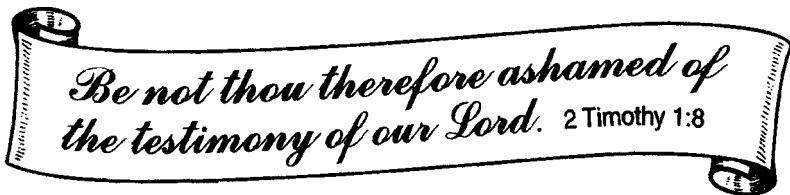


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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As some of our schools in Spanish countries are nearing the end of a school term, our schools in North America are preparing for another term. In a few short weeks, several thousand of our own children will be responding to the ringing of the school bells. When the school bells ring, will each child be ready?

To be prepared for school, children need a lunch box. But more importantly, and often more difficult to provide, children need proper table manners. The little things—chewing with the mouth closed and not talking with food in one's mouth—are parental, not teacher, responsibilities. When children are taught to empty their plates at home, they will usually empty their lunches and eat their food in the proper order (sandwich before cookies). Another part of table manners is to get the food from the lunch box to the mouth without getting excessive amounts on the desk, floor, face, or clothing.

Another very physical part of school preparations is proper hygiene. By the time they are of school age, children should be demonstrating personal interest and responsibility for their own physical upkeep. This is evident when boys and girls have their hair neatly combed and their shoelaces tied, and when boys have their shirttails tucked in. Personal hygiene also involves washing off dirt and offensive odors.

The clothes our children wore last year may now be too worn or too small. The old may need to be mended or altered, or new clothing items purchased. We should be making these decisions in accordance with the principles of modesty and simplicity, rather than bowing to our children's wishes, popular fads, or worldly trends. We are thankful for church directives and school constitutions that unify and direct us in these areas, and we must readily support them.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Until this foundational principle is learned, many other academic concepts will be difficult to master. The fear of the Lord produces obedience, probably the most important lesson that each child must learn long before he enters first grade. What kind of obedience best describes our child? Is it prompt and willing, or grudging, half-hearted, and delayed?

Learning the virtues of diligence and thoroughness prepares children for a profitable school experience. When one command sets the wheels in mo-

tion and those wheels keep turning until the job is complete, the teacher's and the school board's responsibilities are greatly lightened. If home life is scheduled and predictable, children will readily adapt to school schedules. Home life provides boundless opportunities to teach these virtues. If a child has not learned to enjoy work and to labor diligently before going to school, he may never learn these important lessons.

Reverence and respect prepare children to benefit from school as well as to make a contribution to it. We require students to use the titles Brother or Sister when addressing their teachers. We do our children a service by using these titles at home and throughout the summer vacation. Titles are only a part of the equation. The rest of what we say and the attitudes we communicate are just as important. Disrespect in our society is a cancer that has destroyed the core values of truth and right. What attitude do our children have about the President, the policeman, or the preacher? It is likely a reflection of our own. Will their attitude be acceptable at school, to their teacher, and ultimately at the judgment bar before God?

Before going to school, children learn to talk. While their phonics may not be perfect, they should understand that some language is unacceptable. Dishonesty, slang, or swearing may not be a part of our children's vocabulary. Unkind, scornful, and degrading talk violates Bible principles. When parents hold them accountable for what they say, children learn that men will give an account of every idle word on the Day of Judgment.

The summer break from school is nearly ended. We have a natural tendency to postpone things, and often we discover too late the price of procrastination. As the first day nears, we should review whether we have completed and returned all the necessary school forms.

The summer gardening is nearly finished and some of the canning is already completed. Honestly evaluate your child's preparedness and diligently prepare him today, not only for the school bells but also for life and for eternity!

Only one life; 'twill soon be past; Only what's done for Christ will last!

—*Editor*



"Worthy to Escape.....and to Stand"

Our Bridegroom is soon returning! "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

What event is here promised? What is the purpose of this exuberant, glorious descent of the Lord Himself?

The church is Christ's bride. Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus promised that He would one day come to claim her. 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). But our Lord also warned, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36)... and to Stand"

True to the marriage customs of the Jewish people, Christ has already paid the price—the dowry—to redeem His bride. The price was His own blood. He then returned to His Father's house and is now preparing a place for her. Eagerly He awaits the signal from His Father to descend toward earth and take His worthy bride to Himself, to be united with Him forever! What qualities does this worthy bride possess? Strong's defines the phrase accounted worthy as "deemed entirely deserving." What makes her worthy?

For the bride to be deemed entirely worthy of divine union with Christ, she must be washed. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5). "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Christ's bride must be washed to be accounted worthy!

Christ's eager bride is watchful for her Bridegroom's return! "Watch ye therefore, and pray always" (Luke 21:36). "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (I Corinthians 16:13). "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer (1 Peter 4:7). Christ's bride must be watching to be accounted worthy!

A watching bride will be a wakeful bride. She is not asleep. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night.... But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8). "For we are saved by hope" (Romans 8:24). Christ's bride must be wakeful to be accounted worthy!

Luke 21:36 promises an escape to those accounted worthy. The question can be raised: What shall the worthy escape? The question is immediately answered: "All these things that shall come to pass."

This escape does not mean that we will escape opposition from those who are against God and against His people. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

This is, however, an escape from the time when God will pour out His wrath on the earth. The Scriptures describe this as a time of great tribulation and as the day of wrath. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord.... That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Zephaniah 1:14, 15). "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21).

In the Book of Revelation, John was invited to "come up hither" and then was shown things that must be "hereafter." He saw the Lamb pouring out wrath on the earth dwellers. First were the seven seal judgments (Revelation 6:1-8:1), then the seven trumpet judgments (Revelation 8-15), and, finally, the seven vial judgments (Revelation 16).

Christ's faithful, worthy bride (whose sins have been sent to judgment beforehand) is promised deliverance from divine wrath. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

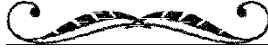
Many purposes will be fulfilled when "the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof" (Isaiah 24:1). The wicked will be punished and judged, but His bride, His "peculiar treasure," will not experience punishment and judgment. Judgment will come because "the earth is also defiled ...; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5).

God made this everlasting covenant with the nation of Israel. They have broken it. The prophet Jeremiah calls this future time of judgment "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). In this time of tribulation, God, in His mercy, will pour out wrath on Israel until they will "look on [Jesus] whom they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10-14:21; see also Romans 11). In contrast, Christ promises this escape to His bride, the faithful church: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try

them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10).

In Revelation 6:17, the recipients of the wrath of the Lamb ask this question: "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" But the bride will be standing! "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

Brother Dwight



The Lamb of God

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). These are the words of John the Baptist as he viewed the promised Messiah. We see many types of the Old Testament sacrificial lamb fulfilled in Christ. Let us consider this Lamb.

Consider His lowly nature. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street" (Isaiah 42:2). As a humble servant, Jesus ministered to the multitudes. As a lamb, Jesus did not open His mouth to defend Himself when He was oppressed (Isaiah 53:7). Natured like a lamb, Jesus has called us to "learn of me" (Matthew 11:29).

The Lamb was yielded. His surrender to His Father motivated Jesus' earthly ministry and death. Jesus could justly say, "I do always those things that please [the Father]" (John 8:29). "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39) was Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. Pondering Jesus' foreknowledge helps us understand more of His surrender. Pondering Jesus' glory with the Father preceding His earthly mission reveals more. But only eternity will reveal the full surrender of Christ and the glory which follows.

This Lamb was pure. In reference to the sacrificial lamb, the law repeatedly required it to be "without blemish." For four days the Passover lamb was evaluated to prove it to be faultless. In like manner the Lamb of God was watched and judged by many in the years of His public ministry. Judas Iscariot gave this testimony: "I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4). Pilate said before the angry crowd, "Behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him" (Luke 23:14). Pilate's wife gave him this urgent message: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man" (Matthew 27:19).

As the centurion viewed Jesus giving His life upon the cross, he confidently stated, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). The dying thief on another cross acknowledged his own worthiness of death, but defended Jesus with these words: "This man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41). But the greatest confirmation was given by God Himself at Jesus' baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 17:5). When He died, God saw and was satisfied (Isaiah 53:11).

The Lamb was also chosen. Many lambs were chosen to fill an important place each year in the Passover feast. Each was chosen by men from among many. But the Lamb of God was chosen by God from among no other equals. This Lamb was chosen before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Not only was Jesus chosen, but He also yielded Himself to be the chosen One. Thus He is qualified to be the Sacrifice of far greater value than the Passover lamb.

When we consider the Lamb, we see a physical body. "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). Jesus appeared to be an ordinary man. But Jesus' body was a miracle of the physical and the heavenly—a mystery that only God understands. He is thus qualified to be our Sin Bearer and the Testator of the eternal covenant.

Jesus is the limitless Son of God. Yet in His incarnation He yielded to the limitations of a physical body for the sole purpose of the redemption of mankind. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" (Hebrews 10:5). In His body, He did that which animal sacrifices could never do!

One sobering fact yet meets us: the Lamb must die. No lamb could do anything to atone for the need of man without dying. This principle is clearly set forth under the Law. Sin requires death. Isaac knew that a lamb was needed if there would be a sacrifice acceptable to God. In the Passover feast, the Israelite families chose a lamb that would dwell with them till it was to be slain. The fact that this lamb must die must have made a deep impression upon young minds as the relationship with the lamb grew.

The Book of Revelation further reveals to us the Lamb of God in eternal glory with God the Father. In Revelation 5, the "Lamb as it had been slain" took the sealed book from Him that sat on the throne. The Lamb shall feed and lead the redeemed. The Lamb shall judge the wicked. Finally "the marriage of the Lamb is come" (Revelation 19:7). In heaven the Lamb will be

the temple and the Light of all. What an inspiration to know that Jesus very clearly displays before all the inhabitants of heaven His continual interest in the redemption of man!

We also see the faithful in heaven redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and following the Lamb. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and they rejoice to be part of His bride. There they will behold His face, and His Name shall be written in their foreheads. Till then may we continue to behold the Lamb of God through the eye of faith until we shall see Him face to face and our redemption is completed in Him. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Brother Jacob



CHURCH COMMITTEE REPORT HANDWRITING FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

The work on Handwriting for Christian Schools began approximately ten years ago when an exploration and development committee was assembled. Based on their work, the Publication Board approved the Curriculum Committee's recommendation to publish a handwriting course. This course would concur with the writing style taught in EMP's Beginning Steps to Reading and Bible Blessing Readers reading curriculum. Further, it would be a tool to promote good handwriting in our schools. Also, the course would be designed to be user-friendly for both the teacher and the student. Bible tone would flavor the course along with illustrations that are consistent with a Biblically conservative lifestyle.

The course includes a teacher's guide accompanied with consumable student pages (for the lower grades). The packets of consumables can be purchased as needed. Wall cards are also available to illustrate the strokes that compose the cursive alphabet. The teacher's guide gives guidance on handwriting evaluation and class scheduling. It also includes detailed directions on how to conduct the class with the possibility of combining some of the grades into one class in a multi-grade classroom.

The effectiveness of this course depends partly upon the fact that cursive

writing is designed to allow free natural movements. Therefore, the series is called the Writing With Rhythm Series. Only three simple movements are used to form the lowercase letters. These movements are combined to make the four combination strokes. The letterforms used in this course closely follow the Peterson method of handwriting. This method has been in use since the early 1900s and has proven to contribute to good handwriting.

This course is designed to be teacher directed. That is, as the teacher presents the lesson, the students are actually working through the assignment. No written work is done outside of class. (Suggested class time is ten to twenty minutes.) One reason for this is the emphasis on rhythm. To the person who is unfamiliar with rhythm as a teaching tool for handwriting, this may feel cumbersome. However, rhythm is key to writing with smoothness, ease, speed, and accuracy. The goal is to have the letters flow from a student's hand with automation such as we use when tying our shoes or shifting a manual transmission.

Presently, Handwriting 1, Handwriting 2, and Handwriting 3 are completed. Handwriting 4 should be published in time for the 2016-2017 school term. Lord willing, grade 5 will be field-tested during the 2016-2017 school term. If the work moves forward smoothly, grades 6-8 may be available in consecutive years. We are grateful to the Lord for His blessing on this work. We also express our gratitude to the writers, artists, editors, reviewers, panel members, and trial-run teachers who have been willing to contribute to this project. Our prayer is that this course will enable our children to use their handwriting effectively and readily to God's glory.

Brother Jason for the Curriculum Committee



Wholesome Marriage Relationships (Part 2)

Communicating Clearly

Successful building requires communication. One poster portrays a bridge built simultaneously from both ends. The builders had reached the middle of the river, only to find that the two halves of the bridge were offset from each other by one bridge width – The caption: Let's get together--

Communicate.

Bridge building, like any other large building project, needs communication to succeed. Rolls of drawings, stacks of specifications, requests for proposals, letters of intent, and signed contracts all exist to ensure that the bridge meets in the middle.

Marriage, too, requires communication if a husband and wife are to meet in the middle. Imagining an offset bridge is amusing, but living in an offset marriage relationship is not. The underlying idea of the poster can also happen in the marriage relationship. Failure to communicate successfully will develop into a relational offset requiring great pain and effort to rectify. If a marriage is to succeed, both partners must ...Communicate with God.

Building a successful marriage, like building a successful bridge, requires someone who envisions the project from both sides and from beginning to end. Since no marriage partner has such a comprehensive perspective, it is important that a couple communicates with the One who can keep them building straight and true. Personal prayer, as well as jointly beseeching the Lord, are necessary communications for a godly marriage to be solidly united. Specific, heartfelt prayers guide a husband and wife together.

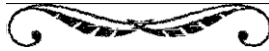
Communicate with each other. To ensure a functional bridge, marriage partners must share facts. But they must dig deeper than the facts, seeking to understand each other's feelings. Dedicated partners express love and gratitude for each other. Healthy, meet-in-the-middle couples persevere when facing disagreements and conquer them calmly. They kindly share tactful suggestions, but patiently allow the gradual power of influence to shape each other. They also wisely realize that their bridge building will not be perfect, and cheerfully continue communicating together in spite of each other's flaws.

Communicate with others. While a marriage focuses on the close relationship of two people, marriage is not an island. The ends of the marriage bridge touch others' lives. A stable couple communicates respect and appreciation for the homes they came from. A successful couple communicates with their children as well. Both partners communicate the love and respect they feel for each other by encouraging their children to show the same. In a marriage that is solidly connected, children know that Father requires his children to honor and respect Mother, and Mother communicates the same respect for Father. A structurally sound marriage communicates fidelity and exclusiveness to outsiders.

Sturdy function and graceful form do not happen without effort—either

in bridges or in marriages. Without successful communication, both projects will fall. Although the theme of the context is not marriage, Hebrews 13:16 is a fitting challenge for each married couple: "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

—*Brother Keith*



PRAYER POINT

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

Pray for the newly ordained and for the planned ordinations. Pray that God would bless the ministry of those who "labour among [us], and are over [us] in the Lord, and admonish [us]."

Pray for our annual business meetings, that God may "set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."

Pray for the presidential election. Pray that God's will be done and that in this land we may continue to "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

Pray for our schools as they begin another year. Pray that the school board members, parents, teachers, and students would work together harmoniously and have another profitable year.

Thank God for the freedoms we enjoy and for the precious privilege of having our own schools.

