

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

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

In This Issue:

"THE CHALLENGE" - VAL YODER

"FASTING WITH PURPOSE" - DUANE YODER

"MIRACLES AND SIGNS" - JAMES G. LANDIS

"EVERLASTING LOVE II" - HAVALAH MYERS

"LIVING WATER" - ANYA HURSH



Letter from the Editor



Franconia Mennonite Church

Years ago one of the brethren at Bartow, West Virginia told me, “When the white oak leaves are as big as squirrel ears, it is time to plant corn.” In this area, that means it is now time to plant corn. I expect that as soon as the ground dries out a bit, large planters will be in the fields.

On 7 March Doris and I and our son Allen flew together to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Then Allen rented a car and chauffeured us around in the area of my boyhood home.

We attended the funeral of my Landis first cousin, Walter Hockman, at Deep Run Mennonite Church.

We visited the graves of my Landis grandparents at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, and the graves of my Gotwals grandparents at Franconia Mennonite Church. These large edifices make me very uneasy. To me, they do not speak of warmth and brotherhood but of money and power.

Allen took us to the old Landis homestead where my grandfather and great grandfather lived. Little has been done to the house and barn since we left there in 1952 and most of the 56 acres is still flat and open land. We visited a bit with the current tenant. Jennifer claimed the current value to be around \$1,000,000. My father bought the farm from his father in 1944 for \$6,000. It is the same farm and practically the same old buildings, so I reckon that in 80 years the money has lost 99.4% of its value.

Our visit also included hunting up the site in Peace Valley Park near Dublin, Pennsylvania, that served as the setting for Owechela’s wigwam in Lenape Homeland. We traveled on Callowhill Road, named after William Penn’s second wife. This road is storied in Tomahawks to Peace.

During our visit, we stayed with a friend of 60 years ago, John Ehst. John and I both committed our lives to biblical obedience in our youth. Today we find rich fellowship and agree on how to put that faith into practice.

The trip stirred many fond memories, but in the end we were glad to return home to blooming springtime at Mystic Gardens in Burke County, Georgia.

Peace,

James G. Landis

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About *Anabaptist Voice*

Our Mission Statement:

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

Our Purpose:

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

Our Tone:

The tone of the magazine shall be positive in that:

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

Our motto shall be words from Isaiah 30:21.

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

Our Bible Translation Policy:

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

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

Our Finances:

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

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

Our Organization:

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

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

Our Audience:

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

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



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

All at Once

This is a reply to the article titled, "In The Beginning" by Menno Knight (AV31, page 20). It is not intended to be a rebuttal but a plea to consider Scripture as the basis for our understanding, rather than the seemingly vast supply of other theories.

I agree that Genesis 1:1 does not refer to the beginning of God's existence. But to claim that this is "the beginning of life on earth" is not supported by Scripture. To be safe and not stray from faith, consider some other scriptures.

– Genesis 2:4 refers to when God created the earth – *"In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens."*

– Exodus 20:11 – *"For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is."* This verse makes it clear that both the planet we live on, as well as the space that surrounds it, were made in six days. It also specifies that all things contained in both earth and the surrounding space were made in those same six days.

– Exodus 31:17 has a very similar message – *"For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth."*

– Genesis 1:1 – Back to the first verse in Genesis. This phrase, *"In the beginning"* defines the beginning as being the point when God created heaven and earth. For any physical substance to have been already present, it would need to have been made "before the beginning." It was not until the third day that the planet was ready for life of any kind; so could we say that the third day was the point of "the beginning of life on earth"?

– Genesis 1:14-19 describes how God made the "lights," the luminaries that we refer to generally as "sun, moon, and stars." Verse 14 tells us about their purpose, and the stars are included. In verse 16, God describes the sun as the "greater light" with the purpose of ruling the day; the "lesser light," or the moon, was to rule the night. The stars were not given a charge of "ruling," yet their role is very necessary. The signs, seasons, and years mentioned in verse 14 would be difficult to keep in proper place without the stars.

There is nothing, either in this scripture or any other, that suggests the stars being made at a different

time. Also, since the "sun" is actually a star (just much closer than any other stars), would it not be somehow a contradiction of God's Word, to say the stars were made at some previous time?

As to the problem of light being visible on earth when the luminary is millions of light-years away God is not bound by our human understanding of light. When He said, *"Let there be light,"* there was light. Light was present for several days before God created (what we think to be) the common sources of light: stars.

Consider also II Corinthians 4:6, *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* The miracle of a former sinner being allowed to see the light in his own heart, is a greater miracle than whatever means God used to get the distant stars' light to us.

Our protection, our very existence as Christians, is based on faith. Hezekiah exemplified that well when he based his plea for protection on the character of an almighty, invisible, Creator God. *"Then Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said: "O Lord God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, You have made heaven and earth" (II Kings 19:15).*

My personal conclusion is: To believe something different from a literal application of Genesis 1 is to make God less capable, reliable, and trustworthy. Besides, it robs me of the security He intends me to have. It also opens a door to unbelief and when that door has been opened, I cannot control what will come through it.

B. R. M. | Tennessee



Thoughts of Others

First, I would like to say, "Thank you for *Anabaptist Voice*." I always enjoy it very much and am blessed by reading it. I like to hear the thoughts of others on various subjects.

P. R. | Missouri

Do Not Rest Yet

I picked up a copy of *Anabaptist Voice* at church. The feedback on the Hebrews 4 article caught my attention (AV31, pages 37-39). [The original article, “The Promised Rest” that sparked the feedback is found in AV29, pages 14-15.]

I found the discussion highly interesting since that passage in Hebrews figured in so greatly in the Sabbath discussion that happened in our area throughout the 1990s. My father embraced Dale Ratzlaff’s book, *Sabbath in Crisis*. Basically, the argument is that Christ is the Sabbath and “rest” in Him. Obviously, Hebrews four becomes a central part of that argument. My father preached powerfully to that effect.

It was only ten years later, when memorizing the book of Hebrews, that I began to see it differently. It did not really upend my view of the Sabbath, but all the same, I believe Hebrews four is speaking of a final rest that all of God’s children are still “striving to enter.”

Also, the whole concept of “ceasing from our works” as something we ought to do so we can begin to “trust Christ” is read into the passage. It is not what Hebrews sets out to establish.

It is always interesting to read the magazine. Keep up the good work. Do not rest yet!

J. S. | *Maine*



Black or White

I am writing in response to “Pros and Cons of Separate Seating” (AV31, pages 18-19).

The human tendency is to look at real-life questions as either good or bad, yes or no, black or white. However, such an approach to issues remains immature. While many issues can be answered this way, many other issues are not answered best with this approach. The segregated seating issue is that type of issue. The better approach is to ask, “Is it wise?”

The answer to that question leads to history, morality, practicality, social considerations, and more. The immature often are not interested in all possible considerations; the immature desire a quick answer that they can run with.

Anabaptists are being impacted by the surrounding culture and cannot avoid the cultural influence on the woman’s role in the home and in the church. The

real question is, “How are we responding to this cultural impact?” Currently, many stories are being written in response to that question. Are the responses demonstrations of wisdom?

I am deeply grieved to watch many Anabaptist people respond to current issues with shallow ignorance. And often they do not care much. They prefer ignorance.

The Lord says in Proverbs 1:22, *“How long you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.”* Then fools get in trouble and pray to God for help. God responds by saying, *“I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your terror comes. ... For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil” (Proverbs 1:26-33).*

Let us seek God’s wisdom in all our decisions including how we seat ourselves in the assembly.

C. W. | *Texas*



More Welcoming

I am writing in regard to “Pros and Cons of Separate Seating” (AV31, pages 18-19). I agree with a few of the article’s points, mainly the idea that segregated seating is more compact. However, overall, I strongly disagree with the rest of the article.

I have visited and attended several churches, some that sat segregated and some were integrated. My observation that churches where men and women sit together do have a different “feel,” but in a more open, welcoming way.

A. H. | *Pennsylvania*



No Love

If I am being honest, I no longer believe that God loves me ANYMORE. He did at one time.

Therefore, please discontinue my subscription to *Anabaptist Voice*.

J. W. | *Connecticut*

Who Is a Christian?

By Lamar Hege

After Jesus had been with His disciples for some time, He asked His disciples two questions:

- “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”
- “Who do you say that I am?”

Today, let us think about two similar questions for our time:

- Who do men say a Christian is?
- Who do you say a Christian is?

Then we want to think about the characteristics of a true Christian.

“The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). King Agrippa mockingly said to Paul, *“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28).*

These two scriptures help us to see that a Christian is something unique; a Christian has certain characteristics that mark him as a child of God. Those characteristics are proof that he is a genuine follower of God. So we want to know what those traits are that identify a Christian.

If you were to ask a nonchristian what characterizes a Christian, what would he say?

- “They go to church.”
- “They talk about God.”
- “They think they are better than others.”
- “They are hypocritical.”
- “They are Mennonites.”

As Jesus did with His disciples, I would like to ask you the question, “What do you say characterizes a true Christian?” Here are several principal characteristics that I think mark and identify a true Christian.

1. A true Christian desires God’s will for his life.

Some words that help us understand what this means are: *repentance, broken, acceptance, a giving-up of control.* The true Christian is characterized not only by his prayer that God’s will would be done, but also that his own life would be in full harmony with God’s will.

This is the true Christian; He has exchanged his will for God’s will—temporary things for eternal values, this life for eternal life. He has renounced Satan, sin, and the world. He has somehow learned that the ways of man are ways of disappointment, failure and ruin.

This truly broken person says, “Lord, you take charge

of my life. I will accept whatever you make it to be.”

2. A true Christian submits to God’s will. True submission is the choice to make God’s will mine. Submission is not natural nor easy. In fact, the very nature of submission is that it factors in when we are wishing/willing for circumstances to be different. We want God’s will to be different in some way.

Real submission means we do it joyfully and with a willing heart. David said in Psalm 40:8, *“I delight to do thy will, O my God.”*

3. A true Christian forgives others. Forgiveness is present tense. It spreads itself to every time and place in my life. We pray, *“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12).*

Not only is forgiveness essential to our salvation, it is also essential to our testimony and our relationships. And the person who forgives benefits the most!

Forgiving others is a characteristic of one who truly trusts Jesus—he is a Christian.

4. A true Christian is thankful. Gratefulness not only should characterize our lives, *it must.* The only blessings we truly have are those we appreciate.

Thankfulness is an effective, essential element of Christianity. We should thank God and others before we ask for blessings.

Thankfulness is a sweet and pleasant savour of God-conscious souls. It is truly a salt in the earth.

5. A true Christian will experience joy. Joy is a result of contentment, not a result of our physical state or possessions. Rather, it is a result of what possesses us and our thoughts. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus was obedient unto an awful death and shame on the cross. Jesus did it for the joy that He saw beyond the suffering.

Joy is not the goal, and will not be attained if we attempt to obtain it. Rather, it is the result of the other four characteristics of true Christians we have already mentioned.

Tomorrow, someone may ask you, “What is the secret of your joy?” I say the answer is not a simple one, like *acceptance, submission, forgiveness, or thankfulness.* The right answer is, *“I am a Christian.”*

– Adapted from a sermon at Indian Creek Mennonite Church, Pennsylvania

Fasting With Purpose

By Duane Yoder

“And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.” (Matthew 9:15)

The disciples of John came to Jesus with a troubling question, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?” This was one time the Pharisees and the disciples of John were in agreement. The Scripture does not tell us why they fasted, but Jesus’ response hints at the answer—both John’s disciples and the Pharisees earnestly desired that the Messiah would come. So they fasted often, imploring God that He would send the Messiah ... soon.

Jesus responded to the question with the above verse telling them that His disciples did not fast because the Messiah had come. Then Jesus continued on. *“No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved” (Matthew 9:16-17).* The arrival of the Messiah was a new day. Old practices and beliefs no longer fit. Now everything hinged on belief in Jesus as the Messiah and His new teaching.

But Jesus added that when He, the bridegroom, would be taken away from them, then His disciples would fast. And they did ... for three days, or until they knew that He had been raised from the dead.

Does this mean that after the resurrection, followers of Jesus should no longer practice the discipline of fasting? No, there are more reasons for fasting than mourning for the death of the Messiah.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, *“When you fast ... ” (Matthew 6:16).* So Jesus seemingly took it for granted that after His departure, His followers would fast. And they did.

What Is Fasting?

Fasting is a common discipline seen throughout Scripture, and holds tremendous meaning and value if practiced.

What is fasting? The dictionary defines fasting as, “To abstain from all or some kinds of food or drink, especially as a religious observance.” Fasting in the biblical sense, means to deprive ourselves of material things, usually food, for a greater purpose. Fasting then, may have other benefits such as losing weight, but biblical fasting has spiritual purpose beyond such side benefits.

We want to consider what Scripture says about fasting, as well as the spiritual benefits of this practice. For the Christian, fasting is a time when we purposely deprive ourselves of physical nourishment in order to receive spiritual nourishment,

Fasting in the Old Testament

The first mention of fasting we have is in Exodus 34. Here we have Moses on Mt Sinai receiving instruction from God. Verse 28 says, *“So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.”*

This first mention of fasting gives us several important insights into this discipline.

– Fasting is associated with things of spiritual significance. Moses was the leader of God’s chosen people. As such, it was his responsibility to relay to them all that God commanded him. The weight of this responsibility was such that Moses did not eat or drink for forty days and nights.

Fasting is associated with things of *spiritual significance*

– Moses interceded for the Children of Israel. God’s wrath was kindled against Israel for worshipping the golden calf. Moses pled with God to spare them. In Deuteronomy 9, Moses recounts this time: *“I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. For... the Lord was angry with you, to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me at that time also.”* Moses came before God with prayer and fasting on behalf of His people.

– Moses entered the presence of God. I imagine that the glory of God was so great that all else became insignificant, even the need for food and water. He was in the presence of the Creator! Moses completely focused on God during this time.

Move forward to the book of Leviticus. In chapter 16, instruction is given for observing the Day of Atonement, and in verse 29, it says, *“This shall be a statute forever for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.”*

The phrase we want to focus on here is “you shall afflict your souls.” This literally means “you are to deny yourself.” According to Jewish tradition, God was commanding His people to fast on this day, a practice that is continued to this day among Orthodox Jews.

As we move through the Old Testament, we find many

When you *Fast*, do not be like the *hypocrites*

instances of people fasting. There is a commonality in these instances. Fasting almost always happens as a direct result of a need for God, whether that is repenting for sins committed, or asking God to intercede on someone’s behalf.

Fasting in the Old Testament is usually in the context of a person or people coming before God in repentance or great need. This was true in the examples of Moses, Nehemiah, and Esther. These are just a few examples, but we see the correlation between a complete need for God’s intervention and the act of sacrificial humility through fasting.

Fasting in the Gospels

As we move into the New Testament, we will find numerous references to fasting. In the time of Jesus, fasting had apparently become more of a ritualistic tradition, a status symbol, particularly among the Jewish leaders. Jesus denounces their hypocritical acts when He says, *“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad*

countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward [in full]” (Matthew 6:16).

We also have the story of the Pharisee in Luke 18:11-12, *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’”*

Like many other Jewish traditions, fasting had become merely an empty act. But Jesus still recognized the importance of fasting. He himself fasted for 40 days in the wilderness during His temptation. In Matthew 6:17-18, Jesus teaches His disciples and followers the proper way to fast. *“But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”* Jesus also taught that there is spiritual power in fasting.

In Matthew 17, the disciples ask Jesus why they were not able to cast out a demon. Jesus answered, *“Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”*

Fasting in the New Testament Church

As we move into the Church age, we have record of early believers praying and fasting. In Acts 10:30-31, we have the story of Cornelius. Cornelius said, *“Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me*



in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.'"

In Acts 14, we see the newly-formed Church commending the appointed elders to God through prayer and fasting. *"So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23).*

Other examples throughout Scripture show us that fasting is not just an obscure idea. In Scripture we see people seeking God's face through prayer and fasting, and God's response. I believe we are missing out on a tremendous blessing if we do not fast.

Fasting for the Right Reasons

I encourage you to practice this discipline. However, fasting is not something that should be taken lightly. It is a serious commitment and must be done for the right reasons.

– *Not just an empty ritual.*

Lets go back to Isaiah 58. In verse 3 it says *"Why have we fasted," they say, "and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?"* The people were going through the rituals of fasting, yet God did not heed their affliction. Why? Because the act of fasting was not from a contrite heart but was merely an empty ritual. During their time of fasting, they were focusing on selfish things. They were exploiting their laborers. They were fighting.

God says in verse 5, *"Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast; an acceptable day to the LORD?"* God is not condemning these acts, but He says these pretenses of humility and repentance mean nothing to Him if they are not from the heart. The people are putting on a facade of righteousness, but their hearts and lives are burdened with sin.

– *Not just a fake righteousness.* In Isaiah 29 God says, *"These people draw near me with their mouths, and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."* It was a false righteousness. There is a very

important lesson here for us. We can fast and pray, but if our lives and the condition of our heart is not honoring God, He will not hear. Psalm 66:18 says, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear."* Along with fasting, one must have a desire for God—a desire to please God with a repentant heart.

To fast is serious business. It is offensive to God to approach Him and expect spiritual nourishment if our lives are not lived for Him. Fasting is often associated with repentance. When we come before God in fasting, we must have a repentant heart. If we come before God expecting a blessing and spiritual nourishment, but are not repentant and humble, we will not be filled.

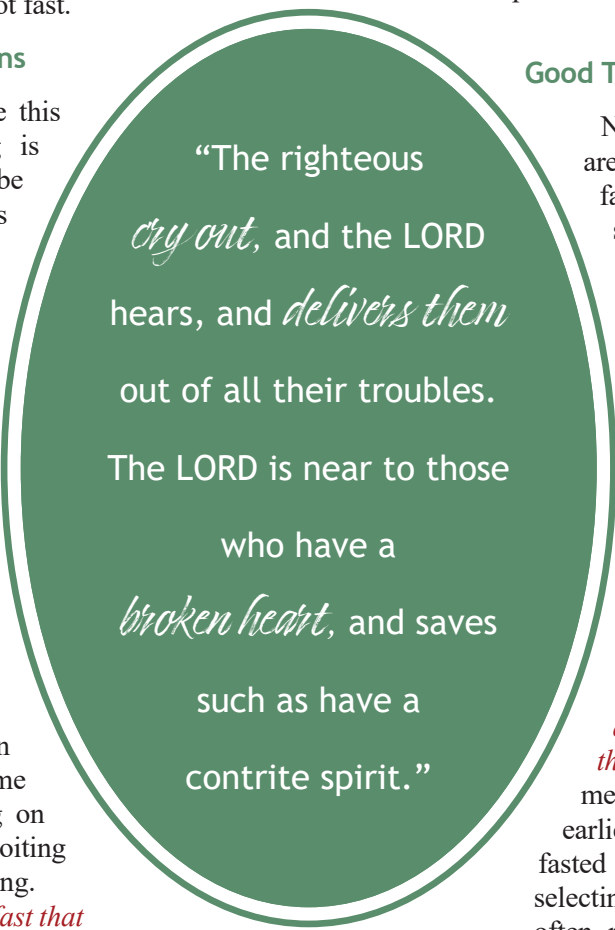
Good Times to Fast

Now, I want to look at some areas in which we can practice fasting. We do not need to have a specific reason to fast, except to draw closer to God. But there are times when we need to seek God through intentional fasting.

1. **Fast before important events or decisions.** We have several examples in Acts of the early Christians praying and fasting in this way. In Acts 13, we have the account of Barnabas and Saul being commissioned. Verse three says, *"Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."* I mentioned the account in Acts 14 earlier, where Paul and Barnabas fasted and prayed in the process of selecting elders for the Church. We often pray before making decisions,

but I think it is scriptural to fully commit ourselves to God's will through a time of fasting. Are we willing to sacrifice our comfort, our wants and needs, for the purpose of seeking God's wisdom?

2. **Fast on behalf of others.** We read earlier about Moses interceding for Israel through prayer and fasting. Nehemiah interceded for Israel through prayer and fasting. We read the verse in Acts 13 where the Church fasted and prayed on behalf of Saul and Barnabas. Do you have someone that you are praying for, maybe someone that is sick or someone that is unsaved? Come before God with prayer and fasting. Seek His face on their behalf.



3. **Fast in repentance.** Fasting throughout Scripture is often associated with repentance. There is an important lesson here for us. Christians can have a tendency to take the act of repentance too lightly, and the result is a continuing struggle with a particular sin. Are we willing to humble ourselves before God, and through fasting and prayer, ask Him to give us victory? True repentance requires dying to self and is exemplified in fasting. When Jonah declared judgement on Nineveh, the people of Nineveh responded with dramatic repentance. Jonah 3:5 says, *“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.”*

God honored that humble act of repentance. If you are struggling with sin in your life, and you can't seem to overcome it, spend some time in prayer and fasting—in humility. God will work in your life and give you victory.

How We Fast

– **Between You and God.** First, we remember the words of Jesus that we read in Matthew 6. Anoint your head and wash your face so that you do not appear to be fasting. In other words, fasting is a private time between you and God. It is not something to be flaunted, or used to gain the respect or admiration of men.

– **Fasting as a Group.** I believe there is a scriptural basis for corporate fasting, a group of people simultaneously fasting for a cause. If we look at the example given in Acts 13, we see the Church fasting together. However, even in a corporate setting, those fasting should be discreet and reverent. It should not be treated as a competition.

– **Abstaining from Food.** Typical biblical fasting is abstaining from all food for a period of time. Remember, fasting is depriving ourselves of earthly desires. Not eating for a certain time is one way to do this. There is a reason that fasting is used in scripture. The human body requires food, and a time of fasting from food not only teaches us discipline, but it also forces us to rely on God for strength.

– **Out of Our Comfort Zone.** We read of Moses and Jesus fasting for 40 days. I believe it was only by the power of God that they were able to do this. I would not recommend a 40-day fast from all food and drink, but there is an important point here. Fasting should be uncomfortable. It needs to take us out of our comfort zone, out of the complacency that comes with the familiar. It must cause us to depend on God for strength.

– **Take Fasting Seriously.** I mentioned earlier that fasting should never be taken lightly. It will have no effect if we do not practice it with the right spirit. I

remember when I went to Bible school at Heritage, there was a mandatory day of fasting. I was not a very mature Christian then, and to my shame, I did not take it seriously. I do not recall eating anything during that time, but I do know that I was not fasting for the right reasons. That fast had no effect on my life, because it was merely an inconvenience. If you choose to fast, do it for the right reason. Take it seriously.

– **Always Accompanied by Prayer.** Fasting should always be accompanied by prayer. The two are inseparable. We fast to draw closer to God. Through prayer we communicate our needs and desires—the reasons for the fast. Psalm 34:17-18 says, *“The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.”*

Waiting on Power

There is power in fasting and prayer. If we choose to practice this discipline, we will be blessed and fed spiritually. We must be willing to deny ourselves, to be able to let go of earthly things for a time, and focus solely on God.

When you draw near to God through prayer and fasting, may His power and blessing rest upon your life.

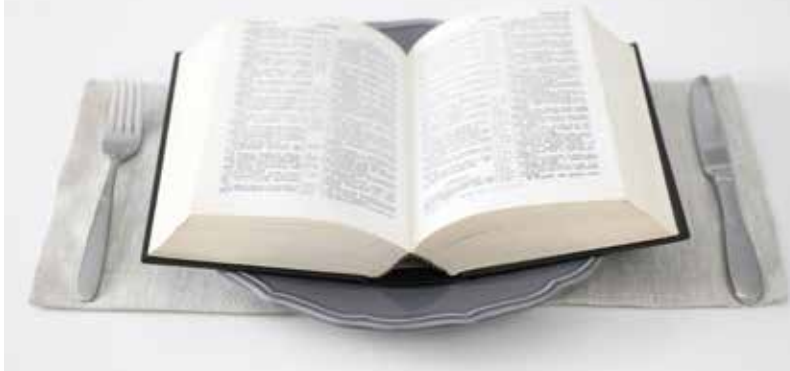
– Based on a sermon at Hephzibah Mennonite Church
29 October, 2023 | Georgia



Practical Questions:

1. Why did the Pharisees and the disciples of John fast?
2. When did Jesus say His disciples would fast?
3. What are some good reasons for fasting?

...the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.” (Matthew 9:15)





Rubies & Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.



“The best argument for Christianity is the Christian.”

– Rodney Witmer at Farmington Mennonite Church, NM



“Each of us should be a man after God’s own heart.”

– Wendell Heatwole at Burkeland Mennonite Church, GA



“There is nothing proud or boisterous or demanding in true worship; it is all done in true humility.”

– Paul Kaufman at Boyer Hill Mennonite Church, WV



“God did not have any trouble getting Israel out of Egypt, but He had a lot of trouble getting Egypt out of Israel.”

– Henry Brumbaugh at Old Brethren German Baptist Church, IN



“Our speech does not go very far if our life does not show it.”

– Dave Kurtz at Shekinah Mennonite Church, MO



“Spiritual usefulness without spiritual brokenness is a spiritual impossibility.”

– Joshua Good at Rowe Mennonite Church, PA



“Forbearance or longsuffering is the ability to wait on God, knowing He has the situation completely in control.”

– Nate Nissley at Farmington Mennonite Church, MO



“The church is not a Burger King where you can pick what you want off the menu. It is a brotherhood.”

– Nathan Byler at Cimarron Christian Brotherhood, OK



“You cannot keep a prisoner locked up if he has the keys to the cell door.”

– Glenn Kilmer at Sparta Mennonite Church, WI



“Our children will know if our lip service is counterfeit.”

– Joseph Yoder at Pelkie Mennonite Church, MI

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

The Challenge

By Val Yoder

From:



I WITNESS NEWS

INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES | SPRING 2024



Historically, Anabaptists have been given two labels. During the Reformation our spiritual ancestors were called “the radicals.” They were a pro-active group on the cutting edge of a determined effort to bring the church back to her biblical foundation in Acts. They initiated discussion, evangelism, and took Christ’s command to “Go ye therefore and teach all nations” literally. The ambition and intensity of this time not only earned them the title “radical,” but also ignited the fires of persecution and wrathful animosity against their simple faith.

Years later, some of the heat of religious hatred toward them dissipated. As the next generation reflected on the cruelty and brutality upon their forefathers and found places of political refuge, they developed a maintenance mode of church life. There was a concerted effort to preserve that which forefathers had died for. “Hold fast to the faith” became the theme. In their places of refuge from the intolerant magistrates of Europe they became known as the “quiet in the land.”

Both titles (the “radicals” and the “quiet in the land”) are essential and represent two callings of church life. The church is called to be pro-active while maintaining the faith. We are to go teach all nations while holding fast to the faith. As a contemporary Anabaptist, I am grateful for a heritage that has done well in maintaining biblical application while most other denominations have compromised to the point of invisibility. I recall going to Sunday school as a child in a mission church where Lutheran ladies would not come to church unless they were veiled, usually with a stylish hat. Walter Beachy reports that in his grandmother’s day the Amish and Methodist ladies looked nearly the same from across the street. It was only with a closer look that you would see the frills and extra lace not worn by the Amish. “Holding fast” in our churches has visibly preserved a biblical obedience that has been lost in most other denominations.

As important as maintenance is, it must actively cooperate with passionate action. If our “holding fast” is not coupled with “go ye therefore,” Anabaptism will become extinct except as a spectacle for tourism. We will be little more than a quaint reminder of western culture’s past.

Honest questioning forces us to ask, “Where are we at in these “holding” and “going” endeavors? A couple years ago a teacher at Sharon Mennonite Bible Institute’s Minister’s Week asked a group of forty to fifty pastors, “How many of your churches have five or more members from non-Mennonite backgrounds?” Only

Go

Ye

Therefore


and

Teach

All

Nations





one pastor raised his hand. Would this indicate which side of the continuum we are on? When churches grow only due to church hopping and childbirth, we are in a maintenance mode. When churches divide due to dissension instead of evangelism, we are in a maintenance mode. If marriage and material things primarily characterize the future vision of our people, we are in a maintenance mode.

These factors do not suggest pro-activity! Marriage and material things are the tools to something far bigger. We are in warfare. No truce has been called between the kingdoms of man and the Kingdom of God. Some question, “Is it safe to send young people to Iraq?” No, it may not be safe! But we are not here to be safe. We are here to be dangerous! Even the gates of hell are not supposed to be able to withstand us. If we are concerned primarily about safety, we are stuck in maintenance mode. Was it safe for Felix Mantz to face the city council? Is it safe for the underground Chinese church to take the gospel back to Jerusalem? Was it safe for the “Ten Booms” to hide Jews? Was it safe for Stephen to preach to the high priests? Was it safe to visit the orphanage in Haiti?

As important as the maintenance mode is, it will never be compelling by itself. Where there is no “go ye therefore,” there will be no significant or biblical “holding fast.” Oh, that we would once again be worthy of the title “Radical.” God calls us to maintenance, but He also calls us to trail blazing, to adventure, to battle, to escapades, to risk for the sake of building the Kingdom of God. The greatest challenge facing the contemporary conservative Anabaptist church is providing the “go ye therefore” examples for young Anabaptists today to model their lives after and to guide them in the conquests of the Kingdom.

The conservative Mennonite church must continue to raise up men and women like Irwin and Susan Schantz who left home and family to travel to the frigid northern regions to plant churches where no Anabaptist had ever traveled. Their bread was spread with lard in their primitive home while they labored to plant churches in northern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario.

We need homes like that of Count Zinzendorf whose house became a training facility for missionaries. The prayer closet of their home was filled twenty-four hours a day with prayer warriors for two hundred years! That community of people sent out more missionaries in twenty years than all the rest of European Christianity did in 200 years.

The conservative Anabaptist church has the resources and willingness in its young people. In the early eighties, young people left SMBI on weekends and term breaks for the cellars of New York City to encourage and assist the church planters that labored there. They slept on tables and the floor while rats walked on the pipes above them. Today young men are cautiously taking food and clothing through jungles in Myanmar to people marked for genocide by the government. Others are de-mining areas mined during wars. Still others are utilizing micro-financing programs to minister to the impoverished. There are a whole army of Kingdom soldiers in our churches who are willing to go into battle with weapons not made with hands. They need to be called forth by the church and sent into action.

What is the challenge facing Anabaptism in 2024?

1. We must get our eyesight off retirement. If middle-aged Anabaptists primarily dream of retiring in some vacationland city of the south, they will live out a lifestyle that will not reflect a compelling vision to the next generation. We will lose that generation to the worldly value system that has already captured us.

2. We must embrace the commitment of the persecuted church. *Martyr's Mirror* should be a regular part of our educational history requirements. The underground church in China should become our mentor. Our love for Jesus must mean that what we live for is also worth dying for. The Chinese church is committed to sending their best workers, the most experienced, the best equipped. Ten years of experience in leadership is desired for those that are sent out. A pastor is hardly deemed worthy in some Chinese circles if he has not spent time in prison.

While we question if it is safe to go into closed access countries, they expect persecution. Of the first thirty-nine missionaries sent out in the “Back to Jerusalem” mission effort, thirty-six were arrested and sent back home. The Chinese church rejoiced that three made it through, the others tried again as soon as they were released from jail. They train their workers to cross cultural barriers, to target specific groups, and to witness in all situations (trains, buses, police cars, even on their way to execution).

These workers are spiritual suicide bombers. They know they need to go, but they don't know if they will come back. They are trained in how to get out of their handcuffs in thirty seconds and how to jump from second floor windows without getting hurt.

3. We must rekindle the fire of conquest in young men. The God-given drive for conquest in

young men has been sedated into sports endeavors, shooting the biggest buck or hitting the most home runs. When our teaching of non-resistance is not coupled with conquest for the Kingdom, we will raise a generation of wimps, yellow soldiers who prefer coffee time to war time. Assuredly, our weapons are not carnal, but neither are they non-existent. They are MIGHTY, to the pulling down of strong holds!

Middle-aged American Anabaptists must capture a vision of Kingdom building that calls forth the wisdom of the aged and the daring of the young. This vision must include both the maintenance of faith and the pro-active aggression of works.

Our challenge involves "holding fast" while we "go therefore."

"The Lord takes away all fear; I did not know what to do for joy, when I was sentenced."
- Maeyken Wens
Martyr's Mirror

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."

"Oh, how easy it is to be a Christian, so long as the flesh is not put to the trial, or nothing has to be relinquished; then it is an easy thing to be a Christian."
- Maeyken Wens
Martyr's Mirror

"You can take from me no more than my life."
- Offrus Greizinger
Martyr's Mirror

"For when we consider that the world is rather a prison, we can perceive that you have rather escaped from, than been committed to, prison."
- Tertullian
Martyr's Mirror

Miracles and Signs

By James G. Landis

The apostle John had a specific purpose in mind when he wrote his inspired record of the life of Jesus, the Messiah. From start to finish, John carefully recorded many miracles/signs Jesus did to prove He was the Son of God, the longed-for Messiah, the Hope of Israel.¹

At a wedding in Cana of Galilee, Jesus changed the water of six stone waterpots into wine. The text tells us that each jar held 20 to 30 gallons each, a stupendous miracle.



"Fill the Water Jars"

In John 2:11, it gives the reason for the change from water into wine. A number of versions, including the KJV, translate the verse, *"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."* Other versions translate the word "miracles" as "signs" as does the NKJV, *"This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him."*

Both translations are correct, but in the language of the common person, the two words have a different meaning. A "miracle" contradicts known scientific laws and is thought to be an act of God. Changing the water into wine was a supernatural act by the power of God. It was a miracle.

A "sign" speaks to the meaning behind the supernatural act. John says changing of the water into wine *"manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him."* Because of this sign which Jesus had done, His disciples believed in Him as the Messiah.

¹ John never once used "signs" to mean the foretelling of future events. In John's book he always used "signs" as meaning the fulfillment of past prophecy regarding the Messiah.

Other scriptures confirm that the miracles Jesus performed were given to prove that He was the Messiah. John 2:23 reads, *"Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did."*

The Pharisee, Nicodemus, came to Jesus at night and said, *"Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him" (John 3:2).*

A wicked Samaritan woman was taken aback when Jesus told her everything she ever did. She was so excited she left her waterpot at Jacob's well and went running back to Sychar. She told her wondrous story, and asked of those who listened, "Could this be the Christ?" After Jesus stayed and taught two days in the Samaritan city—could a Jew really spend two days teaching Samaritans?—many believed in Him. They testified, *"Now we believe ... this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).*



She left her waterpot

We are not told if Jesus performed more signs in Sychar than telling the woman her life history, but it seems likely He did. And whatever signs He gave had the desired result of helping the Samaritans come to believe in Him as the Savior of the world.

A certain nobleman from Cana of Galilee, where Jesus had changed the water into wine, came to Jesus and asked Him to come to his house and heal his son. Jesus told the nobleman to go home; his son would be healed. At that very hour his son was healed. This sign

was so convincing that the nobleman believed in Jesus as the Messiah along with his whole household (John 4:53).

John 6:2 reads, *“Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased.”*

In another instance, Jesus took five barley loaves with two small fish. From that small amount, He multiplied it



“Your son lives”

so He could feed 5,000 people. After the meal, twelve basketfuls were still left over. The narrative sounds like it was His disciples that gathered up the fragments. *“Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world’ ” (John 6:14).*

The very next day after the miracle of the multiplied loaves and fishes, a crowd found Jesus on the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee. People wanted to know how He got there since they knew He had not gotten into a boat the day before. Jesus discerned their motive for seeking him out and said, *“I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled” (John 6:26).* Then those around Him wondered the meaning of the signs and Jesus explained, *“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:29).* Those around Him still did not believe in Jesus as the Son of God and asked for another sign so they could believe in Him. They seemed to have missed the whole purpose of the sign given them the day before. Perplexed, they asked, “Is this not the son of Mary and Joseph? How could He have come down from heaven?”

Jesus went to Bethesda, near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem. There He healed a man who lay crippled for 38 years by telling him to take up his bed and walk ... on the Sabbath day.

Jesus referred back to this miracle of healing the cripple in John 7:21. He said, *“I did one work, and you*

all marvel.” This miracle or sign raised a tremendous storm of criticism and controversy among the Jews. Some argued that “this is truly the Christ” while others denied His divinity because “no one will know where the Christ is from”; we know Jesus comes from Galilee. Jesus fueled the controversy with strange statements such as, *“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. He who believes in Me has everlasting life” (John 6:54, 57).*

In chapter nine John records another miracle/sign. *“As Jesus passed by he saw a man who was blind from birth.”* He healed him on the Sabbath by putting clay and spittle in the man’s eyes and telling him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man obeyed and then could see!

Another storm of contention blew in because this miracle/sign had also been done on the Sabbath day. After a great argument, the rulers cast the man out of the synagogue.

Jesus found him and asked, *“Do you believe in the Son of God?”*

“He answered and said, ‘Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?’

“And Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.’

“Then he said, ‘Lord, I believe!’ and he worshiped Him” (John 9:35-38).

After leaving Jerusalem, Jesus crossed to the east side of the Jordan where John the Baptist had preached



“Gather up the fragments”

and baptized before Herod beheaded him. There Jesus remained for some time and it is likely He taught and performed signs in that place. The apostle John then made a very interesting statement in John 10:40-41. Many people came to Jesus and said, *“John [the Baptist] performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true. And many believed in Him there.”* John did not do signs because he was not the

Messiah. He said plainly, “I am not the Christ.” He did not want to draw attention to himself but to glorify the One who was to come after him.

The reason Jesus performed signs was to prove He was the Messiah and that His words about the Father were true.

Now comes the big sign. In John 11 Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead! Jesus told Martha, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall never die.”* And again, *“If you would believe you would see the glory of God.”* Still again in a prayer to his Father, *“Because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.”*

Jesus called Lazarus out of his earthly tomb. And what was the result? Many of the Jews who had come to Mary to mourn, *“and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.”*

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, *“What shall we do? For this Man works many signs?”* The signs they were scared of proved Jesus was the Messiah and that all the people would believe in Him.

Sure enough, the multitude had heard that Jesus had done this sign—He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 12:18). Then the rulers said among themselves, *“Look, the world has gone after Him.”*

Jesus told the people of His coming death and urged them to believe in Him as the “light” while they had Him with them. But John records a sad note in John 12:37. *“But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him.”* Jesus said these people were just like Isaiah had prophesied about them. Isaiah said they could [would] not believe because *“He [Satan²] has blinded their eyes and and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them” (John 12:40, NIV).*

Then John records a happier note. *“Nevertheless even*

² This verse presents a classic case of an indefinite pronoun. Who is the “He,” God or Satan? If one understands the pronoun to refer to God, it entails a conundrum—a problem or puzzle which is difficult or impossible to solve—at the end of the verse. How will God heal the people if it is impossible for them to turn to Him. Therefore, I would understand it to be Satan who has hardened their hearts so they would not accept the many signs Jesus did and believe in Him as the Messiah.



“Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam”

among the rulers many believed in Him [as the Messiah], but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42-43).

The purpose for all the signs Jesus did in His lifetime culminate in this passage. Jesus cried out, *“He who believes in Me, believes not [only] in Me, but [also] in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (John 12:44).*

The apostle John witnessed all the sickening events of the trial and the crucifixion. He saw one of the soldiers pierce Jesus’ side with a spear. He saw the blood and water come out. In his record of these things, John wrote, *“He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe” (John 19:35).*

Then came Jesus’ resurrection and the empty tomb. After Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark and found Jesus was not there, she ran and told John and Peter that someone had taken Jesus’ body away. They came running to the tomb to see for themselves. John ran faster than Peter and arrived first, but he did not go in until Peter arrived. Then Peter went in and John followed him. They saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. They knew this was not the work of a hasty theft, but the folded grave clothes were another sign, like the ones they had seen so many times before. John recorded that even though he did not yet know the Scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead, “he saw and believed.”

Mary Magdalene also saw the Lord and believed.

The disciples saw His hands and His side when the Lord magically appeared behind locked doors. They believed Jesus was the Son of God He claimed to be.

Thomas touched Jesus' fingers and put his hand into His side. Jesus said to Thomas, *"Do not be unbelieving, but believing."* And Thomas believed. *"My Lord and My God!"* he exclaimed.

Then Jesus spoke to all of us who did not see the miraculous signs he did while on earth to prove His divinity. Nor did we witness His powerful presence after his resurrection. He said, *"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

Near the close of his book John revealed the reason why he recorded some of the many signs Jesus did and his purpose for writing this account of Jesus' life on earth: *"Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."*

Challenge Questions:

1. What was the purpose of a "sign" in John's gospel?
2. Why did the disciples do wonders and signs after Jesus ascended to the Father? *"Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (Acts 2:43).* *"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole" (Acts 4:10).* What other examples can you find?
3. Can you find any examples in the Acts or the Epistles that state, "This shall be a sign to you of the end times?"
4. Why do people do miracles or signs today?
5. If people do not do miracles or signs today, does that indicate a lack of Holy Spirit power in their lives?
6. If people speak in an unknown tongue in the worship service, is that a sign to the unbeliever?

Write your answer to one question and send it to *Anabaptist Voice*.



He is not here, He is risen!

Free Indeed

By Menno Knight

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”
— John 8:36

Set free? Indeed! Set free from the bondage of sin.

Free! NOT from distinctive and modest clothing, NOT from church guidelines, NOT from stable homes, worship services, and work. But free from sin. Free from the slavery of alcohol, tobacco, swearing, gluttony, greed, lust, fornication, adultery, sports idolatry, wasteful hunting trips, military sin, all murder, political involvement, remarriage, self-indulgence, hatred, bitterness, and strife. Show-off cars and trucks and tractors and . . .

I can't name all the sins that are possible. But Jesus said, *“Very truly, I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin”* (John 8:34). Jesus told them the truth. One cannot get around it. Sin is slavery, not to Jesus but to Satan and his demons.

Oh, how people hate to be slaves. When Jesus told the Jews that the truth could make them free, they denied they were in bondage. Even though they were subservient to Roman authority, they said, *“We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, ‘you will be made free’?”*

These people were grossly deceived and in denial. Between Abraham and the time of Jesus, they had been ruled by other nations many times—Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

This is the way it works: some sinners deny they are in bondage, but claim they are free. They say, “I can quit my sin any time I want to.” But they do not stop their sin. They are locked up in the prison of sin, as the songwriter puts it, “I was in sin's prison.”

Or as the apostle Paul put it in Romans 6:16, *“Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness”* (NIV).

Slaves! Here is a proposition that stands on its own two feet. “Neither a prisoner nor a slave can free himself.” He must be emancipated (set free, liberated) by the power of another. Until sinners give up themselves and call for help to be set free, they remain in bondage to Satan and to the ways of the world. They

fight, they lust, they carouse, they lie, and most of all they do not keep the commandments of Jesus.

Jesus said He was the needed power to liberate mankind from the slavery of sin. *“If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed.”* So Jesus set us free from the bondage of sin and called us to a holy life. He did not call us into a stale vacuum where it is hard to breathe or in stifling heat where we labor with great difficulty and in drudgery. No! He called us into fresh air and glorious liberty where we joyfully serve Him. He called us out of darkness into the brilliant light of the Son. He called us out of dreadful slavery into a holy life—clean, pure, honest, innocent, Godlike.

II Timothy 1:7 pictures our holy calling. *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* Galatians 5:1 says, *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free.”*

Free to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against these things there is no law, no limit on how much of each fruit we can produce.

So yes, Christ saved us and set us free from the grip and blackness of sin. He called us to a holy life. Now we are free to show our love for Him by keeping His commandments. We are free to wear distinctive and modest clothing, free to obey church standards and guidelines, free to establish stable homes, free to attend worship services, and free to work. Against such there is no law from heaven.

Free Indeed!



Taking Inventory

By Austin Hege

“Let a man examine himself” (I Corinthians 11:28).

Every successful business must take inventory. A business does not do this every day or every week, or every month. But at least once or twice a year someone must find out what is actually on the shelves or in the fields and barns. To neglect taking inventory in a very careful manner may lead down the path to financial ruin.

Here are some things that taking inventory may bring to light:

1. It finds some things on the shelves that no longer belong there.
2. It shows what is missing on the shelves because it is lost, stolen, or depleted.
3. It helps keep items in their proper place. Maybe something is in the wrong department.
4. It reveals what items need to be replenished—low or out of stock.
5. It helps show the health condition of the entire business.

Taking spiritual inventory of our standing before God is even more important than taking a physical inventory of a business. First Corinthians 11:27 warns us to examine ourselves so that we do not bring the judgment of God upon ourselves when we go to the communion table.

This taking inventory of our lives is to be a self-test to make sure we have not deceived ourselves into thinking all is well in our spiritual lives when we are weak and sickly instead of spiritually healthy.¹ With that in mind, we want to draw some spiritual parallels to these five points.

Taking spiritual inventory can make us aware that:

1. Some things do not belong in our lives. Galatians 5:19-21 provides a checklist of the works of the flesh that should not be a part of our lives—sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions,

¹ First comes the self-exam and then comes the discerning look by the brotherhood. A spiritually healthy person will welcome the discernment of others into his own life. This agrees with the meaning of I Corinthians 11:29 (NLT). *“For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ [the church], you are eating and drinking God’s judgment upon yourself.”*

The practice of examination by the brotherhood and the formal absolution and clearing of sin is a distinctly biblical part of “close communion.” When examination stops at a self-examination, “open communion results” *not discerning the Lord’s body.*

factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies. If we find any of these sins in our lives, we must ask forgiveness and purge them from our life.

2. Some things may be missing in our lives. Maybe we have let our guard down and Satan has taken something away from us. Maybe we have failed to see the value of something and have allowed it to be lost.

Maybe we have done a good work and want to tell others about it. Like King Saul, we may have lost our humility and become proud.

Maybe, like Elijah, we have allowed a fear of man to overtake us and we are hiding in a cave feeling sorry for ourselves. As a result, we have neglected God’s work and have lost complete trust in God’s power.

3. Some things may be out of order in our lives. Maybe we do not have the right priorities. Maybe some things in our spiritual warehouse are on the wrong shelf. In Acts 8:5 it is recorded that Philip went to Samaria and preached the gospel to the people there. The people were responding and there was great joy in the city. But Acts 8:26-30 tells us God’s Spirit sent Philip out into the desert to teach one Ethiopian eunuch.

Taking spiritual inventory requires us to ask ourselves how we rank the most important things in our lives.

4. Some things in our lives may need to be replenished. Some items in our spiritual inventory may be running low and should be restocked. Colossians 3:12-13 provides us a list of hot-sellers—tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, forgiving one another. Stock your heart-shelves with as many of these qualities as they can hold. Your spiritual self will never get too full of these qualities. Nurture them.

5. Analyze your overall spiritual health. If a business man takes inventory, he does not only want to know about the condition of the goods on the shelves. He uses the inventory to study the overall health of the business.

Likewise, in taking a spiritual inventory, we can look for signs of health and growth in our spiritual lives. Look for joy in your life. Jesus said, *“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11).* Are your cheeks rosy and filled with joy?

Adapted from a counsel meeting sermon by Austin Hege
Burkeland Mennonite Church | Waynesboro, Georgia

Treasures of the Storm

Walking through the darkness
Of a stormy trial,
My soul would soon have fainted,
Except for God's light smile.

I saw His love so often,
In ways others did not see.
I felt His loving hand
Bring strength and help to me.

He told me not to fear
When afraid I was and weak.
He was the anchor of my soul,
As I listened to Him speak.

He gave to me courage
When I was disheartened and down;
He gave me a sweet song—
A smile instead of a frown.

I learned to walk with Him,
To rely on my great God.
He grew more dear to me,
As each step, with Him I trod.

As I kept on looking
To my God, amidst the storm,
I found His grace enough;
He kept me from all harm.

Sometimes I almost fell
And lost sight of His dear face;
In mercy, He sought me—
And poured out His love and grace.

Now, I can thank my God,
For trials he allowed;
For I see the treasures
That He has to me endowed.

I see Jesus' nail-scarred hands,
Outspread in mercy and in love.
He, too, faced hard trials,
But reigns victorious, above.

God alone can keep us
And bring beauty out of pain.
He makes things beautiful,
Through life's storms, sunshine, and rain.

God will turn night into day—
The fiercest storms will have passed;
And God will bring true beauty,
If we're faithful to the last.

- Faith Jansky

Everlasting Love II

By Havalah Myers

I had been warned. If I left home, chances were, I would never return. I knew other young people who had ventured out into the world and had not returned to God and their families. But I had followed my heart. At twenty I had left Mama and God and moved in with Papa. After a year of trying my own way, could I swallow my pride and go back home? I fought the gentle calling of God.

Papa and my stepsister, Lindsey, saw I was lonely and unhappy. They encouraged me to meet guys so I could find a boyfriend. I had spent enough time in worldly circles to know I was not interested in any of those young men. One day while at my job in a busy airport coffee shop, I was watching the ever-changing crowd, when someone caught my eye. He stood up straight and walked with purpose. He was dressed neatly. He had a manly hair cut. He was walking away from me and soon disappeared. I started thinking about how different he looked compared to all the other men coming and going. I decided he must be a Christian. Christians should be that obvious! They should be a light in the darkness, ... I suddenly knew that was what I wanted! I wanted to be a real, light-giving Christian and I wanted to marry a Christian man.



Adelle, Maureen and Havalah. 2016

“Then whatever are you doing here?” I asked myself.

I paused, then answered my own question. “Being a fool!”

I decided to go back to God no matter how long it took to find God. I wanted Him, needed Him. I grew excited. My thoughts were interrupted when I saw the

man coming back. I could see his face now and realized I knew the young man. He had been a good childhood friend and fellow homeschooler. He never noticed me, but I never forgot how he was the “light” I needed just then.

Shortly after this, Mama called to tell me she had finally found a church that practiced what the Bible taught. I remembered that I had told Mama I would not come back unless she found a “good” church. I didn’t want to act too interested, but I was excited.

I was very sorry to hurt Papa by leaving, but he was busy trying to patch up his relationship with his second wife. My leaving would make it better for everyone.

In June of 2005, I went back to my grandparents’ old farmhouse and daily chores. I missed my pretty bedroom at Papa’s, but being back with my loving sister and Mother was worth the cramped quarters. We started driving the couple hours to the “new” church that Mama had found in northern Indiana. The people were friendly and sincere, but I was very skeptical. I hardly believed there could be this many genuine Christians in one church.

After I returned home, I was discontented. I wanted to be something, do something. I wanted to be a wife and mother, but knew I wasn’t prepared for that. Mama thought she came up with a solution. She decided to accept a teaching opportunity in Massachusetts, at a Ukrainian church school that needed English teachers for 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades. I was not one bit excited about this. However, we packed our goods and drove the 15 hours to Massachusetts. We set up house in a tiny rental about 30 minutes from the big Ukrainian church and school.

While we struggled through challenges of teaching children who spoke a different language and whose culture was very different from ours, we were blessed to attend a Mennonite church in the area. These Mennonites were like no others we had met. They had real missionary hearts and were good at reaching out and showing God’s love.

Journal - Spring 2006

“Seek God.” That is what one of the Mennonite brothers said to me when we parted. I told God I was scared to seek Him. But I have thought those words almost continually.

God is seeking me. He is slowly prying my fingers from an object I thought nothing could loose me from—Papa. I always thought if I could just become the daughter he wanted, I would get him back. But I now know that is impossible and not true. I am ruining my future by trying to fix the past.

When we returned to Michigan, it was only to pack again and make another move. We had discovered how encouraging a good church was and decided we needed to be close to the church we had found in Indiana. This was NOT an easy move for any of us. It meant leaving my dear Grandpa who was still recovering from a recent stroke. It tore our hearts to leave him all alone in that big, empty house. But he wanted us to finally be part of a good church. It was even harder on Mama, because if she had stayed with Grandpa, she would have inherited the 47-acre farm and enough money for her support as long as she lived. I still can hardly believe she gave that up, just so that her girls could be part of a godly, conservative church. I often think of what she gave up for God—family, land, money. She showed me that God is real and worth living for. Mama and some of her siblings took turns staying with Grandpa until his death six years later in August of 2012.



Stephen, Havalah, and Maureen 2016

So we moved off the farm into a little rental house in Leesburg, Indiana. We had to find jobs right away. It looked overwhelming to support ourselves. Our landlord recommended us to a local factory. We could get sewing from the factory, bring it home, and return it

completed in two weeks. It took some determination to stick to making thousands upon thousands of instrument cleaners. This job was still not quite enough to support us, so Mama began working as a caregiver for the elderly and Adelle and I started working at a custom butcher shop owned by an Old German Baptist family. It was perfect for us. They were a kind Christian family who tried to have a good, safe environment in which conservative girls could work. While I did not really enjoy the work, I did learn to enjoy doing a job well and working together with others.

The longer we attended that church, the more certain I was that Christians were not all “humbug” and that it could be enjoyable to serve God. One man and his family shone in this area. Brother Dan positively beamed God’s love on everyone. He saw the good in all. He saw the potential that we had to bring glory to God. I was not certain what to do with his confidence in me. It made me uncomfortable at first. I did not want him to expect too much of me; I knew I would fail. But even as I failed, Brother Dan never seemed discouraged or upset with me. He was the first man I ever met who I thought must be “like Jesus.”

That first year in Indiana I struggled. How could I be a Christian and give up my loyalty and love for Papa? I knew I would fail if I were around Papa. We saw him often, even though we lived about 2 hours apart. Lindsey, too, tried to keep our friendship going. She invited me to be a bridesmaid at her wedding. I didn’t end up going, but the desire to wear a pretty dress and be part of the extravagant wedding looked attractive to me.

God showed me an important truth. I could not be angry at my parents and their mistakes. What I hated in their lives was because of sin. What causes sin, or more correctly, who causes sin? Suddenly my anger was turned from my parents and their mistakes, to Satan. Oh how I hated this enemy! What was the best way to damage his rule? I decided to live for God completely and joyfully.

In March of 2007, when I was almost 23, I yielded my stubborn will to God. I repented bitterly of my sins and wished to live the rest of my life for God. I was baptized and joined the church.

One year later on March 7, 2008 I made the following journal entry:

It has been a year since I yielded body, soul, mind, heart, and life—past, present, and future—to God. Every struggle was worth it. I do not wish to be back there one ounce. I can hardly wait to keep on going with God!

I was excited to think that now I could get married after all. I was beginning to feel like an old maid and I was not sure anyone would want a girl from a divorced family. Just like most of my girlfriends, I hoped some nice Christian man would choose me.

Yet something was wrong. Ever since I had come back to live with mama when I was 21, I felt ill. I slowly grew sicker until I could hardly get out of bed. I could not think clearly and did not want to eat.

Mama and Adelle prayed for me and threw themselves into finding a solution to my illness. I remember very little of that year or the next. Through God's leading we discovered I had stomach ulcers, thyroid issues and adrenal problems. More tests showed I couldn't tolerate gluten or dairy and many other foods. I felt as if there was nothing I could eat.

Black depression settled thickly over me. During that time I could hardly stand crowds or noise. I often would cower at home. Some church people wondered if it were all spiritual which discouraged me further. I felt I was not a Christian, never could be, and never would be. Mama assured me when I gained health and strength back I would realize that I was still a Christian and that God was still very near and real. I didn't believe her.

When I changed my diet my stomach healed and slowly my mind cleared. Slowly strength returned. And there God was! I realized He was right there all the time, but I was ashamed of my failures during my "dark days." I felt I should just give up. I was 27 when I finally decided to leave the faith and our home for good, but God touched my heart with a powerful dream and many other incidents.

"God, what is wrong with me?" I prayed. Why have I never had lasting victory and joy in being a Christian?" I waited in silence, positive an answer would come. The still small voice spoke to my spirit.

"Do you really want to know the answer?"

"Yes! I am desperate!" I told God.

"Your Papa," He whispered.

I stiffened. I never allowed anyone to tell me what to do about Papa. Papa was mine. "What about Papa?" I asked defensively.

"Do you believe I love you?" God asked.

I thought about all the ways He had lavished His love on me—how patient He had been, how tenderly and tirelessly He had led me. "Yes, Father, I know without a doubt that you love me," I said with confidence.

"You need to switch your Papa and me in your

heart." God told me.

"But I love Papa, I don't want to give him up," I told Him.

"You don't have to give him up, just put me first and him second."

It looked impossible to me. But I took a deep breath and said. "All right Father, you can be first and Papa can be second."

The change was immediate and complete. I wrote Papa a long letter explaining my need for a time of separation and silence. Even though my request hurt him deeply, Papa respected my wishes. It was a year before I saw Papa or talked to him. It was a good year of growing closer to my Heavenly Father.



Daniel and Havalah while dating

A partial diary entry for April 13, 2012:

I was never a big fan of the Old Testament before. But now, somehow I eat up all the stories of these characters being loved and used by God. God has written a love letter to me through the Bible and I'll tell you a little secret. I think I am falling for Him.

Now, I feel as if I can finally catch my breath. I am actually seeing the beauty around me and taking the time to look in God's direction. I am actually beginning to get excited about life, for no real reason except God.

On November 28, 2013, I wrote a long letter to Papa. I had prayed much about what to say and I felt God gave me the words. Here are some excerpts from that letter.

Dear Papa,

"I realize you must be about as confused over me as any father could ever be about his daughter. You

have seen me try to be a Christian and then give it up a couple times. I just couldn't seem to make being a Christian stick. This last time I decided not to say anything because I was afraid I would once again fail God.

"I just grabbed God's hand and asked that He would love me and that I might learn to love Him. I am learning that when "I" try, I fail. When I simply let God lead, He provides the strength and amazingly, I do well. Maybe it is not so amazing; after all, God is God. ..."

"I realize that my whole life has been a search for love. A faithful love. A love that would never let me go. ..."

I must add a bit about my 30's. We were happy and busy for the most part. Adelle and I still prayed that Papa would give his life to God and we still wished we could have made him happy. We also wished we could become wives and mothers. But we trusted God.

Then something amazing happened. Papa came for a visit. He told Adelle and me that after watching our lives for several years, he wanted to tell us he was very happy with us and our choices. He told us if we didn't do anything else in life but what we were doing, we would have lived worthwhile lives. How precious to finally have Papa's blessing on our lives. If only he had become a Christian that day too. We still pray for that miracle. Papa will be 76 this year.

While our friends kept getting married, Adelle and I were not chosen. Yet, through this "rejection" we grew closer to God. We felt "complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). We prayed to stay sweet and not become bitter old maids. We teased each other that if God wanted us to get married He would have to drop a man out of the sky. Well, that is almost what happened to me. While I was busy with the normal daily activities, a plane landed in an airport, and a few days later I met the man I would later marry.

Daniel had lived most of his twenties in Paraguay. He had just turned 32 and was beginning to wonder what direction he should take next in life. He flew to

Pennsylvania for his older brother's wedding. His older brother was going to marry my older sister. I had no interest in him and he had no interest in me.

I had learned well how to guard my heart now that I was 34. So I was confused when I felt God telling me to be kind to Daniel. I had no desire to be thought a flirt. Daniel was a little bothered when God kept bringing me to his notice.



Daniel & Havalah with their two sons, Clark (2) and Forest (1)

God used a dramatic experience to open our eyes. This involved me nearly drowning during a kayak trip down a rather rough Pennsylvania river. Daniel rescued me and we both got the message that we should finish life together! We laugh now over God "forcing" us together. But we are so thankful that He did.

When one totally gives his heart to God, life becomes the most amazing adventure. It is like a journey down a river. Moments of lazy floating and peaceful scenes. Then terrifying moments and moments when you have to paddle frantically. But life with God is the best. It is the way God meant for us to live.

H.D.M. | Kentucky

**"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying,
Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."
— Jeremiah 31:3**

Water For Life

A Two-Part Series – Introduction by the editor

When the Samaritan woman came to Jacob’s well¹, she needed water. Everyone in the village needed water and came to that well. It took work to come to the well, to draw the water up from the depths in a small bucket, and then to carry it back to Sychar ... every day.

Therefore, it is not hard to understand the ear-catching offer Jesus made to Photina² when He said, *“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13-14).*

Imagine the amount of work it would take for you to draw the water you use each day in a small bucket and then walk it to your home one mile away. Probably you would drastically reduce the amount of water you use.

The story is told of a grandmother who asked her granddaughter which of the modern conveniences in her kitchen she would miss the most if she had none of them—dishwasher, cookstove, microwave, refrigerator, freezer. The granddaughter hesitated and turned the question back to her grandmother. Without hesitation the grandmother replied, “Running water.”

Everyone needs water. Without water, life cannot exist. Drinking only salt water is deadly. Drinking dirty water brings on many water-borne diseases, and death. And where there is no water available, a village or city cannot exist.

On the other hand, books have been written detailing the health advantages of drinking large amounts of

clean water and telling how it can cure many diseases.³ When lying in the emergency room with a racing heart of 160 beats per minute, an attendant told me, “Many heart patients suffer from dehydration. Drink more water!” We also believe dehydration played a part in my wife’s kidney failure two years ago. Today we both try to monitor our fluid intake very carefully.

Adequate amounts of good water are very potent in maintaining good physical health. Likewise, abundant doses of the Water of Life are even more important to nurture our spiritual health.

When storms or wars deprive people of access to good clean water, life changes. A lot more time and energy must be spent to obtain water each day. Less time and energy is left to secure food and other necessities. Deadly diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, and typhoid often accompany a scarcity of water during wartime.

The same is true for millions of people in India, Africa, and some countries in South America who do not have easy access to good water. When wells and pumps provide clean water, life improves.

Oftentimes when Christians help bring water to people who lack the life-giving fluid, they find people receptive to the Living Water Jesus offers. With that in mind, *Anabaptist Voice* is bringing a two-part series around the theme, “Water for Life.”

The first story, “Living Water” by Anya Hursh, is an article from war-torn Ukraine (July 2023). It tells of the heartbreak and horror of war and the need for water. It records a small part of the effort of those bringing good water to also tell of the “Living Water” that can soothe the thirst of the soul.

The second story, “Life Pumps,” planned to appear in AV33, will tell of experiences in several African countries where Life Pumps bring good water to the surface in a lasting stream. In the places where Christian Aid Ministries installs these pumps, the presentation of the Living Water is part of the gift package.

¹ Jacob’s well is reported as 140’ deep with a draw depth of 128’. These numbers can vary widely. One report said 74’ deep. Maybe the water level does fluctuate. The point is the well was deep.

² A name given to the Samaritan woman by Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic traditions. The name means “the luminous one.”

³ *Your Body’s Many Cries for Water* by F. Batmanghelidj, M.D.. “You are not sick, you are thirsty! Don’t treat thirst with medications.”



Living Water

Anya Hursh - July 2023

Jesus met the woman at the well. I thought of that story often during the days spent with the team in Lyman. Water is an important resource, which we so often take for granted. The city water system has not been working, which means that many are out of water. All of the water used for cleaning and cooking and serving coffee and tea needed to be hauled in large tanks from the well at the Lyman church house, twenty minutes away from the center. It seemed like someone was always busy filling the tanks and hauling water.

Because of the water shortage, the shower truck is an important addition to the services offered at the Christian center. Three showers and three washing machines fill the back of a box truck purchased especially for that. Water heaters and large tanks of water fill up one end of the truck.

One afternoon I met Valya, an 82-year-old babushka who came to Bible study an hour early so that she could take a shower and do some laundry. Again and again, she expressed her gratitude for a place to shower. We visited at length as she told me stories of how hard life in Lyman had been during the early months of the war. She talked about the terror they experienced when the battle line passed over the city as the Russian military claimed it, and then again months later when the city was liberated. “You think it is bad here now,” she said. “Well, compared to the hell we lived through, this is a flower.”

Babushka Valya regularly attends the services that are held at the Christian center. “I am embarrassed to tell you this,” she said, her voice dropping to a whisper, “but I never read the Bible when I was young. Only since the war, have I begun searching for God. When I was young, we were taught that there is no God. But now I know that was a lie. I’m so glad believers have come to tell us about God!”

“Could you wash these blankets for me?” another babushka asked one day. “I’ve washed all my small stuff by hand, but this is too hard for me. All our blankets are so dirty and smoky from living in the cellar.”

We hear that story again and again. Humans were not made to live in damp, dark cellars. Clothing and bedding—and people—wear out fast in such circumstances!

One night, after curfew, a group of soldiers came and asked to use the shower house. It seemed as though they had just returned from their shift on the front. It takes wisdom and grace to know how to answer these requests. Can we turn anyone away? Perhaps God will use the shower house to introduce these men to the Living Water and the cleansing power of the Word of God.



In Siversk, a city nearly two hours from Lyman, the water situation is even more critical. Wells are almost nonexistent, and people relied on city water. War has robbed them of so much, including water.

Twice a week, volunteers from Lyman take several tons of water to the people of Siversk, a frontline city. The first day our group went, a line of smoke from the battlefield was seen on three sides of the city. The road to Siversk is rough, and few civilians venture that way. Almost the only traffic on those roads is military or volunteers. Phone service is spotty at best, mostly nonexistent.

On Sunday, after a quick lunch, we took three vehicles loaded with water and aid and traveled to Siversk. Again and again, we held short services where people gathered with their empty bottles and buckets. We would sing a few songs, one of the brothers would share a few words of encouragement, and together we would pray the Lord's Prayer. The words of old familiar songs take on new meaning when the background noise is one of loud explosions. It takes a lot of courage to say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," when the sound of missiles cuts the air, and we are surrounded by the wounds of war.

After the service, while people waited for their bottles to be filled, we had time to visit with individuals as we handed out aid. I helped one babushka carry her water to her house, and then she pulled me to her raspberry patch. "Here, you gave me water. I want to give you something, too." Although she was in her eighties, she was spry and cheerful. As she picked several handfuls of raspberries, she talked about her children and grandchildren who used to live nearby, but left because of the war. She feels so lonely, but she thinks she is too old to move away.

She showed me her row of battered buckets and basins lined up next to the roof of her house to catch rain water. "This is the only kind of water I have," she explained, "but it's not good enough to drink. Thank you so much for the water you bring!"



At the end of a service, another babushka called me into her property. There, behind the fence, I found a lovely rose garden. "I want you to see my flowers," she told me, as she took the pruning shears and began picking a bouquet of roses. "I want to pick some for you."

I protested, but she insisted, saying that it is too dangerous to be outside and enjoy the roses anyway, so they are best if they are picked and shared. Her house is still standing, but most of her time is spent in the cellar. It is too dangerous to spend much time above ground. She pointed to a nearby house that was destroyed. "That used to be my daughter's place. They left the country with their children and are safe. And just last week they had a baby girl. I wonder if I will ever get to see my new grandbaby." I felt a lump in my throat as I thought of how much these folk had gone through. The roses seemed so symbolic of the hope and determination blooming amidst the destruction.

Several of our services were held between apartment buildings. The buildings, though standing, had been broken and burned from



the fighting. There the people live in the basement under the building. At first, people did their best to get along and look out for each other. But as time drags on, resources dwindle, the morale of people weakens, and life becomes much harder. Relationships become a source of contention instead of comfort.

The very air feels heavy with oppression. The sound of missiles, shooting, and bombing is ever present and very near. While we were there, the ground shook several times from a nearby explosion. A crater showed where one missile had landed mere meters from where we stood. All around us were telltale marks of war.

“Is it worth it?” I wondered, as another explosion jarred the ground beneath my feet. “Is it worth the risk?” I asked myself as we drove past charred remains of vehicles. “Are we being foolhardy? What if this costs us our lives?”

The questions found answers as I saw the eyes of the people who came thirsting for water and aching for the hope and comfort found in the Living Water. I knew the answer when I felt the grip of gratitude as yet another babushka hugged me and wept on my shoulder, sobbing, “I’m so tired of this war. I don’t know how much longer I can take it.” I heard the answer as I saw hope shine in the eyes of the war-weary people. And when we bowed our knees for evening prayer, I knew the answer. It is worth it. Even if it comes at the cost of blood and suffering.

I sensed in the hearts of those around me a longing to live and serve, but a willingness to die. They were there serving, not for the thrill of getting as close to the front lines as possible, nor for the popularity of being a modern-day hero. Working in danger takes its toll; physical and emotional exhaustion is a constant companion. The work is hard and seems thankless at times.

Those dedicated youth were there because they took seriously Jesus’ words in Matthew 16:24, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” They know Jesus’ words that are echoed throughout the Gospels. “For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel’s, the same shall save it.” That does not mean that Christians can recklessly go wherever they want. It does not mean that it will not cost suffering or death. But the promise of eternal life is real, and that is what keeps them going. They desire to share the Living Water that they have found.

God is not calling for all of us across the world to drop what we are doing and head to the front lines in Ukraine. But do we really know what it means to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily? Are we really willing to give up our lives for the sake of Christ and the Gospel? Do we know what these verses mean? We tend to struggle to hang on to our rights and to the comforts and the petty things we think we deserve. I wrestle with these questions in the comfort of my house. I caught a glimpse of what it really means in the lives of those who live and serve in Lyman. But how does this apply to the rest of us?

We drink deeply of the Living Water Jesus offers us. We find refreshment in God’s Word and in fellowship with the saints. But sometimes we stop there, hoarding this Living Water that was meant to be shared! It is not easy. In the rush of everyday living, how quickly we pass by the woman at the well, or other thirsty souls God places on our path.

Let us pray for each other. May God help us to follow Christ’s command to take up our crosses and follow Him. By the grace of God, we can be a channel through which the Living Water flows. No matter where we live, we can make a difference in this dry and thirsty world.



Nonresistance – God's Command to Christians

by Jay C. Johnson

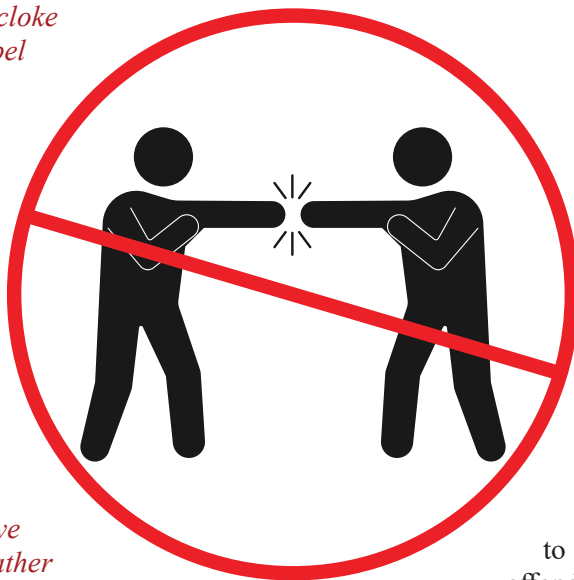
Introduction:

In March of 2000, a seasoned pilot in the United States Air Force (USAF) came under conviction that he could no longer be a Christian and carry out his sworn duty to obey his commanding officer. Jay C. Johnson wrote a 24-page paper explaining why he wanted to be released from his oaths and obligations to the USAF. When Jay presented this paper to his commanding officer, he was immediately grounded and his career in the USAF was ruined.

I found this treatise well written, solidly biblical, and challenging. In AV32 and AV33, we present two sections from Jay Johnson's paper in defense of the Christian doctrine of nonresistance—"Nonresistance: God's Command for Christians" and "Two Separate Kingdoms."

The best place to begin to see the biblical doctrine of nonresistance is by reading the Bible in the book of Matthew. Jesus Christ said in Matthew 5:38-48:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.



A Higher Standard

At times in the Old Testament (the part of the Bible before Christ came), God commanded the Jewish people to go to war against certain other nations and totally destroy every living thing. But when Jesus arrived on earth, He brought a new and higher standard for God's people, which is stated in the New Testament.

The verses above have far-reaching effects if they are to be obeyed by Christians. By saying, "*But I say unto you...*," Jesus raised the obligation of Christians as they relate to their fellow-man. It is actually harder for someone to love their enemy than to kill them. But love is God's will and therefore should be the standard for Christians.

As Christians, we are not to resist any person. If someone offends me or strikes me, I should not retaliate; in fact, I should go the "extra mile" to help and love that person. It is more important for me to suffer than to strike back. Obviously, this requires the grace of God to obey these commands. It is completely against human nature to suffer wrongdoing and then turn around and love that person; however, as a Christian, the Holy Spirit gives me a new nature to make this possible (Acts 5:32, Galatians 5:16-25).

nonresistance. *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25-26).* Even if my offender or enemy fails to ask for forgiveness, I must still forgive him or her.

Stephen’s Example

Another beautiful example of forgiveness and nonresistance is the apostle Stephen. The Jews stoned him because of his testimony of Christ. He never resisted or fought his killers, and he even went so far as to forgive them. *“And they stoned Stephen ... And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:59-60).* Stephen was willing to die rather than fight back against his enemies.



LOVE your ENEMIES

MATTHEW 5:44

Suffering Injustice

James warns the rich about the many injustices perpetrated upon the poor, helpless, widows and orphans, and the laborers while they themselves basked in luxury and pleasure. Then he adds a telling statement about the response of those who suffered such great injustice, *“He does not resist you” (James 5:6).*

Bless Your Enemies

Christians are also commanded to bless their enemies. Romans 12:14 says, *“Bless them which*

persecute you: bless, and curse not.” As a Christian in the military, how do I bless the enemy while killing him or her? Even the soldier who is not directly involved in killing the enemy is contributing to the overall effort to defeat him. For the Christian, this duty is inconsistent with nonresistance, forgiveness, blessing, and the love of God.

“Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” [In this passage Peter quotes from Psalm 34:12-16 and Psalm 37:27.]

*“He who would love life and see good days,
Let him refrain his tongue from evil,
And his lips from speaking guile;
Let him turn away from evil and do good;
Let him seek peace and pursue it.”*

– I Peter 3:9-11

The Love of God

The love of God is wonderfully defined in I Corinthians 13:1-13 and should be exhibited by all Christians. God’s love is patient, kind, pure, benevolent, merciful, and truthful. It is not arrogant, rude, devilish, or malicious. Military service, war, and international political coercion do not fill the definition of God’s love; they cannot take the place of Christian love (I John 4:7-13).

How does one mix bloodshed with mercy and kindness? Bombing with benevolence and forgiveness? Warrior aggression with patience and purity? How do I forgive as Christ forgave me if I am training pilots who will possibly supply missiles for the war effort?

And how do the words of Jesus Christ dwell richly in my heart as I study battle tactics and *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu? Addressing Christians, the apostle Paul said, *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (II Corinthians 6:14).* Man’s military and political forces have purposes that are defined in the Bible but they are incongruous with Christian love (Colossians 3:12-17).

God calls all Christians to love without discrimination; we are to love everyone whether friend or foe. As a Christian, I need to demonstrate God’s love toward people but hate the sin that entangles them (Romans 12:9-10). In war, a Christian cannot be kindly

affectioned with brotherly love toward the enemy he is conspiring to destroy (I John 4:20-21). The two do not match. Even if the person or group is wrong and committing grievous acts, I am still commanded to love the person but “abhor that which is evil” (Romans 12:10).

The Bible says, “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (**Ephesians 4:31-32**). It is important to mention that nowhere in the New Testament does a Christian fight back or defend himself.

Even early Christians would rather suffer imprisonment, persecution, or martyrdom rather than have a guilty conscience toward God.¹ Nonresistance is a basic biblical doctrine that was clear to the members of the early church as they chose to live their lives in obedience to God.

It Is My Duty

In Joshua 24:15, the Bible says, “*...choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*” I have chosen to follow Jesus Christ in literal obedience to the Bible. He said, “*If ye love me, keep my commandments*” (**John 14:15**), and “*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you*” (**John 15:12**). One of the most important aspects of being a Christian is obeying the Word of God in the New Testament. As a Christian, it is my duty to walk after Christ and obey His commandments. He is my Shepherd and commanding General.

In the military, my sworn duty is to obey the leaders in authority over me. When they give an order, my duty is to obey it to the best of my ability. In essence, this is how a Christian should obey Christ. God has already given the orders; they are written in the Bible. It is the Christian’s duty to obey wholeheartedly (I John 3:23-24, I John 2:3-6).

Obedience Means Action

Obviously, real obedience involves action. This is why I have decided to apply as a conscientious objector—simply agreeing with the doctrine of nonresistance is not enough. Jesus said, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the*

kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (**Matthew 7:21**). The Bible also says, “*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*” (**James 1:22**). The doctrine of nonresistance directly applies to me since I am a member of the military. If I truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, then I will want to obey Him by doing His will.

When someone asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment, He said:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (**Mark 12:30-31**).

These two commandments sum up everything written in the Bible. I am to love Jesus Christ with all of my being in every aspect of my life. As a Christian, if I aim to obey these two commandments, then I will eventually learn to obey the other commands in the Bible. If I love my neighbor, I will not want to war against him because I do not want someone to fight against me (Hebrews 12:14).

Who is my neighbor then? Jesus used the story of the “Good Samaritan” in Luke 10:29-37 to show that even my enemy is my neighbor. It is a fact that the Jews and Samaritans hated each other, and yet it was the Samaritan who helped the Jew in his time of need. We are to show mercy and love for our neighbors, no matter who they are, how they treat us, or in which country they live.

– To be continued in AV33, “*Two Separate Kingdoms*”

– More of the Johnson life story can be found in: AV20 (Winter Issue 2021), & AV21 (Spring Issue 2021)



¹ Kauffman, Daniel, ed. *Doctrines of the Bible*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1928.



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

Kingdom Questions

by Lue King

I have questions concerning a few statements on page 33 in issue #30.

Statement #1 – “There should be no political involvement in the government.” Where in the Word of God is there support for this statement? John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter had contact with officials in the “government.” These centurions were never advised to leave their position. In fact, Peter baptized Cornelius, a centurion.

AV Editor

The key word here is, “political.” The Bible never tells us that John the Baptist, Jesus, or Peter, ever advocated any political involvement in the earthly kingdoms of the world—rebellion, holding office, or making laws favorable to social justice. Jesus and all the apostles preached repentance from sin and a changed life and coming judgment.

The Bible is silent on what soldiers and centurions did after they believed in the Kingdom of God. But read in this issue how one air force officer saw the impossibility of being part of the military and being a Christian at the same time (“Nonresistance—God’s Command to Christians”).

Statement #2 – “The rulers of this world are under the sway of Satan.”

Romans 13:3-4 says, “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, (*not* “under the sway of Satan”) a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” How does the writer of these statements reconcile this?

AV Editor

Few would deny that many rulers do evil many times. In fact, Jesus warned us that sometimes we will suffer unjustly at the hands of rulers as did John the Baptist and most of the apostles.

We do not expect to see unregenerate rulers in heaven, even if they did use the sword to punish the evildoer and encourage the righteous. That does not make them members of God’s Kingdom. No, God uses evil men to restrain evil men by force—like King Herod and the Caesars. God will judge all those who use the sword, but nowhere in the New Testament do we find that God has two standards by which he judges: one standard for the rulers, police, and soldiers, and another for nonviolent, obedient, Christians.

Statement #3 – “The Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of Satan.”

The Kingdom of God/Heaven is mentioned many times in the New Testament. The kingdoms of Satan are never mentioned in the New Testament. Jesus Christ is KING of kings, and Lord of lords. His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and, according to Him, this Kingdom will grow until it fills the whole earth! “And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:35). “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; ... and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44). The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven found in Matthew 13:31-33 also teach that the Kingdom of God will fill the whole earth.

AV Editor

I John 5:19 says that the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. This would include the kingdoms of the world.

Matthew 4:8 says, “Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him [Jesus] all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

And he [the devil] said to Him [Jesus], 'All these things I will give You if you will fall down and worship me.' ”

It sounds like the kingdoms of the world are under the control of Satan and God allows Satan’s evil influence to rule in the kingdoms of men.

Yes, Christ’s Kingdom has filled the whole earth in the sense that leaven and salt permeates every aspect of life in the world, but it does not convert the whole world into salt and leaven. And it is true, God’s Kingdom will never be destroyed.



The Root of the Fallacy

by Izit Lawful

I appreciate your thought-provoking magazine.

I am writing in reference to the “Round Table Discussion” on divorce and remarriage in the Winter issue (AV31, page 35). In our last brothers meeting, we had a similar discussion in preparation for redoing our church’s statement of faith.

One interesting point that came out was in the form of several questions.

– Is marriage a universal institution, or is it only a Christian institution?

Yes, marriage is a universal institution.

– Are all first-time non-Christian marriage partners living in sin, or are all first-time marriages sanctioned by the Lord and married according to God’s direction?

Yes, all first-time marriages are sanctioned by the Lord.

– Can non-Christian first-time couples be lawfully married, even though they are not Christians?

Yes, non-Christian first-time couples can be lawfully married.

If the answer to these questions is yes, it means that all first-time marriages are recognized by God. Therefore, a remarriage (with the first partner still living) cannot be of the Lord. It is adultery.

Some falsely teach that being “married in the world” is not ordered by the Lord. This false teaching lies at the root of thinking that when one is remarried as a Christian it is not adultery.

AV Editor

Many fallacies in the world do not change the Creator’s design and plan for all mankind—man and animals should multiply on the earth, men should not kill, man should have dominion over the animals, men and women should marry and have children. When men walk according to God’s will and way, God places His blessing upon them.

And when men disobey God’s way, which they instinctively know, God places his curse upon them. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). Here Paul was not talking just to Christians, he was talking about those who do not recognize God and do not obey the laws He has written on their hearts.

If God did not intend for one man and one woman to marry and have children, there is no meaning to the term “adultery.” None.

God has revealed his will to all men concerning marriage and divorce both in His Word and by the instinct He placed within their beings. Therefore, those who disregard His will in the matter are without excuse and will have to give account to God for their disobedience. A “Christian marriage” where one or both partners have living spouses does not change God’s judgment upon the union.



Much Tolerance

by Inc Lusive

The world is in conflict with the truth of God’s Word. Yes, the world prides itself in its tolerance, diversity and inclusiveness, but that which appears as love for everyone is false. There is no love for Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 15:18, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.” There is no tolerance or love for Jesus Christ in the world.

‘Diversity’ is presented as tolerance of differences. Being inclusive seems to be a welcome to everyone. Yes, the world is inclusive of diversity, which means that anything diverse or different from Christ is included and accepted. This spirit of antichrist has been in the world for nearly 2000 years. 1John 4:3 says, *“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of*

antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

This world rejects God who became man, but instead thinks that man is a god. God has the knowledge to rightly decide what is good or evil, but humans do not.

Satan is a god of the world system. The statement that “God is in control” does not bother him since he is the god of this world. Satan can therefore blame the God of heaven for the evil that Satan and mankind have caused on earth.

In this war there are no conscientious objectors. Jesus said in Luke 11:23, *“He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.”*

AV Editor

You are right. The way of Christ is not inclusive. The path to heaven is narrow and demands obedience. The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:24-30) teach that those who do not obey Christ and His commandments will be cast into hell.



Healing Gift

by Mir A. Culous

I am writing in response to your request for comments on I Corinthians 12:9; what does it mean when it mentions “gifts of healing”? (AV31, page 28).

I believe the gifts of healing described in this passage (I Corinthians 12:4-11) is talking of miraculous healing through faith in the power of Jesus.

I do not feel everyone who has faith will necessarily have the gifts of healing. This is borne out in the verses that say, *“To another faith by the same Spirit (the Holy Ghost), to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy ...”* (I Corinthians 12:9-10).

Further on in I Corinthians 12:30, Paul asks a number of questions about who has the different gifts: *“Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”* The implied answer to all the questions is, “No.” Not everyone has the same gifts from the Spirit.

Each member should labor in the gift given him, for it is of God and should be used for His glory. Healing may not be our gift, but it is someone’s gift. If we do not have faith, I do not believe we will have the gifts of the Spirit.

In I Corinthians 14:1, it is made plain that we should desire spiritual gifts, with charity. If we earnestly desire to prophesy (the best gift), does that mean the Spirit will give us that gift? If we earnestly desire the gift of healing, does that mean the Spirit will give us that power?

In Mark 16:17 Jesus charged His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel. He says, *“These signs shall follow those who believe (have faith): In my name they shall cast out devils ... they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. ... And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen”* (Mark 15:20). Amen, so let it be, even today in 2024.

If the apostles healed by the power of the Spirit 2,000 years ago and Mark says it will follow the believers and Paul says to covet it, then surely it is still for us today.

Maybe we are too quick to go to the world for our healing. Maybe we need to “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” I do not want to discount that herbs and doctors surely have their place, but we do not want to forget the Bible way of anointing, fasting, prayer, and miraculous healing.

AV Editor

You rightly state that not everyone has the same gift or all the gifts. *“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one as He will”* (I Corinthians 12:11).

This means not everyone in the church has the “gifts of healings.” But some in the church do have the “gift of healings.” I propose this gift does not always refer to supernatural powers—curing cancer, restoring a severed ear or limb, stopping an issue of blood, or supernaturally removing a disease. Rather the gift of healings means an insight and understanding of the human body given to those who have been endowed with a natural ability not possessed by everyone.

I Corinthians 12:4 says, *“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”* As a school teacher, I can say that not every student had the same aptitude for different subjects. Some could read and spell much better than others, but were poor in math. Others were sharp and quick with math but not so good with reading. Still others were better with singing and reading music. Some could draw pictures while others only made marks on paper. Yet all could be in the same class in the same school.

So it is in the church. The Spirit enhances and uses these native¹ abilities (gifts) for the praise of God and the benefit of the church. Some have a natural gift or better understanding of the human body than others. When this native skill is dedicated to God and used for His glory, it is a gift of the Spirit to the church and should be recognized as such.

In the matter of the gift of healings, a person who has this natural understanding and interest in the workings of the human body will be given special insight by the Holy Spirit into a particular malady and a remedy for it. This is not a miraculous cure, but a Holy Spirit directed insight into the healing.

Likewise, this understanding of the gift of healings fits with the other gifts of the Spirit mentioned in I Corinthians 12:8-10—the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues.

A point that needs emphasis is that all the gifts are given for the edification of the church. This is likewise true for the gift of healings. *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (I Corinthians 12:7).*

End Note: *The reason Jesus and the disciples miraculously healed people was to prove that the message they delivered was from God and not from men (see “Miracles and Signs” in this issue).*



Hand-to-Mouth by Good Heart

In a world full of desperately urgent needs where people are starving to death daily, it seems to me that I as a follower of Jesus should not expect to make a living to supply more than today’s needs for myself.

God was displeased when the children of Israel took up manna for the next day in Old Testament times. Also Jesus said to consider the sparrow and to take no thought for the morrow; I wonder if I should do just that as well.

I have been living in freedom and prosperity so long that I almost feel entitled to having enough in my savings for years to come. So I doubt if I truly love my neighbor as myself?

¹ Native – a quality belonging to a person’s character from birth rather than acquired.

Although Jesus had the power to do it, He did not heal every blind man in Israel, He did not heal every leper in Israel, nor did He feed 5,000 people every day. Jesus did not do these miracles to relieve the suffering of the people but to glorify the Father and to prove that He came from God.

AV Editor

God does not hold us responsible for all the poverty and sickness in the world, but He will hold us responsible for how we use the talent and the opportunities He has entrusted to us.

Jesus’ reference to the sparrows’ carefree life held them up as an example of not worrying about tomorrow; not as an example that God would supply all their daily needs without winging it. The verses in Proverbs 6:6-8 also support the thought that we should provide for more than just a hand-to-mouth existence. *“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.”* Proverbs has many things to say about work ethics.

The New Testament also gives two more reasons for diligence in our daily work. *“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (I Timothy 5:8).* The second reason why a Christian should earn more than he needs for his own existence is so he can give to those in need. *“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28).*



The Practical Side

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

— Colossians 3:17

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

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

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

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



The Practical Side: Work Boots Required

The Practical Side: Rest of the Story

Real world situations met by today’s Anabaptists.

Bloodcurdling!

by Caught B. Tween



There was only a second to let the words process in our minds. The next moment our mental response would be realized. The words echoed in my mind, “Knife, knife.” The response of the town men was to flee through the door, putting a safe distance

between the madman and themselves. Should I turn and run? If I escaped, would he harm the others in the house? Should I try to wrench the knife from his hand? Should I simply put myself between the man and the rest of those in the house? I made a quick decision to do what I could to keep the man from proceeding further into the house or harming anyone else.

He was charging toward me now, arms raised, knife gripped in his right hand. I crouched slightly, arms raised in an attempt to grab his wrists or deflect his hands. In the blink of an eye he had barged past me, sped back the hallway, and entered into one of the bedrooms. I wheeled around. The women and children had disappeared from the table. I rushed to Dean who

stood by the table at the entrance to the hall. Where were the women and children? We must make sure they are safe, I thought in alarm. “Where are they?” I asked.

“I’m not sure,” replied Dean, his voice strained with concern. Turning toward me, a look of shock crossed his face. “Hey! He hit you with the knife!” he exclaimed.

I looked at the floor and saw blood, then felt a slight sensation behind my left arm. I reached back with my right hand. What I felt was warm and wet. I froze for a second, “Am I ready to die?” I asked myself. I looked back toward Dean, “We’ve got to get them out of here.”

“Go, lay down; I will bring them,” Dean assured me.

I held my hand to the wound as I walked out to the porch. My initial fear subsided as I realized there was no internal pain. The wound was not serious as long as we could stop the bleeding.

Dean called softly to those in hiding. Thanks be to God, the madman had not entered into either of the rooms where the women and children had taken refuge. Only God knew when the man would burst from the room just a few steps away. Dean urged them quickly

out to the truck. They loaded up into the safety of the pickup. A neighbor friend held a shirt to the wound as we climbed onto the truck. Someone went to notify the town nurse and she soon arrived at the small clinic.

As I lay on the table in the clinic, men gathered around. It was hard to know who all was sober. We could hear a commotion outside; the ones in the truck kept the doors closed tight. A group of men argued excitedly behind the truck. One must have made a threat. He held his pistol above his head while others from the group closed in around him attempting to take control of the weapon.

Dean made contact with an experienced brother from the clinic in El Chal. They decided a few stitches would be good enough. A vein had been sliced which caused the extra bleeding. The wound didn't exceed much more than an inch in depth. In a short amount of time the kind nurse had the wound stitched up along with the small gash on my left hand. We thanked the nurse and headed for my house on the other side of town. As we settled down for the night we were sobered by the experience but thankful that everyone was safe.

I am thankful to God that He had His hand of protection over us through the whole incident. I think there are things that affect what our instinctive reactions will be. What is our immediate response to danger? What does this reveal about us? In a situation where there is hardly time for mental processing, is our response Christ-like? Is our immediate reaction an unwavering faith in the power and protection of God? Should I have rebuked him in Jesus' name and then waited to see the salvation of the Lord?

I don't feel bad about putting myself in the way. I know I intended no harm to the offender. At the same time, there may have been a better response.

To be honest, it all happened so fast, not all the options flashed before me in that moment. What I distinctly remember is hearing the warning and feeling that I should not just turn and run, allowing the wild man to have free access to the house and those in it.

How do you feel God would want you to respond in an experience such as this one? I am eager to hear your viewpoint on this question.



The Practical Side: New Stories

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.

Slab Wood

by Izit Fair



Several years ago our family felt it needful to move to a sister church in another state. We wanted to get away from bad influence that was too close for comfort and pulling some of our children the wrong way. The move was what we needed. It helped our children to repent and turn to the Lord.

In our old town, we had a business sawing logs into lumber and air-drying the lumber, then selling it. We did not find anyone wanting the business but someone wanted to buy the property. We had two all-day auctions and sold a lot of stuff, including lumber and

live-edged slabs. We still had many thousands of board feet of lumber to sell. After we moved, I would run sales, come back and sell a bunch more.

One time someone came who lived over an hour away near a big city and had a store where he sold antiques, live-edged slabs, and similar things. He wanted to take all my widest slabs, sell them through his store and give me one-half the selling price which was still about my regular price. He was kind of pushy which was a red flag, but I needed to get the lumber off the property for the new owner. I let the city man take four or five big trailer loads of my best wide, live-edged slabs which included a lot of walnut, also coffee-bean and knotty pine. He charged \$250 a load to haul it. I was to get paid monthly for what he sold.

He did not keep his word. It often went several months and sometimes over a year before I would get any money. I visited him several times and saw some of my slabwood with a sold sticker on, but I never got paid for those months.

I wanted to write down the lumber details of what he took on each load, but he was always in too big a hurry and said he would do it. The best I can estimate, he would have taken at least \$50,000 worth. In about four years time I got around \$4,000 after his hauling was deducted. That is all I ever got. He sold out and relocated without notifying me. He also did not pay several months rent on his building he rented.

We had an agreement signed that he would let me know if he ever closed his business so I could get my inventory. I heard he was selling out from a friend so I hired someone to take me to see him because I was not paid up and I

also wanted my inventory. His shop was all closed up. A neighbor said he had already hauled everything out. I found out too late! It felt like a huge blow.

I was able to write to him; his landlord had provided the man's address. The landlord had heard he moved to the southern part of the state to set up again.

The end result was my loss of about \$46,000.00 worth of lumber. Now how should I handle this? I have a paper he signed that I could use against him to force him for reimbursement.

Practical Questions:

1. Even if I have all the proof I need, is this God's way?
2. What should be the Christian response to this scenario?



Quieting Babies

by Soft Touch



We were visiting in an Amish home in another community. They had a six-week-old baby that was crying so much most nights that the mother hardly got any sleep. The mother stated, "I do not see how I can go on like this."

That evening they passed the baby around to the ladies, but excluded me. The baby did not stop crying. When it was nearly time to go, I said firmly and with authority, "Let me hold that baby."

They gave the baby to me and I held her for twenty minutes. I prayed God would use me to help this child because the mom desperately needed a break. Would He please heal this child so this tired momma could get some rest. In my arms, the baby quieted down and we left for the night.

The next morning we stopped back by the house to pick up some of our passengers. The mom ran out to the van and yanked the door open. She asked, "What did you do to my baby? Last night she slept all night for the first time since birth!"

Then I stated, "I did not know I did anything. Why did you ask just me? We all held her."

The mother replied, "I just think it was you because you specifically asked to hold her."

I have had many similar experiences. If a baby is crying and no one can calm it, I ask to hold it. Usually I hold its back to my stomach and put my hand on its abdomen. Very seldom do they not quiet down.

My mother told me that my grandmother used to have a special gift. People would call her when they were sick. She would read a Bible verse to them and the people would get well.

People of other countries say, "You Americans have money. You go to the doctor when you get sick. We do not have money so we have to depend on God."

Practical Questions:

1. So do I have a special gift of healing that is different from other people?
2. Does my body have some mysterious force within it that has a healing power when babies cry?
3. Or is my healing power simply a matter of God working through me to calm the crying babies?



The Practical Side: An Old Story

A true story of suffering and forgiveness.

The Gospel Won Out

by Norman Ward

“If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” — Matt. 6:14

Kim Joon-gon was the first member of his Korean Buddhist family to become a Christian. He was a radiant believer, constantly speaking of Christ to others in his zeal to win them to the Lord.

Then came the Japanese occupation of Korea during World War II. Kim suffered so much persecution by the Japanese for refusing to worship at Shinto shrines that he went into hiding. When the war ended he moved to the city of Seoul where he enjoyed a few years of relative peace and quiet, during which time he married.

Then the communists attacked in 1950. He fled with his wife and young daughter to Chunnam Island where his parents lived, only to be trapped again when the communists took over the island. Kim’s family daily witnessed Christians being arrested and martyred all around them. In October, 1950, he was arrested and charged with being a friend to the American missionaries who were “working to make Korea a colony of the United States.” When Kim denied this, his captors dragged him to a place where several other Christians lay dead. Still, he refused to make false charges against the missionaries or deny his Lord.

He was allowed to go home at that time. His wife showed him the white clothes she had been making. They both expected to die soon and she wanted these clothes to serve as martyr robes. They prayed together that the Lord would grant them strength to die in such a way as would glorify the Lord Jesus.

About two o’clock the next morning the communists came for Kim and his family which included his aged father. They took them to a so-called “people’s court.” There an angry crowd incessantly shouted as if it were the lowest accusation possible: “Christians! Capitalists!” [Of course they were only “guilty” of the first charge, not being involved in politics in any way.]

The more the mob screamed and yelled, the harder the communist soldiers beat them. Kim’s father was the first to die, pleading, “Have pity on my son.” Kim’s young wife fell next, saying, “Goodbye, I’ll see you in heaven.” Finally Kim sank to the ground unconscious.

As dawn began to break, Kim revived and painfully sat up. Tears flowed down his bruised and battered face as he looked upon the beaten bodies of his beloved wife and

parent. The ropes they had bound him with were loose—probably from the beating. He wriggled free and with much effort got to his feet.

Kim struggled to the nearby home of a Christian woman where he was sure he would find refuge. But unbeknownst to Kim, this woman had denied Christ under persecution. She called the communist officials and turned him in.

Some communist soldiers soon arrived. One entered the house and drawing a long sword, he advanced toward Kim. He shouted, “I have already killed 300 Christians! You will make 301!”

“No!” the woman suddenly screamed, “Not in the house! Kill him outside!”

Kim’s tormenters pushed him outside where they argued about how to kill him. While they argued, a group of villagers came up the road crying, “Don’t kill Kim Joon-gon. He has taught us only good. Please spare him!”

While the soldiers hesitated, a troop ship appeared on the horizon. When the leader took a good look at it he yelled, “Americans! That’s an American ship! Go back to headquarters immediately!”

Two days later South Korean troops captured the island and rounded up about 100 communists, including the ones who had killed Kim’s wife and father. At a quick trial, Kim told about the killings. However, when the South Korean military judge was about to sentence them to death, Kim pleaded that mercy be shown them.

“But, they murdered your wife and father,” the South Korean commander said, “Why would you want them to live?”

“Because the Lord Jesus, whom I serve and to whom I belong, would have me show mercy,” Kim replied.

Because of Kim’s plea and South Korean President Syngman Rhee’s proclamation that repentant communists could be pardoned, Kim’s persecutors were freed. News of what Kim had done spread over the island. Soon pardoned communists came in droves to hear Kim preach the Gospel and great numbers were saved.

So Kim triumphed over his enemies ... the Christian way.

— *Echoes from the Mount*, #370, | Colquitt, Georgia



Circulation & Financial Statement

Income & Expense Report January thru March 2024

January 1, 2024 Beginning Balance	\$19,032.24
Income	
Donations	\$1,490.00
Local Support*	\$1,000.00
Total Income	<hr/> \$2,490.00
Beginning Balance + Income	\$21,522.24
Expenses	
Handling & Packaging	\$622.00
Postage	\$4,376.53
Printing	\$6,067.00
Staff Expenses	\$1,545.00
Total Expense	<hr/> \$12,610.53
March 31, 2024 Ending Balance	\$8,911.71

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

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All gifts given to *Anabaptist Voice* through the local church are tax deductible.



End Matters

There is a place for long sermons and lengthy articles. But sometimes even short short-stories stick in the memory of the reader and make their point better than long ones.

As I worked with three one-page pieces in this issue—*Taking Inventory; Who Is a Christian?* and *Free Indeed*—I felt the power in these short messages. This gave me another idea. Anabaptist preachers deliver many good messages each Lord’s Day. Most of these preachers are going to have some kind of notes or outline to aid in the delivery of the message. Why not summarize the sermon to about 750 words and send it to *Anabaptist Voice*? Use the above three messages as a model. It will help you crystalize your thinking and allow the Spirit of God to guide you as you prepare for the delivery of your sermon.

We will be waiting. Include your name and mailing address. The name of the church where it was delivered would also be of interest.

The longer four- to five-page articles and stories can also grab and hold a reader’s attention through to the end. We want some of those also. When you have written the sermon out, send it to us. We can shorten the piece or use it as a longer piece.

*“So let our lives and lips express,
The holy gospel we profess;
So let our walks and virtues shine,
To prove the doctrine all divine.”*

Until He comes,
James

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The heavens declare the Glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. - Psalm 19:1

