

THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

SELECTED ARTICLES FROM THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION
OF
THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH
JUNE 2016



The Eastern Mennonite Testimony is the official organ of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. That publication seeks to promote the historic Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and practice. The Testimony is published monthly by the Publication Board of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. Subscriptions are free. Forward subscriptions and contributions to Eastern Mennonite Publications, 40 Wood Corner Road, Ephrata, PA. 17522 U.S.A. Telephone (717) 733-7988 Fax: (717)733 2757.

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Editor: www.anabaptistmennonites.net

God desires to be a Father to each human. Jesus instructed His followers to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven." As God's children, we have "received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). How endearing!

Consequently, in their quest for faithfulness and nobility, godly fathers endeavor to pattern their lives and their fathering after the example of their heavenly Father. How humbling then to know that God also identifies with and declares Himself to be like an earthly father! "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm 103:13).

Like their heavenly Father, godly fathers are compassionate. The Hebrew word translated pitieth is a strong word, meaning "to love deeply, to have compassion and tender affection." Fathers who are like the heavenly Father truly care for their children. Not only do they toil in their behalf as they pursue their daily occupations, but they also bear them on their tender hearts as they labor—and they hurry homeward when the day's work is done.

Godly fathers guide their children tenderly through their years of development. They take time to play with the little ones. They train the growing child to relate to others kindly with grace and forbearance. They call attention to the marvels of God's world, and they explain the wonders of God's Word. They nurture the child's faith to look beyond themselves to the heavenly Father, whose attributes they themselves are endeavoring to emulate.

Godly fathers sow the seeds of character so that their growing sons might possess the virtues of manhood. They carefully cultivate the expressions of humility, integrity, and responsibility. Early in their sons' lives, they begin to teach the skills of natural labor—gardening, carpentry, and mechanics. God is compassionate to humans in consideration of what they are. "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

Godly fathers likewise are sensitive to their children's experiences and needs. They relate to them in light of what they are—children. Because they are children, they are allowed to cry when hurt or disappointed. This crying must be controlled and is not allowed to spiral into self-pity. Caring fathers exhibit a tender firmness that not only remembers that they are children but also helps them to become less childish as they move

through the years of childhood.

Consequently, godly parents strive to be fair in what they require and expect of each child. While they allow the child to be a child, they expect growth in behavior and character, demanding more of the six-year-old than of the three-year-old. But as the child grows and matures, behavior and responsibilities must remain age-appropriate.

Perhaps fathers help themselves remember what their children are and what their children face by remembering their own childhood experiences. Those reflections should help a father understand why a trial or disappointment that seems rather insignificant from an adult perspective may be perceived quite differently by a child or a youth. That understanding mellows the father's responses.

Like their heavenly Father, godly fathers discipline with purpose. Unlike the heavenly Father, whose chastening "for our profit" is always perfect, earthly fathers have imperfect perception. But when godly fathers chasten "after their own pleasure," they do not discipline angrily, recklessly, or arbitrarily. Rather, they correct and punish according to that which—as far as they can perceive—is in the child's best moral and spiritual interests. They want to prepare their children for the disciplines of the heavenly Father.

Mother naturally exhibits the softer, finer qualities, whereas Father's hands in home life exhibit the firmness of all who are "ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Timothy 3:12). But as he commands "his children and his household after him," a father, who is striving to be like his Father, will also be gentle and gracious, knowing that as his children move through childhood and youth, he is working with tender plants.

—ism



Parents Instilling a Scriptural Work Ethic

"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD" Psalm 127:3

As Christian parents, we acknowledge our families to be the "children which God hath graciously given" (Genesis 33:5). We sense the importance of taking responsibility to teach and train our children in the ways of God. How humbling and sobering to consider that our efforts are molding the character of our children and will influence their decisions!

One aspect of parenting is to help our children understand that life is full of purpose. This purpose encompasses both spiritual and natural responsi-

bilities. When God created man, He placed him "into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). We are commanded "to maintain good works for necessary uses" (Titus 3:14).

A work ethic is the framework of principles and values that provide a structured focus for the mental and physical functions we exercise in everyday living. These disciplines and resources influence the productivity and effectiveness of our domestic and occupational responsibilities.

Present-Day Challenges

The present generation has witnessed a remarkable and revolutionary change in how things are done. The inventions and technologies of the last centuries have provided mechanical and electronic equipment and appliances that accomplish tasks that previous generations did by hand. The work force of today is rapidly adapting to production devices with pushbutton controls and touchscreen command centers. The automation of these functions can fine-tune efficiencies that cannot be achieved otherwise.

The affluence and the economic opportunities of our present culture are challenging us. They may influence us to desire to avoid manual labor and rather focus on management and merchandising opportunities. We relate to a society where many individuals strive to acquire all they can with as little effort as possible.

The Plain People have valued the privilege and opportunity of rural living and agrarian occupations. Today in our industrialized culture, our brotherhood has needed to discover vocational work in other ways. Many occupations are structured and regulated to be staffed by an adult work force. Many fathers work away from home and are unable to provide work for their families in an occupation at home.

Scriptural Principles

In light of these challenges, we may ask, What is a Scriptural work ethic? How can parents instill this ethic in this modern age? How can children be taught to enjoy manual labor rather than desire a life of ease?

For us to instill a Scriptural work ethic, we must view our work as a privilege to serve God. We use our energies to do the will and work of God. The Christian family's efforts should focus on serving mankind. We labor to provide for our own needs. We also labor to contribute to the needs of others. The Christian uses present opportunities to lay up treasures in heaven.

For us to instill a Scriptural work ethic, we must prioritize spiritual values of worship and praise. We will acknowledge our strength, talents, abili-

ties, and opportunities as providential gifts to us. We will seek to do all to the glory of God. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17).

For us to instill a Scriptural work ethic, we must regulate work-related activities so that we do not neglect the spiritual nurture of our children. Beyond being responsible in earthly duty, we desire that the rising generation develop the fear of the Lord and commit their lives to Him.

Practical Directives

Parents instill a Scriptural work ethic by precept and example. Our attitude toward work must display cheerfulness and enthusiasm. Even when the circumstances are rigorous, difficult, and demanding or the environment is not at all in our comfort zone, we persevere to achieve the completion of our tasks. We stress the importance of following instructions and finishing assignments.

Parents will implement lifestyle patterns that include regular chores for children. Our children must learn that daily living includes responsibility. The Scriptures teach that "if any would not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Parents will prioritize keeping their children productively occupied. The energies of our children and youth must be channeled in activities that are wholesome, worthwhile, and productive—productive in the sense that they at least build appreciation for personal discipline and usefulness even if they are not financially profitable. A lack of focus in childhood activity can quickly degenerate into idleness and foolishness. The electronic gadgetry available today will captivate the minds of our children, serve as mere entertainment, and hinder creativity and usefulness.

Parents will create opportunities to work with their children. Working side by side with our children enables parents to impart knowledge of work skills far better than by instruction only. A child will learn to develop skills, understand procedures, and discover solutions more readily if he observes and participates. The family that works together builds relationships and discovers the enhanced productivity of teamwork. This promotes an appreciation for each other.

Parents must influence their children to find pleasure in manual labor. The healthy development of every young person includes learning the discipline of manual labor and hard work. If our children grow up in environments where they are not required to do manual labor, they will be ill prepared for the demands of adult responsibility.

Children learn to work at home. Preschoolers can help by running errands and doing basic domestic duties such as washing dishes and sweeping floors. School-age children can help with lunch packing, laundry, food preparation, and advanced housecleaning projects. Outdoor activities, such as caring for pets and livestock, provide work for some. A garden or produce patch is a very practical way to keep children busy.

Parents must assign age-appropriate work tasks and see that they are completed in a reasonable time frame. We should avoid discouraging a child by giving him a task that exceeds his ability and development or by holding him to an unfair standard of accomplishment. Also we must exercise discretionary caution in permitting our children to use power tools and other equipment without parental supervision.

Parents must determine a balance between work and leisure times. All age levels should understand that work activities must be completed before we involve ourselves in recreational privileges. Younger children need time to play. Older children can discover pleasure in light-duty work and hobby interests. Take time occasionally to explore natural geography or visit places of historical, scientific, or industry interests.

Parents will purpose to maintain a focus of faith in times of disappointment and loss. We learn to accept graciously the consequences of mistakes. Even when we have done our best, our efforts at times appear to have been in vain. The rains may not come, so the garden fails to produce. The predators may get the chickens. We may discover, after the expenses are paid for our produce project that little is left to put toward our fund for house improvements. Our responses to these circumstances leave impressions on the lives of our children. Will we gratefully acknowledge the goodness of God and try again?

Solomon made this observation in Ecclesiastes 2:24: "There is nothing better for a man, than ... that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour." And so, "whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive [a] reward ...: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24).

Brother Timothy



Minutes of the Conferring Fellowship Meeting
Held at the Ashland Mennonite Bible School April 14, 2016

Brother Paul, moderator for the day, opened the meeting with appropriate comments. Brother James led us in singing "Great God, Indulge My Humble Claim" and "Christ's Everlasting Gospel."

Brother Samuel led a devotional, reading from Hebrews 12:14-29. He emphasized the blessings available to New Testament Christians and our responsibility to serve God with reverence and godly fear. He led us in a kneeling prayer.

The minutes of the September 24, 2015, conferring meeting were read.

The first message was brought by Brother Fred titled "Wherefore Say My People, We Are Lords"—Jeremiah 2:31.

Judah had forsaken God to the point of not recognizing Him as their Lord. They no longer feared God (verse 19), they were seeking water in their broken cisterns (verses 12, 13), and they were not following God as they had in earlier times (verse 2).

He examined the use of the word lord as it is used many times in the Old and New Testaments. He highlighted several areas.

I. How might God's people say, "We are lords"?

- A. By contradicting the Word of the Lord (Acts 10:14)
- B. By feeling smug about where we are (2 Corinthians 3:1)
- C. By embracing false eternal security thinking (2 Corinthians 3:18)
- D. By taking too much authority to ourselves (1 Peter 5:3)

II. When might we say, "We are lords"?

- A. By choosing to disobey the direction that is given (Matthew 7:27-28)
- B. By loving to have the preeminence (2 John 9)
- C. By trusting in ourselves that we are righteous (Luke 18:9)

III. When do God's people really acknowledge Jesus as Lord?

- A. When we come to Him in our need (Luke 23:42)
- B. When we faithfully wait on Him (Luke 2:25)
- C. When we joyfully bear the cross (Acts 4:23-24)
- D. When we are part of a body of believers and submit one to another (1 Corinthians 12:12-17)
- E. When we are willing to allow others to direct our lives and understand God's will (Acts 9:6)
- F. When we persistently endeavor to blend our mind, judgment, and words

(1 Corinthians 1:9-10)

G. When we diligently walk in holiness and expectantly wait for His coming (Luke 12:35-36)

After singing one verse of "Eternal Father," Brother James - spoke on Article IV of the Articles of Faith "Of the Fall of Man:

He looked at the subject in three areas.

I. Before--from good to evil (Genesis 3:1-7)

We need to see how high man was to see how far he fell.

A. Image

1. Man was the highest form of creation.
2. Man was created in the image of God.
3. Image means "an outline, resemblance, or profile."

B. Fellowship

Man was created to live in harmony with God.

C. Perfection

There was no sin, no fear of falling, only perfect harmony.

II. During

A. Temptation

1. Did God limit you from something?
2. This is Satan's method--God's Word is untrue.
3. Focus on what you may not do instead of what you may do.

B. Contemplation

1. Adam and Eve went wrong here.
2. She "saw" that it was good, pleasant, and desirable (1 John 2:16).

C. Action

1. The thought became an action.
2. One wrong act had such great consequences.
3. We may say, "I wouldn't have done it" (Romans 3:23).

111. After – the permanent results

A. Shame

1. A loss of innocence
2. Self-consciousness instead of God-consciousness

B. Estrangement

1. Separation from God
2. Friction between Adam and Eve
3. Banishment from the perfect Garden

C. Toil

1. In childbearing (Genesis 3:16)

2. In sustaining life (Genesis 3:17-19)

D. Depravity

1. The divine image was blurred (Romans 3:23).

2. We are sinful by nature.

3. We are not so depraved that we cannot be saved.

E. Death

1. Adam and Eve developed a fear of God's presence.

2. They were condemned to physical death.

3. They were doomed to spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1).

We then sang one verse of "Open the Wells of Salvation."

Brother Melvin then spoke on Principles for Sustaining the Church from Matthew 18.

He shared eight principles that Jesus taught from these verses.

I. Humility (verses 1-4)

A. "Which of us is the greatest?" is a question that may be asked in many different ways.

B. Jesus said, "Unless you get changed, you are not there yet."

C. Jesus placed a premium on humility, charity, and submission.

11. Spiritual protection (verses 5-7)

A. Jesus was concerned about the young.

B. Offending the young and the weak is very serious.

C. Church problems and relationship problems often cause discouragement or resentment in young people.

III. Self-correction (verses 8-9)

A. We must be so committed to serving the Lord that we would use strong measures to cut off avenues of temptation to sin.

B. The most important discipline in the church must be self-discipline.

IV Redemptive Love (verses 10-14)

A. Even though immaturity can be frustrating and time consuming, Jesus calls us to follow His example and pay attention to the needs of the little ones, for they are important.

B. Redemptive love reaches out to the needy, the sinful, and the lost ones.

V Brotherly Address (verses 15-17)

A. Do not nurse grudges. Go lovingly, humbly, privately, honestly to speak to your brother.

B. Your purpose is to gain your brother and to restore the relationship.

C. Go repeatedly. Try again. Take referees to check yourself. Listen care-

fully to the other side of the story.

VI. Church Authority (verses 17-20)

- A. Discipline is one of the marks of the New Testament church.
- B. The basis of church authority is the presence of Christ in the church (verse 20).
- C. The time comes when an offender needs discipline and, if he remains obstinate, ultimately expulsion.
- D. The purpose of church discipline is repentance and restoration after escalating firmness.

VII. United Prayer (verses 19-20)

- A. Agreement is a condition for answered prayer.
- B. Church authority rests on united prayer.
- C. Pentecost came after days of united prayer.

VIII. Unlimited Forgiveness (verses 21-35)

- A. To be unforgiving is the height of arrogance and pride.
- B. Let it go, forgive, and be at rest.

If observed, these eight principles will sustain the church.

After singing a closing song, "Forth in Thy Name, O Lord," Brother Fred led in a closing prayer.

The afternoon session began with two songs led by Brother Merle we sang "Like a River, Glorious," and "Heaven Is My Home."

Brother Laverne shared a devotional from 1 Timothy 4. He highlighted the warning about doctrines of devils in the last days. This is a result of "depart[ing] from the faith" and "giving heed to seducing spirits." We should "give attendance ... to doctrine," which is teaching based solidly on God's Word and practiced in daily living. He led us in a kneeling prayer.

Brother Daryl gave the secretary's report.

Brother Clair brought the first message of the afternoon on The Place of Council Meetings.

The primary purpose of council meeting is to determine Scriptural purity and the unity of the group, in the interest of Communion. The Anabaptist view puts emphasis on the brotherhood character of the church. The Protestant view emphasizes the personal efficacy of the Lord's sacrifice. The Scriptures call us to an inward look personally and congregationally (1 Corinthians 11:27-31; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Attached to the council meeting is the reading of the Discipline to keep the

congregation informed of what they are committed to. If standards are too abstract, people can get careless with their counsel. The first question examines our relationship with God and man. The second question asks whether we are willing to submit ourselves to the judgment of others and defines our willingness to take direction. The third question is whether we feel the congregation is ready for Communion and if we desire to participate.

The fourth question gives an opportunity to share concerns or positive testimony about the church. This is not to air personal grievances. Council meetings are meant to be a blessing to the church. We should keep them meaningful by promoting preparation, prayer and fasting, soul-searching, and honesty.

We sang one verse of "Nothing but the Blood."

The open discussion period included various comments on the messages. How can we encourage all members to attend the council meeting? When is a good time to read the Discipline? How do we properly understand the effect of Adam's sin on the human race? How do we keep the practice of the brotherly address effective among us? How can we help those whose self-discipline does not seem to be working?

The last message of the day was discussed by Brother Darrel Entitled "Consider Him That Endured"—Hebrews 12:3.

Church life has many challenges and the tendency to become weary is ever with us. We should not allow our feelings to dictate our practice. Brother Darrel used the example of Jesus to inspire us in various ways.

1. Consider means "to give proper value by careful thought."

- A. To move beyond our normal thought patterns
- B. To use the light that shines from the true Light
- C. To prolong our thought processes

1. Resist the tendency to become impulsive.

2. Review the leadership style of Jesus.

D. To arrive at meaningful conclusions

We should not use thinking to excuse inaction.

II. Consider the unique reasons for considering.

A. Lest we should be weary (Hebrews 12:3)

B. Lest we faint in our minds (verse 3)

C. Lest we forget the exhortation God has given us (verse 5)

III. Consider the reality of what we should consider.

A. He endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

1. It was shame instead of glory.

2. He did not demand to be honored.
 3. When we should be respected, we should consider Him.
- B. He "endured such contradiction of sinners" (verse 3). The All-right subjected Himself to the all-wrong.
- C. He resisted unto blood (verse 4).
1. Life was subject to death.
 2. He gave room to what He could have rightly refused. He tasted death for every man. IV Conclusions we should reach
- A. It is good to think of life's struggles as being in the plan of God (verse 5).
- Jesus was sustained in His struggles by His confidence in God, beyond His own feelings.
- B. We should think of God's dealings with us as a father with a son (verse 6).
1. Father excels in a purpose the son may find difficult.
 2. God's glory is waiting for our faithfulness.
- C. Those who think rightly about God will live with a purpose.
1. Jesus is our Intercessor. He continues to intercede yet today.
 2. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (verse 1).
- After singing "My Jesus, I Love Thee,"
 Brother Darrel led us in a closing prayer.
Submitted by the assistant secretary.



Church Committee Report – Liberty Ridge Farm

Five years ago, the Liberty Ridge Farm was established to provide a farm family setting in which to help teenaged young men with behavior and character development.

Presently, we have three young men as residents with a mentor walking alongside each one as a big brother. We look to the mentors both to tell them how to live and, especially, to show them how. They face the day together. They answer to the same authorities. Brother Millard and his wife serve as house-parents. Brother David and his wife live in the second house with David serving as work coordinator.

The day starts with a brisk morning walk followed by gathering in the family room for a time of Bible reading and prayer. After breakfast and

family worship, work projects and school classes begin at 8:00. After lunch, there is a class focusing on Bible memorization and character development. Work projects resume again after this class until suppertime. This schedule gives alternating opportunities to receive instruction and then practice it in daily faithful living.

The work at Liberty Ridge is a very intense work, but it is a work of many hands, and the many hands do make the work lighter. In the past five years, ten young men have been enrolled as residents. Twenty-six young men have served as mentors and nine couples have served as house-parents. Various brethren have served as teachers. In the past year, the Child Care Committee has become more involved with our committee to maintain a structure of accountability as the residents leave the intense program and acclimate to normal daily living.

Since last summer, the new kitchen and upstairs bedrooms in the main house have greatly benefited the program. This improvement would allow us to accommodate up to six residents if needed.

We are anticipating two significant changes this summer. To help with the teaching and personal progress work, we are adding a guidance coordinator to the staff. Brother Luke and his wife are planning to move on site to fill this need.

This creates the need for a third house. Since the farm was purchased with a few additional building lots included, adding another house on the farm is a very reasonable option. With approvals for this project in place, plans are developing to set up a modular house with a daylight basement. We are deeply indebted to those who are contributing to make this project possible. If the Lord would so move you, your additional contribution would be welcomed.

May God bless you as you contribute to this work in time, prayer or finances. "And of [these] have compassion, making a difference" (Jude 22).
Brother Kenton For the Liberty Ridge Committee



A Word on Song Leading

Among the conservative Anabaptist-Mennonite churches, the pattern for leading the singing in the worship service varies. In the Old Order settings, the "singing table" maintains a prominent place immediately in front of the minister's bench and desk. Men with the ability to lead singing are seated on either side of the table. They take turns choosing and leading the songs.

No pitch pipes or tuning forks are used. The brethren remain seated and generally do not beat time in any visible manner.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the trend in the mainstream Mennonite conferences was toward instrumental accompaniment. They first had pianos and organs and eventually the full array of musical instruments and special singing.

As the winds of feminism were blowing in the world, the women in the church were also departing from their God-given roles. They were cutting their hair, discarding their headship veilings, and replacing their distinctive garb with worldly attire. Along with this, women became more prominent as worship leaders. In many congregations, they served first as pianists, but then eventually as song leaders too.

In the conservative regroupings of the 1950s and 1960s, four-part a cappella singing was encouraged and became the accepted mode.

In our settings today, song leaders generally stand before the congregation and lead the singing, using one arm to beat time. Each leader has his peculiar style, yet a certain conformity prevails within the group. Song leading should be characterized by a dignity that does not draw undue attention to the leader.

It is not necessary for the song leader to be moving his body or to be leaning forward as if to draw the singing out of the audience. Swaying with the beat of the song should not be noticeable. Senior song leaders can advise the beginners to keep their arm movements smooth and graceful, not too low or too elevated, and without undue movement of the arm or wrist. We do not say that our way is the only way to lead singing, nor do we want to offend those who visit our churches from other church settings. Let nothing detract from the worship that belongs to the Lord of the church. "Let all things be done decently and in order."

Brother Lamar



A God-Honoring Courtship (Part 6)

Preparing for Marriage

John and Mary reflected on their year of courting. They had been amazed to find they shared so many things in common. They noted how working through misunderstandings and blending differing ideas had led to fond confidence in one another. Mary happily accepted John's marriage proposal.

Entering into betrothal indicates that character and compatibility questions have yielded to acceptance, trust, and commitment. Sharing and comparing ideals and preferences shifts to melding convictions, setting goals, and laying plans to reach them. The process of learning to know one another better continues, but now the focus of courtship is preparation for marriage.

Christian couples are sensitive to God's will for marriage. Your prayers to know God's will in your courtship and for your future should not stop. Now your prayers shift to decisions about where to go to church, where you will live, and how you will earn a living. God has a place for you to fill as a couple. He designed marriage not only for your security and pleasure but also for His service.

Christian couples prepare for marriage by seeking parental approval. You may be ready to enter into a very personal relationship and commitment, but have you sought the advice of your parents? Young man, be wise enough to discuss your intentions with your father before proposing. Honor parental directives for the timing of engagement and marriage. Longer courtships and shorter betrothals are safer. Securing the approval of your friend's father validates the betrothal.

Christian couples remain accountable to parental homes. Planning a home of your own can be thrilling. Myriad domestic choices await your wish or whim. But you are not married yet. Young man, you are still accountable to your parental home and bound to respect schedules and obey curfews. Your bride-to-be is under the authority of her father until she is given to you in marriage.

Christian couples blend goals happily and carefully. Engagement is the time to work out the details of home priorities. Young man, your bride will find security in your ability to make decisions with cautious confidence. She trusts her father; now she is learning to trust you. This transfer will take time but will be accelerated when you honor her father's influence.

Christian couples respect the limits of privilege in engagement. The commitment to marriage opens the door to another level of spiritual and emotional familiarity. This needs to be accompanied with increasing maturity and self-discipline. Now is the time to renew your commitment to purity. The promise to marry in the future does not presently open to you the gifts that God has decreed shall be reserved for matrimony.

God wants your future home to make a specific contribution to society and to the church.

God will bless your courtship and engagement as you prepare your home

to become a building block He intends it to be.
May God bless you as you experience the wonder of “the way of a man
with a maid.”
Brother Jesse.



PRAYER POINT
"The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much.

Pray for the annual Bible conference at Ashland. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity for Bible study and brotherhood fellowship. Pray that unity in faith and practice may prevail among us.

Pray for the new MMM-sponsored mission work in Togo, Africa. To begin a new mission work requires much faith and courage. Pray that God would especially bless the workers with wisdom, health, and strength for their new duties.

Pray that the foundations of moral purity may be firmly grounded and carefully protected in our homes. The home is a prime target for Satanic invasion. Pray that our parents may be blessed with divine discernment.

Thank the Lord for another successful school year. As the school doors close for the summer, the school of life continues.

