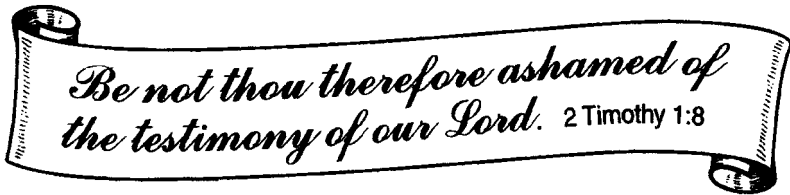


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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The Jews were shocked. Pilate had slain several Galileans and mingled their blood with their sacrifices. Had God allowed this because they were very sinful? Jesus used this tragic current event to calmly but decisively challenge their hearts. He questioned, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" Luke 13:2-3.

Repentance is God's primary call ever since man committed sin. With this question God invited Adam to repent: "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" Genesis 3:11. The Old Testament message rang clear—sin separates from God. The New Testament begins with the call of both John the Baptist and Jesus, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" Matthew 3:1-2; Matthew 4:17. Peter cried out on Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you" Acts 2:38. In Revelation Jesus called five of the seven churches to repent. Without repentance we "shall all likewise perish."

Repentance is an attitude of regret and remorse toward sin personally committed. It also includes abhorrence for all sin. When one repents, he takes full responsibility for his sin. He does not excuse his sin or blame others for leading him into sin. 2 Samuel 12:13

What attitudes accompany a penitent heart? When acknowledging sin, to shed tears of penitence and remorse is right. However, the sorrow should be turned to joy. King David closes the penitential Psalm 32 with "be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

Godly fear provides a fertile seedbed for repentance. When Isaiah saw God, he also saw himself and responded, "Woe is me" (Isaiah 6). No one can ignore sin while walking in the presence of God's holiness. One may excuse sin if he compares himself with others, but the pure searchlight of God's Word will always expose sin.

Humility will be evident when one responds in repentance. Walking in humility leads one to acknowledge his weakness and need for help in temptation. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" 1 Corinthians 10:12.

To repent, one must exercise faith in God and His holy and eternal being

Hebrews 11:6. He must recognize God's right and authority to both examine and judge his life. While "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" Hebrews 10:31, it is a joy to "commit the keeping of [our] souls to him in well doing as unto a faithful creator" 1 Peter 4:19.

The call is personal—"Except ye repent." How do I express a penitent spirit? Repentance will include confession. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" Psalm 32:5.

Our Rules and Discipline, Article III, number 3 states: Confession of sin shall be made personally to God. Inasmuch as sin influences the lives of other individuals and also brings reproach upon the church, therefore the church holds that where individual relationships and influence are involved, the involved persons should make suitable confession one to another and in the church when necessary to acquire peace in accordance with the teaching of Matthew 5:23-24; Matthew 18:15-20; James 5:16.

Sins such as fornication, adultery, lawsuits, drunkenness, and persistent worldliness and pleasure seeking shall be confessed publicly in accordance with the principles of such Scriptures as Joshua 7:19; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Timothy 5:20.

Restitution is also a fruit of repentance. Although wrongs cannot be completely reversed, restitution expresses sincere repentance. Zacchaeus illustrated a Christian spirit: "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" Luke 19:8.

Repentance involves changing course and walking in obedience to God. Godly repentance is voluntary and cannot be forced. Those who resist direction from a Scriptural church or home are not living in repentance. Ignoring direction on hair styles, clothing standards, technology guidelines, vehicle standards, practice of ordinances, or lifestyle reveals an unrepentant heart.

A repentant spirit labels past sin as sin. Glorifying in past misconduct reveals an unrepentant heart. When youth share how fast they drive or older persons discuss how they took advantage of others, they have not repented. One who repents will desire to grow. He will welcome challenges to improve his personal walk with God. He will meditate in the Law day and night Psalm 1:2. He will not be offended easily and will be conscious of his impact on his brother's life.

Am I truly penitent?

—*Brother John*

"Is the Young Man ... Safe?" (Part 1)

King David anxiously watched for a messenger to bring news concerning his son Absalom. When the messenger arrived, he immediately asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" 2 Samuel 18:32. Sad to say, the young man was not safe—either physically or spiritually.

Child training is very serious. As parents, we feel inadequate for the task. We know that if we make a grave mistake, we can never undo it. And so, we ask ourselves the question King David asked: "Is the young man safe?" David is an inspirational example in many ways, but he did fail with his family in numerous ways.

Parents must do more than become aggravated. When David heard what Amnon had done, he was very wroth 2 Samuel 13:21. David grieved over the course his sons were taking. He wept and prayed. But he did not punish Amnon for his wickedness or Absalom for his rebellion. Perhaps David, like Eli, rebuked his sons for their evil deeds but "restrained them not" 1 Samuel 2:23-25; 3:13.

Children's misconduct and disobedience will stir our spirits too. But raising our children will take more than prayers and tears. If a child steals, we must do more than scold. If a teenager races with his car, we should rebuke him and take his license besides.

Parents must do more than let children do what they want. We read these sobering words concerning Adonijah: "His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" 1 Kings 1:6. David told the captains to deal gently with Absalom for his sake. How different the story might read if David had dealt firmly with his sons throughout their lives!

We must teach our children to obey. The Bible repeatedly commands obedience and warns against the disastrous results of disobedience. Paul wanted his members to obey not only in his presence but even more so in his absence Philippians 2:12. Our children are not "safe" if they pull tricks behind our backs. Our young men are not "safe" if they disobey the Bible school principal and cannot stay in bed at night. Our young women are not "safe" if they do not heed church regulations.

Parents must do more than like their children. While Absalom lived in exile, David longed to go forth unto him 2 Samuel 13:37-39. David was a normal parent. He naturally loved his children. We love our own children too. God made us so. We guard them as the "apple of the eye." We like to buy them tractors, dolls, and milk shakes. But parenting is much more than

simply liking our children.

The Bible states and restates that children need correction. In reality, true love moves us to correct our children.

Parents must do more than give in to their children's wishes. Absalom knew how to get his own way. He begged until David allowed the king's sons to attend his sheep-shearing feast. After his exile, he pestered until David relented his judgment. Children will beg until they get their way—if we let them.

Our children's ideas and suggestions often do merit consideration. We should not reject an idea just because it came from our child. But on issues of right and wrong, children should quickly realize that begging changes nothing except the consequences. And even on non-moral issues, we should not repeatedly change our minds for their whims.

Parents must do more than make sure their children have friends. Amnon had a friend who led him into trouble. As parents, we need to know who our children's friends are even if they are from our own church. What influence are they leaving? Do they give books and CDs without our knowledge? Are our youth accountable for where they go and what they do?

Parents must do more than let someone else do the training. Apparently, David had an officer to bring up his sons 1 Chronicles 27:32. Did managing the kingdom leave little time to be a father?

Some busy fathers let their wives do the training. After all, business and church work are important too, they reason. But does a short conversation at the end of the day bring everything up to date? We thank God for faithful wives, but fathers must not let them bring up the family alone. Schools and Bible schools can help round out flat spots from our homes. And we appreciate how they help our children mature. But we dare not brush off our responsibilities onto them either.

"Is the young man safe?" Our children's spiritual safety is a serious matter. In many ways, we can follow our God-given inclinations. But in other ways, we need to go beyond what we naturally feel like doing. Above all we need God's blessing. Without Him, we could do nothing.

Brother Philip



Avoiding Apathy

"Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." Jehu was busy annihilating the house of Ahab when he met Jonadab and spoke these words. And what a zeal he had! With rapid-fire maneuvers he felled two kings, the queen mother, and more than one hundred others of Ahab's posterity. Then he stormed on to destroy every last prophet, servant, and priest of Baal in all the land of Israel 2 Kings 9-10.

But Jehu was apathetic. After he had vented his zeal and received God's commendation for it, we read these tragic words: "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart" 2 Kings 10:31. So was his zeal for the Lord? He had zeal so long as carrying out a specific command aligned with his own interests and provided for the expression of his native impulse for speed and action. But when it came to turning the hearts of all Israel and his own heart wholly to the Lord God of Israel, he was indifferent. Zealous in profession and bold in proclamation and partial performance, he was nonetheless apathetic in matters most important.

Apathy is very native to human nature with its aversion to toil or conflict. To some extent, every one of us must relate to apathetic tendencies in some area. We can, as Jehu, be ever so zealous in some good thing yet complacent in other more crucial areas. One can be a very keen, aggressive businessman and at the same time be a very complacent father. One can be avid in reading, devoted in scrapbooking, and ardent in loving children, yet be very indifferent in housekeeping.

The enemy of our souls knows no apathy. The forces of evil arrayed against the Christian are persistently intent and energetic. Human nature itself is unrelenting in its pull toward evil. And our exposure to a godless society is constant.

No wonder the Scriptures liken the Christian life to warfare! We feel the urgency in commands such as "stir up," "flee," and "fight." Injunctions such as "Hold that fast which thou hast" and "Thou therefore endure hardness" call us to endurance.

Apathy threatens personal victory. Are we determined to overcome every temptation—to be stronger spiritually today than yesterday? Are we determined to overcome the hidden sins of the spirit, or are we content just to look right outwardly?

The fault of apathy in our spiritual life lies in our level of commitment. With Apostle Paul, we must die daily. We must fervently desire a fuller knowledge of God's Word and be fully committed to respond to every truth

the Spirit may reveal.

Apathy threatens godly parenting. Eli, the high priest, rebuked his sons but failed to restrain or discipline them. Children need to be taught and nurtured. They need counsel and guidance and at times firm rebuke. But they also need early and ongoing consistent discipline. We must not be satisfied until they have learned strict honesty and willing obedience. Parents must sense whether their children are embracing the values they are taught and be alert to their attitudes so these time-critical issues can be addressed promptly.

Healthy parent-child relationships are imperative. Adolescents and youth need counsel and direction but these helps will be received only when discipline has been effective and good relationships are maintained. Unless children learn to think for themselves and to take personal responsibility for their actions, they will follow their native impulses into foolishness, fantasies, and fads. Are we as parents sufficiently alert to these needs?

Parents must know where their children are and what company they keep. They are responsible to curb the excessive peer pressure of social gatherings and telephone interchange that militates against parental influence and personal, conviction-building meditation.

Wise is the father who helps his young son find an occupation involving toil and sweat rather than a secretarial or managerial position. These may come later in life; right now, the best tonic for body, soul, and spirit is good, hard work—a much-needed ingredient in the development of endurance. The ability to bear heavy physical toil affects how one will relate to spiritual conflicts.

Above all, parents must nurture in children a love for the Lord and His Word, a deep sense of humility, willing service, and joyful discipleship. Any parent who is not often gripped with the immensity of his task, his personal inadequacy, and his tremendous accountability before God is apathetic.

Apathy is a threat to the kingdom. We almost gasp as we read Hezekiah's words: "Good is the word of the LORD ... IS it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?"

How indifferent! Where was his concern for his posterity and God's heritage? Where was the passion he should have felt to remedy the situation? Today the enemy is still stalking God's people. Watchmen and warriors alike must shake off all drowsiness. We must not for a moment entertain thoughts of accommodating the enemy's suggestions. We must not trust "an arm of flesh," only God can give the victory. Yet we have much to do.

Leaders are called to shepherd the flock and protect it against the advance of the enemy. But leaders need the support of every member. They need the support of youth who zealously serve the Lord and appreciate the "old paths." And they need the support of parents who ensure that their children are well within the standards.

Fathers, it is our responsibility to make sure our children's clothes are acceptable. Casual dress begets spiritual apathy. Fathers are responsible to buy acceptable cars for their sons, to see to it that their youth's courtship is properly monitored, and to ensure that their wedding plans are acceptable.

Apathy tends to be satisfied with the status quo and is even comfortable with a gradually degenerating practice. We should be alarmed about fads within the church. We must understand the influences behind changes in hair styles, dress patterns, and veiling designs and say a firm no. It should concern us that suit coats tend to be laid aside earlier in the spring and left off longer in the fall. Unchecked, our practice will degenerate to going without suits all winter or wearing jackets instead of formal suits.

We must remain sharp in our lookout for the increasingly prevalent signs of pietism, namely, a depreciation of Biblically ordered, disciplined church life along with an overemphasis on one's spiritual life. We must ask ourselves frequently, "What influence do I and my family exert upon the church?"

"Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times," cried the distressed prophet after King Joash had smitten only thrice. But how was the king to know? It was not a matter of knowing; it was a matter of feeling! Had Joash felt as deeply about deliverance from Syria as he ought, he would have smitten more often.

Do our hearts yearn for the good of the church? Our depth of feeling will determine how energetically we work and how carefully we watch.

Brother Andrew



When Is Hunting a Sport?

Hunting wild game has been a part of livelihood throughout history. But hunting has increasingly become more of a sport than a sustenance activity. Can we continue this aspect of our colonial heritage without allowing it to be a passionate sport?

Hunting is a sport if it crowds out devotion to God.

"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). Our worship is misplaced if we plan to skip personal Bible reading and prayer or family worship to hunt. "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" (Psalm 119:16). Is hunting in our thoughts during the church worship service, and does it pervade our after-service conversation? Did it keep us from preparing for the Sunday school discussion? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10:27).

Hunting is a sport if it takes priority over our families. This could be expressed by requiring them to take on a heavy load of chores so we can claim our favorite hunting spot in plenty of time or by leaving the family to live with friends at a hunting cabin for a few days. We might even be home but not really with our families because of our mental preoccupation with hunting. Do we show little interest in their accomplishments, their projects, or their play? Do we listen to their burdens or fears? In our hunting, do we really provide for our own, or does the family not prefer the meat we bring home? If our family dreads hunting seasons and all that they entail but we persist for our own pleasure, are we serving ourselves first?

Hunting is a sport if it takes priority over activities of the church. If we devote many hours to developing time-consuming skills such as archery or muzzle loading but can hardly find time for church cleaning, outreach activities, a workday for a brother in need, or prayer meeting, our priorities are distorted. What do we do if a local need conflicts with hunting plans? Are we "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"?

Hunting is a sport if we violate the principles of good stewardship. Do we own more guns than we need, own a hunting cabin, or travel long distances just to hunt game not available in our area? To go with friends to buy supplies as a pleasurable social outing will endanger our better judgment. With peer pressure added to the pressure of our own carnal desires, we may be tempted to waste time and money with things like hunting games or target practice in a simulated wildlife setting.

Are we tempted to extravagance in outfitting ourselves? Do we need

high-dollar guns and scopes? Do we need a complete set of outdoor? When is what I wear just for hunting, when an orange vest over a work coat would be enough? Do we spend for such things but have little to give in the offering or fail to pay our share for our Christian day school? Do needs of the family, such as getting a toothache checked or replacing a faulty appliance, take second place?

Another example of poor stewardship is hunting for game animals that we have no intention of eating. "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious" (Proverbs 12:27). Is it proper to shoot game just for fun? Even animal life is precious to God, and He created animals for our use—not to be killed just for sport.

In our day of affluence, we struggle to recognize the wrong of spending just for pleasure. "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:14). Notice what King Solomon found when he sought pleasure as an end in itself: "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 2:1). Lasting fulfillment will come from serving God and others with our finances.

Hunting is a sport if we lay aside the principles of separation and the unequal yoke. Joining a hunting club, even if it is just for the privilege of using the shooting range, will associate us with activities of the club that we cannot support. To join a hunting gang made up of people with differing convictions for an enjoyable social event will bring delusion. As we come together with a common interest, wearing common hunting clothes, the pressure to compromise will be intense. The devil will be pleased for us to subtly assume that we are all one in the faith. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

Hunting is a sport when motivated by pride. The culture of hunting magazines and sports megastores cultivates idolatry. Hunting competition, lingo, and boasting should be repulsive to our spiritual sense. Do we retell and glamorize stories of our skillful marksmanship and clever strategy? Do we let worthwhile game pass just to boast a bigger trophy? "The pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). We may be able to determine if hunting has become a sport among us by listening in on the little

boys' discussions. Are they humble?

Do we live to serve God and others or long for the next season for a break from serving? Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). What is your meat?

Brother LaRay



CONGREGATIONAL OUTREACH ACTIVITY MINISTERING WITH GOSPEL SIGNS

What can God do with the ten-second message of a Gospel sign? Can God touch some life in that short time? As we drive our roadways, many messages beckon to us from signs along the road or stickers placed on cars. In a few seconds, they can make us hungry, discontent, even paranoid, or rebellious. How refreshing to find among these signs words that stir our thoughts towards God!

Moses commanded the people of Israel, "Write [God's law] upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:9). This would help them to not forget God as they enjoyed the good land of Canaan. Believers still need this aid today. Our inborn tendency is to forget God. Exposure to God's Word can stir our faith and keep our love for Him burning bright. Christians also desire to draw sinners to God. A Bible verse or sentiment displayed at our "gate" or on our vehicle could stir thoughts that turn sinners on a path toward Jesus Christ.

Placing Gospel signs requires forethought. Which Bible phrase is appropriate to display? The average reader should understand the message. It should at least awaken thoughts that draw their mind towards God. A vague message is not effective. Consider the nature of the message as well. Is it too confrontational or contentious? Testifying against sin will be confrontational. However, our highest concern should be to point men to a holy God—not to point fingers at men. Is the message true to the tenor of God's Word? The message should be redemptive and inspire faith in our great God.

An effective message is placed where it is readable. A strategically placed vehicle decal or sign along the road will catch the eye. Trees, shrubs, or poles should not hide the sign. Safety is another factor to con-

sider. Will the sign placement hinder the view of a driver as he pulls out of a driveway or intersection? Unfortunately, vandalism may also determine where to erect a sign. Such actions may be deterred if it is closer to a house. Sometimes, it may be best to remove the sign for a time till feelings calm down.

The neatness of the sign also contributes to its effectiveness. If the signpost is falling apart or overgrown with ivy, observers may get the impression that they may neglect the message too. Our burden is to keep from hindering the work of God's Spirit.

How we display a Gospel message is likewise very important. The message should be placed with Christian love and prayer. A proud, judgmental spirit will hinder the message of truth. Our aim is to draw men and women to Jesus Christ. We should meditate on the Bible truths we share and let them affect our daily lives. Sign readers should see us living the Gospel message.

Ten seconds or less may not sound like much time to influence a soul for God. Nevertheless, God has used the Gospel messages we display to inspire the saint and draw the sinner to Himself. This work is God's work and the results are for His glory. Be faithful in living and telling the Gospel message, for "the word of God is not bound" (2 Timothy 2:9).



Be Strong and of a Good Courage

Courage? When all looks dark? Look at the Source of light!
Courage? When fear would reign? Trust in the God of might!
Courage? When all's unknown? Know all is in God's hands!
Courage? God's on the throne! With Him we conquer lands!

—*Sister Debbie*



"Glorify God in Your Body" (Part 3) Diligent Labor

Beep! Beep! The alarm clock rings and Jay jumps out of bed. After his routine morning worship, he heads to do the morning chores, whistling a merry tune. He thinks, "What a privilege to be able to work!"

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" Ecclesiastes 9:10. The job at hand deserves diligence. Whether a barn raising or a big pile of laundry, we willingly pitch in. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise" Proverbs 6:6. The busy little ant can teach the big man a lesson in practical wisdom.

God's people work to provide for their own needs. "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" 1 Timothy 5:8. God's people also labor to "support the weak" and to "give to him that needeth." Can we help happily whether it is our own pile of peas or another's tons of tomatoes? Can we tackle our own chores with zeal and also sing while feeding the neighbor's calves?

When should we be diligent? The parable of the laborers, Matthew 20 teaches that, whether early or late, the householder needed workers in the vineyard. Jesus sensed the urgency of His Father's business: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" John 9:4. God's people are busy now!

Diligence and procrastination never look each other in the face. The alarm clock rings for a reason. Do we heed it or sluggardly push the snooze? Can we complete one job and begin another without wasting moments between? Some people follow the concept, "Never do today what can be done tomorrow." "Never put off for tomorrow what can be done today" will serve us better.

Diligence and perseverance hold hands. "So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley" Ruth 2:17. Perseverance overcomes the despondency of dirty dishes or the despair of none-ending repair, yes, even all the demands of daily duty. Young children should be taught to stick at it till the toys are all away or the dishes are all washed.

What rewards does diligent labor carry? How precious is the satisfaction of a job well done! Food on the table is another simple reward. "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing" Proverbs 20:4. A diligent laborer sleeps well. "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet" Ecclesiastes 5:12. To those who are not "wea-

ry in well doing," certainly, the greatest reward will be Jesus's words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord" Matthew 25:23.

—*Brother Andrew*



PRAYER POINT

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

Pray for those who have bereaved of loved ones
That they find comfort through the God of all Comfort

Pray that God would bless parents with wisdom from above
To bring up their children for the Lord on these perilous days

Pray for those who do know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord
That they would respond to the Holy Spirit's conviction

May we with the psalmist "bless the Lord at all times
And keep His praise continually in our mouths
Psalm 34:1

