

Be ye doers
of the Word
and not hearers
only...
James 1:22

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

In This Issue:

"SINNERS THAT WAR WITH GOD" - GLENN HORST

"OUT OF THE MIRY CLAY" - TAMARA HEINEMANN

"VENEZUELA MISSION TRIP" - RODNEY MAST

"THE BATTLE FOR SEHWE" - KENDRA FREY

"IN STRICT TRAINING" - MENNO KNIGHT



Letter from the Editor



One of the great miracles I have witnessed is how a newborn lamb staggers to its feet and totters to the back end of the ewe, puts its head down, searches for a teat, and begins to suck. How does the lamb know what to do?

The same thing happens with a newborn calf. Some unseen power guides the newborn to search for the teat and suck. With milk it will live. Without milk the calf will die.

There has to be a Creator-God who created such miraculous wonders for us to behold.

As I bump upward in age, I still like learning new words. But when one lady came to my bedside carrying a tray and vials, she wore a label that said, "phlebotomist." After doing due diligence, I found that a phlebotomist is "a medical professional who specializes in drawing blood." If I ever need to "give blood" again, let it be a "phlebotomist" that comes to draw it.

God created a world that changes every season and year—at least in Georgia. In the last ten years, on this little spot on earth we have received anywhere from 2" to over 8" in the month of December. Based on my limited records, I say that real climate change is in progress!

In AV27, Glenn Horst preaches on a subject that has been so avoided that many forget the Bible even teaches it.

Tamara Heineman and Kendra Frey tell of victory in great spiritual battles taking place in the kingdoms of this world.

Rodney Mast reports on an exploratory mission trip to Venezuela to investigate needs, and then makes some interesting observations.

Menno Knight challenges us to hold our bodies in subjection as did the apostle Paul, and as high school football players do today.

AV27 also has the usual mix of lively stories, discussions, rubrics, poetry, and reader comments—all meant to stir your thinker and inspire you to live in obedience to God and His Word.

Peace,

James G. Landis

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About Anabaptist Voice

Our Mission Statement:

We want *Anabaptist Voice* to be a servant to the churches of Jesus Christ. We choose the name “Anabaptist” as a fitting term to describe an obedient “people of God” in our generation. We follow the *example* of the historic Anabaptists who sought to obey the teachings of Christ and the apostles, but we do not idolize Anabaptists nor historic Anabaptism. We follow Christ.

Our Purpose:

To interpret Scripture in a simple childlike way, and to apply Bible teaching to the lives of living saints.

Our Tone:

The tone of the magazine shall be positive in that:

- it presents the right way when it decries the wrong way.
- it presents the truth when it warns of the untruth.

Our motto shall be words from Isaiah 30:21.

Whenever you turn to the right hand
Or whenever you turn to the left,
You shall hear a voice behind you, saying,
“This is the way, walk in it.”

Our Bible Translation Policy:

All Scriptures quoted will be in either the KJV or the NKJV translations unless otherwise specified.

We respect the specific preference of a writer who wishes to use other translations for his article.

Our Finances:

There is no set subscription price for *Anabaptist Voice*. We appreciate donations from those who wish to support the work.

To assure an informed supporter base, each issue will contain a statement giving the number of copies printed and distributed, the total costs for the previous issue, and the amount of donations received.

Our Organization:

The AV Editor is responsible for assuring that *Anabaptist Voice* adheres to the stated purpose, securing writers, and proper copy editing. The AV Production Team is responsible for design, layout, printing, subscriptions, and all financial matters.

At present, *Anabaptist Voice* is choosing to be free of government regulations and control as much as possible: We are not registered with any federal or state government body. We are not a 501(c)3 organization; individual contributions are not tax deductible. Those who give to *Anabaptist Voice* through the local church may obtain a tax deduction.

Our Audience:

Our primary target audience is anyone associated with an Anabaptist church. We define an Anabaptist church as one that practices a follower-of-Jesus baptism, maintains actual applications of Bible truths, and one where a close-knit, disciplined brotherhood exists among the believers.

Our secondary target audience is those not familiar with Anabaptist churches but are searching the Scriptures for truth.



Some Historic Tenets of Anabaptism:

In order to provide clarity about who we are, *Anabaptist Voice* lists some historic Anabaptist beliefs and practices we believe are still valid today.

1. God accepted Jesus’ death on the cross as an atonement for the sins of the whole world. Thus the blood of Jesus enables each person to be acceptable to God when he repents of his sin and surrenders himself to King Jesus. This initial commitment is followed by obedience to the commands of Christ which gives the disciple assurance of his right standing before God. “Salvation” is not just a one-time event but a life-long experience.
2. Adult believer’s baptism signifies a commitment to follow Christ as His disciple in His Kingdom.
3. The teachings of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament are to be put into practice. The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain are the heart of Christ’s Kingdom teaching for His disciples.
4. Anabaptists recognize the church as Christ’s Kingdom on the earth.
5. Faithful obedience to the commands of Christ often brings persecution upon us.
6. The world (*all who do not obey God*) is evil and under the sway of Satan.
7. Our earthly conduct determines our eternal destiny. True faith must result in obedience that will be rewarded in heaven. Evil works prove a lack of faith in God and will result in eternal punishment.
8. Kingdom disciples do not participate in the civil government or “serve” in the military.

Our Readers Write

Policy Note: Email letters to *Anabaptist Voice* are encouraged. All letters must be accompanied by the writer's full name and physical address (not a PO Box). If the letter is printed in the magazine, only the writer's initials and state will be attached to the comments. If you send AV a letter, we assume the right to use any part of the letter we deem of interest to our readers. Not all comments by readers express the thoughts of *Anabaptist Voice*, but we think they may have some merit in showing counter points of view.

AV Editor

Higher Ground

I read through AV26. Healthy discussion is valuable; unhealthy discussion about disputable topics is counterproductive.

Life and history are so full of worthwhile considerations which lead to higher ground that we may not waste time mired in mud which drags us down. Readers are depending upon AV to:

- lift their sights,
- clarify the truth,
- present wholesome challenges,
- provide insight,
- sharpen the Christian worldview,
- tell stories,
- bless the good,
- cause readers to be angry with evil,
- focus on excellence wherever it is discovered,
- ponder the past,
- glimpse the future.

I pray that AV can lead the way.

C. W. | *Texas*



Speaking Out on COVID

I really appreciated the "Our Readers Write" letter, "For the Record" (AV26, page 6).

That letter clearly brought out how statistics can be misleading. Using selected statistics, many can be made to believe that masks, social distancing, quarantines, and vaccines conquered COVID. The Amish in Holmes County, Ohio, proved such a scenario was not true.

Then I came to "Half and Half" (AV26, page 7).

Apparently the writer thinks everything about how we live should be cut-and-dried. Christian living is not always clear-cut and proper, even in Jesus' day. He, over and over, challenged the Jewish authorities on their rules: don't make a big fuss over petty issues like ceremonially washing hands before eating, and then overlook justice and mercy.

This is the same Jesus who made a whip of ropes and chased the money changers out of the temple. In

Matthew 23, He denounced these authorities in no uncertain terms.

My point is that Jesus did not try to keep "biased" and troublesome points out of the people's sight. He zealously acted and taught in the hearing of the people. In fact, the leaders were afraid to kill Him for fear the people would stone them.

I do not think Jesus would have avoided talking about COVID if it interfered with the worship in His Father's house.

D. L. H. | *Ohio*



My Favorites

I want to tell you some of the things I like best in *Anabaptist Voice*.

I like the testimonies of the present and past as well as simply written heart-to-heart articles.

I like what people say who write letters for "The Practical Side" and the "Round Table Discussion" and the editor's comments. All these things make me think about how to live out what the Bible teaches.

May God give you wisdom!

S. K. | *Missouri*



Continue the Work

Keep up the good work with the magazine.

I especially enjoy the questions raised throughout—at the end of articles, stories, and the Round Table. They cause one to stop and think.

Then I see the varied thoughts that come in and I wonder, "How is James going to answer that?" I find the answers you give very interesting.

Stay with it.

J. H. | *Virginia*



Networking Ideas

I am a happy *Anabaptist Voice* subscriber and have two questions:

First of all, Who do I make the church check payable to for a tax deductible receipt?

If I made a check out to my local church and specified that it was to go to *Anabaptist Voice*, my accounting and CPA advisors would not approve of that. Yes, it would be okay if the church agreed to lift an offering, but some of us are in churches that would not be enthused about giving to *Anabaptist Voice*!

If your local church would agree to accept donations for a “getting the word out” fund or a literature fund, then all of us could be covered.

My second question is, Could we talk on the phone about setting up a new organization to keep our people posted on pertinent financial news including a CBDC (Central Bank Digital Currency)? We have some interest in starting an alternative to a CBDC. I have consulted with two Anabaptist attorneys and am not sure how to proceed. Then I thought of the *Anabaptist Voice* setup!

I want to inform you of a meeting several brethren held at Dalton, Ohio, on April 4, 2022. The following paragraphs tell the burden and purpose of the meeting and should give you some idea of what our interests are.

America’s financial system is under stress and the fiat dollar system, as we know it, may be changed to a digital system that not only will require internet/smart phones or a chip to do business but will also subject us to government surveillance and control in accessing our finances. Dodd Frank Banking Reforms have brought more risks to investors and depositors in case of bank failures. We, as plain people, are interested in pursuing some ideas on how to be better prepared, including having our own bartering or exchange system.

We are also aware of how typical hospitals, medical research centers, big tech, big corporations, food manufacturers, and mainstream media are increasingly driven by money, politics, and liberal ungodly ideology. A few health clinics have been started by plain people, but more are needed.

We think more networking about better options around the country should be considered. There are individuals who have a vision for these needs to better serve our own people. We seek to complement and support the efforts of people, such as the B & W burn helpers, who already have things in place. We want to explore ways in which we can band together to move forward with godly options for our people.

I appreciated your book, *Overflowing Earth*, when I read it years ago, except for the favorable comments on chemicals like roundup!

I wish we could talk on the phone, about my networking and education ideas and how best to set it up. I am a slow typist and it’s a rather unique venture.

Jesus said “Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it” (Luke 17:33).

A. B. | Virginia



Power in Song

AV26 featured several good articles on singing and song. I believe Christian song is a vital part of spiritual warfare. I want to give several examples.

First, a couple of Old Testament examples suggest that men of faith, men of God, understood the power of godly music to drive back the enemy. In 1 Samuel 16:23, when an evil spirit came upon Saul, “David took an harp, and played with his hand.” The result? “Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.” David’s praise-filled, melodious song released God’s power. Our singing does too.

In II Chronicles 20, King Jehoshaphat confronted a huge coalition of enemies. What did he do? After praying, “he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army” (20:21). And why did he do that? What good are harps in a battle? Wouldn’t it have been more important for these singing men to wield a sword or a spear? Well, he understood what we need to understand. Praise expresses faith in the Almighty, and that spoken faith releases God’s power. So what did the Lord do? He “set ambushes against the [enemies] who had come against Judah; and they were defeated” (20:22).

Our Lord Jesus also understood the power of this weapon. When He went to the Garden of Gethsemane to engage in “hand-to-hand” combat with “the ruler of this world” (John 14:30), He prayed (John 17). He gave no place to the devil, for He said, “He has nothing in Me” (John 14:30). He walked in communion with His Father and with His people (John 17:21, 25). And He sang a hymn (Matthew 26:30).

“Go, and do thou likewise.”

E. S. | Oklahoma



Sinners that War with God

by Glenn Horst

Introduction: This is a condensation of a message Brother Glenn Horst gave on November 4, 2022, at the Southern Mennonite Fellowship Meetings (Hartwell, Georgia). This message presents a startling warning to sinners living in disobedience to a glorious, holy, and powerful God. For those redeemed ones living in obedience, this message is one we must proclaim to the world.

By the illumination of the Spirit and by the grace of God, I'm going to attempt painting three pictures in your minds.

1. *The Wrath of God*
2. *Man Under God's Wrath*
3. *The Precarious Thread of Life*

The Wrath of God

What is *the wrath of God*? It's not flying off the handle like when someone loses their temper—things fly, words fly, pieces fly. That's not *the wrath of God*.

The wrath of God is a perfect, pure, controlled, just, thorough judgment of all things. *The wrath of God* is just as indescribable as the love of God. It's just as wide and deep and just as glorious as the love of God. Yet I wonder how often we actually think about His wrath.

Can you comprehend the greatness of God? No more can you comprehend *the wrath of God*.

Let's read about the wrath of God. Open your Bibles to Revelation 15:1, 7-8. I want you to notice here the connection between God's wrath and His glory. His wrath is about to be revealed in a powerful way that had never been seen before.

Revelation 16:1. The rest of Revelation 16 describes the results of the seven angels pouring out their bowls of God's wrath upon the earth.

I'm not sure what all of this means, but notice a number of things about *the wrath of God* as these angels poured out their bowls upon the earth:

1. Can you imagine the horrible sights and the awful stench as the angels poured out their bowls of wrath?
2. Notice the connection between *the wrath of God* and His righteousness and the judgment that is happening.
3. Men suffered from thirst, scorching heat, darkness, hailstones and great pain—such a miserable existence on the earth.
4. All the plagues might be summed up in verses 19 and 21: Let us pick up the story again in Revelation 19:11-19.

There is about to be a great battle here.

The rider on the white horse is the Word of God. The beast, the most powerful piece of the enemy army, was taken.

It says in verse 20 that the beast and the false prophet were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant, all the armies that had gathered to fight, were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the



The wrath of God is just as indescribable as the love of God.

Revelation 15:1, 7-8. “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them *the wrath of God is complete*. ... Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls *full of the wrath of God* who lives forever and ever. The temple was filled with smoke *from the glory of God and from His power*; and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

Revelation 16:1. “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of *the wrath of God* on the earth.’”

Revelation 16:19-21. “And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the *fierceness (fury) of His wrath*. ... And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail.”

horse. Wasn't a long battle, was it?

Verse 14 says that the armies of heaven followed Him who sat on the white horse. What did the army do? They rode home with white garments. Verse 21 tells us it was the sword that came out of His mouth that overpowered the enemy.

My friends, there is great power in *the wrath of God*. You cannot imagine the magnitude of the power of this wrath. There was no struggle; there was no fight. There was only the perfect timing of *the wrath of God* to be executed upon these people.

It would be sad enough if that were the end of the story, but let's continue reading Revelation 20:11-15. Let's read again about these people whose flesh has been fed to the birds. Not only were they destroyed by *the wrath of God* and the end of time, they were also dumped into an eternal torment where *the wrath of God* burns forever and ever and ever, without end.

At the end of time, my friends, there are but two prepared places.

There is the place Jesus prepared for His followers, to share with them the glories of His kingdom forever and ever.

And there is another prepared place for the devil and his angels where those who refuse the love of God and the gift of salvation will spend forever and ever and ever under *the wrath of God*.

If you'd like to know more about that place of eternal torment, you can read about it in Luke 16. In this account a rich man discovered what hell is like.

There are two things that always stand out to me when I read this account. It's not the torment of the flames, it's the memories that he had. His memories went to the chances and opportunities which he had to avoid that awful place. It's also amazing to me how evangelistic this man suddenly became when he opened his eyes in hell.

Friends, if we could ever get a glimpse of eternity, it would become far more real to us. If we were to open our eyes in hell, we would want every soul on earth to know what is beyond.

So, my friends, what is it to be at war with God? When God is at war with you, it's over. There is no fight, no struggle. You may be at war with God, but praise God, for now, He is not at war with you.

You see in Scripture short glimpses of *the wrath of God* in some of the stories we read. I thought of the story of the flood. It says the imagination of men's heart was only evil continually; that was the state of mankind. Man's condition grieved His heart, but God by His wrath destroyed the world, except for Noah and seven other souls.

We read about God's wrath when He cast His perfect judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Fire and brimstone rained from heaven and burned up the city and all who were there.

I thought about how we see *the wrath of God* against Pharaoh—the judgments of the plagues. It's interesting to note how the plagues are similar to the ones we read about in Revelation.

You see *the wrath of God* in the account of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. If you're struggling with respect for authority and how much God cares for authority, maybe you ought to go read Numbers 16 again.

Revelation 20:11-15 “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. ... And they were judged each man according to His works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

Genesis 18:20, 24 “And the Lord said, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous ...’

Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.’s”

Numbers 16:19, 33 “And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation. ...

The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households”



In the New Testament, there is the simple little story of Ananias and Sapphira. You know the story well. What caused them to die? The judgment of God? Or was it *the wrath of God*?

My friends, the thing I want you to remember is that God's wrath is incredibly powerful. And we have never seen its fulness. Never. Even in the stories I have just described, you have never seen *the wrath of God* that is sure to come.

Man Under God's Wrath

The second picture I want to paint for you is man under God's wrath. This could be a man or a woman. The Scriptures give us several ways that we can find ourselves under *the wrath of God*.

The **first way** we can find ourselves under *the wrath of God* is if we are friends with the world. *The world is the enemy of God*, as James 4:4 says.

Love for the Father and love for the world cannot coexist. Both cannot be in the heart of a person. We have love for the world or we have love for the Father. We cannot have both.

Jesus said that what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The world has a lot to offer these days. When we talk about "the world" we are talking about how the people live, how the people think, how the people process information, what they value, and what's important to them. In the world of music, entertainment, of sports, of social media, and on and on and on, you can soon catch what the values of the world are.

My friends, if those are your values, then you are the enemy of God. That's what the Scriptures say. The values of the world, the pleasures of the world, that which is esteemed in the world—they are not the values of the Christian. They are the values of one who is the enemy of God.

The **second way** we can find ourselves under *the wrath of God* is if we have a carnal mind, as Romans 8:5 says.

This verse tells us that what dominates our mind, what we think about, what is on our mind—determines our values. Are your thoughts things of God, things of the Spirit, things of the spiritual life, things of value, spiritual pursuits, spiritual desires? What do you think about and what fills your mind?

Or is it the things of the flesh—the carnal things, the desires of the flesh, the pursuits of the flesh, the goals of the flesh? What is it that dominates your thoughts? It's not just a question that is neither here nor there. (Read verse six in Romans 8).

If your mind is dominated by earthly things, that's death. But to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Then verse seven goes on to give us the second way to be the enemy of God: have a carnal mind.

If our thoughts are consumed with carnality, then we are the enemy of God. These verses tell us how the Gentiles walk in the futility of their minds. They have their understanding darkened, their minds are past feeling, they have given themselves over to licentiousness (sensuality) so as to indulge in every kind of impurity and greediness.

I don't know how it is here in Georgia, but I know where I come from it

James 4:4 "You adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

I John 2:15 says, "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."

Romans 8:5 "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

Romans 8:6 "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Romans 8:7 "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh, cannot please God."

Ephesians 4:17-19: "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

is literally unbelievable how corrupt a mind can be. Things that are evil are called good, and things that are good are called evil. Desires that shouldn't be described among animals are normalized among human beings. This is how depraved the mind becomes when it is apart from God.

We can convince ourselves that it is okay to do what we want to do because we want to do it. Whenever the "want to do" is in front of the truth of God, we're always going to find ourselves doing what we want to do.

The **third way** we can find ourselves under *the wrath of God* is through sinful deeds. Go to Romans 1:18. *The wrath of God* that I read about in the book of Revelation, I don't see revealed today. But it must mean *now* because if I go back in verse 17 it tells me that the righteousness of God is revealed from heaven. I know God's righteousness is here now.

There are things I know are consequences of sin which are pieces of *the wrath of God*; just tiny pieces. But *the wrath of God*, the evil consequences, this evil judgment comes upon certain people. He goes on to describe it: Professing to be wise, they became fools. Their foolish hearts were darkened. God gave them up to uncleanness. God gave them over to a debased mind.

Has there ever been a generation that was "wiser" than ours? Has there ever been a generation that was more educated than ours, yet more foolish than ours? Has there ever been a generation more confused about reality? Maybe it was like that in the time of Rome or Greece? I don't know, but I know it's like that today.

Romans 1:23-32 lists an unbelievable catalog of evil deeds that spiral downward into darkness and death. It begins with one's thoughts that move to action, and it moves to a place where evil is celebrated as good. And those people are under *the wrath of God*.

We read of the same thing in Colossians 3:6. If we go back to verse five, it lists the sins that give vent to *the wrath of God*—fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

We read again of these things in Ephesians 5:6. And what are these things? Go back to verses three through five—fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, coarse jesting—these are things which are not fitting for saints and are under *the wrath of God*.

I Corinthians 6:9-10 summarizes the third way—evil deeds—that we bring on ourselves *the wrath of God*.

The **fourth way** we can find ourselves under *the wrath of God* is refuse to believe in the Son of God.

Read John 3:36. All unbelievers, all those who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior, have *the wrath of God* abiding on them. Abide means to cling to, it remains, it continues to be present.

For a further explanation, we go back to verse 18.

Friends, I ask you, "What must you do to be under the wrath of God?" What do you have to do? Unless we reach out for salvation through Jesus Christ, we are all under *the wrath of God*. There is no escape. There is no other place. There is no other person.

My friends, the problem with coming to Christ is not a problem of understanding. It is a problem of morality for people. They love their evil deeds! They can't accept the ultimate Morality Giver because He will

Romans 1:18

"For *the wrath of God* is revealed from heaven."

Colossians 3:6

"Because of these things *the wrath of God* is coming upon the sons of disobedience."

Ephesians 5:6 "Let no man deceive you with empty words, for because of these things *the wrath of God* comes upon the sons of disobedience."

I Corinthians 6:9-10

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

John 3:36

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but *the wrath of God* abides on him."

John 3:18

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

demand of them a different life.

We are no different. Too many times we continue to live in our sin. We do not allow the Spirit of God to move us to live in righteousness. So much evangelism today is, "God loves you and the Christian life is so fulfilling. Don't you want to be a Christian?"

Do you know what that is like? That is like trying to coax a child off the highway by telling him the grass is so nice and green over here in the front yard. "Wouldn't you like to come over and look at this grass and play in this grass." Do you ignore the Mack truck roaring down the highway right toward him?

My friends, that is the reality for every person who is not in Christ.

The Precarious Thread of Life

The last picture I want to paint for you is *the precarious thread of life*. I have good news. John 3:16 tells us God loves us.

Psalm 86:15 tells us, God is full of compassion and abundant in mercy.

Psalm 103:8 says, God is gracious and abounding in mercy.

Jonah, what a pathetic evangelist Jonah was! Listen what Jonah prayed. Jonah was saying, "I didn't want to go to Nineveh to preach the gospel because I knew you were going to forgive them." Now that's pathetic as an evangelist. God is a God of mercy.

God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. God says to the children of Israel in Ezekiel 33:11, God does not want to see any living human being in eternal hell under His wrath. Not one. God has no enemies like that. He is not at war with mankind.

But God's abundant mercy is extended to mankind on the precarious thread of life. How many more days are you certain that you will live?

Do you know you have tomorrow coming? Can you count on it? You don't know whether you have one more day. You don't. And that is why I say there is this *precarious thread of life*.

How many days are you certain will pass before the Lord Jesus Christ returns for His bride?

How many days are you certain the earth will continue on as it continues now?

My friends, when Jesus Christ returns, or when you take your last breath, you are what you are, for all eternity. The fact that God loves you and the fact that God is a merciful God, will not matter a lick. It's like you are a little ant here on earth and God in His mercy is holding back His wrath. When time is no more, it is going to come. If you are in the Book of Life, you will not experience *the wrath of God* ... ever, or for all eternity. Praise God!

Friends, sinners don't need to be at war with God. They have the opportunity to repent. They have the opportunity to be at peace.

If you are not prepared to meet God, take hold of God's abundant mercy. By the patience of God mercy exists while you live.

G. H. | Ontario, Canada

Psalm 86:15

"But you, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth."

Psalm 103:8

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy."

Jonah 4:2

"Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm."

Ezekiel 33:11

"I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?"



God's abundant mercy is extended to all mankind on a precarious thread of life so that not one soul need experience the Wrath of God in eternity.



Rubies & Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.



“The love of God will never condone what His holiness condemns.”

– Henry Ramos at Burkeland Mennonite Church, GA



“An attitude of gratitude generates a feeling of generosity.”

– Clay Zimmerman at Farmington Mennonite Church, MO



“If we haven’t left anything behind for Jesus’ sake, we are not following Him.”

– Jheyson Pedrahita at Iglesia Menonita del valle de Huaral, PERU



“Love makes obedience easy and duty delightful.”

– Irvin Shank at Paradise Mennonite Church, MD



“Your fear of God is in direct proportion to your knowledge of God.”

– Calvin Horst at Peake Mennonite Church, VA



“It was not the volume of sin that sent Christ to the cross. It was the fact of sin.”

– Nathan Ulrich at Sequoia Bible Fellowship, CA



“Do not water down the Word of God or you will soon crumble as did the house on the sand.”

– Joseph Yoder at Pelkie Mennonite Church, MI



“When God’s people fight among themselves, people end up in the land of the enemy.”

– Kirby Zimmerman at Hebron Mennonite Church, OH



“Casualness often ends in casualty.”

– Richard Herr at Rowe Mennonite Church, PA



“Change in the church that happens by default is dangerous. If a change is pleasing our flesh, it will let us down. Change should always bring us closer to God.”

– Dave Kurtz, Shekinah Mennonite Church, MO

Share your rubies and diamonds with AV readers. Send in the quote followed by the name of the speaker and the name of the congregation or church where it was given. Just for our records, we also would like to have the name and address of the person sending in the quote.

Venezuela Mission Trip

by Rodney Mast



On 27 October 2022, a team of four—Dave and Monica Bergen, Levi Espinoza, and Rodney Mast—left Chihuahua, Mexico on a mission trip to Venezuela.

One purpose of the trip was to determine if there was an open door for sending volunteers to help with clean-up and reconstruction at Tejerías where, on 8 October 2022, a large wave had decimated the town.

The second purpose for the trip was to visit the printshop that has been printing literature for MZL (Mt. Zion Literature). We wanted to help MZL get a hold on quality control issues; the quality of the books they printed had been deteriorating in an alarming way.

MZL and the Mexico churches sponsored the trip.

27 October, Thursday Morning

We left our homes at Pedernales, Mexico at 3:00 a.m. and drove to the Chihuahua airport. Our journey from Chihuahua, Mexico, to Caracas, Venezuela consisted of three flight segments—Chihuahua, Mexico, to Cancún, Mexico; Cancún to Panama; and Panama to Caracas, Venezuela. An approximate distance for our entire journey was 3,100 miles.

28 October, Friday Morning

Our day in Cancún began at 2:20 a.m. when we left the hotel to catch our 6:00 a.m. flight to Panama. We arrived in Panama at 8:30 a.m. and took off for Caracas at 9:30 a.m..

We arrived in Caracas at about 12:30. The airport

seemed more alive than the last time I had been there. We went through the whole system of getting disinfected, got our COVID test, and after going through security, went out to where Joaquín Arenas; Peter, the one who organized the transportation; and Freddy, the driver, were waiting for us.

28 October, Friday Afternoon

We all got into the vehicle and headed for Tejerías. As we headed up the mountains leaving Caracas, rain began. Peter said that this year it has rained more than normal. Soon Joaquín started talking about food and we stopped at a restaurant along the road. When we got back onto the road we got into a traffic jam, thanks to some landslides on the highway because of all the rain.

At the entrance to Tejerías, the pastor, Carlos Méndez, from San Mateo was waiting for us. Alfredo, the pastor of Tejerías, was with him. Peter got off here and we headed to Alfredo's house.

As we entered Tejerías we saw much military presence. We got to Alfredo's house and he invited us to go to the second floor where they have their services. We talked a while, after which we sang and prayed, and then Alfredo and his son took us walking to where the tragedy had happened.

Again we saw lots of military presence everywhere. The government was handing out food and even had doctors there. We saw many houses and businesses in bad condition, and many other places where the water had destroyed everything. There were a few houses



Devastation after washout at Tejerías

where mud had filled three-fourths of the first floor. Pastor Alfredo took us to a group of people living among the ruins. They had lost their houses with everything in them. We talked with them a while; it sounded as though the basic needs of the people were being met, but they were having difficulty getting cleaning supplies and basic hygiene items.

Pastor Alfredo had heard about a group of Christians who had been congregated when the water came, and the water had taken them. He asked the people there if they knew them. They knew pastor Carlos Castillo and right then they saw him coming toward them.

We talked with pastor Carlos about that day two weeks ago. He told us that sixteen people had been congregated when the wave came. Somehow Carlos and one other person managed to escape, but the other fourteen died—his wife and two daughters were among those who perished.

Carlos said he was fine and had all he needed, but in his eyes you could see the pain he was going through.



Rebuilding after washout

He had escaped with only the clothes he was wearing. After talking with him a while, we prayed with him and then said goodbye.

29 October, Saturday Morning

Saturday we again came to Tejerías at about 8 a.m. Levi and I helped to prepare some food parcels with toothpaste and soap, while Alfredo took David to talk with some people. We handed out food parcels and then we got into the vehicle and headed farther back in the interior than we had been the afternoon before.

We went past the place where the government was handing out food. We went down to the stream and crossed it. We walked past damaged houses and found the spot where the church house had been washed away.

One man, Stefano,¹ came and talked for a while about how they had been able to escape and help others. He described the missiles and torpedoes (immense trees and huge rocks) that came with the mud, destroying everything in their path. He told us that they had their savings in gold in their sofa and bed, but the water took it, along with their house. He also showed us a video that he could not share with too many for fear of the government. In the video you could see the big wave of water and mud and everything else it was able to take, including people.

Then we talked with Alberto,² a young man who was in the second floor of his house when all of a sudden he saw the stream rising.³ He ran to tell his sister, and they ran out to see what they could do. In a panic they went out and he threw the three children onto the roof. After

¹ Name changed to protect identity.

² Alberto, name changed to protect identity.

³ The river started growing at 6:30 p.m. and did not abate till 11:00 p.m..



Preaching and Food Mission

that he climbed up then turned around and grabbed his sister who was almost being washed away by the water.

A little later another big wave came, and he told us how the whole house shook. They saw other people going past in the river, neighbor's houses falling with

their occupants still inside, and all they could do was watch the tragedy and wait their turn to go with the torrent.

Eyewitnesses said the wave was ten meters high.⁴ There was mud anywhere from one meter deep to one floor deep in the houses. In the area where Alberto lived, which was two blocks from the river, the water covered the first floor. Other people told us they think Alberto's house didn't fall because some trees had gotten stuck and helped to part the water. The houses on both sides of his did not withstand the wave.

The people told us different things about what caused the big wave. Some said it rained in three days the amount it usually rains in one month. Others said the stream used to be big, but people started building closer to it and the sand filled it up little by little.

Another report we heard said some mining companies further upstream had blocked part of the river. When the heavy rains caused the blockage to overflow, it washed the blockage out. That's why there was the big wave and so much mud.

There are people who live further upstream but you can only get to them by paths. We were told these people up in the hills above were being given food parcels by helicopter; we decided not to investigate that need further.

Nobody knows the number of deaths. The government says its 57 but some others think the number is around 1,700.

29 October, Saturday Noon

We left Tejerías for Barquisimeto at noon (about a four-hour-drive to the west). We visited AJL, the print shop where they print the *Torch of Truth*, to see how it was coming. Things at AJL seemed to be in good order, so after a brief visit we found a place to spend the night.

30 October, Sunday

Sunday morning we went with Ruben. Ruben preaches in a poor area of Barquisimeto and then passes out bowls of soup. We sang at Ruben's kitchen a bit, and then I shared a few words, after which we helped to serve the soup.

Sunday afternoon the team had a time of prayer and then I gave a report of what we had found at Tejerías.

⁴ Ten meters equals 32.5 feet. One meter equals 39 inches.



Litay's print shop in Barquisimeto

31 October, Monday

On Monday, we went to Litay's print shop in Barquisimeto. In this town Litay has a 4-color printing press and the machine to make the plates. He showed us the machines he has in Barquisimeto. Then we headed off to Yaritagua, about half an hour away, where Litay has a warehouse with more printing equipment (folders, binders) and storage room for supplies and finished product.

When we arrived at the warehouse Dave got us to look at some copies of the book *Hijas del Rey* (*Daughters of the King*). Around 33% were defective. After lunch, we reviewed the book *Siervas del Rey* (*Servants of the King*); about 25% passed the inspection, the other 75% had pages stuck together, blank pages, and fuzzy pages.

At the beginning, it seemed the ones in charge were making excuses for the low quality. One of the excuses was that the books had not gone through the quality control check when they do the packaging. When teammate Dave heard that, he asked to open a pack of inspected books that contained two *Hijas del Rey* and two *Siervas del Rey*. Of the four books, two were defective. When they realized that we were serious, they got a group of workers together to help us with the inspection. They promised to finish checking the books.

Then we returned to Barquisimeto for the night.

1 November, Tuesday

On Tuesday morning we made the half hour drive to Yaritagua. Upon arrival at Litay's warehouse we worked at checking the printed pages that had not yet been bound. The warehouse where we were checking the books didn't have much air flow and at 2:00 p.m. it was very hot.

At the end of the day they showed us how they glue the Bibles.



How they glue the Bibles



Checking quality of printed books



Print shop

2 November, Wednesday

On Wednesday, we again left Barquisimeto for Yaritagua. Dave talked with Litay about how to make the books better, while Levi and I talked with one of the workers. After that we left for a hotel close to Tejerías where we stayed for the night.

3 November, Thursday

On Thursday, we left for Tejerías at about 7:00 in the morning. Upon arrival, we again met Alfredo who showed us some of the government's soup kitchens. We spent a good while seeing how things were going.

We wanted to go up the river to see if there were more needy people there, but the pastor told us that the military was guarding the area since there are precious metals there. He continued, it's said, "The government is mining in a protected area, and they brought Chinese in to mine it. The miners weren't careful and dumped

dirt down the mountain where it started to block the river. When it started to rain a lot, the river overflowed and brought all that mud down the river."

We tried to go into one of the refugee shelters, but we were not allowed to proceed. We believed Pastor Alfredo and his church were able to distribute some literature to those who need them. So we gave him 100 Bibles, 100 *Beside the Still Waters*, and 100 *Fifty Days with God*.

After that we left for Caracas. We got to the hotel, unloaded our suitcases and said goodbye to Freddy. That afternoon Levi and I talked with a guard for a while. He said he used to be a merchant and now he has to work as a guard, which he never imagined doing before. He also said he works for 50 dollars a month.

4 November, Friday

We left the hotel at 2:00 a.m. to drive to the Caracas, Venezuela, airport. Late Friday night, on the drive home from the Chihuahua airport to Pedernales, we added up the hours of travel that day; it came out to 22 hours.

— account by Rodney Mast, Pedernales, Mexico

— Rodney drowned in Lake Atitlán, Guatemala, 26 November 2022

Trip Evaluation

We determined that the work the government is doing there in Tejerías makes it difficult for us to try to go in and do relief work. We saw plenty of opportunity for listening to people share their stories and trying to point them to Christ; but for the time being, it seemed that the main physical needs of the people were being met.

On the printshop end of the trip, we did a lot of quality inspection during the two full days we spent there, trying to give the local team there a feel for what we can accept and what we cannot. Also, my wife and I spent a fair amount of time visiting with the owner, discussing the quality issues as well as the future of the printing work.

— Evaluation by Dave Bergen

Out of the Miry Clay

by Tamara Heinemann

Spiritually, I was a Gomer, an Hosea 2 woman. I strayed from God and sinned. I served Satan. But when I cried out to God, He reached down and did an amazing work of redemption and reconciliation in my life.

I want to share some of my restless and chaotic life so that I might spare others the griefs I have reaped. And above all, I want my story to help others struggling in sin to turn to the Living God for salvation.

Truly God is most magnificent. All glory be to God!

Life in Tucson, Arizona (1973)

I was born in Tucson, Arizona, into a strong fourth generation Church of Christ family—the Stone-Campbell restoration movement.¹ Despite moving nine times in ten years, I spent a lot of time with my grandparents, aunts and uncles who instilled into me a solid church foundation. After family ties, church was always next.

Life in Greenville, Texas (1976)

I was about three when my father took a new job as manager of a Sambo's restaurant and moved us to Texas. My first memories start in Texas.

Life in Durango, Colorado (1977)



Tamara and her father

I was four when my father was transferred to another Sambo's in Colorado. It seemed I rarely saw my father other than at work. I had a mat in his office where I spent many nights while he worked. I played with his mood ring² and with

cut-out paper dolls. My brother was born while we lived here.

Life in Tucson, Arizona (1978)

My parents moved back to Tucson to be with family. My father started training as a millwright. He worked out of town; my mom, baby brother, and I went back and forth between grandparents for awhile.

I loved my parents, and I knew they loved me. But

¹ The Stone-Campbell churches are characterized by a focus on New Testament teaching, shared governance between clergy and laity, baptism by immersion, ecumenism, and weekly celebration of communion during worship.

² A mood ring changes colors depending on one's mood.

they struggled. Because my father had served in Vietnam as a medic, he suffered from PTSD.³ Before I was whisked away to my Nana one night, I walked into my parents' room and witnessed a traumatic scene. At the time I could not understand my father's suffering, but I tended to absorb his mood, especially his pain.



Tamara's parents

My mom was busy standing by my father; my brother and I were somewhat neglected. Our home seemed to have a cloud of darkness living within it. I remember that Satan would visit me often and say, "You are mine. You belong to me."

In 1979, we moved to a different house in Tucson. My parents were able to rent their own place. I started kindergarten and I think part of first grade? During this time my father was really struggling with PTSD, but I remember how hard my parents tried to make my childhood normal. I came home one day and they had unpacked all my dolls. The dolls were lined up on the couch. It really was special to me.

Life in Glendale, Arizona (1980)

After a couple years of work as a millwright, someone dropped a tool box on Dad from a couple stories above him. After that injury, dad decided to become a chiropractor.

Life at Davenport, Iowa (1983)

When I was 10, we moved to some low-income apartments at Davenport, Iowa, where my father went to chiropractic school. My mom also decided to go to college, so both parents were busy with school.

³ PTSD, (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) is a mental and behavioral disorder that can develop because of exposure to a traumatic event, such as sexual assault, warfare, traffic collisions, child abuse, domestic violence, or other threats on a person's life.

My brother and I pretty much ran wild for the next two years. My friends started to take precedence over family. My moral compass began to falter. I started listening to rock-and-roll music and watching lots of MTV.⁴

In 1985 a larger townhouse unit opened up for us in Davenport so we moved again. My brother was quite a bully to me. I was supposed to watch him, but instead, I tried to avoid him. I would lock myself in my room; he would pound on the door incessantly. One day mom came home to find me handcuffed to the front door with the toaster on fire! I love my brother now. We are very close. But we had some rough times growing up. I gave him his first cigarette; he still smokes to this day. I hate that I was such a bad influence on him.

Dad finished his chiropractic schooling and we moved back to Tucson.

Life at Tucson, Arizona (1986)

In Tucson we stayed with my grandparents for a few months while my parents made plans to open Dad's practice. Then we moved back into the house owned by my grandparents.

I was 12 when we moved back to Tucson. It seemed like everything had changed. The little church that my family had attended shut down. Now my family attended a big church which was affluent and cold. My family also seemed to have changed. I felt like I didn't fit in with them or the church anymore. I felt lost and angry.

I hated church. Christianity didn't make sense anymore. Jesus seemed so weak to me, and Satan, still a common presence, seemed so strong. I think I loved him. He was calling me with open arms as if to some sort of destiny. I was drawn into the occult in its many forms for a number of years.

Meanwhile, I tried to fit into a new school for the fourth time. Timid and shy, I did not make new friends easily. A deep anger and hatred started to grow inside me. I did find some friends, but they weren't good friends; they stole, drank, and did drugs. We would also cut ourselves and each other. I became infatuated with blood and vampires.

I began melting down and started running away from home and getting into trouble in school. My parents thought they should move me to a new school district so they could get me away from the people I ran around with. So in early 1987 we moved to a Goldenwest Townhouse and I entered a new high school.

⁴ MTV is a trademark cable and satellite television channel which broadcasts popular music and promotional music videos.



In 1988, at age 14, I dove head first into the occult. I cannot describe the depths of darkness I was in. A friend of mine took me to a Satanic priest. When I locked eyes with this person, I saw an evil spirit deep within him that I did not want. I still shudder when I think about that moment.

I left immediately, but felt it had been too late. I could try to run away, but it seemed like I had opened myself up to Satan's ownership; he could take hold of me whenever he wanted. I ran away a lot and spent a lot of time running around the streets. My friends at the time were much older than I and kind of rough. They wore chains, black trench coats, and military-type boots. One Friday night we were drinking and "cruising speedway." I looked around at everyone and my conscience really hit me. "Lord, I know why I'm here, but I wish I wasn't. I know I'm lost."

Then my feelings would shift back to embracing, even relishing the darkness. Deep down, my soul was crying out for help. There were times, usually in the quiet stillness of a dawn, that I would sit outside and watch the sunrise. I could feel my spirit longing and searching, but for what? I didn't know.



Tamara and her brother

Up to this point, I had been a wreck in school. I failed every class but one or two in my freshman year. I rarely attended class. In fact, my art teacher didn't even let me in his classroom. If I did show up, he just pointed me to the door without saying a word. I ran wild and went from party to party until I met "Mr. Senior."

I believe Mr. Senior was an answer to someone's prayers. He likely saved my life. Mr. Senior had a way of controlling me like no one else could. Little by little he calmed me down and then set himself up as king over my life. Whatever he said, I did. He was a jealous person and didn't want me to have any friends

or associations besides him. The following year, he took me to school each day, picked me up for lunch, then took me back to school again.

Spiritually, I turned toward “white” witchcraft and an eclectic mix of Native American spirituality and New Age mysticism. I don’t think I would do my parents any injustice if I mentioned how involved they were in alternative medicine and how they admired our Cherokee and Choctaw roots. We had a lot of meditative and hypnotic tapes in the house and I used them a lot for help.

At age 17, I moved out of my parents’ house and lived with my nana.

Over time, my relationship with Mr Senior turned extremely toxic. We still partied; I just didn’t do it apart from him. There was so much fighting and mental manipulation. I knew the road was heading toward physical abuse.

After three years, I was a shattered vessel. Everyone else could see how damaging Mr. Senior was, but I did not. Once again, considering the road I was on, I have to give him thanks. Now I was 17 and a senior in high school. We were actually engaged to get married until one day he got mad at me and joined the army.

When Mr. Senior left, I went straight back to my old self. I still went to school, but I had figured out that I could basically show up on Monday to get the assignments and return on Friday to take tests and what-not. The raw truth is that my friends and I were ditching school, as was usual for us. We were looking for alcohol and partying.

One day some of my friends and I went to visit Sean, a boy we knew from school. The following day, we went back to the same house and I met Sean’s brother, Don. Don tells me he fell in love with me at first sight. He was sure I was the one for him. I was 17, coming out of a really bad three-year relationship with Mr. Senior, and felt pretty lost at the time. I was not ready to jump into another serious relationship. But Don has a heart of gold. The more time I spent with him, the more I was drawn to him.

Despite my drinking and partying, I almost made it to graduation with my class in May of 1991. I had taken two summer school sessions every year to make up for my freshman year. I was still short one class. As a result, I got my diploma unceremoniously in September.

After graduation the drinking started to consume me once again. I started struggling at my day-care job. I started falling asleep with the children at nap time. Once I fell asleep behind a stage when my boss was showing around some prospective parents. I had done



really well at day care up to this point. I really respected my director, so I quit before I embarrassed myself and her any further. After that, I held a variety of jobs but didn’t stick very long at any of them.

After graduation Don and I continued dating for a couple years. I had a serious drinking problem. Don grew up in a family of alcoholics and he didn’t care much for alcoholics. We fussed over it from time to time. I don’t know what Don saw in me, but he stayed with me.

Our circle of friends were getting into some serious drugs and getting involved with other wicked people. My life during this time remains somewhat of a blur; people constantly entered and exited through the smoke-filled rooms. But I remember one night in particular when I had a moment of conscience. A song came over the radio that arrested my attention. I stopped what I was doing and sat still. It was like God was reaching down into this sin-sick place and shining a light, saying, “Come and see.”

Once again I questioned, “Where am I, and what am I doing here?” It was an eventful moment, but as usual, I shook it off. Only days later when I opened the door to a man with a gun who was looking for a certain person, I was done.⁵

Don too, was going in a direction I didn’t want to go, so I left. I packed up and went to Oregon with my former roommates, Jolie and her boyfriend Rob.

Life at Mosier, Oregon (1993)

Between July and October of 1993, I lived in a cabin with my former roommates.

After a few weeks, Don called. He wanted to come to Oregon to be with me. As I sat in my room of the little cabin where I was staying, my heart just longed to be with him. I remember truly falling in love with him then and there, and being certain that he was the one for me.

It was either September or October when I picked him up at the Portland airport. Within a couple days

⁵ A number of these former “friends” are either dead or in prison.



**Wedding day
Feb 17, 1994
Reno, Nevada**

he asked me to marry him, and I accepted. After Don's proposal I left the cabin, and we rented a studio house in Mosier.

We were planning a September wedding, but I got pregnant. The medical care in our area of Oregon was really bad, so we thought we should go back to Arizona.

We got married at the Chapel of the Bells in Reno, Nevada, on February 17, 1994, on our drive home. It was just the two us. We

bought a couple wedding bands and got married in our blue jeans. It cost us only \$300 to get married. Of course, that was about all the money we had.

Life at Tucson, Arizona (1994)

When we arrived back in Tucson, we moved into the same townhouse where Don's brother lived. It was a bad neighborhood and Don's brother was up to no good. The townhouse itself was infested with roaches. Brooke was born here, but we moved as quickly as we could to get away from there.

By age 21, I was married and had a little girl. One night I came in from the bar with my stale-smelling leather jacket. I walked into her room and saw this beautiful, clean little baby in her pink nightie. It hit me hard that if she needed me, I couldn't help her right now. I did not want our little girl to grow up with a mother like this. Right there I tried to start changing my life.

Life at Hood River, Oregon (1995)

In January of 1995, when Brooke was about four months old, we moved to a monthly rental hotel near Hood River, Oregon. This lasted a few weeks until we moved into a condo in the same area. Don loved hunting and fishing in the Hood River area, but it only lasted about six months. Don received word that his sister had been injured. It tore Don up that we weren't there to help her. We decided we needed to be closer to family and moved back to Tucson.

Life at Vail, Arizona (1996)

We stayed in Tucson near Don's sister about four months until she had recovered. Then we moved out into the desert away from the city on one acre with a trailer. Our second daughter, Autumn, was born there. Don and I both got jobs working for the Vail School District in Vail. I had taken an accounting class and was able to get a job as the accounts payable clerk. Don got the job of being the Vail District's head landscaper, even though Don's main line of work had been a cook.

However, from this place we drove 45 minutes to the grocery store. That was too far out.

I had a baby and a toddler. We lived way out in the desert. Vail is all built up now, but back then, there wasn't anything out there. We were city people. Having land sounded nice, but we were way out of our comfort zone without amenities.

Don's sister sold her house to us on Eastview Street in Tucson; we moved there. Now Walgreens and Safeway were just a couple streets over. We were also closer to the hospital. Autumn was a tiny baby when we moved back to Tucson. She got really sick one night. We were thankful we were closer to the hospital than an hour away.



Life at Tucson, Arizona (1997)

We both kept our jobs at Vail when we moved back into Tucson. This was one of the most stable times in our lives. My grandparents, my nana, and an aunt took turns watching our children during the day while we worked.

Watching over the girls got to be too much for the grandparents, so I started working part-time as a parapro for special needs students within the district. Then I worked as a kindergarten after-school teacher for one school year. After that, I quit working and stayed home with the girls. I tried really hard to be a good mom.

When I was around 25 years old, a lady from my family's church stopped by with cookies and invited me to come back to church. By now we had two little girls. She became a good friend; our children played well together.



I started attending church services regularly and even began reading my Bible again. One night in a ladies' class, God revealed himself to me as the true and living God. Bible passages that spoke of adoption stood out to me. I could become God's daughter! I repented and was baptized during this time.

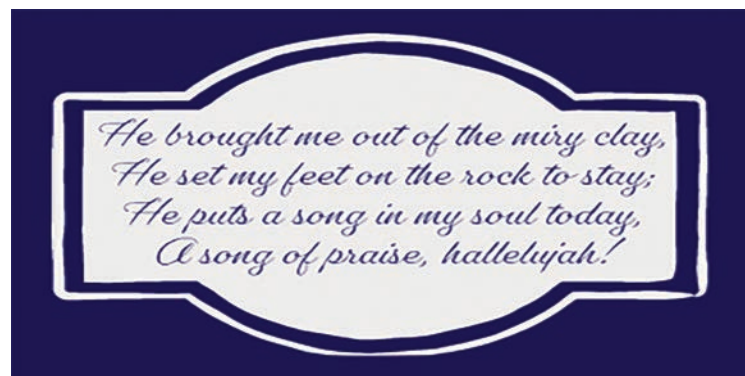
If we had hoped for a nice, clean place for our girls, we were mistaken. Don's family members kept coming to us with issues. A nephew showed up all beat up. Don had to deal with the Mexican mafia after one of his family members was sent to jail. We knew we couldn't keep our girls away from all the bad influences.

Our daughters' welfare now became our main concern. We were going to have to move away.

Life at Eagar, Arizona (2001)

In 2001 at the age of 28, Don and I moved to Eagar, Arizona, at the foot of the White Mountains, elevation 7080' MSL. I remember seeing the welcome sign outside of town that said, "The Church of Christ welcomes you." I was full of optimism for a fresh start.

Satan didn't seem to like my efforts to reform. He taunted me for months. I tried to fight at first, but I soon felt powerless against his "call." I had a complete mental breakdown. I had battled alcoholism and smoking for years and now fell back into both. Some days I had fun playing hide-and-seek with my children while I held a beer in my hand. Other days I was overcome by the darkness. I hid myself in my room because I feared I would harm them. I often neglected even cooking for them on those days.



I sought counseling. They diagnosed me with several mental health issues and gave me various medications that only made me worse. But it did force me to start talking which helped some. Looking back, I can see that there is power in confession.

One day around the end of 2002, I found myself on the floor with Satan pressing my chest so I couldn't breathe. I seemed to have fallen into a deep pit with bars covering the top. I felt like I was dying. I looked around, and all I had was a thin golden strand in my hand. This strand reached up through the bars, right into heaven. It was the last strand of faith that I had, and I called out to Jesus.

Jesus came! He came mightily! He picked me up, washed me, gave me new clothes, and then sent me back to earth to live my life. I could easily think that this was just imagination—except my life was changed. I was a new creature. But most amazingly, I had a sober mind. Now my head was clear. The demonic screeches, the haunting thoughts, Satan's hold, and the addictions were gone.

Knowing how much I struggled with identity and belonging, Jesus gave me this verse: "**Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is the Lord; and worship thou him**" (Psalm 45:10). As I pondered what this verse meant, it became clear to me that now I belonged to Jesus.

(to be continued)
D. T. H. | Arizona



Don and Tamara
December 2018
Tucson, AZ

Purpose in Pain

There are thorns in this life, there is sickness and strife—
God's creation is groaning from sin.
But the Lord always makes something good from mistakes;
He gives hope while I'm heavy within.

When I'm living in pain with my days full of rain,
And I'm deep in a dry desert place;
It is hard to feel love from my Father above.
And I struggle with feeling His grace.

When I lose someone dear, and my sickness brings fear,
And my faith starts to shake to the core;
Then I look to the sky, as I helplessly cry,
And I question what God has in store.

When to Abba I plead, Who supplies every need,
And I beg Him to do what He can;
I'm reminded of how, with the sweat on His brow,
Jesus asked for relief from God's plan.

So I ask and appeal, knowing Jesus can heal,
As He did to the blind and the lame.
But because I can't see what He wants me to be,
I surrender my will to the flame.

When the fire gets hot, when affliction's my lot,
And infirmities snuff out my plan;
Then I think of God's ways and this unpleasant phrase:
"It takes trials to purify man."

So I'll look at my test, as God's ultimate best
To conform me to His pure design.
And I'll glory in pain, 'cause there's something to gain,
Since the fire is meant to refine.

I just want to retreat when God turns up the heat—
It's so easy to murmur and groan.
But I look through the flame, and I trust in His name
As He lovingly chastens His own.

When I suffer and weep, losing hours of sleep,
Jesus loves to repurpose my loss.
In my weakness, He's strong. In my pain, there's a song.
He gives life when I'm dead on the cross.

On the altar I lay my old self and its way,
My possessions, and all in my care.
When self dies on the cross, God removes all the dross;
His deep mercy and love meet me there.

Jesus' peace floods my soul when I give Him control,
When I lay down my pride and my will.
So I'll give up my right, and I'll no longer fight;
I will learn to be quiet and still.

My dear Lord endured pain, suffered hate and disdain;
As a lamb He was led to His death.
He would never resist as they spat and they hissed;
He surrendered and gave up His breath.

Jesus showed us just how we must suffer and bow
For a glorious crown to obtain.
There is hope in the end when our King will descend,
To defeat all the sickness and pain.

Our affliction and grief is so light and so brief
When compared to the joy that's above.
Let's endure all the way 'til we hear Jesus say,
"Welcome home to My child and My love!"



Dwayne A. Stoltzfus

In Strict Training

by Menno Knight

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.”

– I Corinthians 9:25 (NIV)

We cannot be sure what “strict training” meant to an Olympic player in Paul’s day. But I can tell you what strict training means to a high school football player of my acquaintance.



Training begins in the spring as soon as school lets out. Each session starts at 8:00 a.m. and lasts 3 to 3.5 hours four days per week. These strenuous sessions consist of lifting weights, running and hitting drills, all designed to build body strength. Specific training is also given on how to tackle so the players do not get seriously injured in the game.

Body building goes beyond the playing field. Players learn about healthy diets and willingly discipline themselves so as to eat healthy foods and limit the amount they consume.

A summer camp takes place one week before school opens. The players stay at the school 24 hours a day for a full week. In this instance, all the meals are provided by the moms. The training sessions last two hours three times each day. Much running, hitting drills, and all kinds of exercises fill the time until all the trainees have sore muscles and are exhausted.

Then the trainees must subject themselves to an ice-bath. They go to a trough containing ice water—so much ice is continually added that sometimes ice forms on the top of the water and the trainee must break the ice before he gets into the water. Each trainee must stay in the water five minutes. The ice-bath is promoted as being good for sore muscles and general health. After camp the ice-bath becomes a regular feature every Thursday until the end of the football season.

Once school starts, the players start wearing shoulder

pads and the real practice begins. Full practice occurs each day on Monday through Thursday from 3:00 p.m. till 6:00 or 6:30 p.m.. Intensive drills and exhaustive running continue. Most players run so much they throw up.

The coaches study the weaknesses and the strengths of the opposing team they will play on Friday. Game plans are set in motion and the players learn to execute these varied plays, not as individuals but as a team. Each player must learn to carry out his part of every play to his utmost, but no one wins the game by himself.

Every Friday for ten weeks there is a game, five games at home and five games in another town. When the team goes out of town for the game, travel time may take 2-3 hours; then the game. Again it takes 2-3 hours of travel time to return home. The arrival home may be at midnight or even at 1:00 am the following morning.

Every effort goes into winning the game. The team, the coaches, indeed the whole school, works to win the game of the week. Everyone is all hyped up for the game. The ambulance and the police attend each game. The danger is real—a player could easily be injured or a serious fight could break out.

Several times, as the young man was explaining various aspects of the training, he would exclaim, “It’s crazy!”

So I asked the healthy young man, “Why do you do all this?”

His simple answer, “I want to win.”

The apostle Paul said the same thing. **“Run in such a way as to get the prize ... I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (I Corinthians 9:24, 27).**

What did the apostle mean when he said, “I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave”? He surely meant his own body, and was not making it some abstract thing only done in the spirit. Think about it.

Paul says in II Corinthians 11:23-27 that he worked hard, had frequently been in prison, had been severely flogged, had five times received 39 lashes, three times he was beaten with rods, once he was pelted with stones, three times he suffered shipwreck, and once he spent a night and a day in the open sea. Can you picture the apostle as a scholarly weakling spending his time indoors? I cannot.

I picture Paul as a tough brawny person, all scarred up, who intimidated others with his powerful presence. He says to the Corinthians in chapter ten that those who had not yet seen him were saying he was a poor preacher and not nearly so forceful as his letters sounded. Paul said, “When I come, I will show you Corinthians, *by my actions*, that I am just as strong and powerful in person as I am in my letters.”

Now if we go back to I Corinthians 9:26, Paul says he did not run aimlessly; he had a fixed goal in mind. He did not fight like a boxer punching the air. He wanted to make his blows for Christ count. In order to make his blows count he aimed them with purpose. Then he admonishes everyone who wants to win the eternal prize to discipline his body and bring it into subjection.

We cannot be sure what all the apostle Paul did to his body to bring it under the control of his will. But we can be sure it involved privation and hardship; it was not a life of ease where one pampered his flesh and its desires.

So what all does strict training mean for a soldier of Jesus Christ today? Let us observe some things we can learn from the *strict training* a football player endures.

1. Body Muscle. A football player wants to build muscle and tone, not flab. He wants to be careful not only what he eats, but how much he eats. He must do without harmful drugs and drinks. He avoids the quick fixes that give a momentary lift but drag one down afterwards.

I cannot imagine the apostle Paul carrying around 50 or 100 pounds of extra fat because he simply ate too much of the wrong foods. He said he knew how to act when food was plentiful (Philippians 4:8). That meant disciplining himself to not overeat or get drunk.

A disciplined Christian has no excuse that justifies being grossly overweight. I read that 40% of Americans are now classified as obese. And with obesity comes much greater danger of a heart attack, kidney failure, diabetes, and spiritual lethargy.

2. Time Spent. Football players spend lots of time in training. Just the amount of time and energy in actual practice on the field does not cover nearly all of it. Players spend time riding back and forth from home to practice and perhaps weight lifting and running outside of the actual training sessions.

Rigorous training for a Christian should involve large amounts of time. Often, like football players, we ought to commit large blocks of time to training and practice so we are fully prepared for the next game (test

of faith) or the final playoffs. This means regular Bible study and prayer and regularly serving others instead of ourselves—baking cakes and cookies, shoveling snow and mowing lawns; running errands and helping others to doctor visits; teaching, preaching, and witness projects. Strict training takes a lot of time.

3. Exercise. Football players get plenty of physical exercise. They run and run. They do the drills over and over again. They build strength slowly over time. A strong physique does not come upon them overnight; it takes many weeks of strict training until they are ready for the game.

Strict training for the football players involves the mind as well as the body. They must learn by memory many intricate plays so that when the name of that play is called they know exactly what to do—block, run, pass, or tackle.

Likewise training for the Christian involves physical labor. Good old chores where one has to do physical exercise in productive, worthwhile work can be good for both the body and the mind—controlled, in moderation, tempered, not in the extreme. Like good football players we should be tough in body and spirit.

So it is for Christians. We can learn from the football players that exercise and repetition are valuable. Being a tough, hardened soldier of Jesus takes time and exercise to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It does not happen all in one day or in one Bible school. It takes much practice and stress and pain to be ready for the big game.



“You must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (II Timothy 2:3).”

The Battle for Sehwee

by Kendra Frey

Introduction:

This story happened in 2015. Kendra was working with Christian Aid Ministries in Liberia at the time. Kendra sat down with each of three men—James, Steve, and Akin— and got the story from them. Four men mentioned in the story—James, Marvin, Steve, and Akin— were/are Liberian employees at CAM. The main one who went often to Sehwee [seh WEE] has since passed on to his reward.



Prelude to the Story:

We are fighting a battle. Between God and the Devil there is constant war. As Christians, we need to be aware of this battle and arm ourselves to take part. Satan doesn't mind at all if we don't know about the battle. It works for his advantage. But the battle is real. The Bible says:

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life” (I Timothy 6:12).

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Ephesians 6:12).

“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (II Timothy 2:4).

We who are born again Christians should never be afraid of the dark world. We are covered by the blood and the devils tremble at the sight of us.

*When we are on God's side there is **nothing** to fear. The battle is already won!*

Dark Secrets in Sehwee

Tucked away in the deep bush of Nimba County, Liberia, lies a village called Sehwee [seh WEE]. Nimba

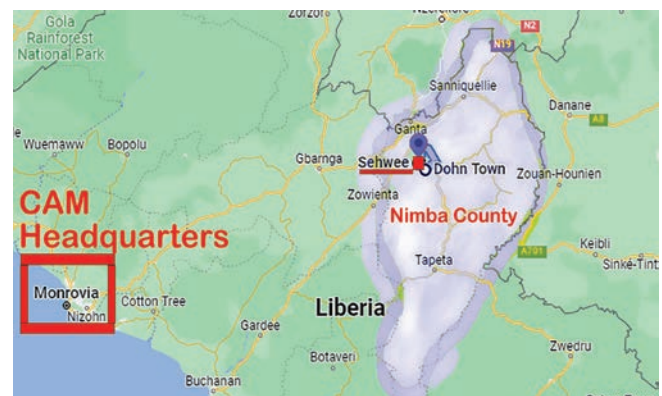
County is noted for its deep involvement in witchcraft, and Sehwee was no exception. It was home to some of the highest ranking people in the devil society. If a man wanted to win the position he was running for in an election, he could go to Sehwee and pay an exorbitant amount of money to have the chief put in his vote in the dark world. It worked every time. If a woman had a relative she wanted to kill, she could go to Sehwee and pay someone to have the person killed. There was power in Sehwee.

Dark secrets shadowed the town. Four different pastors had gone to try to witness in Sehwee. Each one died shortly afterwards. One pastor's wife also died. Those who were interested in going to Sehwee or had been there, were told to shake the dust from their feet because the people could not be saved.

The town was steeped in witchcraft. From baby on up, children were introduced to the dark world and its powers. The people lived in fear.

Convicted in Dohn

Come with me to Dohn, another remote village in Nimba County, where only a few years ago the Devil had free reign. Here, Liberian men from CAM, Steve, Marvin, and James, were preaching the Word of God to



the people gathered in the village. They preached on Christian living and Christian marriage.

After the preaching was over, a man by the name of Saye came forward. He had been living with a woman for years but after hearing the Word of God, he was convicted. He wanted to get married. The men told Saye that was good and he should go ahead.

But the woman was from a different village and Saye wanted the evangelists to come and conduct the dowry payment ceremony for him. James agreed to go to the woman's village and attend the dowry payment. The name of the village was Sehwee.



“The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12).

Hunger for God in Sehwee

James went to Sehwee on the designated day and attended the dowry payment ceremony. After the ceremony, he began preaching the Word of God to the people and praying for them. Afterward, three men came up to James and said, “The words you spoke touched us. We never heard words like this before. We want a church in this town. Please pray for us that a church could be here one day.”

James left, but the Word of God did not. It took root and sprouted. People were convicted and started confessing sins. Two girls (ages 11 and 13) confessed that they, through witchcraft, had killed the four previous pastors that came to preach in the village.*¹

The men who had first shown interest after the service in Sehwee, went to Dohn to tell the pastor there that some children had started confessing things. They begged the evangelists to come back and give them more teaching and guidance.



“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

¹ * God's power is always stronger than the powers of darkness. The reason the children were able to kill these so called pastors is because they (the pastors) were living with sin in their lives; they were not covered by the blood of JESUS. You cannot be in darkness and cast out darkness.

Guardian Angels in Sehwee

One weekend in February, James and some men from the Deeper Life Church made arrangements to have a crusade in Sehwee. The preaching began on Friday and the pure Word of God was brought forth. The village people watched skeptically. It sounded good but they would see tonight if God had power.

The preaching men were planning to sleep in the village. No man trying to share the gospel had ever survived a night in Sehwee. If they were alive in the morning, the village people would then know that these men were working for the True God.

That night the Christians in the town stayed up all night praying and calling on the name of Jesus. Several times during the night those praying saw the demons trying to attack, and fear entered their hearts. But each time they called on the name of Jesus, their courage returned.



Crusade in Sehwee

Those who were involved in the demonic world were up, too. But they were not praying. They were trying with their demonic powers to overthrow the believers.

The visiting evangelists were up with the rising sun, healthy and strong. A woman admitted, “We thought you pastors that came were just like those who came before you. But you were different. Last night we could see angels around the whole town. We were not able to do anything.”

The attention of the village was captured. Many gave their lives to Christ.

Deliverance for “Blessing Saye”

This is the testimony from 12-year-old “Blessing Saye” one of the first in Sehwee to begin confessing sins.

“When I was just a small girl, a man initiated me into witchcraft. First he told me to bring him all my ma's money; so I did. Then he told me to kill my ma. I told him I cannot do that. So he told me to bring some of my ma's clothes. I brought them back to him in the witchcraft form and he 'tied' them so that my ma would never have a child again.

“I killed three people. I killed one pastor's wife who came here, and also her ma. Then I killed my cousin.

The man ordering me to do all these things told me to do these things so I would get rich."

The pastors told Blessing to kneel down. They laid hands on her and prayed for the blood of Jesus to save her. While they were praying, three people came to Blessing in the witchcraft form and tried to distract her from her prayer. Blessing rebuked them in the name of Jesus. The three evil spirits that were living inside her left her and entered the people tempting her. She was delivered.

"Since that time the evil spirits never come to me at night," Blessing will tell you. "When I am ready to lay down and sleep, I always pray. Those that tempted me before are afraid of me now because I am in the church (following Christ)."

Deliverance for Penso

Another young man who gave his life to Christ was 16-year-old Penso. When Penso heard the preaching, he was convicted and made a commitment to serve God. His parents were angry and afraid at the decision he had made. They were afraid because they had seen what had happened before to so many people who claimed to be Christians; they always died.

Penso's parents tried to force him to give up his Christianity, but he refused, crying, "I want to serve God!"

A few days later Penso was working out in the field with eight other men. The men had a plan. They would poison Penso's food so that he would die. Then they could say that it was the God-business that killed him. So when everyone sat down to eat their meal later that afternoon, the poisoned bowl of rice was handed to Penso. Penso innocently ate the food.

Soon he started feeling sick. When the other Christians in the town heard that Penso was sick, they alerted the pastors who had done the evangelizing in the village. The pastors arranged to have Penso sent to a hospital. The Christians in Sehwee gathered together and spent the whole night praying. Five Deeper Life pastors arranged a conference call and prayed for Penso long into the night.

Penso lay sick for a few days then began regaining his strength. In a week's time he was back to normal. When those who had poisoned Penso saw that he would not die, they were frightened. Truly this God was powerful! Never before had a human been poisoned in this way and lived. They confessed their sin to the village.

For Penso to be healed was a great miracle in the



One young girl delivered

eyes of Sehwee. They could not stop talking about it. His parents turned the boy over to the church leaders and said, "Let him be here. He is the son of the church."



*"The Lord is ... not willing that **any** should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).*

The Power of God in Sehwee

A few months later, James again went to Sehwee. This time he took Pastor Akin, Brother Steve, and Brother Marvin from the CAM office along



The Power of God

with him. Many people were again eager to hear the Word of God. But those who were not ready to surrender their Devil worship were trying to use their powers to sabotage the meeting.

On the second day of the crusade, while Marvin was preaching, two bats flew into the pavilion where the meeting was held. As if on cue, all the people rose to their feet and began crying out to God and rebuking the power of the Devil. Steve took the book in his hand and knocked the one bat out of the air. Someone from the village stamped on the bat and killed it. The other bat flew straight out of the building. The people sat back down on the benches and the preaching continued. The powers of darkness were again defeated by our God.

More and more people confessed their sins and gave their lives to Christ. Steve felt the Lord asking him to tell the people to surrender their 'juju' property (the tools

they used in witchcraft). So that evening he addressed those gathered together, “If you have decided to follow God, it is time to surrender the devil’s property. Bring your items tomorrow and surrender them.”

Almost before Steve was finished speaking, a woman stood up, cut the rope that was tied around her waist, and brought it forward to be destroyed. The next day many people brought things forward to surrender. Earlier others had destroyed things of their own accord.

One man had a question, “If I used this horn to do good and bad things to people, can I keep it and continue to use it for good?” The evangelists answered, “No. If it was a tool of Satan, it has to go.”

Freed from Satan’s Power

The workshop continued with more teaching and praying. Most of the teaching was on salvation and deliverance from Satan. This was the first time the village had seen this powerful presence of God—a power that compelled them to surrender their previously most-prized possessions. The power of the Holy Spirit was evident.

A drunkard, deeply involved in witchcraft, stood up during the question-and-answer period. “Suppose I have been living wickedly, but now I decide to live for God. Will He hear me if I pray?”

“Yes,” the evangelists assured him, “God will hear you if you pray.”

“Right now?” the man asked.

“Yes, you can pray right now, and He will hear you.”

So the man stood up and began praying aloud in his dialect. He prayed long and earnestly, and the angels started rejoicing.

New Life for Sarah

After the meeting, a woman who we will call Sarah came secretly to meet with the evangelists. She told the men her story. “I am pregnant but my baby is not moving or growing. I have been pregnant for one year and six months. My aunty got her daughter to tie my baby in witchcraft because she got angry at me one day for not plaiting her hair. Since that time I have been sickly and my baby is not moving.”

The evangelists asked Sarah if she is involved in witchcraft. She admitted that when she was a small girl, she had been ensnared; but since then someone had removed her from the dark world and she had had no part in it.



A time of prayer

“Do you believe God is able to deliver you?” James asked Sarah.

“Yes, I know God can save me,” she replied.

The men prayed over Sarah. They called in faith upon the name of Jesus and rebuked the devil and his spirits.

Meanwhile, the woman whose daughter had tied the baby was informed of what was happening in the church. “Go untie the baby,” she told her daughter. “There is nothing we can do now. Sarah is receiving the power of God.”

From that time on, Sarah’s baby started growing and moving. Her sickness left her. In a few weeks she was ready to deliver. But all the midwives in the town were terrified and refused to help her. They knew what had happened to this baby previously, and they were convinced in their minds that Sarah would die. A woman offered to take Sarah to a nearby village where a different midwife could help her. On the way there, Sarah delivered a perfect baby girl. The two women eagerly took the baby back to Sehwee. Everyone was astonished. The midwives begged Sarah’s forgiveness.

She told them what was obvious, “I am free now. No power of the Devil is on me. Jesus saved me!”

Sarah named her baby girl “Final” because God is the final authority for all.

Confusion in Sehwee

Many in Sehwee were converted, but not all. Some of those in the highest ranks of devil worship were not ready to forfeit their power and position. Their guilt and fear drove them to inflict trouble on those who were converted. They demanded money from the Christians for the things they claimed they still “owed” in the dark world. They ordered poor people to cook large amounts of food for them.



Preaching and teaching in Sehwee

The new converts felt overwhelmed. They had come to the light but now this? They begged the CAM team to come back and help with these problems.



“And they overcame him by the **blood of the Lamb**, and by the **word of their testimony**; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” (Revelation 12:11)

Rejoicing in Sehwee

So another visit to Sehwee was arranged. The welcome the team received was overwhelming. The people had erected seven bowers of palm fronds and hibiscus flowers. They danced around the cars singing and shouting, “We were in bondage, but you set us free.”

Even though there was little time left in the day, Pastor Akin felt God telling him to go ahead and begin teaching because it would be a night of spiritual warfare. The church was packed and Akin preached into the evening by the light of a single bulb strung above the table. That night the man who was involved in putting in election votes in the dark world came forward and surrendered all his tools.

The next day the workshop continued. Most of the village were there, but a few of those in high ranks in the devil work were not there. At the time the workshop closed, these men showed up. The story leaked out. Ever since the CAM people had arrived the night before, these men had been trying feverishly to overthrow the assembly. They tried to use their powers to cause rain to fall. Because there was no building large enough for the workshop, the people were under thatch huts made for this very purpose. But no rain fell. A few times clouds gathered and rain looked imminent. But it never

fell. That night, shortly after everyone had retired for the night, God opened the heavens and let the rain fall in torrents.

These men admitted openly, “We are not able to deter you. The power of your God is not something to play with. It was like you people were surrounded by fire. We eventually gave up and came out to see for ourselves.”

Sehwee is on fire for God. The church building that has been established is now packed every Sunday. The way of life has changed for many people. Instead of living in the torment of fear, they are living in joyous freedom.

Growing in Grace in Sehwee

Sister Kendra recently contacted one of the pastors from CAM (Christian Aid Ministries) who stays in touch with Sehwee and asked him how they are doing now. These were his words: “Sehwee is growing in grace. The fellowship is stronger than ever before.”

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

This story first appeared in Calvary Messenger in 2016.

K. G. F. | Ontario, Canada



Christian Aid Ministries
Students of the Biblical Discipleship
Centre in Liberia

Round Table Discussion

by AV Readers

The following pages are meant to encourage interaction between Anabaptist Voice and our readers. If you have questions or thoughts and would like to hear a response from AV, this section is for you. Write to us.

– AV Editor

Line Upon Line

by Good Glasses

As always, I enjoy the articles on seekers who find their way into a non-conformed Anabaptist setting (AV26, pages 23-27). “No Matter the Cost” was no exception.

It is amazing how those coming from “outside” can detect inconsistencies that we who grew up from “within” seemingly overlook. I really appreciated his thoughts on Anabaptists not being perfect and that it is a good thing if they are challenged every now and then. I say “Amen” to that.

However, I have a question about the thought that “Jesus taught non-accumulation as clearly as he taught nonresistance.” It seems some people read Luke 18:22, “**Sell all that you have and give to the poor,**” as though it were the whole “gospel of riches.” This disregards the fact that in Luke 19:8 when Zacchaeus said, “**One-half of my goods I give to the poor,**” Jesus did not say, “You have to give it all.” Instead, Jesus said, “**Today salvation has come to this house.**”

Then in Luke 16:9, Jesus goes on to teach, “**I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings**” (NIV). Then verse 13 ends with, “**You cannot serve God and mammon.**” So I would say, Jesus is not teaching non-accumulation, He is teaching accumulation and what to do with it.

Likewise, the early church, according to Paul and James, taught the same principle that Jesus taught. Ephesians 4:28 says, “**Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.**”

I Timothy 6:17 teaches the same thing. “**Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God ... Command them ... to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will be laying up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age**” (NIV).

Now I ask, how can we have to share with others unless we have accumulated something?

We also have the warning in James 5:1-6 against accumulating, or should we say, “hoarding” ill-gotten riches. “**Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ... You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay ... you have fattened yourselves, you have condemned and murdered the innocent ones**” (NIV).

I am not arguing whether the Anabaptists of today need teaching or reminding on the subject of riches. We do. I would say we need sound teaching from the New Testament on what we are called to do with the wealth we have accumulated.

AV Editor:

Yes, Jesus did give some teaching on how He wants us to use worldly wealth. Let us look at the teaching He gave in Luke 16:9-11.

I tell you, “**Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?**”

This teaching is given in the setting of a wasteful manager who was about to be fired. Looking ahead for himself, the manager used his master’s wealth to make friends who would favor him after he lost his job.

Jesus made the meaning of the story quite clear in verses 9-11. Here are some lessons for us today:

1. “*Not my own.*” In the parable, as in the other two parables of the talents, everything belonged to the Master. We are only stewards of the wealth entrusted to our care. If we are unfaithful in using the Master’s wealth, we can be fired.

2. “*Faithful in little things.*” How we handle worldly wealth is a measure of how much the Master can trust us. If the Master can trust us with a little of His goods,

He knows He can also trust us with much.

We must be good stewards of the worldly wealth God entrusts into our care. We must not be sloppy, careless, dishonest, or irresponsible with how we handle the Master's worldly wealth. In the two parables of the talents, the Master expected His servants to increase His goods, and He dealt very harshly with the one who went and buried the money.

Money is a test of how we will handle the true riches of the gospel. Jesus asked the question, "If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" True riches? I think Jesus meant the great spiritual truths that are hidden from those who think they know so much.

3. *Lay up treasure in heaven.* This parable plainly teaches that we should use worldly wealth now to make friends who will welcome us into eternal dwellings. In other words, as Jesus taught in Matthew 6:19-21, we ought to lay up treasure in heaven by using worldly wealth now to do good deeds to others.



Pray for Each Other

by Go B. Tween

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the statement published in AV26, page 33, "No Human Priests in the New Testament."

The work of a priest is to speak to God on man's behalf (by prayers, supplications, and intercessions) and to speak to man on God's behalf (by calling to repentance, and by exhorting and admonishing). All believers are called to this work, which is why they are called a royal priesthood.

We do understand the point you are making when you say, "No priests in the New Testament." A priesthood does not need a priest to represent them to the High Priest. But it is technically incorrect to say there are no human priests in the New Testament.

The remark that we need no go-between to plead our case with God, as we have Jesus now, has some limitations. The apostle Paul prayed for the newly-formed congregations, and gave instructions that prayers are to be offered up on each other's behalf.

AV Editor:

Doris and I once established a friendship with a

young searching Catholic lady. She said, "I do not think it right for the priest to say, 'I absolve you of your sin.'" We agreed with her.

Neither should we, in our prayers, ask God to forgive the sins of another person, unless it is a personal offense. In that sense the prayers of New Testament saints differ from those of the priests and the High Priest in the Old Testament.



Giving ALL

by Hundred Fold

I would like to write a few words about your response to the question raised by 'Empty Pockets' in AV26, "Round Table Discussion."

A question of such nature deserves deep consideration as within its answer lies the secret to true life, peace, and happiness. Coming to terms with the New Testament teachings on money, wealth, prosperity, and radical almsgiving have been, and still are, defining moments in my journey towards eternity. I cannot read the New Testament and ignore what Christ teaches. His commands are worthy of due study and obedience.

I appreciate your answer to 'Empty Pockets' for it included much sound reasoning that comes from a well-versed heart. However, I must admonish you on two comments. You state:

1. "It is a false assumption that if we give everything away, we will be doing what Jesus commanded."
2. "Laying up treasure in heaven means using our wealth wisely."

Both these statements are untrue, according to Jesus' words.

First, Jesus did command the rich young ruler that if he wanted to be perfect, he should sell ALL that he had and give it to the poor.

Second, Jesus made it clear what it means to lay up treasure in heaven. Luke 18:22: Jesus said, "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

Therefore, Jesus commands us to give away our possessions. Then, if we do that, we lay up treasure in heaven.

When Jesus told the rich young ruler to give his possessions to the poor if he wanted to be perfect, the disciples who were there had the same disbelief we

have. They were astonished and said, “Who then can be saved?” (Notice how they immediately brought up salvation.) Jesus looked at them and said, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Christ went on to promise everyone who obeys this teaching will receive 100 fold in return, and inherit eternal life.

This 100-fold promise became reality at Pentecost when God poured out His Spirit. It then became possible for men to give their possessions away, and live in households of community of goods.

Within those early households, the needs of the brethren were met. The Spirit had given them a way to live out Christ’s teaching in its fullness, including those on money and wealth. Community of goods encapsulated the law of love. The brethren met daily, they ate together, they prayed together. Everyone found a place to work. Everyone was valued. There were no poor among them, for together they clothed the naked and fed the hungry, took the stranger in and visited the prisoner of circumstance. In doing so, they did it unto Christ Himself.

Through the power of His Spirit, God had created a new social justice system in which His children served God and their neighbor, fulfilling the law of love. Today, community of goods still remains the most perfect environment in which to live out that law of love. Where two or three are gathered in His Name, there He is among them. If we want to make a difference, we must do it together. Modern Christianity endorses capitalism and individualism. Is there basis for this in Scripture? This is what we have to ask ourselves.

“Little children, it is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

AV Editor:

I admire and encourage all those who put the Scripture into practice. But I wonder, does living in community really mean one has given ALL his worldly goods to the poor?

May God bless you as you practice living in community. You can be a good example to many on how to live together for the glory of God.

Do remember, this is not the whole teaching of the Scripture on this subject as pointed out in “Line Upon Line” in the above discussion.



Worthy Auctions

by Good Spirit

I write about benefit auctions in reply “To Be Seen of Men” (AV26, page 36). I want to say, first of all, that the church group that I belong to does not use benefit auctions to fund its programs and ministries, but neither do we prohibit our members from participating in other churches’ events. I have served as the auctioneer for a number of benefit sales and I enjoy them. There are some legitimate concerns that should be considered, but the sales I have participated in have been a blessing and not a disgrace.

One concern is that the giving at a benefit sale is being done “to be seen of men.” This can happen. It should be noted, however, that most of the giving is not really being done by the ones who purchase the items, but by the ones who donated the items. Yes, there may be wealthy individuals who bring sizable, high-value items to the sale, but I do not see them being applauded or made a show of or really even mentioned as to who donated what.

In secular, commercial fundraising events, this is typically not the case. Often times rich donors are applauded and promoted to the point of disgust as well as wealthy buyers who draw attention to themselves by paying multiple times what an item is worth, and after the sale is complete will holler out, “Sell it again.” This clearly violates the biblical teaching of not making a show of our giving. but this is not the spirit that I sense at the benefit auctions I have participated in.

Many of the communities who have the tradition of holding an annual benefit sale started the practice when the community was small and perhaps had a lot of young families without much money. It was easier for them to donate goods and services than scrape together the cash; that is what they did to raise money for their school and church programs. They continue the tradition because it is a way for them to practice brotherhood: everyone brings some donation and they work together to plan and manage the sale. Typically, these churches report that it is also one of the best ways they have found to engage the local community. A lot of goodwill and relationship building has happened as a direct result of their annual benefit sale.

Benefit sales are not for every community. If there is little participation from the community and it is the same people buying the stuff as it is donating the stuff,

then a benefit sale is somewhat pointless. There are also concerns and cautions that should be considered so that benefit sales are a blessing and God-honoring and not a disgrace.

AV Editor:

Benefit auctions may have a worthy goal of helping in some good cause. And auctions can raise lots of money. But neither the cause nor the amount of money raised nor the spirit in which the money is given justify the auction *if* it is contrary to the commands of Jesus.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:3-4, “When you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret.” “In secret,” what does that mean?

In the benefit auction there is the unavoidable public display of a charitable deed. When we pass the plate in the worship service, this public display does not accompany our giving. I wonder, would the buying at a fundraiser be the same if it was a sealed-bid auction and only the name of the high bidder was announced without giving the amount paid?

There is a reward for those who give in a public way. Jesus said in Matthew 6:2, “Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward *in full*” (NIV). Jesus meant that the recognition received in public giving was the extent of the blessing the giver would receive. That was it. Nothing more.

In contrast to public giving, Jesus said when people give secretly, “Your Father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:2 NIV).



The Ukrainian *Holodomor* by Neutral Politics

I am writing in response to “The Ukrainian *Holodomor*” found in AV26, p. 28.

In the interest of preserving our Christian political neutrality, I would like for you to reconsider your article on the *Holodomor* in the latest issue of *Anabaptist Voice*. Ukrainian nationalists have been trying hard to frame that horrible piece of history into a political club to denigrate Russia and Russians.

I am concerned that a false narrative about this sad situation is being propagated among our Anabaptist people, a narrative hijacked by Ukrainian nationalism

that wants to make all things Russian appear in the blackest tones possible. Nationalism is anti-Christian, whether it be U.S. nationalism, Ukrainian nationalism, or Russian nationalism.

Here is an interesting counter viewpoint that promotes the idea that the famine was not a purposeful plan to eliminate Ukrainians: The famine was widespread, affecting other areas of the Soviet Union. A 2020 article in the *Journal of Genocide Research* estimates that 3.9 million people died in the *Holodomor* in Ukraine. That sounds bad, and it is. But that is not all the story. The same article states that an estimated 3.3 million also died from the famine in Russia, and another 1.3 million in Kazakhstan. If the *Holodomor* was a man-made famine to kill off Ukrainians, why did more Russians and Kazaks die than Ukrainians?

All that said, most people who have studied in depth about the situation do blame the Soviet authorities for making some really bad decisions that exacerbated the situation.

AV Editor:

As Christians, we cannot be politically neutral in this world—“of or concerned with government, the state, or politics.” We do not claim to be neutral in politics, but we must be “apolitical” or uninvolved in the politics of this world.

Our total allegiance belongs to the Kingdom of God. God has fixed our standard of right and wrong. We do only those things that please God and refrain from those things that God condemns.

The fact remains, the starvation and the famine in the *Holodomor* were real. It was also true this was not the first famine in Ukraine. World War I and the Soviets destroyed the leading people (kulaks), churches, and the means of production in Ukraine and surrounding provinces. They intentionally killed, deported, and destroyed all those who opposed the forced taking of the land and the means of production. Then to take and export the grain guaranteed famine in 1932-1933.

I have said it before, “Evil men do not do great evil by themselves. Many men must be willing to carry out the Devil’s work.”

True Christians like John the Baptist speak out against sin by any person, be he robber or ruler. All violence is sin in God’s sight. War is a horrible monster and a tool Satan uses. To love both Russian soldiers and leaders as well as the Ukrainian soldiers and leaders as well as the USA arms merchants equally, requires the grace of God in the heart.

Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” And it is the people of God who are doing God’s will on earth ... now!

Therefore, let us do good to all men. Let us pray for those who persecute us for righteousness sake. Let us love our enemies, for great is our reward in heaven.

Let us also pray for peace in Ukraine, Russia and America as our Lord has commanded, “**Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence**” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Let us be thankful if God grants us a peaceful place to live.

And let us who are blessed with peace, support our suffering brethren with prayers and intercessions and food and clothing as we are able.

The article on the *Holodomor* in AV26 is set in the context of the Mennonite experience in Ukraine and southern Russia as told in the book, *Lost Fatherland* (AV19, page 19).¹



A Church Statement on Fund-Raising Activities

We are faced again and again with various appeals for financial support of church, para-church, and secular organizations. Inasmuch as we are to honor the Lord with our “substance,” we do well to screen very carefully which organizations are really worthy of our support, and we need to be alert to methods of fund-raising which are of a questionable nature.

We believe that church-sponsored fund-raising activities of a commercial nature are objectionable for the following reasons:

1. They tend to weaken our Christian testimony and obscure the true mission of the church because of their emphasis on monetary value.
2. They appeal to people of the world for financial support of the church’s program and mission.
3. They are inconsistent with our philosophy of voluntary and sacrificial giving, because the giver expects something in return for his giving.

¹ In light of the current war in the Ukraine, this article (AV19, page 19) should be read again, either in the print magazine or on the web. The book, *Lost Fatherland* by John B. Toews is also recommended.

4. They tend to condition us for the approval of more objectionable methods of raising money, and they also weaken our testimony against them.

5. Auction type sales to raise funds create a climate which makes some people susceptible to buying “to be seen of men.”

We further believe that:

1. Giving through regular church channels results in better stewardship because fund-raising techniques of most organizations involve considerable overhead expenses that divert a percentage of the contribution from the cause for which it is given.

2. Giving by way of purchasing is not legally considered giving and is therefore not tax deductible, such as giving tax-deductible “donations” for tapes or books or other items.

3. Christian stewardship implies that all material possessions are really the Lord’s and Christians are to regulate their lives with that awareness.

4. The Scripture teaches Christians to give:

- a) Sacrificially, Mark 12:41:43.
- b) Systematically, I Corinthians 16:2.
- c) Sincerely, Matthew 16:1-2.
- d) Secretly—not drawing attention to self, Matthew 6:3-4.
- e) Spontaneously, II Corinthians 9:7.

Therefore be it resolved, that we encourage our members to give through regular church channels “as the Lord hath prospered,” and to avoid church-sponsored fundraising activities of a commercial nature such as relief sales, suppers, barbecues, etc., both by way of participation and promotion, and that we dedicate ourselves to a more faithful stewardship of the material possessions that God has entrusted to us.



The Practical Side:

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

— Colossians 3:17

This recurring feature in *Anabaptist Voice* consists of three parts.

1. **Reader Responses**—feedback on previous stories
2. **The Rest of the Story**—what actually happened
3. **New Stories**—situations met by today’s Anabaptists

Here is your chance to help others live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ “right in the corner where they are.” This section is not for some idealistic future kingdom posing theological complicated questions with no good answers—for example, the woman who had seven brothers as husbands (*Matthew 22:24-28*).

Take the time to write *Anabaptist Voice* and share your situations where you faced a difficulty... and failed, or won a victory. As you ponder the situations in these stories and then share your answers and experiences with others, remember the words of Jesus when He told the packed-out house, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s Word and *put it into practice*” (**Luke 8:21**).



The Practical Side: Work Boots Required

The Practical Side: Reader Responses

Reader responses to stories from previous issues.

The Auction Block

by Real Price



I am writing this at the editor’s request in response to the questions in the previous issue of *Anabaptist Voice* (AV26, page 41) concerning auctions in general. I do so from the standpoint of being

both a conservative Anabaptist minister and a licensed auctioneer.

The writer in the previous issue raised a question about things not always being as they seem to be at an auction. There are several things that readers should know about auctions. Auctions are governed by the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) which outlines the regulations that auction companies and auctioneers must adhere to.

Taking false or “shill” bids (acting like there is an active bid when there is not) is illegal and is considered a felony.

It is also illegal for potential buyers to rig the bidding by agreeing among themselves not to bid against each other as a way to hold down prices so everyone gets a good deal.

I have often seen brothers in the church stop bidding when they realize that another brother is the contending

bidder. The key is that this must only be a personal, private decision to do so; plotting together is illegal.

There are several legitimate scenarios where it may seem as though something dishonest is taking place when that is not actually the case. Two other statements from the UCC come into play here.

The **first statement** is that the auction firm or auctioneer acts as an agent for the seller. He has a responsibility to obtain the highest possible price for the merchandise that he has contracted to sell.

The **second statement** is that all merchandise offered at auction should be assumed to be *selling with a reserve price* unless it is expressly stated that it is an absolute sale.

Now for the scenarios that may take place. Openness and transparency in this business is always a good policy.

1. *Reserve price.* In most cases where it seems that only one person in the crowd is bidding, the auctioneer is likely working with a reserve price.

2. *Absentee bids.* Often there are potential buyers who may not be able to make it to the sale but would still like to bid on something. Absentee bids need to be handled with care and with fairness to both buyer and seller. Remember that my first responsibility according to the law is to the seller.

3. *The auction firm is also a buyer.* In cases where an auction firm mostly conducts consignment sales, they may make the decision to purchase merchandise that is selling under value and put it in a future sale in hope of turning a profit on the item.



Auction Tricks

by Good Buy



I was at an auction and the auctioneer was calling for a bid. I and another person bid at the same

time. The auctioneer took his bid and took me for the next higher bid before he called it. The item was sold to me at a price higher than I bid. I could have challenged and embarrassed the auctioneer on the spot, but I didn't.

Recently our son was looking for a car that gets good gas mileage. He found one on the internet that he liked. He went to the dealer, but the dealer said it was sent to auction. Our son went to the auction ready to bid with a price in mind. When the auctioneer got to that price, he placed his bid. The auctioneer didn't go to the back bidder for the next bid. Apparently no one had been bidding on the car. (Could this have been the auctioneer working with a reserve price?) Our son is happy, because it is a good car and he paid \$6,000 less than the dealer wanted on his lot.



The Practical Side: Rest of the Story

What really happened in conclusion to stories from previous issues.

A Pivoting Problem

by Hess I. Tate



After all the points mentioned in the story (AV26, page 40) had been made, I came home and, left the brothers decide what is the right thing to do.

I sat down and read about the war in Ukraine. There were pictures of unending fields of wheat ready for harvest. But instead of \$300 to \$400 per ton the wheat is now only worth \$100 per ton. The seaport is closed. Many tons of wheat still lie in storage from last year's harvest. Lines of trucks 12 miles long wait to cross the border; it may take several days of waiting to get across. Fuel shortages increase the difficulties of getting the grain to market. Land mines buried in the fields may destroy the combine and kill the operator.

I pondered the question, "How significant in God's sight is our pivoting problem?" And I had to conclude, not very much ... *unless we make it a big deal.*

Thankfully, the brethren worked out an agreeable solution to the request. Both parties signed the written agreement. Today a new pivot stands at the desired spot.



To Be Seen of Men

by Sold Out



I am giving a few additional thoughts to the piece I wrote in AV26, page 36.

Here are some good and bad things I have observed taking place at benefit auctions.

Positives at Benefit Auctions

1. Those with limited funds or resources contributed unique items that required more labor. The volunteer labor needed to provide meals and work services at an auction also fall into this category.

2. I have seen older children and youth offer their talents, ability and time to help create and generate funds for a particular need.

3. A community auction provided a good way for visitors and community folks to interact with believers and support a local school, while also enjoying good food and fellowship.

4. Attending a public Mennonite auction is a great way for a "seeker" or someone unfamiliar with Anabaptist life, to experience firsthand the dynamics of brotherhood working together.

5. A benefit auction is an excellent place to buy

quality non-store food at a reasonable cost. This supports local enterprises.

6. All fundraising and collaborative efforts are a lot of work and sweat. Because no wages are paid, benefit auctions encourage a spirit of servanthood.

Negatives at Benefit Auctions

1. Some people are willing to bid and spend an exuberant amount of money for an item they did not even want or need.

2. Some tight-fisted frugal Mennos who regularly shop at cut-rate stores and bypass more costly local produce, now bid up similar items.

3. Men, in general, enjoy a bidding war and the ensuing excitement of an item that goes through the roof in cost. Sometimes people cheer and applaud and congratulate someone who has just paid an outlandish amount of money for a trivial item such as a piece of pie or a gallon of apple cider or a mixed-breed puppy.

4. I have seen a family heirloom or sentimental item sold when a family with limited means could not be the successful bidder because of others with deeper pockets.

5. The standard and universal answer given when someone is challenged on the above items is, “Well, it is going for a good cause.”

Another Way

It seems to me the underlying truth of the negatives for benefit auctions is that people like the excitement, the show, and the unavoidable “giving to be seen of men” (in public). Maybe it’s not like blowing a trumpet on the street, but it comes pretty close.

Maybe there is a way we could have the benefits of the benefit auction without some of the negatives. What about a sealed-bid auction where, at a designated time, the bids are opened and the winner and the contending bidder are announced without declaring the amount paid?



The Practical Side: New Stories

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.

A Smile

by Hannah K. Johnson



I rarely saw the sun in China, except behind a thick blanket of gray haze. The ocean, visible from the windows of our 10th-floor apartment, was a matching

gravy-gray color, and lapped up against a gravel beach littered with plastic bags and bits of candy wrappers. But behind our apartment building, the lush greenery of a mountainside proved that the sun was still there, working its wonders behind the scenes.

Now that I was older—sixteen already—I had gained some new freedom. Once a week, my brother and I rode our bikes to the market to get groceries for the family, and twice a week we walked to a local Chinese church, where we

sang hymns in the choir. The new independence was exhilarating. We tramped through the forest behind our apartments, rode up the coast to explore abandoned rocket bunkers left over from the war with Taiwan, and created elaborate plays that we wrote and produced ourselves. When we passed by, locals stared so hard they sometimes tripped over the curb. We didn’t mind the attention—after nearly four years of living in China, we had come to embrace our celebrity status as foreigners.

One sultry August day, my eighteen-year-old brother and I sallied forth. After a fifteen-minute bike ride, we arrived at the post office, a modest partition of a storefront at the bottom of an apartment building. Stepping into the post office was a reminder of the contradictions of a modern communist country. Just inside the glass door, I greeted the old woman who was perpetually



Lots of haze

standing beside it with a bucket and squeegee. The mild air conditioning enveloped me, cooling the perspiration gathered on my forehead, and my tennis shoes squeaked on the white marble floor. A guard with a red armband, standing against the wall in a posture of semi-professional boredom, nodded and grinned at me. He was barely older than my brother, lanky and trim in his black uniform, his dark eyes sparkling with youthful enthusiasm. A ready smile crossed my face. This guy was my special post-office friend.

The woman behind the counter was always a less alluring aspect of the post office visit. Her uniform was crumpled, her round face somehow sharp, her mouth drawn into an irritated scowl. She did not stamp forms, she stabbed them, and while other postal workers might help customers fix the paper stamps onto their letters, she shoved the sticky plastic tub of glue toward the person and made them step out of line and do it themselves. I had been the customer under this woman's glare before, and I knew she certainly wasn't going to do more than what was required of her.

After a wait of several minutes, it was our turn. My brother and I stepped forward. Without a glance at us, the woman pulled a battered laminated sign out from a drawer and slapped it onto the counter. Amidst the jumble of Chinese characters, I could see the numbers 12:00-14:00.

"Excuse me," I attempted, whipping out my well-worn Mandarin phrases. "We want to put some money on our TaoBao account."

"Can you read?" The woman jabbed a finger toward the sign, rolling her eyes.

Actually, I couldn't—not Chinese. Eight to ten thousand unique characters still seemed a little intimidating.

"It's naptime," the woman said. Her voice rose and she began to enunciate her words, perhaps recalling that we were stupid foreigners. "Do you understand? It's naptime." She began gesturing to the sign again. "We're closed until 14:00."

I looked at the clock, the long hand creeping toward the twelve. "I understand, but it's not 12:00 yet. Please, we have the money right here. It will be quick."

The woman turned away, aloof. Her colleague handed her a plastic container of noodles and a set of



A Chinese post-office

chopsticks. The steam rose in a cloud as she opened it.

My brother sighed, turning away, but I was not ready to give up so easily. "It's not even twelve yet," I said to him, exasperated. "We rode all the way out here in the heat." I turned back to the post officer worker and repeated some version of the words in Chinese, gesturing at the clock.

Only now it actually was 12:00. The woman let out a barrage of angry words, shooing me away, and her colleague shrugged and pointed at the clock with his chopsticks.

When I learned Chinese, I had learned nice phrases: Hello, how are you? Long time no see! China is a beautiful country! I never learned how to say, "Are you kidding me? You seriously won't take two minutes to help me because of your little 'naptime'?" It was a good thing for the post office lady, and for my Christian testimony, that my vocabulary was limited to a range of polite expressions. But body language could speak as well as words, and I made sure to communicate my frustration in a large sigh and a roll of the eyes.

The guard came over to stick his grinning face into the discussion. "Hello," he said to me, deferent, but proud of the one word he knew in English. "I'm sorry, they can't help you. Come back at 14:00." He held up two fingers and smiled. "Two o'clock, they will help you."

My brother was already at the door, heading past the window washer into the sticky August heat. I managed a smile at the guard, and thanked him. He was, after all, the one person in this place being polite, and he was so very handsome.

At home, I ranted to my mom about the lazy post office lady who wouldn't take two minutes to help us after we had biked all the way there. "Be gracious," my mom said. "Maybe she had a bad day."

"Mama, she's like that every time we see her."

"Well, maybe she doesn't like her job, or she's going through a divorce or something."

It was just like my mom—the social worker turned international mother—to come up with hypothetical situations that gave people excuses for their bad behavior. But deep down I knew what she said was probably true.

"No matter how people act, God loves them," she



Looking for the sun

continued. “It’s our responsibility to show them that love.”

Feeling a little ashamed, I went out on the balcony and stared at the hazy sky, looking for the sun. I couldn’t find it. But the mountainside jungle was as lush as ever. My arms rested on the railing and my eyes dropped, down nine stories to the brick pavement below. A woman in a wide-brimmed hat swept a straw broom over the cobblestones, brushing mango leaves into a pile. She was humming to herself.

Moving somewhere new is like pulling out a fresh canvas and being handed a palette of wild and vibrant colors. But moving somewhere means necessarily leaving somewhere else. Someone walks in part-way through the painting, announcing that in two hours it must be put away, finished or unfinished, for a little while or forever. Moving means the loss of familiar sights, smells, sounds, voices, feelings. Something normal and everyday will be gone, fading into memories that might one day feel foreign, like forgotten friends.

We were leaving China. For days on end we talked about seeing our friends in America again, jumping in the car to go camping in the Wyoming mountains, hearing English spoken everywhere, spending hours hunting down books in the city library. We could almost taste the cheerios, the ice cream, the cheddar cheese—things we hadn’t eaten for two years now. We were leaving China. No more biking to abandoned bunkers, playing cops and robbers in a local bamboo forest, family outings to Burger King that involved riding a bus down the coast for an hour. No more fried rice from a food cart on the beach, no crispy dumplings dripping with soy sauce, no cold yogurt drinks sweating in my hand on a hot day. And all my friends.

The time was nearly up. The canvas was being torn from my hands, and it was still unfinished—there were misplaced streaks of color that begged to be turned into something beautiful. Sometime, in the last few months, over a few more trips to the post office, my mother’s words had touched my heart.

Except for twenty-one suitcases lined up neatly by the door, the apartment was empty. All that was left were three bicycles, still unsold. I found my mom in the kitchen, pulling the last of the food from the fridge.

“Is it okay if I go to the post office? There’s something I need to do.”

My mom seemed to understand. “Sure,” she said. “Take the phone and be safe.”

It was October now, and the weather was a little cooler. The sun was still only a faint outline behind the haze of smog. As I biked out of the apartment complex, I fingered the little packet in my pocket and rehearsed Chinese words in my head. I knew I would never see the post office lady again, and that I might be the only Christian she ever came in contact with. I didn’t want to leave this brush stroke unfinished.

The old woman was there with her bucket and squeegee, and my special guard-friend was there grinning at me. Behind the counter, the woman sat scowling, even though there was no one in line—she was scowling at her phone.

“Hello.” My voice seemed to echo on the marble floor.

The woman looked up.

“I’m sorry.” The carefully-rehearsed Mandarin words evaporated, and I stumbled over spontaneous ones. “I wasn’t kind ... before. I’m sorry. This is for you.” I set my offering on the counter—a gospel tract and a bar of chocolate. “This is for you,” I repeated.

Her scowl faded and her face morphed into shock. She looked down at the gift, and then it came—a shy smile spreading across her face. In all my trips to the post office, I had never seen a smile on her face before.

As I turned to go, I saw the smile reflected on the face of her colleague, on the face of the guard, and the window washer by the door. They were all shining, like someone had turned on the lights in a dark room.

Outside, a crack had broken in the midst of the haze. I looked up, and saw the sun shining through.

And far beyond the sunlight, I believe the Son was shining too.

H. K. J. | *Wyoming*

Practical Question:

How many Son-smiles have you given today?

Book Review

The Conquest Series

by Daniel Hershberger

I can still remember reading a book, *Captive of the Delawares*, as a school boy. That book developed my interest in the Delaware tribe of Native Americans.

A school trip to Schoenbrunn further spurred my interest in the Delaware Indians. This partially restored Christian Indian village near New Philadelphia, Ohio, further stirred my curiosity in how the “Christian Indians” lived. Founded in 1772, I saw how these people lived much like the Amish in a close-knit village with a chapel and a one-room school.

Sometime later, I bought a book about David Zeisberger, the founder of Schoenbrunn. David Zeisberger, a Moravian missionary, wrote 2,000 pages of diaries in neat German script that tell of his missionary quest among the Lenni Lenape tribe.

With my interest in native Americans thus aroused by these events, when I first got my hands on the Conquest Series it was almost like finding a gold mine. Here I had the story of the Delaware tribe in seven volumes. The thing that made it really interesting was that the author did extensive research so as to give an honest picture of what actually happened. It was like getting a refreshing drink of spring water from an unpolluted source.

I found the footnotes to be a really interesting part of the series. These footnotes often pointed out how secular history is biased and distorted in favor of the white man. The only history we have read was recorded by white men. The Conquest Series attempts to tell a piece of American history as it might have been seen through Indian eyes.

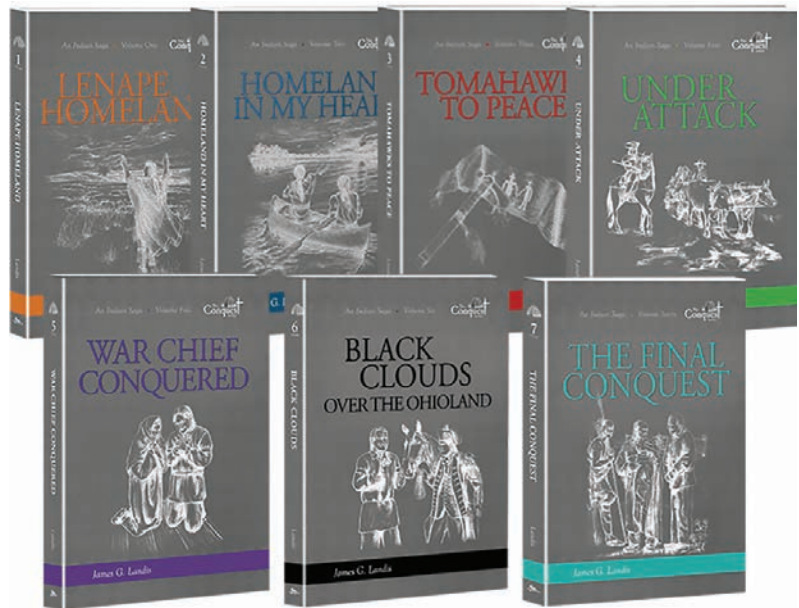
Although the Delawares had some remarkable traits such as believing in the Great Spirit, they nevertheless were steeped in much superstition. This is what had to be penetrated before the true faith could enter. But in spite of many difficulties, through patient ministering the Moravian missionaries were able to develop sizable congregations of believers. And through it all, the famous war chief Glikkikan stands out as a testimony to what the Holy Spirit can do to change the life of a man and make him a leader for the good of his own people.

If you want to be inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit and true mission work, read these seven volumes.

You will end up realizing that not only the Europeans can develop the true faith, the native Americans could, too. This story is portrayed in the Conquest Series, as the white men, totally unprovoked, condemned these harmless believers to death.

Listen in as the orator Glikkikan makes his defense before his accusers and fights his greatest battle as he encourages his congregation with prayer and singing. In the end, Glikkikan's plea for justice and truth fell on deaf ears as far as the hateful settlers were concerned. One hundred sixty white settlers were counted on the side of those who clubbed almost 100 Native Americans to death with a Cooper's mallet.

This story will motivate you to a life of integrity, patience, and faithfulness. If you are looking for reading material to motivate and inspire young people, the Conquest Series makes an excellent choice.



Where to buy?

Order information: T.G.S. Books
7939 Orangeville Kinsman Road - Kinsman OH
44428
Phone: 330.397.2265

Special Winter Sale in US!

Seven volume soft-cover set postpaid: US \$85.00
Seven volume hard-cover set postpaid: US \$168.00

Upcoming Events

If you know of any meetings or events that would benefit the Kingdom of Christ and are open to attendance by the general Anabaptist community, please let us know so we can continue to feature this section in future issues.

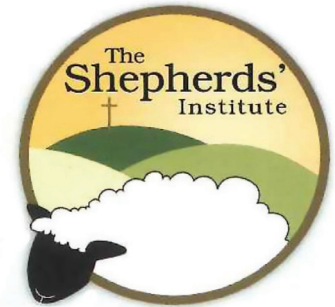
The Shepherds Institute Meetings

Type of Meeting: Equipping church leaders to be compassionate and wise in pastoral care, church administration, and Biblical preaching

Date: February 13 - 17, 2023.

Location: Harvest Mennonite Church, 34985 Hwy, 5, Fortuna, MO 65034

Contact: Chester Weaver (817) 648-1863 - www.theshepherdsinstitute.org



We believe the Bible is the inspired and complete Word of God and that it is our guide for faith and practice in all cultures for all time.

Daytime Classes for Ordained & Licensed Ministers

First period: 9:00 - 10:30 am

– **Man and Redemption:** *Milo Zehr*

Second period: 10:45 - 12:15 pm

– **Biblical Hermeneutics:** *Dave Yoder*

Lunch (12:15 - 1:00 pm)

Third period: 1:00 - 2:30 pm

– **Leadership and Brotherhood:** *Chester Weaver*

Fourth period: 2:45 - 4:15 pm

– **Round Table Discussion:** *Moderated by Milo Zehr*

Evenings Are Open to the Public (7:00 pm)

7:00 - 7:10 pm (Opening)

7:10 - 7:55 pm

– **Spiritual Disciplines:** *Chester Weaver*

The spiritual disciplines are essential for Christian growth: however they are neglected in our day.

8:00 - 8:45 pm

– **Christian Liberty in the Context of Brotherhood:** *Dave Yoder*

Pastoring is not about learning techniques in handling people.

Rather it is learning how to humbly partner with Christ so that His divine influences come to bear on human issues.



Circulation & Financial Statement

Income & Expense Report October thru December 2022

October 1, 2022 Beginning Balance	\$2,953.03
Income	
Donations	\$6,610.53
Local Support*	\$11,000.00
Total Income	\$17,610.53
Beginning Balance + Income	\$20,563.56
Expenses	
Handling & Packaging	\$672.00
Postage	\$3,625.66
Printing	\$5,923.00
Staff Expenses	\$774.94
Total Expense	\$10,995.60
December 31, 2022 Ending Balance	\$9,567.96

Circulation Report December 2022

ISSUE #21 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,760 | Operating Cost: \$9,722.67
Cost Per Copy: \$2.05/ea.

ISSUE #22 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 5,000 | Operating Cost: \$10,568.14
Cost Per Copy: \$2.11/ea.

ISSUE #23 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 5,000 | Operating Cost: \$10,559.39
Cost Per Copy: \$2.11 /ea.

ISSUE #24 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 5,000 | Operating Cost: \$10,715.95
Cost Per Copy: \$2.11/ea.

ISSUE #25 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$11,163.95
Cost Per Copy: \$2.30/ea.

ISSUE #26 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$10,995.60
Cost Per Copy: \$2.27/ea.

*see section "Our Finances" on Page 4 for more info.

The costs of publication have largely fallen to local support. If you wish to share in the publishing costs for AV28, it would be much appreciated. All gifts given to Anabaptist Voice through the local church are tax deductible.



End Matters

We now have six boxes of back issues of *Anabaptist Voice* inhabiting my study. While a grandson from New Mexico visited us over the holidays, he cheerfully updated and organized the count. Here is his tally:

AV 1 – 1 copy	AV8 – 1 copy	AV15 – 20 copies	AV22 – 2 copies
AV 3 – 1 copy	AV9 – 46 copies	AV16 – 37 copies	AV23 – 103 copies
AV4 – 1 copy	AV10 – 28 copies	AV17 – 19 copies	AV24 – 61 copies
AV5 – 1 copy	AV11 – 19 copies	AV18 – 44 copies	AV25 – 5 copies
AV6 – 24 copies	AV12 – 1 copy	AV19 – 86 copies	AV26 – 45 copies
AV7 – 3 copies	AV14 – 22 copies	AV20 – 15 copies	

Please let us know if you can use any of these copies in group Bible studies, evangelistic outreach, or in other teaching ministries. If visitors and guests come to your home or church you can use these copies to introduce them to *Anabaptist Voice*.

We will be glad to forward these extra copies free of charge. If you want to look them up and find which issues you particularly like, they are all available online for your perusal. But be assured the pressure is building to clean house and rid my study of these useless boxes. Someday they will all be burned in the fire.

We are thankful for the offerings and gifts that came in to help with the printing and mailing costs of AV27. These donations cover more than half of the needed funds. They indicate to us interest and support for the continuation of *Anabaptist Voice*.

– James G. Landis

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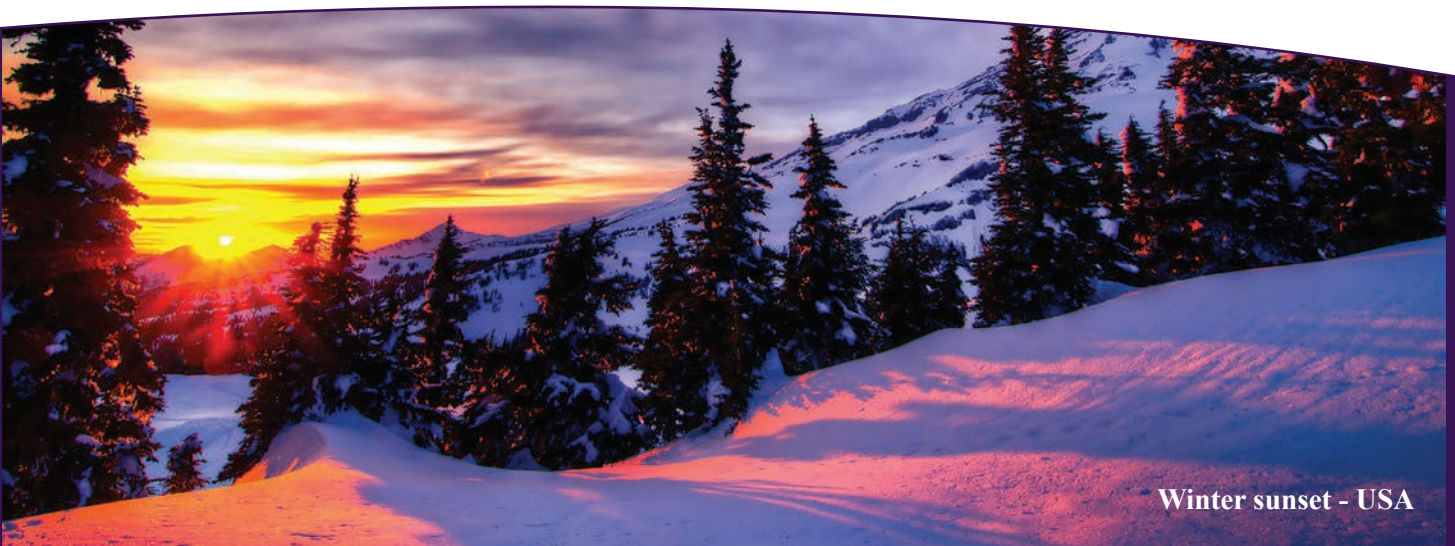
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“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

– Isaiah 41:10 (NKJV)



Winter sunset - USA