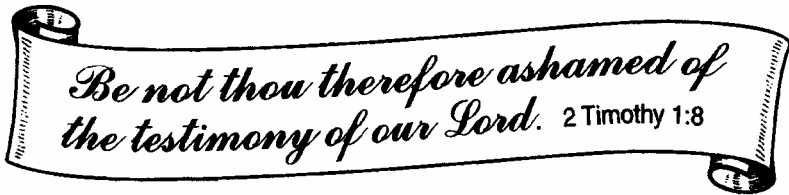


# THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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**AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST**

The first decade of the twenty-first century is nearing its close. How well are we fulfilling our calling to be ambassadors for Christ in these times? Time has brought changes. We are less and less on the farm and more and more in occupations that pertain to the trades and services. As a result, the average working brother has more interaction with society than our forebears did. Even farming has an increase of interaction with society. This reality poses challenges and opportunities that require the application of Bible principle.

Some would suggest that we do more to enable young families to raise their children on the farm. This may be a worthy cause. But, realistically, we will not be able to reverse or prevent all the urban influence on our families. Parents will need to provide work to occupy growing children while Father is at work. Some family-owned businesses offer the benefit of family togetherness like the farm.

The shift to trades and services has presented the challenge of applying Biblical principles of separation in the products we sell, the services we render, and the equipment we use. The Scripture admonishes us to "let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" ([Ephesians 4:28](#)). 'And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful" ([Titus 3:14](#)). That which is "good" and "for necessary uses" will enhance the well-being of those we serve. We should not encourage their pride or promote indulgence in the products we sell.

Our vehicles and business facilities should clearly carry the image that they are for practical, safe, and efficient use of our resources. A properly maintained, used service truck is more consistent than one that could be the envy of our neighbors. Our business office, store, or showroom (including the decor and plaques on the walls), should convey the clear message that we "fear God."

A desire to be separate from the world will also affect our attendance of business banquets and gatherings such as a farm exposition. When there is a meeting we are required to attend, such as a growers' meeting for contractors of a firm, the features of the meeting that are primarily social should be avoided. Our appearance at such events should openly declare

that we are not part of this world.

When we cannot be home for mealtime, a packed lunch will reduce the loss of time on the job, be better stewardship, and avoid the worldly atmosphere of restaurants. "My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path" ([Proverbs 1:15](#)).

We should take the opportunity to be on the offensive rather than being only on the defensive. We might give a tract, post a Gospel sign, put a bumper sticker on our vehicle, openly testify for the Lord, or kindly rebuke a foul word. A brother, who arrived at a construction job, was told by one of the workmen, "We were warned that when your company's people come, we must watch our language." Their consistent reputation preceded them to the job site and prevented exposure to objectionable language.

We should not minimize the danger of society's influence on us. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" ([1 Corinthians 15:33](#)). But the more seriously we take our responsibility to be ambassadors, the more protection we will have against the "tug" of the world. We should be proactive in representing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in today's world. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" ([2 Corinthians 5:20](#)).

*Brother Harlan*



## *The Glorious City.*

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" ([Hebrews 11:16](#)).

Every saint anticipates dwelling in heaven someday. The descriptions of this city revealed in the Bible increase our longing for the realization of its glories.

**What features make this city glorious?** First of all, the New Jerusalem is a holy city. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie" ([Revelation 21:27](#)). What a contrast to the cities of the earth, which abound with wickedness and violence! "And there shall be no more curse" ([Revelation 22:3](#)). No longer will man's sinful nature plague him, for it will be forever gone!

Heaven is also glorious because of the freedom from earthly cares. Death, sorrow, crying, pain, parting, fears, anxieties, and disappointments are all former things that are passed away forever. Rest from the labors of life replaces those cares.

The architecture of this city contributes to its glory. The city "lieth four-square.... The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" ([Revelation 21:16](#)). Is it a cube or a pyramid or a new heavenly dimension unknown to man? The length, width, and height each measure twelve thousand furlongs—fifteen hundred miles by earthly calculations! The names of the Lamb's twelve apostles are engraved on the foundations that surround the many mansions. Twelve different glittering gems garnish each foundation with singular beauty. The wall itself is fashioned of jasper, clear as crystal. Twelve gates bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel provide entrance through the wall into the holy city. These gates stand perpetually open, for there is no night to require their closure.

John further describes the interior of these walls as a city made with transparent gold. Surely the mansions and streets that are as clear as glass reflect the brightness of God and the Lamb. Our new heavenly eyes will be able to gaze upon this dazzling splendor.

**Who are the inhabitants of this glorious city?** "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" ([Revelation 21:22](#)). The glories of heaven surround these two individuals.

Not only will we view God's glory as the children of Israel observed from their posts around Mt. Sinai, but we also "shall see his face." In heaven, God will never need to say to man as He said to Moses, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" ([Exodus 33:20](#)). For the Old Testament saints, gone is the veil that separated them from the holy of holies. For the New Testament believer, faith and hope disappear: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" ([Revelation 21:3](#)).

The Lamb, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ is another inhabitant of this glorious city. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne ... stood a Lamb as it had been slain" ([Revelation 5:6](#)). Only through Him can earthly beings attain heaven, because this Lamb "halt redeemed us to God by [His] blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" ([Revelation 5:9](#)).

Also inhabiting this city are the holy angels. "But ye are come ... to an innumerable company of angels" ([Hebrews 12:22](#)). John further describes

their number as "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" ([Revelation 5:11](#)).

The other inhabitants of heaven are "they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Every faithful soul from the beginning to the end of time will find a place in this glorious city. These blood-washed millions form "the nations of them which are saved." Included in this group are "the kings of the earth [who] bring their glory and honour into [the city]" ([Revelation 21:24](#)). This implies a broader group of kings than the godly line of Judah, yet we normally consider earthly kings as operating under principles unlike those of this city. This illustrates a mystery that we will understand only when we arrive.

**What are the activities of the inhabitants of this city?** In eternity, the Lord God Almighty will continue to be a Father to the glorified saints. After the terrible judgments on evil are accomplished and men's destinies are sealed, God will glorify Himself in love and affection for His redeemed. As a Father, He will wipe away not only tears but also all sources of tears. His glory shines so brightly in heaven that no other light source is needed or desired!

The Lamb, the heavenly Bridegroom, will also lovingly care for His bride, the church. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters" ([Revelation 7:17](#)). As on earth, in Him we will find all that we need, for He is Alpha and Omega. Eternally, He will receive the praise and glory due Him, for He is worthy.

The angels serve and praise God throughout eternity. They worship, falling on their faces before God "saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen" ([Revelation 7:12](#)). Twelve angels serve as gatekeepers at the twelve gates of the city.

**What will we, God's redeemed, do in this glorious city?** Our life will be one of continual service. "His servants shall serve him," without the curse of sin to hinder. This restores God's original plan for mankind that was blighted at the fall. From our mouths also will spring "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power ... unto him that sitteth upon the throne." Also from the lips of the redeemed will flow the song of Moses and the Lamb.

As we anticipate the realization of these heavenly glories, may it inspire us to faithful living. May the service and praise we anticipate in that glorious city be a continuation of the praise and service we daily give on earth. Then, "When I see Thee as Thou art I'll praise Thee as I ought."

## *Biblical Separation in Our Vehicles (Part 1)*

In American culture, a vehicle reflects the status of its owner. According to industry experts, these metal and plastic machines are an extension of our personalities. Whether we like to admit it or not, our vehicles do say something about our identity. As Plain People, our vehicles should not be for the glory of self. Our tastes will be different from those of the worldly man, who seeks to impress his friends and neighbors.

The practical application of separation begins when we need to choose between walking after the flesh or walking after the Spirit. When we are tempted with pride, lust, and vanity, we need to choose humility, simplicity, and serviceability.

Cars did not exist when this Scripture was given: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." But certainly, in light of the prestige and status that vehicles represent in our time, we need to be separate in this area.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" ([Romans 12:2](#)). To be conformed is to act in accordance with current customs. Rather than conforming to this world, we are to be transformed, or changed, in nature. This change comes by the renewing of our minds. The proof of a transformed mind is seen in good and acceptable applications in practical issues.

The following verse of Romans 12 also challenges us "not to think of [ourselves] more highly than [we] ought to think; but to think soberly." Thinking too highly of ourselves will cause us to purchase vehicles that say, "Look at me." Sober thinking helps an individual to purchase vehicles that are practical and express good stewardship.

The Bible commands us to "love not the world," for we cannot love the world and God ([1 John 2:15](#)). The "lust of the eye" is part of the world. Automobiles are designed to catch the eye and project an image or represent a culture that appeals to particular age groups. The "pride of life" is part of the world. Men purchase vehicles that project their wealth or social status.

Our Rules and Discipline gives direction to the appearance of our vehicles. "They should be in keeping with Biblical modesty and separation.... The more expensive cars, cars with contrasting colors, sports cars as well as sports features on regular cars ... shall be avoided. The appearance and use of all our vehicles shall be consistent with these principles and regula-

tions." The uniformity of practice established by church direction helps us to remain separate and non-conformed in the purchase of our vehicles. If we would leave the application of separation to each member, a wide range of vehicles, features, and colors would soon appear, and the practical applications of separation would soon be lost.

Modesty dictates that we do not buy the more expensive vehicles, even though we may be able to afford them. Modesty suggests that we refrain from buying the latest model until the uniqueness and exclusiveness have worn off. Modesty also applies to the color of our vehicles. The use of contrasting colors or two-tone paints is a fad that serves no practical purpose and is strictly ornamental. Since color propriety is subjective, we do well to stay with subdued, dark colors.

Expensive cars may include not only vehicles with a high price tag but also ones that are classed as expensive. Following are a number of questions we should consider. How much should I spend for a vehicle? Can I afford to lose the vehicle I am buying? Will I need to borrow money to buy the vehicle? Will the amount I am spending affect my ability to give liberally to the church? How does the price I am about to pay compare to what my brethren are spending for vehicles? Poor discernment may appear as flaunting one's wealth and encourage jealousy. Good, serviceable vehicles can be purchased at reasonable prices.

Thirty-five years ago the luxury ("expensive") American-made vehicles were Cadillac and Lincoln; the premium models were Chrysler, Oldsmobile, and Buick. The European luxury cars were Rolls Royce, Land Rover, Jaguar, Saab, Mercedes, BMW, Volvo, and a few lesser brands. However, the European cars were expensive to repair, and their styling did not appeal to many of the American luxury buyers.

Since then, the picture has changed quite a bit. In the late eighties and early nineties, the Japanese very successfully introduced the luxury brands Honda Acura, Nissan Infiniti, and Toyota Lexus. In an effort to compete with the Japanese, the American manufacturers bought existing European luxury car lines and restyled them to appeal to American taste. Other luxury models, such as the Audi, have risen in popularity. The styling of many luxury cars may not differ much from lower priced cars. However, they still carry an image of prestige in the world. Some vehicle manufacturers produce a flagship model such as the Nissan Maxima, the Toyota Avalon, and the Hyundai Genesis that sport their latest gadgets and technology.

What produces a luxury image in a car? The price range of the car when it is new indicates its status. Some have an established luxury name like Mer-

cedes or Cadillac. Who are their competitors? In what ways and in what publications does the manufacturer advertise the vehicle? Volvo recently advertised a redesigned model with this tag line: "The luxury car that treats life like the greatest luxury of all." Public perception is also influenced by what sports heroes, politicians, business executives, and movie stars drive.

The newest technology is usually introduced in the luxury models. One area of concern is a new technology sometimes called infotainment systems. The information part may include outdoor temperature, vehicle performance, road conditions ahead, traffic conditions, location services, and GPS navigation. The entertainment side includes AM/FM radio, satellite radio, DVD players with built-in screens for the rear passengers, MP3 players, CD players, game players, Blue Tooth capability, and high-speed Internet service. It is very difficult to separate the objectionable features from the acceptable functions. Avoiding the newest and the latest models is preventive, but as this technology becomes cheaper, it may appear in the lower priced vehicles.

It will be an ongoing challenge to collectively "declare plainly that [we] seek [another] country" in the vehicles that we drive. *Brother Duane.*



### THE RELATIONSHIP OF LOVE AND UNITY

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (1 Peter 3:8).

In this verse we are given the call to be "of one mind" and to "love as brethren." Immediately, some questions may come to mind. Does this mean that we need to think the same as our brethren in every detail of life? Is it possible to be of one mind with our brethren if we do not agree on important issues? How can we truly love the brother that seemingly cannot see things our way? Before we attempt to answer these questions, let us consider what Peter meant when he told us to "love as brethren."

In the early verses of 1 Peter 3, husbands are directed to live with their wives according to knowledge. They are to know their wives' needs and be considerate of them. Do we know our brethren well enough to discern what brings them joy or sorrow? Do we have some words of encouragement for them when we know that they are facing trials? When they need a listening



ear, can they sense our compassion and desire to aid them? When we love as brethren, we will do our best to understand our brethren.

When God asked Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" he replied, "I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" ([Genesis 4:9](#)). Are we ever tempted with that kind of attitude? When a brother has faced defeat and seems to be growing cold toward the truth, do we feel our responsibility toward him and share our concern? Or is our response, "I don't know what his problem is. I wish he would get over it."

When we love as brethren, we sense our responsibility toward our brethren for their spiritual safety and seek to lift them up when they fall. We do so in humility and with concern for their well-being, accepting the same from them. When Samuel challenged Saul with his sin, Saul began to make excuses and blame others for his wrongdoing. How do we respond when others challenge us to consider an inconsistency in our life?

"Charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself" and "seeketh not her own" ([1 Corinthians 13:4, 5](#)). Brotherly love resists being offended when our counsel is rejected for the advice of a brother who seemingly always has ability to give sound advice. When brethren get together to help repair Brother John's house roof, are we willing to pitch in with the insignificant tasks? When we love as brethren, we appreciate our brother for his strengths and seek to have his talents seen instead of ours.

Having noticed these points, we could ask, "Is unity found among this kind of brethren?" Most certainly, it is! Let us notice how.

Peter exhorts us to be "of one mind." Paul instructs us with these words, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" ([Philippians 2:2](#)). If we will be all of one mind, we need a pattern to follow. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" ([Philippians 2:5](#)). As each of us has the mind of Christ within us, we will have the unity of the Spirit among us. The mind of Christ will also cause us to love as brethren. Jesus Christ is our perfect example of love. His love for mankind brought Him to earth to provide the redemption that only He could bring. His example of humility is totally free of self-exaltation or pride. His life on earth was lived for God's glory and man's salvation. We should seek to imitate Him in our brotherhood relationships.

We disagree with our brethren on issues at times. Can we still have unity at such times? [Romans 14](#) makes it clear that we will disagree on some details. Verse 18 clarifies these principles when it says, "For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." As we serve Christ, we will live by the doctrine that He has given us. We will be those

who encourage our brethren rather than hindering them in any way. For example, Brother Peter's church allows recorded singing, and he finds it inspiring to listen to hymns. Brother Paul, who goes to church with Brother Peter, believes that recorded singing can easily become simply entertainment. Neither brother is wrong in his view of the matter. It would be wrong for Brother Paul to start looking down on Brother Peter and feeling self-righteous because of his conviction. It would also be wrong for Brother Peter to knowingly play recordings in the presence of Brother Paul or to encourage him to listen to music against his conscience.

As long as we respect our brethren's convictions and views, we can be of one mind and love as brethren should. The only restrictions to these personal convictions are the principles of God's Word and the standards established by the church of which we are a part. However, church brethren should try to leave a united testimony, even in the details of life. To do certain things just to be different from our brethren and to retain personal identity detracts from the beauty of the church. We know the feeling we get when we bite suddenly on a pit in a cherry pie. Hard pits are not supposed to be in pies and neither should hard lumps of personal identity be in the church. God is glorified when we lose ourselves in the body and allow only Christ to be seen.

At times issues arise that test the unity of the church. How brethren relate to each other in these issues shows whether they are "of one mind" and whether they "love as brethren." Usually each person has Bible principles that they base their convictions upon. Again, we need to come back to the words of Paul and ask ourselves some questions. Will my conviction help me to serve God more acceptably? In holding to this conviction, do I show that I love my brethren and want to build them up? And, finally, do I truly desire God's will in the matter or is self dictating its own desires? If we truly love our brethren and desire a unified decision, we will hear our brother's viewpoint. We will not become impatient with him if he cannot understand our view. A lack of love for our brethren in these issues shows that we are not esteeming others better than ourselves. Once the voice of the church has spoken and has come to a Scriptural conclusion of a matter, we need to show our support by doing what is required of us. To oppose a decision made by our spiritual brethren and go our own way is to lose the blessing of God on our lives. Let us remember that one of the seven things God hates is "he that soweth discord among brethren."

Let us strive to love as Christ loved and to have His mind in each of us, so that we might be one in Christ. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect,

be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11). *Brother Lester.*



## Cultivating Godly Character (Part 5)

### The Submission of Mary

Do you struggle to find submission a joyful experience? Mary chose to submit to God's will under circumstances more difficult than many of us have been called to face. Called by God through the angel Gabriel to be the mother of the Messiah, Mary humbly consented, saying, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). What keys to submission did Mary possess?

Mary did not allow human logic to interfere with God's directives. What strange words Gabriel spoke: "And, behold, thou shalt ... bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS" (Luke 1:31). Desiring direction, Mary asked, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34). Missing in Mary's modest manner is the laugh of Sarah, the fleece of Gideon, and the unbelief of Zacharias. Modern thought questions Bible directives such as the Christian Woman's Veiling as being old-fashioned or irrelevant. We should beware lest these "logical reasons" replace simple faith in the literal Word. Submission to God's Word involves the application of all its teachings to daily living.

Mary possessed a servant spirit. Responding to Mary's wonder, Gabriel graciously detailed how so strange an event would unfold. Quelling further questions in tones of serene surrender, Mary responded, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." In other words, "Here I am Lord. Use me as You see fit." Such an attitude will make us servants "fit for the kingdom of God."

Mary cheerfully accepted the risks that accompanied God's instructions. Promising to be the "handmaid of the Lord" posed plenty of problems to this tender young virgin. Her reputation and her marriage plans were at stake. The sharp sword of suspicion threatened to pierce her soul with many sorrows. Into the teeth of all these risks Mary cast this voluntary commitment: "Be it unto me according to thy word." How much are you willing to risk for your Lord? Would you be ready to cut the ties of a friendship that hinders your walk with God? Can you "dare to be a Daniel"?

and bow your head in prayer in a public place?

Mary did not resist the clear will of God. Mary concluded her simple proclamation with a prayer that God would do to her "according to [His] word." No squirming. No restlessness. Here lies one of the secrets to joy in submission. Yielding to the light of God's will today results in present peace and continued guidance tomorrow. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" ([James 4:17](#)).

Having no need to tarry longer, Gabriel departed. Mary's ready, voluntary submission hastened his mission. God's work speeds onward when His people cultivate a habit of submission. *Brother Daniel.*



### PRAYER POINT

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

**Pray for "the fatherless and widows in their affliction."**

**Pray for those who are directly affected by the economic situation  
in loss of jobs and so forth.**

**May we remember to give thanks to the Lord,  
"Who daily loadeth us with benefits" (Psalm 68:19).**

*And it shall come to pass, that before they  
call, I will answer; and while they are yet  
speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb  
shall feed together, and the lion shall eat  
straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the  
serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor de-  
stroy in all my holy mountain, saith the  
LORD.*

*Isaiah 65:24-45*