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The present generation of parents among us probably gives little thought to the question, "How will we educate our children?" But forty-five or fifty years ago, this question was laden with uncertainty. Brethren of faith and vision started numerous Christian day schools. And in a relatively short time, the question of education among the Mennonites of conservative regroupings became a settled matter.

Today, the education of our children in our own church-sponsored schools is an accepted norm. Our church Discipline states, "The education of our children in a wholesome Christian atmosphere is a Biblical imperative. We believe the church should assist parents in fulfilling this responsibility by sponsoring Christian day schools with a Bible-based curriculum." God gives children to parents. Just as parents are responsible for the physical, social, and spiritual well-being of their children, they are also responsible for their academic development. The church assists the parents in many ways. In the context of home, church, and school, our children receive much Bible instruction. They have friends from families of "like precious faith" (2 Peter 1:1), and they receive their academic training "in a wholesome Christian atmosphere."

Church-sponsored Christian day schools are institutions of the church. They are provided primarily to meet the needs of our families. When others request to use our schools, their requests must be considered cautiously. The late bishop Isaac Sensenig once stated, "Our schools are not on the leading edge of our evangelistic efforts, but they follow wherever we go." That all patrons share the objectives of the school and willingly conform to the standards is imperative.

Church-sponsored Christian day schools are not merely Mennonite community schools. The school is accountable to the church; it does not function as an institution independent of the church. Consequently, church leaders are actively involved in the election of school board members, in the selection of teachers, and in the consideration of prospective patrons.

The church is responsible to safeguard the school. School personnel must embrace high standards of faithfulness and consistency in their Christian lives. They must be loyal, supportive church members. The curriculum must project more than a Christian influence—it must reflect a Bible base and promote a nonconformed, separated lifestyle. Library books must be

carefully chosen and properly screened. The atmosphere of the school must be evaluated: Is it wholesome? Is it respectful? Is it godly?

The church's involvement in the life of the school does not displace parental responsibility. Parents should not view the transfer of authority over the child during the school day as the school and the church assuming responsibility for the education of their children. Parents should sense personal responsibility to provide the necessary funds and should take a keen interest in their children's schooling. They should pray for their children and their children's teachers. They should support the school's standards and discipline. They should give attention to the completed assignments that come home from school and visit the classrooms of their schoolchildren.

We recognize that there are other methods for educating children. But this approach has served our families well for many years. Having church-sponsored Christian day schools answers the Biblical imperative for the education of children.

In several weeks, school doors will open to begin another term. And we will do what we have been doing for years—we will send our children to our own church-sponsored schools. But let us not take this provision for granted. We should praise God for the freedoms that grant us this privilege without state interference. Let us be faithful in prayer and vigilant in duty so that our schools may continue to be places of "wholesome Christian atmosphere."



Bringing Our Children to Christ

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" Psalm 145:3-4

Our children are gifts to us from God. They have been entrusted to our care and stewardship. God has placed upon us the responsibility to help them understand Him. We need to show all of our children God's interest in them and the claim He has on their lives. They need to be pointed to Jesus Christ as their only hope of salvation. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit will fill the void that God has placed in the heart. It is a place that God desires to fill and that only He can fill.

This responsibility to our children must be foremost among our pursuits of life. It should cause us to ponder and to maintain our own relationship with God and with each other. Are we rooted enough to be able to help our children reach this understanding of God? We will not likely be able to help them beyond our own level of experience in our relationship with God and each other.

As parents, we could become overwhelmed by the trust God has placed upon us. But God has not left us without resources to fulfill our responsibility. In His Word, He has given us instructions, as well as many examples of success and failure. The examples of Jesus and the relationship between God the Father and God the Son are given for us to follow.

God as Creator understands how the human mind thinks and interprets. What we observe and hear makes deep and lasting impressions that form pictures and shape our beliefs. We see this pattern in the Scriptures where God reveals Himself through the story of the children of Israel. We see God's heart of love and longing for relationship. We see His mercy, grace, and longsuffering. We hear His unchanging Word, giving correction and exhortation. And finally, we see His judgment on the unrepentant. Jesus used parables, actual accounts, and illustrations to communicate His teaching.

God designed the Christian home to be a place where children can be in an environment where they receive impressions. Through observations and experiences in home relationships, they will form beliefs about God, themselves, others, and authority. The home has the opportunity to provide a safe place where trust and security are experienced; where forgiveness and restitution are found; and where love, forbearance, grace, mercy, and discipline are a part of daily living. All this is pointing them to Christ.

A child comes into the world empty of understanding or beliefs. He is helpless and dependent and would soon die without someone stronger to help him. When his needs are met in a safe, secure atmosphere while he is in this dependent state, the empty "beliefs" reservoir is beginning to be filled. The carnal human nature resists being helpless and dependent and is bent on being independent to serve self rather than submit to parental direction. As the will is consistently brought into subjection, a foundation is laid for him to come under subjection to Christ later in life. Parental fail-

ures and inconsistencies create confusion in the mind of a child. As a child's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are met consistently, he finds security and forms a bond of love.

The relationship between husband and wife as pictured in Ephesians 5:21-33 is built on love and submission. God's design is that within this relationship, children will receive a picture of the spiritual relationship between Christ and the believer. This requires that parents display a personal connection with God and His Word by their examples in daily living. Father expresses love as he takes his leadership role with respect and honor to his wife as the weaker vessel. By nurture and admonition, he points his children to Christ.

Relating in anger will turn his children away from himself and God. A wife and mother, in submission to her God-given role and in subjection to her husband, will respect and honor her husband and be a supportive help meet to make the home a place of respect, peace, love, security, and trust. Husband and wife will pull together as a team to provide a place for children to bond and to understand the spiritual relationship with Christ. It has been said, "The ills of society lie in passive men [uninvolved fathers] and aggressive women [mothers who step out of their place], which produces angry, unhappy children."

The bond formed by following God's design becomes the foundation that helps to keep a child connected with his parents as he begins to mature and think for himself. Without this strong connection and submission to the authority of parents, a young person becomes independent, charts his own course in life, and finds it hard to submit to the lordship of Christ.

We understand that children come to a place in life where they will personally choose whether or not to submit to Christ. Parents, however, establish the home environment that becomes their children's frame of reference, affecting the choices they make. Parents, let us be sure our lives reflect a consistent commitment to Christ. This commitment will shape our daily lives and home relationships so that we can point to God those whom He has entrusted to us.

Brother Lester



The Grace of Giving

The apostle Paul challenged the Corinthian church to exercise themselves in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8, 9). Their brethren at Jerusalem were experiencing poverty as a result of persecution for their faith in Christ. Paul was calling the Corinthian churches to follow the example of the Macedonian churches to give willingly of their resources to help their suffering brethren at Jerusalem. The teachings of these two chapters are pertinent for our time also. If we will have God's blessing, we must "abound in this grace also."

Just as did the brethren in the early church, we too face needs in the brotherhood. Medical costs related to hospital stays or surgical procedures are quite large at times. Automobile accidents can be costly. Families without a breadwinner need support. Other types of needs are losses caused by fire or storm. The mission efforts of the church present opportunities to give. Congregational expenses are met by gifts from the membership, and the costs of operating our Christian day schools call for our giving.

Before we can truly be involved in the grace of giving, we must first experience God's grace in our lives. Nothing motivates the grace of giving more than an appreciation for God's unspeakable gift of salvation. We also appreciate the way God has been gracious in providing an abundance that more than meets our material needs. These appreciations will always result in a desire to give back to God. We will realize that one way we can give back to God is by sharing with His people.

Another prerequisite for involvement in the grace of giving is to give ourselves to the Lord and to His people. When we do this, the needs of God's kingdom become more important to us than our personal wants or desires. This frees us to give cheerfully and liberally. Jesus is our example in this. He was rich, but He fully gave Himself, becoming poor, so that we might be spiritually rich. Our checkbooks help to tell the story of how completely we have given ourselves to the Lord. Are we spending on ourselves, or are we making giving a priority?

The grace of giving is involved in our spiritual fellowship. Paul spoke of giving to brotherhood needs as "the fellowship of the ministering to the saints" (2 Corinthians 8:4). Giving and receiving tied the Corinthians and the believers at Jerusalem together as a brotherhood. My brother has a need. I have the privilege of sharing with him. I have a need. My brother loves me enough to share with me. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love." How different from depending on an insurance company

to take care of us when we have needs!

The grace of giving makes equality a reality in the brotherhood. This takes place not so much by a transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor, but by an equality of lifestyle. This happens when we all find fulfillment in a cause much bigger than ourselves: brotherhood. Helping with needs in the brotherhood becomes more important to us than padding our lifestyle. So we forgo spending on such things as large patios, extensive landscaping, extravagant furnishings, or higher-class vehicles. We prove the sincerity of our love by willingly doing without some things ourselves. The result is Christian equality.

God is fair in His expectations of us. "It is accepted according to that a man hath" (2 Corinthians 8:12). He expects us to give as He has prospered us. The poor widow gave only two mites, yet Jesus said that she "hath cast in more than they all" (Luke 21:3). But God does expect that we be careful how we spend so that we are able to give. We need to purpose to give. Our dollars will go to the things that are most important to us. What is most important to you?

Who should give? Everyone who has an income should be giving. Some will be able to give more, others less. Youth who have an income should give. For a young person to say that they will give later is easy. But youth have no better time than now to exercise themselves in the grace of giving. How much should we give? Old Testament saints were required to tithe. Under the New Covenant we are called in many areas to a higher standard than in the Old. Should we not be willing to give more than was required under the Old Covenant? How should we give if we have debts? This should be considered before incurring the debt. Will we be able to make the property payment and give the Lord His portion also? We will need God's blessing to be able to repay our debts. Are we worthy of His blessing?

The Lord is aware of our giving. "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). He "loveth a cheerful giver." When we honor Him with the first fruits, "God is able to make all grace abound toward [us]." When we give cheerfully, we experience God's blessing today, and we are laying up treasures in heaven. God still honors those who honor Him. He is able to bless the labor of our hands. He is able to temper the reverses that come our way. He is able to open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing.

Caring enough to give sacrificially and being humble enough to receive the gift result in the brotherhood being drawn closely together and God be-

ing glorified. Our ability to give is limited. God's gift to us is unspeakable—indescribable! May our exercise of the grace of giving be motivated by His gift to us.

"For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.... Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:12,15).

Brother Clair



Church Committee Report Hymnbook Development

Singing is a medium by which we worship God. The three committees involved in this project sense the grave responsibility of the influence that a new hymnbook will have on our worship.

About eight years have passed since active work began on this project under the direction of the Joint Publication Council. The vision is to create a book similar in size and quality to the Church Hymnal. Initially the work centered on thinking through what quality of songs we want and evaluating the thousands of songs contributed for the project, but in the past year or two the focus has shifted to the actual compiling of the hymnbook.

The Hymnbook Committee is selecting from the evaluated songs for each category of the book and is well over halfway done with this initial compilation. They consider the sections as a whole. Does each section include enough familiar songs, along with fresh material? Is the breadth of the particular subject correctly represented? For example, do the songs in "Christ—His Suffering and Death" mostly focus on God's love to us expressed by Christ's death, or do a sufficient number also portray how Christ suffered and what that accomplished for us?

The Hymnbook Committee has given thought to the template and the physical dimensions for the new book. They are also responsible for the quarterly singings held across the congregations of the three groups involved in this project. The original focus of introducing material to our people and testing newer pieces in a group setting has given way to presenting songs from a category or two, giving an opportunity to evaluate whether that section is balanced.

The Hymns Committee continues to evaluate the words of hymns. Are they doctrinally correct and poetically fresh? Is this of hymn quality that we would enjoy singing repeatedly, or is it simply literary poetry? Can we tone down the casual, non-archaic flavor of current authors outside of our church groups enough to utilize some of their fresh pieces? We also choose a Bible verse and place the song in the subject index. Some thought has gone into what kind of subject index would be most helpful to our song leaders.

The Music Committee continues to focus on the tunes of the hymns. They endeavor to sense musical difficulty. Will the average congregation be able to sing this tune? They are alert for the influence of the world's music on our selections. Does the chord progression bring rest? Will these tunes produce appreciation for solid music? They must now decide which tunes to use or which of several variations of harmony will work best without unnecessarily changing familiar tunes.

We look forward to the time when the book will be in your hands. We want to continue the final steps of compilation and production carefully, endeavoring to produce a hymnbook that will influence our worship in a positive way for God's glory.

Brother James for the Hymns Committee



Anticipating Our Lord's Return (Part 2)

LOOK

How would you look for Jesus if you knew that He was coming back today? One old saint was asked what he would do if he knew that Jesus would return that day. He replied, "I think I would hoe in the garden just like I was planning to do." Is hoeing in the garden significant enough to be doing when Jesus returns? How should we look for the return of our Lord? We look for Jesus' return amidst daily life. Looking for Jesus' return involves much more than sitting on a hilltop and scanning the skies. It is more like looking with our lives than just looking with our eyes. It is living with an awareness that Jesus could return at any time. It is living in light of the realities of eternity. It is doing the everyday duties of life in a holy and

godly way. Our lives should not be compartmentalized into sacred things and secular things. Instead, the whole of our life belongs to Jesus, and everything we do is done for Him. Quite likely, Jesus will return while we are doing our ordinary duties. That is why we need to be looking for Jesus and longing for Him as we do those commonplace tasks.

We look for Jesus' return with alertness. Jesus told His disciples, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). What are the things for which we are to be looking? Jesus prophesied of signs in the sky and anxiety among the nations. He said that the terror and the uncertainty is enough to make some men faint and fear. But Jesus tells us that when we see these things begin to come to pass (and they are), then we are to be looking with alertness. Are we discerning the signs of the times? We need to be looking into the Word and studying the Scriptures. We need to be spiritual people who can apply the timeless principles of the Bible to the issues we are facing today. We need self-denial and spiritual discipline to avoid becoming earthbound and acculturated. We need to be like the men of Issachar. When they joined David's kingdom, they were "men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32).

We look for Jesus' return with anticipation. We are looking forward to seeing Jesus face to face and becoming like Him. We are longing for the time when our Lord will be recognized for the King He is. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

How do we look for Jesus' return? Look into the Word of God and be ready. Look at the issues of the day and be discerning. Live for Jesus in the mundane tasks of life and look for Him, even while hoeing the garden. "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

—Brother Robert





PRAYER POINT

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

Pray for the churches in Guatemala.

The work that began in 1972 at Varsovia has now expanded to six congregations. Pray that our Guatemalan brethren and sisters and families may be fruitful in their commitment to the Lord and the church.

Pray for the Christian day schools.

Approximately 2,500 students and 275 teachers will soon enter the doors of our 75 schools. This is the work of the Lord. Pray that the present generation may support the schools with an active vision and burden.

Pray for the Publication Board in giving oversight to the functions of EMP. In addition to the regular church publishing, the need for more school curriculum and Spanish literature is increasing.

Pray that this effort may prosper under the blessing of God.

Thank the Lord for the 4029 Social Security exemption first granted in 1965. This exemption has become the basis for exoneration from other similar government programs. May we appreciate and fully support this God-given privilege.

