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Most people value new things. New things hold an appeal, perhaps even a fascination. New things—a new year, a new car—seem to hold a promise of something better. New things inspire fresh aspirations and resolutions. Conversely, that which is "used" carries a negative connotation to many people. A business that was a "Used Car Lot" a decade or two ago now sells "Pre-owned Vehicles," inviting customers to purchase a car "new to you!"

But new things do not remain new. The used car dealer correctly advertises, "Everyone drives a used car." By reason of use, new things soon lose appeal and value and are considered old.

However, not everyone is excited about the new. Some folks are sentimental and nostalgic about old things. Their interest is antiques. Their emphasis is on the "good old days," even to the point of placing unrealistic value on old things.

The interest we have in temporal things and the value we place upon them must be determined by Scriptural principles. Those who have learned Christian contentment do not rush from one new thing to the next. Those who are governed by Gospel simplicity do not clutter their lives with things—new or old.

Because the child of God is seeking first the heavenly kingdom, he views earthly things from a spiritual perspective. But his focus, his primary pursuit, is spiritual treasures. He values the things that are truly valuable. Consequently, when our fulfillment in life is found in our relationship with God, we will delight in the new things that God gives us. "Every morning mercies new fall as fresh as morning dew." God gives new guidance for each new day; He gives new strength for each new duty, new grace for each new trial, and victory for each temptation. All of these new things are available to each of us—if we will avail ourselves of them.

God wants us to enjoy and partake of "things new and old" (Matthew 13:52) from His spiritual treasury. God's Word is exhaustless. Those who have spent a lifetime delving into this treasury have not yet probed all its depths or depleted its resources. The old foundations are not, as yet, fully seen; new things are yet to be mined.

In our times of personal worship, we should be digging deep into God's treasury. When we gather for collective worship, those who teach and preach have been "instructed unto the kingdom of heaven." They have

spent time probing God's treasury; their words bring to us things new and old. While we partake of the Word and it permeates our being, we become more deeply rooted in the truths and doctrines we already believe. We also receive new thoughts, further insights, and fresh inspiration for this new day and for the days ahead.

Things which might be considered old are ever new and always valuable to those who know and love the Lord. The old story of salvation and the old hymns of Zion always hold fresh inspiration. The old patterns of church life, the old methods of child training, and the well-worn paths of Scriptural obedience never become old. They are applications of timeless Scriptural principles which are ever pertinent.

As we receive the treasures from God's Word, its truths become implanted and engrafted within. But it cannot remain idle, it produces fruit—fruits new and old—for God! "At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved" (Song of Solomon 7:13). We present these fruits to God at the gates of each new day. We sing anew the praises of old. We tread anew the old path of obedience. We show new kindnesses to those around us. We utilize the new opportunities for service. We bring these fruits to God, rendering that which He alone is worthy of, in response to the things—new and old—received from His bountiful hand.

Daily we receive valuable riches—things, new and old, from God's treasury; daily we render fruits of righteousness unto Him.

—JSM



Rest in the Old Paths

In Jeremiah's day, Judah and Jerusalem had departed from God and His ways. Judgment and doom awaited them. But God offered a remedy. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16).

Today God calls us to evaluate our ways. God does not change, neither do His requirements for men change. "I am the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). Practices that have proven a blessing to God's people in the past continue to be a blessing yet today.

Those who are finding rest and fulfillment in their Christian lives will not be seeking new ways and innovations. We must understand the Scriptural principles behind the time-proven practices, or the practices will become mere form and their value will be lost. Bible principles coupled with historic precedent provide a solid platform for a productive and stable Christian life. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines" (Hebrews 13:9). Those who become dissatisfied and challenge traditional patterns and practices often open themselves to deception and apostasy.

A Distinctive Lifestyle

Throughout time, God's people have been called to a distinctive lifestyle. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Exodus 19:5). God's blessings to Israel were conditional. They depended on obedience to His laws and separation from the abominations of the nations around them.

This principle is also taught in the New Testament. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed" (Romans 12:2). "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17). As the world moves further from God and Christian principles, we should expect that the difference between God's people and the world will become greater and more obvious. God's children find true satisfaction in receiving His approval individually and collectively even though the reproach from the world increases. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4:14).

A Day of Rest

The principle of one day of rest each week has been established since the Creation. In honor of Christ's resurrection and the Biblical principle of dedicating the first fruits to God, Christians observe Sunday as the day set aside for worship and rest from daily labor (Revelation 1:10). Under the Old Covenant, the desecration of the Sabbath by unnecessary work was punishable by death (Exodus 31:14; Numbers 15:35).

While we are not bound by Old Testament Sabbath laws, are we indeed keeping the Lord's day for the Lord? Being willing to forego those opportunities that would require unnecessary business on the Lord's Day will bring His blessing in other ways. "[Those] that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30). Is traveling for business-related activities much different from doing business on Sunday? When traveling for church functions on Sunday, food should be packed and taken along so that buying food is not a temptation. A dona-

tion of gasoline to a traveling speaker will prove a blessing to both the giver and the receiver. "Blessed is the man ... that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it" (Isaiah 56:2).

Respect for Authority

We find rest and security as we submit to those in authority over us. God has vested the church with authority to establish guidelines based on Scriptural principles. He has given leaders to the church to teach and administer these principles. To those whom He calls, God always gives authority to carry out His calling. This includes requiring accountability and exercising discipline. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17). Those who willingly submit bring joy to themselves and to their leaders.

Biblical Family Values

God's plan for the Christian home not only provides a safe spiritual haven in which to raise children, but also gives parents a daily opportunity to teach basic skills that prepare children for a productive physical life. Children should learn at a young age that work comes before play. Fathers who work away from home must provide a way to teach children the blessing and satisfaction of hard work and a job well done. The production and service occupations have served God's people well and can still provide an atmosphere that is spiritually safe. The principles of contentment and cross bearing must govern all areas of life, including our occupational pursuits.

Raising a garden helps the family to enjoy the rewards of toil as the fruits of the earth provide food throughout the year. While today's affluence may provide the means for many to buy their food or eat in restaurants, Christian parents must look beyond convenience to the spiritual safety of their families. "Eating out" exposes us to pressures that we avoid by eating at home. Growing our own food helps to underscore the Scriptural teaching "that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Besides providing food, Christian parents must also clothe their families. While secondhand clothing can be readily bought, much of it compromises our stand on nonconformity. Although it requires more discipline for some than others, sewing appropriate clothing is part of a Christian mother's responsibility and should be taught to daughters as a basic homemaking skill. "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff" (Proverbs 31:19). "[Samuel's] mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year" (1 Samuel 2:19).

Modern psychologists promote the idea that a child is basically good. They suggest that a child will grow up to be a good person if he is given a right environment and allowed to express himself. But "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child" (Proverbs 22:15). Consequently, correction and chastisement are necessary. "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul" (Proverbs 29:17). While correction and discipline bring temporary unrest, in the end a very restful atmosphere prevails and the child is prepared to submit to God and to other God-ordained authority.

In their endeavor to instill respect for authority in their children, wise parents begin early by requiring the young child to surrender his will to the parents' will. This continues as parents maintain a strong sense of accountability. The parents' example in relating to authority over them will either build or undermine this concept in their children.

As we follow the time-proven Bible principles that have blessed past generations, may God preserve our generation from deception and help us to leave a faithful example to those who follow us. "Thus saith the Lord GOD ... ; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15).

Brother Nathanael



Nonresistance in Everyday Life

If you received word today that all persons between the ages of eighteen and forty-five must report for military duty, to what Bible passage would you turn to prepare your response? Your response would probably include Christ's command, "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil" (Matthew 5:39). As Christians in North America, we have not faced military conscription for over forty years.

Nonresistance, however, is not a garb to be stored in a closet and worn only in times of war. It is a way of life for the followers of Jesus Christ. What are some of the everyday tests that challenge our nonresistant stand? Perhaps nonresistance is tested most often in our speech. Jesus said, "Who-soever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). Many of us have never been literally slapped across the face.

But we may have faced verbal accusations that sting harder and last longer than a physical slap. When tested in this way, our natural response is to don our defenses, to raise the shield, and to flash our verbal sword. How can we instead turn the other cheek to someone who has accused us falsely?

Jesus is our perfect example in relating to false accusations. When He was on trial before Pontius Pilate, the chief priests accused Him of many things. How did Jesus answer? He "answered nothing" (Mark 15:3, 5). Many times the proper response to a false accusation is to answer nothing. We need the help of God to hold our tongues in such a situation. The carnal man has counter accusations and words of self-defense ready at a moment's notice. In contrast the child of God displays nonresistance by calmly listening to false accusations.

At times it is proper to respond to threats or accusations. 'A soft answer turneth away wrath' (Proverbs 15:1). A simple "I am sorry" (even if it may seem that we have nothing to apologize about) is returning good for evil. These accusations might come from neighbors, family members, or even church brethren. A neighbor might be upset about the normal odors associated with agriculture. We might be tempted to remind him that he could have stayed in the city if he does not like the smell of the country. But the true Christian will reply with a soft answer.

The false accusations that hurt most are those that come from family members or church brethren. A minister, parent, or teacher might be accused of relating partially, picking on one person and favoring another. A simple explanation may be in order. But to go to great lengths defending actions or decisions is contrary to the doctrine of nonresistance.

Demonstrating nonresistance in our speech is also tested when discussing politics. We may meet neighbors or business acquaintances who make it clear what they think should be happening in Congress or in the Oval Office. But the Christian's speech is tempered by Jesus' words, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Our speech should indicate our citizenship in the heavenly country. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

We would question the position of an earthly ambassador whose speech centered on the politics of the country he was visiting. The heavenly ambassador is also a stranger here; he must represent his home country. As ambassadors, we do not vote. But neither should we sound as though we are opinionated, nonvoting members of any political party.

As ambassadors, how freely should we speak of the United States as our country? A Christian should not be discussing the best method of dealing with a terroristic threat, such as ISIS. We would certainly not go out with guns to stamp out terrorism. Is our speech consistent?

We also need to avoid using the law to protect our rights. We would not go to court to evict renters delinquent in their payments. Neither is it consistent to turn an account over to a bill collection agency. If our names are automatically included as defendants in a class-action lawsuit, we should take the appropriate steps to have them removed. We may need to read the fine print to determine whether we are being invited to "opt in" or whether we have been already included as defendants and need to take steps to "opt out."

As nonresistant Christians, we avoid going to war, because human life is sacred. Do our driving habits also indicate a sacred view of life?

We should carefully obey speed limits, which are designed, at least in part, to prevent traffic-related deaths. Some situations call for added caution. Because of the increased possibility of a child running into the street or a car pulling out suddenly, speed limits drop as we approach towns. Work zones are also dangerous places that require slower speeds.

On the road, we need to crucify the me-first and get-out-of-my-way attitude. When we are waiting to pull out onto the road, we need to be sure to give enough room for vehicles (especially trucks) coming toward us. How freely should nonresistant Christians use their horns to urge other motorists to move out of the way?

The appearance of our properties should also portray a nonresistant image. Huge, vicious-looking watchdogs hardly befit the properties of defenseless Christians. To have a dog that alerts us to visitors is different from keeping a dog that would protect us from thieves. If "No Trespassing" signs are posted, they should not include threats of force.

We have considered some things that we should not do. But God calls us not only to accept mistreatment passively but also to render gracious assistance to those who have wronged us. We are to love, to bless, to do good to, and to pray for them. The neighbor who has been upset with us should receive the same friendly wave as all others. If a church brother has mistreated us, it is not enough to grit our teeth to avoid a counter accusation. We do good in return by praying for our brother. Jesus set a perfect example while hanging on the cross. "Father, forgive them."

Can unregenerate man practice nonresistance? Individuals may learn to temper their responses for their own profit. However, to truly live a nonre-

sistant life, we need a renewed mind and the power of God's Holy Spirit within. Nonresistance does and must touch every area of life. Let us each be faithful to God and follow the example of Jesus as we respond to the daily tests that confront us.

Brother Marlin



Church Committee Report *Living Waters*

"A sower went forth to sow." This is an apt illustration of the nature of the print aspect of our outreach work. Our efforts to plant the Word of truth through the printed page are unheralded, usually remain anonymous, and often produce no obvious results. We invest much time and many resources in this work. We like to see returns on our investments. Do we have assurance this investment is a good one? The Bible answer is "My word ... shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

We are thankful for the blessing of the Lord on the *Living Waters*. The first printing came off the press nearly twenty years ago. As we look back over the years, we are indeed humbly grateful for the way the Lord has prospered this work. He has provided brethren with inspiration to write the four articles each issue contains. He has guided the thoughts of the editor while he prepared the articles for publication. He has overseen the work of the reviewers as they inspect each article for doctrinal accuracy, readability, and grammar.

Presently, one hundred thousand copies are printed every month. Two thirds of these are mailed to congregations to distribute throughout their communities. Most of you have a hand in this distribution. God will reward you for your labors. Many people look forward to their next issue of *Living Waters*. A pastor from a church in one of our communities expressed appreciation for this paper. He uses it as a springboard for his Sunday morning sermons. Numerous other expressions of appreciation have come our way.

Each month also, the Literature Evangelism Committee mails thirty-seven thousand copies to prison chaplains across the nation. This is the fastest growing part of this work. God is using this instrument as a means of getting His message of hope to the outcasts of society.

As we look into the future, we believe God will continue to direct this

work. Our desire is to maintain the original vision of preaching the Gospel, holding out hope to the lost world. We constantly seek God's guidance to present the truth appealingly, yet in purity and with dignity. To accomplish this, we need writers. Is God asking you to invest your talent in His work? You will receive more than you give. Keep praying. Keep planting. Keep writing. God will give the increase.

Brother John for the Living Waters Committee



A God-Honoring Courtship (Part 1) Evaluating the Practice

Five years had passed since John's family joined this conservative Mennonite congregation. His yen for a companion and a home of his own intensified as he passed his twentieth birthday. His quest to find a Biblical pattern for every area of life left him a bit bewildered on the subject of courtship. Is traditional Mennonite courtship just a variation of frivolous American dating, or is it something different? Are parents involved as the Scriptural record suggests they should be?

John is right. The Bible does not give a specific pattern for courtship. But many principles can be gleaned as we comb the Scriptures. As in other areas of life, the people of God must work out the practical issues of Christian living.

Our practice includes parental involvement. Your parents will not select your companion by arranging a wedding. Instead, they have made many decisions that influence your courtship prospects. When they chose a church home, they made an important step in choosing your companion. Family friendship and social habits further direct your thinking. Concerned parents guide the social interests of their children by the amount of interchange their family has with other families.

Father and Mother stay involved in your choices of friends, clothing, and car because these things have a bearing on your courtship prospects. In all these choices and more, godly parents are still involved in selecting life companions for their children.

Parents guide the courtship process by giving direction from the very beginning. When there is mutual respect and confidence between parents and children, youth understand that they would never begin courting without the counsel and consent of their parents. This gives Father and Mother the

opportunity to learn more about the person their child is considering. When Father carefully evaluates the prospective partner, he is following the example left by Abraham. Even though courtship gives the couple an entity of their own and a measure of independence, parents must continue to guide and protect the integrity of the relationship.

A courtship is begun with the intent of marriage. While the consent to court is not a commitment to marry, the prospect of marriage should be seriously considered. One should never court a person whom he or she admittedly has no interest in marrying. Dating for mere social benefit and pairing non-courting couples for social functions cheapens the value of courtship.

Spiritual compatibility is the primary criterion. One clear Biblical directive is "only in the Lord." When we consider the spiritual implications of marriage, we understand that partners must be selected with great care. Prospective partners should be spiritual individuals in good standing with a church within our normal fellowship lines.

Our practice allows couples to choose. We expect our young men to take initiative in selecting a courtship companion. Parents, in turn, influence and honor their preferences. Like Rebekah, young women have the privilege to answer.

As these Biblical principles have been honored, our practice of Christian courtship has proven to be a blessing.

Brother Jesse



Pray for the churchwide boards and committees as the weight of responsibility shifts to a younger generation. Transition is inevitable. Faithfulness is imperative. Pray that "the LORD [would] delight in us" and bless us.

Pray for the new work in Togo, Africa, sponsored by the Mennonite Messianic Mission. Additional personnel and finances will be needed to support this effort. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

Pray for the churches of the Northwest District. The mission work that began over forty years ago at Topley Landing, B.C., has grown to seven established congregations. Pray for godly wisdom in relating to the continuing interest among the Russian Mennonites.

Thank the Lord for the gift of the New Year. "Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be, on earth, or else in heaven another year for Thee."