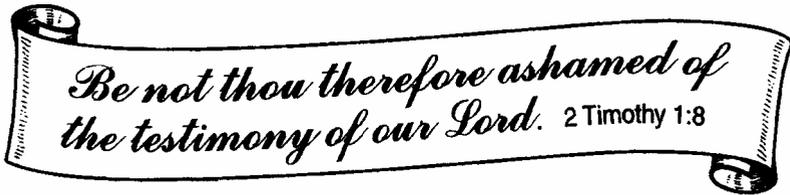


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

SELECTED ARTICLES FROM THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION
OF
THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH
AUGUST 2011



The Eastern Mennonite Testimony is the official organ of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. That publication seeks to promote the historic Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and practice. The Testimony is published monthly by the Publication Board of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. Subscriptions are free. Forward subscriptions and contributions to Eastern Mennonite Publications, 40 Wood Corner Road, Ephrata, PA. 17522 U.S.A. Telephone (717) 733-7988 Fax: (717)733 2757.

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Editor: anabaptistmennonites.org.

Actually, they are century-olds. Satan has no real wares—just the same moldy, toxic temptations that he offered in the Garden of Eden. However, his skill at repackaging must be acknowledged. The sales-pressure tactics have intensified and the wrapping is gaudy. Satan is using the Internet and communication technology in our times to sell the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life at cut-rate, wholesale prices. But the cost is high!

The challenge to discern the harmful side effects of technology is not new. We can look to past generations for their warning and faithful example in applying Biblical principle to everyday life. We need to strengthen the positions that safeguarded their business and personal lives.

Remember Babel. Ease of communication has proven to advance temptation and evil more than righteousness. God took action and we must too. Social networking is the world's form of unbridled communication. Do we exercise self-control and discretion in our communications? The accountability of strong home relationships and brotherhood ties are communication links that are essential to spiritual survival.

Wise parents continue to limit the use of the phone. Youth peer pressure is accentuated and parental influence is minimized with unmonitored use. Phones that cannot block the Internet are unclean. Text messaging, with its instant and secretive potential, has been a deathtrap. E-mail carries the same threat if used for socializing.

Avoid covetousness. The Internet is a powerful marketing tool with a reverse edge. It is a huge wish book with the threat of robbing one of contentment and increasing spending.

Auction goes and shopping addicts do not have spare change. Daily exposure to the intrigue of online auctions and the manifold marketing avenues available on the Internet will hold the same pitfall. Advertising pressure is accentuated by the multiplicity of available vendors. The pressure to advertise poses a threat to a humble view of our talents and wares.

Avoid the daily news. Internet has increased the addiction to trivial information. Although current events are informative, we must avoid the daily indoctrination and world view of our society. The world's gossip and commentary are a distraction from the more important issues of life. "Let us lay aside every [mental] weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset

us" (Hebrews 12:1). A steady diet of worldly thinking distorts our perception of how God thinks.

Guard stewardship. Although computers are great time savers, they can easily become time wasters. Just like the television, they can produce couch potatoes. If we need a computer, we should use it as a tool and avoid the entertainment aspects that it offers.

An industry of computer crafts has arisen that threatens to militate against simplicity of life. Graphic art is captivating but does not increase the love of a special card or letter. Our handmade crafts and creations should be practical and serviceable.

Satan's packaging will continue to require scrutiny. Caution and the test of time are valuable reserves in analyzing his wares. Even if filtered Internet is used for business, this tool, like a powerful tractor, can be dangerous and must be safeguarded from immature use. A safe position always incurs some inconvenience. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1). Convenience must never override what is proven to cause spiritual failure. How many accidents does it take to warrant a red light?

Technology issues have tested brotherhood unity. Satan has gained the advantage in many situations. We do well to analyze issues of the past and discern which positions have preserved a Christlike church.

We must avoid positions that encourage paper sales to third parties and loopholes around the letter of the law. These destroy the base of personal conviction that is so desperately needed in our times. We need clear administrative lines so that each one can have a conscience void of offence. Third-party arrangements may also threaten our separation from the world.

We must diligently apply Scripture personally but avoid the wedge of individualism. Many issues that we have addressed as a church are safety issues. We should respect the lines that other churches and individuals have drawn.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18). "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20).

—BAS



Biblical Concepts for Counseling

The work of counseling is close to the heart of God. God knows how much man needs counsel. "Where no counsel is, the people fall" (Proverbs 11:14). Jesus as the Counselor (Isaiah 9:6) came to earth to bring God's counsel to man. Now God calls His people to admonish one another—to share His counsel with others who need it.

When Jesus walked this earth as the perfect Counselor, He left us an example to follow as we counsel others. He had a genuine interest in people. He took the initiative to open a conversation with the woman at the well (John 4). This account also portrays Jesus meeting this woman where she was and leading her on in understanding. Jesus was exemplary in His compassion. He dealt directly but gently with her sin. Jesus also demonstrated a willingness to give of Himself in the work of counseling. He took time out of His busy schedule and considered this work more important than eating a meal.

The Bible is our counseling manual. It contains the revealed will of God. It supplies direction for the answers to all of mankind's needs. It is filled with real life examples of God's people relating to the problems of life. It discloses the "exceeding great and precious promises" of God for grace and strength in every situation.

We must be very cautious about turning to other counseling manuals. Many on the market today are written by "Christian" psychologists who have imbibed modern psychology's false premises. One of these men has admitted, "As I restudied what I learned in graduate school, it became clearly and frighteningly apparent that most of what I was believing and doing as a professional psychologist was built upon the swaying foundation of humanism, a fervent belief in the self-sufficiency of man. As a Christian committed to a biblical view of man, I could not make the psychological thinking in which I had been trained dovetail with basic biblical beliefs."

Biblical counseling must turn people from sin. Jesus said to the backslidden church at Laodicea, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:18). Sin is the underlying cause of all of mankind's spiritual problems. A selfish, sinful response often compounds a problem and needs to be addressed as a first step in finding victory.

Modern psychology has many methods of diminishing sin and its resulting guilt. Sigmund Freud, the "father of modern psychology," defined man's psyche in terms of his drives. When these drives are suppressed or interfered with, "mental illness" can result. Therefore, the person is not responsible for his problems; rather the authority figures who repressed his drives as he was growing up are responsible. B.F. Skinner, a behaviorist, promoted the idea that man is not responsible for his actions because his environment determines his behavior. Biblical counseling reckons with man's sinful responses and seeks to turn people from sin to righteousness.

The goal of Biblical counseling is Christian growth and perfection. The apostle Paul revealed his counseling goals: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28). The Greek word translated warning is *noutheteo*, which is also translated admonish. This Greek word means "to train by word using encouragement, reproof, or re-monstrance." *Nouthesis* (noun form) portrays a problem in the life of an individual that is addressed in loving concern by another. The goal of this admonition, or counseling, is to bring about change in a person's life by helping him apply Scriptural principles to his problem.

Just as God patiently leads us step by step in Christian growth, so we should patiently lead others on. Many times the changes will not happen as soon or as quickly as we anticipate, so patience is required. One practical way to encourage growth may be to ask the person to come back for more help after he has successfully implemented one change. To focus on one step at a time is often better than overwhelming a person with all the areas in which he needs to grow immediately.

Modern psychology is heavy on listening and light on action. Biblical counseling involves listening but is most interested in action—in applying Scriptural principles to everyday life. We may err on the side of not listening enough—the Bible reminds us, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him" (Proverbs 18:13). Listening involves asking questions to help draw out the whole picture. And we may need to take time to seek counsel ourselves before giving counsel. But then we must move on the God-prescribed course for dealing with problems.

Many times the first required action is confession—confess our sinful responses, confess our lack of forgiveness for those who may have wronged us, and confess our pride and self-will. Secondly, we actively claim God's promises by faith and move forward in hope, knowing God has solutions for our problems. Thirdly, we commit ourselves to the positive action of

responding to our situations in God-honoring ways. Fourthly, we purposefully place ourselves under accountability to other Christians who can support, encourage, and admonish us.

God's design is for the local congregation to supply the needs of its members. Before we seek professional counseling, we should seek godly counsel from our brothers and sisters in Christ. While professional help may be needed in some situations, it should be sought with the approval of one's ministry. Taking along a trusted brother or sister will help sort out any error that may come along with the professional help that we need.

In the local congregation, our situation, including our background, home life, and manner of life, is well-known. In going to an outside counselor, we may be selective in the details we reveal, thus limiting the effectiveness of his counsel. Also in the local congregation we find our best source of accountability. Our brethren are the ones with whom we worship every week, enjoy regular fellowship, and testify to a clear relationship at council services.

Who should be involved in this work of Biblical counseling? Paul wrote to the church at Rome, 'And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish [noutheteo] one another" (Romans 15:14). God calls and equips all Christians for this work. Church leaders have a special responsibility in this work as they watch over the souls for whom they must give account. Counseling relationships within the congregation should have a conferring relationship with the ministry. Paul summarized his ministry at Ephesus with these words, "Remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31).

May we rise to our God-given task of counseling one another according to the principles of God's Word so that we may "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Bro. Matthew

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2 Jay E. Adams, Competent to Counsel (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1970) pp. 41-50.



THE PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

"For the LORD'S portion is his people" (Deuteronomy 32:9). The church is special to God. Jesus died for her to redeem a people for His own. In eternity past, God made plans for the church, and it was His good pleasure to see these plans fulfilled.

The church is invited to His banqueting table and is allowed to sit under His shadow (Song of Solomon 2:4). We are "partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come" (Hebrews 6:4, 5).

The fruit of the Spirit is seen in the church. Love flows between members, and peace is realized as each member has peace with God. The Holy Spirit, living in each heart, conforms each one to the image of His Son.

As we become members of Christ's body, we experience life in Christ. We have the privilege of partaking of the cup and of the broken bread of Communion. This reminds us of the price that was paid for these spiritual privileges. What a privilege to partake in feet washing and be assured that, if we wander off the narrow way, our brethren will help us back! In the church we sit with the saints, and God blesses us "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

As we are born into the family of God, we become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." As we gather with the saints, we understand the privilege of being one of the beloved. This inspires us to praise God for the kindness shown to us in Christ Jesus.

Many in the world are ignorant of the rich blessings found in the church. Members of the church may also take these blessings for granted. They may think that somehow God will overlook their faults as they presume on His grace and goodness. However, if we misuse a privilege, we lose the blessing that God intended for us. In order to keep our privileges, we must accept the responsibilities that go along with being members.

Every member must do his part for the church to be the bride of Christ. Since church membership is voluntary, the responsibility must be carried out voluntarily. Each member must do his part because he wants to, rather than because he has to. Many of the privileges of church life are experienced as a group, but the responsibilities are more personal. The church gives the teaching, but God holds us accountable to apply it.

Each member has the great responsibility of taking up the cross. Just as the cross meant death to Jesus, so the cross means death to our flesh. We must die to our carnal affections, desires, goals, and ideas. When we give

up our all, then the Holy Spirit takes control, and we become new creatures in Christ. This dying must be a daily experience. When we stop giving up our self-life, then carnality creeps into the church through our life.

Another responsibility is to live a life of separation. The church and the world never were in agreement and never will be. If we are a friend of the world, we are an enemy of God. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). We need to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. If we love God this much, we will not love the world. We are to be strangers and pilgrims for the short time we are here. The Bible ought to be our guide for life, for "Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10:2).

God wants us to live by faith. "The just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). The faithful saints of the past always chose to do what they believed to be right. We now have a faith chapter in the Book of Hebrews, extolling these saints. We also have a book of martyrs, who had courage to face the sword, the lion, and the water. These saints believed that compromise is wrong and chose to stand for truth even if it meant death.

We are also responsible to help promote unity in the brotherhood. God is looking for one "body fitly joined together." This is the work of the Holy Spirit. At conversion we surrender our life to God. We must lay aside our ideas and individualistic ways and allow our thinking to be guided by the Bible and spiritual brethren.

The Holy Spirit also convicts us to live our faith in a practical way. This brings about a unity in the local church life. "Now I beseech you, brethren.... that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Every member should feel responsible to give up his own idea and allow the Holy Spirit, to work in his mind to bring about the unity of the Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, the brotherhood can have no unity.

Submission is a virtue that we like to see in others but find more difficult to exercise in our own life. Submission is not simply working together in unity. While submission is necessary to work together in unity, submission also means that other members have the right to share their advice and give counsel about our relationship to the Lord. When that advice is given, it is our responsibility to be open and apply it where it is needed.

We are also responsible to keep the church pure. Each member must do his part to keep the influence of the world out of the church. The world's recreation, materialism, pleasure seeking, educational system, insurance

programs, and religious life can be a source of contamination to the church. We must all do our part so that when Jesus returns we will be part of His pure bride.

Church membership is voluntary, so every member should sense his responsibility to do his part and to be what God wants him to be. However, God gave the church authority to deal with sin to keep the church pure. This is important so that peace and unity can exist and so that the church can be true to her calling to be a testimony of God's saving grace. The church has the authority to give direction on how its members ought to live. We should submit to this direction.

May our lives radiate the joy of being God's children. And may we be faithful in telling the world about the privilege to be part of the church of God.

Bro. Warren



"But I Say Unto You" (Part 2)

Avoid the Lustful Look

David glanced beyond his busy shop crew to the parking lot, where a familiar tool-supply truck was just arriving. He walked quickly to where the salesman was descending his truck.

"Good morning, Joe," David called. "Good to see you again."

"And how can I help you today?"

"My men do need some items, but we are wondering if you would be so kind as to remove the posters and calendars you began offering recently? Jesus taught us that it is sin to look at indecent pictures such as those."

"Certainly," Joe replied with just a hint of embarrassment.

Jesus has clearly and concisely called us to a higher standard than the Law. "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Our desires to look are just as condemning as the act of adultery.

We must be desperate to avoid the lustful look, which is so native to our hearts. Christ has called us to radical discipleship lest our "whole body should be cast into hell." The immoral will not enter the gates of heaven (Revelation 22:15). Faith will reckon with the consequences of failure and

move us to avoid sin at all cost. We need the positive incentive and urgency to "hunger and thirst after righteousness."

We avoid the lustful look by understanding our own heart. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

We can also avoid the lustful look by having a Christlike love and compassion for the souls of all we meet. We must focus on each person as a needy soul rather than an object of lust. We should fan the fervent charity that "will have all men to be saved."

Many dress or conduct themselves in a sensual way in ignorance. The world's sense of modesty is distorted by their exposure to sin. A compassionate rebuke may help to "[pull] them out of the fire," but we must be sure that we are "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).

We avoid the lustful look by avoiding, as much as possible, the deplorable display of sin that is broadcast in our society. "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

Continuing victory over the lustful look depends on a healthy relationship with our Lord. Do we have the longing to see our heavenly Father that makes us desperate for the purity of heart that will allow us to see Him? "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).
Bro. Ernest.



Church Committee Report - Lower Level Reading Curriculum

For nearly thirty years the Publication Board has been providing our schools with the Beginning Steps to Reading (BSR) curriculum. This curriculum was developed with a burden to guide our teachers in the use of the phonics method for teaching reading. BSR is an intense phonics curriculum that covers the first ninety days of first grade.

Rod and Staff revived the phonics method, which was part of the Christian day school movement of the 1960s. Coupled with that vision was the idea of writing a lower level reading series based on Bible stories. Our lower level reading curriculum builds upon that vision and the many valuable efforts since that time.

The BSR curriculum was written to stand alone, laying a groundwork that could precede various reading curriculums. Nevertheless, teachers began to anticipate a reader series that would embrace and expand the patterns drilled in BSR. In 1996 the Board approved taking steps toward this project, and Bible Blessing Readers was begun.

The goals of this series may be summarized with several points:

1. The readers must meet the child at his level of comprehension and inspire his interest in and appreciation for truth.
2. The teacher guides will provide a plan for teaching, drilling, and exercising one lesson for each day. Traditional class time drill patterns will be standard.
3. The teaching plan will be designed with sympathy for new teachers and with directions outlined for effectiveness and efficiency.
4. Vocabulary development will pave the way for reading comprehension. Each lesson must involve a deliberate expansion of the child's working vocabulary.
5. The emphasis on phonics should result in improved spelling skills.

Reading 1 completes the first grade reading course. This level is comprised of two readers with forty-two stories each. The accompanying teacher guide and workbooks provide a full reading, phonics, and spelling curriculum. Since 2002 these materials have been in print and available to our schools.

Reading 2 comprises 168 stories and will be divided evenly among several readers. The teacher guide and workbooks match the patterns of level one. The majority of Reading 2 was field tested during the 2010-11 school term and is available in manuscript form to all schools.

Reading 3 and 4 has been in the organization and research stage since 2008. Additional writers and team managers have been recruited for these levels. These levels are being designed to continue the previous goals and provide a full reading, phonics, and spelling curriculum. Although the writers tested some of their ideas in the recent school term, the work is only beginning.

The progress of this project has thus far encompassed fifteen years of labor. Several reasons can be given for the duration of this work. First, this curriculum is not pressed by the need to replace secular material. Bible-based reading curriculum is available and widely used in our schools. Second, our writers have been dividing their time between numerous commitments, each demanding time and devotion.

And third, writing a Bible-based reader has stimulated an interesting amount of scrutiny and criticism. A curriculum utilizing the text of Holy Scripture cannot be produced without an extra measure of fear and trembling unfamiliar to most curriculum projects. The Curriculum Committee has expended much effort striving to ensure that our Bible stories accurately portray truth.

This project has relied on the contribution of many individuals. Sisters, with their lower level teaching experience, have been involved in writing and reviewing. They are familiar with the condescension required to meet the child at this level. And they understand the techniques which may best be used to teach reading. We are grateful for the faithful commitment of all the writers, reviewers, and editors.

If the Lord tarries, we will labor on in this work. We desire your prayer support and interest in this project.

Bro. Christopher (editor) For the Curriculum Committee.

