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Editor: anabaptistmennonites.org.

Sara's choice of a title for Abraham communicated the depth of her godly character (1 Peter 3:6). Both in attitude and in word, she communicated respect and reverence for Abraham, "whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well." How can we "walk in the steps of that faith" rather than adopt the disrespectful and irreverent language of our surrounding culture?

Sarah's reverence was her choice—not her culture. Her oriental customs may have been more respectful than the casual, crude, and carnal expressions we at times encounter in society. But Sarah's exemplary choice established a spiritual subculture. To be her sons and daughters, we must cultivate respectful speech and terminology and must avoid the ill-mannered, casual references that are in vogue.

A child's sense of respect is nurtured in the garden of the home. As the first authority of the child's life, parents carry the primary responsibility to teach respect. Children who are allowed to refer to their father as "the old man" may someday call their wife "the old lady" or refer to their highest authority as "the man upstairs." When passing the traffic patrol officer, reverence is inculcated in the next generation by choosing the title of policeman rather than referring to him as the cop. Especially when the President is in ill repute, titles, caricatures, and jokes circulate that we should dutifully avoid.

Nicknames—especially those inventions with little or no connection to the real name—are usually less than respectful. Children deserve respect as much as adults. Perhaps one day they will stand behind a podium where an informal nickname will not be appropriate. Children show respect for their peers by using their proper names. Respect for elders is cultivated by a parental habit of referring to extended family members as "Uncle William" and "Aunt Rebekah" or to extended spiritual family members as "Brother Samuel" and "Sister Janet."

We should not adopt slang or casual words. Many of them carry disrespectful or immoral connotations. Guys, which has become commonplace in society, is very disrespectful in its origin. After Guy Fawkes attempted to blow up the British parliament with kegs of gunpowder, the British government created an annual holiday of ridiculing, mocking, and burning effigies of Guy. Guy came to mean "a worthless, ignorant fool." Especially in America, guy began to be used in fun as a coarse substitute for fellow

much in the same way that dude is becoming a common address.

Does God approve of calling others fools in fun? "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:22). "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).

What drives such trends in our culture—and even in our own circles? Casual slang lingo subconsciously creates an atmosphere of peer equality by lowering the standard of morality. Youth crave acceptance and are especially vulnerable to the boldness and camaraderie of casual speech. When everyone is "guys," their children are "kids," and everyone wears blue jeans, a commonality is achieved in which all are seemingly accepted. But are they accepted of God?

Although the slang usage of guy developed among men and boys, it has become transgender to include ladies. This secondary development has moral implications. When respect and reserve deteriorate between the genders, sin follows close behind. The Scriptures teach respect by commanding modest, gender-distinctive dress. Immodest, transgender dress degrades morality by breaking down the reserve and respect that God established by creating men and women with distinctive appearances and roles. Just the same, casual, transgender slang cultivates carelessness and looseness in relationships.

The titles we choose for our friends communicate whether we desire a spiritual or a carnal relationship. Those who choose to use the Holy Kiss with "God bless you, brother" have chosen an opposite destiny from those who bump fists and use the latest slang greeting. Addressing the salesperson as "sir" will establish an atmosphere where spiritual issues may be discussed.

But can we counter our culture? Our Mennonite subculture has avoided calling children kids. Goats are a Scriptural type of the unsaved, but sheep are portrayed as the submissive followers of the Good Shepherd. Children are not naughty, mischievous pranksters but disciplined and courteous charges of our Lord. If we have resolve, we can also avoid being "the guys."

We do conform to language trends and changes if they do not conflict with godly principles. Many in society use slang and vulgar terminology without a thought to their connotations. But we should use such opportunities to teach our children respect and ethical nonconformity in our speech. "Grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever" (Psalm 45:2). —BAS

Understanding the Two Covenants

The Bible contains two major covenants. The first covenant goes by such names as Old Testament, Old Covenant, first will or testament, Mosaic Covenant, covenant with Israel, and Mosaic Law. The second covenant goes by the names New Testament, New Covenant, second will or testament, and the Gospel.

The promise of the New Covenant was contained within the covenant to Abraham, which actually preceded the giving of the Law (Galatians 3:17). The Law, which "was added because of transgressions" (Galatians 3:19; 1 Timothy 1:9), helped preserve a faithful seed through which Jesus would come. The Old Covenant "was our schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24), preparing the way for the New Covenant. Also, the Law entered to expose and magnify sin (Romans 3:20; 5:13, 20; 7:7, 13).

The two covenants contain notable differences. The Old Covenant was given through Moses to the nation of Israel and remained in force until Christ. The New Covenant came through Christ, whose sacrifice provided atonement for all men from Adam to the end of time (Romans 9:4; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:4). The Old Covenant revealed man's sinful nature and provided a covering for sin, but through Christ's resurrection, power is now available for victory over sin (Romans 7; Romans 8:37-39; Ephesians 6:16).

The Law emphasized justice through an iron rule: "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," who gave us the Golden Rule (Judges 15:11; Luke 6:31). The last word of the Old Testament is curse. The last verse of the New Testament is a blessing.

The Old Covenant is called the "ministration of death" and "ministration of condemnation." The New Covenant is the "ministration of the spirit" and the "ministration of righteousness." (See 2 Corinthians 3:7-9.) The Law emphasized God's justice and judgment. The Gospel emphasizes God's mercy and grace (John 1:17). At the giving of the Law, three thousand people were slain; at the giving of the Gospel, three thousand people were saved.

One of the disputed differences between the covenants is the observance of the day of rest. The Gospel does not command keeping the seventh day; rather, we are not to be judged of the Sabbath and other Jewish days (Colossians 2:16). Sabbath in this verse is the same word used in the fourth commandment. All Scriptural uses of the Sabbath Day refer to the seventh day. The idea that the Roman Catholic Church changed the day of rest to

Sunday is false. Just as baptism took the place of circumcision and Communion took the place of Passover, so by the example of Christ, the apostles, and the early church, the first day of the week took the place of the Jewish Sabbath (John 20:19, 26; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). In fact, Saturday-keepers cannot find anywhere that the apostolic church ever met on the seventh day to worship or to hold the Lord's Supper.

Another misunderstood difference is the New Testament doctrine of non-resistance. The Old Testament declares, "Thou shalt not kill," that is, murder. However, divinely directed stoning and war was not murder. The New Covenant supersedes the Law by raising a higher standard. The attitude of hating our brother is condemned as murder (1 John 3:15). To avenge injury is contrary to the Spirit of Christ (Matthew 5:38-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:9).

The Old Testament directed both civil and religious responsibilities. The New Testament acknowledges the authority of civil office but does not direct its affairs. The New Covenant church is universal and, although separate, does coexist with civil powers. It cannot be unified and at the same time serve opposing civil powers of the world.

Many more differences could be mentioned. Costly temples, ornaments, and musical instruments are justified in the Old but not in the New. God winked at some things such as polygamy, divorce, and slavery under the Old Covenant but ruled them out in the New Testament. Actions such as vengeance and the oath were not contrary to moral law but are emphatically forbidden under the Gospel era of grace.

God never changes. But His method of relating to man did change. The Law was set aside in favor of the Gospel as Hagar and Ishmael were cast out in favor of Sarah and Isaac (Galatians 4:22-31). The Law and the Gospel are typified in Moses and Joshua. Moses (the Law) could lead the people only to the border of the Promised Land, whereas Joshua (the Gospel) led them into rest.

Although the Law is no longer binding, moral laws such as the Ten Commandments are not lost to the church (Matthew 5:17-19). A second will disannuls the first will entirely (Galatians 3:15). For an item in an old will to be valid, it must be incorporated into the new will. All the necessary truth of the Old is rewritten or implied in the Gospel.

The Jews struggled to recognize that the Old Covenant had been superseded. When some Jews required Gentile converts to keep the Law, the council at Jerusalem decided they were free (Acts 15). The Old was a yoke too heavy to bear (Acts 15:10, 24). To attempt to patch together the two

covenants is like putting new wine in old bottles or a new patch on an old garment (Matthew 9:16, 17).

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"—but not liberty to do wrong and sin. "Being than made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:18). We are free only as we follow "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1-14). The Book of 1 Timothy has thirty rules alone. Therefore, the Christian is not lawless. When the Old Covenant was in force, the people were to keep all the Law. Now that the New Law is in force, we are to keep it all (Galatians 3:10; Matthew 28:20). The veil of misunderstanding blinds many yet today. The Jewish nation rejects the New Covenant and uses the Old Testament as the infallible standard of life (2 Corinthians 3:14). The modernist believes that neither is divinely inspired or authoritative but that both merely show the evolving of religious thought. "A general church view is that the Old and New Testaments are divine revelations largely beyond our powers of comprehension, through which Christians are to browse, taking out here and there from both what appeals to the individual as necessary and leaving the rest as nonessential or as incomprehensibly mysterious."

However, the Old Testament is inspired of God and was given as an authoritative rule of life for the Hebrews until the Messiah when the Better Covenant would be given through Christ for all and continue in effect to the end of this age. The Gospel should replace the Old as a rule of life and human duty, though the Old is retained as a rich treasury of instruction and truth regarding the origin of the world and man, God's being and nature, and fundamental laws of human government. The Old also contains the promise of the Redeemer and the clear, definite prophecy of another covenant to take its place, which would be for all people. The New is a sufficient guide to salvation—providing redemption, regeneration, illumination, energizing by the Holy Spirit, and regulation of life by divine ordinances, precepts, and restrictions.

In summary, the Old Covenant was useful and necessary to train men to realize the enormity of sin, the holiness of God, and the hopelessness of man without the grace of God. The Old Testament was the rule of life for the Jewish nation but is superseded by the New Testament for the Christian church. The Old is for our instruction but not our rule of life (2 Timothy 3:16; Romans 6:14).

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant" (Psalm 25:14).

Brother Lavelle

Source:

George R. Brunk, "Scripture Studies: 2 Corinthians 3," *The Sword and Trumpet*, October 1929, p. 11.



Lessons From Mennonite History

Mutual Aid

From their beginning in 1525, the Anabaptists believed in the complete separation of church and state and refused dependence upon the state for support. In applying this principle, they willingly provided the necessities of life for all their brethren in times of need.

Heinrich Bullinger, a bitter enemy of the Brethren, wrote in 1560 that "they teach that every Christian is under duty before God from motives of love, to use, if need be, all his possessions to supply the necessities of life to any of the Brethren who are in need." In 1557, one who attended a Swiss Brethren baptismal service reported that all the applicants were asked "whether if necessity required it, they would devote all their possessions to the service of the brotherhood."

The earliest form of mutual aid among the Mennonites was informal and spontaneous. The organization that did exist was administered by the congregational deacons. No central treasury or reserve funds were involved, and monies were collected after members suffered a loss.

The older Mennonite view embraced a simple trust in God. In 1875, the Indiana Mennonite Conference strongly advised members against insuring their properties, telling them instead to give liberally to fellow members who suffered losses and to put their trust in God. Daniel Kauffman stated in 1938, "I do not carry a cent of insurance and the Lord has taken care of me thus far." J. R. Shank, a bishop from Missouri, pleaded in 1939 "that our beloved church not go on record as engaging in the insurance business in any form." This was the prevailing older Mennonite view.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, mutual aid organizations began to appear in some areas of the Mennonite Church. These were often subscription plans involving property valuations, assessments, and solicitations. This method was a step removed from the earlier congregational, spontaneous approach.

By the 1930s, momentum was building for the Mennonite Church to organize a church-wide mutual aid agency. In 1935 General Conference established the Christian Stewardship Study Committee. For the next eight years, this committee worked within the framework of the older Mennonite mentality, which feared that a churchwide mutual aid system could easily develop into an insurance-oriented program. Meanwhile, the Committee on Industrial Relations under the leadership of Guy Hershberger was pushing to organize a churchwide insurance type of mutual aid organization.

Although the Mennonite Church had never ruled out all insurances, the position against life insurance was firm and official. By the 1930s, this position began to be challenged. The Ohio Conference lamented in 1931 that some of the members were carrying life insurance policies in violation of the Scriptural and historic position of the Mennonite Church. The line between life insurance and other forms of insurance was becoming increasingly blurred. Mission workers were complaining that the church had no options to offer converts who came with life insurance policies. The argument was promoted that a church agency would keep members from investing in worldly companies, and could actually provide superior coverage.

In 1944, at a special session of Mennonite General Conference, a churchwide board for mutual aid was approved, on condition that at least six district conferences give their approval. The effort to organize a large-scale, systematic program was moving forward. Considerable opposition surfaced against such a highly organized system that included provisions for death benefits. Through a process of intellectual and political maneuvering by prominent men such as Guy Hershberger and Orrie Miller, a new organization was approved and chartered July 19, 1945, under the name Mennonite Mutual Aid, Inc. (MMA). In reality, the Mennonite Church had now created a systematic program of premium-based insurance. The traditional method of assisting the members through deacon-administrated charities had now been essentially abolished. The respect and need for the deacon office was on a rapid decline.

The insurance ideas of the MMA lay dormant for a few years as the organization focused on offering assistance to returning CPS men. Continuing voices of dissent also hampered their progress. For example, in 1950, rural missionary J. R. Shank suggested that the murmuring of the people for a hospitalization and burial plan came less from neglect for the needy than from a worldly spirit condemned by Jesus. But the insurance concepts of the MMA founders were not forgotten and would soon come on the

front burner.

From the beginning, the MMA motivators favored life insurance. Hershberger contended that the problem lay in commercialization, not in life insurance itself. He believed that a system of evil in the world could be quite good if administrated by the church and infused with a Christian spirit.

In October 1947, a Life Insurance Study Committee was appointed. Interestingly enough, H. N. Troyer, author of an anti-life insurance booklet published by Mennonite Publishing House in 1932, was appointed to the committee. His ideas were passed off as old-fashioned. One of the committee boldly declared, "It would seem to me that MMA could scripturally administrate [life] insurance." Gradually the way was opened for the acceptance of life insurance policies, both from MMA and commercial companies.

Thus far we have been tracing the mutual aid subject from the broader "western" Mennonite viewpoint. The response of the Lancaster Conference is a story of its own. Lancaster Conference was not a part of Mennonite General Conference and generally did not support their programs. The influence of MMA was resisted for many years. In 1950, Orie Miller, a prominent Lancaster Conference executive and first president of MMA sent a letter of apology to the Conference bishops for sending an MMA promotional mailing to the Lancaster Conference constituency.

As the MMA program was developing under the General Conference, Lancaster Conference was taking a closer look at a mutual aid program of their own. In 1950, a plan known as Brotherly Aid Storm and Fire Plan was approved and organized. The plan was expanded in 1955 to include automobile coverage under the name Brotherly Aid Liability Plan. These plans represented a sincere effort to have a planned method for brotherhood sharing. It was, however, an insurance-oriented approach. The plan functioned about fifty years until it gave way to commercial insurance in 2001.

Although strongly discouraged, Conference members were becoming increasingly involved in MMA. In 1958, the bishops discovered that one thousand members were patronizing MMA programs. A recommendation came to the bishops in 1962 that a committee be appointed to study the need of providing a health, hospitalization, burial, and survivors aid plan. For some time, discussion focused on establishing a new Conference program, but gradually the pendulum swung in favor of accepting a customized MMA plan for Lancaster Conference members. On the mutual aid front, the progressives were determined to go the way of most other Men-

nonite conferences. An office was opened in April 1965 at Salunga to facilitate the new program.

A conservative element of the Conference did not favor these developments, but the progressives were becoming tired of always holding back for fear of offending the conservative wing. In 1968, a block of conservative-minded members left the Conference to form a new group. Much of the resistance to Mennonite Mutual Aid went with them. The Conference was now free to move ahead with their organized and centralized mutual aid programs. The old Anabaptist–Mennonite practice of helping the needy under the administration of deacons ordained for that purpose was now outdated.

Accompanying the spiritual awakening and revival at the forming of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church was a renewed desire to restore the Bible practices to full force, including the Scriptural function of the deacon office. A "Brotherhood, Mutual Assistance, and Deacon Work" statement was adopted by the churchwide ministry on September 16, 1970. The statement carefully outlines a plan based on the historic Mennonite mutual aid platform. Funds are to be made available by congregational offerings, all contributions are to be strictly on a voluntary basis, and all funds shall be kept by the local deacons of every congregation.

For forty-five years, this plan of "trusting in God rather than the inventions of man" has worked. We believe that God will continue to bless our church as we are willing to honor Him in this way.

Brother Eby.

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Church Committee Report Ashland/Numidia Bible Schools

Reflection adds dimension and perspective to life in general, and Bible school is no exception. Recently, I read the Bible school report from the April 1970 issue of the Eastern Mennonite Testimony. A number of things have changed since then.

Enrollment and personnel are obvious changes. Benjamin Eshbach and Paul Ebersole served as administrators in 1970. John Risser, Sidney Gingrich, Ivins Steinhauer, and Mervin Baer served as evangelists. Four terms were offered, with two hundred thirty students enrolled. These students were taught by twenty-three teachers.

In 2014, fourteen couples served in administration at two schools. Eight evangelists labored in the eight terms offered, with seven hundred thirty-nine students enrolled. Approximately eighty brethren served as teachers.

Some of the pressures have changed as well. Cell phones, digital cameras, and even CDs did not exist in 1970. Were snacks, and the money to buy them, as plentiful then as now?

Some of these changes are quite positive, and we thank God for growth and increase. Others are cause for caution and concern. While changes seem inevitable, some things must not change if Bible school will continue to bless us.

Our focus on the Bible and personal commitment to the truth it teaches must not alter. Respect and appreciation for sound administration must remain. The strong, united support of the families and congregations at home must not waver. Willingness, even an eagerness, to sacrifice and serve must endure. The burden that drives us to fervent prayer cannot lighten. Above all, the good hand of our God must be upon us.

What changes might occur in another forty-four years should the Lord tarry? A generation of persons will certainly change and, perhaps, other changes beyond our reach. Yet, in part, we answer this question term by term, year by year.

M.S.: For the Ashland/Numidia Board



The Abundant Life (Part 4)

Daily Contentment

Contentment is deep, heartfelt satisfaction with life. This heart condition must be cultivated. Several times the Scriptures direct, "Be content." For each of us, contentment is a deliberate, daily choice. We cannot cage it in our hearts like a parakeet or hamster. True contentment will abide in the heart where Jesus is Master.

David expressed his deep contentment and its source, "The LORD is my shepherd I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). In spite of the fact that he at times faced physical poverty and hunger, he was totally at rest and content with God's care. In his necessity, Paul testified, "I have all, and abound." The Master of our life makes the difference. Contentment is being at peace with His management of our lives.

How easily we become restless and discontent with what we have and can do! Just casual comments like "Isn't that dress so pretty," or "That is an awesome car" or "Wouldn't that be fun to ... T' bring thoughts to our mind: "I wish . . ." Subconsciously, to our detriment, we often compare our things and our lives with others.

Our contentment is also tested when we face struggles. Like David, we can assume that the wicked are advantaged. "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Psalms 73:3). It appears that they do not need to struggle and say no so much. We must also combat the thought that possessions are the essence of life and that little equals sorrow. "Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith" (Proverbs 15:16).

Contentment gives freedom. It frees us of the empty desire to have "the best of both worlds." It makes the grass green on our side of the fence. It drives away the critical, complaining spirit. Contentment would have solved the strained relationships of Jesus' disciples. Judas's covetousness progressed from committing theft to eventually selling Jesus for money. Contentment spares us the heartache of covetousness.

How can contentment be nurtured? First, detach the heart from the possessions of the world. "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:8). Also, trust in God's providence. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30).

Remember, Jesus delights in each of us. Nothing pleases Him more than when we are content and flourishing under His care. He spares no pains to shelter us from the storms of this life and protect us from our ruthless enemy. Do you have enough?

—*Brother Joel*



PRAYER POINT

*“The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much”*

*Thank God for the privilege of paying taxes to a government
that allows us religious freedom.*

*Pray that the school-teaching positions might be filled with able, willing,
and spiritual teachers.*

*Pray that the ministerial and conferring meetings might continue to unify
the church "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in
thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that
thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).*

*Pray that our love for the Lord and our brethren might grow deeper as we
observe the ordinances of Communion and feet washing.*

*"Pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).*

