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The task of avoiding and limiting exposure to the world's sin has engaged saints of all ages. Joseph carefully avoided Potiphar's wife and would not consent to be with her (Genesis 39:10). The zeal that we exert in limiting exposure to temptation communicates our attitude toward sin. The command to "flee these things" is prerequisite to "follow after righteousness" (1 Timothy 6:11).

Some imply that, since "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14), controlling exposure to sin is the wrong tactic. Conversion does change the heart, but to allow temptation to continue its bold appeal when it could be removed reveals an overconfident attitude toward one's commitment. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1Corinthians 10:12). Rather than increasing immunity, constant exposure to sin weakens us.

Abhorrence for sin will cause us to avoid it entirely if we can. When possible, we should avoid patronizing the store with indecent exposure. To regularly patronize the public library will expose us to much illicit material. The world's entertainment centers sell sin, and we should carefully avoid their recreation of amusement and thrill. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalm 1:1).

The home should be a haven of rest from the world's corruption. Parents should take the responsibility to review all the literature that arrives in the mailbox. The world's propaganda and lifestyle invade the home in such subtle avenues as breakfast cereal boxes. Most advertisers provide contact information that can be used to communicate to them our concern for the sinful material they send into our homes. Immorality is degrading to civilization, and we should be ready with both Scriptural and logical explanations for why sin is abominable to us and harmful to society.

We learn by experience where temptation is encountered and what our personal weak point is. We must especially safeguard our weaker moments of unaccountable leisure. Idleness and loneliness heighten temptation. Weariness and discouragement lower our resolve.

Many magazines, displayed at cash registers and lying in doctor's offices and other places of leisure, are safest left entirely alone. Since television regularly displays indecency, we must cultivate a habit of total avoidance.

The ear gate must be guarded as well. The radio in the vehicle should be rendered inoperable. Cell phones must be monitored to ensure they stay disconnected from Internet. Parents must work together to address "borrowed" music that circulates. By our established positions we must reinforce that the use, as well as the ownership, of worldly entertainment is sin. Have we made this principle clear, or do we encourage sin by winking at the use of that which we are not allowed to own?

Shopping trips are no longer an enjoyable, safe family activity that can be ventured on without forethought. Father may take his sons into one part of the store for automotive supplies while Mother and the girls shop for apparel. Shopping should not be an entertaining frolic to browse for new gadgets but should rather be limited to acquiring family needs.

We also limit our exposure to evil by a clear testimony of separation from the world in word, action, and appearance. The Christian should be a conscience to the world. As our conscience is kept sharp, the Spirit can work through our example to convict the vulgar language, indecent dress, and sensual lifestyle of those we meet. When we faithfully do so, we encounter sin less.

Since eliminating all exposure to sin is impossible, we must work tirelessly to strengthen the fortitude of our mind, which interprets what we encounter. We program our minds to either covet or abhor sin. Victory over temptation is accomplished by acquiring God's attitude toward sin. A meaningful devotional life with God-consciousness effectively bars temptation's snare. Eyes must be trained and ears cultured to take the "way to escape."

To "follow after righteousness" is a positive exercise that will fill our minds with godliness and make sin less appealing. A life that is swept and garnished must also be filled with virtue to be useful and remain clean (Matthew 12:45).

God's power supersedes Satan's ploy. He can keep us from falling as we keep ourselves in His care. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). God is glorified by His ability to save and keep His saints in this sin-cursed world.

—BAS



The Conscientious Objector in Peacetime

As conservative Anabaptist churches, we have enjoyed a period of little test to our conviction regarding warfare. We thank God for this opportunity to live in peace. But are we maintaining the principles of nonresistance in peacetime? Are we ready to face greater tests that may lie ahead?

The rising generation has not been tested with a draft. We have been granted freedom from compulsory military service. However, today's world is embroiled in war. The Middle East remains the crucible of conflict in the broader arena of "Arab Spring" revolutions. Despotism is presently seeking to secure their control, and in so doing, many innocent lives are being sacrificed. Certainly Jesus' warning about "wars and rumours of wars" is for our time. Yes, the world is at war today; but within the comfortable confines of the peace churches, this reality seems remote.

We conscientiously object to participating in war and fighting in any form because of Jesus' directive to resist not evil. "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). This familiar verse is at the heart of New Testament teaching on how the believer should live. Jesus not only taught the principle of nonresistance but also modeled its outworking during His arrest in Gethsemane. "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Jesus did not resist His own capture. In His hour of distress, He kindly required Peter, who wished to defend his Master, to sheath his sword—a symbolic action that resonates with us yet today. No doubt this touching event was enshrined in Peter's memory for life. Years later, he wrote, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:21-23).

The nonresistance principle can be understood only in the light of the two-kingdom concept. "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). The believer is called to be an ambassador for Christ's kingdom. Therefore, we obey Christ's directives as a matter of loyalty to His kingdom, not because we are guaranteed freedom from conflict or special privileges from the government under which we live. This outlook

should be reflected in the way we speak about dignitaries and political causes.

The nonresistant believer can expect to be misunderstood and resented—even by those who call themselves Christians but whose allegiance is first to their earthly country. "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake" (Luke 6:22).

True nonresistance is evidence of a changed heart. To request conscientious objector exemption from the military if the life is not first surrendered to the lordship of Christ is inconsistent. The choice of surrender to Christ affects every aspect of life—our identity, our loyalties, and our behavior. Loving our enemies and blessing those who curse us is not a natural human response. The changed heart alone, cleansed by the blood of Christ and renewed by the Holy Spirit, gives consistent, humble expression of these Christlike actions.

Our nonresistance is under test in our daily routine. Would our neighbors say that we are peace-loving people? Our conduct in resolving differences both with neighbors and within the brotherhood tells much about our surrender to Christ. Are we willing to give an unfair advantage to another to peaceably settle a troublesome situation? "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Neighbors and associates will soon know if we have a truly nonresistant spirit or are simply trying to meet each other's expectations. Our children and youth form their frame of reference by observing how their parents relate to conflict. Let us not fail them. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

Our youth reveal much about the level of conviction in the church for practical nonresistance. In the event of a draft, our youth will be tested especially. Are our youth prepared to face opposition and hardship, even suffering, without compromise? Or have we made life so soft that they are at great disadvantage under test? Do our youth have a fear of God that is greater than their fear of disappointing their parents or peers? Only a genuine fear of God will carry one through such a test faithfully.

Youth, cultivate your relationship with the Lord daily. Sacrifice your time and abilities now for the cause of God. The Christian life is not for the faint of heart. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

True nonresistance reaches far beyond not serving in the military. Nonresistance is love in action. As conscientious objectors, we will avoid retaliation when wronged and extend goodwill to those who mistreat us. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:18-21).

Brother Gerald



Lessons From Mennonite History

Old-Age Care

Caring for the aged has always been an integral part of Mennonite religious and social life. In colonial America, children cared for their parents at home. Benedict Brackbill gave command in 1720, shortly before his death, that his son Ulrich was to "love and maintain his mother well." ¹ Likewise Hans Herr, the first Mennonite bishop in the Lancaster area, died in the house owned by his son Christian Herr in 1725. "His widow, having her last home at the same place, died five years later."²

Mennonite homesteads sometimes had a small apartment built onto the main house or a closely connected small house, called the "grossdoddy" house,³ in which the parents or grandparents retired. At other times an unmarried daughter would care for them at their home. Extra care was sometimes given by moving the elderly from home to home among the children. The Mennonites in North America were very slow to reach beyond the family or local congregation for help in caring for the elderly.⁴ However, around the turn of the twentieth century, old people's homes were established among the Mennonites. The first home for the elderly sponsored by American Mennonites was the Salem Home at Hillsboro, Kansas, which opened in 1894. Throughout the next four decades about eleven more were established.⁵

These early homes were operated for the care of older persons unable to care for themselves but not requiring hospital attention. The primary purpose was to provide a residence in a Christian atmosphere for the older

members of the churches, particularly those who had no responsible relatives or other persons willing to provide for them.

Building funds were often supplied through the brotherhood. The Mennonite Home at Orville (1905), near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was built on eight acres of land donated by John Landis.⁶ He also donated two adjoining farms, which made it possible for the home to operate on a self-supporting basis.⁷ The Maugansville Old People's Home (1923) near Hagerstown, Maryland, was built with much donated labor and materials.

These early homes grew their own food on adjoining land. At Maugansville, hundreds of jars of canned goods were processed by workers at the home and volunteer help. This reduced the expenses and made it an affordable place to live. Mennonite boarders paid four dollars a week and non-Mennonites paid four-fifty.⁸

The church was keenly interested in the spiritual welfare of the Mennonite Home. The trustees wrote a constitution, taking care that nothing would conflict with the rules of conference. They also agreed not to install lightning rods on the new building but rather trust the Lord for protection.⁹ In the beginning, ministers came by invitation or by appointment to conduct regular worship services. In 1946 Landis Brubaker was ordained for the home.

The Good Samaritan Home began in 1898 as a social facility for the poor on the Welsh Mountains near New Holland. In 1924 the Mission Board changed the home to provide for "sickly folks and convalescents."¹⁰ The home often suffered due to lack of visitors to the services or nursing personnel.

Since 1940 the development of church-administered facilities for aging persons has increased 800 percent. In 1987 more than one hundred Mennonite-related homes for older persons existed in the United States and Canada.¹¹ What has prompted this change?

Broader employment opportunities and smaller families have resulted in fewer family members being available for the task of caring for the aged. The move away from farming has resulted in the loss of the large farmhouse with its "dawdy haus." A father who works away is not available during the day to share the responsibility. Also, financial independence, through affluence or government programs such as social security, has resulted in some choosing retirement homes because of the services they offer. Accordingly, Mennonite institutions now accommodate elderly that would formerly have been cared for by the family.

All the retirement homes of the Lancaster Conference (the Good Samari-

tan Home, the Mennonite Home, Bethany Mennonite Home, and Landis Homes) presently make their facilities available to all guests, without regard to race, color, national origin, or religious creed. They do assign priority in waiting lists on account of urgency of need and membership in the Mennonite Church.¹²

How should we view rest homes and retirement centers and our need for them? Historically, care for aging parents and other relatives who needed help had largely been a local responsibility carried primarily by the family and by the local congregation. "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.... But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:4, 8). To fail our parents or relatives who are in need is indeed a serious matter, even affecting our salvation. Also, how we care for our parents could well be how our children will care for us.

Are we willing to adjust our life so that we can meet the needs of our parents? For some it may be adding an extra room or rooms to the house or building a small apartment next to the house. For others it may mean relocating so they can be close enough to provide care. Even in our choice of vocations, we need to consider the impact they will have on our ability to contribute. Sacrifice can be inspired in the rising generation as they see it lived out in our lives.

Caring for the elderly at home carries many blessings. Children have a better understanding of their parents' wishes. The elderly may not want life-support measures, a recommended heart or cancer operation, and other treatment, realizing that life on earth is not the ultimate goal. Institutions, however, in their goal to provide excellent care have at times overridden such wishes.

Care at home allows the elderly to practice the Bible principle of being productive as long as one is able. Even in their failing years, they can do such things as washing or drying the dishes.

Satisfaction and fulfillment are found in working together as a family. Canning or freezing food are activities in which all can help. Such social interchange has a profound effect on the rising generation as grandparents, parents, and children all work together. Children benefit from the wisdom of their grandparents, while grandparents are encouraged to see the faith being reproduced in their grandchildren. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). What a contrast to the retire-

ment centers that put a distance between the resident and his relatives!

We also need to consider financial obligations. As the cost of rest homes and retirement facilities rises, financial resources can be depleted rapidly. Also, the affluent lifestyle some offer is inconsistent with simple living.

Caring for the elderly is not an easy task. Failing bodies and minds create special challenges. Personal care requires dedication while receiving it takes humility. As we rely on the Lord for wisdom and strength to meet these challenges, our children can likewise be inspired to trust the Lord when difficulties arise.

Using other institutions can discourage the faith of the elderly because of the distance from church life and less-than-ideal company. May we seek to encourage the elderly in our congregations and families by our prayers and visits.

When more help is needed than the family can provide, there are no relatives, or relatives are in an apostate church setting, the church is responsible to provide care. We should appreciate the efforts of the church to provide homes which meet these needs and conform to her standards. Are we willing to give time and money to this work? May the work not be hindered because of neglect to support the church services or lack of volunteer caregivers or administrators when needed.

Brother Samuel.

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¹ John L. Ruth, *The Earth Is the Lord's* (Scottsdale, Pa. Herald Press, 2001) p. 207.

² M. G. Weaver, *Mennonites of Lancaster Conference* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1931), p. 37.

³ *The Mennonite Encyclopedia, 1955-90, Vol. II, p. 798.*

⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 10.

⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 798.

⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. 11, p. 798.

⁷ Noah G. Good Papers. Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society Archives, p. 3

⁸ Daniel R. Lehman, *Mennonites of the Washington County, Maryland and Franklin County, Pennsylvania Conference* (Ephrata, Pa.: Eastern Mennonite Publications, 1990), p. 534.

⁹ *Good Papers*, p. 3, 5

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 9.

¹¹ *Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, p. 11.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 19



Behold the Lamb!

For man —a lamb to cover sin;
To please God, it was sure;
It took a sacrifice of blood
To enter heaven's door.

The household, too, must give a lamb
That's in his first year prime.
Such innocence, such purity
To cover lust and crime.

The nation then must give a lamb
So God would dwell within.
The holy God, the righteous God
He cannot dwell with sin.

Behold the Lamb, the Sacrifice
That takes away all sin.
He is the answer for the world
That craves God's peace within.

Before God's throne the slain Lamb
We see by faith today.
Behold your King, your sacrifice,
That washes sins away.

The worthy Lamb, the righteous Lamb
Can open up the book
And loose the seven seals of it.
The Son of God it took.

Oh, glorious honor to the Lamb
And wisdom, strength be giv'n
From every creature evermore
On this earth and in heaven.

— *Sister Karen*

Church Committee Report Literature Evangelism

"Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all the people. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.... For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth" (Psalm 96:2-4, 13).

With the arrival of spring, plans are again being made for street meeting trips. We are planning the normal trips to Boston, Indianapolis, and Atlanta. Lord willing, the dates for the trips are as follows: Boston, June 6 and 7, and 27 and 28, July 18 and 19, and August 15 and 16. The Indianapolis, Indiana, trip is planned for August 2 and 3. The Atlanta, Georgia, trip is tentatively planned for September 27 and 28. Last year brought with it rainy weather and along with it postponements of some of the trips. This can be a real challenge for the trip coordinators. We appreciate the forbearance of those who may have been asked multiple times because of coordinators overlapping in their search for personnel. We would be happy to include those who have plans to travel to Pennsylvania. We are open for volunteers twenty years of age and older. Many people say they would like to go along sometime. One of the ways to make this happen is to choose a date and then plan for it.

As new tracts are produced and evaluated, we continue to update the tract evaluation guide. When relating to society, one discovers that there are many needs. What a blessing to be able to give a tract that will speak to people's need even after the initial contact. Tracts can also be used without a person-to-person contact. For instance, when paying a bill, insert one in the envelope with your check. Tract racks at places of business are another means of spreading the Word with this silent missionary. Individuals are invited to stop by the tract trailer and pick up a supply of tracts free of charge for your personal distribution. For those who would like to offer singing and sermon CDs in their tract racks, there is now a rack available to accommodate them.

A replacement tract trailer has recently been ordered. The current trailer has served well but is in need of major repairs. The new trailer will be somewhat smaller and much easier to access.

Gospel sign ministry continues to be an active project. We want to thank the many volunteers who faithfully make and change the signs every

month. From letters the committee receives, it is apparent that people are reading the messages. We receive letters of appreciation and disapproval. Either way, the message is going out and is making people God-conscious. If you have a sign that is not being changed, have recently relocated and need to be put on a new route, or would like to purchase a sign and post, let one of the committee know. We would be happy to assist you. This past year we made approximately 400 signs. Most were distributed to various conservative church groups. Stop by the tract trailer to see items other than signs that may be of interest to you.

The prison literature evangelism work is very inspiring. Living Waters, Bibles, books, and CDs continue to be mailed to prisons and interested inmates. Approximately fifteen to twenty individuals are currently taking Bible correspondence courses. We thank those who help to correct tests and mentor contacts. We thank you also for the continued financial support. At times we can see God working through our efforts. Other times we wonder if our efforts are really worth it when there are seemingly few results. The way God works is many times unseen. We do not know how His Spirit may be using the seeds sown. It is our God-given responsibility to sow the Word; we let God give the increase in whatever way or place He chooses.

Brother Martin.



The Abundant Life (Part 5)

Full Surrender

At the close of World War II, the allied armies threatened to totally destroy Japan unless it surrendered unconditionally. Shortly after, two atomic bombs forced them to admit defeat. To the carnal man, surrender means defeat, subjugation, and bondage. But in God's kingdom, full surrender to Him is victory! To yield our will to God's will and plan for our lives is the doorway to hope and fulfillment.

We find "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" when we present ourselves to Him with no reservations. Rather than once and done, to cultivate and maintain that initial strong inner desire to be in subjection and service is a daily choice. True surrender is not by compulsion, but out of love. "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). Apostle Paul's example all

through life was "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Our flesh consistently desires compromise: "What do I have to do?" Complete surrender to our Master ends the struggle of our flesh and the Spirit. Only then can we experience rest and God's abundant love and care.

We may verbally testify to a full surrender and share the same testimony to God in prayer. But the test comes when we need to surrender to authority and circumstances in our lives. After receiving a no, how long does it take for our heart to resist no longer and rest? Our degree of contentment also measures our surrender to God's plan for us. Our readiness to forgo to another our wish and desire quantifies our surrender. Forgiveness is surrendering our natural inclination to hold an offense or blame another for the mental, physical, or emotional pain that we have experienced. Also, we are tested when we are convicted through the Word or the preaching of it. Surrender then becomes action.

The Scriptures emphasize, by the promised blessings, the high value God places on full surrender. To receive the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-11, surrender is needed. "God ... giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). Many times the New Testament directs us to submit, be in subjection, and obey. God in His wisdom knows what is best for us. He knows what damage a rebellious spirit can do to ourselves and others.

Full surrender gives the Holy Spirit free reign to work in our lives. When our flesh says "be moody," we can respond with joy. When a sibling deserves harshness, we share gentleness. Often our appetites demand more, but through the Holy Spirit's quiet strength, we choose temperance. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:17). We can experience the rich rewards of surrender here. Only in eternity will we realize the full value of present surrender.

— *Brother Joel*





PRAYER POINT

*“The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much”*

*Thank God for mothers who pray for their children,
as Hannah did, and lend them to the Lord.*

*Thank God that we can " dwell in him, and he in us,
because he hath given us of his Spirit."*

*Thank God that " while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest,
and cold and heat, and summer and winter,
and day and night shall not cease."*

*Pray that some would listen to the Word and give their hearts to the
Lord as we share in the street meetings this summer.*

*Pray that God would bless with Holy Spirit direction and inspiration
those who have been called to minister the Word.*

