and business. “But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts” (Ps 22:9). No doubt that the singing mother can implant copious songs in her infant and set the stage for a happy and hope-filled life. While we may show mercy to a woman in dire circumstances, the major song of modern women bears chords that are but dissident and melancholy. These are stopped-up wells like unto the wells that Isaac found upon his return to Gerar. The Philistines “had filled them with earth” (Gen 26:15). So run the spiritually neglected homes of many families today, who pack their schedules so full of earthly commitments that they have no time to spend an hour in song together. If the birds stopped singing, would they even notice?

Ingratitude. Find a soul bathed in unthankfulness, and you will find a soul without a song. If the canary were to refuse to sing in captivity, few of us would ever have heard his rollicking melody. “We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs

of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land?” (Ps 137:2-4). God’s people had been instructed by Jeremiah to build houses, plant gardens, and raise families. “... And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace” (Jer. 29:5-7). But they could see no worth in it. With their eyes fixed upon the dismal scene around them, they lost their song. Israel had within its history a rich tradition of song. Their singing erupted at the passage of the Red Sea in the days of Jehoshaphat and had been known to defeat armies. Earthly discomfort is no excuse to withhold gratitude, for our God reigns, and we are His children. Such were the conditions of the Philippian prison where two jailbirds, Paul and Silas, opened the concert at midnight and rocked the corridors with their joyful singing.

When we open our mouths and stretch our vocals in praise, we enact the grace of God. We join the faithful choir alongside Miriam, Deborah, and Hannah, and blend harmoniously with Moses, David, Paul, and Barnabas. At evening, we sing with our Lord and His disciples after supper, and with legions of angels “giving glory to God in the highest.” If that isn’t enough, perhaps we should consider rising at early dawn and singing with the innumerable hosts of our feathered friends who are thankful for God’s loving providence. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord ... And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Col 3:16, 23).



Arise be glad

—Annetta Martin

Arise be glad! For dawn is here!
Rejoice and sing! The night is past,
The Dayspring shineth from on high,
The grace of God to man is nigh!
Rejoice and praise the King of Kings!
Give thanks and laud, for more is here!

Arise and glorify the Lord!
Extol and praise His worthy name!
He shineth from the heav'ns in love,
And showers blessings from above,
His mercy reaches down to men-
Adore and praise our mighty Lord!

Give thanks and sing to Christ our King
And worship Him with reverent praise;
Bow down in awful, holy fear-
The Holiness of God is here;
In wondrous beauty bend the knee;
Adore th'almighty King of Kings!



Ulli Ammann, to Churches in Crisis

Note from the editor:

This historical letter was previously published in *The Heartbeat of The Remnant* in November/December 2011. This timeless admonition and encouragement to the church are worth reprinting today. The following introduction was penned by Dean Taylor, the editor of *The Heartbeat of The Remnant* in 2011.

“The following letter is perhaps one of the most unsung masterpieces of the early Anabaptists. I ran across this letter as I was studying some of the early source documents of the Amish/Mennonite division. Fortunately, historian John D. Roth has taken these letters out of obscurity and printed them in a book titled *Letters of the Amish Division: A Sourcebook*.

At first glance, the letter doesn't seem all that earth-shaking. It is mainly just some good, practical teaching from a seasoned bishop to a struggling congregation. On its own merits, the advice is powerful, but what I believe makes the letter extraordinary are the life experiences of the writer, bishop Ulli Ammann.

It is believed that Ulli Ammann was the younger brother of the famous Jacob Ammann, from whom the Amish church received its name. Ulli was a young minister during the painful split of 1693 between the Amish and Mennonites. This was an ugly split.¹ The two most visible figures were Hans Reist from the “Mennonite” side and Jacob Ammann from the “Amish.” When you dig into this split and look for the cause of the division and try to determine “whose fault was it.” It becomes very difficult. When reading the letters, you find the older “Mennonite” group being aloof and somewhat slippery with the straight question that was being asked of them. On the other hand, the younger and more radical group of “Amish,” particularly Jacob Ammann, comes off as too demanding and harsh. In the passionate mix of strong personalities, the voice that sparkles with gentleness, wisdom, and humility was Jacob's younger brother, Ulli Ammann.

Five years after the major meltdown, Ulli made several attempts to be a peacemaker. A letter from 1698 reveals his humble attitude with words like these: “For without any question, mistakes were made on both sides, and therefore each person should carry his own burden, and it is proper for each person to reconcile himself again with God and

with the aggrieved fellow human whom he has wronged.”²

In the following years, we see Ulli, along with Jacob and the other Amish bishops apologizing for their attitude during the division. They went so far as offering themselves to be excommunicated in order to once again have unity. Sadly, the Mennonites could not find it in themselves to forgive the Amish. Several requests were made for reconciliation, both verbally and by letter, but the Mennonites never accepted their offer.

Over 20 years later, Ulli Ammann, now an older, experienced bishop, was asked to help out a struggling congregation in current-day Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, France. In an attempt to help, he wrote the following letter. The letter is simple yet profound. Ulli prescribes a humble relationship between a brotherhood and its ministers. He suggests, first of all, that the brotherhood should be able to work out their problems. While he strongly upholds biblical leadership, Ulli envisions a balance between the opinions of the elders and the opinion of the brotherhood. He feels that these problems should be worked out locally. However, if they cannot be worked out locally, then they should seek help from another congregation. Finally, he says they should accept the counsel of the visiting minister. Other things briefly touched on in the letter are the role of the minister in general and even some thoughts on church standards. Coming from a seasoned bishop who witnessed the damage caused by the zeal of his older brother, the unforgiveness of his opponents, and a lifetime of working through difficult church problems, this letter deserves a close inspection. The letter was used by permission of John D. Roth and the Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen, Indiana. The subtitles were added by me.” —Dean Taylor

Ulli Ammann to the ministers and elders of the congregation at Markirch.³

A sincere brotherly greeting with the wish for the very best for your soul and body in time and eternity to all the

beloved fellow ministers who have helped with the work in the house of the Lord, and also to the brothers and sisters who, by God’s grace, are partakers with us in the same faith and worship. Think well of us in your prayers, of which we are in great need. For the sake of peace and unity and to ward off quarrels as much as possible, it has seemed good to us to make known by means of a letter the following points:

Take it to the brotherhood

Namely, that a minister and overseer of a congregation at whatever place he may be, an ordained man or fully confirmed man who is called an elder, can save himself from guilt and the accusations of others in no better way than to proceed with counsel in those matters of consequence that occur in the congregation. We think it is also his duty to do this when something controversial or other important matters arise in the congregation he should, first of all, take counsel with his fellow ministers and then also with the congregation.

A leader should lead

It is our understanding that an elder or ordained minister does indeed have the authority to make his presentation first about the things that happened, and may suggest a model of what he thinks to be best, and then he may present it to his fellow ministers and to the congregation to consider and turn it over to them to correct as much as they can from the Word of God.

However, a leader should not ‘lord over the flock’

He should not think that his presentation must be the only valid one and that no one should have anything to say against it or that even though ten or twenty brethren oppose it, the minister’s word must be king, as Hans Anken in Holland said.⁴

Differences with the ministry should be discussed by the brotherhood

But if no one has a valid, we repeat, a valid objection (and not something based on spite or ill will, as can easily happen) to the minister’s or elder’s initial presentation, then it should be confirmed by the consent of the congregation.

The brotherhood bears the responsibility for the decision

But if it should happen, as it easily could, that the general counsel does not turn out for the best, then the minister who made the initial presentation does not bear the sole responsibility; the entire congregation helps to bear the blame with him and the congregation then has no authority or right to put the blame entirely on him.

What to do if there are opposing views in the brotherhood:

Love is most important

If it should happen that the minister’s or elder’s initial

presentation on some important matter was not generally understood to be the best, and dissension then followed, and some supported the elder and his initial presentation, while the opposing party thought they could not support it, then we think they should not argue about it to the point where love is lost.

The elders should not force their ideas

Nor should the minister think that the opposing party must bend to his understanding and that he would gladly like to rule over them contrary to their conscience, as Hans Anken did in Holland, which resulted insuch great harm.

If the brotherhood can’t resolve the issue, get help

The elder and those who support his initial presentation, and the opposing party which feels that they cannot accept it, should come to an agreement and let the matter come to other elders and ministers in other congregations to examine and discuss according to their best understanding.

Accept the conclusion

... and then both sides should be content to adapt themselves to it as far as possible so that it might promote the general peace from the elder’s side as well as on the other side.

Ammann’s cry to the elders

Oh, if only this could happen, which would be very necessary and good, that all elders and ministers would follow Christ’s example in all that is good, and especially in humble and scriptural obedience to God, and could give the people a good model, and that a domineering nature which is very closely related to destructive pride— would be given no place. As Peter says: Not as those who rule over the inheritance, rather become an example to the flock (1 Peter 5). Also, if someone has made you a ruler, do not put on airs; but rather be as one among the people, says Sirach 32. Also, the appointed kind of Israel should not lift his heart up above his brethren (Deuteronomy 17:20). Also, the Savior said: You know that the worldly princes rule over the peoples, and the overlords act with authority. But it should not be so among you. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the multitude (Matthew 20). From these words one cannot draw the meaning that freedom is granted a minister in the Lord’s church to dominate.

Respect for Elders

But, on the other hand, neither should it be understood to mean that one has the freedom to treat an elder or minister poorly and unkindly, But one who puffs himself up and speaks more out of hostility than with a just reason ... let him remember Korah! as can easily happen at times. We are obligated and duty-bound to give help and support to faithful ministers and leaders of the church of the Lord, for they are a gift of God, and not allow them to be trampled

Holy Scripture provides plenty of instruction on how leaders and followers are to conduct themselves toward each other.

on unjustly, accepting no complaint against them except from the mouths of two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5). We should love and respect them and give them appropriate honor and service, as the apostle Paul admonishes in this regard: The elders who lead well are worthy of double honor and reward, especially those who labor among you and who lead you in the Lord, and who admonish you, that you hold them in even greater love because of their work, and are at peace with them (1 Thessalonians 5).

Also, submit yourselves to them that rule over you, for they watch over your souls as one who must give account for them (Hebrews 13).

But one who puffs himself up and speaks more out of hostility than with a just reason against a faithful minister of the Lord and leader of His congregation who speaks and acts in exemplary manner, and thinks that one may surely speak against [the minister] and not simply accept everything he says as valid-Korah with his mob indeed found out what kind of pleasure the Lord takes in such wrongful rebels and gainsayers (Numbers 16). Because disobedient Israel did not love the good prophets sent by God, but contradicted them and hated and persecuted them to death; God therefore punished Israel and allowed false prophets to come in great numbers.

Holy Scripture provides plenty of instruction on how leaders and followers are to conduct themselves toward each other. The Apostle says: The younger are subject to the older, and all are subject to one another in the fear of God, thereby showing humility (1 Peter 5).

Keep to the “Old Paths”

We also consider it necessary and good that a minister strive to keep order by maintaining the old, traditional practices of the church, not doing much that is new and out of the ordinary or breaking with the old. It is better that he continue with the teachings of the divine Word and break down the old, carnal, sinful life of humans and

implant a new godly life. . . .but discard and renew outdated standards.

Make changes to useless and unscriptural practices

If, however, something that is useless and contrary to the Word of the Lord would be the practice in the congregation, it must of necessity be dropped, and in its place, a better practice should be established in harmony with the Lord’s Word. This we think should indeed be done, but no one should undertake to do it by himself without the knowledge and counsel of other ministers and elders. Tobit says: Always ask counsel of the wise (Tobit 4). Do nothing without counsel, and after the deed you will not regret it (Sirach 32).

Allow and respect differences between congregations

It is, of course, possible that one congregation has a practice not found in another, but only unimportant and minor things that are not in conflict with the Word of the Lord. Against such things one should not complain but rather plead the cause of love and peace.

This is a small portion, presented in simplicity and brevity, of what we think is necessary and good for a minister and also for the congregation which serves through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Whoever also accepts this as good, and wants to help work to this end, may sign below if they so desire.

—Ulli Ammann

¹ *It is interesting to note that this was the first known major division in the Swiss Brethren since their beginnings 168 years earlier. 168 years without a major split!*
² *“Letters” p. 85*
³ *Today known as Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, France. This letter was written in 1720.*
⁴ *Hans Anken had just led a split in Holland after he purchased an old monastery to live in, and the brotherhood felt it was too ostentatious and worldly.*

Jamin Smartens Up

Jonathan Yoder
Millersburg, Ohio

Eight-year-old Jamin wasn't very smart. Or at least that's what his older brother told him. Almost daily, brother Kenny found ways to remind Jamin of his shortcomings and laugh at his blunders.

"Jamin, you will never be smart," Kenny said. Deep inside Jamin felt resigned to a life of muddled trip-ups. Would he always be clumsy? Would he always say things wrong? That's what Kenny said.

Jamin believed Kenny's lectures with wide-eyed belief. Kenny was three years older than him, so he must be right. Very well, then Jamin would be simple. Kenny would be smart. Life was not fair. Dad and Mom disliked Kenny's proud talk and punished him whenever they walked in on one of his speeches. But Kenny had a way of avoiding earshot. So he continued mocking Jamin.

Grandma Otto watched these trials from her rocker on the porch. She was a quiet old lady.

"Jamin, do you know where Kenny is?" Mom asked with a smile. "It's almost supper time."

"He went to check his coyote traps. I'll go find him."

There was a chill in the air as he tramped up over the lawn, and the sun was growing old as he crossed the border of the woods. The fleeting shadows scurried over the hills. The chill deepened as he stumped further in. He breathed the rich air and followed Kenny's trail. Eventually, the trail would end up in a meadow, but Jamin hoped he would find Kenny before he had to go that far. The various traps had been checked already, so Jamin knew Kenny had come this way. Jamin trudged on resolutely. His golden head caught the tired beams that fled from the sun as they flickered

through the trees. And soon those too had faded leaving behind the musky smell of the woods. The fall webworms had been at work, and their web curtains shuttered from branches overhead.

At length, as the trees subdued and thinned, and the meadow appeared Jamin knew this was the end of his brother's trap route. If Kenny wasn't here, he wouldn't know where else to look.

But Kenny was there. As Jamin clumped into the meadow, he could see a frustrated heap to his right. The heap's voice had a familiar ring. The heap's face was lit in pain. The heap was Kenny. "Are you alright? What happened?" Jamin felt strange, seeing Kenny scrunched in the dirt. Kenny was smart. "Did you step in a trap?"

"Yes, Jamin. I..I wasn't looking where I was going. Help me. Please."

Jamin bent and found an ankle firmly held in the jaws of a steel trap. Darkness stained the ground around Kenny. Quickly, Jamin's strong arms pried open the jaws. Kenny reeled free. "Can you walk?"

"Yes. I think so. If you support me, I can hobble along."

"Dad and Mom will be worried. We've missed supper."

Sure enough, as the brothers hobbled back through the woods, they heard the long calling of their father. Jamin called back, and he was by their side in a moment, seeing the ankle and scooping up Kenny like a hurt sheep. The odd little band hurried home, and the screen door banged shut as Dad swept across the porch. Jamin went to the wash house and scrubbed

his hands. He headed for the front door.

"Jamin." It was Grandma. The porch light showed her in her old rocker. A heavy comforter lay on her shoulders.

"Yes, Grandma?"

"Do you think you are not very smart?"

"That's what Kenny says." Jamin squirmed.

"You were strong enough to open the trap, and Kenny wasn't. You were brave enough to find him in the dark. Lots of young boys wouldn't be." Jamin was silent. Grandma Otto rocked some more, then smiled. "God made you the way you are for a reason, Jamin. He made Kenny the way he is for a reason. He has a plan for you, and a place only you can fill, you know."

Jamin turned and walked into the warm kitchen. He was smiling.



The Christian Home

by Harold S. Martin

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The nearest thing to heaven on earth is the Christian family and home, where husband and wife, parents and children, live together in love and peace, devoted to God and to each other. By way of contrast, the nearest thing to hell on earth is the ungodly home, broken by sin and iniquity, where parents quarrel and bicker and separate and where children are given over to the forces of wickedness to be brought up with scarcely any training at all.

The word “home” likely takes your mind back across the years, and for some, the mind goes across hundreds of miles of space—to the spot that will be forever hallowed in your memories among all places on earth. You are reminded of the place where you grew up as a boy or as a girl, playing around the yard with brothers and sisters and neighbor children, and where you sat around the old range stove on a winter evening with your mother and dad and the rest of the family. There are several things about that old home-place that are not true about any other spot on earth.

In this message, we want to see what the Bible says about the duties of the various members of the family to each other and to the Lord.

Duties of Wives To Their Husbands

a) The Christian wife is to be subject to her husband. Ephesians 5:22-23 says, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church.”

Marriage is not a 50-50 proposition. The husband and the wife are not to be jointly in the place of headship. Our Lord plainly says, “The husband is the head of the wife.” This does not mean that the wife is less important in the home than the husband or that she is to be a slave of the husband, but it does mean that she is to submit to the leadership role of her husband. The only exception would be if he asks her to violate clear scriptural teachings (Acts 5:29).

The Lord commands husbands to love their wives, and if the husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church, she will have no difficulty with being subject to him. When problems arise (and they will arise), they should be carefully discussed together. A vote should be taken. If both agree—good. But in the case of a tie (the wife votes one way and the husband votes the other), then the husband should cast the deciding vote. The husband should assume the final leadership in the home.

b) The wife is to respect and admire her husband. Ephesians 5:33 says, “Let every one of you (husbands) . . . so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

The wife should respect her husband. This seems to be true even for the wife who has an unsaved husband (1 Peter 3:1). What kind of life are you living before your husband? Does he see in you true Christian living? Are you cheerful, loving, loyal, and obedient? Some wives drive their husbands away from Christ because they don’t respect them. Instead of being cheerful and obedient, they are noted for preaching and nagging. Nothing breaks the spirit of a man more quickly than a nagging wife.

c) The Christian wife is to be a keeper at home. Titus 2:4-5 says, “Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home.”

The home is to be the sphere of the woman’s influence. There are too many families that have such a high standard of living that mother has to work away from home to help pay the bills. Then in the evening, when happy family activities should take place, mother’s energy is all spent, and pressing duties don’t permit her that happy fellowship. There may be some exceptions, but generally speaking, the father is to be the breadwinner, and the mother is to be the keeper at home.

Duties of Husbands To Their Wives

a) The husband is to honor and respect his wife. We are instructed in 1 Corinthians 7:3, “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence.”

The husband is to show due courtesies to his wife. It is pathetic to see how some young men can play the part of a gentleman; be courteous, gracious, and show respect to young ladies when they are courting them—and then after marriage, they come home and scold and nag and become sullen and bitter. The Christian husband is to remember that it is no easy thing for his wife to keep house, care for the children, and experience the vexing things that come along with the daily duties of home life. Let the husband render to his wife due courtesies.

b) The husband is to consider her physical frailty. 1 Peter 3:7 admonishes, “Husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.”

The husband is to keep in mind that his wife is generally speaking physically more frail than he. Each husband should be careful not to create additional unnecessary work for his wife. And yet when some husbands leave the house in the morning, it seems like a wind-storm has gone through, and when they come home at night, they are careless about dragging dirt into the house. If we as husbands would close our doors and hang up our clothes we may have more pleasant wives.

c) The husband is to truly love his wife. Colossians 3:19 says, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”

The husband is to demonstrate true affection for his wife. He should tell her that he loves her, and he is to treat her with the same love, gentleness, and kindness he showed her while he was courting her. How long is it, husband, since you remembered her with those little tokens of love (a box of candy or a bouquet of flowers) that you were eager to shower upon her during courtship days? If you have been neglecting this duty—go to your wife, apologize for your thoughtlessness, take out your family Bible, read the record of your marriage, and brighten up that old love! If husbands and wives would work as hard to keep each other as they once did to catch each other, most domestic home problems would be forever solved. The spirit of courtship needs to be continued throughout married life.



*It is the duty of every child to
respect and honor his parents.*

Duties of Children To Their Parents

a) Children should honor their parents. God says in Ephesians 6:2, “Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise.”

It is the duty of every child to respect and honor his parents. If you are inclined to be ashamed of them, remember that they cared for you when you were altogether unable to care for yourself. We sometimes forget that our mothers endangered their lives for our sakes; we are ungrateful for the weary toil of our fathers; we fail to appreciate the many sleepless nights that they went through in order that we might be comfortable. All of us owe our parents honor, respect, and courtesy.

b) Children should accept instruction from parents. We read in Proverbs 1:8, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”

That admonition is very simple. Children can easily understand it. It is wise to heed the instructions of parents because the advice and mandates which Christian parents give are generally intended for the welfare of the child.

c) Children should diligently obey their parents. Children are instructed in Colossians 3:20, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”

One of the most beautiful Scriptures regarding the childhood of Jesus is the one that says, “He went down to Nazareth and was subject unto them.” If Jesus, the eternal Son of God, was subject to family authority, then certainly every child ought to obey his parents. One of the saddest New Testament Scriptures is the one that says, in the last days, children shall be “disobedient to parents.” A child should never call his dad “the old man” and his mother “the old lady.” Children—treat your parents as you wish you had treated them when you say your last goodbye to them and when you take that last look at mother and daddy as they lie before you in their caskets.

Duties of Parents To Their Children

a) Parents should teach their children. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says, “And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, and

when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

Bear in mind that every child is born into this world with a sinful nature and that the cute cooing baby in his cradle will soon demonstrate that he has a will of his own. He will lustily scream if he doesn’t get his own way. Thus every child needs to be taught diligently. Reading and quoting the Bible in your home should be just as natural as talking about the weather. Teach them the way of salvation. Read to them from wholesome literature. Memorize Bible verses with them. It is amazing how much truth a child’s mind can absorb.

b) Parents should be good examples for their children. The passage in Deuteronomy 6:6 says, “And these words . . . shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them.”

The Word of God must first be in the parents’ hearts! Children are great imitators. We have all seen little girls wearing the clothes of older people. They want to be like mother. The best way to “train up a child in the way he should go” is to go that way yourself. Most children want to be the kind of man or woman their mother and dad are.

c) Parents should discipline their children. Proverbs 29:15 says, “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

The New Testament says that children shall be brought up in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). The word for “nurture” actually refers to “discipline.” Some don’t use the rod, but if you want to ruin your children, just give in to their every desire, and you can be assured that the job of ruination will soon be complete. I have seen children throw themselves on the floor and kick and scream and insist on getting their own way, and the parents said, “Let them alone, they must express themselves!” May God have mercy on parents who fail to discipline and admonish their children. The Bible tells of God’s judgment on one family because the father (who was a good man engaged in the service of the Lord) failed to discipline his sons (1 Samuel 3:13).

May God help us to live “at home” so sweetly, so tenderly, and so lovingly—that the memories we make within our homes may be music in the heart, sweeter than the songs that angels sing, and may our family circles be unbroken in the world to come.

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A Christ-Centered Courtship

God’s Plan for Male and Female

by Paul Hershberger

Millersburg, Ohio

A Christ-centered Courtship is a series of messages on godly courtship preached by Paul Hershberger. He preached these messages several times at different locations over the last ten years. Recently, we had them transcribed and abridged for reading clarity. After printing all six articles in The Heartbeat of the Remnant, we will publish them in a booklet. This is the first article of six.

Introduction

My wife and I had the privilege of having a courtship without regrets or guilt. We were blessed with parents who guided us in the right way and gave us opportunities that they didn’t have.

If you don’t have that testimony or memory, please don’t go on a guilt trip. But my prayer for you is that you get a burning burden and vision in your heart to have it for your children. That can be your reward.

A Christ-centered courtship is a period of time between a single life and a married life. The decisions you make in this period will affect you for the rest of your lives. With God’s blessing on your life, you can end up with no regrets or guilt.

Five goals for this Christ-Centered Courtship series.

- Goal #1. To turn the hearts of the fathers to their children.
- Goal #2. To turn the hearts of the children to their fathers.
- Goal #3. That parents would get a burden to lead each one of their children into the perfect will of God for their lives.
- Goal #4. That young people would get a burden to seek after God, find fulfillment and purpose in walking with God, and you would seek maturity in your manners and in your character.
- Goal #5. That young men and young women would rise up to be godly fathers and godly mothers with a vision to raise up another godly generation, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ can go on.

God’s Plan for Male and Female

Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the

years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” My desire is that each one of you, remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Turn your heart, your focus, and your life to pursue after your Creator, Almighty God, in heaven.

What does he mean, “while the evil days come not” and “the years draw nigh”? It means to seek the Lord when you’re young. Take the energy of your youth and seek after God. Young people, you’re young and full of ideas, visions, plans, and dreams. I doubt there are any of you who just enjoy sitting down in an easy chair, putting your feet up, and just dreaming about how terrible and horrible life is going to be. We don’t do that, do we? But if we don’t walk with God and follow God’s plan, hard things will come upon us. When hard things come in life, we have no place to turn to. We dream that life will turn out well. The decisions and actions in our youth affect us for the rest of our lives. The good news is they can affect us in a good way. The bad news is they can affect us in a bad way. It depends on what decisions and choices we make. But young people, you’re young, and you have the opportunity to choose.

Let’s go to the beginning of Genesis.
“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept:



and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:18-24).

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26-28).

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18). “I’ll make him an help that is meet for him.” God said He would do that.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). God made. God created us male and female. It takes a lot of blind faith to believe that we evolved perfectly as male and female. The creation of male and female is God’s plan. It is one of the living proofs of Creation. God made. God created. It’s God’s plan. God is the Author. And God’s plan brings blessing.

I’d like to look at ten different aspects of this blessing of God’s plan.

1) God brings Eve to Adam.

“And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:22-23).

God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. Then God created Eve and brought her to Adam. Adam awoke and realized, “This one is for me!” He had seen all the animals go by when he named them. Now God brings him someone that is for him. He also realized, “She was taken out of my side.” She’s close to his heart. “This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” It’s not a dog; it’s not a giraffe, or a monkey, or an ape. This one that God brought to him is like him. God’s plan has a blessing.

Adam and Eve had never had a companion before. Adam and Eve had never let the emotions of their heart go before. Something happened in Adam and Eve’s hearts. Adam was a “one-woman man,” and Eve was a “one-man woman.” They never gave their heart passions to anybody else. God has that plan for us, too. God’s plan brings blessings.

2) Leaving and cleaving in unity for life.

“Therefore Bshall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

This verse says, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother,” but Adam and Eve did not have a father and mother. What God is saying it doesn’t work for there to be cleaving unless there’s leaving. Also, in Mark 10:7, we read, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.” This is God’s plan, and God’s plan brings blessing.

Leaving means to leave behind, to abandon. “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother” is to leave parents leave behind. Let’s consider a young man who has a really good home life. He’s blessed and has everything he needs. Yet once God brings his Eve into his life, something rises up inside him, and he says, “I’m leaving!” But this is God’s plan. And God’s plan brings blessing.

It’s not just leaving his father and mother; he also cleaves to his wife. Cleave means “to glue to, to adhere.” We are very familiar with glued wood panels. All kinds of solid furniture are made out of panels glued together. And if they’re glued together right, they will not come apart at the joints. If you tear them apart, you’re going to have to tear the wood apart. God’s glue is the same way, where it glues two people together. The only way to tear them apart is by splintering and ripping and God does not bless that. But leaving and cleaving, staying together and being glued together, that’s God’s plan and it brings blessing.

3) They shall be one flesh.

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Two single people who become one married couple, become one unit before God, and become one family before God. They become one flesh, where God sees them as together as one.

“And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:8-9). God’s plan for male and female is that He brings Eve to Adam. Then the leaving and cleaving to take place. He causes them to become one flesh. Pulling apart is no blessing at all but brings agony, pain, travail, and hurt. There is no blessing in separation. But God’s plan brings blessing.

4) Not an unequal yoke.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness” (2 Corinthians 6:14-15). “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:39).

God’s plan is that marriage is an equal yoke. God will not bring an Eve to an Adam in a marriage that is an unequal yoke. Let’s think about leaving and cleaving, getting glued together, and two becoming one. In marriage, those two are now one before God. Imagine being in a bad marriage relationship like this—a family like this trying to function together. There will be no blessing.

But an equal yoke brings blessing! God desires that we be joined together in one flesh, one heart, and one mind. He wants to see us joined in heart, mind, and flesh the whole being, being one. God’s plan brings blessing.



5) God planned for us to have children.

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Think of the joy and miracle every time another child is born into a Christian home. God planned it this way. And if God brought Adam his Eve, and they leave and cleave, they become one flesh, one heart, one mind. If they are equally yoked and God blesses them with children, it becomes a joyful haven where God can dwell. “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 9:1). “And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein” (Genesis 9:7). God’s plan brings blessing.

6) Headship order.

“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3). It is God, and then Christ, the man, and the woman. God established a headship order, and this headship order is a blessing. It’s God’s plan, and it’s a blessing.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3). Children, obey your parents in the Lord is a part of the headship order. This not difficult to understand, is it? A home following the plan of God is just a blessed situation. Young people learn to be under authority. Make that your high priority. The sooner you learn to be under authority, the better you will be prepared for the responsibilities in life.

I remember looking at married life and having aspirations about teaching children and raising a godly family. I listened to the “Godly Home” series and thought I was ready to go. But then the day came when it was my turn and my responsibility, and all of a sudden, my heart wanted to wither. Responsibility doesn’t feel the same as dreaming about it does. YOU need to do something! YOU are responsible. YOU need to make it happen. And, by the way, not just make it happen; you need to make it happen in a Christlike way. You need to make it happen in a way that the anointing of the Spirit of God can come down on your family. The better we learn how to be under authority, the better we’ll be prepared for those responsibilities. The more we realize we need God, the better off we are. Let’s make a high priority out of learning to be under authority as children and as young people. “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee” (Proverbs 3:1-2).

God will add his blessing if we stay in this headship order. The more you learn how to be under authority, the more you will be blessed when you establish your home. God’s plan has blessings.

7) A godly marriage.

Ephesians 5:21,22,24 says, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. . . Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”

First of all look at verse 21, “submitting yourselves one to another.” There’s a blending together that needs to happen in a godly home. This blending together should happen in the fear of God. If we’re submitting one to another in the fear of God, we’re going to obey God because we want His blessings.

Ephesians 5: 22, 24 “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. . . Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.” Young ladies, you can count on it: submission to Dad equals submission to a husband. You can practice while you are single. This will help build character in your life. Being a rebellious and froward woman is not going to bring the blessing of God.

It goes on and says, in Ephesians 5:25,28,29. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it . . . So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.” Young men, this says that husbands should love their wives. So who do you think God put in your life to prepare you to love your wife? Your mother! Do you want to learn how to love your wife? Learn how to get along with your mom, love your mom, and care about her. Do you want to practice to love your future wife? Go ahead and love your mom.

Verse 33, “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” God’s plan brings blessings.

8) Being heirs together of the grace of life.

1 Peter 3:7 “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” As husbands, we give honor to the wife. She is the weaker vessel and the one that born the children! She’s gone through a lot of traumatic changes in her life. She’s the one that gets worn out and tires sooner.

And he says, “Husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge.”

Young men, learn to understand your mom and your sisters. It will help you after you get married. Don’t conclude

that—ah, that’s just women. No, you want the blessing of God. Learn to know and understand them.

“Being heirs together of the grace of life.” God wants us to be heirs together of the grace of life. If we’re not heirs together of the grace of life, can we be heirs separated of the grace of life? I don’t think so. He says we should be heirs together so that our prayers are not hindered. So if we’re heirs separated, could we say our prayers will be hindered? Yes, our prayers will be hindered. Let’s give honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel. Every ounce you can gain in this area will only bless you later. It’s worth it. God’s plan brings blessing.

9) **A blessed and secure home.**

This comes partly out of 1 Peter 3:7, but also from Psalm 144:12 “That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” The grace of God is on a secure home where there is unity. Where Dad is understanding Mom, where Dad cares about Mom. Dad is ministering and is there to help and guide. He’s there to give direction with a heart of compassion. God’s plan for male and female—God’s plan brings blessings.

10) **As Christ and the church.**

“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 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. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (Ephesians 5:24-29).

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” God is looking for men who are willing to give their lives. Single young men, who are willing to answer the call and give their life. This is a high calling of God. It’s the plan of God.

Young men, are you willing to lay down your life, your agenda, and those independent things you like to do? Are you willing to be patient, gentle, and understanding? Are you willing to lose sleep and keep going even when you’re tired? Are you willing to stay calm and not react in stressful circumstances? Are you willing to lead and guide a wife and children, eternal souls, through this life?

But my plea is that you would volunteer and say, “I’m willing to apply myself to the Word of God, the will of God, the plan of God, and I’ll give my life. I’m willing to lay it on the altar.” Jesus gave His life for us, and He’s comparing the marriage with the church and Him.

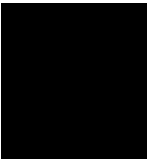
There’s also a need for mothers who are submissive and yielded to authority. Mothers who do not follow the women’s lib of our day but are rather content to be keepers at home.

Young ladies, are you willing to enlist? Will you give your heart to be guided and led? Are you willing to follow and to cheerfully submit to your authority? Are you willing to serve and be spent for your family? Are you willing to serve and be spent for YOUR family? If you get married someday, it will be YOUR family that you’ll be serving and being spent for. Are you willing to bear pain and discomfort? Are you willing to be a helpmeet, giving yourself for his burden and vision?

But as we look at God’s plan and blessings, you want God’s blessing, young people! But that means you need to make choices accordingly. Rise up and make decisions that will lead to maturity. Maturity comes with the process of seeking after God. Make a commitment in your heart to open yourself to God’s blessings and principles. I encourage you to walk with God, to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, and to do so in humility.

Seek after Christlike character, and do it on purpose. It is so easy for us to just live life however it happens. But if we make decisions on purpose, it will take us somewhere! Those decisions matter. Do things according to God’s plan.

God has a plan for male and female and he has a plan for you.



Dealing with Cynicism

By Vincent “John” Waldron, MD
Gladys, VA

“Dr. Waldron, Elsie needs help!” Elsie’s husband was adamant, almost angry, as he stared at me. On the other hand, Elsie stared at the floor, almost as though she wasn’t present. I had never met either of the couple before and was struggling just a little to figure out what was needed from me to help her.

“What is going on?” I asked as I flipped through her chart. This was still in the days of paper charts, and I headed to the lab section of her chart. There wasn’t anything too crazy that I could see there—her liver enzymes were a little elevated, but otherwise, everything seemed OK.

“It’s her drinking!” Her husband told me. “She is drinking more and more every night. She won’t go out except to get whiskey. She drinks till she passes out every night and has to have something every morning to get her started.”

“Is that true?” I asked Elsie, feeling like a judge overseeing a jury trial.

“Yes,” she said. Her face was emotionless, and I couldn’t tell if she wanted to be there or not.

“Do you want help?” I asked her. This was a loaded question. Many people who struggle with alcoholism aren’t ready to break free from its vice-like hold on them. Maybe Elsie was different.

“I guess so,” she said, indifferently. Once again, I couldn’t tell whether she wanted to be there or not.

“At the rate at which you are drinking, you will kill yourself within a year – maybe two at best – if you don’t give up alcohol entirely,” I told her. “If you want to, I will try to find you an inpatient program to detox you and get you off of alcohol.”

“She’s ready,” he husband said firmly.

When dealing with someone who drinks heavily, it is crucial that they don’t simply stop drinking without medical support. Abrupt cessation of alcohol use causes the body to go into withdrawal which can produce a state called Delirium Tremens and even seizures.

I stepped out of the exam room and to make phone calls.

It is never easy to find a place for someone to attempt to rehabilitate from any kind of substances, and it was over an hour and a half before I found a facility that was willing to take Elsie and try to help her get off of the whiskey. I sighed as I reentered her exam room. I had been afraid that I wouldn’t find anywhere for her to go.

I told them about the plan, and her husband nodded vigorously, while Elise continued to stare silently at the floor. “Can we pray together before you go?” I asked them, and when they nodded assent, I prayed with them, asking for freedom and Jesus’ presence in both of their lives.

They left my office with marching orders and directions on where to go. I had a happy glow about me for the rest of the morning, knowing that I had gone the extra mile and had really made a difference in this middle-aged couple’s life.

Around 2 pm, I got a call from the rehab facility. They hadn’t seen even a shadow of Elsie or her husband, which was surprising, since it was a bright sunny day and the facility wasn’t that far away. With a sinking feeling, I dialed the couple’s phone number.

“She won’t go!” Her husband told me. “She tells me that she told me this ahead of time. She’ll try to cut back, but she isn’t willing to go into a rehab facility or any such thing. I guess just tell them that we’ll let them know if she changes her mind.”

My nurse called the rehab facility and told them the bad news, and I sat down in my chair, stunned. What else could I have done? Was there a solution for Elsie—something different that I could have said that would have made a difference in her life?

About a year later, I received the sad news that Elsie had died at home. I was certain that things would have been different if she had gone to rehab and if she had given control to Jesus. None of that had happened, and I felt cynicism pushing into my heart.



*Better is a
poor and a wise child
than an old and foolish king,
who will no more be admonished.
For out of prison he cometh to reign;
whereas also he that is born
in his kingdom becometh poor*
ECCLESIASTES 4:13



Cynicism

We live in an age of cynicism. In ancient Greece, the cynics were an odd assortment of men who specialized in being grouchy and saying mean (they would have said truthful) things to people. They often dressed in rags and behaved in such a way that most of the polite Athenians did not want to be close to them.

Today, cynicism means a tendency to believe the worst about people and circumstances. Cynical people believe that all people are motivated purely by selfishness and that bad events will tend to prevail.

Many young doctors are idealistic and very hopeful. They believe that if they exert the utmost effort, they can make a real, positive impact on their patient's lives. Unfortunately, as time goes by and they try their hardest and their patients don't change, they can give up. These doctors still try, but they no longer really hope that their efforts will make much of a difference.

It seems as though people who get involved with politics often have the best of intentions. They see this as a path to changing society for the better. Unfortunately, as time goes by and the faces in charge change, the policies don't really change, they tend to become cynical.

Sometimes this cynicism is directed against all politicians. Sometimes it is only anger directed against members

of the party that opposes their party's positions. Hope is replaced by cynicism.

Cynicism in the Bible

If there is a book in the Bible that seems to have been written by a cynical man, it is the book of Ecclesiastes. The Preacher, who we understand to be Solomon, lists all of the things that he endeavored in an attempt to find joy.

In chapter 2:17-23 Solomon describes work as futile. He finishes by saying, "For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity." (Ecclesiastes 2:22,23)

He saw the world as being dominated by tyrants and there was little that the people could do about it. Solomon went so far as to say that political power was meaningless "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor" (Ecclesiastes 4:13).

In Ecclesiastes 6:6, he seems to disparage long life. "Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?"

Of course, he finishes his short book with the instruction to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. There

is a blessing for those who choose to focus on God when they have a little bit of energy left and not, when they are old and jaded, like Solomon.

Later on, it almost seemed as though God had given up on His people. He still sent prophets to them, but He knew without a doubt that the people would refuse to respond. "Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee" (Jeremiah 7:27).

Even in the New Testament, Paul told Timothy that the time was coming when people would no longer listen to sound doctrine. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;" (2 Timothy 4:3).

By picking and choosing these passages, we can come away with a very gloomy view of the future and, more specifically, of human's willingness to change. It seems there is little point of investing ourselves in the people around us. They are full of woe and are as likely to change as a chipmunk is to master differential calculus.

The Opposite of Cynicism

The opposite of cynicism is hope. It is the belief that the future could be better.

It is interesting that the Apostle Paul spoke of tribulations in the Epistle to the Romans, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh

patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:3-5).

We may not have reached the place where we glory in the trials we experience, but certainly, they should bring us these other things that he mentions. For, we grow in patience and experience, even as we deal with trials, but more than that, we come to realize that we have hope for tomorrow because we serve a great God.

The contrast in the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 teaches us much about hope. The father and the older brother were strikingly different in their attitudes.

The father had never given up hope – he knew that his son had failed him and gone far from what he knew was right and yet, the father still desired to see the prodigal come to himself and return home.

On the other hand, the older brother not only had no hope for his younger brother, but he was also angry with him. The prodigal had wasted his money, he had lived in sin, and now, he had returned home just because he was out of money.

Certainly, there was no reason to trust the younger son. Yet, that is exactly what our Heavenly Father does for us.

Look for Hope in the Right Places

Part of the problem is that we look for hope in the wrong places. A number of years ago, a presidential candidate

*"And not only so, but we glory in
tribulations also: knowing that
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because the love of God is
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the Holy Ghost which is given unto us"*

ROMANS 5:3-5

ran for office under the slogan “Hope and Change,” and yet, even though he was elected, I imagine most folks did not feel that their lives were significantly changed for the better.

Pursuing the things this world values—political power and wealth is guaranteed to bring emptiness. This is Satan’s pattern—he always over-promises and under-delivers.

This was what he did when he tempted Jesus, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8). All of the things Satan offered, nothing compared with the glory that Jesus eventually received from the road that led to the cross.

In the same way, Satan would like to distract Christians from seeking the things that are valuable, and that will bring hope. Satan tells Christians that politics will not only change the world for the better, it is an easier way to change the world.

The Bible is clear that we build hope as we nurture our relationship with God and then work to help our brothers and sisters build that same relationship in their own lives. The reason that we can hope is not because people are so wonderful—we don’t have to live very long to realize that they aren’t. The reason we hope is because we serve an awesome, faithful God who walks with us through the worst of our trials.

Remember that We Have Undeserved Hope

Jesus’ messages about forgiveness make it clear that one of the major reasons that we have for forgiving others in our lives is that we have received great and undeserved forgiveness. The same is true for hope.

Each one of us was hopeless and without reason to expect to receive hope and we were still given a ray of light in the midst of our darkness. Maybe part of the reason that we have so much trouble hoping for good things for the people around us is that we do not remember how hopeless we were before we found grace.

If Jesus was able to bring hope to our hopeless existence, then certainly He can do wonderful things in the hearts and lives of others around us. The only people we should give up on are the ones that our Savior has given up on as well.

Small Efforts Do Make a Difference

I remember having a conversation with a young person who was planning to go into medicine and had a plan to go to a foreign country and serve the people there. As we were talking, an older man entered the conversation and shared that he saw little hope for change in developing countries.

The people in those countries just weren’t interested in getting better and didn’t do the minimum necessary to stave off things like worms and parasites. Doctors and nurses couldn’t make a difference in such an environment.

I could sense the heart of the youth sinking as this older man shared. He had experience, and he had given up hope.

The sad thing was that he was also stealing the hope of someone who still had a desire to serve.

When I was in training, I had a surgeon tell me that family doctors didn’t really do anything. They simply kept their patients alive till their next office visit, whereas surgeons really “fixed” people—taking out (or off) the offending body part.

At the end of the day, small efforts do make a difference. I don’t do brain surgery, but I still can make a difference in someone else’s life—maybe just by spending a little time and listening and praying. This is true for all of us.

More than that, we come to realize that making this effort changes our own lives for the better. Jesus told the sheep that as they ministered to “the least of these my brethren,” they were ministering to Him.

Even if no one’s life is improved, our Savior knows our desires and feels our efforts, and will reward them someday.

A Few Things to Remember

When we face failures, we tend to move in one of two directions. Those of us who are optimists tend to believe that this episode was an isolated event and that the future is still bright. On the other hand, pessimists believe that failures are permanent, personal, and pervasive.

Pessimists believe that their failures are the result of intrinsic character flaws that they have and that these things affect all of their lives and are unlikely to change. Unlike the righteous man who falls to rise again, these people fall and lie where they fall, defeated at the outset.

When we are dealing with other people, we need to give them the same grace that we should give ourselves. They, too, are growing, and if they have a failure today, they will do better tomorrow. Maybe they will fail again, but they will at least “fail better.”

Conclusion

Cynicism is rife in our world. Many have given up hope for a better future, and it is understandable for those who have invested their hope in this world’s institutions. There is no real hope in government or in armies or in bureaucracy.

The song says, “Oh to have no hope in Jesus, how dark this world must be!” For, Jesus is the one who brings light into our darkness and allows us to continue, even when others fail us.

God is the one who redeems us. He is the one who sent the prophets, even though their messages were ignored, and the prophets were persecuted. He is the one who continues to hope for us, even when we have failed Him so many times in the past.

He is the reason we carry on. He is the reason that we have hope, not only for ourselves but also for our brothers.

Procrastination Overload

by Sue Hooley

Holmesville, Ohio

The urgency of the last minute is something that many homemakers deal with regularly. No matter how organized we are, sometimes we put off tasks because we dislike them or wait until we are under pressure.

Habitual procrastination potentially leads to higher levels of stress. Maybe I’m odd, but it is hard for me to stay calm and collected when the pressure is mounting. By the time the last minute things are completed I’m too exhausted to enjoy the planned event.

Toothaches and Road Trips

It is a mystery to me why a family member ends up in a dentist chair a day or two before we leave on a trip. Maybe it hasn’t happened as often as I think, but the frustration of an unplanned trip to the dentist at an inopportune time is riveted in my mind. Now I schedule an imaginary appointment before a trip. If it is not a dental emergency, some other issue is bound to fill that time slot.

Deadlines are a normal part of life. Without them we would be unmotivated, and our days would lack purpose. Interruptions are also a normal part of life. They constantly give an unpredictable twist to our days and weeks. If we let too many tasks wait until the last minute, interruptions and deadlines collide, and chaos reigns.

Change the Last-Minute Scenario

Deadlines and interruptions cannot be eliminated but we can limit last-minute tasks. Sometimes it takes some honest looking back to figure out what caused our stress. Often, we blame it on interruptions and fail to realize that poor planning or procrastination might have been the culprit.

For example, if guests are coming and we plan to wash windows and make a dessert along with a dozen more tasks on the day of their arrival, there is no room for disruptions.

From experience, we know interruptions will come. So, isn’t it better to “plan” for a bee sting and a stubbed toe?

Why not schedule window washing and dessert another day? That might mean some fingerprints on the windows and a simpler dessert, but isn’t that better than a great deal of stress at the last minute?

Do some tasks ahead of time

Deciding early in the day what to make for supper and packing the diaper bag in advance are little things that can make a big difference at the last minute. When our children were young, I started packing suitcases a day before a trip versus the day of leaving. I was better able to cope with the last-minute rush if that job was out of the way.

Do the most important tasks first

This approach gives freedom to skip jobs of lesser importance when up against a time crunch.

Sometimes not everything on the task list is of equal value. Dropping a task is difficult for a perfectionist, but it is possible to develop new habits.

Break work into smaller bits

Sometimes the enormity of a task makes it seem too huge to start. Break down the large task into smaller components. Completing a smaller task is much more manageable. Deep cleaning my kitchen is a task that I do not enjoy. If my planner says, “deep-clean kitchen,” it’s easy to ignore.

But if my planner says, “clean appliances, wipe out cupboards, and wash windows,” it seems more doable.

There are so many joyful events in life; why be hassled by procrastination? Give yourself the liberty to live life differently. A few minor changes can make the biggest difference between a blessed or stressed last minute.

Circumstantial Overload

by Sue Hooley

Holmesville, Ohio

Circumstantial overload might be the most difficult. We can choose not to go to a Norwex party if we need to give our schedule some space. But if a child breaks a leg in the middle of wedding preparations, we have no choice other than to make the best of the situation.

Circumstantial overload may happen slowly, as in the following story, or it may happen quickly as in the case of an accident in which a family member is injured.

Becky is in her thirties with seven children under seven-teen. A few years ago, one of their chicken houses burned down. At the time, they were thankful that the chickens had left the day before and that no one was close by when the propane tank exploded.

“My husband faced the disaster like a man,” says Becky. “His calm spirit helped me relax. I felt certain that we could make the financial adjustments and life would go on as before. But I was wrong. Very wrong.”

“In time the mess was cleaned up, and Rick looked into rebuilding. The quotes were higher than expected, so he opted to do some of the work himself. He also took on a part-time job to provide more income. Our boys were old enough to help, yet they couldn’t do much without Rick’s direction.”

“I first felt the adjustment in my wallet, but I consoled myself that this was only temporary. Then the spark in Rick’s eyes was replaced with a dull stare. He became distant from us. I knew something wasn’t right, but I couldn’t put my finger on it.”

“Then he was elected to finish the last four months of secretarial duties for a brother who spent some time in Bulgaria. That night he came home and wept. ‘Doesn’t anyone understand what I’m going through? Every time I turn around, there is something to do. The boys want to go fishing, you need a new clothesline, and the chicken house needs to be finished in six months! I am not mentally capable of handling one more duty.’”

“That was the straw that broke the camel’s back,” Becky said. “I became alarmed when I heard him yawning in the middle of the night and knew that he was not sleeping.”

“It was clear to me that my perfectionist husband was overloaded. More and more Rick leaned on me. I cut back on my commitments and tried to keep my time free so that I was available to help lessen his load.”

“I felt like a lifeguard trying to keep a man from drowning while taking in a bit too much water myself. Many of the home-life responsibilities fell on my shoulders. Then I was asked to fill the position of food committee for Mrs. ‘Going-to-Bulgaria.’”

Unfortunately, circumstantial stress is often unnoticed. Worse yet, the victim can be misunderstood or misjudged. Becky said, “My darkest day came when I was accused of being selfish with my time because I declined the food committee request.”

Prolonged overload can be emotionally and mentally damaging

Intense, long-lasting pressures or troubles shouldered alone can cause severe stress. Minor stress is normal, but prolonged stress can cause depression, anxiety, heart disease, and high blood pressure. How you handle prolonged stress is important.

Sometimes this type of overload is not public knowledge. Traumatic events in our plain circles tend to receive prayer, finances, and weekly budget updates. At the same time, other saints are suffering deeply on the sidelines with little recognition or financial aid. It could be strained relationships or little bills that add up to a big sum. Betrayal and rejection cause stress beyond measure. There are no quick fixes to circumstantial stress, but little sparks of light can help you navigate the darkness.

Talk about your situation with someone you trust

Sometimes just talking about problems can help you to put issues in perspective. Hearing yourself verbalize

a stressful situation somehow clears brain fog and gives a clearer path forward.

Find routine

When stress prevails, racing thoughts, forgetfulness, and inability to focus comes uninvited. Having a routine can bring some rhythm to your mental well-being. The smallest normalcy brings a moment of pleasure, and it is soothing to the soul.

Intentionally seek a breather

Lingering stress can cause agitation, moodiness, and the desire to take control. Sometimes it is hard to think beyond mental fog, but it is so important to find refreshment for your mental wellbeing. Stress hormones can speed up your heart rate and tighten your blood vessels. That temporarily raises your blood pressure. The opposite happens when you relax. Being relaxed helps you have a calmer, clearer mind which improves your concentration and decision-making.

Believe that God cares

Say it. Read the Psalms over and over. Listen to good music. Take short walks and pray aloud. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Believe “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).

If you are facing circumstantial overload, be patient and realistic. God will make a way

for you. Many times, He opens doors just when we are running out of options. He will supply the needed grace for that hour. And the next hour. And the next. At times, surprising opportunities come, and prayers are answered in unexpected ways. However He chooses to work on your behalf, hold to His unchanging hand.

Regardless of the type of overload you might be encountering, turn to your Heavenly Father.

Ask Him for direction and wisdom. And say with the Psalmist, “In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion” (Psalm 71:1).

IN THEE, O LORD,

do I put my trust.

PSALM 71:1



Amazing Grace

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How unbelievable it is that God can take a wretched sinner, void of the fear of the Lord, and turn him into a blood-washed saint and preacher of the gospel! In this story, we see God’s life-changing power at work in our hymn writer’s life.

In the small cemetery of a churchyard in Olney, England, stands a granite tombstone with this inscription, written by Newton himself before his death:

John Newton, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy!

This epitaph aptly describes the unusual and colorful life of this man, one of the great evangelical preachers of the eighteenth century. His testimony was, “By the grace of God, I am what I am!”

“Amazing Grace” was a hymn published in 1779, with words written in 1772 by the English poet and Anglican clergyman John Newton (1725–1807). “Amazing Grace” is probably the most beloved hymn of the last two centuries. This hymn is estimated to be performed 10 million times annually. It has appeared on over 11,000 albums and translated into about 60 languages. It was referenced in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s anti-slavery novel Uncle Tom’s Cabin. It had a surge in popularity during two of America’s greatest crises: the Civil War and the Vietnam War.

Ironically, this stirring song, closely associated with the African-American community, was written by a former slave trader, John Newton.

John was born on July 24, 1725, in Wapping, England, to a seafaring father, John Newton, Sr., and a devout Christian mother, Elizabeth Newton. His father loved him but was gone at sea most of the time. On the other hand, his mother was tender and nurturing, teaching him the Word of God. She would instruct him in memorizing the Bible whole chapters at a time and took him to church. Unfortunately,

when he was almost seven, his mother died of tuberculosis. His father remarried a short time later and sent him to a boarding school. During his time at the boarding school, he made bad friends. His character disintegrated to the point that he was dismissed from one school and moved to another. By the time he was 11 years old, the boarding schools didn’t want him, so his father took him along to sea. He spent the next six years on the Atlantic Ocean with his father.

When John was 17, his father arranged to send him to Jamaica for a well-paying job overseeing a plantation. On his way, while waiting for the ship’s departure, John received an invitation to the home of some old-time friends, the Catletts. It was in this home that John’s mother had died ten years earlier. As he reacquainted himself with them, he got to know their daughter, Mary. John and Mary’s mothers were best of friends. John had been invited to stay four days, but he stayed two weeks and missed the ship to Jamaica.

At age 18, John was conscripted into the Royal Navy, and his life went from bad to worse. He wanted to return and see Mary, so he deserted the ship but was caught, publicly flogged, and laid in irons. His life on the ship was so profane that even the other ungodly sailors cringed at his curses and blasphemies. He gained the title “The Great Blasphemer” and was such an unwanted man on the ship that he was sent to work on a slave ship.

One of the owners of the slave ship where he now worked, offered John a job once they reached the African coast. However, once on shore, he was tied up and forced to work with little food, clothing, or shelter. He sent several letters back to his father during this time, pleading for help.

A ship called *The Greyhound* was sailing near the coast, which John had now called home. The captain had been instructed by John’s father to look for his son. The ship, while being almost too far from shore to trade, decided to give trading a try. A friend of John’s rowed out from shore to trade. As he turned to leave, the captain asked him whether

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he knew anyone named John Newton. He did to the captain's surprise, and John was brought on board to go home.

On board the ship, Newton picked up a copy of Thomas á Kempis's Christian classic, *The Imitation of Christ*. He had never encountered anything like it, and he began to wonder if the Christian claims might be true. That night, on March 10, 1748, a fierce storm nearly swamped the ship. Men, animals, and provisions were swept overboard. The storm awakened Newton, the ship's rotten timbers broken by the waves and floodwater swirling into his cabin. John prayed for the first time in years.

The Greyhound thrashed about in the North Atlantic storm for over 11 days. With little hope of survival, the

sailors mechanically worked the pumps, trying to keep the vessel afloat. On the eleventh day of the storm, John was too exhausted to pump, so he was tied to the helm, where he did his best to hold the ship to its course. From one o'clock until midnight, he was at the helm. He feared he was going to die, and if the Christian faith were true, then he surely would not be forgiven. He reflected on all he had done over the past few years. His life seemed as ruined and wrecked as the battered ship he was trying to steer through the storm. During those long and grueling hours, Newton cried out to God like he never had before, and that was the turning point in his life.

That was a day John Newton remembered ever after. "On that day, the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of deep waters." Over 50 years later, John wrote in his diary on March 21, 1805: "Not well able to write; but I endeavor to observe the return of this day with humiliation, prayer, and praise."

Only God's amazing grace could take a rude, profane, slave-trading sailor and transform him into a child of God. John never ceased to stand in awe of God's work in his life. He took an interest in prayer, reading and meditating on the Scriptures, and only speaking words pleasing to God.

On his return home, Mary and her parents recognized the change the Lord had brought in John. The two were married on February 1, 1750.

For the next four years, Newton was captain of his own slave ship. This occupation kept him separated from Mary for months at a time. While they were apart, the two corresponded constantly. In his letters, John repeatedly wrote how their love and marriage increased his thankfulness and gratefulness to the Lord. "... When I indulge myself with a particular thought of you, it usually carries me on farther and brings me upon my knees to bless the Lord for giving me such a treasure and to pray for your peace and welfare"

John endeavored to "Christianize" his slave ship by holding Sunday services for his crew of 30 sin-hardened men. He made three more voyages to bring slaves from Africa to North America. As he planned his fourth trip, he became sick with malaria. God used this sickness to end his involvement in the slave trade.

As John began a new chapter in his life, he felt called to be a minister. For more than 50 years, he preached the gospel and was one of the most influential men of his day.

John Newton often composed a hymn to go with his Sunday evening services. In 1779, 280 of these were collected and combined with 68 hymns by Newton's friend and parishioner, William Cowper, and published as the *Olney Hymns*. The most famous of all the *Olney Hymns*, "Faith's Review and Expectation", grew out of David's exclamation in 1 Chronicles 17:16-17. We know it today as "Amazing Grace". "Amazing Grace" originally had six

stanzas, and the last verse was added about a century later. Most hymnals have four or five of these verses.

As minister in the church, John continued to be more and more troubled by the slave trade that was still going on. In 1788, 34 years after he left the slave trade, He wrote a book entitled *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade* and sent it to all the members of parliament. This book brought an awareness to the public of the evils of the slave trade. He quotes this, "Needless to say, the capturing, selling and transporting of black slaves to the plantations in the West Indies and America was a cruel and vicious way of life." With the help and providence of God, John saw the day, several months before his death, in 1807, when slavery was officially banned from England.

When John was in his sixties, his beloved wife Mary passed away. This was a great trial for John, and he spent the remaining 17 years of his life without her.

After John suffered a stroke and shortly before his death, a spokesman for the church encouraged Newton to consider retiring from preaching because of failing health,

eyesight, and memory. John replied, "What, shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can still speak? I will continue to preach. Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner, and Christ is a great Savior."

The last words of John Newton as he lay on his deathbed were as follows: "I am still in the land of the dying; I shall be in the land of the living soon."

The tune "Amazing Grace" is an early American folk melody. It was first known as a plantation melody entitled "Loving Lambs". This tune was first published in 1831 in the book *The Virginia Harmony*. The majority of hymn books published after this time included this song. In 1910, Edwin O. Excell added the last verse, which eventually replaced the last three original verses of the song. His edition of the song is most common in our hymnals today. Several other *Olney hymns* by Newton continue to be sung today, including "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds" and "Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken".

Amazing Grace

John Newton, 1779

Arr. Edwin O. Excell, 1831

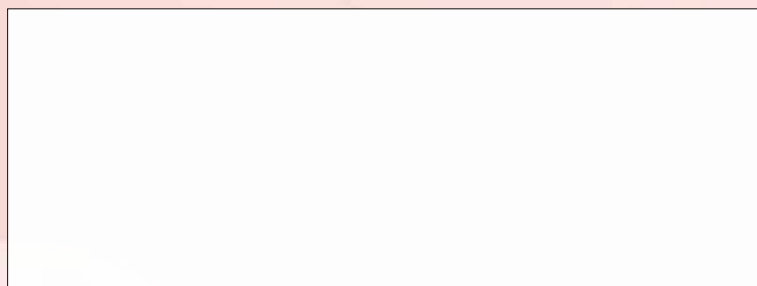
1. A - maz - ing grace! How sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me!
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears re - lieved;
3. The Lord has prom - ised good to me, His Word my hope se - cures;
4. Thru man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares I have al - read - y come;
5. When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shin - ing as the sun,
I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see.
How pre - cious did that grace ap - pear The hour I first be - lieved!
He will my shield and por - tion be As long as life en - dures.
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.
We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first be - gun.

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which eliminates

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