



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

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

In This Issue:

- "TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS" - JEFF BYLER
- "MARRIAGES THAT LAST" - TIM MYERS
- "GOD'S CALL TO SLIM DOWN" - MENNO KNIGHT
- "OPPORTUNITIES" - ABRAHAM NEUFELD
- "A LOOK AT THE BOOK" - DAVID L. BURKHOLDER



Letter from the Editor



Hydrangea Blooms from Our Garden

This is the season for hydrangeas. With big and multicolored blooms they put on their show. "Hydro" means water in Greek and hydrangeas drink it in. On a hot day they are some of the first plants to fold their leaves for protection from the hot afternoon sun. Between June 15 and 18 we enjoyed 3.6 inches of rain; the hydrangeas loved it.

It is certain, sure, without doubt, definite, without question, and undeniable. All living things will die. I am going to die. At nearly 84 years of age, I am preparing for that event.

Here is what I am doing. I strive to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man ... every day. I am laying up treasure in heaven with kind deeds and gifts to others. I am disposing of earthly goods the Lord entrusted to my care for a short time. I am a preacher of righteousness to this generation as was Noah to his generation. I have chosen my funeral text, "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." One triumphant hymn I would like sung is, "Rise, Glorious Conqueror."

I have been at the front and leading the charge to produce Anabaptist Voice. In the Anabaptist tradition, our writing and authority depended on the Word of God. The gospel we promoted has been a simple teaching, not one fit into complex theologies or beliefs concerning current and future events. This way is the simple teaching of sin and salvation through Jesus and how following Him demands obedience.

The time has come to pass the torch on to Brother Jeff Byler. As the Lord gives continued strength and mental ability, I look forward to assisting Brother Jeff in the ongoing work of Anabaptist Voice. I also have in mind to do a condensation of the seven books in the Conquest Series. As the Lord tarries with me, I would also like to write somewhat of a sequel to Overflowing Earth.

So, there is much work to do if we have more time on earth. But if my time on earth is ended, I look forward to being with Jesus in a better place.

We pray this summer issue of Anabaptist Voice will challenge you to put your faith into practice ... every day.

Blessings,

James G. Landis

Send all responses, articles, and questions to:

AV Editor
598 Templeman Lake Rd.
Bonners Ferry, ID 83805
anabaptistvoice@gmail.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.

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

Our Finances:

There is no set subscription price for *Anabaptist*

Voice. We appreciate donations from those who wish to support the work.

To assure an informed supporter base, each issue 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.

However, those who give to *Anabaptist Voice* through Kooskia Mennonite Church in Idaho will receive a tax deductible receipt for the donation. See page 43 for details.

Our Audience:

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

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

Some Historic Tenets of Anabaptism:

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

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



Our Readers Write

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

AV Editor

Kingdom Advanced

by In Volved

Greetings in the name of Jesus. Thank you for putting out this inspiring magazine.

God bless everyone that is involved in producing this material. The Kingdom is advanced.

Gift enclosed.

P. N. B. | *Alberta, Canada*

Work On

by Per Petual

I appreciated your response as AV editor to the "Round Table Discussion" "Not Sinful" (AV35, page 33). Not everyone sees things the same.

We do live in a world that has a curse on it. Something I thought about before is that nothing runs in perpetual motion by itself. That is why we have to drag ourselves out of bed in the morning to go to work. It seems that regardless of how advanced things get, one thing will remain constant: people will still need to work.

Continue doing your best.

L. M. | *Ohio*

Passing AV On

by Con Tinue

In reading the last issue (AV39), I noticed that you are preparing to pass on the editor duties to Jeff Byler. A heartfelt THANKS for your vision and efforts in producing these past 39 issues.

I especially want to bless you in your answers to readers who have taken issue with some of your positions. Your meekness while holding to the truth in love is what we need to pursue in life and relationships.

May God bless you as you transfer this effort on to Jeff and as you continue your journey to the end.

One of the songs that has been an inspiration to me in the recent past is: "O Brother Be Faithful." This is my prayer for you as you continue to the end.

O Brother Be Faithful

O brother be faithful! Soon Jesus will come,
For whom we have waited so long;
And soon we shall enter our glorious home,
To join in the conqueror's song.

O brother be faithful! The city of gold,
Prepared for the good and the blest,
Is waiting, its portals of pearl to unfold,
And welcome us into its rest.

O brother be faithful! He soon will descend,
Creation's omnipotent King,
While legions of angels His chariot attend,
And palm wreaths of victory bring.

O brother be faithful! For soon we shall hear
Our Savior pronounce the glad word,
"Well done, faithful servant, your title is clear,
Now enter into the joy of your Lord."

O brother be faithful! Eternity's years
Exchanged for thy faithfulness now,
When bright smiles of gladness shall scatter your tears,
And a victor's crown gleam on thy brow.

O brother be faithful! The promise is sure,
That waits for the faithful and tried;
To reign with the ransomed, immortal and pure,
For aye with our Lord to abide.

— Uriah Smith 1853

— Amended by Elizabeth Neufeld

S. B. | *Mississippi*

A Hearty Amen

by You Nity

First of all, a "thank you" for the *Anabaptist Voice* (AV39, Spring 2026). I appreciate it very much.

A hearty amen to the article "Reaching for Unity" on discipline and church standards. It is sad to see so many people discarding things we, as older ones, labored for. Only God knows what apostasy we may yet see in our

day. How will we meet God?

I am disappointed that you promote translations other than the KJV. I feel the KJV is the best one for the English-speaking population.

God bless your work.

D. Y. | *Ohio*

Two Ditches

by *Over Lawed*

LAW, Law, or law?

I find the use of the word “law” in the KJV compared to the NASB “Law” interesting (AV37, pages 13-17).

How many different kinds of laws are mentioned in Romans 7 and 8? Half a dozen? Perhaps the NASB can clear up some of the confusion by capitalizing Law when it refers to the Mosaic ceremonial law, which is to be done away.

We should not misapply verses about the Mosaic Law because of a distaste for church discipline and what we may call law. It seems we can either turn to the legalism of the Pharisees with law in one ditch, or to the licentiousness of freedom from law in the other ditch.

Aren't we so privileged that the ceremonial Law has been fulfilled by One who brings power to live above the law of sin? And we are to observe all that He has commanded us. His ways are for our good.

W. B. | *North Dakota*

The True Source

by *Rev Erent*

I really like the article on “People of the Book” because it points modern-day Mennonites back to the true source of Anabaptism and Christianity. It doesn't try to freeze us into some form that was created in 1950 or any given date in the past. True Christianity has been looking at God's Word with fear and trembling since the time of the apostles. We need to continue to reverently and carefully apply “The Book” to our age.

I also like the article, “Obey Your Leaders” (page 18). This article states three options for leadership with pros and cons for each of those options. I have been in too many settings where people think that if they could have the perfect style of leadership, they would have a perfect church. That is a delusion. This article helps people see that their attitude towards leadership and the diligence that they put into church life is more important than having some perfect structure.

J. L. B. | *Idaho*

Reaching for Unity

by *Stand as One*

I found the article “Reaching for Unity” in the spring issue of *Anabaptist Voice* (AV39, pages 17-21) written by Brother Joe Wurz to be very clear, accurate, and very necessary for our Anabaptist brotherhood.

If we all individually followed the biblical principles therein outlined, our churches and our Anabaptist witness would be much enhanced. I urge re-reading and allowing the Holy Spirit to move our hearts in response.

Bless you, brother, for your insight and clarity on the issue of brotherhood unity. And may the church benefit from your insight.

D. L. B. | *Virginia*

Committed to Vision

By *Endless Opport*

It was good to hear that, Lord willing, *Anabaptist Voice* will continue with a younger man also committed to its vision. The introduction of the new future editor was interesting.

May the Lord bless His work. The opportunities to serve Him seem endless.

I have two capsules for “Wit and Wisdom”:

“People do not care about how much you know until they know how much you care.”

“We tend to judge others by what we know about ourselves.”

D. S. | *Missouri*

Correct Verb Tenses

by *Per Fected*

It is interesting how the Greek verb tenses factor heavily in an accurate understanding of Scripture. Some of these verb tenses helped me in my own personal struggle with assurance of salvation when I was younger.

The particular verse that helped me was Hebrews 10:14. In the KJV it reads: “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (This reading can be interpreted as once-saved-always-saved).

The NKJV reads: “By one offering He has perfected forever those who are “being” sanctified. (The NASB alternate reading confirms “being” sanctified.) Why is this important? I think that sanctification is a state that we walk in, not a state that we arrive at.

J. L. B. | *Idaho*

Marriages that Last

Tim Myers

As Christians, we all want to have marriages that last until we die of old age. Every young person who aspires to marriage wants it to be permanent and happy. What does it take to create and maintain marriages that last a lifetime?

In the beginning, God created man to be in relationship with Himself. Adam and Eve regularly communed directly with God. God still wants that kind of communion between married couples and Himself. That three-way relationship will go a long way toward creating peaceful marriages that endure.

I believe there are four universal principles that apply to all human relationships, including marriage.

1. ***Unresolved sin disconnects us with God and creates friction with others.*** God created all things good, but sin destroyed much of the goodness of creation. One of the symptoms of sin and separation from God is friction between marriage partners. The inverse of that is also true: bad relationships between people impede their connection with God.

2. ***God created marriage, and God makes good relationships possible.*** It is only when both partners are rightly connected with God that marriages can function at their best. When the three are bonded, there is a strong, stable unit.

3. ***Good marriages are built on the qualities of the fruit of the Spirit.*** Galatians 5:22-23 lists these: **love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control** (NKJV). God does not give us these qualities merely on a whim, as we might choose paint for a wall or carpet for a floor. He promotes these

qualities through His Spirit because they make life good! They make marriages function well!

4. ***We can improve marriages unilaterally*** (unilaterally means involving only one party). Many marriages are struggling because both parties feel that before they can do anything to improve the situation, the other person needs to change. They see the other person as causing the problems, and therefore nothing can be done without the other acting first.

That is untrue. There is always “*a right thing to do.*” We may not know everything we need to do. We may not have the answers to many questions. We may not even completely resolve the situation, but there is always “*a right thing to do.*” One partner can always do the right thing without waiting for their spouse to change first.

The Fruit of Love

For instance, consider the first fruit of the Spirit mentioned in the above list, “*love,*” as defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

“⁴ ***Love*** suffers long and is kind; ***love*** does not envy; ***love*** does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ ***Love never fails.***”

One spouse can unilaterally, by himself or herself, suffer long and be kind. One spouse can choose not to be envious; to not parade himself, to not be puffed up or behave rudely. One spouse can choose to seek the good of the other rather than his own. One spouse can sacrifice on behalf of the other. One spouse can refuse to be provoked. One spouse can reject assumptions.



One spouse can rejoice in what is good rather than complain about what is bad. One spouse can bear all things, believe in God, hope in all sorts of situations. One can endure all things. One spouse doing all that can contribute greatly to restoring a troubled marriage.

The Other Eight Fruits

Love is just the first of the nine fruits that are evidences of the work of God's Spirit. What about all the other fruits mentioned? Do you suppose that patience can help a sour relationship? Gentleness? Meekness or humility? A godly life is a blend of these divine virtues, and they can help make our marriages pleasant. Who we are will shape our relationships. The Holy Spirit brings these qualities into our lives, but He requires our cooperation to express them.

Displaying these qualities usually requires a deliberate choice. The easiest thing is to just let our natural bent toward evil have its way. But if any person will follow Christ, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow the example of Christ. This is particularly important in marriage..

The Contrary Works of the Flesh

Contrast the evidences of the Spirit to the works of the flesh a few verses earlier: **Galatians 5:19–21 (NKJV)**. “¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hatred,” [hopefully these are not sins you struggle with, but how about the following?] “contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that *those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Neither will they have good marriages.

We must recognize that the responses that come *naturally* in strained or broken relationships will usually worsen the situation. Here are three to shun.

The first is “*rendering evil for evil or railing for railing*” (1 Peter 3:9 [“reviling for reviling” in the NKJV. “Insult for insult” in the NASB]. He speaks harsh words and she speaks them back. She tells a hurtful story about him and even if it is true, he feels compelled to tell one on her. An “eye for an eye” philosophy in relationships will inevitably be destructive.

The second is **Avoidance**. To evade those awkward moments alone with his wife, he waits to go home until after the children get home from school. Or, she goes to bed early and pretends to be sleeping when he comes in. These strategies only make things worse: avoidance is

not a solution to a strained marriage.

The third is **Thinking that I am always right**. A spouse thinking that he always has to justify himself is a sure way to argument and contention. The godliest people are the humblest, the readiest to admit they can be wrong. Marriage partners need to accept responsibility for any wrong they may have done, however large or small, because what seems to one a little thing to the other may be large.

More Pointers for a Healthy Marriage

God gives some clear directions for how men and women should act in a healthy marriage (**1 Peter 3:1-8 NASB**).

“In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. ... You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit.”

A husband and a wife: that's where it all starts, with a bright and happy couple saying “I do!” It usually ends with the two of them, an old couple hobbling around until God calls them home.

Remember that as you raise your family. Someday the children will grow up and leave home and then it will just be the two of you again. Invest in your marriage so when that day comes, your marriage will be solid and fulfilling all the days God gives you.

The Most Important Things

What makes a healthy marriage? Wedding vows usually include a promise to “*love and cherish each other in health and in sickness, in prosperity and in adversity, to share the joys and sorrows of life, exercise patience, kindness, and forbearance toward each other, and live together in peace.*” These are the promises we made, but those things do not just happen; we must be intentional about carrying out our vows to each other.

In the 1960's and 70's, J. Paul Getty was known as the richest man in the world. He drilled for oil, and money rolled into his accounts by the millions. His life, however, confirms what the Bible says in **Luke 12:15**: “*A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things he possesses.*”

Getty married five times, and had relations with various other women. He retired to an estate in England, out of the public eye. A few years before he died, he granted an interview and one of the questions he was asked was, “Do you have any regrets?”

“Well,” he replied, “I wish I had a better relationship with my children. I would gladly give all of my millions for just one lasting marital success. I guess I focused too much on my work.”

Marriage and family, apparently, did not have a high priority. Relationships in the family were very strained. Several of his children and grandchildren were plagued with drug use and overdoses.

The Best Investment

The best investment in life is not oil wells or real estate. It is the Kingdom of God, the only empire that will last forever.

An integral part of God’s kingdom is the family; the souls which comprise it are eternal, too. A godly family contributes to the Kingdom of God exponentially. The ripple effect of a godly home is almost incalculable. In the light of eternity, most other entities fade into obscurity.

To those of you who are married, you can have what Getty would have traded his millions to have: a good marriage. Some of the best things in life do not cost a lot of money, but they do require a large investment of yourself. Marriage is one of them.

Different Roles

In a good marriage, spouses recognize that God made men and women for different roles, and He gave them different personality characteristics. Both Paul and Peter speak of the differing roles of spouses, and give specific directives about filling them.

We could find teaching about marriage in **1 Peter 3, Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, 1 Corinthians 11**, but let’s consider **Ephesians 5:22-33**.

“Wives be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.”

Putting Love and Subjection into Practice

We know what these passages say, but do we practice it? God puts His finger on what husbands and wives tend to neglect. Husband, do you love your wife? Are you ever unsympathetic, inattentive, uncaring, haughty, insensitive, secretive, overbearing, cynical, overly critical, or unforgiving?

Wife, do you respect your husband? Are you ever controlling, insistent on your way, manipulative, complaining, overly critical, stubborn, rebellious, or suspicious?

Are either of you lazy about fulfilling your duties in the home? Ladies can get wrapped up in novels and digital media, and men can be workaholics or addicted to their hobbies. There are a hundred activities that invite our attention, but make sure that your spouse has a hot line to your ear.

Listening Well

The term “hot line” originated in the Cold War era, when the USA and USSR both wanted to be sure there were no misunderstandings that could start a nuclear war. A phone line was established between the two countries with the assurance that there could be instant communication at any time. It has changed through the years and now operates via email, but technicians still make contact every hour to make sure the system is functional.

Do you and your wife have a hot line? It may not be instantaneous, but it should be constant. Sometimes I say, “Let me finish this sentence, let me make this cut, let me make this turn, and then you will have my full attention..”

Open Your Hearts

Men and women are generally different in their emotions, their motivations, their perspectives. Men care about facts, how things work. Women are more in tune with their feelings, and the sensitivities of others. We can benefit from each other. I often ask my wife’s perspective on situations I face, and she often asks what I think. Husbands, if you sense that there is something between you and your wife, you can ask her, “Honey, how could I be a better husband?” A wife could pose a similar question.

That leaves one quite vulnerable. But vulnerability

**Trust is the
currency
of a solid
marriage.**

and honesty build trust, and trust is the currency of a solid marriage.

In a good marriage, spouses communicate from the heart. Truly hearing and understanding each other is at the core of any good marriage.

Tell each other stories of your life, particularly experiences that have formed who you are. Talk about your childhood, talk about the ideals you have. Dating couples, that is how you get to know each other—talk about the experiences that have formed you, the things that bring you joy or sorrow. Talk about what happened in your day. Open up your heart.

Husbands and wives should share intimate and private things. But they should also be very sensitive to the need for confidentiality. A wife or husband will feel betrayed if they open up the inner recesses of their heart only to be embarrassed by having their privacy violated. In marriage your primary loyalty is to your spouse, not your mother or sister or brother or your best friend.

Keep Growing

There are no two marriages exactly alike. Within the bounds of scriptural principles, you have to wiggle and squirm together until you figure out how to function and relate comfortably with each other. I think that now, after forty-nine years of marriage, my wife and I are the most comfortable with each other that we have ever

been. We have had rough spots, but we have grown.

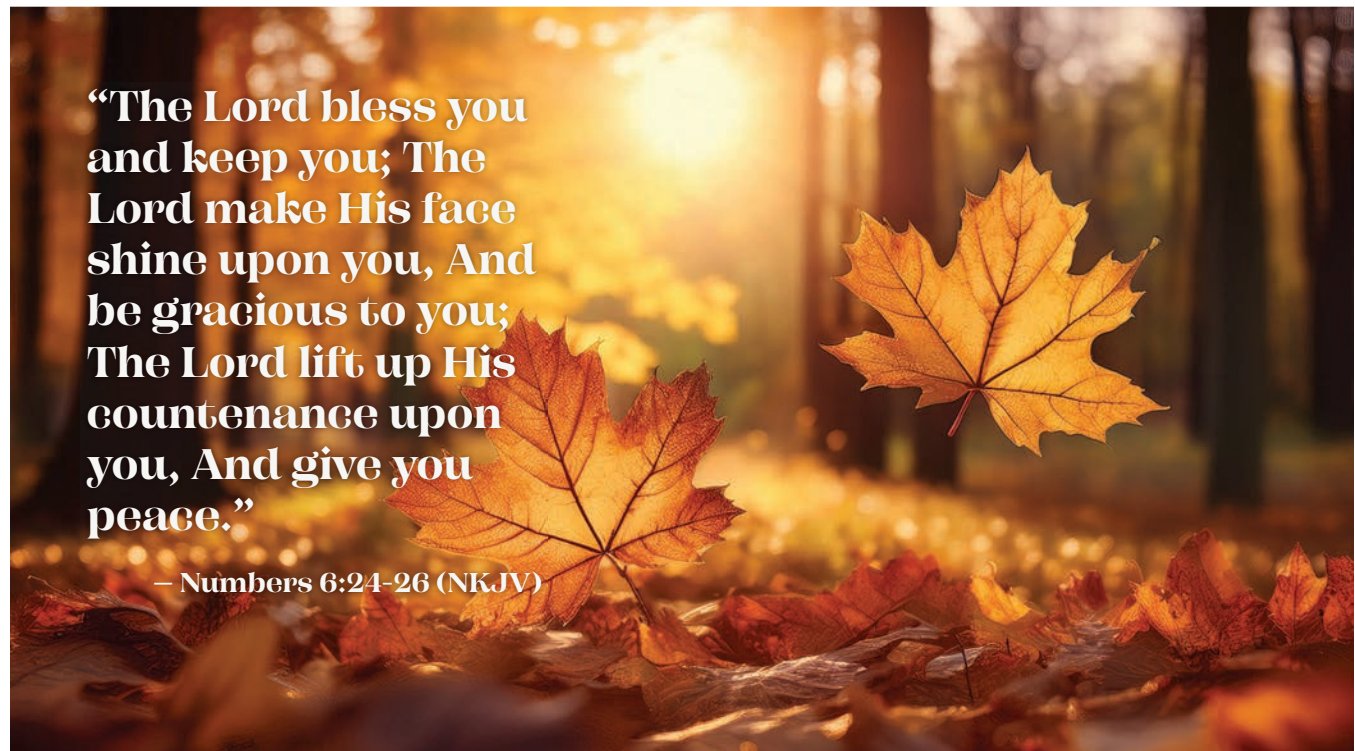
While there may be disagreements, one does not have to be disagreeable. Husbands, you may need to make a final call that conflicts with your wife's perspective, but be sure you have heard her and understand what she is thinking. If it really does not matter, try to accommodate her view point. She will sense that and can much more easily accept the occasional opposing decision.

In a good marriage spouses go the second mile. Always thank her for the meal. Express appreciation for the way he provides for the needs of the family. Do things the other enjoys, just to give them happiness. Fix the broken things around the house. Help him with a project. Do more than the other expects. She longs to hear, "I am glad you are my wife." He loves it when she replies, "I love being your wife."

Marriages that Last

God created marriage to represent the relationship He wants to have with His people. It is as if we are engaged to Him now, eagerly anticipating the day when that relationship will be consummated.

Meanwhile, build a good marriage, one based on the pattern of giving and caring and sharing that exists between Christ and His church. There are few earthly relationships that have greater potential to produce a joyful life, or to bless God's world.



**“The Lord bless you
and keep you; The
Lord make His face
shine upon you, And
be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His
countenance upon
you, And give you
peace.”**

— Numbers 6:24-26 (NKJV)



Just Like You

James G. Landis

"In speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself to be an example of those who believe."

— 1 Timothy 4:12

A preacher friend of mine and I were discussing the youthfulness of the mission workers in Haiti. He threw a challenge at me that I have long pondered.

"What we need in Haiti is somebody *just like you*."

Just like me? At nearly 70 years of age, I had been to Haiti two times. Frankly, I did not enjoy the trash, the harrowing transportation, the uncertainty of life, the seeming lack of initiative, the heat, or the Creole and French. It was all strange to me and both times I feared the uncertainties surrounding Haitian airports might derail my departure.

So the first question hidden in the challenge, "*Somebody, just like me*," was, "Would I be willing to go?" The second question was, "Would I be a good example of the followers of Jesus Christ to Haitian believers?" Would my speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity shine through in my life if I was not in pleasant physical surroundings?

Many times the apostle Paul was far from pleasant surroundings when he carried the gospel to the Gentiles. Yet he said that he had learned to be content even in the worst of surroundings—prison, strange foods, sickness, and friends who deserted him. Timothy, likewise, may also have suffered in his ministry because of an upset stomach caused by strange foods.¹ Timothy had other troubles besides health issues. Paul writes, "**Let no one look down on you because of your youth, but be a good example of those who believe**" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Being a good example means that every one of the believers should be "*just like you*" in character—in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. These character traits are things the individual can and should control. As Paul said without apology, "**Follow me as I follow Christ**" (1 Corinthians 11:1). That did not mean there were areas in Paul's life where he was not following Christ. It meant believers should be "just like him" because he was a trustworthy imitator of Christ.

Are you also a trustworthy imitator of Christ in the things you can control? Can you say with confidence,

"I wish everyone in the congregation was *'just like me'* in these virtues? I am not writing about the things you cannot control—your stature, the hairs on your head, your sex, the color of your eyes. You cannot do anything to change these features of your body.

But there lies within your power many things you have control over beside the virtues Paul wrote about to Timothy. God sees things like hair styles, clothing, body weight, how you work, how you study your Bible, what games you play, the car or truck you drive, and a host of other things. Would you be happy if everybody in the congregation followed your example in each of these areas?

Would you think it a strong congregation if everybody did, "*just like you*"? In other words, you cannot say you are a good imitator of Christ and "follow me," if you have areas where you are not exemplary.

Let us explore a few of these "*just like you*" areas that everyone should examine. And most importantly, how would God view the congregation if:

- all the men in the congregation had haircuts like yours?
- all the men wore the same buckles, fitted pants, and shoes you wear?
- all the ladies wore veilings like yours?
- all the ladies used the same colors and patterns you use?
- everyone controlled their body weight like you do?
- everyone rode the same cars or trucks you ride in?
- everybody went to the same places you go for vacation?
- everybody played the same games you play?
- everybody used their phones the way you use yours?

The list could go on and on because it reaches into every area of your life. If you are living a life that shows a good example to others, this self-examination can be made without fear.

But the point is, if everyone in the congregation was "*just like you*," would God be pleased?

1 In 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul advised Timothy, "No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments."



Rubies and Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.



“Godliness is living in constant awareness of God.”

– Kendall Martin at Spring Valley Mennonite Church, WA



“God does not tell us to do and then we will become. If we first be, do actions will follow.”

– John Ray Troyer at Shekinah Mennonite Church, MO



“The mind that abides in Christ stays near the thoughts that Jesus thinks.”

– Marcus Byler at Living Hope Mennonite Church, ID



“True peace is not the absence of a storm, it is the presence of Jesus.”

– Ernest Rhodes at Delano Christian Community, TN



“Sin is a wall that separates man from God.”

– Tim Myers at Hephzibah Mennonite Church, GA



“Gossip is not just an ugly habit, it is a deadly sin.”

– Ted Byler at Iglesia Anabaptista Coyhaique, Chile



“The negative things in life can shape us positively if we are exercised by them.”

– Martin Friesen at Horndean Mennonite Church, MB



“The accomplishments of man are for God’s glory, not for man’s.”

– Chad Brubaker at Barnwell Mennonite Church, SC



“The devil sees to it that we see the fun of the sowing, but shields us from seeing the agony of the reaping.”

– Sheldon Mast at Shekinah Mennonite Church, MO



“The freest person in the world is one who is the prisoner of the Lord.”

– Titus Martin at Calvary Mennonite Church, PA

*Writing down one good quote from each sermon you listen to will sharpen your listening skills. Jesus said, “**He that hath ears to hear let him hear!**”*

Send in the quote followed by the name of the speaker and the name of the congregation or church where it was given. For our records, we would also like to have the name and address of the person sending in the quote.



True Righteousness

Jeff Byler

Jesus calls us to, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (**Matthew 6:33**). The purpose of this article is to see what the Bible says true righteousness is. If we incorrectly define righteousness, we can become careless and trust in a substandard “righteousness” that does not fear God nor keep His commandments.

When we talk about “true righteousness,” it means there is a righteousness that is not true. We will look first at a number of signs of a false righteousness that is not according to biblical teaching. Then we will follow a few of the signs of true righteousness that flow out of a right relationship with God.

What True Righteousness Is Not

Error #1: Faith Alone Can Save You

False faith assumes Christ’s righteousness is a covering, but continues to live according to the course of the flesh and the world. This grave error is perpetuated by teaching that salvation is by faith alone and that obedience to God is unnecessary. Anabaptists reject this false doctrine because the Scripture is clear, “A man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (**James 2:24**).

Righteousness without holy living is absurd and ignores the Apostle’s stern warning. The Bible says, “The unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God. neither

fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God” (**1 Corinthians 6:9, 10**). Paul clearly links unrighteousness to disobedience in this passage. Faith that does not practice righteousness will not save us. If we are genuine recipients of God’s grace, then we will be forgiven AND be liberated from sin.

Error #2: God Hates Righteous Deeds

Some claim that God hates man’s righteous deeds; that He takes them to be “filthy garments.” They quote the verse, “Our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (**Isaiah 64:6**). The context of **Isaiah 64:6** is that “there is no one who calls on Your name, who arouses himself to take hold of You” (**Isaiah 64:7**). Isaiah’s proclamation to the Israelites was that their righteousness had fallen into a state of rags; they were living in disobedience to God.

Isaiah was not saying that man’s works are inherently filthy and unacceptable; instead, he was saying that the Israelites were not living holy lives. In fact, Isaiah recognizes that God does “meet him that rejoices in doing righteousness” (**Isaiah 64:5**), but states that Israel was not doing that.

Error #3: We Can Declare Ourselves Righteous

In the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee,

Jesus taught us about righteousness. He “told this parable to some people who *trusted in themselves* that they were righteous and viewed others with contempt. ... The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get’” (Luke 18:9-12).

Always beware of teachers who speak too much about themselves and what they have done. That should be a warning signal telling us they are false teachers and desire something for themselves—money, power, or prestige. As an example, **1 Timothy 1:7** talks about some men who *stray from the truth* because they *want to be* teachers of the Mosaic Law.

The Pharisee does not confess sin, nor does he express gratitude to God for His forgiveness. This prompts us to question if the Pharisee is even conscious of his sin. He is like the Jews described in **Romans 10:3-4** who, “Not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to *establish their own*, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the [Mosaic] Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

The Pharisee also viewed others with contempt. The delusion of considering ourselves to be righteous because we are “better than others” is a deception that some fall into. We must remember, “There, but for the grace of God, go I.”

The Pharisee’s righteousness was solely based on his own performance. He shows no need for God. Righteousness is more than human performance and doing a few good things and thus being “better than others.” Most importantly, the Pharisee sought righteousness from within himself when he should have sought righteousness in Christ.

Error #4: Obedience to God Is Legalism

Some look at Jesus’ description of the Pharisee and conclude that righteousness has nothing to do with actual righteous living. They see the self-righteous Pharisee and focus on the danger of legalism and self-righteousness. They never consider that there is another kind of false righteousness which is based on a false faith that does not live in obedient love to God.

Our age is undoubtedly characterized more by “ungodly persons who *turn the grace of our God into licentiousness*” (**Jude 4**) than by legalism. Those who believe this doctrine of licentious grace think that God’s grace allows them to live in disobedience to God.

That is why false teachers often speak far more about self-righteousness and legalism than they do about true righteousness and holy living. They are in effect saying, “Thank God that I am not a Pharisee,” while looking with contempt at “all who *desire to live godly in Christ Jesus*” (**2 Timothy 3:12**).

Obedient Christians who strive to uphold God’s high moral standard are often mistakenly likened to “Pharisees.” Their obedience is viewed as a threat to an “open unity” of toleration, and, “loving acceptance” of sin and the sinner.

What True Righteousness Is

True Righteousness Believes in Christ

John 1:11 and 12 state that Jesus “came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” One of the most basic elements of righteousness is that it starts with faith in an all-sufficient Christ. This is emphasized a lot in the Gospel of John because the Jews so obviously rejected Christ and chose not to believe that He was God’s Son, Savior of mankind, and the Messiah. Wherever the Gospel is preached, the first step is to persuade people to believe in Christ.

However, sometimes faith is emphasized to such a degree that it appears to be simply the power of positive thought that saves. This ideology emphasizes faith over the Savior himself. Jesus, however, said that a little faith, the size of a mustard seed, was enough. The object of our faith is far more important than our faith itself. A little faith in a great Savior will suffice. Those who struggle with the assurance of salvation need to remember that trusting in our faith is not required; trusting in Christ is what matters.

Our faith **IN CHRIST** will be increased as we come to know what a perfect, gracious, powerful, and faithful Redeemer He is. Jesus himself said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (**John 17:3**). The purpose of faith is to know and fellowship with the invisible God. In knowing our Holy Father, we become like Him. The faith that brings you into fellowship and obedience to God is the faith that saves.

True Righteousness Begins with Repentance

True righteousness begins by recognizing our sinful state and seeing the only solution is Christ. Then, crying out to Him in humble faith, we repent of our sins and can be forgiven through His blood. That is how we

have our filthy sins washed away.

God has promised to send His own Holy Spirit to dwell within the one who turns to Him. This process is summed up by Peter in **Acts 2:38**, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Many people say that we live in the “age of grace” as if this was a time when God winks at sin, but this is not true. Paul spoke to the Athenians about their idolatry and stated, “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent” (**Acts 17:30**) NIV. The “age of grace” is not a time where we can crucify Christ anew by living in impurity and expect to be saved. Never! It is a time where man has no excuse to live in sin because God’s enabling power has never been more available.

The first words we hear in the Gospels from John the Baptist, to Jesus, and then on to the Apostles are, “Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand” (**Matthew 3:2, 4:17, Acts 2:38**). The message of repentance—turning away from sin—is almost always said in the same breath with salvation.

It is hard for proud people to confess their sins and repent. True repentance often involves the restitution of things that were stolen and the correction of offenses or lies that have been told. If stolen things are not returned, can it rightfully be called repentance? This is not an easy doctrine to practice, but it cannot be overlooked and is a condition for having our sins washed away.

True Righteousness Forgives Others

Jesus makes it clear that we must forgive others if we expect God to forgive us: “If you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses” (**Matthew 6:15**). This has been the holdout for many sinners who refuse salvation, knowing that they will have to lay their bitterness down at the foot of the cross if they expect to be saved. Forgiving others is a condition, other than faith, for forgiveness and salvation.

True Righteousness Fears God

It is often said in Scripture that righteous people fear God. This is said of Abraham, Job, Joseph, David, and other saints from both testaments. Some say that the fear of God is just a strong reverence for Him, but we see the word “trembling” connected with fear quite often; like in this verse in **Philippians 2:12**: “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” This indicates that the word “fear” was properly translated and that we should accept the common English definition.

Proverbs 16:6 says, “By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.” Many people do not live righteously because they have created a God of tolerance and do not accept the God of the Bible who hates sin. There is no example in Scripture of God overlooking deliberate disobedience, without the repentance of the individual.

Yet one beautiful reason to fear God is because He forgives those who turn to Him. **Psalms 130:3 and 4** say, “If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

True Righteousness is Abiding in Christ

The New Testament affirms that true righteousness is maintained by abiding in Christ. **1 John 3:6-8** says, “No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil.”

When the flesh is crucified, then Christ can live in us. Paul adds, “And it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (**Galatians 2:20**). In this way, our “spirit and soul and body [can] be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**).

Abiding in Christ is essentially the same as walking in the Holy Spirit who makes us a new creature “which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (**Ephesians 4:24**). Walking in this spirit of holiness empowers us to be holy in conduct and attitude.

True Righteousness Produces Love

Scripture affirms that without love, God’s high standard for righteousness is still not satisfied. John writes, “Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother and sister” (**1 John 3:9**). Love is the end or fulfillment of God’s Law, and without love, we cannot practice heartfelt righteousness.

Paul says, “If I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give away all my possessions to charity ... it does me no good” (**1 Corinthians 13:2-3**). This expresses clearly the fact that love is necessary to crown the work of faith. This love works righteousness through Christ living in us by faith. The highest command is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (**Mark 12:30**). This all-consuming love crowns Jesus as complete

Lord and puts father, mother, spouse, children, and self on the back bench.

True righteousness lives out this love in our relationships on earth as well.

True Righteousness Produces Good Works

Righteousness, or pure religion, is living in love for our fellow man in two ways: “To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (**James 1:27**). It is proactive, first in “righteous acts of the saints” (**Revelation 19:8 NKJV**) and second in separation from sin. Both aspects are critical to maintain.

We should not forget Jesus’ description of the Day of Judgment when, “The righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You? The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me’” (**Matthew 25:37-40**). God will condemn the wicked for not helping others, but will reward the righteous for doing good. Obviously, these words by our Lord contradict the idea that we can be saved without righteous living.

The quantity of good deeds does not qualify our faith; it is simply loving obedient actions that confirm faith. Even giving a cup of cold water is noticed. A member of our church felt led to give a bag of groceries to a couple of new believers. Little did they know the need that was present and the faith that was confirmed by this small action. “While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith” (**Galatians 6:10**).

True Righteousness Separates

The second part of righteousness is keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. **II Corinthians 6:17 and 18** say: “COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;¹ And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty. These verses and many others show us that we must keep our garments clean of sin by living a life separated unto God and away from sin.

True Righteousness Produces Fellowship

In speaking about this subject, we need to remember that righteousness is not an end in itself. We maintain our garments in purity for the purpose of having a loving relationship with our Creator and glorifying Him. A Holy God cannot fellowship with sinful man. The bride dresses beautifully to delight the groom. Living in righteousness enables the child of God to know God as his Father.

Even ungodly people wish to be free of their vices. They pay psychologists and counselors high fees in search of freedom from bondage to drugs, anger, and other sins. The child of God has another reason to live in the freedom of righteousness. He knows that one cannot walk in loving fellowship with God and live in disobedience to Him at the same time.

God desires fellowship with us and sent Christ to restore this relationship by washing away our sins..

This is the reason Christ came, “To take away sins ... No one who remains in Him sins continually; no one who sins continually has seen Him or knows Him” (**1 John 3:5, 6**).

JLB | Idaho

1 The small caps indicate that these Scriptures were partial quotes from the Old Testament: Isaiah 52:11; II Samuel 7:14; I Chronicles 17:13; Isaiah 43:6; Hosea 1:10.

“You are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 1:7-8

A Look at The Book

by David L. Burkholder

In a previous article (AV39, page 27), I stressed the importance of being “People of The Book.” My purpose in that article was to stress the importance of maintaining a vital personal relationship with the Author of “The Book.” As we walk with the Lord, we need to grow in the Christian life and in its daily expression, as well as maintain the biblical principles upon which Anabaptism was founded.

In this article we will be exploring the history, structure, authorship, content, integrity and purpose of God’s written word. In a future article I plan to explore methods of reading the Bible in order

to achieve personal help in understanding and living out its principles.

The Bible is a unique book. There were between 36 and 40 writers, working over a period of approximately 1,500 years, from

Moses’ writing the Pentateuch around 1400 BC, to John the Apostle’s writing of Revelation around the year 90 AD. Most of these writers were not familiar with other authors.

The cohesion of The Book reflects the overall authorship and inspiration of an all-knowing, wise and benevolent God. The sixty-six books all speak in various ways to one message—God’s work among mankind to provide a Redeemer to lift man from his sinful condition and give him the hope of a glorious eternity.

The human writers of Scripture were a mixture of men: prophets, priests, kings, poets, a statesman, a farmer, a tax collector, fishermen, a tentmaker, and so forth. The variety of writing styles is a reflection of this mixture. However, there is ample evidence of the message itself having been produced by one mind—the mind of God. We find affirmation of this in II Timothy 3:16 where we read, “**All Scripture is inspired by God**” (God-breathed). That proves



God’s authorship. The rest of that verse and the following one go on to show the Scripture’s profitability to man by equipping him to do God’s work. “**And is profitable for teaching for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**”

I Thessalonians 2:13 also shows the effect God’s word has on the lives of men who hear it preached in its simplicity. “**For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.**”

Man’s defense of Scripture as originating from God is referred to in II Peter 1:20, 21, where Peter states: “**No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation (or origin). For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**” While the reference here speaks directly to the Old Testament prophecies, it is certainly no stretch to apply the same standards to all Scripture. God spoke to holy men, men of upright character, and enabled them to write His message for mankind.

The Bible is a complex book. It contains history, prophesy, poetry, inspiration and rules for living, both for the individual and for the brotherhood in their relation to God and to their fellowmen. The

 **“Forever,
O Lord, *Your*
Book is settled
in heaven”
(Psalm 119:89).**

 **“*Your Book*
is a lamp to my
feet and a light
to my path”
(Psalm 119:105).**

cohesion of this book, written over such a long period of time by a diversity of writers speaks clearly of divine purpose and authorship.

The Bible is indestructible. Over the centuries ungodly men have attempted many times to destroy the Bible, and thus eliminate its influence over mankind. But it survives. In fact the Bible remains the world's bestselling book with an estimated five to seven billion copies distributed over the centuries. Small wonder, for it is the only book giving hope, comfort and guidance to lost and dying mankind. The Bible in its entirety has been translated into 776 languages, the New Testament into 1,798 languages, and portions into 4,007 different languages.¹

This all speaks clearly to God's protection and man's desire to have the Word of God in his native language. There is simply no other book in the world that speaks so clearly to man's basic needs. No other book has so impacted the world or the hearts of men as has the Bible. It's durability, reliability and effect on mankind has no peer in world history. Nor has it ever been proven false or incorrect. Peoples of the world today still clamor for personal copies so they can read God's instructions for themselves in their common tongue.

To meet this crying worldwide need for Bibles today, Bible societies and other Christian organizations are doing their best to supply these treasured books. Bibles are being smuggled into closed countries and sent by container loads to receptive countries.

I recently read of Dutchman Brother Andrew's many trips behind the Iron Curtain in the mid

1950's to the late 1960's smuggling the precious Word of God to believers. Only God knows how many Bibles he delivered to hungry believers with his trusty VW. He didn't keep count; he said only God knew. And the authorities at borders never discovered his precious hidden treasure. In 1955 he founded the Open Doors ministry specifically to smuggle Bibles behind the Iron Curtain.

In the late 1950's I learned to know a pastor of Russian descent in Belgium. In addition to ministering to a congregation of Russian refugees, he aired a weekly evangelical program into Russia.

Part of his program, he told me, was to read Scripture slowly so the listeners could write it down. Not having Bibles of their own they were copying Scriptures as he read them so they could have at least a portion to hold and read and share with others.

The Bible is God's life-saving message to man. It is God's Holy Word, written and preserved for mankind for his spiritual and relational needs. It speaks to the basic needs of man in every age and circumstance. It is his lifeline to heaven and his guide to living on earth.

Most of us have multiple copies of God's Word. There is no shortage among us. However, believers around the world continue to plead for copies of God's Word. So let's be faithful in doing our part to make The Book available to them.

The Book is mankind's guide for daily living and his lifeline to heaven. May we do our best to promote it through prayer and giving so it can be made available to seekers worldwide, and thus enhance their relationship to the Author.



**“Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your Book is truth”
(Psalm 119:142).**

1 Figures are as of August 2025. Wikipedia: Bible Translations.

“Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

Matthew 13:52

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 (NIV)



JASPER

"Without holiness, no man will see the Lord."

Austin Hege at Burkeland Mennonite Church



SAPPHIRE

"The reward for service is that you may be called to more service."

Conrad Stover at Burkeland Mennonite Church



AGATE

"God wants to have an intimate presence with us, and if you experience that, you will be changed."

Tim Thomas at Bethel Mennonite Church



EMERALD

"Believing God and acting on it equals righteousness."

Randy Miller at Hartwell Mennonite Center



ONYX

"Job worshiped God after all was taken away."

Conrad Horst at Burkeland Mennonite Church



RUBY

"Physical death does not destroy the soul."

Wendell Heatwole at Bethel Mennonite Church



CHRYSLITE

"A pure heart will always result in love for our fellow man."

Duane Strite at Hephzibah Mennonite Church



BERYL

"Patience is an even temper that comes from a big heart."

Gary Hege at Burkeland Mennonite Church



TOPAZ

"Good soldiers train and prepare for the battle."

Harry Argo at Waynesboro Mennonite School



TURQUOISE

"The Word of God never allows us to stay where we are."

Josh Good at Hartwell Mennonite Center



JACINTH

"Our loving and knowing God can go no deeper than our obedience"

Jeff Byler at Burkeland Mennonite Church



AMETHYST

"A life of service is the way to overcome an entitlement attitude."

Jesse Hege at Burkeland Mennonite Church

In the Silence

by Wait Quietly

"The Lord is in His holy temple.
Let all the earth keep silence before Him."
Habakkuk 2:20

Silence!

Silence is the cocoon that nurtures the chrysalis of faith. Silence is the time when quietness opens our hearts and minds to the voice of God. Silence is the time when we shut out the din and the healthy activity of life—friendly chatter, the roaring of machinery, the purr of the truck, the background music, the clanging kitchen pots and pans, the office and street noises—and commune with God.

We can be so overwhelmed by the noise around us and the busyness that overtakes us that we do not have time to listen for the still small voice of God, or to hear ourselves think.

Not being able to hear ourselves think is a common expression people use when someone is being too loud or disruptive. But it seems to be an outdated phrase nowadays, when listening to our own thoughts is the last thing we want to do. When was the last time you stopped to listen to your own thoughts, in complete, undistracted silence?

In the modern world, a moment of silence is nearly unheard of. Sure, we can still hike up a remote mountain trail and spend a night under the stars. Only the chirp of insects interrupts the serene soundscape. But most people's daily life is a barrage of noises. Traffic. Conversation. Music. Sometimes we get to the end of our day and realize that it was full of one song, podcast, or audiobook after another. Often, we may not have spent quiet time in the prayer closet.

But time "in the silence" reigns importantly in our minds and in our relationship with God. As with Elijah in the cave, God often speaks in a still small voice. He can be heard when one listens and ...waits—fifteen minutes, 30 minutes, or one hour at 4:00 in the morning.

There has been a huge spike in digital noise since the advent of modern technology, especially smartphones. Before we had the world in our pockets, there were natural quiet moments throughout our days. Perhaps

you took a book to the dentist to read while you sat in the waiting room, or you might peruse their selection of magazines. On a walk through the park you could listen to the sound of birdsongs and squirrels scampering through tree branches. But not any more. Now you take your smartphone along.

With continual access to so much information, entertainment, and interaction, we fail to spend time in silent reflection. We must continually check the weather forecast, check on all the bad news, check on the stock market, play games, get all the dating and baby news from near and far, and share your pictures with friends everywhere. With AI, you can ask any question you think of and pronto, an answer soon comes back.

Many times this answer gives you useful information, but not always. The point is, all this busyness takes away from silent reflection on the Word of God or in meditation on our own spiritual condition.

James 1:23 describes this kind of busy person who looks at his natural face in a mirror and then rushes off forgetting to wash his face or comb his hair. Such are those who read the Word and do not have time to meditate upon it. More importantly, they do not take time to put it into practice.

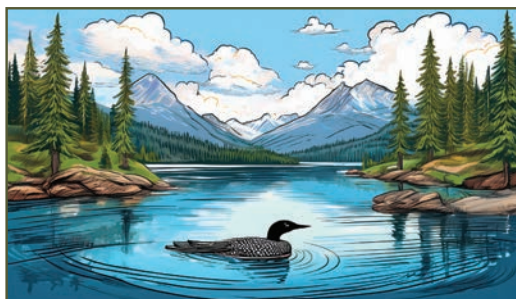
Modern technology has brought great advancements, but also great dilemmas. The continual distractions of the modern world pull us into habits of ignoring our faults and failings. When those distractions are removed, we are forced to pay attention to what is going on in our psyche.

The prospect can be terrifying. This creates patterns of self doubt and disappointment with ourselves. The longer we live our lives without evaluation, the more these patterns are solidified. We do not like listening to ourselves. We do not like taking time out to listen to the voice of God and examine our own selves as the Scripture commands.



No, the noise continues. We reach for our phones, trying to avoid the void that comes in stray moments of quiet between our busy schedules and carefully arranged days. Silence can be uncomfortable. We want to be constantly entertained.

Go to a dine-in restaurant, a doctor's office, or any public place, and you will see it. Nearly every person has their eyes on a screen or earbuds in their ears. Heathen music plays on the speakers. We treat boredom like the plague, scared to sit quietly for more than a few seconds for fear we might become infected. In this continual flood of information and media we forget that God knows everything and that the continual noise is drowning out His voice. We need quietness and time to reflect if we are going to hear His voice amid the cacophony that surrounds us.



The effect of silence on our physical brains is monumental. Just five minutes alone with our thoughts can help to process our day and even reset our attitude.

We must incorporate silence into our busy lives. We should rethink having every moment of our day filled with activity. If we have been used to constant noise and stimulation, it may take some time to calm our brains down. Most of us have faced this fact during sleepless nights as we lie wide-eyed while our minds whirl through the day's events, while we try desperately to make up for the moments of silence that we did not give our brains.

We can have time to think and listen while we work in the garden, or in the dairy, or on the road, but we must be careful not to fill that space with noise. Thinking about God while trying to work is not the same as thinking about God while reading His Word in silence and meditating upon it.

Jesus spent a good bit of time in silent communion with God. The gospel writer, Mark, seems to have especially taken note of these times when Jesus got away from the crowds by himself or spent time alone with His disciples.

- **Mark 1:12.** "The Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days ... and the angels were ministering to Him."
- **Mark 1:35.** "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there."
- **Mark 1:45.** "Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere."
- **Mark 3:13.** "He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him."
- **Mark 6:31-32.** "He said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.'"
- **Mark 6:46.** "After bidding them farewell He left for the mountain to pray."
- **Mark 14:32.** "And He said to His disciples, 'Sit here until I have prayed.'"

If Jesus needed time alone with God in silent reflection, how much more do we? We often forget that silence is an indispensable method to sort out our thoughts and emotions.

Quiet Time for You

- *Have you ever given an hour to quiet time in silent reflection when you were alone with God?*
- *Have you ever gone to the meeting house 1/2 hour ahead of the scheduled meeting and just sat there in quietness?*
- *Has God ever spoken to you in the silence of the night?*

Wait for the Lord;

Be strong and let your heart take courage;

Yes, wait for the LORD.

Psalm 27:14

An article on the Science News Today website says this about the effect of silence on our physical brains:

Studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) have revealed that periods of silence can activate regions of the brain linked to emotional regulation, including the prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex. These areas are essential for controlling stress, managing emotions, and making rational decisions. By fostering their activity, silence contributes to emotional resilience, allowing individuals to navigate life's challenges with greater composure and clarity.



God Is Waiting In the Silence

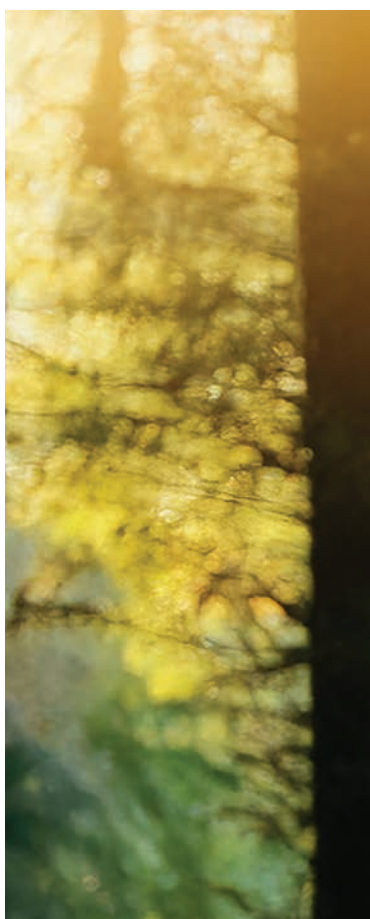
God is waiting in the silence,
For a heart that He can fill;
He must find it cleansed and empty,
With a spirit calm and still.

God is waiting in the silence,
Mid the rush and roar of life;
Waiting, someone's heart to enter,
Someone quiet in the strife.

God is waiting in the silence,
As the world goes rushing by;
Will not someone stop and listen,
Answer quickly, "Here am I"?

God is waiting in the silence,
Oh, to know that He is near!
Earth recedes and heaven opens,
God is waiting, God is here.

Oswald J. Smith





Opportunities

Abram & Elisabeth
Neufeld

The following issues of Anabaptist Voice tell the story of a Mexican family serving the Lord in Chihuahua, Mexico: (AV22, pages 24-26), (AV23, pages 17-22), (AV33, pages 40-41). We have stayed in touch with the Neufelds through letters and were pleased to have Abraham and Elizabeth with their 11 children visit us in our home in May 2026. Brother Abram inspired the Burkeland congregation with a Wednesday night topic telling of “opportunities” they have had to distribute Bibles and preach the gospel in Mexico. Brother Abram challenged the congregation saying, “It is not about us. It is about what God is doing. Seize the opportunities you have right where you are.” The whole family favored us with a song.

An Opportunity to Rear a Family for the Lord

Our youngest child’s middle name is Jorian. He was named after a book peddler in *Martyrs Mirror* (pages 563-564). Jorian was able to share truth with many in his life as well as with the crowd that gathered when he was killed. So in life and death, Jorian was able to spread the truth of the Kingdom of God. That is our prayer for Andrew Jorian.

May the Lord use each one of these precious children to further the gospel all of their lives. May they share light and truth.

SOMEDAY

Someday the child now so small, I hold upon my knee,
Will go to places I can’t go and see things I won’t see.

The years fly by and they grow up; like birds they leave the nest.

And when they take their flight from home, it’s then shall come the test.

The times that they will face in life, I do not doubt will be,
A journey thru the darkest hour before the Son they see.

For “such a time as this” they’re born, to shine forth light and truth,
Oh may we cover them with prayer as they grow into youth!
— Elisabeth Neufeld

An Opportunity to Fellowship with German Families

Today we had a houseful of people for a fellowship meal. German families have been gathering for church services and singings. This all started one day last summer when a man came to our shop for some free sawdust.

As I waited one hour for Abe and the boys to come in for lunch, I sensed the Lord had a whole lot more in mind than sawdust. I looked out the window (while waiting) and God put this thought in my heart, “*You will have fellowship with this family.*” I had no idea who they were as we had never met them before.

From that discussion about spiritual things with the man and his boys, who came seeking free sawdust, has come these German families seeking truth and fellowship.

An Opportunity to Reunite a Ukrainian Family

We helped a Ukrainian family to immigrate to our community in the past year. The man was in the US, but his wife and five children were stranded at the Mexican/US border.

In February 2025, Abe received a phone call from a Beachy church in the US. When Abe received the call from the church, he found out that this family was being refused entry into the US. It appeared as though there were only two options. Either the mother and children

would be sent back to the Ukraine or maybe the family could be reunited if they could stay in Mexico. The caller asked us if we could help this family stay in Mexico.

It has been a long road. Our constant prayer has been that somehow God would work out the details so this family could be together again. We were blessed by helping this family be reunited—not separated in the US and Ukraine and their five children not having their daddy.

After church on Sunday, Abe drove to the border to hopefully bring this Ukrainian brother, the dad of the family, along home with him. So we are praying that all will work out so the family can be reunited tomorrow. (Abe arrived back with the daddy at 10:00 that night.)

Do keep us all in prayer as we seek to be what God would have us to be to each person He brings across our path. It was interesting when the refugee work came to a halt in the camp in Chihuahua, January a year ago, this situation came into our lives in February. We had been praying, “What does the Lord have in store for us next?”

An Opportunity to Witness to a Seeking Family

There is work on every hand. We had a new seeking family from the area visiting today. That man was in tears as Abe shared truth and testimony with him. Abe left for the border later in the afternoon. Blessings, dear praying friends, and love in Christ from all of us. There is so much happening I don’t know how to condense it all!

An Opportunity to Witness to a Dying Man and His Many Friends

We prayed, “Lord send them. You know Lord, the ones you want us to share with. The ones that need to hear. Oh Lord, you know our hearts. We will share the truth with them—Your truth.”

So God sent them. The day was a normal November day. We arrived at home and saw a car sitting on the other side of the neighbor’s lot—an empty lot. An older man with his wife and their son and his wife wanted to purchase a lot.

We had never met them before. They asked to talk with me. I went to their car; we talked with them about the lot, then about Christ. I shared with them for the next hour. The lot was not for sale, but I realized they needed to hear about true Christianity. A fire for sharing the truth burned in my heart.

A couple months went by. We received the news that the older man was sick, most likely cancer. Three weeks ago our family went to sing for them. The house was full of people who needed to hear the truth. Some people had traveled from as far away as Campeche

which is a three-day drive from our house.

I had just arrived home from work and showered when the thought popped in my mind, “*You must go sing there. The time is right.*” The Lord was directing this. Again we went to sing for them—our family and another family from church. I shared the gospel and God gave the words as needed. The fourteenth of this month the older man died. The “lot” he was looking for, is now a grave in our camp. He is buried about seven lots over from our house.

Was this all a coincidence? No! It was God, directing as He willed. Did we not pray, “Lord send him to us?” May we be encouraged to be available for the Lord always. All for God’s glory! Let us use the time He gives us for Him.

An Opportunity to Share Bibles and Truth with Youth in Monterrey

One Sunday we distributed Bibles in Chihuahua. Out of the Bible distribution came a call from a pastor who had connections in Monterrey (12 hrs from us). He asked, “Are you willing to take Bibles to a rehab center for troubled youth coming out of addictions? They have no Bibles.” These people are looking for help. But how can they find the way without the compass of God’s Word? So today we are on our way to Monterrey, 14 of us and 500 Bibles packed into our 12-passenger van. Lord willing, tomorrow Abe will have an opportunity to share truth with the youth there and for us to personally give out the Bibles.

The children are singing at times as we drive along. It’s a blessing to be ambassadors for the Kingdom of God, on a mission. Please pray for us and for the ones who are seeking. This hymn has been on my mind, “Channels Only Blessed Master, with all Thy wondrous power, flowing thru us Thou canst use us every day and every hour.”

An Opportunity to Share Life with an Aunt

My aunt from Detroit is here until tomorrow. Even though she is 74, she still teaches in the public school as a substitute teacher. We have had some beautiful times singing for her and showing her around the area. I believe that getting to experience family life with us has been meaningful and the spiritual conversations have left a lasting impression on her. She is a Lutheran by affiliation.

An Opportunity to Share with a Border Guard

God is always to be glorified. He is worthy to be praised! We are thankful for what He has done and allowed us to experience this past week.

Yesterday morning I drove 5 1/2 hours from our home and picked up 2400 Bibles. It was early Friday morning as we came into Juarez, around 7:45. I went into the declaration lane and the guard yelled, “Stop!” That is what I was planning on doing anyway, which was why I was in that lane.

The guard came up to the back doors of the van and opened them. From there he looked at a few tools I had bought on this trip for our work. He asked for the value of the goods and I told him the value.

Then he went to the side of the van and took a look inside. Without me telling him that I have Bibles, he said to me, “You have lots of Bibles.” I said, “I do.” He didn’t ask for the number of Bibles, and I didn’t offer to tell him how many there were. He said, “You will pay duty for the tools.” I followed him to the office and paid the small duty for the tools. Then off we went. Praise God! Another load of Bibles and no duty on them.

An Opportunity to Share Bibles and Preach in Rehab Centers

Then began the journey of the day, rehab ministry. There were 50 to 100 people in each rehab we visited in Juarez; it varies from place to place. These rehabs are homes, converted into counseling centers. They have security so the people in these places may not come and go as they wish. No cell phones are allowed.

There are quite a few minors in places like this, some as young as 10 yrs old. They have either gotten into trouble, or because of alcohol and drug addictions have been born into situations of abuse. Some of them have their lives in danger. All are very much in need of help! For instance, in one of the rehabs I visited, there was a girl whose eye was missing and the other one was damaged beyond use.

On that Friday, we went to six different rehabs. In four of them we were able to take Bibles in and preach. In another rehab the people were on an outing but we left 150 Bibles there.

I preached against living in sin and the shortness of life. I shared how one can be freed from the burden of sin. In one rehab I shared a message about the two graves, the one where the man of sin is destroyed and the new man

is resurrected (Romans 6). The other grave is where we are physically buried. In another rehab we shared about truly living for God and against the gender confusion and what goes with that.

Generally, the people were very attentive and respectful. But in one rehab where there were only men, a number of them were not very happy with the message I shared from I Corinthians 6. This passage lists a number of sins and warns that those who do them will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Only a few people were in another rehab so we shared with the director. He said, “I know some about the Bible but I do not really obey it.”

I responded, “Do you know what the Word says about this? This makes you a goat and not a sheep. In Matthew 7 and 25 you can see what you really are if you do not obey the gospel.” He was very humble and open to the truth. He invited us back to share again.

One of the most rewarding responses I heard on that day’s visits was when a teenage girl asked, “Is this the book about God?”

We personally gave out 250 Bibles today.

It is amazing that we have an open invitation to take Bibles into places like this. There are 60-70 rehabs in the Juarez (Chihuahua, Mexico, the border city to El Paso) area that would like us to come share and bring Bibles in as soon as we are able. Pray that God will show us how to move forward with such huge opportunities.

God is good and to be praised.



Back row, L to R: Jeremiah Abraham-17, Benaiah Jason-15, Ezra Johan-14, Zakkai Esteban-12, Abe Neufeld. Front row, L to R: Elianna Fe-11, Jonatan Nehemiah-10, Eberli Mathias-7, Charity Elisabeth-2, Micah Paul-3, Channah Ruth-5, Andrew Jorian at 3 months, Elisabeth Neufeld. Taken April 2026.

THE PROPHET ELIJAH

The Storyteller

The Story Background

With little introduction, the prophet Elijah steps into the pages of the Old Testament. His fearless thundering voice against the prevailing wickedness of Israel could be heard throughout the kingdom of Israel. He openly condemned King Ahab and prophesied the murder of all his descendants, thrice prayed down fire from heaven, slew the prophets of Baal, nurtured the schools of the prophets, destroyed two companies of fifty men, contended with Jezebel, outran the horses of Ahab, and departed this life in a chariot of fire.

In the pages of the New Testament, Elijah holds a special place as the archetype of all the prophets. The angel Gabriel told Zacharias that his promised son, John, would go before the Messiah in “the spirit and power of Elijah.” Jesus made His disciples understand that John the Baptist was the “Elijah that was to come” and herald in the Messiah. Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Jesus in all His glory.

Yet James says this great and powerful prophet was a “man with a nature like ours.” In the following story, we want to tell the story of Elijah, not as a superhuman, but as a human being subject to the terrible times he lived in. Some details may be imaginary, but always in accord with the facts we can glean from geography, history, and always true to the biblical account.

CHAPTER 1

I want to tell you the story of Elijah the prophet as if I were Elijah himself.

My parents taught me about the Jehovah God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I knew the Ten Commandments given by God on Mount Sinai, and I studied the Law of Moses. In Jerusalem, I read of the glories of King David who wholly followed the Lord his God. And I knew how King Solomon had strayed from the Lord his God by marrying many foreign women and serving their gods.



My Jehovah God was not pleased with Solomon, and he tore ten tribes away from Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and gave them to King Jeroboam. King Jeroboam set up two golden calves in his kingdom and caused Israel to sin against Jehovah God by worshipping these idols. That was only 57 years ago.

Now Ahab became king in Israel, and he continued leading Israel away from God. He married Jezebel, a Phoenician princess who continued the worship of the god Baal. He sold himself to sin like no other king before him.

Stories coming to our remote town in Gilead of the wickedness of Ahab, the open sensuality, and ritual immorality were appalling to me, but it was not until I went to the capital city of Samaria that I saw it firsthand.

It is difficult to describe how far Samaria had fallen since Jezebel had taken over. I say Jezebel because Ahab was a mere pawn in her manipulative and seductive hands. Not only was the loose living and degenerate lifestyle obvious in the wares and shops on every street corner, but the darkness of iniquity was etched on the hardened faces of every person that I met. There was no fear of God in that place.

Drunken men and even women lay along the sides of unkempt streets. It was obvious that self-gratification was enjoyed at the expense of diligence, cleanliness, and order. Those that did not live in the debauchery of sin were given to entertainment and the pursuit of wealth and fame.

But it was when I came to the temple of Baal that it became difficult to control myself. There in the middle of the capital of Israel stood the abomination of the Canaanites and the nations around us. The temple was crafted carefully to express majesty, but it was the sinister, promiscuous, and monstrous expression of the Evil One himself. My fists and jaw clenched, and tears came into my eyes. How could God's people leave their righteous and loving Jehovah for this abhorrent lie!

I was about to turn away when I heard the voice of a teacher in front of the temple. "Come to receive a blessing from Baal," he said in a smooth and articulate voice. "Jehovah is the God that rescues from the desert, but Baal is the god of the blessings of rain and fertility! Give to Baal and he will return tenfold! With Baal is prosperity and pleasure!" An insinuating smile spread over his face.

I could bite my tongue no longer. "You cannot serve God and Baal at the same time!" I said with a very loud voice. Every eye turned to look at me but I was not

intimidated. "Jehovah is a jealous God, and He will consume you! He is the Almighty and Living God of creation. He is God of the desert AND the God of the rain. He is the only true God!" I pointed a shaking finger at the priest. It was hard to catch my breath. "You are a sham and a liar!" I shouted.

This priest of Baal was trained for this reaction, and he responded in a cajoling tone. "I don't think that speaking out in anger will please Jehovah," he said soothingly. "If you wish to worship Jehovah, we have no problem with that, but it is only fair that you let these fine people worship how they please as well. Baal has blessed the crops of many of these listeners with rain and abundance! Please, my friend, watch your tone and calm down; this is not the way to speak. Let's be reasonable ..."

"In worshipping Baal, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure that your sin will find you out!" I said passionately. Then I abruptly turned and walked away. The jeers of Baal worshippers burned in my ears.



The Israelites foolishly forsook God to worship a golden calf.

Leaving Samaria, I wished that I could erase all that I had seen in Samaria from my mind. I am a man who feels things strongly, and this affected me deeply. Waves of anger and then sadness at the deceitful wickedness that had overtaken my people overwhelmed me.

Back in Tishbe, it was peaceful, and I could have possibly ignored the atrocities in faraway Samaria, but my heart was laden with the preposterousness of the sin of my people. It was hard to eat or sleep. It was then that I began to call out to God and pray. As I prayed, the burden did not lift but only became like a heavy weight in my heart which was expressed in tears and sadness for the iniquity of Jehovah's wayward children. The Spirit of God guided me in these prayers; He urged me on, and His hand was heavy on me.

After times of prayer, I went walking and preaching throughout Israel. I was pleased to meet a few other faithful servants of the Lord in my travels. There was Micaiah¹, Obadiah², and then there was Abishai³ who became like a beloved son to me. It was such a comfort to share the burden for Israel with him. We visited many villages and preached about the righteous judgment of God on them for forsaking Jehovah. We were shocked at the indifference of the people. Their eyes were blinded, and the message fell on hardened hearts. Sometimes we were mocked and laughed at, but many times we were just ignored and sidelined.

Soon we were known throughout Israel. And then they locked us out of their cities. This was hard to accept. It left us dumbfounded and astonished to see their open rejection of the God that had brought them out of slavery in Egypt with such a mighty hand. We wept and prayed together.

It was during this time that I encountered some acquaintances from some time before. I was surprised to see that they also were dressed according to the fashions of the Zidonians; this was disconcerting. Jezebel's pagan influence was being seen everywhere. We sat down together to catch up on where our lives were now. It was not long before my activities became the main subject of our conversation.

"You have become a radical, Elijah. We have heard of your preaching," one said disappointedly.

"I don't believe any differently than I always have," I stated flatly. "Baal is not God."

"We worship Baal alongside Jehovah, and there is no

harm in this. We have received unusual productivity in our herds and crops because of this," another one said.

"Sadly, the priests and prophets that preach only of Jehovah God are lifeless and boring. There are some really inspiring prophets, like Zedekiah⁴ the son of Chenaanah. He teaches that Baal and Jehovah are two gods that can bring Israel to a new age of great prosperity. The temple of Baal is exciting and meaningful. The singing and dancing is what brings our family together," the third one said.

"You are mixing the gods of the Canaanites with Jehovah, the only living God. Jehovah has commanded us to destroy these false gods ... like Baal. You have rejected the true God for a lie!" My voice rose in volume and intensity as I spoke.

"Stop it right there, Elijah!" the first interrupted heatedly. "You have become judgmental and mired in your own conceit! We are tired of all of your self-righteous superiority. We are just as close to Jehovah as you are! You should see the miracles worked by the prophets of Baal! You have your head stuck in the sand."

Before I could say another word, they all turned and walked away as if on cue.

One day Abishai and I managed to get through the gates of Bethel, where Jeroboam's golden calves were still worshipped in the name of Jehovah. Such mockery and irreverence to God was unspeakable. But speak we did, and God gave us a holy unction with words of God's desire for their repentance. We had attracted a large crowd, and the Spirit was especially upon Abishai, and he spoke out with great boldness. As we were finishing up, some people came to ask questions, and I told Abishai that I would get us a drink from the town well before we left.

As I was returning from the well, I noticed that the crowd was bigger than even before. I stopped dead in my tracks with the realization that soldiers with swords and spears vastly outnumbered everyone else. I rushed forward and pushed my way to the front of the crowd, where all were gathered around the lifeless body of my beloved companion. Ahab's wicked soldiers had murdered him in cold blood. Hot tears of anger and sorrow came into my eyes, and I could not control them.

I could not speak, and I felt dizzy and sick. An unknown hand touched me on the shoulder and drew

1 1 Kings 22:8-28

2 1 Kings 18:1-16

3 Fictional character

4 1 Kings 22:24

me back and out of the crowd.

I stumbled blindly toward the city gate, and outside, the sobs came uncontrollably. The next weeks, I would have been drowned in sorrow had it not been for the consoling presence of the Spirit of God. *Abishai, Abishai, how I miss your pleasant companionship! How I wish that I could be with you where you are now, but there is a work that must be done.* Ahab and his murderous followers would someday face the vengeance of a just God.

I felt so very alone.

It was impossible to believe how quickly Israel had fallen. Previous to Abishai's death, thoughts of doubt had crossed my mind. How could I be right and everyone else wrong? Now they were killing the righteous and protecting the wicked. And the Torah was clear: Jehovah God would not share his glory with any other so-called god. His voice was in my ear, and His words came easily from my tongue without any preplanning about what I should speak.

Very soon after this, a friend came to me at Tishbe, saying that messengers from Ahab were asking about me. He looked over his shoulder to see if anyone was watching. "I don't think that I can afford to protect you, Elijah," he said, trying to sound brave.

That evening, walking back through town to my home, there were few greetings from the neighbors of my small village. Furtive glances told me all that I needed to know. There was not a faithful friend amongst them all who would stand up to Ahab and Jezebel.

In addition to their cowardly ways were the lies that were told about the prophets of Jehovah God; they were judgmental, they incited rebellion, they were critical and divisive, they were withholding Baal's blessing on the nation. Sadly, the masses were quick to listen and carry on this false witness. After all, it took a lot of courage to stand for truth when it could cost you your life.

As I knelt in prayer that evening, the Spirit of the Lord impressed upon me the fact that Israel needed to repent, and repentance could only come with dire consequences for their sin.

Then the unmistakable message of God came to me. The next morning, I arose early and traveled to Samaria. How I managed to meet with Ahab and all of my words to him can only be explained by the fact that God had directed with His guiding hand.

My words were passionate and fierce as I

denounced Ahab in front of his ministers of cabinet. Ahab's face turned violently red as I confronted him for his abhorrent treachery in turning Israel away from God. He wanted to strike out, but some force restrained him from giving the order to have me taken and executed like he had so many other prophets of God.

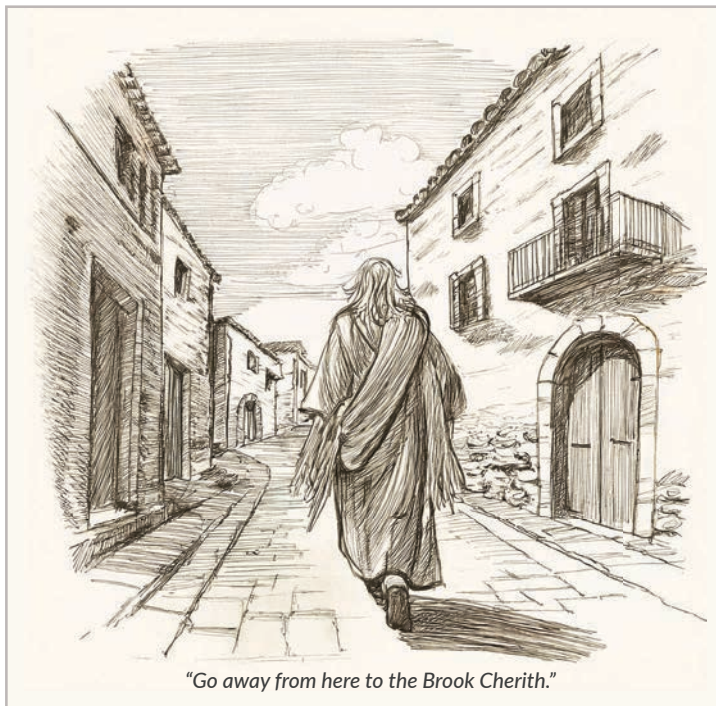
With a calmness that seemed surreal to me at the time, I finished with the words that God had given me: "Baal is not the god of the rain, Jehovah is the God of all blessing and rain. You have forsaken Him, and now there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." I turned and left him speechless with fury.

Ahab had grown up in the palace, and though he was vacillating and soft, the words of rebuke grated against his prideful heart. *It's not a good idea to scold a prideful man in power*; I thought to myself. *He will certainly seek vengeance at being rebuked.*

Walking out the gates of Samaria, the still small voice gave me clear instructions. "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there."

Immediately I turned off the path that led home and began the long solitary journey into the lonely wilderness by the brook Cherith. I spoke to no one and no one on earth knew where God had hidden me.

— (to be continued)





For a simple weight control plan, use
a bathroom scales.

God's Call to Slim Down

Menno Knight

I had a friend who owned a mature Jersey bull that knocked him down on the ground—Jersey bulls are thought to be the most dangerous of all dairy breeds. Having escaped under the fence from that encounter, my frightened friend decided to sell the bull. He called a veteran cattle-hauler to come pick up the bull and take him to the stock sale.

When the stockman arrived at the farm, he sized up the situation, took a heavy baseball bat, got in the pen with the bull, and gave the bull a tremendous blow on his nose. Then he said, “Now that I have his attention, we’ll load him on the trailer.” And he did.

Now that I have your attention, *gluttony is sin*.

The Bible says in **Proverbs 23:20-21**: “Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with rags.” Definitely not good, but does this mean gluttony is sin?

In **Titus 1:12-13** Paul tells Titus that a Cretan prophet described Cretans as “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons”—Titus was ministering on the island of Crete. What a nasty description of Cretans! Then Paul goes further and tells Titus, “This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them *severely* so that they may be sound in the faith.” Here gluttony is lumped in with “lying, evil beasts, and laziness.” Such sin called for severe reproof so that the Cretan believers might “be sound in the faith.”

If gluttony is really sin to be equated with

lying, drunkenness, and the like, true believers must put it away from them. Drunkards must stop getting drunk. Liars must stop lying. Gluttons must stop overeating.

My trusty *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines gluttony simply as "the habit or act of eating too much."

The Merriam-Webster #4 dictionary defines gluttony in more detail: "Gluttony is the habitual, excessive, or greedy consumption of food and drink, far beyond what is necessary for sustenance." It adds this commentary to the definition: "Gluttony is often regarded as a sin or vice, It involves a lack of self-control regarding appetites and pleasure."

Commentaries go further. They link a lack of self-control with gluttony. Here is one quote: "Gluttony is excessive indulgence in food and drink, often implying a lack of self-control and an overemphasis on physical pleasures at the expense of spiritual or moral well-being."

The Bible agrees. "For many walk, of whom I often told you and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things" (Philippians 3:18-19).

Who was Paul speaking about when he talked of people "whose God is their appetite" if he was not speaking about overweight people? Paul called obese people "enemies of the cross of Christ." The spiritual condition of these obese people concerned Paul so much that he wept over them.

Jesus challenged people with the thought that it is better to poke out one's eye or cut off a limb than to leave them intact and go to hell. He said the same thing twice, both in **Matthew 5:29-30** and **Matthew 18:7-9**. It could be that the extra pounds an overweight person totes around on his body could send him to hell. If that is true, one would surely want to get rid of those extra pounds and be fit for the Kingdom of Heaven.

For the purpose of this message, we will define

obese people as those who tip the scales at more than 50 or 100 pounds over the ideal weight for their height according to the chart. The chart gives a range that may not fit every person exactly, but it does give some idea about what is healthy for most people. Obese people tote around far more weight than is really what they need to keep them happy and healthy.

Obesity is a big problem in America. Skipping all the nice verbiage that masks the real condition of an excess of superfluous weight, we are talking about fat people. One can go to town on a hot summer day with his eyes half-closed, and the problem is obvious. Many people are overweight.

Obesity is not only in the hedonistic world around us. I had a close friend who was short and stocky by nature . . . and overweight. I talked to him about it and

he confided to me that he would feel better if he lost some weight; but he never did. One day he fell over dead with a massive heart attack.

Now I think the "People of God" should be concerned about more than just falling over dead with a heart attack and the practical effects of overeating—related health problems, sluggishness, poverty, and poor appearance. They should be concerned about what God thinks of a fat person.

Being overweight should not be a problem

for the "People of God" because the Bible provides a sure-fire way to control our weight. It is simple, cost effective, and God-pleasing. It works. The key to losing weight is whether or not a fat person really wants to lose weight or not.

If one really wants to lose weight, one does not need to go to the university or read books about the cause of getting fat. You do not need to look into which foods may cause a premature death ten years from now or attend seminars and health clubs on how to lose weight. Common sense should tell us that it is not only *what* one eats that makes people fat; it is also *how much* one eats that does the trick.

People do not get fat on well water. When



Anabaptists went to prison and the jailers put them on bread and water, they became weak and thin. Some starved to death.

People get fat because they eat more food than the body needs. When one habitually eats more food than he needs, the Bible calls it gluttony. And Proverbs gives stern warnings about the practical effects of overeating. “Put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite” (Proverbs 23:2). This proverb is not advocating suicide, but it is encouraging one to control how much he eats.

The solution to the problem of obesity is simple. Stop overeating. This takes self-discipline. Stop frequenting all-you-can-eat buffets where you feel obligated to “get your money’s worth” or you feel free to indulge. Stop snacking between meals. Eat slowly; chew your food well instead of “wolfing it down.” Do not take seconds. Skip a meal. Fast occasionally.

This brings us to the next aspect of God’s sure-fire weight-control plan. It’s cost effective. You don’t need to buy expensive books. You don’t need to see a doctor. You don’t need to purchase any expensive machines or set up a work room. You don’t need to purchase costly health foods. None of that. All you need is to buy a

good bathroom scales and use it every day. If it electronically records the weight for the day, that is helpful.

If you want to commit to a weight-control plan that does it God’s way, here is the next step. Weigh yourself every day at the same time. Stepping on a scales is the first thing one does when one goes to the doctor’s office. So it should be no big deal to weigh yourself in your private closet and it won’t cost you anything.

Now it gets a little harder. Write down your weight every day. If you are overweight for your height and build—look at the chart. Set yourself a goal of five to ten pounds less than your present weight. Then begin cutting back on how much you eat. When you have maintained your new weight goal for a month, drop the weight goal again by five or ten pounds and keep it there for a month. Keep doing this until you have reached a body weight that is pleasing to God, your fellowman, and yourself.

There are Bible rules that apply here as well. You can be eating too much of one thing. Eat meals with a variety of wholesome foods. Eat some asparagus, some spinach, some collard greens, some onions, some radishes, some eggs, some dairy, and some meat—do not eat the whole chicken in one meal. Again Proverbs 23:20-21 gives this advice, “Hear my son ... Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty.”

Do not eat too much of any one thing. Eat a little of many different kinds of food. Do not major in only two or three foods. You do not need to worry about the effects of a little of most any food. I Timothy 4:3-5 gives some guidance on this: “[Some people command] one to abstain from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.” But if you discover, by trial and error, that a small amount of one food, such as ice cream, makes you sick, do not insist on eating ice cream. Generally, small amounts of most foods will not make you sick.

On the other side of the balance scales, eating too much of most anything can make you sick, including sugar, salt, and honey. Proverbs 25:27 states: “It is not good to eat much honey.” The principle involved is that too much of even a good thing is not good for your body.

Again, one should come back to *how much* food one is eating rather than only considering *what* one is eating. Everyone should know that a car that travels

IDEAL BODY WEIGHT CHART

Men		Women	
5'	106 - 124 lbs	4' 8"	80 - 85 lbs
5' 1"	112 - 127 lbs	4' 9"	85 - 108 lbs
5' 2"	118 - 130 lbs	4' 10"	90 - 111 lbs
5' 3"	124 - 133 lbs	4' 11"	95 - 114 lbs
5' 4"	130 - 136 lbs	5'	100 - 117 lbs
5' 5"	134 - 139 lbs	5' 1"	105 - 120 lbs
5' 6"	138 - 143 lbs	5' 2"	110 - 123 lbs
5' 7"	142 - 147 lbs	5' 3"	115 - 126 lbs
5' 8"	146 - 153 lbs	5' 4"	120 - 129 lbs
5' 9"	151 - 159 lbs	5' 5"	125 - 132 lbs
5' 10"	155 - 165 lbs	5' 6"	129 - 135 lbs
5' 11"	158 - 171 lbs	5' 7"	133 - 138 lbs
6'	161 - 177 lbs	5' 8"	136 - 141 lbs
6' 1"	164 - 183 lbs	5' 9"	140 - 146 lbs
6' 2"	167 - 189 lbs	5' 10"	144 - 151 lbs
6' 3"	171 - 195 lbs	5' 11"	147 - 156 lbs

These figures are light compared with other charts.

100 miles takes more fuel than a car that travels 10 miles. Likewise, a person who does a lot of physical work outdoors on a cold day demands more oatmeal and eggs than a person who stays indoors and works at his desk. If you would do things God's way, a person should adjust how much one eats to match his physical activity. The scales will tell you if you are eating more than your body needs.

So if you are determined to control your weight in order to please God, you have guidance in the Scripture. Paul wrote in **I Corinthians 6:20**, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Again he wrote in **I Corinthians 9:25-27**, "Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things . . . I run thus: not with uncertainty. I fight not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection."

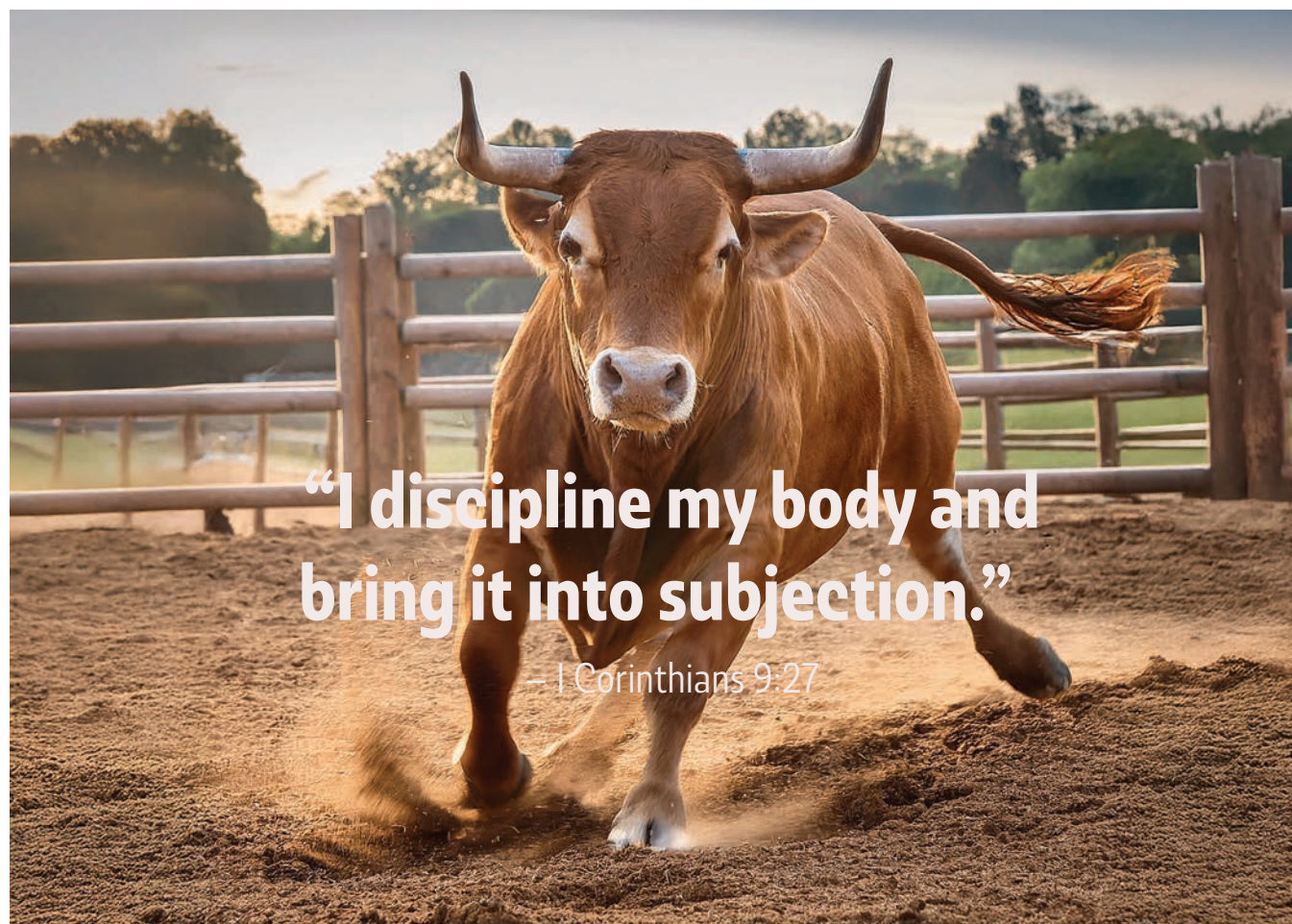
Is God pleased with your body weight? Do you glorify God in your body *and* in your spirit? **Romans 13:14** tells us to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and not to think about how to gratify the

desires of the flesh.

What do the scales tell you? There is a way for the scales to go down and it lies in your self-control.

Now, I am sure there will be some naysayers to God's weight-control program who will argue that they are genetically programed to be fat. Others believe they are medically destined to be overweight. Other "excuses" may surface for why some do not bring their bodies into subjection.

A few cases for Christians being fat may be valid. If so, they will need to work that out with God and His Word. But the majority of fat people are without excuse. However, there is a way out of their uncontrolled overeating. If they see the error of their way and repent, God can give them a new heart *and* a new body—a body that is in subjection to their will so that when the last trumpet sounds and they leave this earthly body, they will not be disqualified from the prize of winning a heavenly body (**I Corinthians 9:27**).





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

Beyond the Grave

By Twink Cling *[internal comments in blue by editor]*

I am writing in regards to the article, “Pre or Ah?” By Menno Knight (AV38, page 18).

Along with Brother Menno, “*I am going for eternity.*” I agree that 1000 years in apocalyptic literature may not mean a literal 1000 years.

But I was perplexed with what I read at the top of page 19. I quote: “*The apostle Paul, like Stephen, believed that when he died he would go immediately into the presence of his dear Savior; at death His [his] corruptible body would instantly be changed into an incorruptible body.*”

The first part of the sentence is clear. But what does the part after the semicolon mean? Whose corruptible body would be changed? “His” (capital letter) body I would assume refers to Christ’s body. (Was this a misprint? *[Yes]*) The grammatical construction makes me think it refers to Paul’s body *[Yes]*.

So I am confused. If it refers to Paul receiving a resurrected body before the future Day of the Resurrection, where does that idea come from? *[Philippians 1:23-24. “I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.”]* As far as I understand that contradicts both Scripture and the historic Christian faith over the last nearly 2000 years.

This is what Jesus says (boldface added):

- **John 6:40** “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and **I will raise him up at the last day.**”
- **John 6:44** “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and **I will raise him up at the last day.**”
- **John 6:54** “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and **I will raise him up at the last day.**”



Does Brother Menno mean that each one will be raised up after his personal last day? I think not. Martha knew that her brother Lazarus would be raised and she knew when: “**I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day**” (John 11:24). Jesus gave Martha and Mary a special surprise. *[“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who believes in Me will never die.’” (John 11:24-25)].*

Jesus tells us clearly what more happens “in the last day”: we will face the final judgment.

- **John 12:48** “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him, the word that I have spoken will judge him **in the last day.**”
- **Matthew 25:31** makes clear that this judgment will happen “**when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.**” That has not happened yet, but it could come any day. **Revelation 20:12-13** describe the last-day general resurrection when the sea, death and Hades deliver up the dead who are in them, and “**the dead, small and great, stand before God**” to be judged.

Paul describes this event in **1 Corinthians 15:51–52**: Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but **we shall ALL be changed--IN A MOMENT, in the twinkling of an eye, AT THE LAST TRUMPET.** For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (Emphasis added).

This is the last day. All will be changed, those still living and those resurrected “in a moment.” Departed spirits will be joined to resurrected bodies and all who belong to the Lord will be with the Lord forever.

I don't see any room in these verses for a resurrection of the body preceding the resurrection "on the last day."



AV Editor

You may have explained it all correctly. I have never been to heaven yet, so I write only on the basis of my understanding.

As you suggest, my personal last day on earth is the time when my spirit leaves the body and goes to my eternal destiny.

I believe that when I die, my spirit will ascend to be with Jesus. This agrees with what Jesus told Mary and Martha in the bracketed quote above. It agrees with what is said at every Anabaptist funeral I have ever been to.

I believe the entire book of Revelation was written to encourage suffering Christians to be faithful until death; then they would receive the crown of life. Revelation 4 & 5 are literal scenes from heaven, not of some future event.

There may be some kind of bodily resurrection beyond death. Some soul-thrilling event! I do not know. If there is, I wish to be there.



A Spiritual Body

By Raysa Rected

I am writing a response to the article "Pre or Ah?" in Issue 38, pages 18 to 21, of *Anabaptist Voice*. While there are many good points in that article, I feel some statements are misleading.

First, on page 19 the author states, "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." This contradicts several clear statements in Scripture. In Acts 7 at Steven's martyrdom, He said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." However, devout men came and buried his body. Obviously, his body was not instantly changed into an incorruptible one.

Also, in **I Corinthians 15:51**, Paul wrote, "**Behold, I show you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet call. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.**" Apparently, our physical body will remain in the grave until the last trumpet call, and only our spirit

will go to the presence of God at the time of death. See also **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

Secondly, also on page 19, the author states that the apostles "pictured themselves sitting on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It is my understanding they didn't just "picture themselves" sitting on twelve thrones, for in **Matthew 19:28**, Jesus specifically told them, "**When the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**" That doesn't sound like just "picturing themselves." See also **Luke 22:28-30**.

Lastly, the author quotes three verses, one each from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where Jesus states that some standing there would not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God come. Personally, I believe that promise was fulfilled six days later on the Mount of Transfiguration.

AV Editor

The disciples judging the 12 tribes of Israel? This is exactly what the disciples expected on earth. This teaching may be similar to the time in **Luke 22:35** when Jesus told His disciples to sell their coats and buy swords. But then when Peter used his sword to cut off the ear of the high priest's slave, Jesus said, "No more of this." Totally baffling.

Like many of the teachings of Jesus, the disciples of Jesus could not understand these object lessons till after the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

When we get our incorruptible spiritual bodies is at death. I believe that is the bodily resurrection Paul talks about in **I Corinthians 15**. He writes, "**Then will come about the saying that is written, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. ... Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" Victory appears to come at death when this mortal body is transformed into an immortal one. Victory in Jesus!



Faith Feelings

by Unse Curee

Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." So, I said it out loud. Maybe then I would feel better. But I didn't. Growing up, I struggled with assurance of salvation.

Days and nights were spent in agonizing anxiety as I wrestled within myself, trying to hold on to Bible verses I knew that would comfort me.

Where are You, God? Why don't I feel You? I don't feel like You forgave me. Surely if You forgave me, You would want me to know. These were the thoughts that swirled in my mind every time I recommitted my life to Jesus. Because I didn't feel any different, I recommitted again. And again. Even though I knew there wasn't anything I could ever do to earn my salvation, I still felt the pressure to perform. Read your Bible every morning. Evangelize. Have a consistent prayer life. I was convinced these were the components that a functioning Christian obtained.

Every time I felt I sinned, mounds of guilt piled up. I confessed, but the devil planted lies. Those lies quickly evolved into shame. You missed your devotions again? You should have talked to that cashier about Jesus. At least say, "Have a blessed day!" It's the least you can do."

The shame ran deep. Although I carefully considered verses concerning witnessing and doing all the right things, I missed the ones that would puncture my very view of God. I did not take to heart **Hebrews 4:16**, which says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." I did not approach the throne boldly. My first fault was that I missed the part about grace. I mess up, and I need grace. I do not need to fix myself before coming to the throne. That's the point of grace. The second problem was that I missed the "coming boldly" part. The devil took advantage of my perfectionistic mindset and poured the shame over me each time I attempted to approach God's throne.

Then one night, something clicked. My mom read a passage from **Titus 3:4-8a**, which says, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, ... so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

That was the beginning of my long uphill climb to securing my identity in Christ. I began to see God as a loving father instead of a cruel judge. **Romans 8:1** tells us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because we live in the Spirit, and not under the law of sin and death. **Second Timothy 1:7** states that God does not give us the spirit of fear, but of power,

love, and self-control. These verses were foundational in beginning my journey to freedom in Christ.

Jesus showed me another passage that tells how valuable I am to Him: "Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (**Hebrews 12:2**)." Why did Jesus endure the cross? Why did He endure such shame? He did it for the joy that was set before Him, which was you and me! We have a Savior who would rather die than live without us. That is crazy love.

But why do I not always feel His love? Where is God when things get confusing? David had the same feelings. He questioned where God was, too. He said, "Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul" (**Psalms 142:4**). Does this mean that no one cared about David? Did God care for him? Of course He did; it just didn't feel like it to David. The same is true with our identity in Christ. Do I always feel like a child of the King? Nope. But that doesn't change the facts. I belong to Him.



AV Editor

You have suffered much because of a false teaching commonly accepted in our time. Martin Luther and John Calvin perpetrated among the churches that *salvation is by "faith alone."* This results in a belief that we must say the right words to be saved and that if we do good works we are trying to earn our salvation.

This is far from the biblical truth. According to the Bible we must do good works if we are going to get to heaven.

Let me explain it like this. God did everything He needed to do when he offered up His only Son on the cross. Because God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus as an atonement for the sins of everyone, everyone in the world can be saved from the wrath of God ... if he repents. This is something man must do.

So salvation all depends on actions man must do—believe, repent, confess, surrender and ... do good works. When man does good works, they are pleasing to God. The righteous acts of the saints are like the pleasant aroma that filled the tabernacle and the temple when the priests burned the incense on the altar. The righteous acts of the saints represent being clothed in white robes before God.

But let us be clear. Good deeds are not a counterpoint to offset sinful deeds in one's life as some teach. Willful

and repeated sin must be confessed and repented of and put away before God blots out that sin. But when a conscience is clear, good deeds of obedience comfort the believer with assurance of salvation.

This assurance wipes out our trust on the ups and downs of feelings because we *know* we are accepted in God's sight. I **John 2:3-5** says it like this: "By this we *know* that we have come to *know* Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the *love of God has truly been perfected*. By this we *know* that we are in Him."

This is the promise of God. Do you believe this?



Binding and Loosing

by Stick Toward

I read with interest the article on "Christ's Authority" (AV39, page 33). I agree wholeheartedly with the writer. I also agree with the editor's response. I am responding in order to bring out another side to this issue.

As far back as I can remember, I was taught that the bishop has final authority. If things need to be discussed and decided on, the ministry would try to come to an agreement and then present the proposal to the congregation. If the congregation would agree on the proposal, the bishop would then make the statement of finality. That settled the issue.

If, however, there was disagreement among the lay members concerning the proposed issue, the ministry could, with the authority of **Matthew 16:19** and **Matthew 18:18-20**, make a declaration. That would settle the matter according to their statement.

These scriptures read alike in both the KJV and the Luther version. (AV editor comments) [These translations say in essence, *whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*. This rendering allows church leaders to determine what is a "just war" and declare that members should fight in it. They have loosed what is bound in heaven. Or they can force people to recant or die at the stake. That is also loosing what is bound in heaven.

On the other side, church leaders can forbid reaching out to the lost in mission work. They can declare people

must pay fees to have their sins forgiven or to indulge in more sins. These are examples of binding up what is not bound up in heaven.]

AV is now using the NASB version and it reads "Whatever you bind on earth *shall have been* bound on earth; and whatever you loose on earth *shall have been* loosed in heaven." This means the bishop, ministry, and church have no authority to bind or loose things; things not in accord with what God has declared in His Word.

In my 74 years, I have heard numerous times from ministers that they have the right to bind and loose whatever they decide; their decision is then automatically written in God's book in heaven. God would then honor that as His will because it is the minister's will.

God has never been in need of humanity to establish what he bound up and or loosed in heaven. He, however, expects us to compare our binding and loosing to be in accordance with His Holy Word. "The keys to the kingdom" are His written Word, and experienced by every believer, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit covering every issue known to man. "The keys to the kingdom" are not man's carnal, personalized rules, egos, and agendas.

AV Editor

It is true that an imperfect translation of Scripture can result in abuse of supposed authority. The problem in this case is that Luther and the KJV did not fully account for the Greek verb tenses. This is one case where the NASB translates the verse more perfectly (see the part in blue above).

However, some 55 years ago, my bishop at the time interpreted these verses correctly—under Holy Spirit guidance—from the KJV. So it is possible to know the truth, if one really wants to know it. Jesus said in **John 7:17**, "If anyone is *willing* to do His [God's] will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." The condition is in the "*willing*."



Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

I am writing in regard to statements made in the "Round Table Discussion" on page 32 (AV39, Spring Issue 2026). You answer "Bible Set Aside" with the statement, "God has spelled out clearly the sins that will send people to hell. We need not fear that using GMOs and glyphosate are such evils." Now if I poison

my neighbor's cows, pigs, horses, and bees, that sounds like sin to me.

On page 29 in the next to the last paragraph you write, *"People of God should be proactive agents sent by God."* You mention many positive things like healers, helpers, savers, but you say nothing about farm chemicals that will harm my neighbor. I believe all farm chemicals—D.D.T. to glyphosate—are unsafe to use and will negatively affect my neighbor and his livestock.

I am a victim of insecticides used by my neighbors. They made it impossible for my honey bees to survive. That is why I ask the question, "Is killing your neighbor or harming his livestock, sin?"

AV Editor

You make a good point. A Christian should never intentionally harm his neighbor. We are to be a people of peace. **Romans 12:17-18** says, *"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."* **Hebrews**

12:14 says the same thing, *"Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."* According to this verse, peace could be a salvation issue. Preach peace.

Living at peace with your neighbors may not always be easy.

It may even be costly. I Corinthians 6:7 says that it is better to suffer wrong than to go to court with a brother. To be at peace, you may even have to give up beekeeping where you live and move to another location.

Beekeeping is not the only source of conflict a Christian may face. The cows get out and destroy a neighbor's garden. The bull gores a neighbor. The creek or well runs dry because a neighbor's irrigation pump uses too much water. A forester cuts timber across the line. Do we do everything we can to be at peace? Do we willingly give in and suffer wrong? We should.

The Bible says, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (**Matthew 22:39**).

MENDING WALL

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean.
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbours."
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

Robert Frost





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." This section is not for some idealistic future kingdom posing theological complicated questions with no good answers—for example, the woman who had seven brothers as husbands (*Matthew 22:24-28*).

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



The Practical Side: Work Boots Required

The Practical Side: *More of the Story*

AV33 (Summer issue of 2024) and AV34 (Winter Issue of 2025) tell the story of Murray Carter's life. Born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, into an ungodly home, he never knew the love of a mother who cared for him. Physically and emotionally abused, he still craved a mother's love on into adulthood.

In these two Anabaptist Voice issues you can read the story of how a sinful, selfish and ungodly life led to many disappointments and emptiness of spirit. Finally Murray Carter prayed and asked God to reveal Himself to him. Read how God, over a several-year period, answered that prayer. At the end of 2024, Murray Carter's testimony was, "Today I am praising God Almighty for the mercy He has shown me. In faith, I am learning 'to trust that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.'"

In this column, we are bringing you an update on how God continues to work in Murray's life.

Staying Faithful

by Murray Carter

At the beginning of January 2025, I was busy forging knives and attending church at Living Hope Mennonite Church in Cambridge, Idaho. Life was routine and comfortable. Perhaps that is why I had a challenging dream of moving back to my home town of Nova Scotia, Canada, to be closer to my aging parents: my dad, 91 years old (and his second wife) and my single 86-year-old mother (who has been married three times). The dream seemed to be in keeping with the 5th Commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother." I shared my dream with several godly men who said it seemed to them to truly have come from the Holy Spirit.

After checking in with my church ministers, and

getting their blessings, I then went to my former wife in person and got her approval as well. The die was cast. Last October, I packed my bladesmithing tools and anything else that I could fit in my enclosed trailer and set out on a 3600-mile road trip. Six days later, I reached my destination, Northfield, Nova Scotia.

How I ended up in Northfield is another testimony to God's leading. In July 2025, before my permanent relocation to Nova Scotia, I had flown back to Nova Scotia to survey a plot of forest land I had purchased a few months earlier. My idea was that I could build a tiny home on the land.

While I was there, I attended a Wednesday evening Bible study at a Kleingemeinde Russian Mennonite

home in Northfield. After the study had dismissed, I hung around chatting and praying with the house owner. He had just finished building his family's house and shop, a four-year endeavor. But now these friends were switching churches and desperately wanted to sell their property so they could avoid the 90-minute drive to the new church. In addition, their children could attend school in September at the new location.

On my drive back to my accommodations that night, I felt the Holy Spirit was leading me to offer to buy the brother's house, so they could move. It seemed odd to me, since I had already purchased land and was not really in an advantageous financial position to buy something else, let alone a proper house and large outbuilding on 25 acres.

In the quiet of my car—I never play the radio, and rarely listen to music, instead preferring to keep quiet in the hopes that I'll hear from God—I asked the Holy Spirit just how much, maximum, I could offer to my brother for his house. A very distinct number came to mind, \$XYZ,000. It was the maximum I could imagine being able to pay for his house, while remaining a reasonable figure.

When I approached the brother a few days later and asked if he would sell their property to me, he responded, "My wife and I prayed about it; we want to offer it to you for the discounted price of \$XYZ,000." Incredible! I had not even mentioned the price that I had come up with. This really felt like God was speaking clearly.

So I gave this brother what I had in my savings account, which was about a third of the price. He said he would carry the balance, interest free, for nine months until I could secure financing for the remainder. Because of his financing offer I could go ahead and settle into the house after my planned move in October.

I returned to Idaho to prepare for the big move. I had some concern about how I was going to get the home paid for. However, I felt that since the Lord had led in this endeavor, I had no need to worry or fret. I knew I just had to be a responsible steward with my time, and work as hard as I could. I took inventory of anything I could possibly sell—an engine, a tractor and some old hobby items from my previous life. Then I packed my trailer and made the long journey across the continent.

I moved into my new house and set up my blade-smithing tools in the shop. As the end of April approached and the final payment was due, I received word that my tractor finally sold. The amount of the sale exactly covered the outstanding balance on my property purchase. How sweet it is to repeat the words

"God is faithful"!

Being in Nova Scotia close to both sets of my parents has been a double blessing. I am learning the joy of serving others and I get to share my love for God with family. My father has been hospitalized two times since I arrived. It has been balm to my heart to now be needed and considered a blessing, when as a child I was unloved and unwanted.

For the time being, my folks are still mostly independent, so I only spend one or two days a week, divided between both parents. I do errands, home repairs, shopping or taking them to doctor appointments, and other needed services. Lord willing, I will learn to be more helpful as their needs increase.

I also sense that God helped me pay off my house so that as my folks need more of my time, I will not be stressing out over finances. At this point, I can support my modest needs with just a few days of knife-making a week.

Also, thanks to my parents' independence, I was able to sneak away to Pennsylvania last December for a weekend choral event (100 Men Sing) and a week of study at SMBI this past February.

One unanticipated setback with my move from the US to Canada was the prohibitive tariffs and custom fees of shipping knives over borders. A large part of my business is sharpening and repair of various knives (not just limited to ones I have made). As soon as I had moved, a US customer sent me a blade for a \$25 sharpening job but the Canadian postmaster wanted \$88 from me just to accept the package! I quickly realized that this new arrangement wasn't going to work.

Now I had a dilemma: Should I just give up my sharpening business? Or could I find a place just inside the US border where I could do my US sharpening work? If this plan were to work, it would mean several trips a month (round trip 11 hours). While the sharpening doesn't add up to much money, it keeps me relevant in a competitive industry. I decided to look for a place in Maine where I could do my knife-sharpening and thus avoid the tariff and duty problems.

After several false starts, I decided to visit the local Amish community in Smyrna, just 14 miles inside the US border. I wanted to see if there might be a barn or old house I could rent. My first stop was Kauffman Metals. I walked in feeling a little sheepish, since I didn't really know much about the Amish culture and practices.

I needn't have worried; a bearded man named Jason

greeted me with a big smile and a warm handshake and inquired, “How can I help you?” I said my name was Murray and I started to explain the move from Idaho, the knives and the trouble with the border, and so on.

I was about 3 minutes into my explanation when Jason exclaimed, “I know who you are! You are the guy who has his testimony in *Anabaptist Voice*. Yeah, the knife guy. You have a very interesting story!”

Wow! I couldn’t believe it. God had gone ahead and opened an improbable door for me. That conversation resulted in me renting a house right in the middle of their Smyrna community. Currently, I go there three times a month for two nights, three days (the 10th, 20th and 30th of every month). I visit regularly with several men in the community, and we discuss the Scriptures, their application, and the urgent need to share the love of Jesus with the lost. I’m overjoyed to discover I am among God-fearing people here.

Perhaps the highlight so far was my being included in a work-bee to demolish an old building. There is nothing quite like working alongside men to get to know them. In the coming days, I have a promise to teach the young men how to sharpen knives. I am very much looking forward to that teaching experience. (They probably already know how to sharpen knives, so I had better not be too proud of my skills!)

Jesus said, “Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:29). It is exciting to think on this verse and realize that if I hadn’t obeyed the leading of the Holy Spirit to move close to my parents, then I might not have ever met the brethren of this remarkable community. I feel truly blessed.

I am speaking now of being among God-fearing Christians. In Nova Scotia I am attending Bloomfield Mennonite Church, a conservative Kleingemeinde congregation. The services are mostly in *Plautdeutsch*, with reading from the Luther German Bible. The ministers are very gracious in announcing their Bible verses—book, chapter and verse—in English, for my benefit. Mostly, I can follow along. One service a month is in English. When I am part of the group the

fellowship, is in English. I feel truly blessed and fed well from God’s Word by faithful shepherds.

In these services, I learned my first memory verse in German: “*Denn Christus ist mein Leben, und Sterben ist mein Gewinn*” (Philippians 1:21). (For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.)

If you had asked me a month ago how reconciliation was going with my former wife, I would have answered very enthusiastically. Communication with her has been regular, without a hint of conflict or bitterness and often lighthearted and pleasant. Last May (2025) I took her and the children for a two-week trip to England and Switzerland. This May we are planning a family get-together in Vancouver, Canada.

So, it came as somewhat of a shock to me when she called the other day and confided that she has had a boyfriend for the past four years. She also said they have agreed that he will move into her house this August. (Two of our children are still at home).

After a quick silent prayer, I responded that I wasn’t happy to hear her news, but that I was grateful she felt confident enough in our relationship to tell me in full transparency. I reminded her that the Bible instructs me to be faithful in serving her and the children, no matter what the circumstances. I told her that this is my intention. I pray God succors me to do so.

I could sense she was relieved to hear my response. I could tell she was glad I did not get mad or hurl insults at her as I would have done prior to knowing the love of Jesus. I see this as a test in obedience and with heavenly rewards in the balance. With God’s helping hand, and with the prayers of my brothers and sisters, I trust I can persevere for God’s glory.

End Note

I think it important that your readers know that since my Nova Scotia move is temporary in nature, I am still a member at Living Hope Mennonite Church in Idaho. I feel that is my “home church,” and as such, I still call back every two weeks for “Accountability Group” meetings. I stay in touch with the members and I am still given a voice in church matters. I feel very strongly about church membership and the protection, privileges, and accountability that comes with it.

“Blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it.”

Luke 11:28

The Practical Side: *New Story*

Building Community in Our Churches

by Work to Gether

As Anabaptists, we have community. There are thousands of us. If there is a death, a wedding, a birth, or some other significant event, brothers and sisters come from near and far to pour out support. Local church people rally at these special times to provide meals and often lodging to guests who come from distant churches. These events strengthen the bond of fellowship, even among those who were often strangers before.

It is sometimes easier to fellowship with people from a great distance than it is to work closely with the believers in our own community. So how do we build trust and work together with local Anabaptists? We, as Anabaptists, need to nurture the building of close community within our own home churches. How do we do that?

Community is defined as a feeling of fellowship with others. It is a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. While church services are important, there is much more to community than that. I suggest we should start spending more time together outside of church in an effort to build better community. This could help us learn to know each other in deeper ways.

My dad taught me a profound lesson in this area. A nasty storm blew a giant tree branch down in our backyard. Several days later Dad came into the house and announced he was going to invite the church family over to help us clean it up and join us for a campfire supper.

My eyes widened in dismayed surprise. Then I voiced my opinion, “Dad, we are strong and independent. We

could easily do this. Why wouldn’t we just clean it up instead of making them come help us?”

That was his point. His words to me were, “If you want close community, you have to humble yourself and start building it in every-day scenarios.”

We are often too independent of a people. We think we can handle life on our own during the week and see each other maybe once or twice a week at services.

So why not ask your church family to come help with a project or offer to help them with one of their own projects? It is a great opportunity to spend time together while in work shoes.

There is giving and taking as a result of being part of a church family. In our situation, several families accepted our invitation to help with the tree clean-up.

The work got done in record time and the enjoyable campfire supper we shared together was a small step in the relationship-building process.

A blessing comes when we build community with the people we worship with every Sunday. The better we know our church family on a week-day basis, the sweeter the fellowship will be Sunday mornings.

Close community in our home churches is something worth working for!

Practical Questions

1. What is the common purpose that binds a church together?
2. What are some common interests that draw a community together?
3. What stories could you share with AV readers of how working together built a stronger church and community?





Circulation and Financial Statement

Income and Expense Report

June 30, 2026

April 1, 2026, Beginning Balance \$1,623.15

Income

Donations \$17,820.00

Local Support \$1,000.00

Total Income \$18,820.00

Beginning Balance + Income **\$20,443.15**

Expenses (AV38)

Postage \$5,381.00

Printing & Mailing \$6,871.19

Layout and Design Expenses \$1,618.61

Total Expense **\$13,870.80**

March 31, 2026 Ending Balance **\$6,572.35**

Circulation Report

ISSUE #39 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 5,080 | Operating Cost: \$13,870.80

Cost Per Copy: \$2.73 each

* See section, "Our Finances" on page 4 for more info.

Treasurer - Danny Hege, Olar, South Carolina

Circulation - Benita Hege, Olar, South Carolina

Your gifts given to support the publication of AV41 encourage us.

END MATTERS

Changes for the better are taking place at *Anabaptist Voice*. Jeff Byler is now the editor. Any writing or editorial matters should be addressed to:

Anabaptist Voice

Attn: Jeff Byler

598 Templeman Lake Road

Bonnars Ferry, Idaho 83805

Email: anabaptistvoice@gmail.com

Kooskia Mennonite Church has agreed to sponsor *Anabaptist Voice*. This means you can now obtain a tax deductible receipt for donations made to *Anabaptist Voice*.

Checks can be made out and mailed to:

Kooskia Mennonite Church

928 Battle Ridge Road

Kooskia, Idaho 83539

In addition, a credit card capability has been set up at Truss Tek, Inc. You can now give them a phone call at 1-800-269-7471 and tell them you would like to make a donation to *Anabaptist Voice*. You will receive a tax deductible receipt from Kooskia Mennonite Church. Giving through a credit card usually gets the best exchange rate for those living outside the US.

We encourage you to give and show your support for the continued low-cost production of *Anabaptist*

Voice. Neither the editor nor his staff receive earthly pay for their part in the production of *Anabaptist Voice*. Only on rare occasions do writers receive any compensation. Through this work we seek to lay up treasure in heaven by building the Kingdom of God on earth.

We believe there is great value in a well thought-through and attractive print magazine. However, there are some advantages to using a website. For instance, one can view all 40 of our back issues at any time by visiting our website at anabaptist-voice/print>. If you want to receive an electronic notification that the current issue has been posted on the web, you can request being added to the "blast" list. Simply send an email to lou@pressonprinting.com>. Lou will take care of adding your name to the blast list.

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Anabaptist Voice

5282 Hwy. 56 South

Waynesboro, GA 30830

editor@anabaptistvoice.com

www.anabaptistvoice.com

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*But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.*

Proverbs 4:18



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