Issue 41 Fall 2026



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

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

In This Issue:

"A Thankful People" - *Menno Knight*

"Knowing Christ" - *Ted Byler*

"Structure of The Book" - *David Burkholder*

"Prophet in the Wilderness" - *The Storyteller*

"Child Training" - *Burton Heatwole*

Letter from the Editor



Idaho



Chile

I do not really enjoy changes. After my wife Lorita and I were married over 30 years ago, we moved to our property here in northern Idaho. Then we moved to Chile for 17 years. There are differences and similarities between Chile and Idaho. Our view of the mountains from our front lawn is somewhat similar. But one faced the sunrise and the other the sunset. Both were about the same distance from the equator, but the seasons were reversed. Both were within 20 miles of another country: Argentina and Canada. Though they are 7,000 miles apart, I would like to be in both places at the same time because of the memories of moments with friends and family etched deeply into my heart.

Circumstances of life brought us back again to our little spot on the hill here in North Idaho. Many things have changed since we left—we had to rebuild our home that burned down—but the mountains are still the same. Jesus Christ is the same today and forever ... and everywhere!

The Anabaptist Voice is changing editors, but I hope that it will be enjoyed as much as I enjoyed it when Brother James Landis was editor. Thankfully, we still have his guidance as we go forward. This quarterly relies on an editor who, in turn, relies on God for inspiration and truth. Our prayer is that God will help us to serve Him and His church. He deserves our best!

We need to be thankful for the service that Brother James has done for the Anabaptist community. Ten years of editorship is quite an achievement and a lot of work! I pray that God rewards you and Doris richly, brother.

I look forward to continued input from our readers as we resume this service to the believers who want to put their faith into practice.

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower (Psalm 18:2).



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Table of Contents

The ↻ symbol indicates a recurring feature in *Anabaptist Voice*.

↻ Letter from the Editor 2
↻ About *Anabaptist Voice* 4
↻ Our Readers Write 5
A Thankful People 7
↻ Rubies & Diamonds 10
Knowing Christ 11
The Fast-Approaching Day 15
Honor to Whom Honor Is Due 16
Structure and Overview of the Book 18
Gems from Georgia 21
Train Up a Child 22
Transformative Love 24
The Prophet Elijah 28
Morton Defeats the Pain of Surgery 32
↻ Round Table Discussion 35
↻ The Practical Side 40
↻ The Practical Side: New Stories 40
↻ Circulation & Financial Statement 43
↻ End Matters 43



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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 whowishes 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

Encouraged

by Really Blessed

I have really enjoyed the AV; it has been an encouragement to me. It is a blessing to have a publication like this.

I am wondering if it is possible to get the articles *The Real Team* (AV38) and *Obey Your Leaders* (AV39) in PDF format, so I can give them to some people in our church who do not get the AV. Thanks, and God bless.

W.N. | *Alabama*

Real Religion

by Timely Quotes

I am writing in support of some great quotes from "True Righteousness" (AV40, Summer Issue, pages 13-16).

"Trusting in our faith is not required; trusting in Christ is what matters" (page 14). Years ago, my brother's child ran a high fever that damaged the brain. The parents prayed fervently and were determined that God would heal her. God did preserve the life of the child, but as a vegetable … for 30 years. The couple had faith in faith rather than in the giver and taker of life.

"The faith that brings you into fellowship and obedience to God is the faith that saves" (page 14). There is no faith that can save a person without repentance and obedience.

"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" (page 15). The blood of Christ never covers willful sin. **Hebrews 10:26** says, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries."

"Jesus makes it clear that we must forgive others if we expect God to forgive us" (page 15). This is unconditional forgiveness, whether the other party asks for it or not. It is the only way to have peace and freedom in one's own soul.

"The word 'fear' was properly translated, and we should accept the common English definition" (page 15). A common teaching is that fear means *awe* or *reverence* toward God. The word "*fear*" should be understood as being afraid of God and His wrath. Today, many Christians are so overwhelmed by God's love that they have forgotten about His wrath.

The result is the teaching that if we love God, He will accept us. We think that if we teach about God's love, it will draw men to Christ. Everyone in the church knows **John 3:16,** "For God so loved the world … " Few can quote **John 3:36,** "He who does not *obey* the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

"One cannot walk in loving fellowship with God and live in disobedience to Him at the same time" (page 16). Righteousness and holiness demand obedience, or religion is only a sham hidden under a raincoat.

J. G. L. | *Georgia*

Excesses

by Dis Tressed

I am blessed to see you take the bull by the horns on the issue of gluttony. This sin has been allowed into today's conservative Anabaptist camps, almost wholesale. The issue of wealth is bigger yet, but again has become accepted wholesale across every spectrum of today's conservative Anabaptist movement. God help us in every issue of life.

M.A. | *Ohio*

Slim Down

By Pen Slim Vania

I appreciated Menno Knight's "God's Call to Slim Down". And I'm going to guess that he will receive

much negative response, for there are many Anabaptists who would justify their 'overhang' with the words from **1 Timothy 6:17**: "God has given us richly all things to enjoy".

Menno's tips on how to lose weight were right on! Gluttony is a sin that is laughed at and joked about too often in our Anabaptist circles. Thanks, Menno, for being so brave to speak out against this sin! Now I have a tip for you: Don't use a pen name if you're unashamed of what you stand for. A suggestion for a future article is: Speak out against materialism! Be Faithful!

A.M.M. | *Pennsylvania*



Slow Down

by Choose Ur Words

Here are a few thoughts on *God's Call to Slim Down:* speaking out against gluttony is completely legitimate, but the words gluttony and obesity should not be used interchangeably. There are some chubby people who eat less than some skinny ones. Many areas of life are affected by temperance, and overeating is just one of them.

E.B. | *Idaho*



Fatten Up

By Dis Quieted

The article, "*God's Call to Slim Down*", is troubling to me because I have the opposite problem—I have been unsuccessful at gaining weight. I have been trying for 50 years, yet 1 am still 24 pounds below what this chart shows as a minimum. Also, global charities tell me that worldwide, starvation is the leading cause of death for children under 4 years of age.

This article states that most fat people are without excuse (for being fat), but if that were so, then most of those who try to lose weight would be successful.

What is the problem? Our culture makes food available from hybrid plants that are highly processed. The processing removes much fiber and many vitamins and minerals that God put in them for us. Flour is refined to white flour. Sugar, salt, and other things are added in abundance. The proper balance is gone. If you eat enough to fill your stomach, you will have way too much sugar and not enough fiber. Also, to cut back, you are still out of balance. And when we finish the diet, we gain some of what we lost. People who repeatedly fast to lose weight end up even heavier. Many Anabaptists tend to live in rural settings, and many grow their own food; thus, you have an advantage in that you are able to avoid processed foods.

R.L. | *Maryland*



Lasting Marriage

By Testi Mony

Dear Anabaptist Brotherhood, I received your magazine and read the article "*Marriages That Last"* with much interest. I am a plain believer and greatly appreciate that contribution.

Six days ago, my dearly beloved companion of 60 years had his body laid to rest. Dust to dust. Life seems so short now, and I can just see myself more clearly than ever.

When I was dating age, I had one concern, and I longed for a strong spiritual leader. God gave me that. He had one goal and focus, and that was to have a close relationship with God and prepare for the next life. He did me much good, and now I wish I had expressed more appreciation. We are born in pride and are too easily hurt.

An important thing to keep in mind in marriage is that no one makes mistakes on purpose or with evil intentions, so we should not be too sensitive or keep evil grudges. We trust, forgive from the heart, and release. The hard part is to be open.

I can identify with what the article says. We don't want to take the blame but think that the other one is in the wrong. I wouldn't want to live my life over, but I do wish that we would have conversed more.

I encourage all husbands to live a humble life. A woman can often sense danger that a man does not. Don't be too proud to accept the warning. It should be important to always consider each other when making any decisions—pray about it. The love chapter certainly includes it all.

Since my husband took sick, God spoke to him plainly, telling him much, and said it won't be long. It was only two months, but what a beautiful testimony. I just wish I could have lived a more sanctified life. Heaven will surely be worth it all. The book *Love and Respect* by Emerson Eggerichs should be in every home.

God's blessings to everyone.

L.B. | *Illinois*

A Thankful People

BY MENNO KNIGHT

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." – I Thessalonians 5:18

The verse above makes it plain. God wants us to be thankful. **Ephesians 5:19** confirms God's desire that we should be a thankful people. "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

Giving Thanks for His Wondrous Works

We should be thankful to God for who He is, for the wonders of His creation, and for His provision and care over all those who fear Him.

The psalms overflow with this kind of thanksgiving and praise to God. The psalmists often gave thanks to God and followed the initial outburst with long lists telling why they were thankful. The psalmists urged others to give thanks to God as well. They knew that when people speak praise and thanks to God, it refreshes their minds as to who God is. These opening lines in the following psalms all encourage the giving of thanks to God.

Psalm 75:1. "We *give thanks* to You, O God, we give thanks, For Your name is near; Men declare Your wondrous works."

Psalm 92:1. "It is good to *give thanks* to the LORD and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High … For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of your hands."



God's Wondrous Works

Psalm 105:1-2. "Oh *give thanks* to the LORD, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders."

Psalm 106:1-2. Praise the LORD! Oh *give thanks* to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting. Who can speak of the mighty deeds of the LORD, or can show forth all His praise?"

Psalm 107:1. "Oh *give thanks* to the LORD, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." Four times in this Psalm, the psalmist repeated the same call to be a thankful people (verses 8, 15, 21, 31. KJV). "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his wonderful works to the children of men." In verse 22 he adds to the refrain, "Let them also offer sacrifices of *thanks-giving*, and tell of His works with joyful singing."

The psalmists could not keep their praise and thanksgiving bottled up inside them. It had to come out in songs and psalms. That is the essence of worship. Either in silent prayer or when His people gather together, praise and thanksgiving to God should be expressed.

We recently raised the question in our Sunday school class, "Can someone be truly thankful if he does not express it?" I doubt one can be truly thankful without expressing it to God and to others.

Giving Thanks for Our Food

At the breakfast, dinner, and supper table, we should give thanks to God for our food. Jesus said we should pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Not to thank God for our food is to think that we have earned it by our own strength and cunning. Or that we are entitled to abundant food.

When Jesus prepared to multiply five barley loaves and two fish into enough food to feed five

thousand men, He first took those small loaves, held them up to heaven, and gave thanks.[1] Then His disciples went among the groups seated on the ground and broke the bread … and more bread …and more bread. When everyone had eaten and was full, Jesus took a few small fish and blessed them. Then the disciples passed out the fish. After everyone had eaten and was satisfied, the disciples filled twelve baskets with leftover broken pieces.

That remote place along the sea became a sacred and hallowed spot. The next day some came from Tiberias in small boats; they came "near the place where they ate the bread *after the Lord had given thanks*" **(John 6:23).** The giving of thanks by the Lord had been so impressive that these men remembered it. All knew that the food they ate had been given to them by God, not by their own work or diligence.



Our Daily Bread

Everyone knew that Jesus gave thanks to God for the loaves and the fishes.

In our prayers, we should express our thanks to God, not only for each and every meal, but for every good and perfect gift that comes from above. The people of God should be a grateful people, bubbling over with thanksgiving in our hearts and on our lips. Thanksgiving and thanksliving cannot be stowed away in our hearts and hidden from public view. The giving of thanks to God and to others should spring forth from within us like the songs of birds on a spring morning.

Giving Thanks for the Churches

The apostle Paul urged the churches to be a thankful people. In his epistles he set a great example of expressing that thanks. He wrote:

"I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and *thanksgiving*, be made on behalf of all men" **(I Timothy 2:1).** Paul's prayers and thanksgiving extended to all people including those in authority. Paul was not giving thanks for chaos and anarchy, but for the opportunity to live a quiet and orderly life in all godliness and dignity.

"In everything [every circumstance] *give thanks*; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" **(I Thessalonians 5:18).** This admonishes us to give thanks to God, not for the circumstance itself, but for God's faithfulness to us at all times—earthquakes, hurricanes, wars, pestilence, or car wrecks.

"In everything by prayer and supplication with *thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God" **(Philippians 4:6).** God wants us to ask and bring our petitions to Him as taught in the parable of the unjust judge. "Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night?" **(Luke 18:7).** However, thanksgiving should always accompany our prayers and petitions.

Paul made it a practice to thank God for the saints in the church. He gave thanks publicly to the churches to whom he wrote.

"I *thank my God* through Jesus Christ *for you all*, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world" **(Romans 1:8).**

"I *thank my God* always *concerning you* for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus" **(I Corinthians 1:4).**

"Being established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and *overflowing with gratitude*" **(Colossians 2:7).**

Paul saw many problems in the churches, but He thanked God for the people who had committed their lives to serving God. He did not spell out all the problems and class the whole church as evildoers. No, he thanked God because the faith within the churches of Rome was being proclaimed throughout the whole world. He thanked God the churches in Colossae overflowed with gratitude. He thanked God that the grace of God was at work in the churches at Corinth.

So when someone asks you about how it is going at your church, what do you say? Are you thankful for the ministry and their labors? Do you tell the friend who is asking of the good Sunday school sessions and the summer Bible schools and the good sermon you heard last week? Do you remember how the church reached out to give aid after a disaster in the community or even in far away places? Are you quick to tell how ***YOUR*** church's faith is being proclaimed in the community and throughout the whole world? Can you say with enthusiasm, I am really thankful to be a part of ***MY*** church?

Or does your response to an inquirer go something

1 Matthew 14:19; Mark 8:6; Luke 9:17; John 6:11; John 6:23.

like this? "We have some problems right now. I wish things were different, but …"

Giving Thanks for Fellow Saints

Paul not only gave thanks for the churches in general, but he thanked God for individuals in those churches and called them by name. In Romans 16 he went all out. He named 42 individuals and some others by groups and families.

In **Romans 16:4** he prefaces his list with this statement: "Who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." Then he lists all 42 saints by name—Prisca and Aquila, Phoebe, Epaenetus, Mary; Andronicus and Junias, my fellow prisoners who are outstanding among the apostles; Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord; Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ; Stachys my beloved; Appelles, the approved in Christ; Aristobulus, and his household; Herodion, my kinsman; Narcissus and his household who are in the Lord; Tryphena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord; Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord; Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine; Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them; Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister; Olympas and all the saints who are with them; Lucius, Sosipater, my kinsman; Tertius, Gaius, Erastus, the city treasurer; and Quartus.



Serving Saints

That is right. Paul mentions 42 individuals by name for which he can give thanks. Men and women who are obedient to the faith. I am sure these dear brothers and sisters in the Lord were not perfect, but Paul knew they were on his side. Paul writes in **Romans 16:19,** "For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil."

Try this in your congregation. Think of some good thing you can give thanks for in each member of the congregation. Thank God for that person by name. Then tell that person directly that you are thankful for them and that you are glad they are part of **OUR** church. Call them by name. Yes, two times is not too many. Watch their eyes light up.

We are speaking of giving encouragement to believers in a public setting. In a private setting, this type of appreciation, like the holy kiss, should be limited to brother-to-brother and sister-to-sister.

These words of appreciation and love for others are not flattery. Flattery is defined as, "The act of giving excessive or insincere praise, typically used as a strategic tool to manipulate others, gain influence, or secure a personal advantage. Unlike a genuine compliment, it prioritizes a hidden agenda over truth or genuine appreciation." Our words of appreciation should be sincere, without any design or intrigue for personal gain. Words should flow from our hearts in praise to God for that brother or sister. If it is not appropriate to tell them in person, call them by name in your prayers.

I like this story that illustrates how such prayers can change your own attitude towards another person.

A waitress came to work feeling grumpy and having a bad day. Her manager noticed this and told her, "I want you to tell each table that you serve today, "I like you."

She said, "I cannot do that. I cannot tell every group of people that I like them."

"No, you don't have to tell them out loud. Tell them in your head."

At the end of the day the manager checked back with the waitress. The waitress responded, "It is not fair. You rigged it. You gave me all the nice customers!"[2]

Try giving thanks to God for every person who comes to your church. You can tell them in person as well, "I love you." And if you can't do that, do it in your head. I believe maybe you will find out God rigged your church family with many thankful people!

Giving Thanks Myself

I admit that over the years I have not been as thankful as I should have been. I repent and ask God's forgiveness. I vow to do better. May God give me a thankful heart … in all things.

2 *Plain Communities Business Exchange* (PCBE), "Phone and Voice Communication" by Floyd Miller, July Issue, page 91.



Rubies and Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.

"One thing that repeats throughout history is: His mercy endures forever."

– Paul Martin at Cedar Fork Mennonite Church, NC

"Jesus rescued Peter from drowning even though he doubted."

– Jonathan Miller at Ozark Mennonite Church, MO

"An acceptable sacrifice is pure and untainted by our own agenda."

– Marcus Byler at Kooskia Mennonite Church, ID

"For God to work in our lives, we must be willing to be vulnerable."

– Ben Huffman at Mountain View German Baptist, ID

"The greatest inventors of mankind only discovered what God knew from the beginning."

– James G. Landis at Believers Mennonite Fellowship, WV

"We come to know our Savior best by suffering with Him."

– Martin Hadley at Englewood Christian Community, TN

"If we have lost our first love for Christ we have lost fundamentally what it means to be His follower."

– Ivan Yoder at Living Hope Mennonite Church, ID

"Fatherhood is a calling that needs assistance from the best Father of all."

– Martin Friesen at Horndean Mennonite Church, MB

"The best way to pray for people is for the Lord to reveal Himself to them."

– Marty Weaver at Clark Fork Christian Fellowship, MT

"Mediocrity is a hard sell."

– William Byler at Kooskia Mennonite Church, ID

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.

Knowing Christ

By Ted Byler

"That I may know Him
and the power of His resurrection"

– the Apostle Paul, ca A.D. 62

The Apostle Paul, nearing the end of his extraordinary life, shared what is surely the loftiest personal testimony of all time. Writing from a Roman jail, Paul expressed the deepest sentiment and aspiration of his soul—an unreserved avowal of complete self-denial and devotion to Christ. His testimony is found in a moving letter to his fondest church, the one in Philippi, whom he called, "*my dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown* **(Philippians 4:1).** To these precious saints, Paul opened his heart and testified:

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,... That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." **(Philippians 3:7-14).**

Paul's Ambition

The motivating desire of the Apostle Paul was to *know Christ*. It was his single, all-consuming goal and fiery passion—to really, truly <u>know</u> Christ. He considered the *knowledge of Christ* so very valuable that every other thing he possessed was nothing but *dung*. To be well thought of, respected, loved? Dung, compared to knowing Christ.



Paul Begins the Pursuit of Christ

For a human being, there is nothing more important than feeling useful, appreciated, respected, and valued. Paul, however, was more than willing to give up those things to *apprehend* Christ, to *know* Christ, to *win* Christ. So, forgetting every other earthly endeavor, he pressed forward to that one highest Prize.

What about you and me? Is <u>knowing Christ</u> so firmly set at the top of our life priorities that the next ones on the list are but dung? It should be. But in today's Christianity, Jesus is generally presented as a possession rather than an aspiration – someone to "have," rather

than someone to *know*. Someone who is "with you" instead of someone to *follow after*. Evangelists often preach a Christ who loves you and wants to bless you in every area and time of life instead of a Christ that you should get to know.

Now, Jesus is wonderfully all of love and salvation, a Christ who is "with us" forever. But that is only half of the story, the beginning half at that. The real goal of the Christian unfolds in the vocation that follows the new birth. Choosing to believe in Christ is a lifelong pursuit of the One who first loved us and created us. Why did He set His love upon us? Who is this heavenly Prince that became a man and walked in His own creation? What did He gain by dying on the Cross? How can I get to know this Person better? These questions became the Apostle Paul's passion and hunger, his obsession.

Saul, the Jew

Paul grew up in an influential, well-to-do Jewish family. As a young man, he was already well-known and respected; a highly educated, pure-blooded, zealous Hebrew. Everyone expected him to go right to the top in the Jewish religion. He was endorsed by the Sanhedrin, recognized by his peers, feared by his enemies. But when the supposedly dead Jesus apprehended Saul, the Jew, on that dusty Damascus road, his world was shaken to the core.

At that moment, everything that Saul knew and held dear was thrown roughly upon the scales of decision. His honest mind saw it clear as day: if he chose Jesus, then everything he had done, along with all his hopes and goals, was over. And that is why many years later he testified, "*What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*"

The Jewish leaders had faced the same choice. They saw Jesus heal the lame, cast out demons, raise the dead to life. They heard His divine doctrine, listened to His perfect answers and beheld His blameless life. They heard their own officers say, "*Never man spake like this Man"* **(John 7:46).** One of them even admitted, "*We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"* **(John 3:2).** Deep down in their hearts, they knew who He was.

Unlike Paul, however, the scribes and Pharisees did not choose Christ. The cost was too great. Why, if they believed on Him, their iron monopoly in Judaism would be broken. No, they decided, Jesus was a threat that must be eliminated. For the good of the nation, this Man must die.[1]

Saul, the up-and-coming Hebrew, never met Jesus during His time on this earth. He had heard stories of Jesus' life and death, and rumors that He had risen from the dead, but Saul stumbled over a glaring fact: every genuine Jew knew that the Messiah would be a powerful, noble figure who would restore the Kingdom of Israel back to the head of the nations as in the days of King David.

Jesus, the quiet son of Joseph in Galilee, could not have been a more opposite personality. The Messiah, a humble, unknown carpenter living in the backwoods town of Nazareth? That penniless, homeless outcast the Romans had openly mocked and killed in the ultimate shame of crucifixion? It just could not be.[2] Saul did not believe.

However, when Jesus miraculously appeared and conversed with him as he was travelling to Damascus, Saul knew that he had greatly misjudged the case. Jesus was very much alive. And in that moment, like the Jewish leaders before him, he too saw his future, his accomplishments and everything else that was his. Yet, beyond that precious-to-self acclaim, Saul saw the figure of a Man beckoning to him, a Man with scars in His hands, feet and head, a Man that had been crucified and buried. But a Man that knew his name and what he had been doing.

Saul recognized this singular crossroad moment. He must choose one or the other—there was simply no middle path forward. Which would it be? All that was Saul, or the mysterious and controversial Jesus of Nazareth?

Saul Makes His Choice

The Scriptures indicate that Saul did not waffle at all. He chose Jesus. Not like Nicodemus who followed in the shadows, but by immediately and openly abandoning everything that he had labored so hard to gain in life. He left it all. He was going to know this Person. He was going to *win* Christ.

Paul never looked back. His single desire was to *know Him*, and that fire only intensified with time. The more he gave himself to understand this Christ, the more radical he became in the eyes of the world. "Paul!" one king exclaimed, "You've gone mad! Too much study has addled your brain!" Paul didn't mind being thought

1 John 11:47-53 reveals these thoughts and motives of the Jewish scribes and Pharisees.
2 Paul explains the Jewish mind on this topic in 1 Corinthians 1:20-29.

a fool on account of seeking to better know Christ.[3]

The prevailing theology in evangelical Christianity is that Man was not created with free will and so is incapable of choosing God. The account of Paul's conversion collides with that idea. While Christ did call and choose first, Paul in turn then chose Christ. He could have said "no," like the Pharisees before him.

The Scriptures liken this mutual choice to a marriage.[4] Christ is looking for a Bride, a virgin that loves Him in singleness of heart, and His eyes are set upon us. He has shown His great love by giving His life to save us, and He is calling to whosoever will to believe upon Him and accept His proposal of marriage, set to take place in heaven after this world has ended.

We children of faith are deeply moved by His gracious love and have accepted His call. We are engaged to be married to Christ. He has chosen us and we have chosen Him. The engagement is a time to get to know Him better and to prove our own love by faithful living, for only those who keep their hearts and lives in purity for Christ alone will attend that great mystery wedding in Heaven.

Pressing Forward to Know Christ

Knowing Christ was Paul's super-eminent goal of life. *"The excellency of the knowledge of Christ,"* he called it.[5] And in his mind he was off to a late start. All the other Apostles were well ahead of him. So he figuratively put down his head and ran. He was going to see if he could apprehend the Man who had first apprehended him.

Putting all else out of mind, Paul stretched forth unto things ahead, to seek to know this Christ and to understand why He had voluntarily suffered. And as Paul pressed forward in this exercise, the mark of the prize came faintly into view, that high calling of God to put all his faith in Christ Jesus. It inspired him to run even more earnestly.

One thing I have learned in life is that mere knowledge is for the birds. It is way overrated. Zeal. Resolve. Diligence. Perseverance. Granite tenacity.[6] Those are of much more worth than the finest earthly treasures, as well as the highest education they might buy. And wonderfully, they can be sown and cultivated by absolutely anyone—rich or poor, famous or unknown, educated or illiterate, young or old. Deciding to know Christ and then persevering in that vocation is truly all that matters.

It should come as no surprise then that some of your severest battles will be fought on these very fields, for in truth Satan has only two methods by which he can take your crown.[7] The first is Deception—stealing it by cunning sleight. And the second is Discouragement—getting you to give up and toss it away. Under this twin scheme, the Devil and his wicked angels think to take away your eternal reward.

Even Paul knew discouragement. He endured many attacks of the Devil and learned to recognize them.[8] His example is a source of special comfort, but perhaps the greatest key to victory is his top-shelf mindset of cultivating a passion fixed upon Christ. Zeal is what fueled Paul's insatiable search for the Truth of God. Zeal for God is what motivated his unquenchable resolve to teach only Christ. Paul had been dealt a good measure of zeal up front **(Galatians 1:14),** and he directed every ounce toward his one consuming life goal.

"That I may know Him." When Paul confessed this to be his highest personal aspiration, he wasn't referring to just deepening his intellectual knowledge of Christ, but to verily and truly *know* Him. He wanted a living, active, intimate, social relationship with Jesus Christ, just as any young man or woman longs to have with their chosen life-mate.

Of course, knowledge is an important aspect of truly knowing Christ, but Paul was seeking much more than simple head-knowledge, for it was he who famously said, *"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth"* **(1 Corinthians 8:1).** Without being put into practice, knowledge is actually harmful and negative. It breeds pride, vain conceit, selfishness, discrimination and judgmentalism.

The Greek word that Paul used (***ginosko*** - "to know") is found about 200 times in the New Testament and 600 times in the Septuagint. Strong's Greek Dictionary

3 The Apostle's conversation with this king is found in Acts 26. See also his statement in 2 Corinthians 5:13.

4 Some of the passages underlying the following paragraphs are Ephesians 5:23-32; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 21 and 19:6-9; Matthew 22:2-14 and 25:1-13.

5 The word *excellency* is translated from the Greek ***huperecho*** – "the surpassing worth" (EMTV). And that is roughly how the word is translated in Philippians 4:7, *the peace of God which passeth all understanding*.

6 God is a *rewarder of them that diligently seek Him* (Heb 11:6; Ex 15:26; 2 Pet 1:10). The following proverb has a spiritual dimension: "He who is diligent in his work will stand before kings, not mean men" (Pro 22:29).

7 *Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown* (Rev 3:11). *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give to me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing* (2 Tim 4:8).

8 See Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 and his alert recognition of Satan's purposes in 2 Corinthians 2:11.

defines it as follows: "to know in a concrete manner… not merely to know based on personal observation or perception but also based on actual rational truth; not merely that which is based on or bound only by sight and experience…to completely grasp and have the comprehension of, as well as why and how."

This is an incredibly rich definition that embraces the whole experience of knowing Christ.[9] Paul elsewhere spoke of this degree of knowing: *"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"* **(Ephesians 3:17-18).** These are deep waters to *comprehend*.[10] Can we really be filled with the fullness of God on this earth?

What Is Knowing Christ?

The exercise of knowing Christ is a marvelous life-long experience that broadens and deepens with age and time because the intersection of a finite mind with an infinite God is not an easy, natural union. Man is largely confined to the physical, but the eternal God is Spirit. Human experience takes place within the constraints of the space-matter-time continuum, but God is independent and outside of that created physical triad. Man explores his existence using five sensory intake streams plus a rationalizing brain, while God's mind and wisdom exceed by far those things that He created.

Nevertheless, God made Man a high creature of great complexity and potential. We have been fearfully and wonderfully created in God's own likeness and image. We can reason, consider, analyze and understand. We also have the ability to experience spiritual acuities like love, peace, faith and hope, as well as a wide range of emotional sensibilities. We laugh and cry, become angry or sad, are discouraged or encouraged.

These features, being all infused in one creature, bring us to conclude that God expressly created Man in His own image so that he could and would seek to know Him. God carefully designed him with all the necessary attributes and abilities for that profound investigation. Outside of the angels, I cannot think of another example of any created thing having the ability to mindfully understand and communicate with its maker.

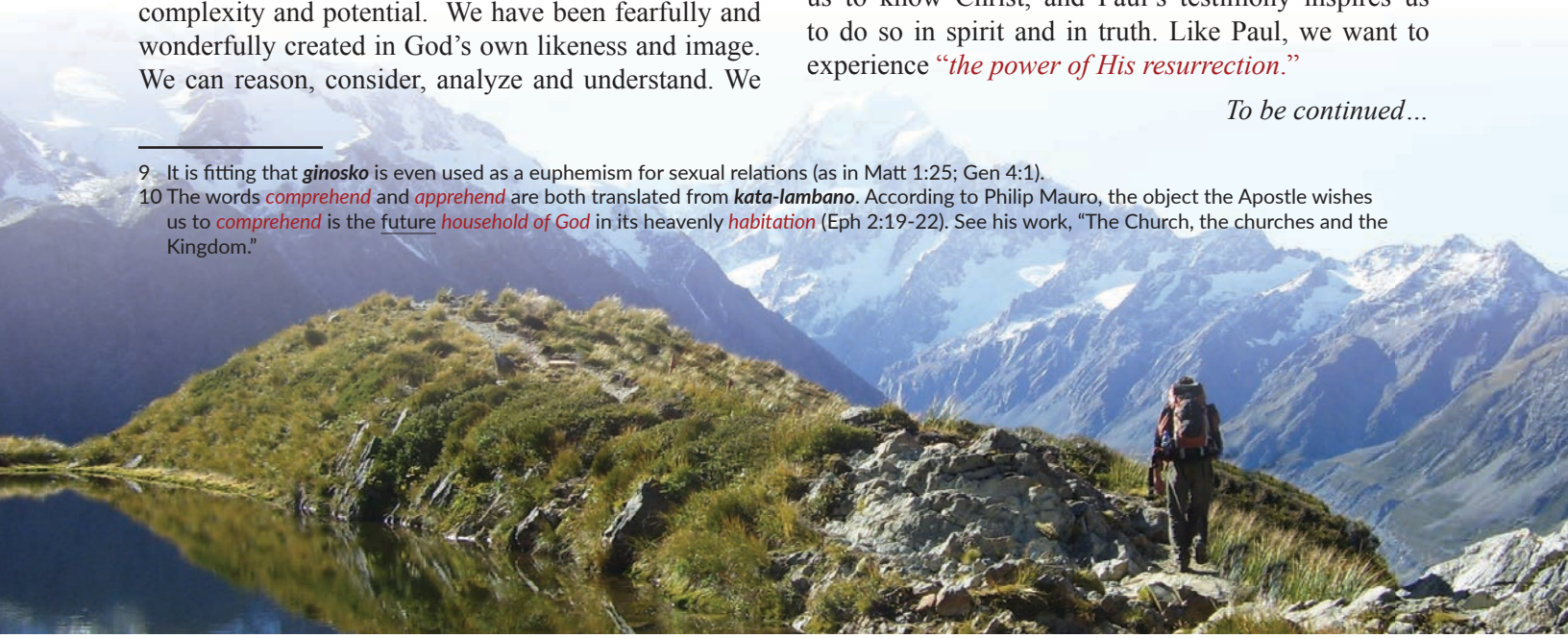
In a sense, the man who seeks to know his Creator has undertaken study in the ultimate Science course. However, Paul likened this kind of search for God to "feeling about blindly with the hands." Groping about, a man might find God in nature, but he cannot truly come to *know* (***ginosko***) Him by studying only His creation. "He is near you, but you will not find Him in physical temples or in anything visible, for He made all those things. He is the Lord of heaven and earth" **(Acts 17:23-31).**

God is not a small-minded Being. He is immense and unfathomable. And He carefully designed Man and crafted the world so that we might know Him in fullness. Not each one of us in the same way, but in many ways, such as Abraham in faith, David in praise, Noah in obedience, Enoch in prayer, Moses in leadership, Job in perseverance, Daniel in wisdom, etc. He has given us the tools of His Word, the Holy Spirit, the book of Creation, our hands and minds. These blessings enable us to know Christ, and Paul's testimony inspires us to do so in spirit and in truth. Like Paul, we want to experience *"the power of His resurrection."*

To be continued…

9 It is fitting that ***ginosko*** is even used as a euphemism for sexual relations (as in Matt 1:25; Gen 4:1).

10 The words *comprehend* and *apprehend* are both translated from ***kata-lambano***. According to Philip Mauro, the object the Apostle wishes us to *comprehend* is the future *household of God* in its heavenly *habitation* (Eph 2:19-22). See his work, "The Church, the churches and the Kingdom."



The Fast-Approaching Day

There's a day that's fast approaching,
when before the Lord we'll be,
then our hope will be our Jesus,
who has died to set us free.

There will be no host of lawyers
there to free us from our sin.
Neither will earth's vast book writers,
stand with us our case to win.

We'll be judged by the Bible
not by all the books we've read.
Mankind's books so often hinder
what our Saviour really said.

If we love God and our Jesus
and our brethren far and near,
on that final day of rec'ning,
we have nothing then to fear.

For on love hang all commandments,
all the rest will fall in place.
This command is universal
to the entire human race.

If we've loved, we will not stumble,
by our dress, or fellow men.
This will help to show to others
that we have been born again.

If we love our married partner
it will last till life is o'er
and our children will find refuge,
in this home that is secure.

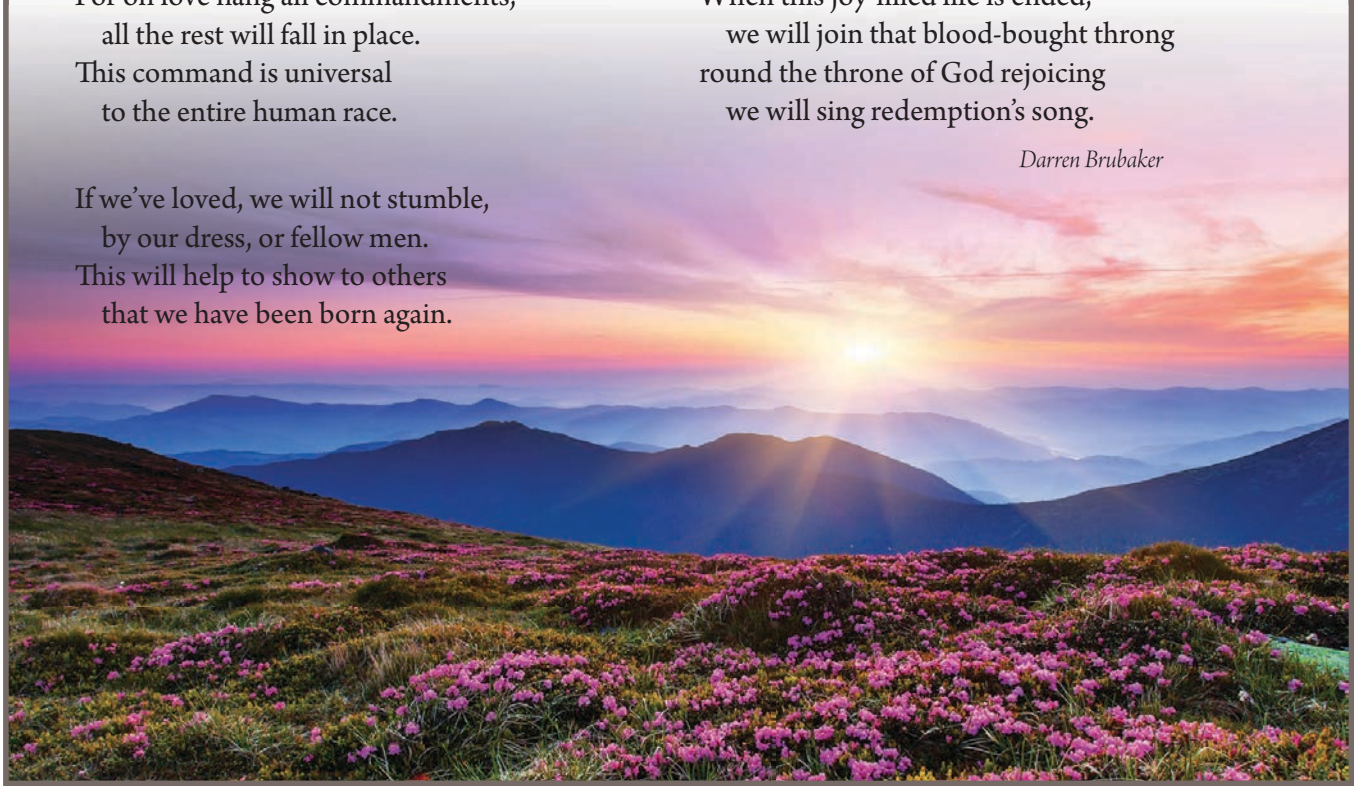
If we truly love all nations,
we will then abstain from war.
We will turn our swords to plowshares
our fellow man we'll kill no more.

If we love the cold and hungry,
our second coat and food we'll give.
We will strive to live so simply,
so others can just simply live.

If we love those who aren't Christians,
we will tell them of Christ's love,
by our loving kind example,
and with words that point above.

When this joy-filled life is ended,
we will join that blood-bought throng
round the throne of God rejoicing
we will sing redemption's song.

Darren Brubaker



Honor to Whom Honor Is Due

Jeff Byler

Pay to all what is due them: ... respect to whom respect; honor to whom honor.

(Romans 13:7)



Many church and family problems could be avoided if one word were applied to relationships. That word is honor.

The Vine's Expository Dictionary defines the Greek word for honor (*time*) as "a valuing." In fact, it is also translated in the New Testament as "price" or "precious." The person who honors others is "valuing" their opinions, convictions, and especially their God-given position. Honor is a condition of the heart that influences the actions of the individual. Submission might only be an act of the will, void of any real respect, but honor demands that submission be accompanied by a heartfelt esteem for the other person.

When we are asked by one in authority to do something we don't want to do, honor asks that we do not submit with a grudging spirit but value his position. If we are asking others to do things that they do not want to do, then honor would ask that these requests be made showing dignity to others and valuing their convictions or opinions. If we are dealing with peers, then "in honor [we should] prefer one another" **(Romans 12:10).**

God has arranged affairs so that those who show little honor will receive little honor.

Honor is God's way of keeping our churches and society on an orderly and healthy path. One of Satan's tactics is to create dishonor and then anarchy to create a society that only does what is right in its own eyes. Mob rule or individualism prevails without honor. A community that preserves a chain of honor throughout God-ordained positions will receive the blessings of God. And a society that shows no honor will fall under the chaos and destruction of the Wicked One. Satan is the master of those who honor only themselves and take orders from no one else.

1 Peter 2:17 says that we should "Honor all people." This is because everyone is made in the image of God and so should be treated with dignity. However, Scripture is clear that some positions deserve more honor than others. We are specifically commanded to honor the following:

Government officials – "Honor the King" **(1 Peter 2:17).**

Honor should be shown to all government leaders, from the deputy sheriff to the President, regardless of political affiliation. We should be careful to avoid disrespectful speech or jokes as well.

Parents – "Honor your Father and Mother" **(Ephesians 6:2).**

Honoring does not expire when you become of age, nor does this commandment—or any other—have exceptions for shortcomings in parenting. As your parents get older, honor them by visiting and caring for their physical needs. You will reap the blessings promised by having things go well with you and also show your own children how you wish to be treated when you are older.

The Aged – "You shall stand up in the presence of the gray-headed and honor elders" **(Leviticus 19:32).**

Though it is common for younger people to think that they have more insight than their elders, it is wise to consider the experience of age. The church that seeks and follows the counsel of its older members will be a stable church that keeps the faith. Honoring the aged is a way of valuing our heritage.

Church leaders – "Recognize those who diligently labor among you and are in leadership over you in the Lord, and give you instruction … regard them very highly in love because of their work" **(1 Thessalonians 5:12,13).**

Instead of viewing your church leaders as police, view them as those whom the Word of God has commissioned to "keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account" **(Hebrews 13:17).** Promote the feeling of family in your church where ministers are expected to admonish the unruly in love and share responsibility with the mature. Incoming leadership should desire to be mentored by outgoing leadership. When a newly ordained leader does not value the norms or practices of the previous leadership, most likely he honors himself too much.

Weaker ones – "Live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, *since she is* a woman; and show her honor" **(1 Peter 3:7).**

Husbands honor their wives by doing the physically demanding things around the home. They are called to protect them emotionally and physically. In a church, deference should be given to the weaker conscience even if it is a minority. Democracy is not the rule of law in God's kingdom; "the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak" **(Romans 15:1).**

Husbands – "The wife *must see to it* that she respects her husband" **(Ephesians 5:33).**

Wives can build the family unit and inspire their children to have a high standard for honor by listening and submitting to their husbands with a meek and quiet spirit. This will create a generation that builds and establishes a godly line that brings God's Kingdom peace and life.

How Honor is Shown

First of all, since honor is the value that you put on the other person because of their God-given position or role, it is something given from the heart. The actions or words that show this honor should stem from a sincere heart that esteems the worth of an individual highly. The opposite of honor would be to treat someone in a demeaning or indifferent way.

Churches and societies that retain honor will find it helpful to use titles to express their heartfelt esteem for each other. Using titles like uncle, aunt, father, mother, pastor, brother, and sister reminds us of how we should feel about the other person. Peter makes a point of mentioning that "Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" **(1 Peter 3:6).** This title reminded Sara of her position and responsibility in relation to her husband.

We also show honor through the things we do. The Israelites were commanded to "stand up in the presence of the gray-headed" **(Leviticus 19:32).** Rising from your seat to shake hands and giving your seat to someone older is a demonstration of honor. Opening a door and letting your wife go in first shows honor to her as well. These seemingly small gestures show a culture that has a proper concept of roles and position.

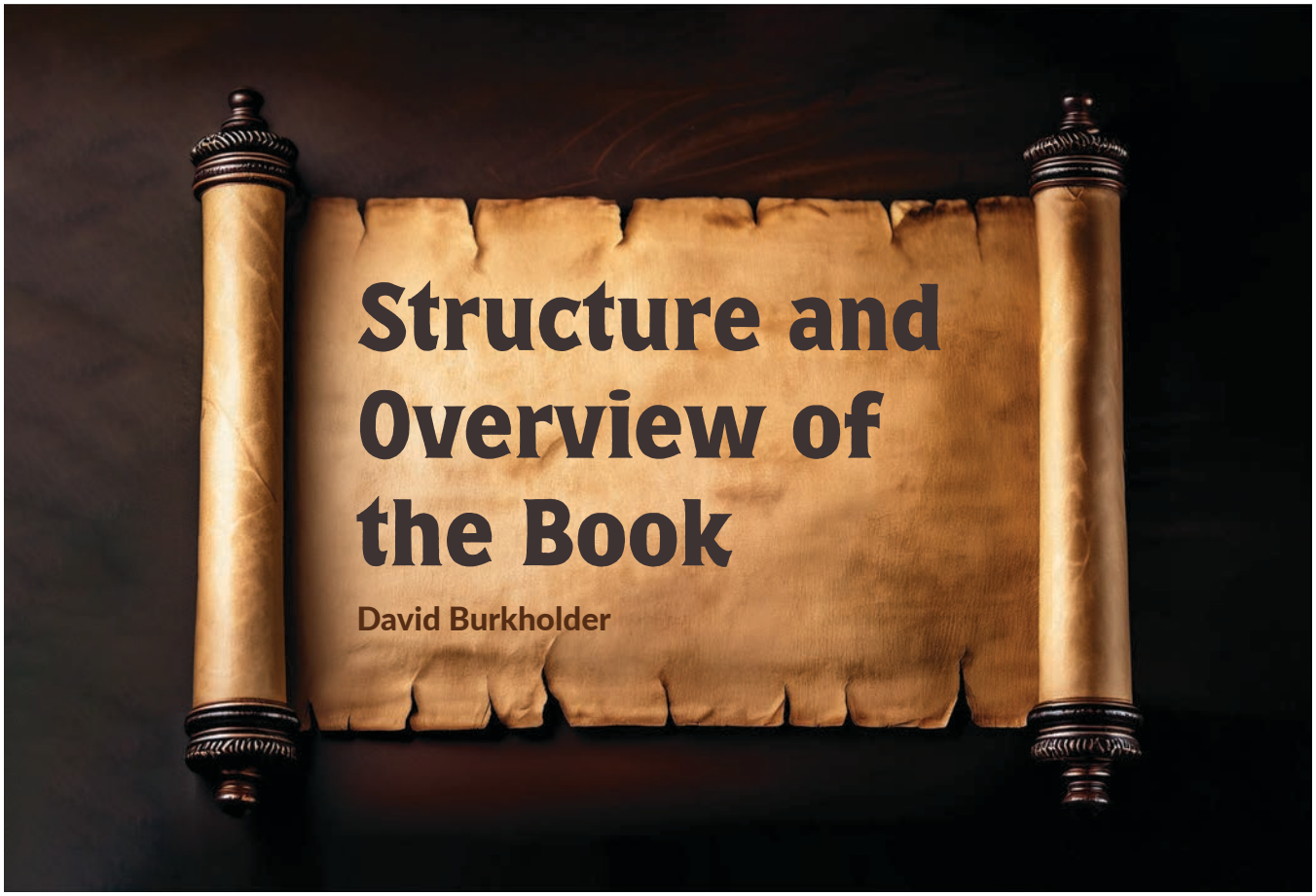
When a person is in a position that merits honor, then we should defer our opinions to them. When church leaders propose a course of action, that course of action should be respected over and above the opinion of others. We are to esteem them highly for the sake of their work or duty that has been given to them by God. After all, it is they that must give an account. Scripture furthermore says that "the elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor" **(1 Timothy 5:17).** Those who have spent years of service should be consulted and considered when decisions are to be made. This is especially true in Anabaptist churches where no significant financial recompense is given to the ministry.

Conclusion

Satan has been laboring incessantly since creation to destroy God-ordained authority. When people dishonor authority by words or action, they are ceding territory to the Destroyer. The blessings of honoring the laws of succession that come by "the laying on of hands by the presbytery" **(1 Timothy 4:14)** are worth seeking. Authority should not be taken but given; otherwise it is dishonorable. In recent history, children are deemed to be out from under their parents' authority at age 18, whereas ancient societies like the Israelites, Romans, and Greeks would have considered this dishonorable. The roles of husband and wife have come under obvious attack as well. Sadly, once a single generation neglects to practice honor properly, it is quite possible that the coming generation will accept this as the new norm and will find the true biblical practice to be strange.

Honor is such an attractive attitude of the heart. Those who practice it will find that it will bring gentleness and willingness to the hearts of those to whom they show honor. If you address a policeman with the term "sir" or "officer," you may find him kinder. If you address your minister as "pastor" or "brother" your attitude and his could turn your relationship into a greater blessing.

JLB | *Idaho*



Structure and Overview of the Book

David Burkholder

"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." *(Romans 15:4)*

Before reading a book, we like to know some things about it: who is the author, what is the book about, the setting and nature of the book, and who the main characters are. We read the inside cover flap, testimonials from reviewers, and a blurb about the author. All of this helps us gain a clear perspective of the content and intent of the book and stimulates our interest in reading it.

Approaching the Bible should be no different. We need to know the Author, the structure and purpose of The Book, main characters, their roles, and why it was written. Having this broad understanding will help us, as we read, to see its purpose and how the various and diverse elements of The Book fit together to bring understanding of God's purpose in giving it to us.

In this article, we will look at the structure of the Bible and do a brief overview of its contents. This will provide a general understanding of The Book and provide background for reading for the greatest profit.

The Bible is divided into two main sections: the Old Testament containing 39 books, and the New Testament with 27. There are a total of 1189 chapters penned by 36-40 men. The original writings were penned in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. It was first translated into English by John Wycliffe in AD 1382-1388. In 1535, Miles Coverdale printed the first English edition. Let's look at the structure and contents of The Book.

The Old Testament:

Luke 24:27 "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

The first five books of the Bible, known as the Jewish Pentateuch, were written by Moses around 1400 BC, and are focused on the creation, the first peoples of the earth, the coming of sin, the destruction of the wicked world in the flood, and the repopulation of the earth by Noah's descendants. We also note God's

calling of Abram and the establishment of the Jewish race as God's chosen people. We follow their move into Egypt, their exodus from Egyptian bondage, and their establishment as a nation at Mt. Sinai.

Following the Pentateuch, the Book of Joshua portrays the conquest of Canaan, the Promised Land, and the division of the land among the tribes. The Book of Judges shows Israel's departure from following God, the punishment He allowed from their ungodly neighbors, and the deliverance He provided by raising up Judges to deliver His people.

In first Samuel we note the beginning of the kings of Israel, which theme carries through first and second Chronicles and first and second Kings. God then allows Israel to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians for their failure to heed the warnings of the prophets—Isaiah to Malachi. (We should note here that the Old Testament is not arranged in chronological order). Ezra and Nehemiah record the return from captivity and the rebuilding of the Temple and the nation.

Between the record of the failures of Israel to follow God's will and the thundering warnings of the prophets, we find inspiration in the sweet songs of the Psalmists and the encouraging wisdom of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

The books of the Prophets are divided into two categories: major and minor. This is due to their length, not the weight of their messages. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel are considered the Major Prophets, while the Minor Prophets are Hosea through Malachi. As you read the Prophets, you will discover that mixed with the prophetic warnings there are also messages of hope for repentant Israel's future.

The Inter-Testament period:

From Malachi's prophecy to the beginning of the New Testament, there are 400 years of silence from God. No prophets, no further word. But God was not asleep. He was working in the background to prepare for the coming of His Son, Jesus, the Messiah. He was using other nations to prepare the way.

This 400-year period was a time of both stabilization and change for the Jewish Nation. The Persians under King Darius had allowed the Jews to return home from their 70-year captivity in Babylon, rebuild the Temple, and establish themselves again as a nation.

Then in 331 BC the Greeks under Alexander the Great conquered and ruled Palestine. Their contribution to God's plan was the establishing of the Greek language as the universal language of commerce and



The Maccabean Revolt: Jonathan Apphus destroys the temple of the pagan god Dagon.

thus used throughout the vast empire established by Alexander. Again, this was a significant part of God's plan to forward the message of salvation throughout the then-known world in a common tongue.

The Maccabean revolt in 167 BC returned home rule to the Jews for about 100 years. Then in 63 BC, the Roman General Pompey captured Jerusalem, ending Jewish self-rule and establishing Roman rule for approximately 700 years. The great Roman contribution to God's plan for broadening the outreach of Christianity was the building of roads throughout the area of their rule. Their system of roads provided early Christians with ease of travel and thus enhanced the spread of Christianity. God was at work in those silent 400 years preparing the world for the coming of Jesus and His message of salvation for all men.

Religious and internal political leadership during this Intertestamental period shifted from the prophets to religious parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were legalists—adhering to the minute details of the law—which they themselves interpreted and promoted. The Sadducees were the elite, aristocratic class. They were the merchants, and from whom came the High Priests who ruled the religious life of the people. The Sanhedrin, composed of 70 men, plus

the High Priest, was the highest court in the land. Both the Pharisees and Sadducees figured prominently in opposition to Jesus' ministry and played a significant role in His death.

The New Testament:

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

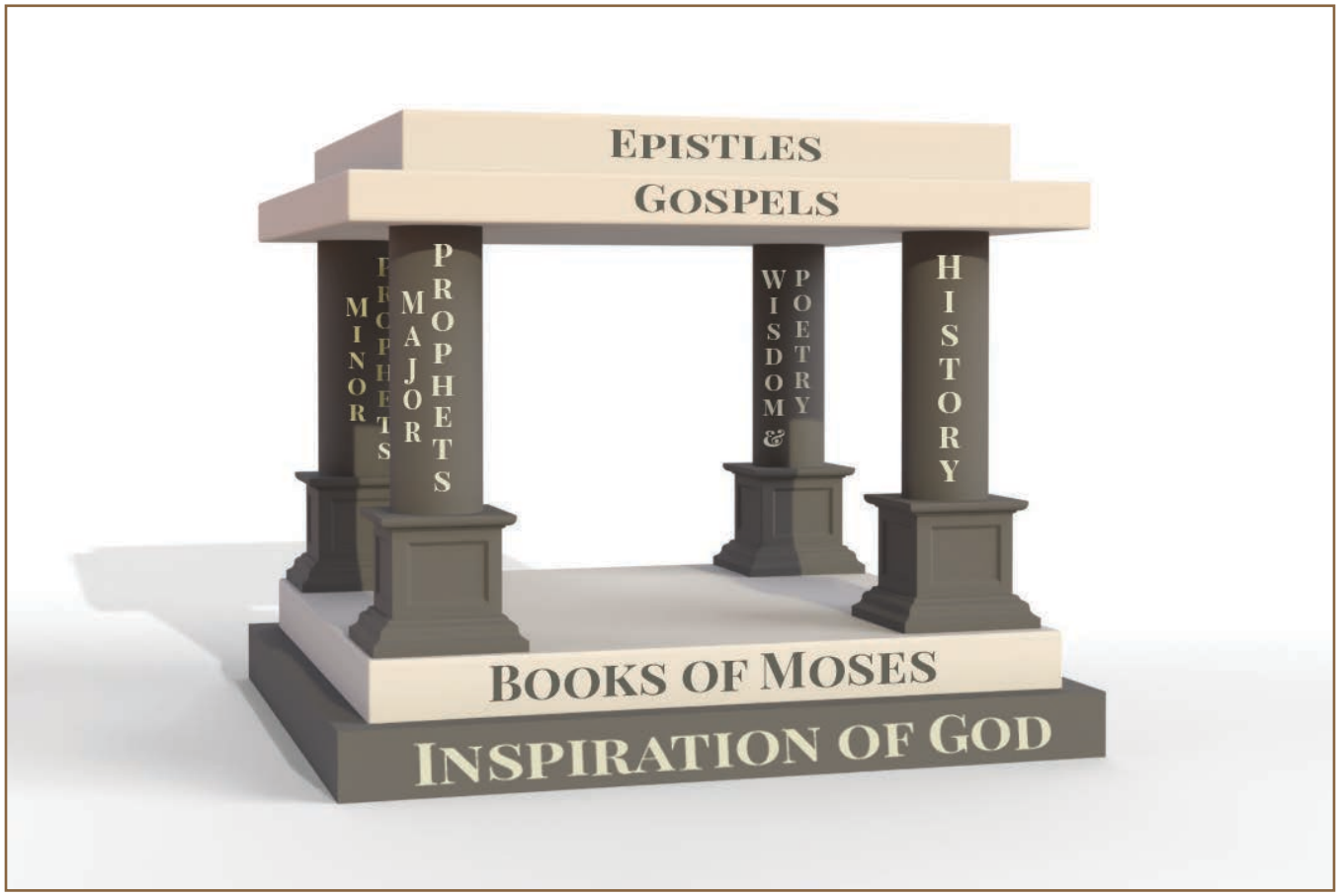
The 27 books of the New Testament begin with the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They cover the coming of Jesus to earth to become man's Saviour, and the three and one-half years of His ministry. We also note Jesus' acceptance by the common people who were eager for a message that spoke to their hearts and was not cumbered with the plethora of regulations imposed by the Pharisees. We also note the growing hatred of the religious leaders who eventually plotted to take Jesus' life.

Following the Gospels, the Book of Acts describes the beginning of the Christian church at Pentecost and its subsequent spread throughout the then-known world by dedicated men such as Paul, Peter, and others of the disciples. The rest of the New Testament, from Romans to Jude, are epistles to various churches or people outlining the doctrines of the Gospel and containing instructions for living the Christian life. The New Testament closes with the Book of Revelation, which depicts in symbolic imagery the events of the end times and the final spiritual warfare between God and Satan, showing Satan's utter defeat and the establishing of God's eternal kingdom with His faithful followers.

Having now gained an overview of the Bible, its structure, contents, and purposes, we will next take a look at ways of reading The Book to one's best advantage and the enhancing of our relationship with God and our fellow believers. That will be examined in a following article.

John 5:39 "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me."

D.L.B.



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

"Good choices often lead to more good choices. Bad choices often lead to more bad choices."

Jeff Lee – Hephzibah Mennonite Church



SAPPHIRE

""Submission to Jesus Christ is worship."

Josh Good – Hartwell Mennonite Church



AGATE

"Joseph was a blessing to others while enslaved and waiting on God."

Matt M. Landis – Bethel Mennonite Church



EMERALD

"What we cannot see is much larger than what we can see."

Conrad Horst – Burkeland Mennonite Church



ONYX

"The work of the church is not evangelism but discipleship."

Nathan Bange – South Atlantic Mennonite Conference



RUBY

"True spirituality is not a checkoff list."

Wendell Heatwole – Burkeland Mennonite Church



CHRYSOLITE

"Grace given ends in a harvest of more grace and thanksgiving."

Duane Strite – Hephzibah Mennonite Church



BERYL

"The desert always has an end."

Randy Miller – Hartwell Mennonite Church



TOPAZ

"If we want to grow in Christ, we need to accept personal responsibility."

Conrad Stover – Burkeland Mennonite Church



TURQUOISE

"In things impossible, God is fully capable."

Ryan Keller – Burkeland Mennonite Church



JACINTH

"There is a huge blessing in knowing that God's plans are higher than ours."

Royal Barnhart – Burkeland Mennonite Church



AMETHYST

"We cannot pass something on to others if we do not have it ourselves."

Austin Hege – Burkeland Mennonite Church

Train Up a Child

By Burton Heatwole, Sr.

Burton and Deborah Heatwole have parented ten children who, by God's grace, speak respectfully, listen to their elders' advice, and are a joy to be around. In this article, Burton speaks with the well-earned authority gained by experience.

This article is based on a topic given at both the Hephzibah and Burkeland congregations in Georgia.



"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you. ... so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ... You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." **Deuteronomy 6:1-7.**

Parents Take Charge

The first thing you must remember as a parent is that you are in charge. It is up to you to make decisions for your children when they are young—at least until age four. Do not give them open-ended choices by asking questions such as "What do you want to eat?" "What do you want to wear?" or "What do you want to play?"

If you want, give them two options, no more. "Red or blue? Eggs or oatmeal?" Do not let them demand what they want.

Demand Obedience

Genesis 18:19. "I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice."

Require unconditional obedience from your children. They should look at you and answer respectfully, ideally by saying "Yes, sir," or "Yes, ma'am." Teach them to come as soon as they can crawl or walk.

Never allow a child to respond to a command with the word "No." If they say "No," do not ever allow it to stand without consequences. Stop your life—regardless of the context—and discipline until the child complies. If you do not train them to respect your authority, they will never learn to respect other authority in their lives—school, church, work, law enforcement.

Remember, you cannot demand their respect while disrespecting the authority in your own life. Some parents lose moral initiative by not practicing what they teach; this weakens their hands in discipline.

Be Consistent

Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Consistency is of utmost importance. You must expect the same consistent behavior from your children and have similar consequences for disobedience. Regardless of the location, whether it is home, church, the car, Walmart, or at the restaurant with friends on a special occasion, when the child does not obey, remove them if necessary and solve the problem.

People expect children to misbehave, but what is truly embarrassing is a parent who allows a misbehaving child to disrupt the situation. "Remove and distract" is not a technique to train a toddler. Taking them outside to run about is rarely helpful. It only delays the inevitable. Separate seating in church for a time may be helpful in keeping the child from migrating back and forth from one parent to the other.

Bringing a suitcase full of toys, snacks, books, and other distractions ignores the problem and causes both parents and the child frustration and anger. One book

and one toy should be enough to keep a child satisfied when they are expected to be quiet.

Communicate Clearly

It is important to have a clearly communicated strategy that a misbehaving child understands. The child should know that if they disrupt the peace, the only reason we will get up and go out is to give them a spanking. And we stay out until both the parent and the child can come back in smiling.

The child can understand this ultimatum from the time they are around one year old. When the parent asks the child, "Do you want to go out?" the child understands that if they go out, he will receive a spanking. So, he shakes his head "No."

The person slow to understand this standard is usually the parent, not the child. It is always a test of the child's willingness to obey, not an inability to sit still, play quietly, or look around. The problem is usually the parent who does not want to miss something, is tired and does not want to deal with it, or does not want to deal with it right now.

Loving Sacrificially

You must sacrifice your wants and desires if you are going to honor God as a parent. "Sleep is overrated—babies are not!" Having a "bad day" does not relieve you of your responsibility to discipline and nurture your child. You are representing God to them. How you respond and relate to them is the model they will consider to be "normal."

We are called to show sacrificial love that represents Jesus to our children. We do not have the option of giving a child the "cold shoulder" because we are irritated with them.

Understand that this is a short and very demanding phase in your life—changing diapers, chasing children, feeding, dressing, bathing, training. Embrace it! It is God's will for you right now. You are shaping future adults, moms and dads, pastors, teachers, missionaries. Being a godly parent is the greatest opportunity for lifelong impact and significance.

Nurturing Positively

Ephesians 6:4. "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Love them, delight in them, and talk to them a lot!

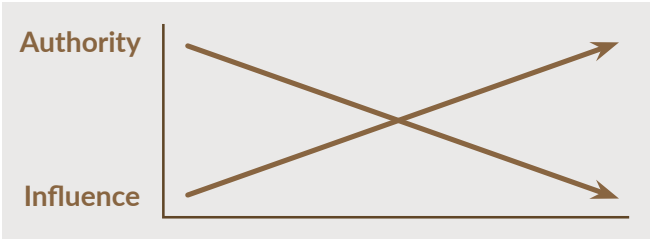
Learning to say 'yes' more than 'no' can help create positive children. So much of the early years are spent setting boundaries—we say "no" a lot! Focus on and create opportunities to reframe conversations so you can say "Yes." For instance, "You can ride your bicycle on the dirt road, but not on the highway."

Another illustration could be when a child drags a storybook to you in the middle of your work project and asks you to read it; say, "Yes!" Or when the child comes asking for a cookie at an inappropriate time, say, "Yes, you may have a snack, but we are going to have cheese cubes this time."

When the eight-year-old comes to tell you a 'knock, knock' joke for the seventh time, do not say, "No, I have already heard it." Say "Yes," and listen to them attentively. Your smile can be genuine if you focus on the love for your child and not the corny joke you have heard too many times already.

Keep a Vision of the Future

As your child matures, the approach to your child should shift from using God-given authority to using godly influence. It is beautiful to see children following their parents' teaching not because of punishment but because they embrace their parents' values. The illustration below shows how a parent should gradually move into influencing their children as they move into adulthood instead of being authoritative.



Strain in adolescent and teenage relationships begins when the child is very young and does not feel the delight of the parents. Commands, demands, and discipline without listening, loving, and conversing will lead to walls in the future.

Look them in the eyes and smile at them! Ruffle their hair when you walk beside them at play. Let them know you think they are great! Make the most important things in their lives important to you. Let the dishes be dirty—take the time to stop, sit down, play or talk with them. Park the planter or truck because there will always be work to be done, but there will not always be little children in your house.

Inspired by "Shepherding a Child's Heart" by Ted Tripp



Transformative Love

Jeff Byler

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
(Romans 5:8)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, who came "to seek and to save that which was lost" **(Luke 19:10).** *In this article, we will look at two elements of Christ's love: compassion and truth, and its power to transform sinners into saints. "The love of Christ compels us"* **(2 Corinthians 5:14)** *to speak the truth that will set men free from sin, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus"* **(Colossians 1:28).**

Compassionate Love

One afternoon, I discovered an old enemy of mine, the skunk, trapped in an uncovered manhole that was used to access a water valve. I had tangled with one of these before, and the experience had left me feeling defiled and violated. Upon seeing each other, we were both alarmed. I stepped back quickly, not wishing to offend or ruffle his delicate temperament.

The skunk could not get out of the manhole. This made the water valves inaccessible. Like the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan, I wanted to pass by on the other side of the road but was confronted by the fact that the skunk's predicament was my predicament. Reaching down and kindly pulling him out of the hole was not an option on the table. Leaving the skunk to die would leave a permanent odor in the manhole that would assault my senses every time that I needed to access the water valve. Besides, I reasoned, it would not be charitable to let him die of hunger and thirst in this hole.

Finally, a plan formed in my mind. Gingerly, I pushed a plank into the manhole, endeavoring not to irritate the skunk's explosive personality. *I was being kind to this skunk*, I thought to myself. His life would be preserved if he would just see my generous offer and climb out of this pit and save himself from certain death.

The next morning, I went anxiously to the manhole to see if the skunk had found the solution that I had offered him. Sure enough, he was gone. Deep down in my heart, though, I knew that my concern was not so much for the life of the skunk as it was for my own comfort. The skunk and I were rid of each other, and we were both the happier to not have to be in each other's company anymore.

This incident made me think of the way that I love people that are difficult. It made me wonder who really are *the least of these* that Jesus talked about in Matthew 25. I could see times in my life when I had treated people respectfully and distantly, just like I had that skunk. God was calling me to a higher expression of love. Through Christ, God transforms his enemies into sons and daughters.

It's so nice to help people who appreciate it and are thankful for what you do for them, but there are some that we prefer just to keep at arm's length. It reminds me of Jesus' words: "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good

to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same … But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" **(Luke 6:32-36).**

The Compassion of Christ

When it comes to love, we have no greater example than our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to this wicked earth and subjected himself to the envy, treachery, and selfishness of all mankind and ultimately gave his life for our redemption. This He did while we were yet enemies in our minds and assaulting His holy law with our trespasses.

What is more astounding about the unfathomable kindness of Christ is the fact that he did not just proffer us a solution for our condemnation (like I had with that skunk) but made us accepted in the beloved and set His love upon us, desiring our fellowship. Anyone who understands a fraction of God's holiness and man's sinfulness can grasp, though limitedly, the immeasurable love that God extends to us. It would be akin to coming to a kingdom of skunks to befriend them.

One of the first steps in being a loving person is recognizing that God is the source of love and that, by nature, all of us humans are selfish. **1 John 4:7 and 8** say, "everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." No human being can truly love without knowing God, and for that reason, we should grow continually in the knowledge of God and His love. This is essential for us to express God's love in the church and in the world. We need this love to promote righteousness and peace in the Kingdom of God. If our perfect God shows tender mercies to man, how much more should imperfect man show mercy to others.

Compassion to Foes and Friends

Yes, Christians must separate themselves from close fellowship with the ungodly, but our hearts should always be disposed to show God's love to them. We desire that all would come to repentance and perfect fellowship with God and each other. This should be the ultimate goal; it is what makes us like Christ. Christ's love compels us to the work of reconciliation.

Early Anabaptists practiced this redeeming love courageously toward their enemies. Dirk Willems, famously turned back to rescue his persecutor, who fell through the ice while pursuing him. This is a compelling demonstration of loving our enemies. By overcoming evil with good, the sons of the Most High can win the sinner, and the sinner can "be rescued from the domain of darkness, and [be] transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son" **(Colossians 1:13).**

But sometimes even loving our brothers has its own difficulties. When we love our enemies, we do not expect love in return. We do, however, expect our brother to have our back. It is difficult to love our brother if he is unfaithful or selfish.

How we love those that are closest to us can reveal self-interest or selflessness in us, almost more than how we treat a stranger. The constant irritation of repeated small offenses can challenge the depth of our love as much as the hatred of a distant enemy. We can also pass by on the other side of the aisle at church to avoid those we do not wish to make contact with. This is not the level of brotherly love that the sons of the Most High should be aspiring to.

Proverbs 18:19 says, "A brother who is offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and quarrels are like the bars of a citadel." But we must pursue peace with all men to really be sons of the Most High. We may think that time will erase offenses committed, but in Matthew 18, Jesus asks us to communicate with our brother, make things right, and forgive from the heart.

Love Rejoices with the Truth

Jesus not only showed compassion to us but transforms us through the word of truth. The transforming love of God unabashedly proclaims that the truth will make us free and that lies will lead to destruction. Love "does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth" **(1 Corinthians 13:6).** In seeking peaceful fellowship, it realizes that the offense of sin must stop.

Transformation is needed for this to happen and is possible through "the love of God [that] has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" **(Romans 5:5).** The Spirit of God in the repentant sinner—now a saint—causes "the requirement of the Law [to] be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." **(Romans 8:4).** The fruit of the Spirit is love, and true love lives in harmony with God's Law, and the offense of sin ceases.

Biblical love embraces the truth of God's Law and conforms to it. In fact, the Law of God is an expression of love. The two greatest commandments are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our

neighbor as ourselves; "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" **(Matthew 22:40).** Paul said, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law" **(Romans 13:10).** Dozens of other verses in both testaments link love to God's Law and man's obedience to it.

The truth contained in the Law of God is inextricably attached to true love. Any act that breaks God's commands or approves of disobedience is not love at all but a false imposter. Those who bear false witness against their neighbor do not love their neighbor. Those who commit adultery do not love their spouse. Those who covet their brother's possessions, abilities, or position do not love their brother. Those who dishonor their parents are not loving.

False Love

True love's commitment to truth is what sets it apart from the love and peace that the world and false church have to offer. Love cannot be passive to the offense of sin; it wants to transform itself and every man into the perfect image of Christ. It cannot practice the tolerant false love of the world. The world and the false church speak of compassion but ignore the fact that lawlessness is not loving.

When righteousness and truth are no longer included in the expression of love, this love turns into abuse. Scripture teaches that "we love the children of God when we love God and follow His commandments" **(1 John 5:2).** When obedience to God is compromised, love is also compromised.

Some Western nations have prosecuted or endeavored to create laws that condemn passages of Scripture as "hate speech". In this pursuit of compassion, truth is denied, and in the process, biblical love is replaced by a satanic imitation that does not produce life but death.

Some modern pastors teach against the doctrine of eternal hell as being unloving and are fearful of speaking out against sin because it is considered to be un-Christlike. True love warns that we will be justified or condemned according to our words and actions. This is what Jesus taught throughout the Gospels. True love and sin cannot co-exist.

Transformative Love Teaches the Truth

Many of the prophets, and ultimately even the Son of God Himself, lost their lives at the hands of people who were offended at the loving message requesting repentance. The most striking example of this may be that of Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

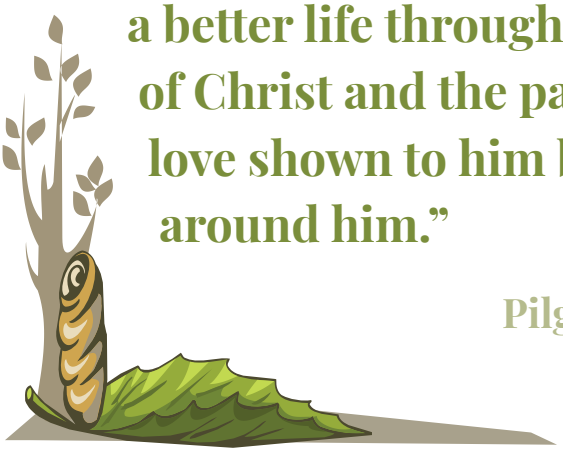
Acts 7 states that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit, so we know that his words were spoken in love because love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We are struck by the fact that his words were bold, truthful, and difficult to accept.

His final words to them were: "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels and yet did not keep it." We cannot believe these words to be unloving because love rejoices in the truth, yet these words ignited the hatred of



"As long as a person remains in this life, no matter how wicked he may be, he may be converted to a better life through the grace of Christ and the patience and love shown to him by those around him."

Pilgram Marpeck
Expose (1531)



the Jews into such a rage that they gnashed their teeth at Stephen, stopped their ears, and stoned him to death.

Paul instructs Timothy to "correct, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires" **(2 Timothy 4:2,3).** Pastors need to speak the truth in love, boldly and fervently. Those who listen should encourage their pastors to speak the truth courageously as well.

Speaking the truth of the Gospel is mostly a positive message. It is about the Good News of salvation provided by a God who lavishly offers complete forgiveness to a sinful world.

Brother Andrew, in his autobiography, *God's Smuggler,* tells the story of preaching to refugees from communist nations who had never heard the gospel. Tears ran down their faces, which were transformed from bitterness and despair to radiant joy and peace as they drank in the marvelous truth of Christ's great love. Their personal hygiene and appearance were also changed without even specific instruction.

Transformative Love Disciplines

One of the tools of love is discipline. Since love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, it takes steps to resist bad behavior. **Proverbs 13:24** says, "He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently." When I was about 6 years old, my father paddled me because of a lie that I had told him. I don't believe that I ever lied to him again since then. This loving discipline was transformative in my life. The same is true in a brotherhood. Discipline given for the purpose of bringing an errant brother to repentance can be very effective.

When dealing with sin in the church or family, the loving approach is like a surgeon's knife that benevolently cuts and removes cancerous tissue that can ultimately cause death. Indifference will only hasten destruction and could cause many to be defiled. Delaying discipline also minimizes the transgression; "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil" **(Ecclesiastes 8:11).** Sometimes an uncertain stand is taken, for instance, on the subject of divorce and remarriage. Condoning sin in spite of God's judgment against it is not as loving as disciplining against it. This is how we can show how serious we believe it is to disobey God.

Transformative Love is Faithful

We may think of transformation as an instantaneous process, but sanctification takes patience. It may be tempting to give a one-time rebuke to the sinner or shun him completely out of our lives, but one outstanding attribute of love is long-suffering faithfulness. The faithfulness of the Godhead to the sinner is almost unbelievable. God bears patiently with the sinner, longing for his repentance. He endures the reproach that the sinner's life is to His holy name. Like the prodigal's Father, God looks down the road anxiously, longing for even the vilest of offenders to return.

This should inspire His children to never give up on the sinner and to "admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone" **(1 Thessalonians 5:14).**

One of the most inspiring prophets is the weeping prophet, Jeremiah. Here was a man that understood the faithful love of God, for he stated: "The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness" **(Lamentations 3:22,23).** This understanding of God's faithfulness empowered Jeremiah's own faithfulness to a people who treated him with spite, malice, and treachery. But he continued to weep, admonish, and decry their wickedness.

We need to show God's love with kindness, truthfulness, righteousness, and faithfulness to the lost world around us, as well as to the prodigals that leave our churches. Love demands that we act; indifference is destructive. If a prodigal leaves our congregation, we should not breathe a sigh of relief but remember that our Lord left the 99 to search for the lost one.

Summary

Love shows compassion to the ungrateful and wayward but will not compromise in speaking the truth. This love is contagious and changes others into lovers of God as well. It endeavors to cover a multitude of sins; not by overlooking sin but by transforming those that abuse and offend into brothers that build and heal. "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" **(James 5:19, 20).**

THE PROPHET ELIJAH

The Storyteller

In Chapter 2, we continue our imaginative retelling of Elijah's life. This story probes into Elijah's feelings of loneliness and despair and draws on the wilderness testings of the Israelites, David, and Jesus.

When we stay shut up for long periods of time without any human contact, strong feelings of dejection and rejection can overwhelm us. Richard Wurmbrand, while locked up in a Romanian prison, put it like this:

"I don't wish to share only the outward physical suffering—the hunger and torture—but to share also what is far worse: the inner tempest, the doubts and the moments of despair ... I had no Bible, no books of theology, no Christian fellowship to check whether my thoughts were right." [1]

I believe Elijah struggled in his wilderness experience with similar feelings of rejection and despair as the apostle Paul did. Paul says in II Corinthians 7:5, "We were afflicted on every side: conflicts on the outside, fears inside" **(2 Corinthians 7:5).** *Or Elijah in his human passions, surely must have felt like Paul did when he said, "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me"* **(2 Timothy 4:16).**

This story begs you to share in Elijah's struggles so that you, too, know God is ever present in times of loneliness and despair. The ravens will come for you as they did for Elijah.



CHAPTER 2: PROPHET IN THE WILDERNESS

God sent me to the Brook Cherith, not far from my hometown, Tishbe. This wilderness held adventurous memories from my youth. I could wander there for days without seeing another human being, few animals,



and maybe some ravens passing by to check if I were dead or alive.

I knew Brook Cherith would be a perfect spot to stay hidden from Ahab; this deep gorge hid many spots accessible only to those who were physically fit and unafraid to descend into them. Caves etched into the bluffs offered shelter from the intense heat. I never ceased to marvel at how Brook Cherith ran down through that wilderness. It seemed that only God knew where it came from; yet its cool, clear water often refreshed me when I traveled there.

Strangely, Israel and Assyria contested this scarcely populated region. For this reason, lawlessness prevailed, and roaming bands took advantage of any man brave enough to travel it. But with the ravens bringing in food as God had promised, I knew I would be completely undetectable.

The first months at Brook Cherith were wonderful. The nights passed quickly. Long and dreamy summer days passed in blissful fellowship with God. Only then did I realize how much I needed this rest from preaching. Spiritual battles had worn down my physical body more than I realized.

Though this wasteland was at first a sanctuary of safety and worship, its steep walls soon became to me a veritable prison. The Accuser soon came to stand against me. At first, I did not recognize him for who he was; sometimes his voice was soft and persuasive, at other times he roared like a lion ready to devour.

1 Wurmbrand, Richard. *If Prison Walls Could Speak*.

After reflecting on the Israelites traveling through the wilderness and remembering the psalms David wrote when he fled from Saul, I came to understand: the wilderness is a place of testing and temptation. It is where we learn to trust only in the sustenance of the Most High God and where the enemy plies us with his wiles to get us to doubt, lose hope, and disobey God's commands.

I am almost ashamed to write some of the temptations and mental torments I went through during this time. But keep in mind, I had no brother or friend to talk to and share my mind. Above all things, at Brook Cherith, I was alone … all alone.

Reality fragmented into pieces and joined itself with my imagination. I found it hard to assure myself of the truth. Entirely alone and left to my own thoughts, they became a whirlwind. I struggled to control a downward spiral. I have heard of some men who were confined alone in prison and lost their sanity. I feared I, too, might lose my sanity. Jehovah and His Word comforted and sustained me.



Then the ravens came and I knew that Jehovah-Jireh cared for me.

The ravens brought food regularly—every morning a piece of meat and a piece of bread. I marveled at this great blessing. However, this was also the point of a great struggle in the wilderness at Cherith. Man can live healthily on bread, meat, and water. But one day, while eating my daily ration, I recalled the onions and thick steaks of beef that we had in the land of Gilead.

I remembered sitting with my family at the table. Visions of my mother's loving smile and delicious platters of warm food stirred my heart. I am ashamed to say it, but my thoughts turned to unthankfulness. Food I craved filled my ungrateful mind.

In the evening, when the ravens returned with bread and meat, the thought of these vile birds bringing me food entered my mind. I took the food and knelt to pray. I could not pray. I could not approach the Holy One of Israel in such a state of mind. I had spent a day focusing on how much better the food was in Tishbe. Around and around my mind went, pitying myself instead of entering God's fellowship with praise.

I was convicted of my ungratefulness. I prayed audibly and confessed my lack of thankfulness. Then I thanked Him for the food, the ravens, the brook, and His gracious provision. I resolved in my heart to be grateful and to trust in God to meet all my needs. He was Jehovah-Jireh, the God who provides. *Help me, Lord, to be faithful.*

The cravings did not end; I faced them every day. I learned that thankfulness and trust in God's sufficiency took away the power of the cravings. I learned to humbly accept the yoke that God put on me and to realize that He wanted me to pass through these trials.



As time went on, loneliness shut me in like the walls of a prison. There was no one to encourage me, no word of hope, no smiling face. I had only the comforting words of the psalmist to meditate on daily.

I knew I had to hide because even my old friends were willing to turn me over to Ahab. The thought of being forsaken and hated by most of mankind was a wound that returned constantly. I wanted to love and be loved. This wound of rejection by former friends caused me to turn to God, my strength and my only companion.

I remembered a psalm of David we sang as a family, "My eyes are continually toward the LORD, for He will pluck my feet out of the net. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses." [2] It comforted me to realize that David was beloved of God and yet felt lonely and afflicted. God allowed the faith of His children to be tested almost to the breaking point. I determined to keep the faith to the end.

My mind returned to a conversation with my old friends who spoke of Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah as being a great speaker. It occurred to me that while I was now a nobody in the desert, my old acquaintance from my youth, Zedekiah, was enjoying the praise of all Israel for his teaching and preaching.

The Adversary flattered me, *"You are as good a preacher as Zedekiah. Here you are a castaway, and Zedekiah is making a name for himself. While you are reviled, he is praised. You should leave this empty wasteland and go to Samaria and show him a thing or two."*

The injustice of the whole situation weighed on my mind, and I burned inside. It seemed to me Zedekiah prospered in his iniquity while I was abandoned. I caught myself. *"Think of Joseph,"* another voice told me. *"He too was abandoned by those he loved, but he waited on God and entrusted his steps to Him. Look at what God does to those who wait on his timing: they are blessed."*

I remembered Saul, who did not wait for Samuel to come, but offered a sacrifice himself. Besides this, Saul sought the honor of the people and not God. That had been the beginning of his downfall. I resolved to wait on God. I told myself, I would rather have his approval and be a 'nobody' alone in the wilderness than to be rejected by Him and have the praise of all Israel. But still … .

Then the ravens came and I knew again that Jehovah-Jireh cared for me.



Having won these skirmishes with loneliness and doubt, the Tempter came with the sneakiest of all my temptations. *"You are pleasing God; you are a good man, Elijah. You are a special person, gifted and righteous. Because of your talents and holiness, you are here in this desert. You are the only righteous man left in all Israel."* A smug feeling came into my heart. Thoughts of all my good deeds came before me; momentarily I reveled in my own bravery and knowledge of God and His law.

Then it dawned on me: whenever man gives in to pride, he will soon fall. Man should not glory in his wisdom or strength, but only in the Lord. No, I was not good or spiritual in and of myself. I depended on God's favor.

When it seemed I had passed all the tests, self-accusations shifted and came in terrible frequency. The sins of my youth, my wandering thoughts, and my previous ungratefulness weighed me down like a heavy burden.

This time no comfort came from anywhere; my prayers seemed to fall from my lips to the ground instead of rising to heaven. Even He had abandoned me.

The Devil's jeering taunt haunted me. "*The voice that you thought was God was just a delusion."*

A fever I must have contracted from the water in the brook added to my misery. At night, I was troubled by dark dreams; in the day my thoughts turned constantly to the mistakes and sins of my past. They seemed to mount up to heaven as if God had turned His face in anger away from me. I cried out to God. Sometimes I broke into tears, thinking that not only was I rejected by all my friends and family, but even God had forsaken me here in this brutal wilderness.

2 Psalm 25:15-16.

I now see that after many months alone, my mind was playing tricks on me. The Deceiver had taken advantage of my loneliness. I walked dejectedly to the brook, my eyes fixed on the ground; the heat and fever addled my aching head. I washed my face with water and drank, but the water seemed dank and warm instead of cool and refreshing.

Then the ravens came and I knew Jehovah-Jireh had not forsaken me.



Days and weeks passed by. I persisted in meditating on the psalms of David. My soul was stirred as I sang or recited aloud the prayers of David and claimed them as my own: *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' These things I remember and pour out my soul within me."* [3] My soul was restored and hope built in my heart, but the Accuser would not stop; he incessantly plied me with the fiery darts of his lies.

I remembered the story of Job. Here was a man who felt like God had abandoned him. The Adversary tormented him with dreams and struck his body with sickness and murdered his children. His friends condemned him. Yet Job trusted in God.

But Satan mocked me with evil thoughts. "*You are not a saint like Job. You are not a man of integrity like him; you are a great sinner. Give up on God; he doesn't care. Go back to Tishbe and enjoy the pleasures that all your family and friends are enjoying.* But I could not betray my Lord and forfeit what was of eternal value for the temporal pleasures of this world.

Then I remembered what David said he felt like at one time. He had written, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* [4] Was it common for God's children to think that God had forsaken them? Somehow, within me I could not forsake what was fixed deep in my heart as true and valuable.

God was good; this was true, I reasoned. Yes, I knew I could trust in God, but I could not trust in myself. "*Trusting in yourself is not required,"* a softer voice whispered. This was true. I could trust in the goodness of God. God was merciful; God did not want even the wicked to die in their sin. He was not a God that would deceive a sincere seeker. I knew that my heart was set on pleasing God. *"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness".* [5]

I tossed and turned trying to sleep. The moon seemed to strike out at me at night like a bright lamp chasing away my rest. I awoke exhausted. In the day I hid in my dark cave. I continued to pray; I knew faith, not emotions or feelings, must guide my actions.

I lost track of the time that passed. Days, weeks, and months seemed all mixed together in one long, lonely, and troubled night. It had not rained, and the canyon was void of life. The brook was now a jumbled mass of rocks with a small trickling stream.

Was I crazy for waiting? What would happen when the stream dried up?

Then the ravens came, and I knew Jehovah-Jireh would make a way for me if I remained faithful to Him.

I knelt and prayed aloud, my voice cracked from disuse and seemed out of place in the quiet chasm. I poured out my soul to God and closed with the words: "I will serve you in the crowds. I will serve you in the wilderness. I will serve you in life and in death. Though you slay me, yet I will trust in you."

Then I felt the Presence. A gentle, refreshing breeze whispered up the still canyon, moving out the stifling heat and clearing my troubled thoughts. His Presence was pure and inexpressibly peaceful. I knew my every thought and every question was known from beginning to end. It was wonderful to be known so completely and loved despite the human weaknesses and passions that beset me. My heart that had been heavy and burdened now turned as light as a feather.

The still small voice spoke in its unmistakable tone with a message that brought hope to my soul. "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide food for you."

I rejoiced. God said, "GO." He did not need to tell me a second time. I was ready to leave this lonely place and go once more to be among people, even if they were foreigners and strangers to God's covenant with rebellious Israel.

– to be continued

3 Psalm 42:1-4.
4 Psalm 22:1.
5 Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23.

Morton Defeats the Pain of Surgery

By John Hudson Tiner

William Thomas Green Morton wanted to be a doctor. As the son of a penniless New England farmer, he couldn't afford medical studies. Instead, he took a course to be a dentist. In 1844 he settled in Boston with his bride, Elizabeth. She was 18 years old.

"I've not given up on a medical degree," he told her. "First I'll make enough money to build a house for you. Then I'll study medicine, too." Right away William Morton earned a good income. He designed a set of false teeth much better than any then in use. His dentures required patients to have all of their old teeth taken out. The prospect of such a dreadful experience scared away some of his paying customers.

"If only I could pull teeth painlessly," William Morton said. "I would become the richest dentist in Boston, perhaps in the entire world. But I've investigated, and nothing is suitable."

"What are you going to do?" his wife, Elizabeth, asked.

"Well," he hesitated. "If you could wait a bit longer for that beautiful house and fine clothes. . . ."

"Of course I can," she said.

"Then I'll attend medical school to learn how to relieve pain," Morton said. Quickly he added, "I'll keep my dentistry practice, too." Morton couldn't wait for the fall term to begin. He wanted to get a head start on his studies. "I'll hire a doctor to be my tutor," Morton decided.

Dr. Charles T. Jackson

He became the private medical student of Dr. Charles Jackson of Somerset Street. Dr. Jackson was one of the most colorful figures in Boston. He dressed as a dandy, attended parties in extravagant homes, and was a chemist, world traveler, and physician. He was also a non-stop talker. How the man talked! He could carry on an intelligent discussion about any subject under the sun.

Dr. Jackson's mind bubbled with ideas. Before he became the master of one subject, he jumped to another one. Right now, he was loudly proclaiming to the world that he, Dr. Charles T. Jackson, who had invented the telegraph.

"I explained the whole idea to Samuel Morse during an ocean voyage," Jackson charged. "Why, Morse is merely a portrait painter." Of course, a half-baked idea and a completed invention are entirely different. The conceited Jackson, however, wouldn't accept the difference. He claimed a half-dozen other ideas, too. The fact remained: few men in the world knew so much about as many different subjects as Jackson. William Morton learned a lot from Dr. Jackson.

A Lofty Idea

In the fall of 1844, William Morton entered the Harvard Medical School. One day he was led into the operating theater of the Massachusetts General Hospital to watch an amputation. While the surgery was being performed, the screams of the poor victim echoed in the operating theater. Some of the students watched stone-faced. Others turned their eyes away in horror.

Until then, William Morton had wanted a way to pull teeth painlessly to make money. This put a whole new light on the matter. He set his sights higher. He'd rid operating rooms of the screams of helpless patients.

After reading all he could on the subject, ether stood out as the likely candidate. Ether is a light, flammable liquid that evaporates easily. In the late 1820s, Michael Faraday, Davy's assistant, inhaled small amounts of the vapor and reported the effect. Yet, William Morton had already experimented with ether. The gas didn't seem to work.

"I'll try it one more time," William Morton decided. He brought up a rubber bag to hold the liquid. "First, I'll see what Dr. Jackson thinks of the idea." At first, William Morton tried to keep his research secret. Slowly, he led Dr. Jackson around to a discussion of gases that might deaden pain.

"Ether will do the job," Dr. Jackson said. He recited all the known facts about ether.

"I tried ether once," William Morton admitted, "but it didn't seem to work."

"You must use the pure diethyl ether," Dr. Jackson told him. "Buy it from Joseph Burnett. His apothecary is the only one that sells the pure grade." "This will never do. Ether eats right through rubber. Here, let me fix you up. Take this glass jar with a sponge in it."

Testing the Product

William Morton purchased the ether from Burnett's. He tried it out first on his pet dog. After putting the animal to sleep, he pricked it with a needle. The animal did not move. Moments later, the dog awoke, perfectly healthy. For 18 months, William Morton tested ether on animals.

Then he tested it on himself. He locked the door, seated himself in the dentist chair, and soaked a handkerchief with ether. He noticed the time and breathed deeply through the handkerchief. Suddenly he awoke. Once again he checked the time. "I was out for eight minutes," William Morton observed. "Now I must try it on a patient."

Late on the evening of September 30, 1846, Morton heard a pounding on his door. By the light streaming through the window, Morton saw the swollen and bandaged face of Eben Frost.

"Dr. Morton," Mr. Frost moaned. "You'll have to pull this tooth. I can't stand the pain of it any longer."

William Morton examined the man's swollen jaw. "Yes, the tooth will have to come out. I'll pull it at once."

When the patient saw the pliers for yanking the tooth, he fell back. "No . . ." he winced. "Oh, I can't bear the toothache or stand the pain of having it pulled. What am I going to do?"

William Morton comforted the man. "If you are willing, I have something that will put you into a kind of sleep. You'll not feel the extraction at all." Wordlessly, Eben Frost nodded. He took the chair. William gave him ether to inhale. Soon the man fell asleep.

William Morton grasped the tooth firmly. The tooth held. He strained at the effort. Morton pulled harder. The patient didn't even stir. Less than a minute later, the patient groaned and blinked his eyes open. He braced himself. "Well . . . when will you begin?"

"It's out," William Morton said. He showed the man the abscessed tooth held in the pliers.

The excited patient confessed, "I didn't feel a thing!"

That night William told Elizabeth about the experiment. The idea horrified her. "If he'd died, you'd be put in prison."

"He didn't die," Morton pointed out. "Besides, I tested it first on myself."

A Public Demonstration

Early in October, William went to Dr. John Warren's home. As head of Massachusetts General Hospital, he was the most respected surgeon in the United States. William Morton pleaded for the opportunity to demonstrate painless surgery.

"Such preparations have been tried before," Dr. John Warren pointed out. "None worked." The doctor's stern face softened. Almost in a whisper, he added, "Painless surgery is every doctor's dream. I've almost given up hope. Is it possible?"

William Morton rushed ahead. "This will work, I'm certain of it."

Now Dr. Warren had to make a difficult choice. The test would be carried out on one of his patients. If the patient died, he would have to answer the critics. A lifetime reputation would be wiped out. It was an awesome choice. Dr. Warren nodded. "We'll give it a try."

They set the date for Friday, October 16, 1846. William Morton continued to improve his methods. He believed the glass inhaler would work better if it had two openings. He took it to an instrument maker for the changes.

The night before the trial, William Morton could hardly sleep. He arose early Friday morning to pick up the new inhaler. The instrument maker didn't have it ready. William, in a fever of impatience, waited for the final touches to be put on the inhaler.

Precisely at 10:00, Dr. Warren strode into the operating room. Onlookers had already gathered. Students, doctors, and staff members jammed into every seat. The patient, a pale and rather frightened Gilbert Abbott, waited. He seemed resigned to whatever fate awaited him.

The spectators grew restless.

Several blocks away, William Morton was beside himself with impatience. The instrument maker still fiddled with the ether inhaler. Five minutes passed. Back at the operating room, the crowd began to whisper and laugh. Dr. Warren motioned for silence. "We'll wait for Dr. Morton."

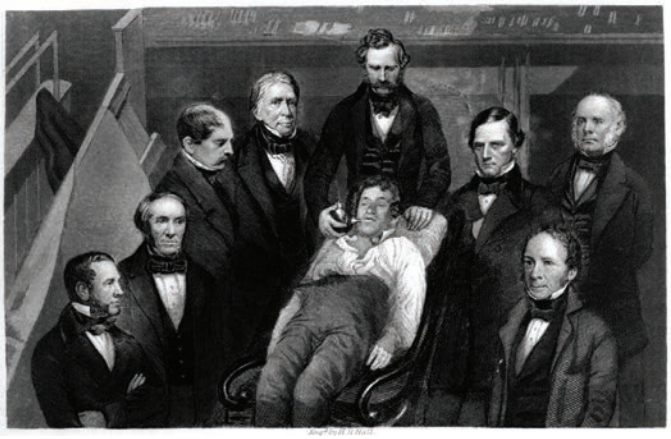
The instrument maker held up the glass globe to examine it. Morton plucked it from his hands and raced along the streets toward the hospital.

Dr. Warren looked at the clock. Fifteen minutes after ten. The delay irritated him. Morton has probably backed out, the surgeon thought to himself. Aloud he said, "As Dr. Morton has not arrived, I presume he is otherwise engaged." He couldn't keep the sarcasm out of his voice.

As the spectators laughed, William Morton burst into the operating theater. Puffing and out of breath, William Morton explained the delay. "I needed a few minutes longer to charge the inhaler." Morton prepared the inhaler. He mixed some perfume with the ether, both to disguise its well-known odor and to make it easier for the patient to breathe.

Suddenly, Morton was terribly nervous. What if the patient struggled and fought with the doctor? What if the patient shrieked and tried to jump up? The students would laugh. The doctors would nod knowingly. Catcalls and cries of "Humbug!" would bombard his ears. William Morton would be disgraced. He'd never be given a second chance.

The patient was strapped into a heavily padded operating chair. The operation would go ahead whether



First demonstration of surgical anaesthesia, 1846
Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0

the painkiller worked or not. Morton began to administer the vapor. The patient shuddered a little and fell into a deep sleep. William Morton stepped back, bowed to the surgeon, and said, "Your patient is ready, doctor."

Dr. Warren took the scalpel and, with the speed of a master surgeon, cut away the growth. The patient did not stir as the blade cut into his flesh. The doctor sewed up the wound and wiped away the blood.

The patient stirred. He awoke. "Did you feel any pain?" Dr. Warren asked him. The theater grew silent. The viewers leaned forward, listening for the reply. The young man spoke in a shaky voice. "No, it didn't hurt at all."

Dr. Warren turned to face the silent crowd. He called out, "Gentlemen, this is not humbug!"

The news of Morton's success spread rapidly. Within two years, doctors throughout the United States and Europe adopted anesthetics. They became bolder in operating procedures.

Rivalry

Do you think William Morton was satisfied to be one of the great founders of modern medicine? That turned out not to be the case. William Morton's moment of triumph was tempered by the fact that he was penniless. His long-suffering Elizabeth had allowed him to pour everything into his pursuit of the painkiller. William Morton patented his discovery. It was so simple that any doctor could duplicate the procedure. Many did.

Disaster of another sort struck. Dr. Charles T. Jackson came forward and claimed full credit for the discovery. He engaged in a vicious public battle with Morton over the discovery. Jackson pointed out that he'd experimented with ether first and instructed Morton in its use. Morton tried to answer the claims. They fought the matter out in medical journals and in the press. The quarrel so enraged Morton that he abandoned his dentistry practice. For the rest of his life, Morton spent his time, energy, and every penny he could scrape together supporting his claim as the discoverer of ether as an anesthetic.

England offered Morton a generous prize for his discovery. Dr. Jackson raised such a ruckus that they withdrew the offer. The French Academy of Medicine offered a similar prize, provided both men shared it. Morton refused, rather than let Jackson have any of the money. Because of their jealousy, each man prevented the other from receiving any money.

Actually, neither man had been the first to use ether for surgery. That honor went to Crawford W. Long, a Georgia doctor. He had used ether in 1842 while removing a tumor from the neck of a patient. He repeated the experiment eight more times, but he didn't publicize his methods until 1849. By then, he was only one of many who claimed to have put ether to use for surgery.

In medicine and science, credit is given to the one who perfects an idea and tells others about it, not to the one who has the idea first. Who deserved credit for the discovery of painless surgery? The Massachusetts General Hospital appointed a commission to investigate the matter. Most of the members of the commission knew Jackson personally. It appeared he would win the case. But the commission ruled that Morton, not Jackson, should be given the credit for painless surgery.

Sad Consequences

The commission's ruling didn't settle the controversy. In July 1868, while riding in a carriage, William Morton happened upon a newspaper account favorable to Jackson. Morton's face grew scarlet. He crumpled the paper in anger. Suddenly, he fell unconscious. William Morton suffered a stroke and never recovered. He died a few days later.

Elizabeth, his wife, summed it up. "The greatest personal tragedy in my husband's life was his discovery of ether."

Ironically, his enemy, Jackson, suffered a similar fate. One day he walked through a cemetery in Boston and came across Morton's tombstone: *William C. G. Morton, Inventor of anesthetic inhalation.* Savage jealousy struck Jackson again. All of his life, insanity had lingered just below the surface. This time something in his mind snapped. He read the inscription and went completely mad.

They found Jackson in the cemetery, raving at the tombstone. They carried him off to the McLean Asylum. He remained there, completely insane, until his death in 1880.

The two men became terrible examples of how personal pride can ruin a person's life. Likely both Morton and Jackson would have gone on to other discoveries if they had devoted their energies to research rather than controversy.

Conclusion

This story reminds us of the devastating result of envy and contention. Pride and unforgiveness blemished these men's reputations and even shortened their lives prematurely. "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel" **(James 4:1,2).**

On the other hand, can you imagine how much a team of brothers can do if they walk away from contention, communicate their differences, and choose to love each other and forgive? What an amazing team they can be! Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! **(Psalm 133:1).**

From: Exploring the History of Medicine published by Master Books – used with permission

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

God, Gluttony and Obesity

By Di Centing Voice

I was troubled by the recent article "God's Call to Slim Down." It misinterpreted the Bible, failed to present a balanced viewpoint, and included false information. It did not show genuine love for those who struggle with their weight. Let me begin by saying that I strongly believe that gluttony and obesity are problems. However, I want to address some issues with this article.

To begin, the author only gave a partial definition of a glutton. A glutton indulges in excess in eating and is eager for anything to excess (Noah Webster American Dictionary). The author misinterpreted Philippians 3:18-19. While Paul is speaking of those who live for eating, he was also including those whose god is any carnal appetite.

Gluttony and obesity are NOT the same thing! Gluttony refers to someone's actions, not their looks. Not all gluttons are obese; I have met many gluttons who were thin yet lived for food and the flesh. I know people who are overweight who are not gluttons, who fast often and eat very little. Not all people who are overweight "wolf" their food down, snack, or go to all-you-can-eat buffets, and there are some thin people who do.



The author also seems to think that one's physical appearance determines one's salvation, which is unbiblical. If a glutton who is overweight gets saved and then dies before they could lose those pounds, would they go to hell? God forbid! God does not make decisions based on our physical bodies, but by our hearts and works **(I Samuel 16:7).**

The author's ideal body weight chart is also erroneous; I have never seen a chart that puts the ideal weight so low! Doctors and medical professionals are using these charts less, due to the serious flaws in them. Many recent BMI (Body Mass Index) charts include a disclaimer stating that one's weight may be more or less than the suggested weight due to muscle mass and bone structure (muscle weighs more than fat), and that the chart is not correct for some indigenous peoples and people of color.[1] It is scientifically proven that genetics play a significant role in one's weight and body mass.

For example, those of Native American descent have a unique starvation gene. As a result of starvation-plenty cycles that they experienced, this gene became prominent and contributed to their survival. Because of this, Native Americans tend to automatically store fuel as fat, even when they are starving. As soon as their bodies feel like they aren't getting enough food, this gene kicks on and turns every calorie into fat. This makes dieting detrimental, as eating less can cause weight gain and nutritional deficiencies, etc. This is a well-studied fact.[2] People of African descent also tend to have larger bone structures than Caucasians, and for some ethnicities, a higher body-fat ratio is normal and healthy.

The article failed to present the prevalence of medical reasons why one cannot lose weight. Even Anabaptist communities have a lot of people with health conditions that affect their weight. For example, hormonal imbalances and endocrine problems are

1 Dietitians weigh in on BMI alternatives | UT MD Anderson
2 Native American Obesity: An Economic Model of the 'Thrifty Gene' Theory - Richards - 2006 - American Journal of Agricultural Economics - Wiley Online Library

common and are scientifically known to make weight loss extremely difficult.[3] I know of many plain women who barely eat and starve themselves and still can't lose weight. The fact that people like the author treat them like they are sinning only adds to the problem, causing stress, anxiety, and depression, all of which affect one's weight! Many medical and genetic reasons contribute to why people are "fat."

Here are a few important things to remember about gluttony and obesity:

- We should not judge others by their appearance, but by their actions.
- We should not obsess over physical appearance as the world does.
- Eat healthy and in moderation.
- Be active, serving the Lord with your whole heart, mind, and soul.
- Leave the rest to God.

AV Editor:

Anabaptist Voice has received another letter like this one. We will respond to both here. First, thank you for sharing your beliefs.

We agree that gluttony and obesity are not always completely related. The last paragraph of *God's Call to Slim Down* (AV41) says, *"A few cases for Christians being fat may be valid."* We feel that the cases that you pointed out deserve attention.

Yes, the "Ideal Body Weight Chart" is lighter than what is generally seen today.

At the bottom of the chart, we wrote: *"These figures are light compared with other charts."* We agree that a person's frame and muscle constitution could make him heavier or lighter than normal and may not indicate whether he is overeating or not.

Statistics indicate that around 40% of the United States population is obese; this compares to a 13% obesity rate from the 1960s. It ranks around 15th in obesity out of the 195 nations in the world and has the highest rate among developed countries.

Americans consume around 25% more food than the rest of the world per person.

These statistics indicate that overeating contributes heavily to the current obesity problem in America.

As you point out, the word "glutton" may technically encompass other forms of excess, but the common understanding of gluttony is overeating. Scriptures often link overeating or fatness to a host of other sins, as in this passage in **Jeremiah 5:27,28:** "They have become great and rich. They are fat, they are sleek, they also excel in deeds of wickedness; they do not plead the cause of the orphan." Gluttony is a physical malady with spiritual implications, and we can see it at work in America today.

The Christian should choose self-denial and not self-gratification. Scripture speaks frequently about fasting. Fasting is an important tool to use if we want to begin denying ourselves and rid ourselves of vices that bring us into bondage.

What a wonderful blessing food is! God has made it with abundant textures and exciting flavors for our enjoyment! But we should not let the appetites of our body master us, but let our Lord be Master and choose a lifestyle that best hallows his Holy Name.



Wealth

By Wealth Denide

Christians living in the most affluent country on earth are among the wealthy here in America. What would Jesus say if He were to walk the earth today? I believe He would preach the same message He did 2,000 years ago.

Many try to come up with a different meaning for Jesus' words. But Jesus meant for us to take His teachings on money as literally as His teachings on war, divorce, and swearing oaths. Indeed, we shake our heads and wonder how some Christians can teach that it is all right to participate in a "just war," or that it is all right to divorce and remarry. But then why do we depart from Jesus' clear teachings and lay up treasure for ourselves on earth? I would like to share a few thoughts on some accounts that Jesus gave in Scripture.

The Account of the Rich Young Ruler

Three gospels record the account of the rich young ruler coming to Jesus **(Matthew 19:16-26, Mark 10:17-31, Luke 18:18-30)**. This man probably had much in common with many of us living in America. He was rich and *probably* was not finding lasting fulfillment in his riches, and so turned to Jesus for the answer in his

3 PCOS and Obesity: How They're Connected | MyObesityTeam
Thyroid Function Alteration in Obesity and the Effect of Bariatric Surgery - PMC

search for peace. Jesus told him: "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" **(Mark 10:21).** The young man didn't argue with Jesus, but went away grieved, "for he had great possessions." Since Jesus loved this young man, why didn't He call him back to explain what our American interpretation is of this account? In other words: No, I didn't really mean what I said. You only must sell whatever is an idol to you or what gets between you and God. Go sell your cabin or your boat and such unnecessary items and keep the rest for the future needs you are sure to experience.

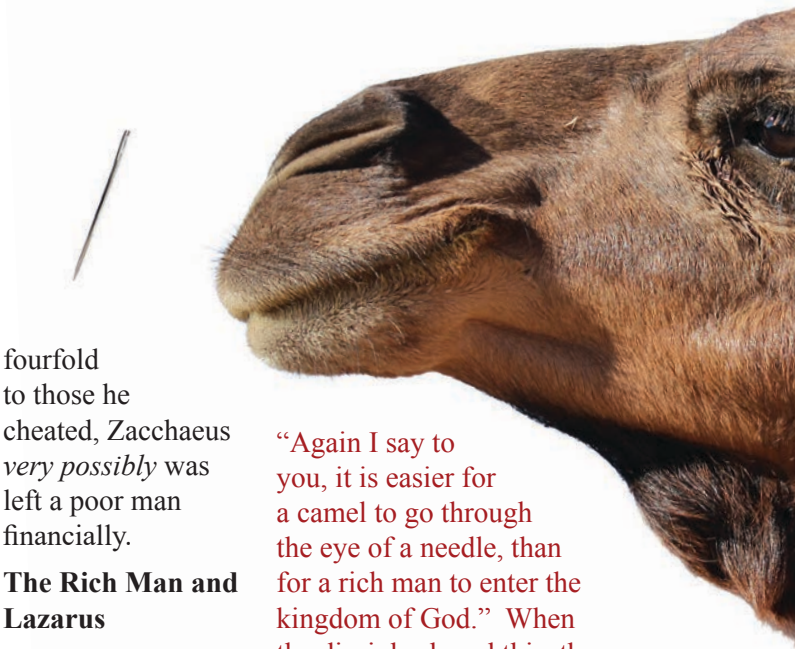
If that was what Jesus had meant to say, I'm certain He would have called him back to clarify Himself. Instead, Jesus said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" **(Mark 10:23 NKJV).**

The disciples were astonished at His words, but Jesus answered, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!" **(Mark 10:24).**

Commonly, this is explained away by saying, "We may be rich as long as we don't place our trust in riches." However, that is a false concept. If we truly have love for our neighbor who is cold and hungry, and if we are not trusting in our riches, we will give them to him. Whether we trust in our riches or not, Jesus made it clear, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" **(Mark 10:25).**

When the astonished disciples wondered who then can be saved, Jesus said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" **(Mark 10:27).** He did not say that it's alright to remain rich, for we will receive help from God to be saved. Rather, *I believe* he meant it is possible with God's help to give our possessions away, and then to be saved. After the rich young man walked away from Jesus that day, *I doubt* God helped him have victory over other areas of his life such as pride, anger, jealousy, evil thoughts, gluttony, and all the other works of the flesh. And so it is with us. If we walk away from Jesus in order to keep our riches, we lose the blessing and help of God and wonder why we cannot overcome these temptations.

I don't know exactly how Jesus intends for us to live all this out, but could not we, plain people here in America, at least sell everything down to the basics? Or could we at least do like Zacchaeus **(Luke 19:1-10)** did and give half to the poor as a start? Remember, in giving back fourfold to those he cheated, Zacchaeus *very possibly* was left a poor man financially.



"Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking at them Jesus said to them, " With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

(Matthew 19:24-26)

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Perhaps the most extreme account regarding affluence is the story Jesus told of the Rich Man and Lazarus **(Luke 16:19-31).** Here we find a man who lived in great luxury compared to the beggar who lay at his gate. Keep in mind that the luxurious foods, cars, and houses of modern America are still likely beyond the Rich Man's imagination. The number of refugees (Lazaruses) in our day most likely far outnumbers the number in his day.

With this in mind, I would like to ask a sobering question and hopefully don't come across as too judgmental, as I am also pointing to myself. Would God's judgment on that rich man be fair if we are living more extravagantly than he? Why should we inherit that beautiful heavenly city while he must suffer eternal damnation for his life choices?

Maybe yet today he is gazing over that great gulf to where Lazarus is, longing for just one drop of water to cool his tongue.

A Vision for Change

Brethren, it is urgent that we awake. One sign of the end times is deception—doing something we feel is right that is not. Could it be that we Anabaptist people are deceived in this area?

Oh, that in this late day God would raise up a church like our forefathers had 500 years ago. A church that would take all of Jesus' commandments seriously, including radical giving and sharing our faith with our neighbors. *I'm not sure* how seriously the early

Anabaptists viewed Jesus' teachings on wealth. Surely God would bless us as He did the early church and many since! No, not with earthly possessions and freedom of religion, but exactly the opposite.

Many questions come: "Who would pay all our hospital bills?" "Who would build our church houses?" Perhaps we just think too much about ourselves and instead should consider the multitudes today who have no food for tomorrow, let alone for hospital bills, churches, or even a Bible. Do we truly love them as ourselves? The minute we step ashore in Heaven, there will be *no doubt* in anyone's mind that the harshest life lived for Jesus will seem but a drop in the ocean compared to the eternal reward we will receive!



A business mind needs to maintain a Kingdom heart.

I envision an awakening even in these end times. Surely, if we rose up to completely follow Christ and do all His commands, our churches would grow to include all or many of the divisions and different plain groups and even grow with those from the world around us, as Jesus meant it to.

No, *I don't know exactly* how we should start, but let's at least get started. I, for myself, have *possibly* many possessions to sell to provide for the destitute. And it would be so much easier if we, like the early church in Acts, would do it together as a joint effort. *I like to imagine* the many questions we would be asked by the world around us and the many chances we would have to share our faith. There are many in the world who are searching for something more. Oh, that we may give them the example and words they are searching for.

I would like to remind us that the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. If it should be me or you that is living in poverty in a third-world country, sending our crying children to bed hungry, and tucking a few worn rags around them to try to warm them, would we feel loved by our American brothers? Or if it were us who would be living in great sin yet searching for more, would we feel our plain church neighbors love us as much as themselves? I hope I am *not sounding too confusing or radical or judgmental*. But, in conclusion, let us take a serious look at our lives, and let us remember we cannot be a follower of Jesus without following Him!

AV Editor:

Your passion to follow all the commands of Christ is admirable and commendable. You give us many admonitions that should be practiced. Though we agree with much of what is said, we would like to look also at what the rest of the New Testament says about money and riches.

Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 6** many things that apply to this subject. In verse one he states, "All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor … Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brothers." I don't believe that a man who had slaves was poor. Here Paul is showing that apostolic Christians were both rich and poor and that they were expected to respect each other and not let position or money affect their relationship.

If there are any doubts that Paul did not believe that riches exempted one from the Kingdom of God, then he dispels them in **1 Timothy 6:17-20:** " Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life." Paul was an Apostle of Jesus and states elsewhere: "The things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment" **(1 Corinthians 14:37).** So, he was not contradicting what Jesus was saying.

I believe that Jesus' particular commandment to the rich young ruler was because he knew that the young man loved his wealth and position more than he loved Jesus. We can harmonize Paul's words with Christ's

words by seeing Christ's command as directed specifically to the rich young ruler. God tested Abraham by specifically asking him to sacrifice his son. He knows the greatest "love" of our life, and He rightly expects us to give that to Him. It could be land, possessions, money, friends, position, father, mother, or anything good or bad that we may have to give up to follow Him.

The rich, young ruler had a triple hazard that made him especially prone to pride: He was young. He was rich. He was a ruler. Following Christ means taking the humble way of the cross, and riches can make people snooty. Paul warned the rich of conceit, and every rich man should beware of this tendency.

Christ's commands and the rest of the New Testament make it clear that riches can be a trap. Paul also states in **1 Timothy 6,** "Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." There are undoubtedly many who will lose their souls in their quest for wealth. Those who seek first the Kingdom of God should not entangle themselves with the affairs of this life.

I have also witnessed personally those who barely work a 40-hour week, labor in the Kingdom, give much of their time and finances, and still end up being wealthier than those around them. Generally, these types of people look at themselves as stewards and do not spend a lot on themselves. Then some work endlessly, spend wastefully, and borrow to the hilt in their mad pursuit of the "American Dream", but somehow always come up with an empty fist.

I believe that giving to the poor is something a child of God seeks to do; however, it is not always easy to do this in a wise and responsible way. We should give time to prayer and ask for wisdom when giving because in certain circumstances, we can cause harm or be poor stewards by giving.

A few things that the Scripture is clear on:

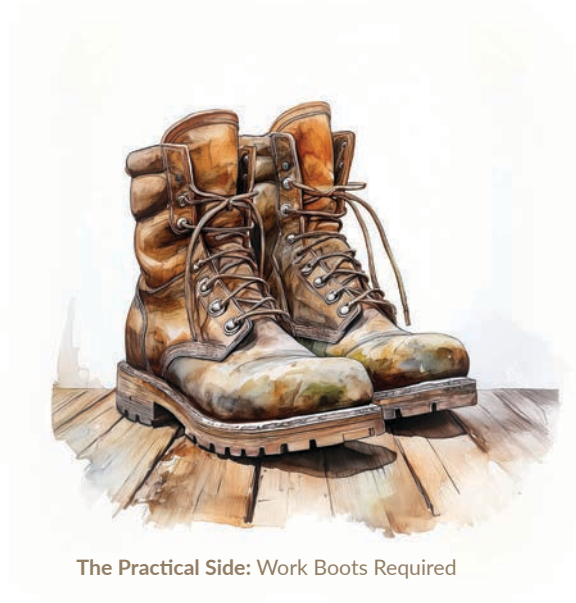
- Lay not up treasure on earth but in Heaven.
- Consider yourself to be a steward of all that God gives you.
- Don't judge a man by how much he has or does not have.
- God may ask some to give it all away.
- Beware of covetousness.
- Be a living sacrifice.

"Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

Luke 12:15



The Practical Side



The Practical Side: Work Boots Required

"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: *New Stories*

Lost and Found

by Abram Neufeld



The workday was as normal as could be expected. I did a withdrawal and then went to fill up with gas. At that moment, I realized my debit card was gone. Going back to the ATM, where I had just been, the worker said, "The machine must have eaten it up". Whatever happened, the bank card would need to be replaced as soon as possible, because the next day we planned to bring another load of Spanish Bibles into Mexico.

So, my wife and I needed to stop everything and go to the bank immediately, which was over an hour from home, to take care of the lost bank card. Well, why not believe God has a purpose even in this interruption? Thankfully, everything went well with replacing the card.

Then, because it is my wife's birthday and our 18th anniversary this weekend, we stopped for a meal at a restaurant on our way back from the city. The young waitress is an old-colony Mennonite girl. After our meal, I noticed this girl singing along to some ungodly music that was playing through the restaurant, and my heart was stirred.

We need to give her a Bible and talk to her about salvation, I thought. So we went and talked with her. Sure enough, she could read Plattdeutsch. She had not thought much about spiritual things. I began to share some verses with her as we paid for our meal and gave her the New Testament. She was so amazed to realize that her sins could be forgiven. She did not know about repentance, and her face just glowed with joy as she realized for the first time in her life that she could have her sins washed away and be forgiven.

As we continued to visit and buy donuts to bring home for our children, the girl's mother joined the conversation. She too was very open to the truth. Their names are Tina and Lina.

We left there rejoicing at this beautiful divine appointment, and we went on to pick up a garage door for a customer. At that stop, the young men who loaded up what was ordered had spiritual interest as well. We had a great conversation about true conversion. So, you never know what God has in mind when something happens that seems like an interruption to the day! Losing something can become an opportunity for finding something greater.

Grace as "Unmerited" Favor?

by Robert Loizeaux

The grace of God should not be defined as God's unmerited favor. There are texts where God's grace is

given freely, so as to appear unmerited; but we ought not limit God's favor by adding the word "unmerited."

The New Testament word "grace" is not only used to mean "favor" but can be translated as "gift," or "thanks." "Unmerited" is a qualifier that limits the meaning of favor. If you applied such a limitation to "gift" or "thanks," you could have "broken gift " or "insincere thanks." Certainly, it is not noble to give a "broken gift" or "insincere thanks." And wouldn't it be more appreciated for us to receive sincere thanks, a worthy gift, and favor for pleasing God?

This isn't a trivial matter; it is foundational to having a heavenly hope. God motivates us with promises to believe.

God's unmerited gifts include: "He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous" **(Matthew 5:45).** This has a purpose: That we may have God's example so that we may bless, rather than curse, doing good to those who curse us, and pray for those who persecute us; and that we may be children of our Heavenly Father. Also know that Christ suffered for us to bring us to God; "the just for the unjust" **(1 Peter 3:18).**

Jesus also said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" **(Matthew 5:6).** Filled with what? Surely with the righteousness we hunger for. And isn't that a gift from God? Isn't that His favor upon us? This isn't unmerited favor, but God's reward for hungering and thirsting for righteousness. If God's favor is strictly unmerited, we would be deprived of this being a fulfilled promise.

Those who teach "unmerited favor" like to say, "We are saved by faith, not by works." But consider this: faith is one thing that merits grace. God rewards our faith. Without faith it is impossible to please *Him,* for he who comes to God must believe God, believing that He rewards those who diligently seek Him **(Hebrews 11:6).** Christians anticipate receiving an unshakeable kingdom. The grace we receive is so that we may serve Him acceptably **(Hebrews 2:28).**

Unmerited favor is a distressing doctrine to me because I have a craving to do good works; especially, I want to obey God and believe the promises that give heavenly hope. Unmerited favor is incompatible with being rewarded for believing God's promises.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ **(Titus 2:11-13).** **2 Peter 1:17** says that God was well pleased with Jesus. Jesus merited God's approval.



AV Editor

"And you will seek Me and find *Me* when you search for Me with all your heart" **(Jeremiah 29:13).**

The marvelous and matchless grace of God is most amazing because it was offered to us even while we were yet sinners and enemies of God. Though it is true that we do not deserve God's grace and could never earn it—it is priceless—God's saving and empowering grace is not given without some merit to man. It is unfortunate that theologians, sitting behind their comfortable desks, have coined the expression "unmerited favor" for grace. But the cross-bearing child of God who faces the intense battle with self will search the Scriptures for promises and beseech the Father for more of His enabling favor to be able to live acceptably to God in holiness.

If we find our Christian walk to be dry, if our mind is flooded with unloving thoughts, or if we are struggling with fleshly appetites, God will definitely give more of His grace if we seek Him, because He keeps His promises.

Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was not even a child of God but found grace with God by his attitude and actions. **Acts 10** recounts this story and says that Cornelius was a "devout man and one who feared God" **(Acts 10:2).** The angel sent to Cornelius said, "Your prayers and charitable gifts have ascended as a memorial offering before God" **(Acts 10:4).** In other words, God saw what Cornelius was doing and rewarded him by sending Peter to preach the gospel. God showed Cornelius favor due to some merit that Cornelius had demonstrated.

The struggling Christian can "approach the throne of grace with confidence, [to] receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of *our* need" **(Hebrews 4:16).** He definitely should not sit back and do nothing when God's promises and truths are there to be believed and applied.

If we are not living the abundant life that comes through the grace of God, then we should look at some of the truths and promises that will allow God to shower His favor on us.

James 4:6 says that "[God] gives greater grace" and

then goes on to list at least seven things that we can do to receive more grace.

- "God … gives grace to the humble"
- "Submit therefore to God."
- "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
- "Come close to God, and He will come close to you."
- "Cleanse your hands, you sinners"
- "Purify your hearts, you double-minded."
- "Be miserable, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into gloom."

James concludes by saying, "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" **(James 4:10).**

The way of the cross brings life through the denial of self, and grace through humility and diligence.

Last Chances

by Abram Neufeld

God's heart is for forgiveness, not bitterness. God seeks us and is willing to help us. Our sins are so dark; nothing bright can be seen in them. Our loving, kind, merciful Heavenly Father seeks to bring us out of such sins as bitterness and unforgiveness.

A few years ago, an aunt of mine was down here in Mexico. She owned a house here yet had been living in Ontario for some time. She spent time in Mexico all alone because she was married and had inherited her grandparents' farm. She had built a smaller house on the property after Grandma and Grandpa had died.

While staying there, she got sick, and someone was concerned about her and tried to reach out to her by phone. I was notified by relatives from Canada that she was in the hospital about an hour and a half from where we live. Our oldest son and I went there; it was around midnight when we arrived. She was awake, so we could talk to her.

She had been very hostile to the truth years ago, mocking and swearing about the Gospel. This time I could talk to her, and she was willing to listen; it was a good and meaningful conversation. One thing that she said disturbed me. "There is a person whom I will never forgive," she said to me. I tried to reason with her about the words of Jesus, saying, "If we don't forgive, we will not be forgiven." She was not willing to budge on this one point. She was happy otherwise, and we went home.



The next thing we knew, she was better enough physically that she traveled back to Canada. She didn't come to see us before she left. We hadn't seen her since, and a few years went by. She was in the hospital in Ontario a few times in the last year and was having a hard time with her health.

A week and a half ago, she went to the hospital again and died. She was 63 years old. The funeral plans were made by our relatives in Ontario, and I decided, with all that we had going on here, not to go. Many questions arose in my mind. Where was my Aunt with the Lord by now?

Her last wish was that the lady whom she was not willing to forgive not attend her funeral. She made it known to a cousin of mine on the way to the hospital, where she would die the next day. The lady was told this before the funeral. The bitterness and unforgiveness were at work to the very end.

This was a sad story. Yet it is a stark reality for many. Where do we find ourselves in this? Is there someone in my life I'm just not going to forgive? This fruit of unforgiveness can follow us to death. God had wanted to free her from her bitterness when she was sick in Mexico. But she refused.

Has God spoken to me about unforgiveness, and I just won't listen? May this story help us to see the mercy of God at work. The heart of God is for the sinner to be free. The love of God for those who are lost awaits repentance. How He longs to free them and have them as His children. God desires to forgive us and for us to be full of forgiveness for others.

God's perfect timing draws us to the message. Yet if we resist, we find ourselves at death's door, bitter, full of unforgiveness, and we remain unforgiven. Let us listen to the heart of God for us in this matter before it is too late.

My aunt had her opportunity to be freed; I believe God was trying to free her, yet she refused. Open our eyes, Lord! Help us to see the longing You have for us to be free! God is so good, so merciful, and so kind. But one second too late is forever too late.

Circulation and Financial Statement

Income and Expense Report

June 30, 2026

April 1, 2026, Beginning Balance	$6,844.28
Income	
Donations	$3,170.00
Local Support	$4,000.00
Total Income	$7,170.00
Beginning Balance + Income	**$14,014.28**
Expenses (AV38)	
Printing & Mailing	$11,479.83
Layout and Design	$522.00
Reprint of 100 AV38	$746.07
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September 30, 2026 Ending Balance	**$1,266.38**

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Upcoming Events

Shepherd's Institute in Willingdon, Alberta
February 15-19, 2027

Daytime classes for pastors, leaders, and their wives. Equipping church leaders to be compassionate and wise in pastoral care, church administration, and biblical preaching.

Speakers: Milo Zehr, Clyde Byler, John Coblentz, and Lowell Miller

For more information, please contact:

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e-mail: lowelljudy5@gmail.com

END MATTERS



Fall has come. Fall gets its name from the English phrase, "fall of the leaf." In preparation for winter, the tree sheds its majestic beauty. Grass and flower seeds also fall to the cold earth. Fall means that life is preparing for a long state of sleep. After winter, it arises triumphant in the spring to begin a glorious new life.

We sometimes look at the end of life as a final summation of the facts of science, decreeing that life is over. In reality, the end for the Christian is just the beginning of a new life. A life exploding with unimaginable splendor and perfection forever with Christ. Where there is this faith, there is the hope of life immortal.

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" **(John 12:24).**

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Sunset and evening star, and one clear call for me!
I hope to see my Pilot face to face when I have crost the bar.

- Alfred, Lord Tennyson



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