

The Amish Voice



PO Box 128, 575 State Route 250 N, Savannah OH 44874

Office: (419) 962-1515

September 2009

PART 13—What Is The Church

The Witness of the Church (Part 2 of 2)

In our last issue, we dug into the important subject of "What is a witness of Christ". Here is a small re-cap of what we learned...

1) A Witness Knows God.

A witness is acquainted with God and has a personal relationship with Him. He knows that God is the only God and the only Savior (Isaiah 43:10-11; 44:6,8; 45:21-22).

2) A Witness Believes God.

A witness is one who believes God's Word and relies completely upon what God has said. He believes God (Hebrews 11:6) and takes God at His Word: GOD SAID IT! I BELIEVE IT! THAT SETTLES IT!

3) A Witness Understands Who God is.

God's witness not only knows God, but his knowledge of God grows deeper and deeper. He wants to know God better and better, more and more (Philippians 3:10)

3) A Witness Points to God.

In John 1:29 and John 1:36 John used the word "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD." This word is a "pointing" word (like an arrow). This word points out something to which the speaker wants to draw attention.

GOD USES THE CHURCH AS HIS WITNESS BEFORE ANGELS.

If you are a born again believer, did you know that you are in this world to teach angels a lesson? In Eph 3:9-10, God wants to teach the

angels about His wonderful WISDOM and GRACE that made it possible for Him to save sinful men & women. How does God teach the angels? He teaches them THROUGH US!

Think back to the time you sat in class at your school. If your Teacher were teaching about the world she might use a globe as an object lesson. To teach you something about the world, she would point to the globe.



Ephesians 3:9-10 describes a similar action going on in heaven. This heavenly action, which we will read in a moment describes the setting in the following way...

1. The universe is God's school room.
2. God is the Teacher.
3. The angels are the students.
4. The CHURCH is the OBJECT LESSON.

Ephesians 3:9-10 says, And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities (unseen rulers) and powers (authorities) in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold WISDOM of God.

What is God teaching the angels? Not about the globe, but about His wonderful WISDOM (Ephesians 3:10).

When God wants to teach the angels about His wisdom and His grace, He points TO US (the Church) and shows them what He has done for us.

Did you know that God is using you to teach angels? Did you know that angels (good angels and bad angels) are probably watching you right now?

God wants to make Himself known, not only to the lost and dying world, but to principalities and powers in heavenly places—He does that through the Church. The Church is in the world to "POINT OUT" God! Here are at least seven things, according to Scripture, that God wants to "POINT OUT". Are you ready to dig in and study? I am! This is very exciting stuff.

—1—

God Wants To POINT OUT His Grace

Ephesians 2:8-9: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of his GRACE in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by GRACE are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.

The word undeserved is the key to understanding GRACE (Gnade in German). Man

does not deserve God's favor; he cannot earn God's approval and blessings. God is too high and man too low for man to deserve anything from God.

If a man wants to be saved, these verses tell him how to be saved. Salvation is the work of God, of God's **GRACE** and of God's **GRACE** alone. It is not of man, not to any degree whatsoever.

Salvation is a free gift of God. It is by **GRACE** alone that man is saved. Man can do nothing whatsoever to save himself. He cannot earn, win, or merit salvation. All man can do is accept the fact that God says He will save him, accept as true the free offer of salvation.

Romans 11:6, *And if by **GRACE**, then is it no more of works: otherwise **GRACE** is no more **GRACE**. But if it be of works, then is it no more **GRACE**: otherwise work is no more work.*

Salvation is received by faith (Romans 3:27; Romans 4:2, 5; 1 Cor. 1:31). Man must believe

just what God says and accept His Word, accept His free offer of salvation. And when he accepts the fact that God says He will save him, God takes him and creates him into a "new man" (2 Cor. 5:17; Ephes. 4:24; 1 Peter 1:23; 2 Peter 1:4).



God has done a thing unheard of among men: God has given His **GRACE** to mankind...

- despite their cursing Him.
- despite their rejecting Him.
- despite their rebelling against Him.
- despite their denial of Him.
- despite their neglect of Him.
- despite their trespasses.

- despite their sins.
- despite their half-hearted commitment to Him.
- despite their worship of religion (man made rules) instead of Him.

GRACE is giving, but it is giving to people who do not deserve the gift. What is the gift that God has given? Jesus Christ. God has given His Son, Jesus Christ, to save men. He did not have to give His Son. God could have wiped man from the face of the earth. Man deserved it, but this is God's **GRACE**. God is full of mercy and kindness—by His very nature He is full of these glorious qualities. Therefore, God was bound to shower His **GRACE** upon man sending His Son to save man.

When Jesus Christ hung upon the cross, He was *taking our sins* upon Himself and bearing the punishment for our sins. We had committed high treason against God: rejected and rebelled against Him. The penalty for high treason is death; we are condemned to die. But Christ took our penalty and condemna-

Heart to Heart with Joe Keim

In Luke 14:26-27 Jesus said, *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

The passage is ever so clear, if we want to be a follower of Christ, **we must be willing to loose everything, including the people who are closest to us.** If we are unwilling to do this, **we will fail.** And if we say, "we are a follower of Jesus, and yet are not willing to obey this command", we hinder others from following Him as well.

Not everyone will have to forsake his/her parents, children, brothers and sisters to be a disciple of Christ, but some will be required of God to do so. Not everyone will have to give up their life and die for the sake of being a follower of Christ, but some will.

But wait, before you make the decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ, sit down and count the great cost? If you start, are you willing to finish? In the verses that follow, Jesus is once again very clear when He says, sit down and count the cost.

Luke 14:28-30 *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*

There is absolutely nothing in this entire world that is of more importance or holds more value than the relationship Christ wants with us. The Christian must forsake all, renounce and give up all that he *is and has*. When a Christian counts the cost, he needs to think about two things.

1. It will cost him *all he is*.

- **his heart:** total devotion and commitment.
- **his mind:** being permeated and controlled by Christ.
- **his eyes:** watching what he looks at.
- **his ears:** watching what he listens to.
- **his hands:** watching what he touches and picks up.
- **his feet:** watching where he goes.
- **his mouth:** watching what he eats and drinks and says.
- **his desires:** watching, controlling, and changing his desires.

2. It will cost him *all he has*.

- **family:** being put after Christ.
- **friends:** being put after Christ and centered around Christ.
- **home:** all the comforts and extravagances.
- **job:** being centered around Christ and being used to earn enough to give to those who do not have.
- **money:** taking care of personal necessities and then using the rest for God's cause.

Matthew 19:27 says, *Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee...*

W H O This publishing work is registered as a charitable organization in the USA and is supported through freewill offerings. We welcome your articles, testimonies and questions. We reserve the right to edit or decline any material and are not responsible for the return of any articles.

W E A R E Since our beginning in 2000, many people have written to us, asking to be added to our mailing list, while others have sent us names of their friends and family members. We think it is important for us to tell you that the cost of *The Amish Voice* is \$.45 a copy and is totally funded by readers from across our great country, who appreciate the ministry and care to support it. If the Lord would lay it on your heart to come along side of us, by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit as well as highly appreciated. In order to continue receiving the Amish Voice, please keep us informed of any changes to your address.

tion upon Himself. He died for us—in our place, in our stead, as our substitute. This is what Scripture means when it says that Christ died *for us*.

Romans 3:24, *Being justified freely by his GRACE through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

—2—

God Wants to POINT OUT His Life

Galatians 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...*

Colossians 3:3-4 *For ye are dead, and your LIFE is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

The LIFE of the believer is *hid with Christ*. What does this mean? When Christ arose, He arose to a NEW LIFE, not to His OLD LIFE. He had just died to the OLD LIFE once for all. Therefore, when the believer is said to be *hid* in Christ, it means that God counts the believer risen with Christ. God counts the believer as risen to a NEW LIFE. God sees the believer *hid* in Christ day by day. God sees him walking in Christ and in Christ's righteousness. And because he is in Christ, the believer sets his mind upon things above, upon the things of Christ and of heaven.

An excellent illustration of what it means to be "*hid with Christ*" is this: take the index finger of your right hand and wrap your left hand around it. Say that the index finger represents you and the left hand represents Christ. Where are you (the index finger)? *You are in Christ*. When God looks at you, He sees you *hid in Christ*.

—3—

God Wants To POINT OUT His Glory

Ephesians 3:21 *Unto Him be GLORY in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*

God alone deserves GLORY, for He alone is glorious. The word "GLORY" refers to the wonderful and awe-inspiring but indescribable presence of God himself. GLORY is given to God in the church. The church, God's creation, exists to glorify (elevate, worship, adore, and praise) Him. The ability to give GLORY to God comes only in Christ Jesus, for He brought the church into existence through His sacrifice for sin and His resurrection from the dead. As we see and recognize God's work in the church and in Christ, we respond in praise

and worship, giving God GLORY. This GLORY will be made known through ALL generations, forever and ever.

—4—

God Wants To POINT OUT His Love

(Jesus' prayer for future believers)



John 17:22-26
And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we

are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast LOVED them, as Thou hast LOVED me.

Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou LOVED Me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the LOVE wherewith Thou hast LOVED me may be in them, and I in them.

Jesus requested that believers be *perfected* in unity, perfected as one body. This stresses beyond question the absolute need that believers live in unity. The world has not been reached for Christ—millions have been lost—because believers have not been unified enough to penetrate the world with the gospel. This is a terrible reflection against believers.

The problem is certainly not God. He is willing and He is LOVING and powerful enough to use believers to reach the whole world. The problem is unquestionably believers, and as Jesus made pointedly clear in this verse, the problem is our LOVE for one another.

In Revelations 2 it is clear that the church had lost its LOVE for Christ and the church.

Revelation 2:4-5 *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy FIRST LOVE. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and REPENT, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou REPENT.*

The church saw a rupture take place in its fellowship and in its LOVE for one another. When the church was first founded, a deep LOVE existed among the members (cp. Acts 20:17-38). The church had a LOVING heart and a helping hand—a readiness to labor together even through persecution. But something happened. What happened? Most likely, some or all of the following sins existed... criticism, division, grumbling, jealousy, a selfish mind.

How did criticism, division, grumbling, jealousy, and selfishness become a part of their Christian life? I think it is probably very simple. They were not having personal fellowship with Christ, walking and sharing with Him like they once did. They were not as attached to Christ as they had been. They were more attached to other things and other involvements of life. At one time they LOVED their church and they had the right beliefs, and they were even ready to fight for the truth of Christ. But they did not LOVE Christ, not in a personal and intimate way, not to the degree that they walked and shared with Him, fellowshiped and communed with Him all throughout the day.

John 13:34-35, **Jesus was clear:** *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye LOVE one another; as I have LOVED you, that ye also LOVE one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have LOVE one to another.*



There are times when believers differ. There is always the danger of becoming critical, judgmental, and divisive, but if we want to win the world to Christ, if we want the world to know that we are Christians, than we must lay our petty differences aside and LOVE one another.

There is a great and fitting song that comes to mind. It was written in 1968 by a priest named Peter Scholtes.

*We are one in the Spirit, we are one
in the Lord
And we pray that all unity may one
day be restored
They will know we are Christians by
our love, by our love
We will work with each other, we will*

work side by side
And we'll guard each one's dignity
and save each one's pride
And they'll know we are Christians
by our love, by our love

We will walk with each other, we
will walk hand in hand
And together we'll spread the news
that God is in our land
And they'll know we are Christians
by our love, by our love

—5—

God Wants To POINT OUT His Wisdom

Ephesians 3:10 *To the intent that now unto the principalities (unseen rulers) and powers (authorities) in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold WISDOM of God.*

The mystery of Christ profoundly affects heavenly beings. It causes them to stand in stark amazement at three things.

(One)

Heavenly beings stand in stark amazement at what God is doing in the church. This is the meaning of Ephes. 3:10.

God's glorious purpose in salvation and in the church is to show His **LOVE** and **WISDOM** to the whole universe—to stir every creature in heaven to stand in stark amazement at what He is doing. Note that the heavenly beings see what is happening right now.

Romans 11:33, *O the depth of the riches both of the WISDOM and KNOWLEDGE of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.*

(Two)

Heavenly beings stand in stark amazement at God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. (See Ephes. 1:3-14 and Ephes. 2:7)

2 Tim. 1:9, *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*

The work of God's mercy has one great purpose—to show believers the riches of His grace throughout all the ages to come. Very simply stated, God's one great purpose is...to show the riches of grace toward us demonstrated in Christ Jesus.

God has done so much for us through Christ Jesus that it will take an eternity to point it all out. God is going to be eternally glorified for His grace and kindness toward us. All creatures will live in admiration of God's wondrous mercy shown toward men—all through Christ Jesus

(Three)

Heavenly beings stand in stark amazement at the believer's access into God's presence—at the fact that access is granted to us by faith in Christ (see Ephes. 2:18).

Access: Christ brings us access to God. The word access means to bring to, to move to, to introduce, to present. The thought is that of being in a royal court and being presented and introduced to the King of kings.

Jesus Christ is the One who throws open the door into God's presence. He is the One who presents us to God, the Sovereign Majesty of the universe.

Note that it is the Holy Spirit who escorts us into God's presence. The idea is that of daily access—hour by hour, moment by moment. The Holy Spirit keeps us in the presence of God.

- The Holy Spirit is the Divine Nature of God within us that gives us permanent access into God's presence. (John 3:5; Romans 8:11; 2 Peter 1:4).
- The Holy Spirit is the One who works in us and stirs us to move more and more into God's presence (Romans 8:14; Galatians 4:6-7).
- The Holy Spirit is the constant companion with us, teaching us to live in God's presence (John 14:26; 1 Cor. 2:12-13).
- The Holy Spirit is the One within us who bears witness that we are children of God and should approach God continually (Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:4-6).

—6—

God Wants To POINT OUT His Power

Ephesians 3:20 *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the POWER that worketh in us.*

God is able to do what we ask. He is able to do...

- exceedingly: to surpass; to go beyond any request; to overcome and do anything.
- abundantly: to overflow and to do more than enough.
- above: to go over and above, beyond any need.
- all that we ask.
- all that we can think. Imagine going beyond anything we can think! What is the greatest answer or deliverance we can think? God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we can think.

The Thompson Chain Reference Bible points out what Scripture says about God's power: He is able...

- **to raise up children from stones.**
Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham (Luke 3:8).
- **to fulfill promises even if they are humanly impossible.**
And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform (Romans 4:21).
- **to make grace abound.**
And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (2 Cor. 9:8).
- **to do exceeding abundantly.**
Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us (Ephes. 3:20).
- **to subdue all things.**
Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:21).

• **to guard the soul's treasure.**
For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that [the soul] which I have committed unto him against that day (2 Tim. 1:12).

• **to save to the uttermost.**

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

• **to keep from falling.**

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

—7—

God Wants To POINT OUT His Truth

1 Timothy 3:14-15, *These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the TRUTH.*

Paul was writing to tell believers how they should behave within the church, that is, within the household or family of God. The word "behave" means the conduct, walk, and behavior of a person; but it especially refers to how a person relates to other people.

Verse 15 gives a great description of the church, a description that spells out three great pictures of the church.

(One)

The church is "the household of God." This does not refer to the building of the church, but to the household of the church, to the people of the church. The church is a body

of people who have committed themselves to form a family of people, a family centered around God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.



The church is a *family of people...*

- who believe in God and in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- who have committed their lives to live for Christ.
- who have based their lives upon the promise of eternal salvation promised by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- who have committed themselves to live as a family with all other believers.

Simply stated, the church is a body of people who have committed their lives to live as the family of God. God is the Father; Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father; but we, the followers of God, are the adopted children of God. Every person who is BORN AGAIN is a true member of the church, that is, of the family of God (John 1:12; 2 Cor. 6:17-18; Gal 4:4-6).

(Two)

The church is "the church of the living God." The word "church" means an assembly, a gathering, a company of people who have been called out by God. But note: God is the living God; He is not some dead god. He is not some idol. He is not some religion of man-made rules, set in place by our forefathers. He is the living God who is actually alive and is concerned with how men be-

have and conduct themselves.

God calls people to His church. He calls them to join His assembly, His gathering, His company of people. But it is up to people whether or not they come to His church. He is the living God; therefore, He actually speaks to the human heart and calls people to follow Him and to live for Him. But the decision is up to the person. God loves the person; therefore, He will not force the person to come to Him.

(Three)

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth. The church *supports* the truth just as pillars and ground support a building.

The church holds the truth up before a world that misbehaves and dies, yet does not have to die. The church—the family and company of God—is God's instrument upon earth to proclaim the truth to the world. What truth? The glorious truth that God has loved the world and has demonstrated His love by sending His Son to save the world (1 Tim. 3:16). This is the glorious truth that the church supports and holds ever so highly before the world.

An ending thought. How many within the church are really supporting the truth before the world? How many are really holding up the truth by behaving and conducting themselves as they should? How many are holding up the truth by proclaiming it as they should?

This Bible study was taken from the Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary.

10 Lessons, Life Taught Me
1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
2. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.
3. You don't have to win every argument; agree to disagree.
4. It's OK to let your children see you cry.
5. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
6. No one is in charge of your happiness but you.
7. Frame every so-called disaster with these words'— In five years, will this matter?'
8. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.
9. What other people think of you, is none of your business.
10. God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do.

Grandma's Apron	
<p>The most important use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath, but along with that, it served as a potholder for removing hot pans from the oven. It was wonderful for drying children's tears, and on occasion was even used for cleaning out dirty ears.</p> <p>From the chicken coop, the apron was used for carrying eggs, fussy chicks, and sometimes half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven.</p> <p>When company came, those aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids. And when the weather was cold, grandma wrapped it around her arms.</p> <p>Those big old aprons wiped many a sweaty brow, bent over the hot wood stove. Chips</p>	<p>and kindling wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron.</p> <p>From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables. After the peas had been shelled, it carried out the hulls. In the fall, the apron was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees. When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds. When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out onto the porch, waved her apron, and the men knew it was time to come in from the fields to dinner.</p> <p>It will be a long time before someone invents something that will replace that 'old-time apron' that served so many purposes.</p>

Damaged Emotions

What are some of these damaged emotions? One of the most common is a deep sense of unworthiness, a continuous feeling of anxiety, inadequacy, and inferiority, an inner nagging that says, "I'm no good. I'll never amount to anything. No one could ever possibly love me. Everything I do is wrong."

Then there's another kind, that for want of a better term, I call the perfectionist. This is the inner feeling that says, "I can never quite achieve. I never do anything well enough. I can't please myself, others, or God." This kind of person is always groping, striving, usually feeling guilty, driven by inner oughts and shoulds. "I ought to be able to do this. I should be able to do that. I must be a little bit better."

Then there is this kind of damaged emotion that we can call super sensitivity. The supersensitive person has usually been hurt deeply. S/He reached out for love, approval, and affection, but instead got the opposite, and s/he has scars deep inside. Sometimes s/he sees things other people don't see, and tends to feel things other people don't feel.

Then there are the people who are filled with fears. Perhaps the greatest of them all is the fear of failure. These damaged persons are so afraid of losing the game of life that they have a simple way out; never get into the game; just sit on the sidelines. They say, "I don't like the rules," or, "I don't care for the referee." "The ball isn't quite round." "The goals are not right."

"WHY SOME OF US ARE WHO WE ARE"

Did you know that the rings of a tree trunk reveal the growing history, year by year? A person looking at the rings in the tree, might say, "here's a ring that represents a year when there was a terrible drought. Here are a couple of rings from years when there was too much rain. Here's where the tree was struck by lightning. Here are some normal years of growth. This ring shows a forest fire that almost destroyed the tree. Here's another of savage blight and disease. All of this lies embedded in the heart of the tree, representing the *life story* of its growth."

And that's the way it is with us. Just a few minutes beneath the protective bark, the concealing, protective mask, are the recorded rings of our lives.

There are scars of painful hurts in the rings of our thoughts and emotions, the record is there; the memories are recorded, and all are alive. And they directly and deeply affect our concepts, our feelings, our relationships. They affect the way we look at life and God, at others and ourselves.

It is necessary that we understand this, first of all, so that we can compassionately live with ourselves and allow the Holy Spirit to work with special healing in our own hurts and confusions. We also need to understand this in order to not judge other people too harshly, but to have patience with their confusing and contradictory behavior. In so doing, we will be kept from unfairly criticizing and judging fellow Christians. They're not fakes, phonies, or hypocrites. They are people, like you and me, with hurts and scars and wrong programming that interfere with their present behavior.

Amazing Facts In The Bible

What does the Bible say about paying taxes?



In Matthew 22:17-21, the Pharisees asked Jesus, "Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way.

In full agreement, the Apostle Paul taught in Romans 13:6-7, *For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*

As much as we don't like taxes, as much as the tax system is corrupt and unfair, as much as there are far better things our money could go towards - the Bible commands, yes commands us to pay our taxes. Romans 13:1-7 makes it clear that we are to submit ourselves to the government. The only instance in which we are allowed to disobey the government is when it tells us to do something the Bible forbids.

Romans 13:2 reminds us, "*Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*"

In other words, the believer who resists the authorities will be condemned. The word "damnation" means judgment. The idea is that the disobedient believer will have to face the judgment of God if he disobeys the just laws of government. Some commentators think this refers to the judgment of the civil authorities. There is no question, if the believer is caught breaking the laws of the state, he will be punished. However, the civil authorities may never catch the believer; but God knows every law broken by the believer, and by resisting the laws of the state the believer has broken the law of God. Therefore, the believer stands guilty before God, and he shall be judged by God.

1 Peter 2:13-14: *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

The Bible does not forbid paying taxes. In fact, the Bible encourages us to pay taxes. Therefore, we must submit to God and His Word - and pay our taxes.

The most frequent objection to paying taxes is that the money is being misused by the government or even used for evil purposes by the government. That, however, is not our concern. When Jesus said, "Give to Caesar..." the Roman government was by no means a righteous government. When Paul instructed us to pay taxes, Nero, the most evil Roman emperor in history, was the head of the government. We are to pay our taxes even when the government is not God-honoring.

We are free to take every tax deduction that is both legal and honest. We do not have to pay the maximum amount of taxes possible. If the government allows you a tax break - take it. If there is a legal way you can shelter some of your money from being taxed - shelter it. By all means, take the deduction for your children, your mortgage, your moving expenses, etc.

Some Thoughts on Faith and Trust

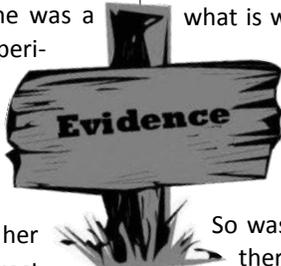
By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" Heb. 11:3

Too often we hear the expression "We must go out in blind faith." Is faith really blind? Is faith limited to those who are physically blind? Do we have to be totally blind to reality to have it? What do people mean when they use the term "blind faith" and is that what the Bible teaches? Some people think so. But the Bible says this also in Hebrews 11; *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

Substance and evidence do not sound very much like blind to me. I believe the notion that faith is blind is only in the minds of those who do not fully understand what faith is. Faith is based on someone's word that is trustworthy.

Recently I had gall bladder surgery. Even though I had no experience with this surgeon, I had the word of others that she was a good surgeon. Friends had experienced the benefits Dr. Crosbie's skill and spoke highly of her.

This is an example of what faith is. I trusted my life to her based on another person's account of her skills. And they proved to be correct. This is a simple example of what faith really is. It is not blind trust, based on fables and old stories. Trust is built by a word from someone you trust that has had experience.



The New Testament has many accounts written by people that had experienced what God is like, by observing Jesus' ministry. Therefore, even though we like to have direct experience with someone's skills and abilities, it is not necessary to have experience. This would not be faith but experience.

When I lack faith, how do I go about building it? I did not have to try to somehow manufacture faith, instead I asked questions from experienced people. Trust has to always underlie faith. Trust in God is built by hearing or reading the accounts of people who testify to what God is like. Faith is built by studying the object of your faith, namely Jesus Christ.

Even though you don't personally know most of the writers here, there is a certain amount of trust extended to strangers. Bad experience and deception fosters distrust. But it is not my word I am asking you to look at, it is what is written in scripture that can never be changed, that I ask you to consider. Also, no one is his own witness in a court and a credible witness can really influence the outcome of a trial.

So was Jesus really speaking for his Father (God) when he spoke? Consider how he came into the world. First, an angel speaks to Mary. Joseph was spoken to in a dream. Shepherds got the word directly from the angels. Simeon was told he would see the messiah before his death. When Jesus was

baptized, a voice from heaven said *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Matthew 3:17.*

Many Old Testament prophets foretold of a coming messiah. This many witnesses really influence me to take the claims of Jesus Christ seriously.

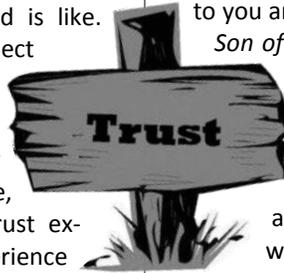
I exercise faith when I believe that He who promised is able to do what he says he will do.

Remember when the paralyzed man was lowered through the roof? Jesus simply says *"your sins are forgiven"* in *Matt 9: 5*. He then explains why he said that. This was to prove to you and me *"that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins"*(Verse 6).

Now when he says for me to place my trust in Him for eternal life, I can know that he is able to give eternal life to those who believe on his name. My trust is based on the strong evidence I have not seen personally.

We operate on trust every day when working with other people. They may tell us where a problem lies or how to fix it. Chemistry books tell us to not mix certain substances or disaster will occur. If we try it anyway, we will find out that the person writing really did know what he was talking about.

Is faith blind? The world might think so. But you and I know that the faith we have is never blind, but built upon the creator of all things. Go ahead. Take the first step. Trust placed in Jesus Christ will never disappoint you.



What Is The Christian Life?

~By Juan Carols

Let me tell you what I believe God has been reminding me of lately... The implications of the Gospel in humans' lives are hard, very hard, in fact impossible without the grace of the Holy Spirit applying His life to ours. The Gospel means... the end of me (the death of me). I'm done... self-sacrifice... self-denial.

It's about knowing Him and living the way He requires of His people. That's what the Christian "life" calls us to do.

The Christian life is not one more thing or a "little something" we can add to our lives to make it better in our own pursuit of personal peace, happiness, and affluence. The Christian life is not about

having "your best life now" or "becoming a better you" or "finding my purpose in life.

It is not a means for attaining success and achieving my own agenda, and having Jesus prosper me. It is not about "how is this gonna help me". It is not about you *adding a dash* of Jesus to your life to make it go better for you. It is not about discovering Jesus' secret way on how to live the good life. No!!! It is not about US, it's ALL about Him.

It is about Him living and us dying... about Jesus increasing and us decreasing (being consumed for Him). It is about His will being done not ours. It is about pursuing the things that are important to Him. It is ALL about seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness.

Two preacher' wives sat mending their husbands' pants. One of them said to the other, "My poor John, he is so discouraged in his church work, He said just the other day, He was considering resigning. "It seems that nothing goes right for him."

The other replied, "Why, my husband was saying the opposite. He is so enthused, it seems like the Lord is closer to him than ever before."

A silence fell on both of them, as they continued to mend the trousers: One was patching the knee the other patching the seat.



A source of RPM Books,
Dr. Robert W. Kellemen

Here I Stand!

(Martin Luther's Story)

Part 3 of 3

Martin Luther's Main Message: In ourselves, we stand naked before the All-Holy God; in Christ, we stand clothed in righteousness before our All-Compassionate God.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. —Romans 1:17

Presentation Introduction: Purpose

The presentation you are about to witness is a dramatization of major points in the life of Martin Luther. It will vividly portray the differences that he had with the Catholic Church of his day regarding the way of salvation. The intent is not to offend, but to instruct. The purpose is to enlighten the heirs of the Protestant Reformation to the nature of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone.

The following story is a continuation from the previous two editions of the Amish Voice. This article will serve as the last.

Standing before God with Christ's Righteousness and Courage

With the zeal of a missionary, I dedicated the rest of my life to telling others the good news of salvation by grace through faith. For now I knew that I stood before God with Christ's righteousness and with Christ's courage. It was such courage and zeal that led me to post my theological convictions, my 95 Theses, on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany on October 31, 1517.

—1—

Courageous Faith to Proclaim Faith Alone, Grace Alone, Scripture Alone in Christ Alone

It's vital that you understand my motivation. I was responsible for the spiritual welfare of my flock. Message after message, sermon after sermon, lesson after lesson, I taught God's sheep that salvation was by faith alone, in Christ alone, through grace alone, based upon Scripture alone.

However, my sheep were procuring indulgences as I once had. They believed in purgatory—a place of temporary punishment where sinners paid for their sins. They also believed that indulgences shortened their time in purgatory.

The Church granted them indulgences for religious works such as participation in a Crusade, visiting certain shrines, praying in sanctuaries where relics of saints were kept, paying for the celebration of the Mass, or simply for the payment of money to the Church. In fact, in my day indulgences became nothing more than the Church bingo of the sixteenth century! Conned by the Church, foolish people gave all they had to purchase God's forgiveness. Imagine that! They believed, as I had, that they could buy their way out of punishment into God's favor.

Many of my flock journeyed to the Dominican Friar, John Tetzel, to purchase their freedom from guilt. I despised Tetzel as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Instead of preaching the gospel, he pranced about singing his little ditty: "As soon as the money clinks in the chest, a soul flees up to heavenly rest." He was teaching people to trust in works alone, in self alone, based upon superstition alone for their salvation. Their very souls were at stake.

Indulgences were nothing but knavery and fraud. Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone, based upon Scripture alone had to be preached.

Believing this, I prepared my 95 Theses, or theological facts. For example, in Thesis 62, I declared: "The true treasure of the Church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God." On the eve of All Saints Day, I nailed my 95 Theses to the door of the Cas-



tle Church in Wittenburg thereby proclaiming that I was prepared to debate anyone, monk, priest, Pope, or Emperor, who dared to proclaim that salvation came by works.

Barely two weeks after being posted, these theses had circulated all over Germany. A Reformation had begun.

—2—

Courageous Faith to Stand Alone

The next four years of my life both tested and confirmed my faith. Christ empowered me to display a courageous faith to stand alone. When the Pope threatened to excommunicate me and the Emperor threatened to execute me, even my friends and supporters urged me to back down. Once my best friend, Spalantin, warned me harshly. I responded to him:

Find someone else to scare! Spalantin, I have no better friend, but even you have no right to ask me, even out of regard for my safety, to stop preaching God's truth from God's Word.

After four years, I was called to stand trial for my faith. On the 16th of April, 1521, I entered the city of Worms, Germany in a two-wheeled cart accompanied by a few companions. Here at the Diet, or Church council, of Worms, I was called to give an account of my faith. I came to debate. They insisted that I recant.

With the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire presiding, with representatives of the Pope

present, I was asked, "Martin Luther, do you or do you not renounce your books and the errors which they contain?" To which I replied:

Since your Majesty, and your Lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scriptures and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of Popes and Councils, for they have contradicted each other. I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scriptures, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.

In response, the Emperor declared, "I mobilize everything against you, Luther. My kingdoms and dominions, my friends, my body, my blood, and my soul."

My life in jeopardy, many inquired how I could stand. All I could say then, all I say now is: "Here I stand because of Christ." That's what faith is. As I once described:

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a

man would stake his life on it a thousand times. Hence a man is ready and glad, without compulsion, to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything in love and praise to God, who has shown him this grace.

Conclusion: Luther's Lasting Legacy—Trust in Christ/Stand for Christ

Four-hundred-eighty-seven years after I nailed my 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg, I challenge you to live the legacy of the Reformation. You live that legacy when you tire of your own righteousness and trust in Christ's righteousness alone.

In one of my earliest letters, I wrote to my dear friend George Spenlein who was an Augustinian friar in the monastery at Wittenburg. My challenge to him then is my challenge to you now.

Now, I should like to know whether your soul, tired of its own righteousness, is learning to be revived by and to trust in the righteousness of Christ. For in our age, the temptation to presumption besets many, especially those who try with all their might to be just and

Col 2:14, Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

Col 2:8, Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"

good without knowing the righteousness of God, which is most bountiful and freely given in Christ. They try to do good of themselves in order that they might stand before God clothed in their own virtues and merits. But this is impossible.

Tire of your own righteousness and trust in Christ's righteousness.

You also live my legacy, Christ's legacy, the Reformation legacy, when you stand firm, your conscience held captive to the Word of God. Live according to faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone, based upon Scripture alone. Believe no one, no leader, no preacher, no teacher who teaches any gospel other than the one proclaimed in this Word—salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Stand for all that this Word teaches. Stand alone if need be. For when you have faith in Christ, you are never alone. You always stand in the welcoming, accepting, loving, holy, strong, and all-powerful arms of God. Stand firm in Christ. Stand firm for Christ.



The Reflection in the Mirror

by Charles F. Boyd

This article is a continuation from the back page...

Now that picture he gave me of myself—as someone who dreams, but also someone who knows how to deal with reality—has been one that's helped me through some pretty rough times.... I was wondering whether anyone else here had that kind of experience." There was a thoughtful silence as each of us began to reach into the past to look for the message that had marked our lives. Slowly, together, we began to remember aloud:

"When I was a little boy, my grandmother always used to tell me I had wonderful hands. Whenever I'd thread a needle for her or untie the knots in her wool, she'd say I had 'goldeneh hendt' [golden hands]. I think it's one of the reasons I decided to become a dentist."

"My first year of teaching was overwhelming for me. I used to tremble whenever my chairman dropped in to observe a lesson. Afterwards, he'd give me one or two pointers, but then he'd always add, 'I never worry about you, Ellen. Basically, you're self-correcting.' I won-

der if he ever knew what an inspiration those words were to me. I hung onto them every day. They helped me believe in myself...."

Almost everyone in the group had a memory to share. When the session ended, we just sat there and looked at each other. The father who had started us all remembering shook his head in wonderment. When he spoke, he spoke for us all. "Never underestimate the power of your words upon a young person's life!" What are you reflecting to your child?

What does she see in your eyes when you talk with her—or discipline her? Your mirror not only influences her self-esteem, but also her behavior. If you can reflect positive images to your child, you can have a profound impact upon whom she becomes.

Adapted from Different Children, Different Needs © 1994, 2004 by Charles F. Boyd. Used by permission of WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc.

Searching for Real Joy

Romans 5:8-11: *But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also find joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Happiness fluctuates because it has for its source the good times of life, whereas joy, in the Holy Ghost, is present in the gloomiest of circumstances. By the grace of God, we have joy. Jesus is the joy of our salvation.



Galatians 5:22-23: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Joy is given to us by God. It is a Heavenly gift that can not be taken away. It is not dependent on external conditions, but rather upon internal possessions. We have grace, peace, blessed assurance, and fellowship with God Almighty through our Great Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are saints of the most high God. We have access to the very throne room of God through the blood of the Lord Jesus. We have the ever-abiding indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus: our Savior, our Redeemer, our Joy, our best Friend.

The world cannot give joy. The world offers superficial happiness that renders a person empty inside. This world did not give us joy, and the world cannot take it away.

Romans 14:17: *For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteous-*

ness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Faith in Christ implants that joy--the joy that can see in the midst of a trial and say: "I have hope! My sins are forgiven!" All things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.

1 Peter 1:7-8: *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

The world does not understand; the ungodly will never understand, for they have no peace, no fulfillment in their lives. They search for joy in their careers and from the things that they buy. These things are temporal fleeting moments of happiness and then, the emptiness remains. What good is a mansion when your heart longs for lasting peace?

The world searches for joy-- they want contentment but they search for joy in all the wrong places.

Joy is only given to those who have received Christ as their Savior. He is the one who gives us joy. Joy is found by reading the bible and understanding what it means, and loving our Father. There is no one no where on this earth that can give us the kind of joy and love that He can. He will bless us abundantly, and we will know we have peace and joy by Him.



Peter said, concerning Jesus, in Acts 2:28: *Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.*

Hebrews 12:2: *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The Lord Jesus had joy in knowing that He would redeem us by His sacrificial death upon the cross. The Blessed Savior--praise His name forever! He has given us the joy that the world cannot take away. The material things of this world are temporal indeed. We cannot take them with us when we die, but the things of God-- the treasures of Heaven--are eternal. They last forever.

When we remember the love of God, how that He loved us with such great love; how God the Father gave His only begotten Son to die for us and to rise again that we might have everlasting life, then how can we not have joy? Our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

We believe God's Holy word. We know that we shall reign with Christ Jesus forever. We know that our sins are forgiven and washed away. We know that every promise of God is true. We know that life here on earth is as a drop of vapor. We know that we have riches in heaven; our life is hid in Him. We are citizens of heaven and our names are written in the palm of His hand. There is so much to be joyful about!

Psalms 16:11: *Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasure for evermore.*

Jesus is the joy of our salvation. He will be King forever and we shall reign with Him. Let that sink in for a minute. He is the giver of Eternal Life. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. We are to look to Him always.

*Katie Hershberger — Ponchatoula, LA
Phone: (985) 634-8777*

**Pennsylvania
Deitsh
Testament**

If you would like to obtain a New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs in Pennsylvania Deitsh, they are available for \$13.95 postpaid from the **Committee for Translation, 3864 Township Road 162, Sugarcreek, OH 44681. Phone 330-852-4663.** You do not need to send money ahead of time; we will bill you with your order. Your local Christian bookstore may also have them available.

How Things Work In Life



Start with a cage containing five monkeys. Inside the cage, hang a banana on a string and place a set of stairs under it. Before long, a monkey will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the banana. As soon as he touches the stairs, spray all of the other monkeys with cold water.

After a while, another monkey makes an attempt with the same result all the other monkeys are sprayed with cold water. Pretty soon, when another monkey tries to climb the stairs, the other monkeys will try to prevent it.

Now, put away the cold water. Remove one monkey from the cage and replace it with a new one. The new monkey sees the banana and wants to climb the stairs. To his surprise and horror, all of the other monkeys attack him. After another attempt and attack, he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five monkeys and replace it with a new one. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm! Likewise, replace a third original monkey with a new one, then a fourth, then the fifth. Every time the newest monkey takes to the stairs, he is attacked.

Most of the monkeys that are beating him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs or why they are participating in the beating of the newest monkey.

After replacing all the original monkeys, none of the remaining monkeys have ever been sprayed with cold water. Nevertheless, no monkey ever again approaches the stairs to try for the banana. Why not? Because as far as they know that's the way it's always been done around here.

And that, my friend, is how family, church, and company traditions begin.

Let's see what the Bible has to about traditions

Mark 7:8-9: *For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.*

Colossians 2:8: *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

1 Peter 1:18-19: *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

The Power of a HelpMeet?

Hiya, all you Ladies,

Isn't it wonderful that God has assigned such a big job to us; to be "AN HELPMET"? I don't know 'bout you, but I feel pretty important when I think about that!! 😊 I wonder what the word "helpmeet" includes. (All of a sudden I'm feeling kinda small!)



I want to share with you ladies about the journey I've been on lately that has been very rewarding. You know how we THINK of good things about our husbands, but somehow we just never get around to saying it to them?? So often we think "if we don't have anything bad to say, we don't say anything at all", which is exactly the opposite of what we should do.

Well, I've been searching what the Bible has to say about it. James 3 talks a lot about the tongue, especially verses 10-12: *"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."*

I've been trying to make a habit of thinking, before I say something to my husband, "Is what I am getting ready to say going to build him up (BLESSING) or tear him down (CURSING)? Two places in Proverbs it says: *"It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."*

For way too many years I was a brawling woman!

Also Proverbs 31:11-12 says: *"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."*

We need to search ourselves deeply; can our husbands TRUELY trust their

hearts to us? Or are we too busy "keeping them on the straight and narrow" and "cursing" them? We need to remember that we can feel ever so righteous, but be ever so wrong!



I don't think we realize how much power we have over our husbands, either

in a good way or a bad way, and ONLY when we are totally connected to God, can we exercise that power the right way.

My husband tells me that when I speak words of "LIFE" (BLESSING) to him, he wants to please me and do things with me. And I find that the more I say kind things to him, the more love I feel for him! It's kinda like the song, "Love isn't love, 'till you give it away"!

I know that, for some of us, the thought of doing this takes us out of our comfort zone, but, well, how much is our marriage worth to us? Do we want to stay at the level we're on, or do we want something even better? Doesn't the thought that we can make a difference in our marriages and therefore, for our children put a thrill in your heart? 😊

If this is something you've never practiced before, make a goal that you will say ONE "blessing" to your husband and each child once a day 'till you've broken yourself in, and then, well, the sky's the limit!!!! TI 😊e's SOOOOO many "words of life" waiting to be spoken!

No, we don't always do and say everything right, but Proverbs 24:16 tells what the difference is between a "just" man (or woman) and a wicked one. They both fall, but only the "just" riseth up again. Let's be "risers"!!!!

Until next time...

Joy Knepp, Loogootee, IN
Phone: (812) 259-2634

Current Resident

The Reflection in the Mirror

by Charles F. Boyd

When your child looks in the mirror, what does she see? I'm not talking about the mirror on the wall. I mean the mirror of your eyes. You may not be aware of it, but you are a mirror.

In *The Art of Sensitive Parenting*, Catherine C. Kersey wrote: "Children come into the world not knowing who they are. They learn who they are from those around them." You are a mirror your child looks into every day, and you reflect back to her what she will come to believe about herself. These reflections are like snapshots of herself that she pastes into an imaginary photo album, laying the foundation of her identity.

Initially, your child cannot see herself directly; she only sees herself through the eyes of the important people in her life. A person's self-image is usually based not on who she is, but on who she *thinks* she is. And a child thinks she is who her parents believe her to be.

As a parent, you have a choice of reflecting acceptance or rejection, approval or disapproval. To a great degree, whether or not

your child feels wanted and worthwhile depends on what she sees in your "mirror."

Faulty Mirrors

I'm amazed at the number of parents who know what their children can do well but instead spend most of their time focusing on their kids' failures and weaknesses. Sometimes the parents don't know any better, and sometimes it's just a bad habit.

Another problem is that some parents believe too much praise can make a child weak and spoiled. As with many errant beliefs, this one contains some grains of truth. Parents should take responsibility for addressing their child's faults. And if a child receives an extreme amount of praise—hearing from her parents that she's always good, always right, and never wrong in her behavior—she could grow up spoiled, selfish, and amoral. She may never come to understand her sin nature and her capacity to do wrong.

Unfortunately, some Christian parents move to the other extreme: In their efforts to help their child deal with weakness, disobedience, and sin, they rarely affirm the child.

There's no balance. The child sees only bad reflected by her parents, never the good. So she grows up with a poor self-image, and believes she's destined for failure.

The Power of a Parent's Words

Parental disapproval usually leads to long-term emotional and psychological difficulties. In fact, history books are filled with examples of the brutal impact such people have had on the course of human events.

But there can be a positive impact as well. In their excellent book, *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*, Adel Faber and Elaine Mazlish relate the following story that happened after one of their workshops.

One day, toward the end of a session on roles, a father started us reminiscing. He said, "I remember when I was a kid, I used to come to my dad with all kinds of crazy schemes. He'd always listen to me very seriously. Then he'd say, 'Son, you may have your head in the clouds, but your feet are rooted in the ground.'"

Continued on Page 9