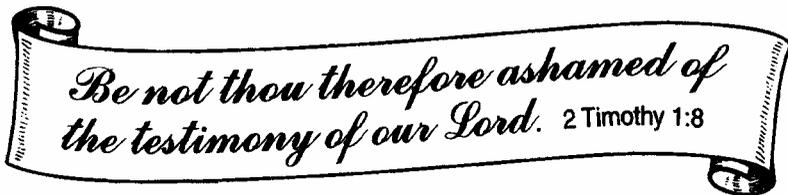


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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Editorial.

"Your Daughters Shall Prophesy"

Our daughters as well as our sons have a calling to speak to others' "edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Corinthians 14:3). Although men are charged with preaching and teaching the Word in public assemblies, the Scriptures give clear direction as to when and how our sisters are to teach the Word. Women are to have their heads veiled, especially when they pray and prophesy in the presence of God and man (1 Corinthians 11). Furthermore, when the Word is taught in a public assembly, women are to "keep silence in the churches," rather than publicly questioning the exposition of the brethren. These Scriptures have been basically ignored in many Christian churches, and this has greatly contributed to apostasy.

We are grateful for the stand that our fathers took to revive conviction in this area. In our settings there has been a gradual shift to less and less participation of sisters in various aspects of worship. However, in our effort to discourage unscriptural participation by our sisters, are we failing to encourage them in the areas that they are called to contribute?

Our daughters prophesy:

By lifting their voice in song. This is a wonderful outlet of personal inspiration and praise for our sisters. A mother's singing brightens the gloomy days, lightens the tedious care, quiets the restless child, rivets Scriptural truth, cultivates the musical ability of the rising generation, and pleads with the conscience of the erring child. Our sisters' vibrant singing greatly enhances our collective worship.

Our daughters prophesy:

By active participation in public worship. The command that "women keep silence in the churches" can be taken out of context to our sisters' spiritual detriment. Although brethren lead in worship, our sisters can contribute in various expressions of prayer and praise. Sisters should take the challenge of participating in spiritual exercises such as Bible memorization when invited. Diligent and active attention when the Word is preached is a small message to a mother's children or to her distracted neighbors. Sisters will enjoy completing the Sunday school lesson and will certainly have questions to "ask their husbands at home."

Our daughters prophesy:

By the nurture of children. It is essential that our mothers have a close relationship with God that will feed their souls so they can spiritually feed their children. The hand that rocks the cradle guides the church. A fear of

God is imparted as mothers employ Scripture to supply the answers and the inspiration for the needs of the day. The home is a child's most important Bible school. At the rare times when father cannot be present for family worship, a mother can ably lead the children in praise and worship. Teaching school, Sunday school, or Bible school is an opportunity to use her natural charisma and gift with children to transport the children into awe and reverence for God. The simple Bible stories have power to guide and form their character.

Our daughters prophesy:

By prayer. A mother's prayers communicate to her children the depth of her relationship and commitment to her Father. Children pattern their prayers after their parents' example. A father should include his wife and daughters in the prayer circle of family worship or of asking grace at meals. Our sisters can enjoy participation in collective prayer when so directed. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren (Acts 1:14).

Our daughters prophesy:

By personally testifying for Christ. Every saved saint has a burden to witness for Christ. We need to convey to the world that, although we are separate, we are not reclusive. A friendly disposition that invites interaction should be developed. A smile and friendly greeting will show an interest in others that will open the door to conversation that can be turned to God. A peaceful, well-ordered family has given many the occasion to witness. We should not accept compliments to ourselves that rightly belong to God.

Our daughters prophesy:

By expressing their inspiration in Christian writing. We profit from poets such as Fannie Crosby. We encourage the gift of writing by utilizing these gifts in our publications. They can also "lift up the hands which hang down" by writing letters of encouragement.

A fountain that flows must be fed. Christian service requires and motivates Bible study. A spiritual interest will result in edifying conversation rather than the curse of being "tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13). God will richly bless our sisters as they faithfully serve where they are called.



Mission Perspective and Policy (Part 1)

On November 1, 2006, the Mennonite Messianic Mission Board approved a policy statement that represents its attempt to evaluate and clarify a Biblical approach to missions. The statement had four points: (1) The Premise from the Scriptures, (2) The Purpose of the Board, (3) The Practice of Missions, and (4) Our Platform. The italicized portions of this article are the complete text of this policy statement. In this article, we will state the points and comment on them.

The Premise from the Scriptures. Jesus, the Head of the church, mandates that the collective church should actively pursue the conversion of all men (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). The Gospel is "the pound" (Luke 19) committed to our trust in the temporary absence of our Lord.

Upon His return, what will we have done with the pound?

The Book of Acts gives us a basic pattern for church-sponsored missions. This pattern includes a sending church, commissioned workers, delegation visits, Conferring fellowship, informative meetings, and administrative directives (Acts 1:8,13:1-4; 14:26-28; 15:2,36,16:4). The Book of Acts is more than an informative history of the early church. The approach of the apostles to fulfilling the command of Jesus to take the Gospel to the world is a pattern for church life today. The Lord was at work, sovereignly directing, scattering, and enabling them in the work. But He did not do it for them. The Gospel was commissioned to men.

The Epistles reveal that converts are to become disciples through leaching, both before and after their admission into church membership. The Epistles have much to say to specific groups in the early church, regarding what is holy living and how they are to respond to worldly pressures facing them (Ephesians 4 - 6; 1 Peter 2 - 4). The Pastoral Epistles instruct leaders on what to teach in order to lead believers on to maturity (Titus 2).

The Epistles further plainly show that these disciples need continued nurture and organization to become the burden bearers of these new churches. The goal of every new congregation was that they would be another witness point (Acts 16:5). The Book of Timothy, written by Paul to Timothy while Timothy was at Ephesus, contains very specific directives for church life, including public worship, because God wants all men to be saved (1Timothy 2:4).

The Scriptures record that these new churches became active in outreach and expansion. For example, with the establishment of a church in Corinth, it then became a center for reaching a wide area in Asia (Acts 19:10).

The basic concept of the New Testament is that all churches are missions and all missions are churches. In mission work, congregations are established. They function as congregations, and from them, efforts are made to touch souls for the Gospel.

Having looked at the Scriptural pattern, we will now look at The Purpose of the Board in directing outreach. One purpose of a mission board is to spearhead the collective effort to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially in foreign lands. A board is a valuable organizational tool when a project can better be done by the group rather than the individual. For the group to share there must be some organization. This is part of the work of a board. As representatives of the collective body, they are elected by the body and accountable to it. A foreign work normally requires the involvement of more than a congregation. Because of this, a mission board assumes responsibility for foreign mission efforts.

A board is also responsible to safeguard both the church at home and abroad from the negative influences that past mission work has brought to bear upon the sending church. Some would say in response to this that we operate from fear. But we are responsible to know and avoid the mistakes that have brought ruin to others (Daniel 5:22). Avoiding these pitfalls requires a group effort. Mennonite missions have a story to tell from which we must learn. We may not shrink from obedience to Christ's command to "go." But in going, we need a planned approach that utilizes the help of each other. Again, this is another reason foreign efforts come under Mission Board direction.

A mission board is responsible to protect our workers and their families from spiritual failure in the face of threats peculiar to their field of service, lest we experience mission work in reverse. To lose our own souls or the souls of our families while we are trying to help others is tragic. Each soul is of equal value. To lose our own and gain another is not a gain. When workers are sent into situations where they face unaccustomed threats in cultures they may not understand, a broader perspective is needed that a board can help supply.

A board is also responsible to staff the work adequately with Spirit-filled Christians who espouse our Mennonite heritage and church life. We believe that the church life with which we are blessed is part of God's provision to help His people survive the pressures of the perilous end times. The workers that are sent must understand this. It is the Mission Board that is responsible to make sure that the sent workers do understand.

A board is also responsible to supply needed resources in material that

churches in other lands may not be able to provide. Someone must oversee the distribution of the money that is given to the church for mission work. Money given for missions is a way of turning "mammon" into heavenly treasures and to make the giver a part of those that "turn many to righteousness" (Daniel 12:3).

A board is also responsible to stimulate the church to have the vision for new fields and expansion of existing work and to keep the constituency informed of the activity of the overall work. We are not doing all that we could. Jesus called us to behold the "fields white ... to harvest" and called us to pray for laborers (John 4:35; Matthew 9:37, 38). The early church had informative meetings to keep alive the burden of the work (Acts 14:27). Someone must plan these meetings. Board-directed reporting to the constituency helps to avoid the sensationalism that often accompanies news direct from the field.

The work of a board is also to "lengthen [our] cords, and strengthen [our] stakes" simultaneously by careful review of any adaptation or additional applications that a given culture might seem to warrant. Adaptations are sometimes needed, but these adaptations should be decided by more than workers on a given field of labor. Again, a board overseeing a work brings the perspective of the sending church to bear on a given field. Adaptations to a given culture are apt to be fueled by the emotion of workers. The Board helps to keep the larger picture in focus.

Brother Glenn.



THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

According to Nave's Topical Bible, the security of the believer is "a theological expression used with reference to the safekeeping of believers it is distinguished from assurance." These two Bible doctrines are certainly twins, but not identical twins.

The security of the believer is based on God's omnipotence. Our minds are comforted with benedictions such as, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless" (Jude 24), "that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20), and "which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance" (Acts 20:32).

The Rock of Gibraltar may be used as a symbol of security, but Job knew that no rock is secure in the presence of him who "canst do every thing." Our security rests in Him with whom "all things are possible."

The security of the believer is anchored in God's sovereign provisions. God's sovereign decision for Adam and Eve was "a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). In this great act of mercy, God limited man's free choice "lest he ... eat, and live for ever" in his fallen state.

As God promised, "Thou shalt surely die," "so death passed upon all men."

The psalmist well understood that the valley of the shadow of death had replaced the Garden of Eden, but he could say, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4). The guarantee of God's great mercy was the provision of a way that fallen humanity could be redeemed: "Her seed ... shall bruise thy head" (Genesis 3:15).

The security of the believer begins and ends with "whosoever will" (Romans 10:13; Revelation 22:17). "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:2-3). "For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.... For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 10:11-12). "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11).

The security of the believer is always contingent on his commitment to obey. Can the believer have security, knowing that his assurance of salvation is contingent on his own walk of discipleship? "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). Jesus said, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (John 15:10). "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6).

He also said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). The sheep that goes astray because he stops following is in grave danger of dying unless the shepherd finds him. 'And if so be that he find it" (Matthew 18:13) implies that he might not find it. Obviously it may have succumbed to the dangers of the wilderness, or it may intentionally be running from the shepherd. In Luke's account, Jesus com-

pare the lost sheep to a sinner that needs repentance! He was not a wolf, but a sheep in the shepherd's care who went astray.

Jesus also made it very clear that many will come to the Judgment Day with a false security based on their good works done in His Name! Yet He will accuse them of working sinfully (workers of iniquity). Jesus said that the true Christian will keep His commandments (John 14:21). Yet many today reject the commands of God related to divorce and remarriage, uncut hair for Christian women, short hair for Christian men, the kiss of charity, and washing of the saint's feet. Others condone immoral behavior and practices of an ungodly society and yet claim to be secure in their sin.

Neither the security of the believer nor his assurance of salvation are dependent on God's sovereignty. Although the provision for the believer's security is based on God's sovereignty, the appropriation of salvation by man is not. God's sovereignty determines fixed laws and prophecies which are unalterable by man. For example, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22) and "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Therefore, the responsibility for security and assurance of salvation rests with the individual to exercise faith in God by living in obedience to His Word.

From the Creation God warned, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it." In His sovereignty He could have said, "You will not eat" or, "You cannot eat!" Man's free will and rational choice is God's sovereign plan. It was so from the beginning, and will be so until the end of time. Despite this freedom, the Scriptures are clear that it is not God's will that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9), yet many will perish under God's sovereign judgment (Matthew 24).

Neither the security of the believer nor his assurance of salvation leave any room for self-confidence. A good religious heritage is a blessing but only if we are "found in [Christ], not having [our] own righteousness" but living in "the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:9, 10).

The security of the believer is not "locked in" in this life. It is secured by pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). The believer may run well in the race, but to receive the prize, he must cross the finish line.

Brother Lamar.



Keys to Healthy Interpersonal Relationships (Part 6)

Sincere Commendation

"Thank you for helping with tract distribution today. I know youth have other things they would enjoy, but your help is invaluable. God will reward your labor," Brother Benjamin commended when the group returned.

Compliments reassure others that they are filling their God-given place. What are some principles for sharing commendation?

Commendation requires pure motives. There are two basic motives for commending others—encouragement for their good or flattery for selfish gain. We should not give so that we receive. We will develop a habit of flattery if we crave it ourselves. Learning to receive commendation graciously is a step toward sharing it appropriately. "Their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16). Flattery not only endangers the giver but also places a snare before the receiver. 'A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet' (Proverbs 29:5).

Commendation must express honest appreciation. Humility is a key to sincere commendation. When another's strength supersedes our ability or maturity level, we should express appreciation for the challenge they are to us, rather than feeling intimidated. Too often, we base commendation on how another compares to ourselves, when truth should be the benchmark. "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Commendation shows an interest in others' lives. When a young brother shares a devotional or leads singing for the first time, we should commend him for his effort. Youth appreciate when older brethren and sisters approve of their efforts. Patrons should look for areas to commend school-teachers who are pulling in the harness of daily routine. Parents face challenging experiences in family life, and need the encouragement of fellow parents to spur them on.

Commendation is not necessarily an expression of others' perfection. Although we should not be pretentious or insincere, we can commend others even if they lack spiritual maturity in some areas. Jesus exemplified this principle when He spoke to the church at Ephesus. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil.... Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left

thy first love" (Revelation 2:2-4). Commendation may even encourage growth in the areas that they are lacking.

Our goal in commendation is to help others reach the day when we together hear those ultimate words of commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant.... enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21). "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 3:8).

Brother Mark (end of series)



PRAYER POINT

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

Pray for our government leaders as they rule the nation,
"That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life
in all godliness and honesty"
(1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Pray that we would continue to love the truth and not be deceived.

Thank God for the privilege of prayer.
"Call unto me, and I will answer thee,
and show thee great and mighty things,
which thou knowest not"
(Jeremiah 33:3).

