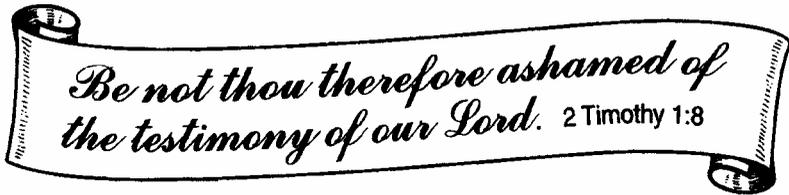


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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God instituted marriage at the creation of man and woman. Since that time, marriages have taken place many, many times. And even though weddings occur frequently among us today, each of them is unique and important. Marriage is instituted by God and each marriage is recorded and recognized in heaven. Not only is each one special, it is also sacred. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Genesis 2:24).

In the Old Testament, marriages illustrated the special relation that God had with His covenant people. Likewise, in the new dispensation, marriage is a symbol of the love and commitment between Christ and His church. Today, Christ and His bride are in a time of betrothal, awaiting the heavenly consummation. Both the wedding ceremony and the marriage relation are symbolic. Because of this symbolism, marriage is an ordinance of the church.

The solemnity of entering a lifelong commitment is portrayed in the first question of our marriage formula. Do you believe that matrimony is an ordinance instituted of God, and confirmed and sanctioned by Jesus Christ, and that you must therefore enter upon it in the fear of God? These vows are made to God rather than merely to one another. Sincere Christians, as they pursue marriage, will seek the leading of the Lord and desire His blessing above all else.

The home is the basic unit of the social structure. So, while marriage is an ordinance and our weddings are church functions, they also have a definite social dimension. We have no other church ceremony with an associated formal reception and the giving of gifts. Because of this social connection, weddings can easily move toward pageantry and frivolity. Over the years, weddings have been susceptible to innovation and the introduction of practices borrowed from the surrounding culture. Some of this pressure stems from the desire to have a unique and personalized wedding.

It is true that the New Testament does not specify details for conducting weddings and that our basic approach is based on Western custom. However, our weddings need to be regulated by Bible principle rather than gradually adjusting to cultural norms. In the conservative regroupings of the 1960s, wedding practices were strengthened with a return to a more Scriptural pattern. We must resist the pressure for practices that express

pride or tend toward lightheartedness. The church must maintain wedding practices that are God honoring and have His smile of approval and blessing.

Along a more practical vein, the dresses of those having part should be in keeping with Gospel simplicity. The design, print, and color must be consistent with godly humility and modesty. In an effort to avoid ornamentation, we have not used flowers in our weddings. But the use of flowers for the wedding pictures misrepresents and militates against this standard.

If a printed program is used, it should be kept simple. Some programs are too colorful and showy, and do not fit with the observance of a solemn church ceremony. Neither does it encourage simplicity to list names of those who have only an indirect part at the reception, such as gift carriers and table clearers.

There is pressure at times to add extras to the bridal table. For instance, a plain tablecloth should be used, rather than one with prominent ruffles. When planning a wedding, it is good to remember that a workable spirit will lend to better memories than details which may seem so important at the time. They will lose their importance as a couple settles down to the business of building a home.

There is a practice among some for a close friend to prepare a special arrangement of treats for the wedding trip. Included in this have been nonalcoholic beverages that simulate strong drinks. Certainly, this violates the principle of abstaining from all appearance of evil, and should not once be named among us. We do not use drinks to toast the health and welfare of each other but, rather, in the fear of the Lord, seek His face and beseech His blessing and guidance. This is an illustration of how a worldly practice can creep into our circles.

It is imperative that weddings and the associated activities contribute to the establishing of strong homes that are bulwarks of holiness and purity in a corrupt age. Such homes will help the church to be separated from the world and prepared for the marriage of the Lamb.

—HBG



Spiritual Watchfulness.

Spiritual watchfulness is a state of alert and continuous attention. Christ laid this solemn responsibility on every believer with these words: And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (

Mark 13:37).

Why must we be watchful?

Our Lord commands us to be watchful. He "commanded the porter to watch" (Mark 13:34). We have a natural tendency to become complacent, which will surely bring us to spiritual ruin. "Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (Mark 13:36).

We also have a tendency to be negligent and to drift (Hebrews 2:1-3). Slowly, almost imperceptibly, like a ship without an anchor, many a believer and church group drifted because they neglected the duty to watch.

We are in enemy territory. We face sinister foes that are intent on our destruction. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," and Satan is as a roaring lion. This calls for unrelenting watchfulness. The soldier who is sent behind the enemy lines will surely be very alert and watchful.

We must watch lest we enter into temptation. Jesus admonished His disciples, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). We are never exempt from temptation because of the lust of our flesh and the enticements of sin (James 1:13-15). However, if we stay alert and walk close to God, He has promised to temper our temptations so that we can bear them (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Watching is a matter of life or death. The unfaithful servant who fails to watch and be ready for the Lord's return will be cut asunder and sentenced to be with the hypocrites, where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:42-51).

For what should we be watching?

We need to watch continually lest the deceitfulness of our Adamic nature would allure us into sin. "Take heed unto thyself" (1 Timothy 4:16). "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

We need to be alert to our terrible adversary, the devil. The word vigilant in 1 Peter 5:8 is the same Greek word translated watch in other places. Paul reminded the Corinthians, "We are not ignorant of his devices." We are no match for him by ourselves, but in God's strength we can overcome. Only as we put on the whole armor of God can we possibly stand against the

wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Covetousness is another subtle danger. Christ emphatically warned, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15). Covetousness is the lust for things, whether legitimate or illegitimate, and the Bible equates it with idolatry. Where is our love? Is it on Christ or on things? The orthodox, otherwise faithful, church at Ephesus was severely rebuked by Christ for having left her first love (Revelation 2:4). May we take heed and diligently guard our affection today.

Deception can easily take us unawares. Christ warned, "Take heed that ye be not deceived" (Luke 21:8). The health-and-wealth gospel, the once-saved-always-saved teaching, God's grace turned into loose living, worldly attire, cut hair for women, tolerance of divorce and remarriage, and women in the pulpit are all examples of deception among professing Christians today. Surely the Lord would have us watch lest we become accustomed to such violations of Bible truth and fall from our own steadfastness.

And then we also have the calling to watch for our Lord's return (Mark 13:32-37). This is the most important event to keep on our minds. We need to be watching for Him because we do not know the hour of His coming. He will come suddenly, like a flash of lightning, and we are accountable stewards for Him. Certainly, such imminence, suddenness, and accountability should move us to continuous attention; diligent preparation; and faithful, obedient service.

How do we watch?

A meaningful devotional life will keep us alert. "He sees best who kneels most." The word watch is often linked with prayer. "Take ye heed, watch and pray" (Mark 13:33). "Watch ye therefore, and pray always" (Luke 21:36). "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). Drawing nigh to God in regular prayer puts us in the best frame of mind to be watchful. For there, proper priorities are established, love and devotion to Christ will blossom, and watchful anticipation for His coming is experienced.

Regular church attendance is an antidote to laxness. The psalmist admitted that his feet had almost slipped when he saw the wicked prosper. But when he went into the sanctuary of God, he understood their end. How many times we feel the power of sovereign grace and our perspective of life changes as we meet with the saints! Watchfulness is a work that we share as brethren as we watch for one another (Hebrews 3:13).

We must watch in the normal duties of life. Christ warned His followers in the Olivet Discourse, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your

hearts be overcharged with ... cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34). The warning is clear. We need to be alert lest the normal duties of life crowd out the most important work, and we are found wanting (Luke 8:14).

We must stay alert to issues that confront us. The Bible says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly" (Ephesians 5:15). This means to be alert, looking all around and carefully considering consequences. Today we face a technology explosion in communication, which calls for extreme watchfulness. Innovations need to be evaluated. Will it be good for us spiritually? Can it be used to God's glory? Where will it take us?

A sober outlook on life will foster alertness. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6). Life is more than a mere joke, and we must give account for every idle word (Matthew 12:36). While Christians are generally happy and cheerful, having a sense of humor, they view the world's hilarity as incompatible with watchfulness (Ephesians 5:4).

In the midst of the permeating spiritual decay of our day, we do well to reflect on the twice-repeated question in Isaiah: "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" The watchman answers, "The morning cometh, and also the night" (Isaiah 21:11, 12).

Truly, a glorious morning is coming for the prepared, but so is the night of outer darkness for the unprepared!

Brother Earl.



RESPECT FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP.

Peter warns against a spirit that despises government and is "not afraid to speak evil of dignities" (2 Peter 2:10). The prevailing attitudes of society tend to influence our thinking. God's people, living within such a climate, maintain respect for church authority by addressing the issue and by applying principles from God's Word.

We believe that the Bible is "authoritative in its counsels" and is "the only infallible rule of faith and practice." This is the main plank in our platform of church authority. God established various levels of accountability. "Children, obey your parents" (Ephesians 6:1). "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters" (Ephesians 6:5). "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls" (Hebrews

13:17). Because we believe the Bible to be authoritative and infallible, we see church leadership as established by God, not man. This should inspire respect.

God has clearly defined the need for church leadership. He has also given direction for filling this need. The church used nominations and the lot to fill the vacancy Judas left (Acts 1:15-26). By following this Biblical pattern, we emphasize two important truths: The ordained are called to this position by the will of God, and "the whole disposing thereof is of the Lotto." God chooses—not man. This demands respect.

It is possible, however, that leadership can sidestep from the will of God. As the early church battled false doctrine and apostasy, they faced many decisions and the idea of patriarchs was introduced. Difficult church matters were brought to the patriarchs for resolution. In the 300s, as Christianity began to decay, the position of pope surfaced as they elected one patriarch to be their head. One leader at the apex is not God's design. Peter challenged leaders not to be "lords over God's heritage."

Rather than lords, Peter inspires leaders to have a servant attitude toward their flock. A leader must aspire to be constantly empty of self and to more fully exalt Christ. Any worthwhile accomplishment or decision is a present expression of a past thought of God. John states his relation to Christ this way: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). This stimulates respect.

Instead of personal exaltation in leadership, there should be cooperative effort. The Bible clearly teaches a three-office ministry working together to nurture the flock. Paul says of Titus, "He is my partner and fellow helper concerning you" (2 Corinthians 8:23). Gifts and personalities vary, but, as leaders blend together to give direction, their differences can reinforce each other. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone" (John 12:24). This collective authority is a firm basis for maintaining respect. Since God has so clearly outlined authority and we have adequate direction how it is to work, can we stop here? Do followers have a part in maintaining respect?

We know the Garden of Eden was a perfect setting; we could say everything was square. Yet Satan appeared there, defying God by a simple question, "Yea, hath God said?" Satan still appears today with innocent-sounding questions. "Something needed to be done, but is there not a better way to deal with people?" "Anyway, where is true brotherly love?" Satan uses such questions, maybe even logical-sounding questions, to undermine respect.

Our respect for Scriptural church authority is integrally related to our submission to God's authority. No sincere leader will claim to always do everything exactly right. Those in places of responsibility must ever seek to draw men to God. However, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13 commands lay members to "know them which labour among you" and "to esteem them very highly in love." Our expression of these qualities is a thermometer of our submission to God.

Such expressions will promote respect in the rising generation. We know respect for authority runs counter to human nature. When submission is taught early, true character can develop. This produces men of God who understand that authority brings order, unity, and true peace.

As we follow God's direction for properly constituted authority, we will see disrespect to church leadership as from the devil himself. Our desire to see our leaders excel in their God-ordained offices will inspire respect in the church of tomorrow.

Brother Martin.



Separation in Vocational Choices

We continue to face the question, "What will I do to make a living?" A more important question to ask with the many, many job choices available may be, "What will a separated people do to make a living?"

Separation in vocational choices is important for the same reason we are separate in other areas of life. There are two separate forces at war in this world—"the prince of the power of the air" and God Almighty.

Does being separate from the world in our vocations mean that we will do nothing that the ungodly do? No, but rather we need to ask if a vocation fosters worldly pride or if it serves the needs of mankind.

Consider these questions before choosing an occupation.

Is it consistent with the Biblical principle of nonresistance? We will not employ ourselves in any type of occupation that requires us to take others to law. "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Romans 12:17). Neither will we be involved in a job that requires us to evict a tenant from a house. If the occupation we are considering requires employing a collection agency, we will avoid it. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably

with all men" (Romans 12:18).

Is it an occupation that will allow us to fulfill Ephesians 6:4? "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The ideal occupation may be in agriculture or another livelihood at home. This may not be possible for everyone. Will the occupation we are contemplating frequently keep us away from home overnight? Occupations such as truck driving that involve many nights on the road will spell ruin for the family. A person who spends every free evening working will face the same pitfall. A father needs to take time for the more important work of bringing up his children.

Is it an occupation that allows us to work with our hands (I Corinthians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:11)? We would not consider frequenting a gambling casino, but would we buy and sell on the board of trade? Is it any more ethical to buy and sell commodities that we never handle or use? We need to avoid business involvements such as these, or we will lose the practical obedience of Scripture. "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). Failing to follow this Bible directive will also deprive us of blessings such as, "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet" (Ecclesiastes 5:12). Although an office job may not be as physically strenuous, it is necessary and productive. Furthermore, not everyone can handle hard manual labor, so some will need to search for a job that meets their needs.

Is it an occupation that will avoid our being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14)? Perhaps the most common application of this verse is partnership with an unbeliever in a business. But there are other involvements that are more subtle. We are warned to "touch not the unclean thing" (2 Corinthians 6:17). What about serving as a clerk at a store that sells unclean things? Can we handle tobacco, liquor, lottery tickets, and so forth? "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel" (2 Corinthians 6:15)? Although we do business with the ungodly and witness to them, we must avoid jobs that expose us to the world's corrupting influence. Hearing the conversation of the unregenerate day after day will have an effect on us no matter how strong we think we are. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Is it an occupation that will allow us to keep the Lord's Day holy? When we remember the sacredness of this day, we will think carefully before working. Like the early church, we set aside this day in memory of the res-

urrection of our Lord. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them" (Acts 20:7). We know that some jobs, such as tending to livestock and clearing roads in winter, are necessary. If we are in the snow-removal business, should we clear snow from parking lots of restaurants, supermarkets, or other such non-emergency businesses? It is different if we clear public roads or parking lots of places like pharmacies and hospitals, because these may need to be used in emergencies and attending church.

May we with the wisdom of God's Word and the help of spiritual brethren make wise vocational choices. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Brother Stephen.



Minutes of the Conferring Fellowship Meeting Held at the Blue Rock Mennonite Church, September 23, 2010

Brother David moderated the morning session. He opened the meeting by calling attention to the historic significance of this date. On September 23, 1710, the Mary Hope docked at Philadelphia, bringing on it the first Mennonites who settled in Lancaster County. They located in the general area of present-day Willow Street, not far from Blue Rock. May we give God all the glory for bringing us to this point. Brother Matthew served as the song leader for this session. He led us in singing two opening songs, "O for a Thousand Tongues" and "Lord of the Harvest."

The devotional meditation was led by Brother Allen, who read Luke 15:1-7. The Pharisees were offended by what Jesus said about the ninety-nine. God rejoices more over the one lost sheep that was rescued, than the ninety-nine that saw no need for repentance. We are what we are by response to the Word. We need to avoid the self-righteousness of the Pharisees. He also referred to a Martyrs Mirror account, and then led in prayer.

The first message was brought by Brother Melvin. He chose to speak on the subject "The Relation of Biblical Authority and Church Authority."

He began by explaining Biblical authority. All authority resides in God. God spoke through His world and through His Word, which rings true. The Bible has authority because it is the Word of God. Jesus came in the flesh to say things that God could not say in His world or His Word.

The church has authority because Jesus promised that He would give the authority to do His work. Jesus gave authority to the church to forbid and to allow, and said that this would be recognized in heaven. The assumption of the entire New Testament is that the church has authority. The authority of church leaders was affirmed by early church authority. In the development of the Roman system, the church came to be seen as being equal to the Scriptures, and eventually to be even higher in authority than the Bible. The Protestant Movement was a protest against this view of the church, and the rallying cry of Protestantism became “solo scriptura” which means “only the Scriptures.” However, Protestantism has tended to swing to the other side, making the individual conscience the final authority. And people adapt the Bible to fit what they really want.

How can we find the proper balance in the relation of Biblical authority and church authority?

1. There is more to being the true church than only avoiding divisions.
2. We must continue to recognize that freedom of conscience is taught in the Bible.
3. The Bible recognizes church authority. Rebelling against that brings no blessing. Submission is such a fundamental truth, and the fact that submission is necessary implies disagreement.
4. We must recognize the authority of the church to make applications. The applications need to be clearly tied to the Scriptures.
5. We need to beware of church statements coming between people and the Scriptures. We need to get into the Word.
6. We need to rein in individualism with submission, humility, and love.

The second message was on the subject *Dortrecht Confession of Faith, Article XVIII, The Resurrection of the Dead and the Last Judgment* and was discussed by Brother Wendell. The resurrection is taught in both Testaments, but is more prominent in the New. This article of the Dortrecht Confession gives in one article what the Garden City Confession gives in three. This subject speaks about the closing of the era of time and the opening of eternity.

Apart from Jesus, no one can experience resurrection: He is the first fruits. This is something we have not seen, yet we believe that all men from all time shall awake, from the least to the greatest. The incomprehen-

sible power of God will bring all people together to stand before Him. And the good shall be separated from the evil. The basis of judgment will be the works, or deeds, of men.

According to Revelation 7:9, even the few that are saved are a multitude that no man can number. There are two destinies, and man chooses his own destiny. It is not predetermined by God, irrespective of man's choice. The doctrine of the resurrection is foundational; it is basic to our faith. Our fathers endured severe persecution because of this hope. That hope will help us to be faithful and endure to the end.

Our brother called our attention to Revelation 20, where is the record of John's view of the great white throne. Here is a description of the great final Judgment scene.

Brother Clarence brought the concluding message for the morning session, entitled **Effective Shepherding of the Flock**. He referred to John 21:15-17 and 1 Peter 5:1-8. Shepherding includes tending, nurturing, and folding the flock. There is more to tending than only feeding. He then used Psalm 23 as a basis for lessons for effective shepherding. This psalm is written from the sheep's perspective.

1. The shepherd must have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. David's success or failure depended on knowing the Lord. When David numbered Israel, he was out of tune with God and the sheep suffered.
2. The shepherd needs loving concern for the sheep. He needs a shepherd's heart, and the key to such a heart is to love the Lord Jesus. Jesus said to Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these'?"
3. The shepherd needs to be an example to the flock. Sheep cannot be driven, but they need to be led. As leaders, we are examples when our daughters do not appear with variations in necklines, fancy sweaters, and gray socks, and when our sons do not have low-maintenance haircuts, expensive cameras, and borderline cars.
4. The shepherd is responsible to feed the flock. Psalm 23:2 gives a picture of contentment. We need to do expository preaching, making practical applications and appealing to the will.
5. Shepherding includes restoring and rescuing the straying and lost sheep. We need to lead the penitent ones in the paths of righteousness.
6. The shepherd needs both an "among" and an "over" relationship with the sheep. Having a good "among" relationship will help one to be effective when he needs to carry out the "over" relationship.
7. The shepherd is responsible to prepare a table for the sheep. The table

referred to here is a flat area, or plateau, where the sheep can graze and be protected from the enemy. As leaders, we are preparing a table for the next generation. Have we been careful to pull out the weeds? Might it be that the younger generation has an appetite for forbidden areas of Internet use because some of the older sheep need to be in the system?

8. The shepherd leads from plateau to plateau till the sheep reach the final step to be in the presence of God.

The afternoon session was moderated by Brother Noah.

He opened by referring to the privilege of being in God's service. What God did for the Old Testament Levites, He wants to do with church leaders today. The song leader for the afternoon was James Kreider. For opening songs he selected "Christ's Everlasting Gospel" and "I'll Live for Him."

Brother Alvin gave the opening devotional meditation, reading 1 John 2:8-11. Light in darkness describes the coming of Jesus into the world. This has been repeated many times in the lives of those who have come to the light. Here we have the formula for staying in the light, which is loving our brother. Why does hatred for a brother plunge one into darkness? When we close the door of forgiveness, we are in darkness. How much space is there between love and hate? We may try to create a third category, but there is none. He led us in prayer.

The first message was brought by Brother Jerry on the subject "**I Will Pay That ... I Have Vowed**" (Jonah 2:9). It seems that some of the best words recorded from Jonah came from the deep. He turned from the call of God, and God needed to deal with him. Anyone taking his own way rather than God's comes up short. This book is more about God than about man, and shows what God expects. God and other people are counting on us to keep the vows we have made.

A. The purpose of a vow

1. Vows are an expression of dedication and consecration. They help us to focus our lives.
2. Vows help us make the right choices from here away.
3. Vows help us to keep going in difficulty.
4. Vows bring the security of God-consciousness to the work. It is finally not our work.
5. Vows help remove any of the sting that comes because of unfair criticism.
6. Vows help provide resistance against drift and apostasy by providing a

benchmark. Apostasy in part has resulted from ordained men not holding to their vows.

B. Ordination vows

1. In this vow there are three questions that are asked. As ordained leaders keep these vows, they encourage the membership to keep the vows they have made.

2. It is important to read Mennonite writings and have an understanding of church history.

3. We need to speak to deviations in practice. The people of Nineveh were on God's heart.

This was followed by a period of open discussion.

There was a question and then some discussion about the concept that baptismal vows include never leaving a church group. There was also discussion on a question about freedom and the lifting up of the individual. There were thoughts shared in relation to several of the messages.

The last message, entitled "**Seeing That Ye Look for Such Things**" (2 Peter 3:14), was given by Brother Luke.

First Peter was written to encourage the believers who faced persecution, and 2 Peter addressed the false teaching within the church. Those who were living in sin scoffed at the thought of future judgment.

A. What are the things we ought to remember?

1. The words of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles agree.

2. Just as the world perished by a never-to-be repeated Flood, it will be judged by a never-to-be-repeated fire. It will be dissolved, never to be brought back, in order to make way for the new.

3. When we see the strange fires in the world and in the church today, the fire of God is waiting.

4. God is the God of both time and eternity.

5. We may not judge God in relation to seeming delay, which really is an evidence of His long-suffering.

B. What are the things for which we should look?

. We are looking for the day of the Lord. This term is always used in the context of judgment. Creation to the rapture is man's day. The day of Christ includes the translation of the church and the judgment seat of Christ. The day of the Lord includes a period of judgment, known as the Great Tribulation, and the millennial kingdom. The end of the day of the Lord will merge into or overlap with the beginning of the day of God, the

dawn of righteousness.

We are "basting unto the coming of the day of God." The term basting means "to desire earnestly."

3. We ought to see the progressive and cumulative work of God.

C. How can we be diligent?

1. Pay attention to our personal relation with God.

2. Be diligent in our study of the Word.

3. Be diligent to preach with doctrinal soundness.

4. Be diligent in understanding the prophetic Scriptures.

5. Be warned lest we fall into the error of wickedness.

6. Be diligent in encouraging faithful youth.

7. Be diligent in feeding our own souls and the flock.

God will get glory forever; will we share in it?

Submitted by the secretary, Brother Harold.



PRAYER POINT

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

Pray for the Ministers' Bible Study Fellowship meetings
and the Christian Day School Institute.

Pray for the Mission Board as they give direction
and inspire the church to fulfill Christ's Great Commission
(Matthew 28:18-20).

Thank the Lord for graciously providing many
with another good growing season.

Ask the Lord to increase our faith as we face the many tests of life.

Pray that God would help us to desire the better, heavenly country
and to live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth
(Hebrews 11:13, 16).

Ordering the Child (Part 4)

Social Adjustments

"To Sunday school, to Sunday school, tomorrow I'm going to Sunday school," sang Justin as his tricycle zoomed around the clothesline post. The exciting prospect of Sunday school for Justin may not hold the same thrill for twelve-year-old Mary, who is on the back seat of the family van traveling to a strange church for the Sunday morning service.

Children will inevitably face social adjustments. And sooner, rather than later, a child must discover that he is not the only "pebble on the beach." The security of a loving, disciplined home will ease the social transitions of childhood.

Changes in family life bring social adjustments. A new baby can disorient and upset a preschooler's routine, but he needs to learn that his behavioral boundaries remain the same. Relating to older sibling's dating partners, or even to in-laws, requires a new reserve and respect. The old concept of children "being seen and not heard" and "speaking only when spoken to" still has merit in relating to parental peers, grandparents, and other adults.

A shifting in authority figures requires social adjustments. Learning to relate to authority outside of the home is foundational for the rest of life. Justin should discover that disobeying his Sunday school teacher brings the same results as disregarding Father and Mother. The rules and discipline of the new schoolteacher give an opportunity to blend with another's direction.

New friends generate social adjustments. Can Mary be courteous when Joanne seems to avoid her? Can Fred refrain from arguing when Calvin informs him that his father has the better truck? Expecting our children to sit and visit with handicapped Henry will help them learn the value of understanding others. Offering to push his wheelchair or to get him a drink will cultivate the law of kindness. They must learn that character is more important than popularity. This will aid in choosing the right kind of friends. "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly" (Proverbs 18:24).⁷⁸⁰

Social graces smooth social adjustments. "Please," "Thank you," and "Pardon me" are like oil in the gears of our social "transmissions." Welcoming the strangers at church takes courage but is a responsibility that must be developed. Children should learn to shake hands and say their name clearly while looking their elders in the face. Our children's social catechism should include becoming titles such as Uncle, Aunt, Brother, and Sister. Personal hygiene is a necessary ingredient for social respect.

Social adjustments continue for life. And may the school of life yield the

results found in Psalm 144:12: "That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."
Brother Philip.



O Holy Saviour

*A Holy Saviour, Friend unseen,
Since on Thine arm Thou bidd'st me lean,
Help me throu'out life's changing scene,
By faith to cling to Thee.*

*Blest with communion so divine,
Take what Thou wilt, shall I repine,
When, as the branch is to the vine,
My soul may cling to Thine?*

*What tho' the world deceitful prove,
And earthly friends and hopes remove,
With patient, uncomplaining love,
Still would I cling to Thee.*

*Tho faith and hope are often tried,
I ask not, need not, aught beside;
So safe, so calm, so satisfied,
The soul that clings to Thee.
Charlotte Elliot.*

