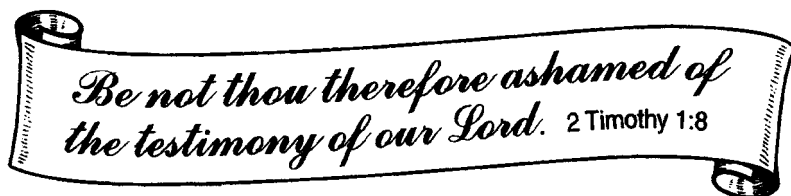


# THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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## Fad Fever Diagnosis

Fads, like fevers, indicate a deep-rooted human disease. Both are contagious, and, although passing, they can leave permanent, lasting damage to one's health. Both indicate that a harmful infection is fighting the body. Fad fever must be suppressed. But even more important, the underlying disease that produces the fever must be identified and treated. Fad fever is symptomatic of the chronic disease of pride. Fads draw attention to self, make one stand out in a crowd, and feed the carnal competition to be popular. Following fads is a foolish attempt to inflate one's ego. Those confined to this sick ward can never rest because what is popular is always changing. And since righteousness is not popular, trends that appeal to pride always tend toward the world. "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15).

Following fads also indicates a poor relationship with God. The security of God's smile is traded for the flighty flattery of peers. One reveals his true character by his choice of role models. "More like Thee, O Saviour, let me be." Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (John 4:34). Good friends appreciate inner grace and virtue rather than the appeal of one's dress or the status of one's vehicle.

The styles one chooses indicate an identity aspiration. The world follows the fads set by their idols. "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led" (1 Corinthians 12:2). One's appearance reveals whom he worships. An appreciation for a godly heritage will be evident in conformity to a spiritual brotherhood. But an individualistic spirit will fly a flag of mutiny by adopting trends that communicate distaste for conformity.

Following fads can also be a form of rebellion. Godly parents guide their youth by rooting out the seedlings of carnality and pride that sprout. But a restless, rebellious spirit chafes under regulations that limit the expression of self. This chronic illness ends in spiritual death. Fad fever is costly—financially as well as spiritually. Fad fans are never content. A new fad is always beckoning. Often the sacred trust of stewardship is abused. Fads and fashions tempt affluent societies. But humble saints find satisfaction in the frugal preservation of durable goods.

The virtue of caring for earthly goods is also good training in caring for enduring spiritual values. The present throw-away culture conditions

one to be careless in conservation. Adopting the latest fad militates against conserving a godly lifestyle. The world's fads have moved people away from formal to casual, decent to indecent, and respectful to crude.

Following fads conditions one to move along with the crowd rather than standing for what is right. "They have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up" (Jeremiah 18:15). Even when the fad is a trend that seems innocent, the devil knows that, if he can begin to rock the ship, he will eventually land it on the rocks. Fads that affect established church forms, such as the Christian woman's veiling, are especially harmful.

Following fads is always wrong. Even when the fad may seem innocent, it expresses a restless spirit that is not finding fulfillment in God. For example, the current fad circulating among plain groups of women wearing maxi-skirts does not seem as evil as wearing miniskirts. But when hemlines go up or down with the fads, the spirit that motivates the change is equally wrong. And short hair may seem better than long hair on brethren, but if it is a current fad, it "is not of the Father, but is of the world."

On the other hand, are all new trends and products a fad? Many new things go through a popularity stage that is wisely avoided. But as items prove functional and practical, they may be utilized. The foundation of a principle-based conservatism may actually be undermined by withstanding any and all change. Telephones, cars, and computers, along with most inventions, have gone through these stages. But many who disregarded caution with new inventions lost their moorings even if the item was eventually accepted.

Since fad fever stems from heart issues, the thermometer reads best when tucked under one's own arm. Grace with prayer should be exercised in diagnosing the flush of fever in others. However, since the heart is deceitful, nursing by others is not resisted.

Fads, like fever, will be a perpetual test. Youth who identify and avoid these temptations set a pattern for life and avoid many sins. But those who toy with pride in its infancy will grind in the prison of sin.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

—BAS

## **The Bruising of Satan**

The bruising of Satan is revealed in the first chapters of the Bible. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). This prophetic reference was made to the Son of Mary, the man Christ Jesus. His death on the cross merely bruised His heel. But Christ's victory over death, hell, and the grave was a deathblow to Satan. Jesus will surely "bruise" the head of that old serpent, the devil.

The apostle Paul refers to the bruising of Satan as an encouragement to the church in her battle against the "wiles of the devil." "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20). God, through the Lord Jesus, does the bruising, but the people of God are significantly involved. Interestingly, this is part of a benediction! It is not intended to be a comprehensive statement, but a picturesque declaration that the church will be victorious! The conjunction and connects this scene of victory to the faithfulness of the church in maintaining an obedient walk of faith. This was being done in spite of false brethren who were causing division by promoting false doctrine.

This word picture that Paul uses is vividly portrayed in Joshua 10:24. In this account Joshua told the captains of the men of war, "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings." The scene was dreadful and yet awe inspiring. For the enemy it was humiliation and sure defeat. But for the victors it was a moment of exaltation and triumph! Just so, the church by "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" will be victorious and exalted, but Satan will be trodden down and destroyed.

David also used this symbol in his psalm of thanksgiving. "Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me" (2 Samuel 22:41). He wrote this psalm after God "had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul" (22:1). David understood that his victories were the work of God and that God alone was worthy of all honor, glory, and praise.

The bruising of Satan will be "shortly." It will not be long in comparison to eternity. Satan's eternal defeat is foretold in Revelation 20. He will be cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, "and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Revelation 20:3). "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison" (Revelation 20:7). But his final doom is certain: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, . . . and shall be tor-

mented day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20:10). The sobering truth is that Satan will be joined by all those whose names are not found "written in the book of life."

In contrast, those under whose feet Satan is bruised will be the occupants of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1). This glorious hope is the impetus for faithfulness to Christ, who gives us the victory over our enemy even now.

The benediction in Romans 16:20 is preceded by another in 15:13, which adds dimension to the victory of the saints. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." This benediction is preceded by a quotation from Isaiah: "There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust." We have every reason to believe that Satan's defeat is sure and that we, through faith in our Savior, will share in that victory (Romans 16:20).

*Brother Joseph*



### *Youth and Brotherhood Bonding*

The period of time between childhood and adulthood called youth should include a growing appreciation for the brotherhood. A child's primary relationships and responsibilities are in family life. As children mature into youth, a spiritual bond with the church, the body of Jesus Christ, should be expressed by growing love and loyalty. This should naturally develop following conversion, when new life in Christ is experienced. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:5).

Unfortunately, not all youth bond with the brotherhood and experience the joy of sharing in the labor of church building. What will cause our youth to lie down in the green pastures of congregational life? What part do parents and congregations have in accomplishing this? What are some practices and influences that compete with this desired process?

A child's earliest influence in relating to the church, and the local congregation in particular, comes from his home. The apostle Paul spoke of Timothy's "unfeigned faith," which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5, 6). Parental appreciation for the church is demonstrated when family life is centered around the church and its activities. Attending regularly, praying for the brotherhood and

ministry, arriving on time for worship services, and participating in assigned work (such as teaching Sunday school or helping to maintain the church property) will demonstrate a love for the church to a growing family. Parents with a proper regard toward church standards do not allow practices and activities in the home that the church forbids or discourages.

Another positive bonding influence occurs when families associate with other homes that share similar convictions. In addition to family visits that include our youth, these benefits may be received by attending churchwide or special meetings. A few in this category are informative fellowship meetings, summer Bible conferences, winter Bible schools, and all-day meetings in other congregations.

These meetings promote a vision of the New Testament church. As a young child, Jesus received similar benefits as He accompanied His parents to the Passover feast at Jerusalem. Returning home from Jerusalem after the Passover and unable to find the boy Jesus among their kinfolk, His parents discovered Him in the temple. Jesus replied to their inquiry about His absence, saying, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). He had bonded with His heavenly Father's interests at an early age.

Bonding to the brotherhood occurs when young people are welcomed and expected to support outreach activities of the local congregation. Cottage meetings, Gospel literature distribution, community visitation, and street meetings are opportunities for youth and adults to labor together. The ministry of exchanging Gospel signs is a good service. When young and old alike support the work together, feelings develop: "This is my church, and my support is necessary and important as a member of the body of Christ." At other times youth and adults working side by side on relief work (such as storm cleanup) or on church or school building projects can be very inspirational and profitable. Opportunities for special fellowship during travel can establish bonds which last for a lifetime.

Another bonding element is accomplished when youth are invited to share in the teaching ministry of the church. Teaching a Sunday school class or a summer Bible school class, conducting a devotional exercise, or sharing a topic at the midweek meeting requires study and preparation. Spiritual exercises of this nature place on youth an obligation that builds spiritual fiber and a sense of accountability and usefulness to

## Christ and the church.

In instances where youth are rarely asked to participate in these ways, a sense of disconnect and an attitude of not being needed may develop. When the lack of involvement is due to an oversight by leaders and not because of disloyalty on the part of the youth, a negative signal is sent that will hinder the bonding process. Youth should, and most do, desire to mature and contribute to congregational life.

Paul encouraged the Ephesian church to "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15, 16). Participation in the spiritual ministry of the church is a part of growing up in all things. This should be the desire of every member, and especially our youth.

When youth fail to bond with the church, the church loses the benefit that is normally received through the vibrancy and vigor of young people. The separation associated with differing age groups becomes more pronounced, and a generation gap develops. What are some of the causes when this happens, and how can they be avoided?

One of the reasons that youth have struggled to feel close to the brotherhood is related to a strong interest in purely social activities. To be together with friends is not wrong. However, when the pressure is stronger for social life and physical activity than for spiritual nurture and growth, an accompanying estrangement from the brotherhood will be evident. The interest in play should diminish rapidly as children leave formal schooling. History teaches us that when the church endeavors to keep her youth through entertaining social activities, she will eventually lose them to the world with its forms of entertainment. Spirituality and play run counter to each other.

In some settings special youth meetings are planned for the youth. These meetings may have some practical benefits by addressing current issues and providing inspiration on the youth level. A negative aspect of these meetings is that they fail to share the important teachings with all age groups. Older brethren and sisters are generally absent because the program is for the young people. Rather than joining the youth in worship and instruction with those who are older, a distinction according to age is confirmed. This may also occur where special singings are fre-

quently planned for youth only.

Special Bible study groups are at times arranged for youth. These Bible study groups may be arranged by youth and directed by older youth or young married brethren. On the surface this may seem innocent and even beneficial. In these study groups, an atmosphere is generated where there is freedom to share struggles, ideals, or victories. The element lacking, however, is the counsel that should be given by ordained brethren or those seasoned by age and experience. Rather than promoting a bond with the brotherhood, the involved individuals bond with their peers. Bible study is never wrong. However, when the occasion is reserved for an exclusive group, the exclusion may produce a net loss.

Brotherhood bonding is the product of being members one of another as children of our heavenly Father. When a common interest in building the church together exists, age differences will lose their significance. For we have "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:6).

*Brother Luke*



### **Church Committee Report – Liberty Ridge Farm**

Liberty Ridge Farm is situated on a ridge near the site of the former Liberty School House in the hills of Juniata County, Pennsylvania. This eighty nine-acre farm has two residential houses, two chicken houses, a shop, and several outbuildings. The land is approximately two-thirds woodland and one-third cropland. Liberty Ridge Farm provides a farm family environment for boys ages thirteen to nineteen who need a more structured environment than can be provided in a typical family setting. But perhaps we should first answer a few questions: Why a boys' farm? And why Liberty Ridge?

In early 2009, the EPMC Mission Board appointed a Family Support Committee to serve as a contact point and a resource for families who need help with a child having behavioral needs or with emotionally unstable individuals. The work of the committee includes securing host homes when needed, providing guidance to host homes, and evaluating available institutions when they are needed. This committee is a resource committee. It does not take the place of the local ministry, but serves at the request of and in conjunction with the local ministry.

In working with the needs that have risen, the committee concluded that "the most pressing need is a facility for troubled boys and young



men." Other behavioral needs can more often be met in a family setting, and if a facility is needed, safe facilities are more readily available. But for troubled boys, many institutions are not spiritually safe. And those that are safe often have a waiting list, making them unavailable to take in new boys on short notice.

In October 2009, the committee made the following recommendation: "that the MMM Board work toward providing a facility for troubled boys and young men." The committee outlined the following objectives: To provide a facility:

- With a godly environment and conservative standards that build spiritual fiber as well as emotional stability.
- That fosters self-discipline, personal accountability, respect for authority, and structure.
- That develops personal management skills, interpersonal-relationship skills, and appreciation for others.
- That encourages openness, honesty, and truthfulness.
- That discourages individualism, self-exaltation, and pride.
- With a "farm" approach, instead of a "camp" approach.

With MMM Board approval, the committee began its search for a suitable farm. After looking at numerous possibilities, the committee learned of a farm offered for sale in August 2010.

The farm was purchased on December 28, 2010. This purchase was made possible through generous donations and interest-free loans from interested individuals. After purchasing the farm, the attached garage was renovated for house-parents' living quarters. The chicken house ventilation was upgraded. An outdoor wood furnace was installed, and a new driveway put in. Countless hours and numerous items were donated to prepare the farm for our use.

Liberty Ridge Farm opened in November 2011.

Residents interact with mentors throughout their day, which consists of class time and work activities. Daily Bible classes are taught by the staff. Currently, Brother Eugene comes in one day each week to teach the book Free Indeed. Scripture and poem memorization are part of the daily routine.

Daily farm activities include caring for the chickens and raising other farm animals. The residents help with yard work, garden work, and food processing. Other work projects include building fences, making fiberglass farm gates, and cutting firewood to sell. In the past several months,

the boys painted the roofs of the chicken houses and built a wood shed. Presently (November 2012), the farm "family" is usually a family of six: house-parents, two residents, and two mentors. Given the uniqueness of the farm "family," we request that visitors come by appointment only.

We express sincere appreciation to all who have contributed and who are contributing to this important work. Contributions, whether in the form of time, finances, or food, represent an eternal investment. Continue to pray for the work of Liberty Ridge Farm. Pray for the daily needs of the residents and staff. Pray for the continuing need for personnel. Like our Master, each of us "must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).  
*Brother Scott - For the Liberty Ridge Farm Committee*



## **Keys to a Clear Conscience (Part 1)**

### **Obeying Civil Laws**

As citizens of an earthly country, we are subject to its laws. God has set up governments to maintain law and order in society. "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake" (Romans 13:5). "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1). Can we claim a clear conscience in the following civil laws?

Traffic laws test our conscientiousness. Our first thought may be speed limits and stop signs, but do we try to avoid inspection requirements and operate unsafe vehicles? Commercial driver's license requirements and weight restrictions contribute to safe roadways.

Local ordinances, such as zoning laws and municipal requirements, at times test our conscientiousness. Building codes may seem to add unnecessary expenses to construction. Our schools may face inspection or government mandates. We should carefully obey the laws we conscientiously can so that, if and when we cannot, our testimony will be clear.

Governments have the authority to tax their citizens. We have income taxes, property taxes, school taxes, sales taxes, fuel taxes, and estate taxes. Are we honest in our reporting, or do we engage in questionable practices to avoid paying tax?

Seat belt and car seat requirements are an issue we face. Restrictions on children operating or riding dangerous equipment could test us. These

regulations were designed to protect us and our children even though they may be rather extreme at times.

We should always respond respectfully. Civil authorities are to be respected because of their position. "Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17). Even when unjust demands are made, we dare not speak disrespectfully. Proper titles should be used to refer to those in authority. Praying about a situation and for authorities will help us have right attitudes. Our response will have a lasting influence on our children's lives.

We need to obey unless doing so violates God's higher law. When civil laws conflict with God's Word, we respond as the apostles: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Some laws provide an exemption due to religious beliefs. We should utilize the exemption when needed to keep a clear conscience. In some instances, avoiding government aid frees us from government requirements.

Consistency is imperative. We dare not obey or disobey laws due to convenience or our preferences. To obey sometimes and disregard at other times does not leave a clear witness. We need the help of our brethren to discern wisely when the law is not clear. We must strive to obey the spirit of the law.

As governments become more socialistic and laws increase, we face increased pressure to not respond properly. May God grant us wisdom to have "a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16).

*Brother David*

### **PRAYER POINT**

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

**Pray** that God would help us to live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth and "desire a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Hebrews 11:16).

**Pray** that we might bring forth much fruit as branches of the True Vine and as His disciples (John 15:5-8).

**Pray** for the families that have been bereaved of loved ones, that they might be comforted through the God of all comfort.

**Pray** for the victims of Hurricane Sandy and the Guatemalan earthquake.

**Pray** that God's love would shine in the relief work.