

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

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

In This Issue:

"THE LORD'S DAY" - DAVID OBERHOLTZER

"THE REAL TEAM" - JEFF BYLER

"PRE OR AH?" - MENNO KNIGHT

"MY JOURNEY TO NONRESISTANCE" - JASON GLASGOW

"ANABAPTIST BROTHERHOOD" - MERLE HERR



Letter from the Editor



On my Sunday morning walk, I saw them at a distance, three of them. I froze. They had also seen me. Gracefully they slid in and out of the water, some on the bank while others played along in the water. But they came my way to have a look at me.

These half-grown puppies (or kittens) are not commonly seen in our area. But I knew what they were because a few days earlier, I had found an adult dead on the road and had examined it carefully. It had a long slender tail, about 12 inches, and a fairly broad head. The identification was certain. They were otters, super graceful in the water ... and superb fishers. Two adults can clean a pond out of fish

overnight. Uh-oh! We paid \$2,000 for grass carp to eat the weeds and grass in the ponds and ... otters like carp.

- x x x -

On a weekday, I stopped at a busy gas station to fill up. I wore my plain suit. The man at the pump on the other side wore a T-shirt with "HOMELAND SECURITY" emblazoned upon it. I missed the rest of the message. "Did you really work for Homeland Security?" I inquired.

"No, no," he responded. "I'm only about 40 percent, but some people are 60 percent or even higher."

"I am 100 percent for Homeland Security," I responded, and pointed up.

He understood. A friendly exchange ensued where I learned about his grown children, his wife, and other interesting details of his life. I believe God opened his mind to a different perspective on which Homeland is really secure.

- x x x -

After close to six years, my one hearing aid quit working. I consulted with a hearing aid specialist who asked me all sorts of questions that were supposed to be related to my hearing. Are you retired? How active are you at 83? Do you have a wife? Then he followed up with this one liner, "Use it or lose it."

Hm-m-m. Do I really need hearing aids? Or do I hear just what I want to hear anyway?

Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Peace,

James

Send all responses, articles, and questions to:

AV Editor

5282 Highway 56 South
Waynesboro, GA 30830
editor@anabaptistvoice.com
www.anabaptistvoice.com

Send donations and/or subscription info to:

AV Production Team

243 Partridge Road
Olar, SC 29843
subscriptions@anabaptistvoice.com
www.anabaptistvoice.com

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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 from the New American Standard Bible (1995) unless specified otherwise at the end of an article.

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

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 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 contains 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.

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

Four "C" Christians

By Ob Servant

I believe there are four types of Christians: converted, cultural, casual, and committed.

Converted Christian – The converted Christian may have been uninformed or indifferent to Christ and His teachings, but then he/she heard the gospel and was convicted by the Holy Spirit of sin. Sin is confessed and salvation by Jesus Christ is accepted. The converted Christian becomes a new person and follows Jesus.

The converted Christian may not be correct in every belief, but he/she lives a life that pleases the Lord. **"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master'" (Matthew 25:23).**

Cultural Christian – The cultural Christian may have been raised as a Christian. He/she conforms to the surrounding "Christian" environment.

Casual Christian – The casual Christian is a nice, peaceable person. Strong convictions on Christian teaching can be lacking. Casual Christians are usually cultural Christians.

Committed Christian – The committed Christian could be called a zealot. They have strong convictions and defend them. An example is the apostle Paul. He was committed to the Jewish traditions until he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He became a converted Christian who would die for Christ.

B. H, | Pennsylvania



There Is Remission

by Kant Sing

I am writing in regard to the article "The Law and the law" (AV37, page 13). This article refers to the hymn, "Once for All."

This hymn is in our church hymnal, but I cannot sing it. It seems to support lawlessness and eternal security salvation.

The song suggests that Jesus met all the requirements of the law and we have no obligations to keep the law. That is true concerning the requirements of the [Mosaic] Law. The Old Testament blood ordinances were "done away with" when Christ bled on the cross. However, sin is still the transgression of God's laws (**1 John 3:4**).

Galatians 3:13 does not say, "Christ has redeemed us from the cursed law." God's laws place a curse on those who disobey them. The curse of sin is death. Christ has redeemed us from that curse.

It may not rhyme, but I could sing "Once For All" if the wording was changed.

"Free from condemnation, O happy condition
Jesus has bled, and there is remission:
Cursed for breaking the laws,
Christ offers salvation to all."

B. H, | Pennsylvania



Forgiven

by Con Fined

The reason for this letter is to thank you for your action regarding the *Anabaptist* magazine. As I mentioned before, I really like its content and everything else. I would like you to write to me and give me more information about your church, doctrine, and beliefs.

I am a Christian and I believe that Jesus died for me, and everyone. I believe in baptism, in the repentance and forgiveness of sin.

I am 61 years old. I have been confined for 12 years; I am here because I had a fight and I took a human life with a pistol. This event practically destroyed my life and that of my family as well.

However, here in jail I met Jesus; I have been a Christian for 10 years.

Before this tragedy, I worked as a police officer and in the private sector—pharmaceuticals, and computer software.

All of my family are in the states with the exception of my father, mother, sister, and two brothers who

passed away within the last six years.

I have told you all this so that you know me. I know what happened was horrible and that I have to live like this in prison. I also know God has forgiven me.

I hope you can read in Spanish, but if not, you can write in English.

Thank you for remembering the prisoners.

My respects and prayers for you and your family. I hope to hear from you soon.

L. E. T. A. | Puerto Rico



Perplexed

by Wan Dering

I have been taught the doctrine of the Trinity at home and in the church which I attended in earlier years. In my studies, I came to understand that the doctrine of the Trinity is not taught in the Bible.

A friend of mine defended his false doctrine and ungodly behavior by saying, “The doctrine of the Trinity is not in the Bible either.”

To me, some things not taught in the Bible are true; but every false doctrine has this in common—it is not taught in the Bible. If someone says, “This doctrine is not taught in the Bible,” rather than affirming something to be true, it casts a shadow of doubt upon it. If it is not taught in the Bible, at best, it is insignificant for our pursuit of holiness and, at worst, it is an error that we ought to avoid.

Saying that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be understood but must be believed is troubling to me. This suggests that its author did not understand it either, yet he requires people to believe it. This excuse should not be used to validate incoherent doctrine.

R. L. | Maryland



Refreshing

by Ins Pired

In the last edition of *Anabaptist Voice* (AV37), I was encouraged by the “Letter from the Editor.” It was refreshing to see God’s purposes even when there seemed to be no clear direction. There was a lot of godly wisdom and inspiration throughout, and

the article distinguishing the “Law” from the “law” is essential for avoiding antinomianism and for correct Bible interpretation.

Though I personally prefer the manuscripts based on the Textus Receptus, such as the King James Version and the New King James Version, the article on the New American Standard Bible was good and indicates that the translators had no other agenda than to translate God’s Word.

It is important to consider that not all Bible versions are “good.” Some translations have an ingrained bias other than to accurately translate the truth—gender neutrality, women’s place in the home and church, divorce and remarriage, ecclesiastical authority, military murder. Do they translate the truth? Congregations need to be diligent in informing their members to reject tainted versions.

It is very inspiring to hear the testimonies of people like Murray Carter, Ted Summers and Janet Smith in *Anabaptist Voice* as well. Praise God, that the harvest is not over!

I appreciate your dedication to having an open mind and not taking offense at disagreements. This is part of the strength of *Anabaptist Voice*. Embracing a gracious and meek response is what can make this platform safe, despite the diversity of opinions.

J. L. B. | Idaho.



Puzzled

by Dis A. Pointed

The title, “In the King’s Service” (AV37, page 28) puzzled me.

If the driver was indeed in service to the same King that I serve, his disrespectful and mocking remarks about the older couple and the dog were inappropriate.

This driver’s number one duty should have been to stop, turn around, and face the older couple who had just lost their valuable pet. Being prejudiced in assumptions as an excuse is not a good testimony for an Anabaptist.

D. H. | Ohio



The Lord's Day

By David Oberholtzer

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

Genesis 1:31; 2:2

God set in order the precise time cycles of the month, day, and year. The time length for the day is twenty-four hours—midnight to midnight or sunrise to sunrise—no one can change the length of the created day. The same is true for the cycle of the year. Winter to winter, spring to spring, and so on—no one can shorten or lengthen the created year.

There is another time cycle that is even more amazing—the seven-day week. Many people do not think about it, but the time interval of the week is also a real part of God's wonderful creation. The day and month and year are easily understandable time increments. But the week has no explainable reason other than the one left us in God's written Word. Today, 6,000 years since creation week, this time cycle could be extinct, or a diverse practice. Instead, the week stands right alongside the day, month and year. This is only due to the wisdom and power of God.

After creation week, and the first Sabbath, only a few instances of the week are recorded in the Bible until the time of Moses.¹ The first specific mention of a weekly Sabbath, after the Sabbath at creation, is when the Israelites gathered manna. At the time of giving the manna, we have a clear indication of Sabbath observance—God commanded the Israelites to not work on the Sabbath.

Later, from the terrible mount burning with fire, smoke, and tempest, God gave the command to keep the Sabbath Day holy as one of the Ten Commandments. God verbalized these commandments in a voice like a trumpet. Then He engraved them with His own finger upon tablets of stone for them to fear and to observe. The commandment regarding the Sabbath is known as the Fourth Commandment.



It seems that after the Ten Commandments were given, the Sabbath was kept very strictly.

“Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people” (Exodus 31:14).

“But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted; then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them” (Ezekiel 19:13).

At one point a man went out to gather sticks on the Sabbath, and at God's command they took him and stoned him to death (**Numbers 15:32-36**). Thus the death penalty for failure to observe the Sabbath was put on an equal basis with the penalty for the sins of adultery and murder. It was that serious in the Law of Moses.

It is clear from Moses and the prophets that God regarded it very serious to not keep *“My Sabbath.”* By the time of Jesus, the keeping of the Sabbath was considered one of the most important commandments by the Jewish rulers.

The Sabbath Day

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work ...” (Exodus 20:8-10).

It has not been uncommon over the years to use the term “sabbath” for the first day of the week. Is it a correct understanding to consider the Lord's Day or Sunday, a direct observance of the Fourth Commandment?

In one sense the term “Sabbath” can be used for this day. However, the teaching that the Lord's Day as a direct observance of the Fourth Commandment is a mistake. This belief gives rise to the doctrinal error of the Saturday, seventh-day Sabbath observance.

The word “sabbath” comes from a word meaning “to cease.” It means to “intercept” or “interrupt.”

¹ The Bible records several seven-day increments at the beginning and end of Noah's stay in the ark (**Genesis 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12**). This is a strong indicator that the honoring of the sabbath of rest continued from the beginning and, like marriage, applied to all men before Noah's flood.

The Bible also mentions Laban requiring Jacob to fulfill Leah's “week” before giving Rachel to him for his wife (**Genesis 29:27**).

The Sabbath intercepts the busyness of the six days of labor. From what little we can glean in the Bible about a week, it does seem something must have been maintained of a sabbath principle before the Ten Commandments were given. Living day after day, alike, without a weekly interception of some kind of sabbath principle would, with time, take away the time interval of the week.

In this way the Lord's Day has a basis upon the time interval of the weekly Sabbath. Some kind of weekly sabbath order must exist if Christians are to experience the blessings of God's design of the "week." Jesus referred to these blessings when He said, "*The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath,*" (*Mark 2:27*). Nevertheless, just because the Lord's Day entails a sabbath principle, it does not make it a direct observance of the Fourth Commandment given under the Old Covenant.

No longer observing the Sabbath, but living in observance of the Lord's Day

Ignatius c. 80 ad

The Old and New Covenant

We need to realize there is a vital difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Along with the mistaken understanding that the Lord's Day is the actual observance of the Fourth Commandment, oftentimes there is also a wrong concept regarding the Old and New Covenants. Some may see the Old and New Testaments as two sets of rules—the Old list an imperfect list, and the New a perfect list. With this kind of concept, you may hear statements like, "Any commandments that God gave in the Old Testament—those Jesus did not delete or change—stand just as they used to under the Old."

The only way to attain peace and eternal life is through a very different covenant—the New Covenant.

*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made ... when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt ... (*Hebrews 8:8*).*

A covenant with God is a sacred agreement between God and man. Thus the "law of Christ" looks very different from the Mosaic Law under the Old Covenant. The "law of Christ"—all His teachings and commands—take a new dimension. In this dimension, we see Jesus in His teachings and commands! The greatest desire for the one who has entered covenant

with Christ is to be changed into His glorious image. Our striving to obey and fulfill the law of Christ flows from this deep desire. In beholding Jesus, and desiring to be changed into the same image from glory to glory, the law of Christ transcends the actual letters of the law under the Old Covenant.² Letters simply could not be written out sufficiently enough to make this change.

Preparing for the New Covenant

In the Gospels and in Acts, the Sabbath is repeatedly mentioned. But these are mostly in narrative form. Sabbath observance was a real part of Jewish life, just like other areas that naturally come up in the gospels and Acts.

These statements of Jesus were offensive to those who were not receptive to the heavenly Kingdom He was teaching. It was offensive to the Pharisees when Jesus defended His disciples for plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath and telling them that the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless, then adds: "*But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple ... for the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath day*" (*see Matthew 12:1-8*). The message was clear. Jesus was telling them that if "the temple" is a greater authority than "the Sabbath," they need to know there is "One Greater" than both the temple or the Sabbath.

Jesus did not destroy the Law³ or the prophets. Rather, by fulfilling them, He could change them into a higher, better fulfillment of God's promises of old. God fulfilled His word in something far better than what the Old Covenant offered, or the Old Testament prophets promised. A promise that gives something far better than the original promise is a glorious fulfillment of one's promise. May Christ be praised forever for doing this for us! It is the only way we could be saved.

The Lord's Day

*"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet" (*Revelation 1:10*).*

We use the term "Lord's Day" for the first day of the week. This is the day Christians observe in honor of Christ's resurrection. Like the Old Testament Sabbath, the Lord's Day intercepts the temporal busyness of the

² *II Corinthians 3:7 speaks of how the "letters engraved on stone" came with glory. Then it goes on to point out that the ministry of the Holy Spirit will be far more glorious than that of keeping the letter of the law.*

³ *The law spoken of in this instance refers to the Mosaic Law, rather than to all law in general. See Romans by David Bercot, pages 7-8; AV37 page 13, "The Law and the law."*

week. The day is observed to assemble for worship, to be refreshed spiritually, and to lay aside temporal pressures.

Due to a certain kind of sabbath principle entailed in the Lord's Day, it has become confused with the Old Testament Sabbath observance by different Christians down through the centuries. Originally, for the early church the observance of the Lord's Day on the first day of the week had the sense of a weekly celebration of Christ's glorious resurrection, and our resulting life in Him. This joyous celebration lacked the legalistic tension of observing the Old Testament Sabbath.

There are numerous early Christian writings where the term "the Lord's Day" as used by John in Revelation, was a common term. On the Christian's special first day of the week, they assembled for worship services. The earliest of these, the Didache,⁴ is thought to have been written close to the time period when John wrote the Revelation. Ignatius, living a decade or two later, states that Christians no longer observe the Sabbath and that they observe the Lord's Day.⁵ The Lord's Day, Sunday, and the First Day of the Week, are used frequently and interchangeably in referring to the Christians' special weekly day of worship.

A man keeps the Lord's Day—when he abandons an evil disposition and assumes the disposition of the spiritual man, glorifying the Lord's resurrection in himself.

Clement of Alexandria c. 195 ad

References To The First Day

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils" (Mark 16:9).

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, 'Peace be unto you'" (John 20:19).

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow" (Acts 20:7).

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:2).

⁴ Anti-Nicene Fathers (ANF) verse. 7, page 381.

⁵ ANF, verse 1, page 62.

But Sunday is the day we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God ... made the world. And Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead on that day.

Justin Martyr c. 160 ad

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet (Revelation 1:10).

These Scriptures in themselves may not be totally convincing, but they fit perfectly with the records of the early Christian church. Once we consider everything, it becomes understandable that the Church ended up observing the first day of the week as a special "Lord's Day."

Understandably, there was a needed transition period of toleration between the Jews, who were used to Sabbath observance, and the Gentiles, who understood the Sabbath was already fulfilled in Christ. Romans fourteen seems to especially give guidance to Jews and Gentiles in that transition period.

When we think of everything involved, it casts a special glow of appreciation and awe upon the final outcome of Christians assembling and worshipping weekly on the Lord's Day. Let us consider what was involved in observing the Lord's Day.

Valuing God's Time Interval of the Week

There is something divinely good about the 7-day week, just as it is with the day and year. Something about the seven-day interval is just right for man. If men would change the week to 10 days, it would not be the same. Some civilizations have tried changing it.

One of the more recent nations to try it have been the French. In 1793, the French Revolutionaries instituted a new calendar with 10-day weeks to de-Christianize society and replace the traditional 7-day week. It proved very unpopular with the workers; they wanted more days of rest. After only 12 years, Napoleon returned the country to the traditional 7-day week.

Studies indicate that there are natural benefits for the human body and mind to have this weekly time cycle with a day that relaxes from the temporal stresses of the other six days. The basis for the week is founded on the creation week where God rested from His work at the end of the seven-day time interval.

It should be no surprise that Christians dedicate a special day of the week to regularly assemble to worship Him and edify each other. In doing this, they also experience the blessing Jesus spoke of when He said, *"The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27).*

For the Lord's Day to have and maintain a certain sabbath principle that blesses man, the normal weekly activities should be laid aside, and the day must be devoted to that which is appropriate for worship, fellowship, and service.

Christ rose on the third day, which fell on the first day of the week of harvest

Clement of Alexandria c. 195 ad

The Resurrection of Christ

Why, if the Old Testament Sabbath is fulfilled, do we not choose just any day of the week to worship on a weekly basis? It seems right and Christ-honoring to gratefully maintain the time interval of the week by dedicating a day to our Lord. And what day was more fitting to choose than the day that crowned our Lord victor—the day of His glorious resurrection?

Originally, in early Christian writings, the sense comes through in shining contrast to the old Sabbath. The Lord's Day was a day of **celebration** of the One who fulfilled the Sabbath, rather than a continuation of it. And the final crowning of this wonderful fulfillment came when Christ arose from the dead "*and is alive forevermore*" (**Revelation 1:18**).

Feast of Pentecost

Pentecost marked the finish of the harvest. On this "*morrow after the sabbath*" the Israelites were to wave two loaves of the fresh grain, made with leaven, before the Lord along with other offerings. It was to be a holy day with freewill giving and rejoicing (see **Leviticus 23:15-21** and **Deuteronomy 16:9-11**).

Day of Pentecost

The New Testament tells us what happened on this first day of the week, seven weeks after Christ had risen from the dead. "*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come ... suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind ... and they were filled with the Holy Ghost*" (**Acts 2:1, 2, 4**).

Other New Testament References

In the New Testament there are further references to the first day of the week that are significant:

- 1) Jesus arose this day, the first to rise forever from the dead, victorious over sin and death (**Mark 16:9**).

- 2) Jesus appeared to the eleven on this same evening where they were assembled and said, "*Peace be unto you*" (**John 20:19**).
- 3) The following week, on the first day of the week, Jesus met with them again and showed Himself to Thomas (**John 20:26-29**).
- 4) After His ascension on the day of Pentecost, the first day of the week, He sent the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, upon His New Testament church (**Acts 2:1-21**).
- 5) In **Acts 20:7** it tells us the first day of the week was the day the disciples came together to break bread, and that Paul preached into the night.
- 6) In Paul's final chapter of **1 Corinthians**, he instructed them to have alms gatherings on the first day of the week, indicating this was the day they assembled (**1 Corinthians 16:2**).
- 7) On the isle of Patmos John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day," and there he was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ for the churches (**Revelation 1:10, 19**).

Not Forsaking the Assemblies of Saints

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).

This New Testament exhortation fits well with the practice of weekly observing the Lord's Day to assemble together for worship and spiritual edification. This weekly practice since the beginning of the Christian Church is a direct application of this divine instruction. Experience tells us that without such a regular order of practice, we humans would tend to get more and more lax in assembling as we should. The idea that we can fit in normal work and business and still assemble and exhort as we should is not reality. Keeping the Lord's Day special helps fulfill this command.

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities and countries gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or writing of the prophets are read.

Justin Martyr - 160 ad

The Sum Total

Any single one of these aspects alone may not be convincing to people who have doubts about observing the Lord's Day. However, when these four aspects are all considered together, the Lord's Day becomes hard to deny.

- The value of the created week.
- The celebration of Christ's resurrection.
- The significance of the first day of the week.
- The not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.

When all these are considered together, a lovely truth glows through the Lord's Day. It would seem all Christians everywhere, whether Jew or Gentile, should be able to accept the Lord's Day and exclaim, "*This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it*" (*Psalm.118:23,24*).

But every Lord's Day, gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, so that your sacrifice may be pure.

Didache c. 80 ad ⁷

No Occasion To The Flesh

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh (Galatians 5:13).

It seems there are always some people who, when hearing we are no longer under the law⁶ but under grace, think they need to flaunt their liberty in using it for an occasion to the flesh. Jude writes of some who by having a wrong view of God's grace, "*turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness*" (*Jude 4*). We see this, more and more in our times, in many areas of life. But may it not be the testimony of the true lovers of Christ.

Just a few decades in the past there was a fairly

⁶ The New Testament makes a distinction between the Mosaic Law and all law in general. The observance of the seven-day week with the holy day of rest on the seventh day is a part of God's eternal laws for all men. See AV12 page 32, "The Law of Moses in the New Testament"; AV34 page 12, "What is the Law?"; AV37, "The Law and the law," page 13.

⁷ The Didache, also known as The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations, is a brief anonymous early Christian treatise written in Koine Greek, dated by modern scholars to the first or second century AD.

universal respect of the Lord's Day here in America. I'm sure it lacked in the true spirit and devotion found in the Christian's initial celebration of this day. Nevertheless, there was still a degree of respect held for the day. That is swiftly changing. More and more businesses are open seven days a week. In the past it would have been unheard of that professing Christians were going to the job, or doing normal business on the Lord's Day. Today, it has almost become the norm.

The decline of respect for the Lord's Day is just one of the many signs of a great falling away. Instead of falling in line with the prevailing spirit of licentiousness, let our lives be a testimony to those who transgress. We show that we love our Lord ardently by assembling and worshipping, and by laying aside temporal distractions on His day, the day of His resurrection and the redemption of our souls.

Appropriate activities for this day include attending worship service, engaging in various types of church work, visits for spiritual fellowship among families and believers. It is also a day for repose, quiet time, reading the Bible and upbuilding materials, and things of this nature.

Inappropriate activities include pleasure trips, sport type activities, eating out, and unnecessary travel. This should not keep us from doing merciful deeds, dutiful responses in emergencies, or necessary travel, especially for the Lord's work.

In our society, the Lord's Day is largely a day of pleasure seeking. It is often the very thing that prompts more and more businesses to be open Sundays. We need to remember that by using businesses on Sundays, we are taking part in helping more and more people stay out of church. It is our Christian duty to exhort others to not forsake the assembling of the saints. We need to do this in word and by our example. How can we do this if we needlessly make use of Sunday businesses? May our witness be that of being a people who love the Lord, and who love to assemble and worship and fellowship on the Lord's Day.

- Selections from a booklet,
"The Sabbath Day or the Lord's Day?"

The booklet may be ordered from: Needle Eye Press

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“Jesus summed up all of the Old Testament with just two simple words, ‘Follow Me.’”

– Murray Carter at Living Hope Mennonite Church, ID



“Our failings are a lack of performance rather than a lack of knowledge.”

– Jeff Lee at Hephzibah Mennonite Church, GA



“Sometimes through yielding, we actually conquer.”

– Conrad Martin at Delano Christian Community, TN



“God loves to answer your prayers, but He refuses to share His glory with you when He does.”

– Aden Troyer at Cimarron Christian Brotherhood, OK



“We should not despise our adversaries for they do us a favor; they show us our weaknesses.”

– Noah Hoover at Scottsville Christian Community, KY



“Yesterday’s faithfulness is not a replacement for today’s obedience.”

– Kurtis Martin at Shirksville Mennonite Church, PA



“If we want to be of those of whom the world is not worthy, we need to walk worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

– Martin Friesen at Horndean Mennonite Church, MB



“I know two things: I was a great sinner and Jesus is a great Savior.”

– Trent Bahler at Remington Apostolic Christian Church, IN



“People do not ditch bad habits in the reaping stage, they need to ditch them in the sowing stage.”

– Sheldon Mast at Shekinah Mennonite Church, MO



“Repentance is more than a mental acknowledgement. It is a complete change in direction of travel.”

– Richard Herr at Sparta Mennonite Church, WI

We welcome additional quotes to add to our file. If you do not see a ruby or diamond listed from your state and your congregation, please send us at least one. That way Anabaptist Voice knows you are alive and listening. Please send in your quote followed by the name of the speaker and the name of the congregation where it was given. For our records, we would also like to have the name and address of the person sending in the quote.

The Real Team

By Jeff Byler

In this article we will view how age affects leadership in the church. First of all, we will look at what the Word of God says about the necessary qualities of a Christian leader and how age may factor in their practice. Then we will look at the historical position of the church.

A Minister and the Age Factor

1 Timothy 3:2-5 lists the qualities of a leader as being *“above reproach ... temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach ... not pugnacious, (overly aggressive) but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money ... one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity ... not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.”*

As we look at this list, we can see that character is more important than talent. Being quick witted, having charisma and energy comes in second to meekness, wisdom, faithfulness and holy living. This list in 1 Timothy does not necessarily favor young or old leaders. However, some of the qualities listed here are usually developed more with age, such as prudence and patience. “Managing well his own household” hints at someone older as well. Then we have the obvious rejection of a novice, who is anyone new to the faith.

The ability to work in a team is critical to the building up of God’s Kingdom. This is where young and old must respect each other and lay down their own opinions for the sake of a unified goal.

The term “elder” in the New Testament is used synonymously as overseer (bishop) and is also used to designate someone older. This gives us a strong indication from Scripture that the office of bishop is for someone with some years and experience under his belt. The following verses show this fact and the respect that was to be shown them as well.

1 Timothy 5:1, 19: *“Do not sharply rebuke an older man (presbuteros), but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers ... Do not receive an accusation against an elder (presbuteros) except on the basis of two or three witnesses.”*

1 Peter 5:1: *“Therefore, I exhort the elders (presbuteros) among you, as your fellow elder (presbuteros) and witness of the sufferings of Christ.”*

Titus 1:5, 7: *“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would ... appoint elders (presbus) in every city as I*

directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach ... For the overseer (episcopos) must be above reproach.”

Youth may tend to fall into the trap of self-conceit more than the older, self-aware, elder in the church. For this reason, when Jesus told the accusers of the adulterous woman (**John 8**) that those who were innocent should cast the first stone, they went out from the oldest to the youngest. As we get older, the recollection of our many faults and failures tend to temper swift calls for judgment.

The strength of youth is a quick and curious mind, lots of contagious energy and a freshness of perspective. Without a doubt, young men contribute immensely to the work of the ministry, but to think that these traits supersede the wisdom and godly testimony of the older men is a big mistake.

We believe that *“though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day”* (**II Corinthians 4:16**), and that growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ takes time. Because of this, we should expect older men to be more Christ-like; full of meekness, gentleness, kindness, wisdom, faith, and truth. Often I have found this to be true. But **Ecclesiastes 4:13** also says, *“A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction.”* Examples of young spiritual men and old carnal men also appear in Scripture.

As we get older, we also develop some limitations. We tend to become more sedentary and as a result, sometimes become out of touch with the rest of the congregation. We may have a harder time taking stress and a lot of social interaction can wear us down. Hospitality can seem like a bigger chore.

As my grandfather aged, he preached less but I appreciated his sermons more than those of a younger speaker because of his consistent and tried testimony. He emphasized the more basic elements of Christianity; his faith and love for Jesus shone at its strongest. I admired and appreciated his gentleness and longing for his heavenly home and was inspired to grow in my love for Christ because of him. To some he may have

been seen as past his prime—he was slower and more measured—but I valued his counsel more than ever.

The work of a minister is not like that of a CEO or a Wall Street stock broker. A good minister invests *emotionally* into his congregation: in prayers, in love, in sleepless nights, in study and in having difficult conversations and messages to the souls that he will give an account for. He will begin to love his congregation like a father does his children. He will put his heart out like a welcome mat to be trampled on and will make himself vulnerable to rejection and spite.

In Anabaptist churches, complete physical compensation is not given for his labor, and indeed, to think that this job could be done strictly for monetary compensation is absurd. He labors for the sake of Christ and His bride. We want this work to attract those who will go well beyond the call of duty and commit their entire heart and life. These are important things to remember if someone believes that we should put term limits or age limits on this work.

Examples of Age and Length of Service

The priests of the Old Testament began their service at age thirty. Joseph is our first example of a young man, age thirty, who proved himself to be an excellent and responsible leader. David was thirty years of age when he became king. Jesus also began his ministry at *about thirty years old* (**Luke 3:23**). Though the ages of Solomon, Jeremiah, Samuel, and Daniel are not given in Scripture, they were probably either teenagers or in their early twenties when they began their ministries. Joshua was called a “young man” (**Exodus 33:11**), but was well into his forties when this was written of him.

Because of the many examples of age, thirty being a starting point for public ministry, many people consider this to be the safest age to begin. This is undoubtedly true, but seeing the many examples in Scripture of God calling both the very young and the aged, we should be reluctant to put either a minimum age or a maximum age for ministry. Special caution should be given in ordaining a brother under thirty because their character is still developing.

The ministries of the judges, kings and prophets, varied as to their length. We do not find any hint of retirement in Scripture. Some prophets and judges served mere years, while others served over 40 years and some even served for more than 60 years. For this reason, it is a mistake to assume that when a minister is over 65 he should be “put out to pasture.”

We need our older men to have the spirit of Caleb who said at 85 years old, “Give me this mountain.” Godly men should not retire to shuffle board matches or the local fishing hole. Not even counting the Patriarchs, we have many leaders of God’s people like Elisha, Daniel, Moses, Jeremiah, Caleb and Joshua who were well over 80 years of age and remained active. Leadership in the Old Testament and in the Apostolic and early church, was a lifetime work.

One of my favorite kings in the Bible is Josiah, who at age 20, began the most extensive religious reforms in Israel’s history. His reign shows the fact that youth are generally not as afraid to upset cultural and social norms as older men may be. After reading the Word of God, Josiah recognized the evil of idolatry and set out to destroy every idol that he could find. He left no stone unturned in this endeavor. Josiah is a good example of the Kingdom of Heaven’s need for young men with clarity of vision and energy to restore true worship.

On the other side of the spectrum from Josiah, we have Jehoiada the priest. At about 100 years of age, he began his greatest life work: the concealment and training of the young prince Joash. As King of Israel, Joash served God until Jehoiada’s death at the remarkable age of 130. Interestingly, this is the oldest age ever recorded since the time of the patriarchs (**2 Chronicles 22:10-24:27**). After Jehoiada’s death, Joash apostatized just like the children of Israel apostatized after Joshua’s death. *“Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel”* (**Joshua 24:31**). This illustrates how the godly elders of the church stand as pillars and bulwarks to protect God’s Kingdom in the spiritual battle we are in.



At age 54—having been ordained for nearly 25 years—I have a great sense of debt to the wisdom of those who are older than myself. Yet I am also refreshed by the vigor of the newly ordained young men. I have always sought counsel from people older than myself because of their experience and character. They also tend to be more confidential with one's troubles.

On the other hand, the curiosity and amazement of the young men who are just discovering the treasures of God's Word is truly inspiring as well. This amazing combination works wonderfully together in a team as it did various times in Scripture—Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Timothy, Peter and Mark. The early Waldensians went out in pairs of an older and a younger man. Yet today, some mission models ignore the wisdom of these examples and send novices on the field with little or no accountability.

Traditional Points on Age in Leadership

Clement of Rome wrote in the first century these words to the church at Corinth; *“Our Apostles, too, were given to understand by our Lord Jesus Christ that the office of bishop would give rise to intrigues. For this reason, equipped as they were with perfect foreknowledge, they appointed the men mentioned before, and afterward laid down once for all to this effect: when these men die, other approved men should succeed to their sacred ministry. Consequently, we deem it an injustice to eject from the sacred ministry the persons who were appointed either by them or later...”* This passage, written so close to the time of the Apostles, and by a man that most likely knew Peter and Paul personally, should carry a lot of weight in assuring us that the office of bishop is a lifetime work and not to be retired from, or looked at as a term.

Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna died with great courage for his faith while in his mid-eighties.

The tradition of serving for life in the ministry comes from the God-given instinct that many cultures across the world still maintain the respect and honor that is due the aged. Many of the historical churches of today like Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, some Baptists, German Baptists and many evangelical congregations still maintain the tradition of leaving church leaders in for life. This appears to have been the practice handed down since the beginning of the church age. The work load of an older minister or bishop may shift more into counseling and mentoring as he ages. But this is an essential aspect of ministry as well, and should be done in an official and respectful way.

Early church tradition and the New Testament



support the idea of having plural bishops in a single congregation; this can safeguard the church from authoritarianism. Paul addresses his letter to the Philippians, “the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons” (note plural).

The early Anabaptist leaders such as George Blaurock, Felix Mantz, Conrad Grebel and Michael Sattler were in their late twenties and early thirties when they restored true, biblical worship. Their lives show the need for young men to rise up like Josiah and sometimes radically reform the church.

Younger people tend to see things in a purely ideological or black-and-white way. For this reason, young people need to respect their elders and consider that their ideological and revolutionary position may have been tried before and consequently failed.

I am still a young man, but have seen many revolutionary movements in the church burn out and leave disillusioned people in their wake. Some of these movements seemed attractive to me when I was younger, but thank God for the faithful older men in my life who lived out a steady faith that made me think twice about following these wandering stars. Yet, despite these negativities, young men have a lot to contribute to ministry and bring a much needed, fresh perspective.

Being patient and appreciative for the strengths and weaknesses of age and youth is developed by communities that are dedicated to close fellowship and are not simply looking at numbers.

Working Together in Ministry

Recently, I was in a community where the complaint was that the ministry was old and out of touch with the young people. This is a valid concern. Effort should be



made to keep the young and old in an active relationship. As we age, we should not forget how we felt and acted as youth and try to remember the particular thought patterns and needs of youth. Youth should also think of how to develop a relationship with someone who has already passed through the same path that they are on.

Rather than retiring older ministers it is wiser to constantly bring in younger ministers to complement the older. We should expect these younger ministers to submit to the older ones and the older ones to listen carefully to the younger. A plural ministry is a wonderful asset to serving God and His people. If there are qualified individuals, the ministry could represent about 10% to 20% of the heads of home.

One concern that we should have today is that the Kingdom of God be not limited by the expectation that older men need to get out of the way to let the younger ones lead. This concept is not found in Scripture; I fear that it comes from the erosion of honoring parents, leaders, and the aged; this attitude comes from the influence of the humanistic society around us. This is of great concern for the Church of Jesus Christ because respect for authority is foundational to the success of

God's people. *“If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?”* (Psalm 11:3).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Paul commands us to *“appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord, and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.”* This is true for the older; *“You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD”* (Leviticus 19:32). It is also true for the younger ones. *“Let no one look down on your youthfulness”* (1 Timothy 4:12).

Conclusion

In looking at the strengths and weakness of youth and age it becomes obvious that they make *The Perfect Team*. Paul needed to pass along the values that he had learned from God's Word to a young Timothy. Without this vital link, the church is severely hindered.

A congregation should strive to have a *ministerial team* that has young, middle-aged, and older men working together. We need the wisdom of the hoary head and the zeal of the younger. Instead of simply stepping aside and letting the younger men take over, an effort should be made to *work as a team* and submit to each other. As Peter says, *“You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another”* (1 Peter 5:5).

“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins” (Ephesians 6:24).



Gems from Georgia

Twelve Precious Stones from Georgia Church Meetings

"The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst."

— Revelation 21:19-20



JASPER

"We have peace, not because life is right with us, but because we are right with God."

— Conrad Stover at Burkeland Mennonite Church



SAPPHIRE

"In God's Kingdom, the throne is never empty. There is no crisis."

— Nathan Bange at South Atlantic Mennonite Conference



AGATE

"The thrust of our life, as we interact in the world around us, is to link people to God."

— Tim Thomas at Bethel Mennonite Church



EMERALD

"Questioning Scripture is more dangerous than outright lies."

— Tim Myers at South Atlantic Mennonite Conference



ONYX

"Salvation is free, but it wasn't cheap."

— Henry Ramos at Hartwell Mennonite Center



RUBY

"The greatest gift we can give our families is our faithfulness to God."

— Faron Wengerd at Burkeland Mennonite Church



CHRYSTOLITE

"A double-minded person will seek for wisdom when they already have their minds made up."

— Duane Strite at Burkeland Mennonite Church



BERYL

"The truth is still the truth, even when nobody believes it."

— Ted Steinruck at Hephzibah Mennonite Church



TOPAZ

"We must surrender to our Father before meaningful service can characterize our lives."

— Jared Hege at Burkeland Mennonite Church



TURQUOISE

"I must take on the mind of Christ, regardless of the circumstances."

— Ryan Keller at Burkeland Mennonite Church



JACINTH

"The new birth means that Christ has moved from outside the heart to within the heart."

— Austin Hege at Burkeland Mennonite Church



AMETHYST

"A great hindrance to usefulness in God's Kingdom may be that we have been used before."

— Nathan Bange at South Atlantic Mennonite Conference

Pre or Ah?

By Menno Knight

Some brothers were discussing certain doctrines about future things when I happened upon the scene. “Are you a Pre or an Ah?” was a lead brother’s question to me. I gave some dumb answers and straightway departed.

According to my studies, I do not think I quite fit into either camp. What the brother meant by his question was, “Do you believe Christ will return before the 1,000-year reign on the earth (premillennial)? Or, do you not believe there will be a millennium (amillennial)?” The problem is that a whole set of attached ideas come with each classification. Different ways of Bible interpretation and Bible understandings accompany each term. Whole books have been written explaining each view; even those in the same camp do not agree with each other. Am I supposed to claim to be in one camp or the other?

Furthermore, I find that there are also those who believe Christ will return after the 1,000-year reign on the earth (postmillennialists).

In addition, there are panmillennialists who say everything will “pan out” all right. I have a certain respect for those who do not want to be embroiled in fruitless discussions. But I do want to encourage healthy Bible study, even in areas where brethren disagree.

Let us take a better look at each of these three views of future things. Here is what the terms mean:

Premillennialism – Premillennialists believe that Jesus Christ will physically return to Earth, His *second coming*, before a literal 1,000-year reign, also known as the millennium. This reign will be a time of peace and prosperity established by Christ on Earth. Following the millennium, there will be a final battle, the defeat of Satan, and the ushering in of the new heaven and new earth.

Amillennialism – Amillennialists believe that the “thousand years” mentioned in Revelation 20 is a symbolic representation of the present church age, inaugurated by Christ’s resurrection and continuing until His *second coming*. During this period, Christ reigns spiritually, and His kingdom is both present and future, with believers experiencing both present blessings and future glory.¹

¹ Amillennialism – online definition from Wikipedia.

Postmillennialism – Postmillennialists hold to an interpretation of chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation which sees Christ’s *second coming* as occurring after the “millennium.” The millennium itself will be a time of global peace and prosperity brought about by the spread of the gospel.

All of these views of future things use different scriptures and interpret many scriptures differently. In which camp do I belong? I will explain why I do not fit in any of them.

The Bible Teaches Jesus Is Coming Again

The first difference with all three viewpoints is that the Bible never mentions the “second coming.” The Bible talks about His *coming again* and his *return*. Here is what Jesus and the apostles taught:

John 14:3. “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will *come again* and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there you may be also.*” This verse was a promise to the disciples that after His death He would come again and take them to be with Him. He did not mean that He would come for all twelve of them at one time. So this could have been eleven comings, not just the *second coming*.

Acts 1:9-11. “He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ... While He was going, behold two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’” This was not just a declaration of some glorious future event when He would return for all of them at one time; but a promise that those standing there watching would also see Him *return* for each one of them.

Acts 7:56, 59. “And he [Stephen] said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ ... He called on the Lord and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’” There can be no doubt that Jesus received Stephen’s spirit. In this way Jesus fulfilled the promise made to His disciples that they would be with Him in the place He had prepared for them. Stephen’s reception then, could be another coming of the Lord for one of His own.

Philippians 1:21, 23. “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. having the desire to depart and be with Christ.” The apostle Paul, like Stephen, believed that when he died he would go immediately into the presence of his dear Savior; at death His corruptible body would instantly be changed into an incorruptible body.

I believe, then, that when the Lord returns for me, it will be a glorious event where I can have a new body and live with Him in an eternal dwelling place.

The Bible Teaches All End-Time Events Have Been Fulfilled

Another understanding of the biblical message lies in the recorded words of Jesus. He told His disciples, that some of them would still be living when *all* the signs many connect with end-time events would already be fulfilled.

Matthew 24 is often broken down into different periods of time, some present in the time of Jesus and some ascribed to future events. But Jesus declared all of these events would happen within the lifespan of that generation.

Matthew 24:32-34. “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you see *all* these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, *this generation* will not pass away until *all* these things take place. You do not know which day your Lord is coming.”

Both **Mark 13:28** and **Luke 21:29-32** tell the same parable and give its meaning. Everything Jesus had just declared in the foregoing discourse would happen in the lifetime of that generation. Now if one looks back in the chapter to see the things that Jesus foretold, most people would agree that it is highly uncertain language—tribulation, darkened sun, no moonlight, stars falling from the sky, heavens shaken.

I do not think we should place a higher meaning on doubtful interpretations than what Jesus said it meant—Jesus said it would *all be fulfilled within the lifetime of that generation*. This fits exactly into the meaning of the fig tree parable—the time when the kingdom of God would appear was close at hand.

Following what Jesus said leaves no room for saying this discourse applies to future political or natural events that would happen after the people then living were gone. Jesus was not giving signs to watch for that would predict “end-time” events today.

The Bible Teaches the Kingdom of God Has Arrived

Many times Jesus taught His disciples about the Kingdom of God. But the coming of God’s Kingdom stood so distant from what they expected that they did not grasp what Jesus was telling them. So they argued about who would be the greatest in His Kingdom. They pictured themselves sitting on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus wanted them to understand that when His Kingdom did arrive, it would be vastly different from what they expected.

So Jesus made a plain statement that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all thought important enough to record.

Matthew 16:28. “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.”

Mark 9:1. And Jesus was saying to them, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

Luke 9:27. “But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God.”

Some viewpoints on the Millennium think that the Kingdom of God as it came in the time and in the way Jesus said it would was not glorious enough. So they see a future time of earthly glory that predicts practically returning to Old Testament principles, a glory very similar to the kingdom the disciples expected.

According to these three scriptures, Jesus’ Kingdom came to earth in all its glory and power in the lifetime of some of those standing there listening. I am not expecting any earthly kingdom different than what Jesus already established.

The Bible Teaches the Old Testament Is Fulfilled in Christ

The New Testament teachers always used the Old Testament scriptures to show how they were fulfilled in Christ and the church. The Old Testament was a tutor to bring us to Christ.

By divine inspiration, New Testament teachers often lifted quotes out of Old Testament books; these quotes were often used out of context. The Old Testament prophets had spoken to situations in their own times, but the New Testament preachers including Jesus applied them differently.

For instance, take the situation in Isaiah 7. The prophet Isaiah was assuring King Ahaz that the two kings

threatening his kingdom were nothing but two stubs of smoldering firebrands. They would not overcome him unless Ahaz did not believe what the Lord was telling him. Apparently Ahaz doubted. So God through Isaiah told Ahaz to ask for a sign that this is true, **“Make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask nor will I test the Lord!’ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.”** Ahaz was to understand that some virgin in his kingdom would have a son and name him Immanuel. Before that child was old enough to tell right from wrong, “the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.”

By divine inspiration the New Testament writer, in Matthew 1:23, gave the Old Testament scripture another meaning in a new context and wrote, **“Now all this took place to *fulfill* what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet.”** Jesus, the apostles, and the gospel writers applied this same quotation principle many times throughout the New Testament. Always it spoke of the Old Testament prophecies as being *fulfilled* in Christ and the church. The New Testament never recorded these Old Testament scriptures as applying to future events beyond that era.

The Bible Teaches Using Figures of Speech

The prophets often spoke of future times of great sadness or times of great joy in relation to Israel. They used figures of speech to portray those times.

For instance, take **Isaiah 55:12.** **“The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.”**

Or **Isaiah 11:6,** **“The wolf will lie down with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat ... And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together.”** The passage goes on with many like-kind impossible literal translations. We ought not lift them out of their context and apply them to some future world beyond the time of the Messiah. The meaning of these illustrations is made clear in **Isaiah 11:10.** **Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.”** Such prophecies were to be fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah to a restored Jewish nation and the Jews understood it that way. Jesus interpreted these passages as Himself being the the fulfillment of them.

Jesus said, **“Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it”** (Matthew 13:17; Luke 10:24). Yes, the prophets and righteous men would have loved to see the Christ and to hear Him teach, but they did not live long enough.

The Bible Teaches the Time Is Short

The New Testament gives many references that teach the imminence of Christ’s return. In every case this supports the fact that those listening or the teacher himself could expect Jesus to come for them. He might be around any bend in the road of life or drop down out of a cloud. He could return at any moment for the soul of the hearer. Here are a few scriptures that stress this:

I Peter 4:7. **“The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”**

James 5:8. **“You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.”**

Revelation 1:3. **“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”**

Revelation 22:7. **“And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”**

Revelation 22:12. **“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”**

Revelation 22:20. **“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’ ”**

These scriptures were not given as applying to some future generation at some future time, after some future events took place. They were all given to the immediate people to whom they were written. And the message to those people was that the time was near; I am coming quickly.

A passage that makes it certain that the writer considered the people he was writing to were the ones to whom the message was directed is found in:

I Corinthians 10:11. **“Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”** These people were living in the “end times,” or the “last times.” This means there were no more signs to be fulfilled or to watch for until Christ returned for each one when they died. And it is likewise true for each one of us at our death.

The Bible Teaches We Should Always Be Ready for His Return

I believe all the signs are fulfilled and the Lord can come for me at any time. Jesus always warned those listening to Him to be prepared for His return.

If the watcher was going about his business, faithfully expecting the Lord's return, at death his spirit would be ushered into the Lord's presence, but woe unto the one living in sin.

Matthew 24:42. "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

Matthew 25:13. "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."

Mark 13:37. What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"

Luke 12:40. "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

I Am an Eternalist

So I am living carefully in expectation that Jesus can return for me at any moment and deliver my spirit into God's eternal presence. For me the time is short. I will soon be there with Moses and Elijah—remember the Mount of Transfiguration—the twelve apostles and Stephen and Paul, and the twenty-four elders and the angels and the Lamb. If there are more signs and wonders coming to the earth that I do not see in the Scripture, I am completely at ease. I will be there with the Lord of heaven and earth and I rest assured that I will not miss out on any glorious things to come.

The one overriding teaching found throughout the Scripture is that, while on earth, we should be living a holy and righteous life that pleases God Almighty. I do not think that whatever one believes, or does not believe, about a 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth or about Christ's return or about any other thing, should change how one lives a holy and righteous life ... NOW.

As for me and for my house, I am going for eternity, not just 1,000 years. I am an Eternalist.

And so we shall always be with the Lord
1 Thessalonians 4:17

*"Lift your glad voices in triumph on high, For Jesus hath risen, and man shall not die.
Vain were the terrors that gathered around Him, And short the dominion of death and the grave.*

*"He burst from the fetters of darkness that bound Him, Resplendent in glory, to live and to save;
Loud was the chorus of angels on high, The Saviour hath risen, and man shall not die.*

*"Glory to God, in full anthems of joy; The being He gave us death cannot destroy:
Sad were the life we may part with tomorrow, If tears were our birthright, and death were our end.*

*"But Jesus hath cheered the dark valley of sorrow, and bade us, immortal, to heaven ascend:
Lift then your voices in triumph on high, For Jesus hath risen, and man shall not die."*

-John Edgar Gould, 1822-1875

Come Walk

The path is steep into the vale,
And dark and muddy too;
The torrents fall; hard blows the gale.
Tis not a pleasant view!

I cannot see where this trail leads,
With narrow curves so tight.
I'm sure it cannot meet my needs;
It disappears from sight.

My legs are weary; feet are tired.
I do not wish to start.
I'm sure I'll fall and become mired,
I'm frightened in my heart.

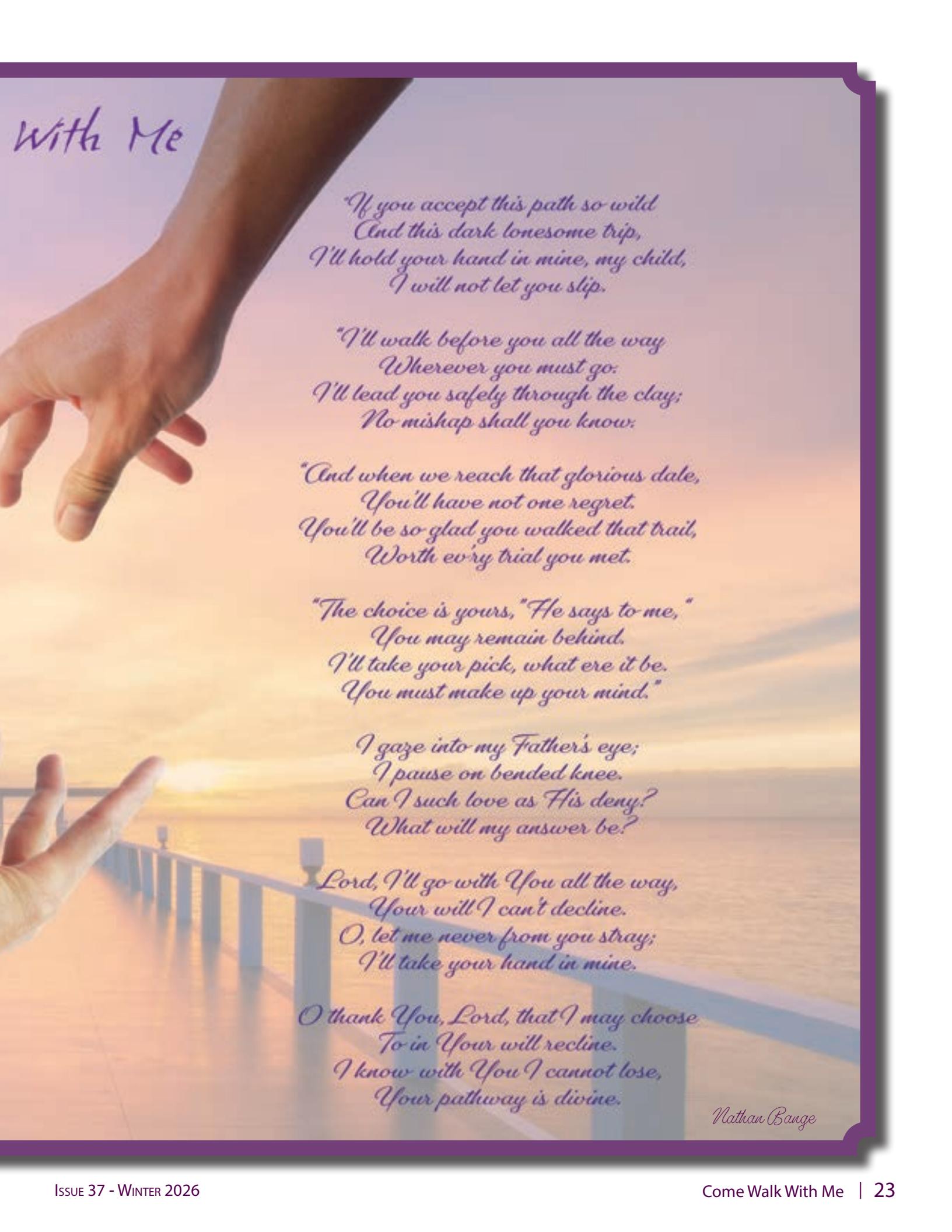
And then I hear my Father say
In tones so calm and mild,
I see beyond the mud and clay,
Where you see not, my child.

"For when you reach the valley deep,
Such beauty you'll behold!
The peace that in your soul you'll reap,
Cannot with words be told.

"The valleys spread with lush, green glades,
The sun in splendor glows.
The sky is stretched with glorious shades
A mortal seldom knows.

"The air is still, the water kind,
Reflecting trees and sky.
Upon this earth you'll never find
A nicer place to lie.

With Me



*If you accept this path so wild
And this dark lonesome trip,
I'll hold your hand in mine, my child,
I will not let you slip.*

*"I'll walk before you all the way
Wherever you must go.
I'll lead you safely through the clay;
No mishap shall you know."*

*"And when we reach that glorious date,
You'll have not one regret.
You'll be so glad you walked that trail,
Worth ev'ry trial you met."*

*"The choice is yours," He says to me,
You may remain behind.
I'll take your pick, what ere it be.
You must make up your mind."*

*I gaze into my Father's eye;
I pause on bended knee.
Can I such love as His deny?
What will my answer be?*

*Lord, I'll go with You all the way,
Your will I can't decline.
O, let me never from you stray;
I'll take your hand in mine.*

*O thank You, Lord, that I may choose
To in Your will recline.
I know with You I cannot lose,
Your pathway is divine.*

Nathan Bangs

My Journey to Nonresistance

By Jason Glasgow



Based on a topic by Jason Glasgow at a Conservative Anabaptist Service Program (CASP) meeting.

I was born and raised heathen. I did not have a Christian upbringing aside from the form of Christianity we have here in America. Christmas and Easter were the two times my parents took me to church. We went to a Catholic mass—walked in and walked out. I did not have any kind of Christian teaching.

My two sisters and I attended public school. My dad was addicted to crack cocaine. My mom committed adultery. Mom was not happy with her marriage because of my dad's drug addiction so they got a divorce.

Their divorce left me alone. When I say alone, I mean without parental supervision. As a senior in high school, I indulged in things of the world. I don't really remember thinking of God and my accountability to Him. I just thought of what I was doing as "cool," normal, and fun.

I had a friend who was raised in church. He invited me to a youth group service at his church on a Friday night. I did not go there seeking God; I went there seeking friendship with other people I knew from school.

I encountered God that night and felt the presence of God in the service. It broke me and revealed to me who I was before Him. I was guilty; I was sinful. I remember that I just started weeping. I was by myself and did not go forward or repeat a prayer.

Being present in a church service and thinking of God did something to me. I wondered if God was real. I prayed a prayer, "God, are You real?" When I closed my eyes, for some reason I became open to my sinfulness. Again, I started weeping and started saying, "God, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

All of a sudden, for the first time, my understanding of why Jesus came flooded over me. He came so that I could be forgiven. I knew that I deserved hell. I knew I deserved death. I was sorry about it all, but I could not fix it. Then I understood that was why God sent His Son Jesus to die for my sins so that I could be forgiven. That melted me even more.

I started crying, and saying, "Thank you, God," and knew I was forgiven. I knew I was new. I was a new person; everything was different. I still had to go back to my high school. I still had my same parents. So, I was like a baby Christian, but I was truly changed from the inside out.

Now I had to work those changes out in my life—friendships, study and goals. While on my way to college, I still did not know exactly what I wanted to do, but I was sure I wanted to serve the Lord. I was thinking maybe the military academy at West Point, maybe a lawyer, or maybe a medical career. I did well in school, so I had scholarships.

The friend who had invited me to the church service that night, asked me to go to a year internship in Texas. So before going to college, I went to Texas to better develop my relationship with God. That is where I met my wife to be, Tricia.

I came back to Florida and we got married. I wish I could show you pictures of all the changes we have made, and where we came from. It has been a long journey to get to an Anabaptist church. I want to encourage you as brothers to keep putting your faith into practice. I know we live in the country, and we like that setting because it's conducive to our values. But just remember, not everyone knows you are out there.

We lived in Sarasota, Florida, where there is an Amish community. They seemed to be mostly older people who rode bikes. I never really saw them as an option, so I was just a part of the Protestant church.

In our search to draw close to God, we started out in a nondenominational-type church. We were considered radical Christians. By radical, I mean we were doing things not everyone else was doing.

We were serious about following God. For instance, getting off the TV was not something that was just handed to us. We had to choose to see Satan working in the TV.

There were many other things we did that were countercultural in the churches we were at, like having a large family and Tricia getting out of makeup and applying the Scriptures to life. There was no one to teach us these things. Through the Scriptures and the guidance of the Holy Spirit we found convictions.



We could not find a church that was like us, so we moved from Florida to Tennessee. We wanted an “Acts church” where the people loved God and were willing to part with their possessions, people that were just sold out for Christ. That’s what we were looking for.

At that time, we lived in Franklin, Tennessee, and started home-churching. Our family was growing.¹ Spiritually we were standing out like a sore thumb in the churches we attended. We started getting convicted about the head covering.

Once again, I say it is not an easy thing to be doing things differently than other “Christians.” You go to one church and they say something; you go to another and they tell you something else. You read one commentary; another says something different. We got our minds around the head covering, even though Tricia was the only one covered. All these changes were not something you just say, “Hey, look, the Bible says this, and then you do it.”

One Saturday we were not sure what we were going to do that day, but we felt something drawing us to the Farmer’s Market. We had never been there before. At the Farmer’s Market we saw this family from Lobelville, Tennessee² selling their produce. The ladies wore head coverings. We introduced ourselves and found them to be a very loving group of people; they invited us to visit their church.

So, we drove the 75 miles to their church. It was our first exposure to an Anabaptist church. The people seemed to be such a like-minded group of believers with us. We moved there and joined a horse and buggy community.

There were things about the church that were different. We were at home with, and very comfortable with, a lot of the applications to Scripture. But for me, the teaching on nonresistance was a whole new way of seeing things.

However, I had enough respect and value for this

¹ At that time, we had three children. Today we have nine children.

² Lobelville, Tennessee was about 75 miles southwest of Brentwood-Franklin, Tennessee, where the Glasgows were living at the time. Brentwood-Franklin is not far from Nashville, Tennessee.



body of believers that I wanted to be a part of them; I was willing to accept and abide by the teachings of the church despite a lack of understanding on the practice of nonresistance.

More than Nonresistance

Nonresistance has probably been the hardest Bible doctrine for me to wrap my mind around. I put my hand over my heart since I was a boy and recited the pledge: “I pledge allegiance to the flag and the United States of America, to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” I was taught to defend, protect myself, my wife, my children. It was hard for me to understand how this could work.

I relate my story to the two who were on the way to Emmaus. Jesus had died and they were sad (**Luke 24:13-35**). Somehow, they misunderstood their Messiah, but when Jesus came along beside them and opened their minds, the two understood things in a different way.

That is the way it worked in my life. The Scriptures did not change; I just saw nonresistance differently. I want to share how God inspired and enlightened me so I could see things differently.

I sat down with different ministers and asked questions; we had discussions. One time I prayed, “God, help me to see. I respect the Anabaptist church. If this is not the true church, then what is? Is there an authority? I want to do what is right, but I am confused on this. Or maybe I am not willing to do it. Lord, what is the problem? I need an answer.”

As I sat there and meditated and prayed, I felt like Jesus came beside me and opened up the Scriptures. God helped me understand that all these things were pointing to Christ. It was just like the two on the way to Emmaus—when they saw that their risen Savior and King was fulfilling the Law and the prophets, “it burned within them.” Once I understood what Jesus did and the fulfilling of it, I began to see the Scriptures in a different light.

As I looked at an article on nonresistance in one of the church papers, I found the focus was not going to war, not going to law. The practice of nonresistance goes beyond that. It is not just a doctrine of not doing; it is more a doctrine of doing. We do good to those who persecute us. Jesus is our prime example of one who overcame evil by doing good.

Let us look at a number of verses and see how they relate to nonresistance.

II Corinthians 5:17. “*Therefore if anyone is in*

Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold, new things have come.”

Here we have the changed man, the change that happened to the two on their way to Emmaus, and to all the apostles who deserted Him. Later they were willing to die for Him. Behold, all things are new. Once we see what Christ has done for us, it makes us new. It changes us.

I Peter 2:19-20. *“For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.”*

The righteous one suffers wrong and reaches out to pray for his persecutor because of his conscience toward God. Because of what God has done in his heart he absorbs the wrong and does not retaliate. Maybe the reason we pray for forgiveness for persecutors is because our heart cares about their soul.

God says suffering for righteousness finds favor in His sight! This is positive nonresistance.

Matthew 5:38. *“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’*³

Jesus says a lot of times, “*You have heard that it hath been said by them of old time.*” That is the way it used to be under the Mosaic Law—justice, retaliation, revenge. But in the Kingdom of God it becomes not only not doing the outward thing, but doing the right thing from the heart. That is what God wants—forgiveness for your brother from the heart of love ... not just seven times, but until one stops counting.

Matthew 5:39-40. *“But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.”*

It is not only that we do not retaliate; it is actually offering him your other cheek. That is more than nonresistance; it demonstrates divine love in action.

When Jesus said in verse 40, *“If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also,”* we see more than nonresistance. We see Him commanding



us to give more than one is suing for! The New Testament way is not only not doing; it is also doing.

Matthew 5:41. *“Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.”*

This verse does not talk about not doing or not resisting someone. If a soldier compels you to go one mile, you have no choice. The choice comes when you freely and willingly carry the soldier’s bags the second mile. That is more than nonresistance. That is doing rather than not doing.

Matthew 5:43-45. *“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.’*

Once again Christ goes further than the Old Testament standard of hating your enemy and seeking revenge. Instead of refraining from hitting back at your enemy, Jesus said to love and pray for them.

To me, it goes further—loving your enemies! Once again, it is not just not hitting back at them; it is active love.

In verse 45 we see God giving sun and giving rain, which provides life and food to the evil and the unjust. Once again, this applies to our everyday life, not just not going to war and not going to law. It is doing good and giving, and showing the love of Jesus that is going to help these people see Christ. We are in His stead.

Romans 12:17-19. *“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY, SAYS THE LORD.”*⁴

This passage means, we should not take revenge into our own hands. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are firm that revenge and vengeance belong to God. Rather, we ought to give time and place for God to deal with those who do evil against us. Not taking revenge portrays nonresistance.

³ This quote was the standard under the Mosaic Law and is repeated three times: Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; and Deuteronomy 19:21.

⁴ This quote comes from Old Testament passages: Proverbs 20:22; Proverbs 24:29; Deuteronomy 32:35; Psalm 94:1-2. The same teaching is found in other New Testament references: I Thessalonians 4:6; Hebrews 10:30.

Tucked into the verse is the statement, “As far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” Being at peace sometimes means more than not being an aggressor against another. It may mean bending over backward to someone who treats you unjustly. This involves not just not doing evil, but doing good.

Romans 12:20-21. “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD. ⁵ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Again, we see the active doing—let us be active in doing good to those who do not deserve it, to those who are unthankful or unjust. Then it adds, “*for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.*”

To throw burning coals on the head of an enemy sounds like cruel and unusual punishment. But in the context, it cannot be construed as if we are to harm our enemies. Instead, our enemies are going to pay for their evil deeds by the hand of God. Their punishment will be even greater for doing wrong to innocent people, people that have been a witness of goodness in their life. God’s wrath will increase for them.

Then we come to a very big phrase. “Do not be overcome by evil.”

We can lose out—depression, anger, jealousy. We can get offended. We can get hurt. Our feelings, our rights we protect, and we can become the avenger. We can do wrong. Guile can come out of our mouth. Paul is

saying, “*Don’t let that evil overcome you.*”

We must not forget who God is. Through His power we can *overcome evil with good*. When I think of this in the light of Christ and what He has done, I see what my calling is. This is what made the doctrine of nonresistance understandable for me. This is what made nonresistance come alive to me in my conscience.

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for by doing this, you will forgive your enemy for the burning coals he has heaped on your head, and the LORD will reward you. ⁶

—Proverbs 25:21-22

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on [does] them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

—Matthew 7:24

Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on [do] them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

—Matthew 7:26

5 Proverbs 25:21-22

6 J.G.L. paraphrase



Blessed are the Peacemakers for they will be called Children of God
Matthew 5:9

Anabaptist Brotherhood

by Merle Herr

Introduction to Anabaptist Brotherhood

King Solomon said, “There is nothing new under the sun.” While this article introduces something new, the issue at stake is, in fact, as old as mankind. In one of the earliest human interchanges that went awry, Cain asked God a question after he murdered his brother Abel. His question echoes down through the corridors of the ages, “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*”

God’s answer to Cain’s question resounds like a bell ringing throughout the Scriptures. “*The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground*” (Genesis 4:10).

King Solomon is right: “There is nothing new.” Yet in every era, mankind needs to renew and reapply the most important issues of life. Being our brother’s keeper is one of them.

The Old Path of Mutual Aid

The mission of Anabaptist Brotherhood (hereafter referred to as *Brotherhood*) is to assist the church in bearing the burden of the brother in economic need. Our tagline is “*Caring for our own.*”

In the last 100 years, Anabaptists have referred to bearing each other’s burden as “mutual aid.” In the past, this aiding of one another was carried out in practical ways such as helping each other in times of loss such as fire, storm, and medical need.

So mutual aid is not something new or a secondary doctrine or practice. Instead, it is a central expression of Anabaptism. Mutual aid is not socialism¹ but is a biblical characteristic inherent in real brotherhood. Here is how the Bible defines mutual aid for the Christian.

- **Galatians 6:2** “*Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*” Mutual aid bears another’s burdens without taking the entire burden on oneself.
- **Galatians 6:5** “*For each one will bear his own*



A symbol of brotherhood

load.” Mutual aid does not free one of personal responsibility. Each one should first do what he can to carry his own burden.

- **Galatians 6:7** “*Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*” Mutual aid does not erase the spiritual law of sowing and reaping. It embraces the law of accepting life’s hardships and the consequences of our own sins.
- **Galatians 6:9** “*Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.*” The Bible encourages us to keep on doing good to others, even when we want to give up and think it is not worth it. Mutual aid fosters mutual interdependence, not individualistic independence.
- **Galatians 6:10** “*While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*” Mutual aid means that our primary mission is to physically aid those who are part of the household of faith. Yet we still continue to do good and not evil to all men everywhere.

For Anabaptists, mutual aid is God’s love embodied through our hands and feet, expressed in countless ways. Over the years, mutual aid traditions have become deeply etched in our culture.

Some of the most meaningful and heartfelt mutual aid is expressed informally and without structure—providing meals to a family during time of death or meals to a family with a newborn. We ought to keep it that way as much as possible.

Yet over the past century, countless Anabaptist organizations have sprung up to bring needed structure to expressions of mutual aid—fire, storm, theft, auto, medical, widows, people with disabilities, low income—the list could go on.

None of this is easy, but such traditional practices spring from deeply held principles long embraced. Anabaptists should encourage this spirit of caring for one another and not give way to government’s social programs, or commercial health and life insurance.

¹ Socialism is defined as “A political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole.”

Another Sharing Plan

More and more churches are feeling the encroaching socialistic government programs eroding our practice of mutual aid and crossing our consciences. Increasingly, when confronted by medical staff about medical payments, patients are pushed to sign up for Medicaid and Medicare programs. Healthcare providers often do not understand our deep beliefs in mutual aid and passion to be our brother's keeper. They don't understand that paying our medical bills is intricately tied to brotherly love and commitment.

If Anabaptists embrace Social Security wholeheartedly, without reserve, the government will become our brother's keeper! Wayne Wengerd, a member of the Ohio Amish Steering Committee, said it succinctly, "You cannot eat from the government's table without eventually feeling like family!"

Furthermore, there is no need to sign up for financial assistance programs offered by hospitals or government. Such programs are for the financially disadvantaged and isolated in society, not for people surrounded by the body of Christ. It is disingenuous to give off an impression that the Anabaptists are a financially disadvantaged group incapable of handling their medical and alms expenses. We send millions and millions of extra money around the world in charitable efforts for relief and missions. Why then, in an era of unprecedented wealth, are some pockets of Anabaptists struggling to pay their medical bills?

Under the pressure of medical expenses, people tend to give up on their long-held convictions of mutual aid and reach more and more to the liberal handouts of government aid. Do we have biblical principles to strengthen our approach to medical and alms aid? Do we have the financial ability to pay for our own medical and alms needs? Without question! However, this requires sharing plans to build credible organizational infrastructure that can sail safely through the choppy waters of paying medical bills.

People are also experiencing the frustration of the complexity of the medical system's approach to billing. It is increasingly difficult to make sense of billing discounts. Individuals are often overwhelmed when the medical bills arrive and rightly frustrated with the ambiguity and fog surrounding whether the bill is fair and reasonable.

Brotherhood has designed an effective



A symbol of disaster

structure to tackle these financial challenges with the old principle of mutual aid. We are repaving these old paths by facilitating the bill negotiation process for its members. Our approach challenges the medical system's lack of pricing transparency by using advanced pricing tools and software to simplify the approach.

Brotherhood's Mission

The *Medical Aid & Alms Plan* enables Anabaptists to support and share each other's medical and alms burdens. In today's language, this is a sharing plan. The complexity of the medical system can be frustrating and difficult to navigate. This Plan addresses multiple issues plaguing the medical billing system and integrates the old principles of brotherhood mutual aid with a renewed and robust solution.

The *Medical Aid & Alms Plan* integrates medical aid and alms aid. There are deep, unintended consequences if medical aid is separated from alms aid. Too many people within our midst with disabilities and widows as well, have suffered a lack of financial resources. Or worse, a low-income elderly couple runs out of money while the local church wrings its hands in anxious worry of how to help. Meanwhile wealth increases across the Anabaptist community. This is an embarrassing problem that needs to be addressed.

Brotherhood's Medical Aid & Alms Plan is structured to help churches provide a strong economic solution for both exempt and non-exempt members with its Alms Plan. In other words, our economic aid for widows, people with disabilities, and low-income elderly is structured to include a broad network of churches working together, just like the medical aid plan. That said, *Brotherhood's Alms Plan* does not replace or change how the local church operates their alms fund. Instead, the *Alms Plan* simply provides an overarching structure for alms funds to flow between churches to provide or receive additional assistance for their widows, disabled, and low-income elderly.

Summary of Purpose

Am I my brother's keeper? Cain's question is as relevant today as 6,000 years ago. What will your answer be? *Brotherhood* was launched to help churches bear the burden of the brother's medical and alms needs. We seek to serve a broad spectrum of Conservative Anabaptists—Amish, Mennonites, German Baptists, and others who adhere to the 1632 Dordrecht Confession of Faith or similar Anabaptist confessions of faith. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the "*Medical Aid & Alms Plan, Complete Guidelines*," call or email. The *Medical Aid & Alms Plan* launched on May 1,

2025. As of December, approximately 300 households have enrolled.

An Early Adopter

The process of signing on with *Brotherhood* began when I interviewed Neal Zimmerman, deacon at Cornerstone Mennonite Church in Memphis, Missouri. Cornerstone is part of the group of churches called Mid-Atlantic Fellowship. Since 2007, Cornerstone has grown and planted two additional churches.

Starting a new church requires courage, vision, and a willingness to embrace uncertainty. In that same spirit, Cornerstone has stepped out and become one of the first churches to join *Anabaptist Brotherhood* as an entire congregation. Typically, when a new initiative launches, it attracts a few early adopters while others wait for evidence of success before committing. But Cornerstone's decision to join *Brotherhood* was neither careless nor rushed.

Their decision was the result of thoughtful deliberation and a careful process. The journey began with a few exploratory phone calls made by Neal Zimmerman. He then arranged a conference call that included the ministers. After discerning that *Brotherhood's Medical Aid and Alms Plan* closely aligned with their values and medical aid concerns, Cornerstone requested an informational meeting for the entire congregation to thoroughly discuss *Brotherhood's Medical Aid & Alms Plan*.

Cornerstone's Medical Aid Journey

Cornerstone's initial search for a medical aid plan in their early years led them to join a broad-based Anabaptist sharing plan. "It met our needs very well," Neal recalls. "We were satisfied except that it required a significant amount of energy and time to manage the medical bill negotiation side of things." Over time this burden became great enough that Cornerstone sought another sharing plan that would handle bill negotiation on their behalf.

They found another Anabaptist sharing plan that offered bill negotiation. It was a welcome relief, freeing up church leaders to focus more fully on the spiritual needs of their members while the sharing plan managed the complexities of medical bills. However, they later discovered that this sharing plan relied heavily on the government's Medicaid program to reduce medical costs. As time passed, Cornerstone's conviction deepened, and their concerns about using government-

funded Medicaid became more clear. Again, they began searching for a sharing plan that aligned more with their values.

Another essential value for Cornerstone was full acceptance of pre-existing conditions. The previous plan had required some of the members with pre-existing conditions to depend on Medicaid—a compromise that made them uncomfortable. Once again, *Brotherhood* aligned with Cornerstone's principles by sharing the burden of pre-existing conditions. *Brotherhood* requires 70% participation of a church in order to accept pre-existing conditions, but for Cornerstone, this requirement was not an issue. Their level of participation in medical aid has consistently been 90% or higher. The congregation fosters a strong group mentality. "We are proactive on the front side, and almost all of our members participate in medical aid," Neal said. "If a member needs help with their quarterly contribution, we consider helping with our own alms fund."

As they discussed whether to switch to *Brotherhood's* plan, Cornerstone seriously considered managing their own medical aid plan in partnership with their two sister churches. Neal recounted the congregation's conclusion: "While it would have provided a close sense of medical sharing, we concluded that we were not large enough of a group to handle the larger bills.

Plus, it would require a dedicated person to manage the plan, and we would have been back to the old problem of negotiating our own medical bills." Neal went on to describe his vision to be part of *Brotherhood's* broader plan. "There is a measure of security in a larger group. But more importantly, we get to be a blessing to other churches in bearing medical and alms needs more broadly with them." In the end, Cornerstone made the decision to join *Brotherhood's Medical Aid and Alms Plan*.



A symbol of sharing

Reasons for Joining *Brotherhood*

Reason #1 – The Transparency of a Member ID Card

Brotherhood's approach to interacting with medical providers is marked by transparency and clarity. Neal appreciates that members are not required to pose as a person without a health sharing plan in order to receive self-pay discounts. Instead, *Brotherhood* issues a Member ID Card that clearly identifies the member as part of a structured sharing plan with defined administrative and payment policies. This transparency offers peace of mind to medical providers as well.



A symbol of shared joy

Using the Member ID, providers can verify membership in their electronic data system, confirming that the patient is with *Brotherhood*. In addition, providers submit bills directly to *Brotherhood* through electronic transmission, relieving members of the burden of sorting through complex medical codes, bills, and paperwork.

Reason #2 – Some Share More

Neal expressed appreciation for *Brotherhood's Alms Plan*, which allows wealthier members the privilege of bearing a greater share of the needs of widows, those with disabilities, and low-income families. He noted that some of the more financially able members of the congregation commented approvingly on this arrangement. They felt inspired to contribute generously and embraced the opportunity to give cheerfully and sacrificially to the *Alms Plan*. The *Alms Plan* is one of *Brotherhood's* distinctive features. It reflects the spirit of the Apostle James' call to exercise pure religion by "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

Reason #3 – Be Your Brother's Keeper

As mentioned earlier, Cornerstone's convictions grew to stop the routine reliance on Medicaid to reduce medical expenses. They were attracted to *Brotherhood* in part because it does not expect Medicaid to be their brother's keeper. Neal summed up this conviction with a thoughtful question: "Where do you start and stop with government Medicaid insurance?"

As this belief deepened, it became clear that *Brotherhood's* approach perfectly aligned with their vision to take full responsibility for bearing the cost of medical needs as a brotherhood. *Brotherhood's* slogan, "Caring for Our Own," captures this commitment. This burden is not heavy—it is a joy. Anabaptists are blessed with more than enough resources to fulfill the call to be our brother's keeper without depending on Medicaid.

Reason #4 – A Structured Plan

With his background in business management, Neal recognizes and values the importance of *Brotherhood's* structured plan. Any sizable effort requires clear systems and organization to function smoothly and effectively. Neal pointed out, however, that structure does not replace compassion. Emphasizing his point he



A symbol of mutual aid

added, "Structure is not the enemy if you navigate the individual situations with a personal touch." At the same time, he cautioned, "If systems that override people or policy are used to avoid the messy individualized touch in needy situations, a corporate feel will dominate. However, good policy sets expectations and provides principled direction in tough situations."

Summary

Not every church may feel ready to take the risk of being an early adopter like Cornerstone. We share Cornerstone's journey and the reasons behind their decision in order to help other congregations prayerfully discern whether *Brotherhood* is the right fit for them.

For more information about *Brotherhood*, obtain a copy of the "Complete Guidelines." Contact *Brotherhood* at 574-354-4449 or visit their website at anabaptistbrotherhood.org. Or write P.O. Box 144, Guys Mills PA 16237.

Note: Anabaptist Voice is introducing Anabaptist Brotherhood because we think it worthy of further consideration. This information is not an endorsement.

Practical Observations by the Editor

- In times past, medical needs in the brotherhood were dealt with in a number of ways: personal sharing on a one-to-one-basis, taking up an offering for a particular need, some organized assistance plans.

- The understanding was that each family was responsible to do what they could to pay their own bills. If more help was needed, it became the responsibility of the immediate family to give financial aid. This was in line with **I Timothy 5:8** which says, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

- Self-responsibility for helping care for one's extended family extended from the cradle to the grave: parents took care of their children and then the children took care of their parents.

- Dying is part of the Christian experience and we should make our peace with the hope of the better life we hold in view. Paul said in **Philippians 1:21**, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

- The Bible way of caring for medical needs without government assistance is still possible as proven by those living in close community.



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

Farming God's Way

By Confused No More

I am writing in response to "Perfect Farming" (AV37, page 33).

In answer to my writing, the editor made the comment, "I do not see how Genesis forbids alteration and manipulation in plants." This indicates he did not look into the belief systems of the people who have masterminded this false science [GMOs and chemical farming].

People who developed these GMO's and chemical farming methods think evolution gives people the right to mix up the genome that God ordained which was and is created to work perfectly.

The studied goal of these dreamers is to prove God did not know what He was doing or that He is/was not the Creator. They teach that God did not give man the right to steal or manipulate genome for control of life so that poisons could be introduced that are registered antibiotics with no supposed side effects.

Much scientific evidence is available today against GMOs and chemical use in farming. As Christian farmers, we should dedicate our lives to the principles found in the Sermon on the Mount. We should take our calling more seriously to provide nourishing products for our fellowman. Producing an inferior product and hauling it to an elevator in town does not seem to fit the template of the Sermon on the Mount.

My encouragement to the editor of AV is that he would not subject himself to the views of the false teachers of the day, but to prove all things and hold fast that which is good.

AV Editor

Thanks for your response. Your thoughts on GMOs have some valid concerns. We too want to "*examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good, and abstain from every form of evil*" (**I Thessalonians 5:13**).

We certainly must be careful of all ungodly teachers and their false theories. Evolution has no credence in the minds of believers. A creator God made everything, but in the world we live in, everything is not perfect—

no disease, no sickness, no dying.

We must strive to avoid evil and continually do good. But let us assume that your belief that all GMOs and all crops grown with chemicals are inferior products. I do not see how that connects with the Sermon on the Mount?

Maybe this is a case of conscience like that dealt with in Romans 14. *"Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another"* (**Romans 14:16-19**).



Breaking of Bread

by Evree Sunday

I am writing in response to the article, "Council Meeting" by Menno Knight (AV36, page 14).

Unlike Anabaptists, I grew up in a denomination which had a communion service every Sunday, which we called "Breaking of Bread." It was incumbent upon all who intend to partake to come with a prepared heart that we not partake in an unworthy manner. **I Corinthians 11:28** specifically says, "*A man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*" It does not say, "have the bishop judge what he thinks is in our hearts, for we were all considered to be brothers in Christ.

In addition to sharing of the bread and the cup, every adult had opportunity to share in the process. Someone would open the meeting with a prayer or a hymn. Others would follow with hymns and prayers, some would read a text of Scripture, and usually add a devotional comment. Things that were said often established a theme. Toward the end of the meeting someone would initiate the breaking and passing of the bread with a prayer to the Father for salvation in Jesus.

After passing the bread, a similar prayer was done before passing the cup. After receiving the bread, and also passing the cup, I would silently thank Jesus.

I loved that meeting, for it motivated me to search the Scriptures to find something suitable to share. I enjoyed sharing my devotional findings.

I understand this as a remembrance feast intended for Christians of all denominations, thus we did not restrict it to members.

On my first encounter with “Council Meeting,” I was disallowed to participate in their communion service because I was not a member.

Membership to this group included affirming a long list of doctrines. These were interpretations of Scriptures rather than the Scriptures themselves.

I sought membership. Before God, I resolved to be strictly honest concerning my beliefs. I had studied the Bible before coming to them, and had interpretive understanding of these Scriptures which often differed slightly from theirs.

Their bishop told me their doctrines come directly from the Scriptures. It did not occur to him the possibility that their doctrines could possibly be less than perfectly accurate.

By having this list of doctrines to affirm, they treat these as beyond the need to investigate to see if they are accurate. Those who have studied and have discovered an error or two, if we are honest, cannot affirm them.

AV Editor

If you received a blessing from a particular order of the communion service, that is good. I am sure there is more than one way that edifies the believer and worships the Savior.

However, you have aptly pointed out a key difference between what Anabaptists want to practice as a brotherhood and the less limiting practice of Christianity in general. The Anabaptist sense of closeness and brotherhood is real, palpable, and defined.

On the other hand, you put yourself and your understanding above that of the brotherhood and the covenants believers make with one another as a congregation. This is the difference between close communion and open communion. Close communion tests whether a believer is “one with us” in faith and practice, or whether his practices and beliefs are not in accord with ours.

The test of submission comes into play. Are my own beliefs and practices always right, or am I subjected

to the church and church leaders?

If your understanding of communion is that “it is a remembrance feast intended for Christians of all denominations,” is correct, then you can be a Christian and take communion anywhere without submitting to one another in Council Meeting. But according to the Bible, communion embraces a closeness and a cleanliness lacking in “open communion.”



This Generation

A Reviewer Writes

I enjoyed reading your article on “Pre or Ah” (AV38, pages 18-21). I agree with so many things in the article.

Not long ago, I was thinking about Daniel’s vision of the stone that was cut out of the mountain and how it filled the earth. This vision specifically prophesies that Jesus would set up a kingdom that would have no end; it would take place during the time of the Roman empire. As I was thinking about this, it occurred to me that the laws Jesus instituted on earth were intended to be eternal. In other words:

- There will be no divorce and remarriage in heaven, so there should be none on earth. We will be eternally married to the Lamb.
- There will be no violence in heaven, so Jesus’ followers should turn the other cheek on earth.
- There should be no swearing on earth because swearing will not be necessary in heaven.
- We should not lay up treasures on earth because we will not need them in heaven either.

Beside all this, Jesus did call it the Kingdom of Heaven, not His kingdom on earth. His will should be done on earth as it is in heaven. The bodies of Jesus’ followers will be transformed, but they will remain in His Kingdom before death, during death, and after death.

Yes, the Kingdom of God is within us. Praise God! We are more than conquerors.

The one thing I view differently from the “Pre or Ah” article is the definition of the word “generation” (*genea*). I was looking at its usage in the New Testament, the Septuagint, and different lexicons and

had concluded some years back that when the word “generation” was used in the New Testament it was mostly referring to the Jewish race, not the particular generation that Jesus was living in. That word could be translated as “*generation, lineage, nation, or race.*”

When Jesus said, “*this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled,*” I believe that he meant that the Jewish nation would exist until his physical and visible return. That is one difference that I would have.

Jesus and Peter use this word (*genea*) to encompass the whole of the Jewish nation. When Jesus said, “*Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit,*” He said this as a judgment given against many generations of Jews who were stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears and were always resisting the Holy Spirit.

As far as the signs go, I also believe that they are for the time well before his coming. Some of the signs that I believe will be just before Christ’s physical return are found in **Luke 17:22-32** and **2 Peter 3:1-13**:

1. It will be like the time of Noah (divorce, remarriage and violence).
2. It will be like the time of Sodom (sexual perversion, pride, fullness of bread).
3. People will say, “peace and safety.”
4. Someone will say that things continue as they always did.
5. Because lawlessness abounds, the love of many will wax cold.
6. The day will come like a trap when few are expecting it.

Overall, the article is a refreshing perspective that encourages us to be watchful at all times.

One thing that could be clarified in the article is that when Jesus returns physically, every eye will see Him. He will come in the clouds of heaven at the sound of a trumpet. His coming will be like lightning from one end of heaven to the other. We should not heed anyone who says that they are Christ and come in any other manner than in the clouds of heaven. Our Lord specifically warned us that many false Christs would come and that we should not heed them.

AV Editor

When we talk about future things, we must understand that we do not know as we are known.

Therefore, we must be charitable one to another.

If it is possible for us to think of Christ’s return as an event that happens for each one of us instead of some spectacular event still future, it changes many things. Yet that is what the Bible teaches. We have been so accustomed to the “second coming” teaching that it is hard to think of Christ’s return in the individual sense. Still, that is what many Scriptures teach as pointed out in the article (AV38, pages 18-21).

The thought that (*genea*) means anything different than the literal meaning of a “generation” is a new one for me. Regardless, of which meaning attributed to the word (*genea*) it does not change what Jesus meant in the parable of the fig tree. He said, “You do not know which day your Lord is coming” (**Matthew 24:34**). Or, when He said, “But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God” (**Luke 9:27**). The Kingdom of God would come within the lifetime of some of those then living.

Yes, every eye will see Jesus when he comes for each one. We should always be prepared for when He returns and for the time when we shall see Him as He is in all His power and glory.



No Reverence

By Obed E. Enz

I am writing in regards to the editor’s response to “Perfect Farming” by Confused No More” (AV37, page 33).

Before the microscope was invented, many things including genes were invisible. All people could see was the miracle of plant growth. My question here is, are we reverencing the Creator when we alter genes to where plants become totally different than what God created?

Is it possible that humanity is guilty of not reverencing the Creator through His creation? In other words, instead of using the creation as God gave it, we, through human knowledge, alter this creation with artificial plant foods and other things.

My Bible teaches me that obedience is very important if we want to be a part of the Kingdom of God. Yes, when we are obedient, we reverence the Creator.

AV Editor

Thanks for your response. You have a valid concern that we reverence and obey the Creator. However, I am stuck trying to understand how artificial plant foods, pesticides, and GMOs draw a Christian farmer away from worshiping the Creator God.

A Christian farmer is using God's creation for good according to God's direction in **Genesis 1:28**. *"God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* It is the Christian who honors and obeys God's commission to rule over every living thing on the earth.

It is the atheist and the ungodly who deny that God has given man such authority. These are they who say man dare not kill beasts, alter plants, cut down trees, dig coal, or draw oil out of the ground. Instead they reverence the earth, trees, animals, the climate, created things, themselves, science, the sun, moon and stars. We must separate ourselves from such people.

These same people do not obey God or keep his commandments. They abort babies, believe in mass destruction murder, cheat, lie, and steal. From such turn away.

Let us not try to tithe mint and cumin by preaching against GMOs, climate change, and chemicals used for the good of man. And then neglect the weightier matters of God's Kingdom such as justice and mercy and truth and love.



Cut the Rope

By Ali Trusty

This is a story about a mountain climber who wanted to climb a very high mountain. He began his adventure after many years of preparation. Since he wanted all the glory for himself, he decided to climb the mountain alone.

The night fell very heavy in the heights of the mountain, and the man could not see anything. All was black. Zero visibility. The moon and the stars were covered by thick clouds.

As he was climbing, he slipped and fell into the air. Falling at a great speed, the climber could only see black spots as he went down. He was surrounded by the terrible sensation of being sucked down by gravity. He kept falling ... and in those moments of great fear,

he was reminded of all the good and bad episodes of his life.

He was thinking about how close he was to death, when all of a sudden he felt the rope tied around his waist pull on him very hard.

His body was hanging in the air. Only the rope was holding him, and in that moment of dark stillness he had no other choice but to scream, "HELP ME, GOD!"

All of a sudden, a deep voice coming from the darkness answered, "What do you want me to do?"

The man replied, "Save me, God!"

"Do you really think I can save you?"

"Of course, I think you can save me."

"Then cut the rope tied to your waist."

There was a long moment of silence. Finally, the man decided to hold on to the rope with all his strength.

The next day a rescue team found the climber dead and frozen ... his body hanging on a rope ... his hands holding on tight ... only five feet off the ground.

Sabbath Day Devotions (11-29-25) by Kit Pharo

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

- Proverbs 3:5





The Practical Side:

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” — Colossians 3:17

Here is your chance to help others live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ “right in the corner where they are.” The Practical Side 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 My brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it” (*Luke 8:21*).



The Practical Side: Work Shoes Required

The Practical Side: Readers Respond

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.



Bad Story

by Pit Stop

I am writing in response to the story found in (AV37, page 28).

I suggest you not publish a letter such as “In the King’s Service.”

The writer showed poor judgment in a bad situation. If he would have stopped and asked to assist the old couple, he probably would have saved the car and possibly helped someone (sometimes dogs in training wear a harness).

AV Editor

Thanks for writing and calling us up short. I should not have presented all aspects of the story in the way I did. Now, let me beg forgiveness and offer some explanation. I intended that we could learn something from the story.

I sympathize with someone who has suddenly encountered such a shock. You are out in the desert, far from home, in another man’s car. Would your instant reaction have always been the right one? Mine has not always been the right choice in difficult decisions.

I invite stories from your experience where you made the right choice and did the right thing ... or the wrong thing. That way others can learn from your experience.



Dead Dog

by Apol Ogize

I am responding to “In the King’s Service” (AV37, page 28).

This is an extremely disappointing story.

Nothing is worse than someone harming/destroying other people’s property (accidentally or otherwise) and not going back at the very least, to offer apologies.

Driving over that dog is an accident, yes, but I can just imagine the owners when they see the perpetrator continue driving without the least bit of slowing down.

I am sorry, but this to me is not Christ-like character.

AV Editor

Thanks for writing and pointing out our failure. We intend to use more discretion in publishing stories like this. However, this story does illustrate the inconveniences that often waylay those who are traveling in God’s service. Many times, traveling servants are forced to make hasty decisions they look back on and wish they could do over. Honesty about events that occurred is an important step in the development of Christ-like character.



Why We Change Clothing

by Set Apart

I really appreciated the article entitled, "The Clothes We Wear" (AV37, page 41).

How we practice separation and nonconformity matters. Three important principles that should guide how we dress are: modesty, consistency and nonconformity. Modesty is to keep both the soul and body of men and women free from carnality and pride. Consistency is to portray a faithful testimony. The author of the article described different practices as the times changed. We should respect these different traditions because "each man must remain in that condition in which he was called" (1 Corinthians 7:20). The Holdeman Mennonites in our community often wear a distinctive solid tee-shirt with a single breast pocket and their sisters wear a full-length dress with no cape. They have held to this tradition for many generations and this is admirable.

Just because this exact dress style works for the Holdemans does not mean that it is good for other congregations. Consistency means that there is wisdom in keeping the distinct tradition that was given to your particular congregation. In other words, "not moving the ancient boundary which your fathers have set" (Proverbs 22:8). The direction that you are going is more important than where you are. Drifting is detrimental yet there may be a time when a congregation needs to tweak its dress standard. This should be done with godly purpose and caution.

My Grandfather came from the Amish and wore suspenders and a black hat his whole life. Even though he spent extended time living in communities that did not dress as plainly, he linked consistency in dress, with consistency in testimony. I distinctly remember him telling me that though he did not think his way of dressing was the only way, he felt that changing would confuse his grandchildren. I watched others go through many changes in dress and convictions and definitely believe that his assessment was correct.

So, in answer to the first question, "What should determine whether change in clothing is good," I would answer: First, be free of any carnal or worldly motive to change your dress code. An example of a wrong motive would be to fit in more with the world around us. In actuality, the world respects people who stand by their values, even if those values are not necessarily theirs. Secondly, what spiritual benefit would there be to change? Would this change create more unity and

reflect a more biblical dress style? It may be possible that a certain dress style is completely impractical in some settings, such as in a particular mission field. If our lives truly are a living sacrifice and our minds are transformed, then the perfect will of God can be found. If not, then we will seek out selfish reasons for change.

Here is an answer as to how these changes should be put in place: the voice of the church, the ministry, and the weaker brother should be respected. Paul states that he would not eat meat if it offended his brother (1 Corinthians 8:13). We should also consider our brother's conscience in clothing. The church is a family/ body, not a democracy, so we respect the opinions of all, not just the majority.

Though by-laws and order are necessary, too much emphasis on rules, whether you are for or against them, is a mistake. Thinking that we will be more spiritual with less rules is a delusion; trying to legislate holiness is also impossible. Embracing *gelassenheit*¹ and (working out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12) are what we should not lose track of.

Regarding the third question, I do not believe that modestly dressed people are necessarily nonconformed. Nonconformed people avoid styles and fashions that are clearly "IN," regardless of whether those styles and fashions adequately cover the body or not. Nonconformity should express aversion to earthly values and embrace the "strangers and pilgrims" mentality.

AV Editor

Our dress and our appearance should always separate us from the fashions of the world. We should not change our modest, simple, and plain, appearance to reflect the accepted standards of the society around us ... or the lack of any standards.

The dress standards should be set by the brotherhood and faithfully adhered to, not grudgingly, but cheerfully as is becoming to a faithful Christian. When one's attire is left up to the individual believer, modesty and simplicity become irrelevant.

There is a right way and a wrong way for change in attire to take place. The wrong way is when drift toward the world takes place and enough people ignore the church's standard that the change is accepted. I call this change by default. Sleeve length for men and women could be a good illustration of this kind of change.

¹ *Gelassenheit* – A German term that translates to "calmness," "composure," or "serenity." It also carries deeper meanings of self-surrender, yielding, and a state of being let be.

The right way for change in attire to take place is for the congregation or church to decide on a different standard as meeting the practical and scriptural application for their people. Then it is put into practice by the people. A good illustration of this kind of change could be hair styles for men and women.



Two selected essays from a writing class at Ebenezer Mennonite School, South Boston, Virginia. These were written in response to “Learning by Doing” (AV36, page 40). AV would welcome more essays by writing students in your school.

Learning to Identify Trees

by Simon Miller



As a nature lover, I have always found it inspiring to spend time outside, with a special attraction to the woods. Trees have always fascinated me. At the age of ten, I became aware that I knew almost nothing about the different tree

species and their characteristics. This did not sit well with me, so I determined to become adept at identifying the trees around me.

My desire to learn about trees soon became obvious to my parents, who, for my birthday, gifted me a field guide to trees in our area. The field guide was full of detailed pictures and gave technical facts about each tree—kinds of bark, shapes of trees, size and shape of leaves, likely habitat. Much of this information was over my head, but nonetheless, the book gave me a great start in learning to know more about trees.

I spent many afternoons, field guide in hand, roaming the woods near our place and acquainting myself with the general species. However, many of the different oak varieties, for example, can be quite similar and I lacked the experience to distinguish between them. Grandpa, a tree lover himself, noted my interest in trees and took me on a tree identification outing. We spent a day sampling local forest, where he demonstrated techniques to positively identify many tricky varieties and assisted me in better understanding my field guide.

The hands-on experience I gained that day greatly boosted my tree identification skills. Since then,

my increased comprehension of the field guide and continued observations have aided the further honing of those skills. Now, I enjoy the woods more than ever as my fascination extends to each distinct variety and their unique characteristics.



Learning From Experience: Trailer Trouble

by Alyssa Shirk

“Alyssa, I need you to get a few things from Lowes. You’ll have to take the trailer; you can get Logan to help hook it up.”

Taking the money my dad handed me, I went in search of my youngest brother. He guided me as I backed up to the trailer and hooked it up while I got ready to go.

“Is it ready?” I asked on my way out, and Logan gave me a thumbs up.

I was soon on my way. I cruised down the highway and slowed as I got into town. Then I passed a few gas stations and went over a small bridge. Several feet after the bridge, I heard a scraping sound coming from behind me. I checked my mirrors and was alarmed to see my trailer swerving wildly all over the road. There was nowhere to pull over, so I stopped on the road and turned my hazard lights on, then jumped out of the Suburban to see what was wrong.

Maybe a more experienced driver would have realized what had happened the moment they saw the trailer swerving. For me, it took a minute to figure out that the trailer had not been latched and had bounced off the hitch when I went over the bridge. I was able to lift it back on and this time I made sure it was latched. Praise God for the safety chains that ensured the trailer did not come completely loose and that no one was around to get hit by it! And you better believe I double check to make sure it’s latched before I start driving!

I learned something by doing.



The Practical Side: Rest of the Story

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.



The Clothes We Wear

by Fit Fully

For many years I have loved growing cotton. I would still like to grow cotton. The science and “magic” needed to make an

indeterminate tropical plant grow and fruit in the lower south’s 150-day growing window is still a wonder to me. But don’t be fooled. Marketing your cotton crop for a fair and reasonable price is often more difficult than growing and harvesting the crop itself. So it was a great and liberating day when I found and started using the services of a cotton marketing cooperative, *Staplecotn* based in Greenwood, Mississippi.

Each winter the CEO and other administrative staff of *Staplecotn* would have a grower meeting in different regions of the cotton belt from Louisiana in the west to the Carolinas in the east. It was not a formal, stuffy, upper middle-class event. Hicks, hayseeds and country bumpkins would be met at the door with frowns of disapproval if one showed up without clean clothes, well groomed, and without the fresh smell of beard oil. For those who preferred the less rugged and more smooth look, the aroma and evidence that you had sloshed on a skosh of after-shave brought similar frowns of disapproval.

I enjoyed the excellent food served at those meetings, the camaraderie of visiting with other growers across the cotton belt. I liked the information we were given, how our crop was being priced, where it was being exported to, and what we could look forward to by planting time in the spring. But something was wrong.

Each year I would wonder if those new and accommodating cotton growing friends that we were making could tell without a shadow of a doubt that my sons and I were actually “wanna be” cotton growers with only 350 acres (they grew cotton by the thousands of acres). If the “truth be told,” we were actually 8th and 9th generation dairy farmers that just like to plant a little cotton on the side for a crop rotation. I noticed many other things that made me a bit skittish or hesitant to disclose very much of my personal journey and resumé.

When introducing ourselves, most of us peasants would say that we were from South Carolina, Alabama, or Georgia. Not those fellows ... they were from “The Delta” and it was often said very reverently and with a touch of arrogance—not Mississippi or Louisiana, but “The Delta.” I am not sure what the zip code of “The Delta” is but in their mind it was Canaan, the promised land or maybe even the vestibule of heaven.

All of them that could had big hair, piles of it, carefully groomed and, no doubt, a touch of hair spray to hold it in place. The ones who did not have a tweed jacket and tie were wearing “Columbia” brand capeshirts, sunglasses stuck up in that big hair or dangling on a “cable” around their neck. The 40 and under set wore khaki shorts; the older guys wore khaki long pants. For footwear, it was boat shoes with no socks.

Each year at the *Staplecotn* growers and members meetings I was reminded and quite sure that we would never really fit in with that crowd. Try as we might, we could never hide our true livestock, shepherd, cattle and dairy identity. Or why should we want to hide it? Nice and friendly men that they were, I became more and more aware that I did not fit in. Until I became comfortable wearing and identifying in their choice and taste in attire, I never would really feel like one of those guys from “The Delta.”

I was not from “The Delta” but from the low country of South Carolina. Who I was, where I was from, my vocation, my church affiliation and a loyalty to my God exposed for all to see that I did not fit in. More importantly, why would I want to look like I was from “The Delta” when I was part of another Kingdom. And if it did not affect the way I chose to dress myself and who I want to identify with, it should!

I think that we do well to maintain a certain humility and respect for other Anabaptists who have made an honest attempt to make the Bible current and alive. Yes, and sometimes their applications may be a bit different from ours. I hope we can learn from, accept, and appreciate others as they endeavor to make the Scriptures practical in our time.



The Practical Side: New Stories

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.



Scared

by A. Fraid

It was a pitch-black night in the Dominican Republic and like usual I drifted off into a deep sleep. Suddenly,

I was brought to an instant state of full alertness but did not know what had awakened me. I just knew that something was wrong. Almost immediately, I heard a slight clicking sound coming from the front door. I bolted silently from bed, leaving my sleeping spouse oblivious to "whatever it was" that awaited outside.

At the front door I heard the muffled sounds of someone outside and the clicking, just inches away. My mind raced wildly through myriads of possible solutions to this situation but it seemed like there was nothing that I could do.

Obviously, someone was trying to force the front door open. How many of "them" were out there? Were they armed with machetes and guns? Five years earlier, in Honduras, we opened the door to two masked men who held a shotgun to a co-worker's head and demanded money. That time they had us literally "over the barrel" and I had decided the next time intruders came; it would be different.

What kind of defense did I have against this situation? But then again, I was a nonresistant Anabaptist. That fact was uncontested. Or was this one of those rare exceptions that occurred only on a dark night in the Dominican Republic when one was far away from his home congregation in the States?

Without much reasoning about the theological implications of my actions, I reacted out of the urgency I felt. I did the only thing that I could think of doing in that moment. After all, we were taught as boys to be men of action.

With all of the force I could muster I struck the door with both hands and yelled at the top of my lungs. There was a long moment of silence. In this moment I realized that the impact of my hands had broken out the raised panel of the door and that my would-be intruder had uninhibited access to the house. "Great," I thought to myself. "Now he can just march in and hold us up."

Practical Questions

1. Does nonresistance apply strictly to physical violence and harm?
2. Is restricting a drunk something Christ's followers should do?
3. What would be the correct action in this situation?

(See AV39, "Practical Side: Rest of Story" for follow-up)



The Deacon Work

by Won Dering

It was a late Saturday afternoon. We were doing the evening chores when I got a phone call from a young lady. Penny said she had been referred to me by someone who answered the phone at church. Penny claimed she was a mother of three young boys. As I listened to her tale of woe, the bottom line was that she was out of money, out of groceries, and the rent was due.

"Where is your husband and why is he not helping you?" I asked.

"Oh ... that would be my boyfriend, and he cannot work right now because he got hurt in the woods while logging and does not have any income."

"Why is not your church helping you?"

"Well ... we really don't have a church right now." She was so honest.

"Well," I asked her, "Do you do drugs, smoke, and drink? Is that why you do not have any grocery money?"

"Oh, no," she said, "we don't do none of that, but I really do need your help. Can't you help me?"

"Well, where are your mom and dad?" I asked.

"Oh, they are divorced and that is part of the problem

.... My mom is staying with us, and she lost her job too; she is just sucking us down.”

“Can you cook? If I get some things together for you to feed your boys, will you be able to prepare it? Do you have a refrigerator or a freezer?”

“Oh, yes, I can cook. I just don’t have anything to cook.”

“Where is a good place for us to meet? So do you know where the Piggly Wiggly is? I will meet you there at 5:00 p.m. out in the parking lot.” And that was what we agreed to do.

I started going through my wife’s pantry—picked up some homemade bread, went out in the freezer and got a package of hamburger, some fresh eggs from Grace’s little flock of chickens. I was going to go by the barn and get her a gallon or two of fresh milk but then thought better of it—I did not need a law suit from giving someone raw milk and then claiming they got sick from drinking our milk. I had already been there with a home school group, and it was a very scary and bad experience. —I went into the house and opened my dresser drawer and got out a crisp \$50.00 bill to give to her to buy milk, cereal and fruit for her boys.

I waited at the Piggly Wiggly parking lot for perhaps 20 minutes past our agreed time and was beginning to think that I got scammed. How much longer should I wait? Finally, the deep rumble of a big Chevy truck with baboon tires a huge lift kit that almost made it possible to stoop and just walk under the truck came loafing by real slow. So, I stepped out from under the tree where I was standing and flagged it down.

Penny stopped and jumped down out of her truck, a very young scantily clad white girl—most girls in our area are black. I noticed an older woman sitting on the passenger side of the truck, puffing away burning weeds. So as soon as the introduction was over, I said to Penny, “I thought you told me that you all don’t smoke.”

“Oh, that would be my mom,” she said.

We had a very nice and polite conversation about her needs: her need for a husband and not a boyfriend, her need for Jesus and to become part of a caring church family. Then I gave Penny the food and asked her, “If I give you some money, will you go into the store and buy some milk, cereal, and fruit for the boys?” Penny promised me she would use the money for groceries.

After a tear-filled “thank you” Penny got those three little boys to hop down out of that truck; they called me, “Sir,” and shook my hand and thanked me from the bottom of their little hearts (Bless their hearts). My

suspicious, cool, and, yes, a little bit stony heart was so touched and it had long already started to melt.

I handed her the money and wished her well. Penny gathered up her little boys and headed into the store with my crisp \$50.00 bill.

Practical Questions

1. Should the deacon have investigated the situation more before aiding Penny?
2. How could the deacon help Penny and her boys beyond the immediate need?
3. Would it be good to require Penny to bring the boys to Sunday school?
4. Would it work to pick the boys up and bring them to church?
5. Would a church school in the home reach the boys and maybe Penny too?



Trust the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

Proverbs 3:5-7

Meeting Announcements

"Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

- Hebrews 10:25

Anabaptist Identity Conference

Anabaptist Identity CONFERENCE

Purpose of the Meeting: The purpose of the Anabaptist Identity Conference (AIC) is to bring together plain Anabaptists to strengthen their heritage, witness, and common ground by encouraging mutual support, addressing challenges like the desertion of their people from radical Christianity, and deepening their understanding of how to follow Jesus. It aims to challenge complacency, awaken consciences, and provide a vision that extends beyond their home congregations to the broader Kingdom of God.

Time of Meeting: January 29, 30, 31

Location: Harvest Ridge Event Center at Holmes County Fair Grounds 8701 State Route 39, Millersburg, Ohio 44654

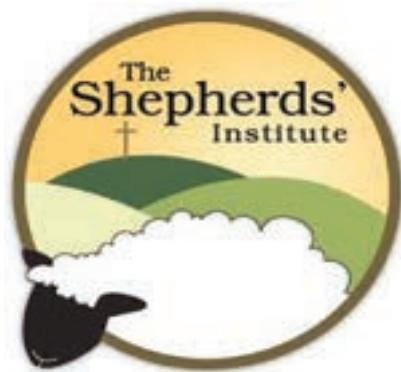
Contact Person: Minister Ray Miller for information and lodging.

Ray Miller – Home phone: 330-275-7560

Ray Miller – Business phone: 330-276-6508



The Shepherds Institute



Purpose of the Meeting: To equip church leaders to be compassionate; wise in pastoral care, church administration, and biblical preaching.

Time of Meeting: February 9-13, 2026

Location: Cornerstone Mennonite Church meeting house
20000 County Road 655, Memphis MO 63555

Contact Person: Chester Weaver – Phone: 817-648-1863

Email: chesterweaverfamily@gmail.com

Address: 504 N. King Street, Itasca, TX 76055

Circulation & Financial Statement

Income & Expense Report

December 31, 2025

October 1, 2025 Beginning Balance	\$4,456.25
Income	
Donations	\$2,905.00
Local Support*	\$7,000.00
Total Income	<u>\$9,905.00</u>
Begining Balance + Income	\$14,361.25
Expenses (AV37)	
Postage	\$5,299.04
Printing & Mailing	\$6,675.00
Staff Expenses	<u>\$930.00</u>
Total Expense	\$12,904.04
December 31, 2025 Ending Balance	\$1,457.21

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

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End Matters

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” – Jude 24-25

Until He comes,

James

Anabaptist Voice
5282 Hwy. 56 South
Waynesboro, GA 30830
editor@anabaptistvoice.com
www.anabaptistvoice.com

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*Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised,
And His greatness is unsearchable.*

Psalm 145:3

