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God is merciful and gracious. But when life brings disappointments, men are inclined to "[charge] God foolishly." Part of the error lies in a faulty view of God's providence. Too often men expect God to perform according to their wishes rather than His wisdom. Those who overcharge God end up feeling shortchanged. Rest and peace are found in trusting God but on His terms.

God has not promised freedom from trials, hardship, or persecution. The poet correctly penned, "God has not promised skies always blue." Sometimes we need trust and faith that He can supply grace for the trial. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Our selfish insistence on a rosy life may deprive God of glory and ourselves of the opportunity of spiritual growth. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (Romans 5:3).

God has not promised us health and wealth. God did promise prosperity and health to the nation of Israel if they would obey His Law, but these were civil promises and were not guaranteed to individuals. A community that lives by God's laws today also receives collective blessings, and the standard of living is raised. But we still live with the curse of sin and death which

Christ will yet put under His feet. Christian Science, which claims that Christ has redeemed our bodies from all physical sickness, denies the obvious and is contrary to Scripture. "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).

God has not promised to intervene for our neglect or carelessness. When Satan abused God's promise and tempted Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, Jesus rebuked him: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (Matthew 4:7). Do we at times tempt God? We pray for safety on the highways, but we must also drive carefully.

God's promise, "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak," does not mean that we should neglect Bible study and memorization. And the gift of speaking in various languages comes more often by mental sweat than by a miracle. Diligent application to the full spectrum of

education that our schools provide prepares us for Christian service and should be training for a lifetime of study.

God has not promised grace to those who forsake His ways. Israel assumed that they had God in a box and could win the war against the Philistines by carrying God onto the battlefield (1 Samuel 4:3-6). A superstitious view of divine intervention ends in disappointment and actually weakens faith. Samson betrayed the secret to his strength and realized too late "that the LORD was departed from him." Many Christians believe that they are predestined to be saved and stray from the obedience that is foundational to assurance of salvation (Matthew 7:24-27).

God cannot bless us if we do not desire His will. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34). His care is not forced. 'A way to escape' from temptation is promised, but we must be willing to take it. Although God has promised to hear, He has not promised immediate answers or action. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" (Lamentations 3:26). "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.... For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:6-7). God withholds His providence at times till we seek Him. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

"But God has promised strength for the day ..." He knows best and has promised in His infinite wisdom to always do for us what is best. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28).

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). He knows the difference between our needs and our wants. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:11).

We can rest assured that everything will work out for God's glory. If that is our highest desire, we will live at peace in life and spend eternity in worship.

—BAS



"Holiness Becometh Thine House"

"The LORD reigneth." The psalmist begins with a description of the majesty, supremacy, and eternity of God. He closes with the declaration "holiness becometh thine house" (Psalm 93:5). To what house is the author referring? Why is holiness becoming (suitable, pleasant, or attractive) to God's house?

The word house could refer to God's family or to a physical meeting-house. In the psalmist's time, God dwelt in the temple. Today He lives within the believer and in the church. In the future, we will dwell with Him in His eternal house.

Holiness is becoming to God's house because of the holy God who is worshiped there. In light of the majesty of the God of heaven and earth, should we not come before Him with awe and reverence? When we consider the supremacy of God, dare we give less than our best in worship? Because of the eternity of God, will He not require more than contemporary forms of worship that please our flesh?

This psalm mentions God's established throne and His established world. He has also established acceptable worship. The worship patterns of the tabernacle helped to establish the contrast between the holy God and an unholy people. The numerous blood sacrifices established the seriousness of sin. The various washings and periods of preparation for worship reminded worshipers of the distance between God and man. "When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not" (Exodus 30:20). Keeping this view of God's holiness is important.

What about God's house today? Are the requirements different? "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6). Our God has not changed. The awe that the Old Testament saint felt toward God is just as vital today. What are some practical helps for God's people as they gather to worship?

Worship includes personal preparation. Taking sufficient rest to prepare the body and mind proves that we view worship seriously. Personal prayer before coming to services prepares the mind and spirit for receiving God's Word. A prepared heart includes prepared answers to the Sunday school lesson questions. Preparation for sharing in the worship service is worthy of our best. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:11). Our prepa-

rations should be mostly concluded before we arrive at church.

Worship is a collective experience. As we gather at church, our worship affects other believers. Prayerful meditation while waiting for the service to begin (instead of racing to arrive at the last minute or later) promotes a good worship atmosphere. Listening intently and taking notes exerts positive peer pressure. Lack of participation in congregational singing detracts from worship and affects others negatively.

A worshipful atmosphere is important. Ornate chapels, stained-glass windows, candles, and flowers may stir the soul. But a simple, quiet building will allow our spirit freedom to communicate with God. Old Testament worshippers were to follow God's dress code. A modest, uniform dress code greatly eliminates distractions. God is worthy of our best. A serious, dressed-up, buttoned-up approach is more fitting than contemporary come-as-you-are attitudes. This includes buttoning suit coats and keeping dress sleeves and shirt sleeves down.

Teaching children reverence in family worship can lessen distractions in public worship. The janitor's unobtrusive attention to the heat and ventilation will aid the worship experience of the whole group. While there may be acceptable times to remain seated during kneeling prayers, we should keep those times to a minimum. We should wait to rise from prayer until after the amen. Whispering or other forms of communication during church services shows a wrong view of the great God we worship. Frequent trips out of the auditorium also distract others.

A planned and consistent approach aids worship. While new insights into Scripture may enlighten and inspire, new approaches to the forms of worship are more likely to distract. This is also inconsistent with our unchanging God.

What happens after the benediction can indicate the degree to which we have worshiped. Is the noise level becoming to God's house? Do our thoughts and conversations immediately move to earthly subjects? Were we challenged enough by the thoughts in the sermon or Sunday school lesson to engage in more discussion on those subjects?

"The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty Thy throne is established of old The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters" (Psalm 93). The psalmist's God is still the same today. Worship that issues from holy lives will bring glory to His holy Name and display that which is becoming to God's future house. "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent

reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:6-8).

Brother Anthony



Vacations, Family, and Church.

Vacations were nearly unheard of one hundred years ago among the average working class. Factories in town closed over harvest time, so men could help farmers labor to harvest their crops, doing much work by hand. But in our materialistic, pleasure-loving society, vacations have become customary.

The sports and entertainment features at vacation resorts and tourist attractions threaten the spiritual life of our families and the church. Will we resist these worldly pressures and find acceptable means for recreation and diversion?

In times of ease and prosperity the danger increases for the church to accommodate to the ways of the world around her. We still need the warning God gave to Israel: "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10:2). Should vacationing be part of the mentality of Christ's servants?

Let us consider some divinely appointed provisions for relief and refreshment.

- 1.** A disciplined, scheduled lifestyle allows one to get sufficient rest. Nothing can replace the miracle of sleep.
- 2.** One day in seven is a day of worship and rest intended for the renewal of soul and body.
- 3.** The changing seasons also provide a diversion of activities throughout the year. God knew that a change in our various duties would hold recreational value and fulfillment. Working together in the family garden, especially for those whose livelihood comes from the shop or office, invigorates minds, muscles, and family relationships.
- 4.** "Come ye apart ... and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). Take the family and go to an all-day meeting, a weekend meeting, or a Bible conference. Cut a bouquet and go to visit the aged or to sing for shut-ins. Rest and fulfillment

come in seeking the comfort of others.

Now, what are some Scriptural principles for recreation?

Can it be done to the glory of God? "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

To spend days "on vacation" making little or no contribution to family needs or church interests would rob God of glory and man of blessing. "This was the iniquity of ... Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49).

Will our planned excursion take us away from or interfere with spiritual obligations in our home congregation? When social interests take priority over or conflict with special services in our home congregation, such as council, Communion, or revivals, our values are misplaced. A Christian home that reproduces the faith will adjust the schedule and faithfully support the home church.

We must be cautious in exposing our family to evil influences. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Wise Christian parents will use discretion in visiting places of interest and beauty such as the mountains, waterfalls, an ocean, caverns, zoos, botanical gardens, or national parks. Here the marvels of our Creator are displayed. But many of these prominent tourist attractions have entertainment features that must be avoided.

An inspirational and educational day can be a healthy family diversion. But if we indulge in the pollutions of an immoral society, we place a spiritual blight on our family that is not easily erased. Our "members shall not indulge in the world's methods of pleasure seeking, amusements and entertainments" (Rules and Discipline, Article VII, #1).

Our dress and conduct should leave a testimony for God. Our separated Mennonite identity helps to protect us from going to places where we do not belong, and it makes people God-conscious. It also invites inquiry and opportunities to share our faith in God and His Word.

Fifty years ago a plain Mennonite family with young children was visiting a zoo. A little girl stepped near and, looking up, asked, "Are you real people?" We should ask ourselves, "Has the appearance of our Mennonite families changed in proportion to society in the last fifty years?" If separation has been maintained, the contrast will be even more noticeable.

Is our diversion a good stewardship of time and money? "And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful" (Titus 3:14). Travel is expensive. Bank loans for vacations are

common in our easy credit society, but loans for vacation should be unheard of for our people.

Extended travel should surround family and church interests. At times some sightseeing can be done along the way. With family members and outlying congregations scattered across the States, most of our travel can provide diversions while making contributions to kingdom interests. Money can be saved by stopping with friends or by staying with families of our congregations. But we should kindly compensate for our keeping lest we become a liability rather than an asset.

Finally, the world lives for here and now, so they spend much time and resources on equipage for their vacations. Let the Christian home and church arise and use their time and resources to meet brotherhood needs, to extend kingdom borders, and to support the Church missions.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest" (Hebrews 4:9-11).

Brother Noah



PUBLICATION BOARD PROJECT DOCTRINAL STUDY GUIDES

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God" (Deuteronomy 32:1-3).

We thank God for the privilege and opportunity to publish doctrinal study guides. The Word of God is our authentic source of sound doctrine. The doctrinal study guides arrange Bible doctrine in an orderly lesson-by-lesson approach. These lessons also include practical teachings and applications. Most of these study guides have a twelve-lesson format with study and discussion questions. A few study guides have resource suggestions for extra study or practical illustrations.

Many Bible school students have been refreshed with "the small rain upon the tender herb" through the use of these study guides. They are also useful for personal Bible study and prayer meetings.

The printing of doctrinal study guides began in 1991 with Ambassadors for Christ, Building Christian Homes, and The Doctrine of the Church. Since then numerous study guides have been written and some have been revised.

A few new study guides are being prepared. The Doctrine of Heaven and Hell is near completion. The Christian Ordinances study guide is being reviewed by brethren from the Illinois District. The Doctrine of Christ study guide is written and being reviewed. Brethren from the Northwest District are helping with this project.

The Publication Board gives approval for these study guides. A writer or writers are asked, and a doctrinal review team and an editor are assigned. The editorial department guides and reviews the work. We greatly appreciate the contribution of each one who has served in this work. May God bless your labors.

We sense the great accountability to produce doctrinally sound material. We pray that the value of these study guides will contribute to the cause of Christ building the church. May God receive all the glory.

Brother Kevin For the Publication Board.



Lengthening the Cords History of the Rosedale Congregation

The outreach work in southern British Columbia began in the mid-1980s through street meetings in Vancouver. These meetings were held twice a year, with people from the churches in northern B.C. traveling down to Vancouver and spending two days on the street, singing and passing out literature.

Beginning in 1995, our brethren had numerous contacts with home-schooling families from the Fraser River Valley of southern B.C. who were interested in sound literature for their children. They came from many different walks of life, yet they shared the mutual conviction of not sending their children to the public school system. Many raised questions about our more conservative lifestyle and Biblical, consecrated living. We realized keenly that there were no conservative Mennonite congregations in the area to point these seekers to. A few Sunday services were held occasionally

for these families.

In the summer of 2004, we started conducting meetings on a more regular basis, the first being held in Langley and then moving to Abbotsford. In 2006 a family from Chilliwack became acquainted with some of our people and attended a Sunday morning service.

By the summer of 2007, we shifted our focus to the Chilliwack area and held monthly Sunday services at a town hall, along with Bible studies in the home of an interested family

In October of 2007, four brethren from the Danskin, Decker Lake, and Vanderhoof congregations made a trip to the Chilliwack area to explore possibilities for establishing a congregation. The urban area certainly posed some economic challenges with high land and housing prices. Eventually the Northwest District voted to plant a church in Chilliwack, a city of seventy thousand people that lies just north of the Washington state border and is located between the Cascade and Coastal Mountains.

Six families and one ordained couple were asked to relocate. Five families made the move. In August 2008 the first service was held in a small community hall in Chilliwack. School began in September in a brother's garage with one teacher and five students. After four months, the community hall was sold, so we began holding services in a rented conference room in town. This was adequate but not ideal, as there were many events often happening simultaneously in the same building. Another family moved from Decker Lake in September 2009, bringing the number of member families to six.

In the summer of 2010, God was gracious in directing two brethren to an old Anglican church, which was for sale in Rosedale, a small farming-based community near Chilliwack. The purchase was made, and the first service was held on July 4, 2010. In the following weeks renovations began, including a new septic system, two classrooms for the following school term, a new roof, painting, and various other projects. The congregation officially became Rosedale Mennonite Church. Finding a vacant church in this area that is not beyond financial reach is rare; we are grateful to God for directing the purchase of this property and also to the many who extended their physical and financial help to make it possible.

At present eight member families with four other families/couples attend regularly. Thirteen students are enrolled in the school, and eight young Christians in instruction class.

God has been faithful in leading our congregation through many joys as well as sorrows in the past five years. We have had one death, two bap-

tisms, and one deacon ordination,

The Chilliwack and Rosedale areas are heavily populated with Dutch people holding strong Calvinist beliefs. There is much deception and spiritual darkness. We have had the privilege of hosting three Christmas singings, which the community attends and enjoys. Each time, approximately one hundred friends and neighbors attended many asking questions and expressing frustrations in not finding peace with God. May our lives be filled with the spirit and "Christ in you, the hope of glory" that portrays Biblical applications and practices in everyday life. May the church of Jesus Christ ever leave a legacy of truth and faithfulness that will give reason for the planting of churches in many new areas.

Brother John for the Rosedale Congregation



"Glorify God in Your Body" (Part 2)

Humble Adornment

"Are you Mennonites?" a cashier asked one evening. "You must believe that modesty affects even your feet. Is that right?"

"I just wondered," she continued. "The other day I saw a young Mennonite girl all dressed up like you folks, but her painted toes were peeping out from her sandals. That doesn't make sense."

Godly virtues and modest dress adorn God's people with serene beauty. "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Timothy 2:9-10). How can we dress in a manner that glorifies our Maker?

Our human tendency is to glorify ourselves rather than God. "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet" (Isaiah 3:16). The daughters of Zion dressed to show themselves. "The Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments."

The adornment of godliness springs from the heart. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God ... humbleness of mind" (Colossians 3:12). A heart that strives to please God will "put on" virtues that attract His approval. The clothing we wear reveals the attitudes of our heart. The humble Christian's attire shuns vanity, is modest, and denotes godliness.

Christian apparel is not changeable since it follows the unchanging principles of God's Word rather than the "changeable suits of apparel" of the world. "Let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart.... even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3-4). The value of a meek and quiet spirit has not changed and never will change.

Humble adornment takes the focus off self and glorifies God. Is that new watch designed mainly to tell time or mostly to turn heads? Are those shoes simply serviceable, or do they reflect the ego of the wearer? Would not high-heeled shoes and broad-buckled belts fit into the catalog of vanity described in Isaiah 3? Does our hair arrangement reflect pride? Decorating our children with lace, buttons, or other extras that we know better than to wear ourselves displays the vanity of our own heart. These small things express our heart's affection and our sensitivity to God's Spirit.

May we daily seek to adorn our bodies with humility for God's glory.
—*Brother Andrew*



PRAYER POINT

*"The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much"*

*Pray that each of us would [choose] rather to suffer
Affliction with the people of God
Then to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;
Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater
Than the treasures of Egypt.
Hebrews 11:25-26*

*Thank God for His blessings and mercies
Which are new every day!*

