

"Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep..."

# THE TESTIMONY

...of thy mouth." Psalm 119:88

VERSE OF THE MONTH

*"...I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son... And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. 1:5-6*

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## FAIREST LORD JESUS

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler Of All Nature,  
O Thou Of God And Man The Son:  
Thee Will I Cherish, Thee Will I Honor,  
Thou My Soul's Glory, Joy, And Crown.

Fair Are The Meadows,  
Fairer Still The Woodlands,  
Robed In The Blooming Garb Of Spring:  
Jesus Is Fairer, Jesus Is Purer,  
Who Makes The Woeful Heart To Sing.

Fair Is The Sunshine,  
Fairer Still The Moonlight,  
And All The Twinkling Starry Host:  
Jesus Shines Brighter, Jesus Shines Purer  
Than All The Angels Heaven Can Boast.

Beautiful Saviour!  
Lord Of The Nations!  
Son Of God And Son Of Man!  
Glory And Honour, Praise, Adoration,  
Now And Forevermore Be Thine!

*Author Unknown*

# THE TESTIMONY

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## EDITORIAL

## EVEN GREATER THAN FAITH

*I Cor. 13:13*

What is this attribute in the Christian's life that the apostle Paul holds forth as so great and so needful?

The great Apostle, in the midst of his letter to the Corinthian church, begins to speak of a gift that is more excellent than all the gifts that he has spoken of previously, that a Christian can possess. It is, in fact, one that is required. It is necessary.

Charity has been defined as "The love of God, in man, to man." Think of it! God placing His love in every converted heart, and feeble man being able to feel and experience the great LOVE that our God feels for all.

Behold how Paul holds forth the theme of CHARITY. If we do not have it, we are nothing. We may speak like an angel, but if we have not charity, we are nothing. We may have the gift of prophecy, and have great understanding of many mysteries. But if we have not charity, it is nothing. We may have all faith, so that we could remove mountains, and yet if we lack charity, it is all as nothing. This is a sobering thought. It gives us pause, and it should. Notice the effect upon the Christian life.

Charity suffers a long time and still is kind. Charity does not envy others. Does not attempt to place itself out in front, and does not boast. Charity does not behave in inappropriate ways. Charity does

not seek its own. It is not easily provoked. It thinks no evil. Charity does not rejoice in anything that is sinful but rejoices only in the truth. It bears every burden, and believes all that the Word of God declares. All of the promises of God, charity patiently hopes for, and endures all that comes upon it as it waits.

Charity never fails and will be eternal. Though knowledge and tongues and many prophecies shall fail and come to an end, yet charity will never fail. It will always be effective and will last forever.

It is difficult for us to understand these things. We see through a glass darkly. But when that which is perfect is come, then temporal things will be done away. When we shall see Him face to Face, then all will become clear, and we shall know these truths even as also we ourselves are known by Him.

Many things in the Scriptures are held forth as very great and important. Faith is one. Where would we be without faith? We come to God by faith. We stand by faith. We live by faith. Surely faith is the greatest theme in the Word of God.

And yet, notice. The Apostle ends his small treatise with these words. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity. But the greatest of these is *charity*."

Lowell Miller

## A CALL FOR ARTICLES AND POETRY

### A CALL FOR ARTICLES

The editor of *The Testimony* has been having difficulty filling the pages for the monthly publication of our New Conference paper.

*The Testimony* began in 2010 as a 32-page publication. With the January 2018 issue the publication became a 28-page publication. The readers may have noticed that, with the February 2024 issue, it became necessary to decrease the size of the publication to 24 pages. The Committee is concerned with this trend.

*"We note with regret that our supply of suitable composition is rather low. [The season] no doubt, has been a busy one, yet ought we become so busy that we fail to tell others about the good things the Lord has done for us? The Lord*

*too, has a harvest to reap, and the laborers are few. There are souls yet today that desire the sincere milk and meat of His gracious Word of salvation, and the time is short. The labor of preparing a Church paper or magazine is not as small a task as some might think. It is our desire that our labors would be pleasing to the Lord's people, and most of all, to the Lord Himself. To accomplish this, we need your careful and prayerful help in the vineyard of the Lord..."*

So reads a notice by Lester Fisher, the editor of *The Vindicator*, September 1966, so this is not a new problem. Again, in *The Vindicator*, October 1977 there is the following notice:

*"Essays Needed! As we page up another Vindicator a shortage of*



*articles to consider for publication in future issues is facing us. We might do well to ask ourselves, 'What is the purpose of our Church paper?'..."*

Donald Boyd, the editor, further challenged the Church, *"As members of the Body of Christ, we would do well to answer this call in defense of all we hold dear. We can best show our love to Christ by action. Writing is one means whereby both young and old can help one another. Reader, if you would ask those who are aged and shut-in, they would no doubt tell you how much they appreciate the various messages of the brethren."*

*An article can be called a collection of thoughts on a subject. The Holy Spirit may bring to our remembrance thoughts that would help or inspire others. We believe the time and toil spent in writing a message is worthwhile when it is based on the Word of Truth. And we never know how many souls may be benefitted. All of us have our place in the Kingdom of Christ. How thankful we should be for the privilege of sharing the Faith together! Brethren, let us not allow 'the cares of this world' to 'choke the Word' until it becomes 'unfruitful.' We trust the Spirit will move many to respond with seasonal and doctrinal writings to the edification of a vast audience of readers."*

The problem is not new. A concern, though, is that this has been met with an abbreviation in size from 32, to 28, to 24 pages. The Statement of Purpose on the last page of this publication states, *"The Testimony* is a Christian publication intended for those who desire nourishment in their spiritual walk, and for writers who wish to express witness to the Truth of the Gospel as experienced in their own lives."

We must recognize the fact that we are living in a fast-changing day. Material to occupy the mind is literally "at hand" at every moment and the printed page is becoming less and less a part of our lives. Information on the internet is fleeting while the printed page may leave a Christian legacy for those who follow. There is still a need to proclaim God's Word. Surely the Holy Spirit still speaks to the people of God.

Our desire is that aged and youth, brothers and sisters, pray God that He speak into hearts with a testimony of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. There is need for devotional articles, doctrinal essays, seasonal material, articles directed to youth and children, personal witness, poetry, and meditations.

Marcus Miller

## GENERAL

**BROKEN PIECES**

Sitting on the desk is a black porcelain mug that has been dropped. The mosaic pieces have been glued together, each piece is clearly outlined by the imperfect edges of the white base material. It was given to me to help me remember that the giver and I are broken also. Likewise, are the ex-convicts that we visit with. A few of these men have been restored after spending ten or more years in prison. They have been walking drug- and alcohol-free for as many as 20 years. Others have forsaken lives of immorality and crime. The wife of one has been living homeless in an unheated garage with their small son as recent as a year ago. This family is together now—back in a safe environment and radiant in their new life.

These men, as we, are being put together by the same Master Potter (Isa. 64:8). In His sovereign grace He has reached down and is restoring the pieces of our soul and spirit that were so carefully place within us at conception. Like broken pottery, the pieces are being healed though the flesh and may still bear emotional scars as His sanctifying work continues.

In creation, all was arranged by God in perfect harmony. Beyond the limits of man's understanding

He gave order to subatomic particles. From these He made matter and organized the galaxies into His design. He moved by His Spirit on the waters (Gen. 1:2) and infused the physical with the spiritual. Light emanated from Him and that illuminated the heavenly bodies. God impregnated this new earth with seed-bearing plants to perpetuate life. On the third day He energized the heavenly bodies to radiate physical light and provide food for His animal and human creation. Nature was at peace and man was in union with his Lord. Then sin entered in.

The lamb could no longer lie down with the lion. Hatred and murder entered the human race. The order of God's creation was broken and remained so until the debt of sin could be paid. It was.

God became man through His son, Jesus. He gave His lifeblood as the perfect sacrifice, sufficient to restore all of human-kind. He defeated death by His resurrection. This redemption is available to all but will only be received by those willing to surrender to Him.

Yet at best, we are broken pieces just glued back together. In Christ, the redeemed are new creatures (II Cor. 5:17) as the Father views us through the blood of His Son. Still, our flesh bears the

marks of our restored brokenness.

If we compare ourselves among ourselves we may thank God that we are not so broken like others. Jesus related a parable to help us see how wrong such thinking is. In this parable a Pharisee and a publican (tax collector) went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee thanked God that he was not like others. He boasted that he fasted twice a week and tithed one-tenth of his income. The tax collector simply said, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Jesus said, the "sinner" not the Pharisee, returned to his home justified (see Luke 18:10–14). We may be more broken than we think?

I have been guilty of pettiness and irritability to the one I am to love as "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for." I have been guilty of passing by the man in trouble and leaving his care to others. I have judged unrighteously as a hypocrite. These and other moral failures cannot enter heaven. While judgment of sinful behaviors is a sacred responsibility within the confines of the committed church family, it must be administered in love, humility and with the ultimate goal of restoration. Parents must administer righteous judgment and correction of the little ones. Governments must administer judgment and punishment of its citizens as or-

daind by God. Earthly citizens of the heavenly kingdom must warn of sinful practices but are not commissioned for judgment of the souls of others outside of the household of faith. Our passion must be for the redemption of those walking in sin, remembering that we too, are sinners needing God's grace. God remembered that we are dust (Ps. 103:13–14) and made a way for us to be cleansed. We are called to simply testify of this mercy by the way of the cross.

The redeemed have not yet been delivered from the struggle between Spirit and flesh until we have taken our last breath. Even though we must live as true to the light as we can, we are still "unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:5–10).

When blood-bought children confess, repent, and turn from sin the Lord Jesus clothes them with white robes and makes them worthy to enter in through the gate, into the city. It is as Charles Wesley wrote, "Vile and full of sin I am, Thou art full of truth and grace. Plenteous grace with thee is found. Grace to cover all my sin."

Broken pieces! Made whole by the merit of the Lord Jesus!

Rejoicing in Him!

Stanley Boyd

## BIBLICAL BEHAVIOR

### Part 3

*“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).*

This is a continuation of an article from last month. The purpose of this article is to provoke thoughts as to how we as born-again believers should behave. In doing so, it is not our intent to lose sight of the basis of behavior, which is belief. Belief dictates behavior. I offer the following axioms:

1. All behavior is based on a belief.
2. Lasting behavioral change always starts in the mind.
3. When people genuinely change, it's because their beliefs changed first.
4. Changing your behavior without changing your belief is not true change at all. This is why Paul says “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

As we mentioned before, the apostles used the word “conversation” to describe behavior. In the Greek it is the word *anastrophe* which means behavior. *Anastrophe* is rooted in *anastrepho* which means to turn, or to turn oneself about. This implies the idea that godly behavior is a turning away from a direction you were once going, and going in a different direction. This is the essence of repentance—a change of your mind and direction of your life. Turning away from sin, self and the world, and turning toward Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and heaven.

We are continuing to look at

some of the verses that call us to godly behavior and give some practical encouragement for your consideration. Because the Word of God is quick (living), we will, no doubt, only touch a fraction of the depth and meaning of each verse. The next verse we will consider is found in Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:3: *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Fleshly desires are powerful. They are empowered by our appetites to gratify our selfishness. This innate appetite never had to be awakened or acquired, for it was in our nature from our earliest days. The power of human desires have been strong throughout history, yet today, there is little doubt the fleshly allure is greater than any other time in history. This is largely due to the moral decline in our society and the outright and public nature of many temptations. Coupled with this is the explosion of devices that make access to forbidden pleasures just a tap or click away. As stated in the previous article, this issue must be wrestled through in each heart with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. However, to give some thought on this, first, I suggest we must be honest with ourselves as to what piques our fleshly desires. Some behaviors to consider is the use of Social Media. Another is how our leisure time is spent, such as vacation, hobbies, hunting, etc. Another is our thoughts and imaginations. Another is our

eating habits, and the list could go on. Only you know how you’re doing with these behaviors. If you have a radical problem, I suggest a radical response. Jesus taught the need to cut off a hand in order save the overall body. He offered a radical response to a potentially radical problem. If fleshly desires are out of hand, *complete abstinence*, should be our behavioral response. This may require fellow believers to surround us, and keep us accountable. It is time to get serious about our behavior regarding fleshly desires.

Grant Fullmer

## “GREET ALL THE BRETHREN”

### *Scriptural Basis of the Holy Kiss*

#### Part 1

“Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss!” Kisses have been immortalized throughout history. From early Mesopotamian epics to the Song of Solomon, from Shakespeare’s poems to children’s rhymes, folk songs and hymns, kisses express affection between individuals. Mothers kiss babies; lovers kiss one another, and grown men will kiss friends upon their deathbed. But more importantly, kisses are mentioned throughout the Bible; five times the New Testament calls Christians to greet one another with a Holy Kiss, and for most of us in Brethren or Anabaptist church fellowships, this is neither strange nor unusual. The

Bible calls us to express our brotherly love with a kiss, and we do so gladly!

Nevertheless, if we hope to see our children continue the practice of a Holy Kiss as more than a cultural tradition, they must understand why we still use it. Too often, the Holy Kiss is misunderstood or misrepresented, as contemporary culture links it with immoral lifestyles and gender confusion, and as many in contemporary Christianity accept the premise that such a practice is relevant in principle only. As we seek to be faithful in this area, such things present a particular challenge for our children, for there can be a tendency to explain this practice simply as a Brethren or Anabaptist cultural practice, especially when we engage others who have long been taught that the Holy Kiss is an irrelevant cultural tradition!

Our first calling is to be faithful to the Lord and His Word, a calling which should always trump the changing preferences and practices of contemporary cultures! Every generation of believers faces a choice to either reject or continue to uphold biblical practices like this which have been passed down to them; can we afford to determine our choices on the basis of what is convenient or preferred by others around us? To retain such things as valuable, there must be an understanding and ultimately a conviction of that value, for if we fail to pass that conviction on to our children, clear

biblical teachings will evolve into good traditions which will eventually come to be viewed as sentimental cultural forms, and future generations will either hold them strictly for the sake of tradition or sentiment, or else lay them aside as having little to no value!

This three-part article offers a brief study on the practice of the Holy Kiss for an encouragement and a resource as we share with those who ask, those coming on behind us, and in order to reaffirm our own convictions that it is indeed a scriptural practice which continues to be relevant for the church of Jesus Christ in our day! The proposed outline of this study is threefold: first, we will begin with an overview of kissing as a practice among God's people in both the Old and New Testaments, especially looking at the BIBLICAL BASIS for the practice of extending a literal Holy Kiss between Christians. Secondly, we shall consider the question of CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE, looking at how churches have practiced the Holy Kiss throughout history and whether it is indeed still appropriate to our time and culture. And finally, we will briefly review the SCOPE OF PRACTICE for this teaching, considering who, when, and where the Holy Kiss ought to be practiced and whether there is ever any scriptural basis for Christians to justly withhold it from others.

We begin our look at the scriptural BASIS for the practice by asking the fundamental question:

"What does the Bible say?" Nearly fifty instances of kissing throughout the Bible clearly reveal that God's people have always been a kissing people, and the variety of times, types, and locations of these kisses demonstrate that the use of a kiss among God's people was not the custom of just one culture, but something that happened over 1000s of years across various countries and cultures! As we see how the practice of kissing has long been a mark of the people of God, we begin to understand why the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to teach this particular form of greeting to the churches.

### **The Nature of Kisses**

For the sake of context, there are three aspects of kisses to consider; kissing first requires proximity, then it requires some level of trust, and finally it inherently shows affection. Regarding proximity, it may be said that nobody "blew kisses" in the Bible; the act of kissing requires nearness and even intimacy. Genesis 27:26 gives an example of this aspect as Isaac, now aged and blind, spoke to his son Jacob (who was attempting to steal the birthright of his brother Esau), "Come near and kiss me, my son"; this act brought Jacob close enough for Isaac to smell, touch, and attempt to confirm the identity of his son. Genesis 48:10 offers another example as Jacob, now an old man himself, arrived in the land of Egypt and reunited with his son, Joseph; when he met Joseph's sons, Manasseh and

Ephraim, he wanted to kiss and bless them, an act which required a willingness to touch and be touched.

Kissing also requires a level of trust between two parties, where neither fears imminent harm from the other. King David's erstwhile commander Joab offers two (negative) examples of this when he twice abused such trust; in II Samuel 3, he drew near to Abner under a pretense of peace, yet stabbed him to avenge the death of his brother Asahel; also, in II Samuel 20, Joab drew close to Amasa, taking him “by the beard with his right hand to kiss him,” feigning friendship yet using a knife in his left hand to assassinate him!

The last aspect of kissing which we see, is its implication of affection, for the Bible shows kisses as the outward expression of the heart, often as a demonstration of heartfelt affection (usually between relatives). Several examples of this are seen between Jacob and his future wife Rachel (Gen. 29:11), Laban and his future son-in-law Jacob (Gen. 29:13), Esau with his brother Jacob (Gen. 33:4), Joseph as he revealed himself to his brethren (Gen. 45:15), Jacob with his sons (Gen. 48:10), Moses upon reuniting with his brother Aaron (Ex. 4:27), and Moses upon reuniting with his father-in-law Jethro (Ex. 18:7). Each of these are set in the context of relationships and loved ones—these are not examples of enemies making peace, but rather acts of trust and

love among people who cared about one another!

### Kisses in the Old Testament

There are also several types of kisses demonstrated in the Bible; we will here consider only three from the Old Testament: kisses of greeting or farewell, marital kisses, and regal kisses. Greeting/farewell kisses were most commonly recorded, usually demonstrating familial affection or an expression of ongoing love within established relationships. Such kisses were often used at parting, as when Laban kissed his grandchildren (Gen. 31:28, 55); also, Joseph kissed his dying father, Jacob; Naomi kissed her daughters-in-law Ruth and Orpah (Ruth 1:9, 14); and David and Jonathon kissed each other at parting as David fled from Saul (I Sam. 20:41). Another type of kiss in Scripture is the marital kiss, as we see in Song of Solomon 1:2: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine.” We see here a couple not yet married but anticipating a covenant love; this, too, is a family kiss, yet in a more exclusive and intimate sense.

The last type of kiss to consider here is a regal kiss, one associated with ancient kingship and less familiar to us today than family or romantic kisses. Such a kiss could go two ways, and when extended from subject to king, it was called a “kiss of homage.” Such a kiss presumed the trust of the king as he allowed a subject into proximity

ty with himself, and it was more significant than a bow (which might happen at a distance and accept submission), for this sort of kiss expressed a heart of devotion and love! Two examples of this kiss are found in I Samuel 8 and 10 as Samuel anointed first Saul, then David, to be kings over Israel, and we read that he “took a flask of oil, poured it on his head and kissed him.”

Regal kisses could also be extended from a king to his subject as a sign of great blessing. We see such a kiss in II Samuel 14:33 when Absalom came before his father, King David, after two years of exile; though Absalom bowed before his father, David welcomed him with a kiss! This was not just a greeting from a father, but also a kingly kiss of blessing and acceptance as David communicated that he held no grudge against his son. Finally, there is one regal kiss in the Scriptures which rises above all others. Psalm 2:12 says to “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they who put their trust in him!” Kiss the Son! We know who this “Son” is: Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to whom all authority has given! We are called to “kiss” Him. This is no call to bow in submission, to cautiously hold back as any defeated foe might do, but to a joyful kiss of homage and devotion, expressing a transformation of heart by past enemies who are now worshippers of the King!

## Kisses in the New Testament

From the pages of the Old Testament, we see clearly that people of God have long been a “kissing people.” We now turn now to the New Testament, where we will encounter yet another type of kiss, one by which brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ are called to greet one another; the Scriptures primarily refer to this uniquely Christian greeting as a “holy kiss” or a “kiss of charity.”

From the early manuscripts of the Scriptures comes a Greek word which has been translated repeatedly into English translations of the Bible as “kiss”; this is the Greek word *kataphileo*, meaning “to kiss earnestly or fervently!” It underlies four accounts of a kiss in the Scriptures. Matthew 26:49 tells how Judas used a kiss to betray Jesus in Gethsemane (a *kataphileo* of betrayal); in Luke 7:45, Jesus was dining at the home of Simon the Pharisee when a woman came in, washed His feet with her tears, anointed them, and kissed them (a *kataphileo* of honor); and Luke 15:20 tells how the father of the Prodigal Son ran and welcomed him with a kiss (a *kataphileo* of welcome).

Finally, Acts 20 records an account of how the apostle Paul was on his way to Jerusalem for one last Pentecost and, stopping at the island of Miletus, how he called for the elders of the Ephesian church (60 miles away) to come and meet with him one last time; they having done so, verses 36–37 tell us that he exhorted them with one

final message to be faithful shepherds over the flock of God: “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him...” Here we see grown men, godly men, spiritual leaders overcome with sadness at the final parting with a dear, spiritual father, expressing their love and devotion in the only way they knew how, with a *kataphileo* of love!

We now come to the five instances in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to instruct Christians to greet one another with a “holy kiss.” The first of these is Romans 16:16 (“Salute one another with an holy kiss”), followed by I Corinthians 16:20 (“greet ye one another with an holy kiss”), II Corinthians 13:12 (“Greet one another with an holy kiss”), I Thessalonians 5:26 (“Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss”), and I Peter 5:14 (“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity”). Notice how these references give specific instruction regarding a “holy kiss,” a “kiss of charity,” to “greet one another,” and to “greet all the brethren.”

### **Word Study of II Corinthians 13:12**

We live in a postmodern era, where words are variously redefined in attempts to justify the preferences and desires of unregenerate men; with that in mind, we are blessed by the previous studies of others who have translated the texts of early manuscripts and papyri of the Scriptures, so that we can receive those

same Scriptures today with the confidence that they do indeed speak the words and the messages that the Holy Spirit (through the apostles) intended to convey! With this in mind, we turn now to a brief word study on the simplest of the aforementioned apostolic commands regarding the Holy Kiss: II Corinthians 13:12.

GREET (or salute) is translated from the Greek word *Aspazomai* (Strong’s G782); its definition is: “To fold another in our arms, to salute, to welcome, to embrace/greet; to pay respect to, to give honor to; warm gesture of love.” ONE ANOTHER is taken from the Greek word *Allelon* (Strong’s G240), and defined as “One another, each other, yourselves, mutually/reciprocally.” We see that the Holy Kiss is for the members of Christ’s body (brothers and sisters), and is not simply a greeting, but is an outpouring of love for one another with a heartfelt love that discerns and acknowledges a brother/sister’s profession of faith and identity as a fellow child of God.

HOLY, as used here, is rooted in the Greek word *Hagios* (Strong’s G40), and means “something sacred; physically pure, morally blameless, consecrated or set apart for a purpose.” So we must ask: what makes a kiss HOLY? Surely it is the element of a pure heart filled with unfeigned love! A truly “holy” kiss can only come from hearts that are right with God, and who are walking in the light! One commentary mentions

that “The use of the word ‘holy’ here serves to denote that Paul intended it as an expression of Christian affection; and to guard against improper familiarity and scandal.” A “holy kiss” comes from hearts that care about others’ walk with God!

Remember Judas feigning love in Gethsemane; his kiss was nothing more than a dead form, no matter how fervent it may have been! Without a pure, sanctified heart behind the Holy Kiss, it remains an empty gesture, even a hypocritical one, but when hearts and motives are holy, the Holy Kiss can become a beautiful, consecrated act and a blessing instead! Remember, too, individuals in the early Church who were outcasts from their biological families and communities, spiritual family was precious to them, and that love was reflected as they extended the Holy Kiss to one another! How precious is your spiritual family to you, and can others discern that from your greeting?

KISS—the word used here is not the earlier *kataphileo*, but rather a simpler Greek root word, *philema* (Strong’s G5370), which simply means “to kiss.” Some people are simply uncomfortable kissing other people, whether because of cultural influence, personal distaste, or other reasons; contemporary studies demonstrate that most individuals in North American culture prefer between three and six feet of personal space in order to be comfortable when standing near others. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit still calls His

people to greet one another with a holy kiss! This is not a call to a friendly handshake or a warm hug, but rather five, repeated instructions to literally greet one another with a kiss, given by the Holy Spirit who does not make mistakes! While there is nothing inherently wrong with Christian men and women using a handshake or a hug, such things are not intended to replace the Kiss itself.

A literal kiss seems to be what the Holy Spirit considered the best symbol to visibly symbolize sharing the intimacy of a pure Christian, brotherly love, similar to the head covering pointing to the principle of Headship, or baptism showing our burial with Christ and the washing away of our sins. This Greek word *philema* shares a root word with *phileo* (an affectionate/brotherly love), and I Peter 5:14 says we are called to “greet one another with a kiss of charity” (agape love), as a demonstration of two hearts washed by the blood of Jesus and sharing that common bond of His love with one another. I Peter 1:22 also calls us back to that love which must underlie any practice, including the Holy Kiss, when the apostle writes: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart FERVENTLY!”

To be continued...

Christian Filbrun

## THE MARVEL OF REPETITION

Have you ever marveled at how repetitious life is? The sun comes up and the sun goes down. The wind blows from the north, then the south. We eat breakfast, lunch and dinner; then do it all over again. We walk and run; plop, plop, plop, a repetitious step at a time. The bodybuilder lifts weights in repetitious fashion to grow stronger. The moon patiently repeats its orbit over and over again; its repetitions are exact. The seasons come and then they go and then they repeat themselves. The Bible says of these seasons that seedtime and harvest shall not fail. They are ordained to repeat themselves. Our lives are a series of repetitions great and small, long and short. Our work schedules, our worship services, our devotions, our trips to the grocery, our celebrations, and on and on are all repetitious cycles that make up life. There is even a saying out there, "History repeats itself."

So, am I trying to make this sound like a boring thing or a good thing? Definitely, a good thing. Many things can have a bad side to them, but repetition is only bad if it is practiced vainly. Our prayers are a good thing unless they are repeated in a proud, vain way. Jesus taught us in Mathew 6 to not use vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Acts 19 illustrates this. For two whole hours the Ephe-

sians cried, "Great is Dianna of the Ephesians, Great is Dianna of the Ephesians." It was a lot of vain repetition. Certain religious rulers in Jesus' time prayed for the sole purpose of being seen. They had the notion that public prayers made them look like devoutly righteous men in the eyes of others. Jesus did not condemn long prayers, if they were offered up in private, but long phrases of repetitious words uttered to attract the praise of men, or make a religious statement, in Jesus' judgment, were just the product of a vain, fleshly mind. We conclude that repetition should definitely be looked upon as a good thing.

May I suggest that rather than looking at life as a boring routine, let us esteem it as a rhythmic song; a song in which we sing the same notes over and over in repetitious fashion, yet with rhythmic variety. The sun rises and the sun sets with repetitious allocations of time which we call days. Within each day, however, is a combination of repetition and variety that produces a rhythm that we can view as a beautiful hymn rather than a boring routine.

Time is repetitious. We repeat days and weeks and months and years. There is hardly anything in life that is not repetitious. But the beauty of repetition is the endless variety that we encounter along the way. We can consider the rising and setting of the sun as a monotonous, boring thing that just happens, or we can esteem it as a glorious gift of God, which is

packed with musical ups and downs that harmonize into a beautiful rhythm that we experience as life. Each sunrise and sunset is a testimony of His unwavering faithfulness. We live in that extremely small sliver of time that separates the past from the future. Whether it be one second or one millionth of a second, we are sandwiched between the remarkable element of where the future presses against the past. We call it the present. A very remarkable statement made by Jesus was when He said, “before Abraham was, I AM.” He represents the eternal present. His calling is for us to follow Him. So we walk with Him one repetitious step at a time, not with sullen plop plops, but steps with an enthusiastic spring in them, singing the high notes of love and joy, while allowing the low notes of sadness and longsuffering to harmonize with the high notes. Life need not be a journey just to be endured, but one to be enjoyed as each moment is given to us to be treasured and savvied as something very special. Think of your heart. It beats repetitiously and faithfully day and night. If it beats 70 times a minute, that is 4,200 times an hour, 100,800 times a day, 36,792,000 times a year, and if you live an average lifespan of 80 years, it will have beat 2,943,360,000 times. That is nearly three billion times. We have every right to feel a little tired when we get older. One billion is a massive number. Let me give you

this illustration. I once owned a little car that had in excess of 400,000 miles on it. That is equivalent of driving around the world 16 times. If I averaged 50 MPH, that equals 8000 hours of driving time. If that little engine averaged 2,000 revolutions per minute, that means each little piston is moving up and down 33.3 times per second. That also means that for the full 8,000 hours each piston would have repeated itself 960 million times, which is closing in on one billion, yet still 40 million short. Yes, one billion is a massive number; and to think the human heart can beat 3 billion times in a lifetime. Truly, as the Bible says, “the heart is the life of the flesh.” If Methuselah’s heart beat the same speed as ours, then it beat over 35 billion times.

Repetition is a good thing. We live by it. We learn by it. The musician hones his talent by it. The mother in the home sustains that home by it. By it a father provides for the family with the work of his hands. The surgeon becomes uniquely skilled by it. If we give it some thought, we all can appreciate it. We never tire of hearing the same songs over and over again. We have been blessed with such a variety of them that we hardly notice the repetition. Brilliant and talented men and women have strung words together in such poetic and rhythmic fashion, that now we can become absorbed in wonder and the praise of God in a special way. Songs containing themes of redemption and salva-

tion, faith, love, praise, and adoration are repeated over and over again, yet with renewed reverence. The apostle Paul wrote to his beloved babes in Christ at Corinth that he had determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. He wrote to the Philippians that for him to write the same things to them was not grievous for him, yet it was safe for them. In other words, he is telling both churches that they were going to hear a lot of repetition. It is no different today. Jesus, the central personality, and the cross the central feature. I love that kind of repetition. Ministers of the Gospel can now attach many titles to the same sermon. Each sermon, each baptism, each communion, each kiss, each show of affection, are all very similar to many proceeding them, yet they are experienced anew by someone and/or everyone.

Hymnals and song books have been published by the dozens, and I marvel at all the variety of thought and reverence contained there. There are so many tunes made possible by just using a combination of seven notes. So many ways of singing the same thing, namely, the love, greatness, pureness, and holiness of God with a focus on Jesus and Him crucified. The Psalms of the Old Testament were designed to be sung. They inspire us to praise God. They repeat the same things again, and again, yet with a reverence and passion that we love to read and repeat. The prophets are also very repetitious, having to remind

again and again that all we like sheep have gone astray, and all of us have come short of the glory of God. The angelic beings of heaven are repetitious such as is revealed in Revelation 4 when they cry day and night, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come." Those beings are expressing the same sentiment that we have when we sing that refrain, "Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words of life."

We no doubt have all had bad days to the extent that we were glad when they were over. Even then our faith consoled us with the thought that all things work together for good to them that love God. Crucifixion day was a day like that, but God brought so much good out of it. A glorious resurrection morning followed, and a once crucified Jesus ascended up into glory while angels assured us that this same Jesus would come again and receive us unto Himself to ever be with Him. As a cheerleader for Christ, I passionately urge all of us to shout repeatedly to our hearts these four words, "The Lord is coming," "The Lord Is Coming," "The Lord is Coming." It is impossible for me to imagine the reality of that event, but when it happens I can imagine something like this happening. On heaven's crystal pavement, down at Jesus' pierced feet; Joyful we'll cast our golden crowns, and His dear name—repeat.

Phillip King

## **A BRIEF BIBLE STUDY OF TITUS 2:3-5**

### **Be in behavior as becometh holiness**

Be reverent in behavior. Being reverent means being respectful, worshipping, devoted, humble, and meek. Model this in your thoughts, attitude, words, and actions. Do not be flippant, forward, discourteous, shallow, or sassy. Do not be thoughtless or careless in how you think, speak, or do.

### **Not false accusers**

Do not make false or hurtful statements about others. In Romans 1, Paul gives an alarming list of some nasty deeds. Included in this list right along with hating God and murder is backbiting—to talk maliciously about someone who is not present. Let it be said of you that you never said anything bad about anyone.

### **Not given to much wine**

Do not be enslaved to wine or other self-indulgent practices. To be enslaved or drunk means to give up control of your body. Do not yield your body to the control of anything other than Christ. Romans 6 says, “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God...”

### **Teachers of good things**

Teach what is good. You can teach by speaking, but you will teach much more by the things you do and how you conduct yourself. Be sure that what you are teaching is good and let your behavior show a pure heart, devoted to Jesus. (I Tim. 4:12)

### **Be sober**

This doesn’t just mean “serious.” Paul is talking about an inward virtue that only comes from Christ in us. It could be described as not showing excessive emotion; being unhurried, calm, and self-controlled; not being given to any overindulgence; having a quiet heart; not over-reacting to any situation, whether good or bad. Take time to stop and ponder what these things mean and how they might look when played out in your life. Don’t merely suppress your emotions and put on a false display of composure. Pray for Christ to teach you to become truly quiet—untroubled, unshaken, and untouched by outward disturbances.

### **Love your husband**

Be his friend, treat him with affection, enjoy him, be loyal to him. Show interest in the things that interest him and be his biggest fan. Leave your work to spend time with him as often as you can. Always be on his side and be a dependable source of strength and comfort to him. Proverbs 31 says, “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her...She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.” Do all you can to make his life simpler, easier, and more comfortable. Take on the heart of a servant and honor his needs cheerfully. It’s likely that he will respond with appreciation and warmth and your relationship will be blessed. Give him as much grace as God has given you, remembering that he’s not perfect, but a sinner, and so are you. When you’re tempted to find fault with him, pray instead. Ruth Bell Graham said, “It

was my job to love Billy, and God's job to change him." Being married is an honor and a faithful man is a gift from God. Cherish your husband and be thankful for him.

### **Love your children**

Be affectionate and kind in your interactions with them. Do ordinary, everyday things with gentleness, not speaking sharply or treating them with harshness or impatience. Do not speak negatively about them to others, even if they are very young. Do not neglect training and discipline. Proverbs 3 says, "For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." It's not easy to correct our children and often means discomfort and unhappiness for both parent and child. Be sure you are more concerned about the shaping and saving of their soul than their comfort and happiness. Put your feelings aside and do not give in in order to spare yourself or your child. Have compassion and a good deal of grace; discipline carried out without kindness will not be effective. Children are a good gift and a blessing from the Lord, not a burden or a nuisance. Treasure them and be thankful for their life.

### **Be discreet**

Be tactful and sensible. Restrain and guard your tongue with great care, being constantly aware of how your words will affect others. Do all you can to avoid causing offense with uncontrolled speech.

### **Be chaste**

Be clean in heart and clean in mind. Keep your thoughts and in-

tentions pure and maintain modesty in dress and conduct. Do not use your clothes as a way to display or bring attention to your body. Examine your motives for wearing something that looks "good" and avoid even a hint of immorality. Be extremely careful about what you soak your mind with and don't allow yourself to be polluted by immoral behavior, whether by the company you keep or the material you consume. If this is an area of weakness for you, let Christ be your strength. Find someone you trust to help keep you accountable and pray for you. The Lord is on your side and His desire is for you to overcome. Isaiah 1:18, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

### **Be a keeper at home**

Treat housekeeping like a job you've been hired for. Take great care for your household and manage it well. Be dedicated and work hard to keep it as orderly and clean as possible and don't allow chaos to be the daily standard. Proverbs 31 says, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." Don't be afraid to ask for help if you feel overwhelmed; few people work completely on their own. Your attitude will truly set the tone for the atmosphere of your home, so be compassionate, warm, and generous. Make it welcoming and peaceful; a haven from the noisy world, a little taste of heaven on earth. Don't just keep your house, be a keeper of your home.

### **Be good**

Most other translations use the word “kind.” Ephesians 4 says, “And be ye kind one to another...” Luke 6 says, “For he [God] is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” Be kind to everyone, starting with your family or co-workers. Be kind to those who are unkind to you. Do not flatter, saying things you don’t mean in an effort to be “nice.” Let your kindness be genuine, flowing freely from a heart filled with love for others. Be hospitable. We tend to think of hospitality as hosting people in our homes, but true hospitality begins in your heart and in the way you treat others. Have a welcoming and friendly attitude toward everyone you interact with. Give yourself; sacrificing your time and resources to help others. Remember this starts first with your family, or those you live with. It’s necessary to show Christ’s love to the world, but who you are at home is who you really are.

### **Be obedient to your own husband**

According to God’s created order and design for marriage, your husband’s role as head requires your respect, submission, and reverence. This is true regardless of whether you think he deserves it, has earned it, or is trustworthy. Be humble; willing to let him make decisions, with or without your review. Be agreeable; easy to reason with and quick to yield to his point of view. Be patient and understanding. No one gets it right all the time and your hus-

band is not an exception. When he makes mistakes, forgive him and do not hold it against him.

Remember that in holding the greatest responsibility, he also bears the greatest burden. Do not add to his burden by being uncooperative and disagreeable. Hold him in high esteem. Never speak about him in a critical or unfavorable way, even if you intend no harm. Guard his reputation and do not be careless about how you portray him to others.

### **Conclusion**

This is a daunting list and not achievable by your own strength or willpower. Pray for God to teach you these things (be specific!) and mold you into a vessel He can use to fulfill His purpose. Don’t look around, look up and within. Your friends and sisters are not the standard. God is the standard. Reserve quiet time every day for reading and prayer and don’t let anything stop you. The more time you spend in HIS presence, the more you will become like Him. The more you fill your heart with good things, the more good things will flow from it.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief...Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Jessica Bayer

## HOME AND FAMILY

**THE PUDDING AND THE OATMEAL**

And it came to pass on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year 2023, that I was in my house with my husband. And my husband was diligently applying himself to Increasing his Knowledge, and I was likewise diligently applying myself to the Fixing of Pies for future events. And as I beheld my husband's head bent over his textbooks, I had pity upon him, for I had served him no Breakfast. So I cast my eyes about my kitchen, searching for something wherewith I could Satisfy his Hunger without Disrupting my Labor. And, behold, I had an Idea. So I prepared for him a bowl of Vanilla Pudding, with bananas, and topped with Whipped Cream. And as I set the bowl before him, his face was filled with Surprise and Delight, and he did thank me, and kissed me; yeah, verily, he did Giggle like a Little Girl who receives a Doll on her Birthday.

And I returned to my kitchen, well satisfied with the good deed that I had done, for I had given my husband both Food and Happiness. But as I began again to

make my Pies, I thought some more upon the Vanilla Pudding and the Giggles. And I remembered that my husband had often spoken of other Desires. For as we have discussed Food and Nutrition, my husband has spoken of the Desire for Good Health, and the Desire for Energy to do Hard Work, and the Desire to Maintain a Healthy Weight. And I pondered in my heart, that if I had sought to fulfill all of these desires, I would have served him Oatmeal with Blueberries. And I thought that if I had placed before him a bowl of Oatmeal with Blueberries, he would have thanked me, but probably he would not have Giggled like a Little Girl. And I wondered how often God, knowing the Desires of my Heart to become more like Jesus, has served me Oatmeal instead of Pudding. And I wondered how often I have grumbled at the Oatmeal, wishing instead for Pudding, when I should rather have Delighted myself in having a God who knoweth better than I what will fulfill the Best Desires of my heart.

Lisa Wagoner

FORBEARANCE

Lord, grant me the gift of forbearance, a merciful spirit I pray,  
That suffers the wrongs of another, and seeks not the ill to repay.

Lord, help me be kind and forgiving—I who Thy forgiveness have known  
So oft for my many transgressions, grant me, Lord, a love like Thine own.

Thou who didst once suffer for sinners such bitter reproach and disdain,  
Fill me with that same gentle spirit, that reviled, still reviles not again.

Lord, grant me the gift of forbearance, thy tender, compassionate grace,  
That others beholding my visage the light of Thy likeness may trace.

— Avis B. Christiansen

MEDITATIONS

When you are filled with the Spirit there’s no room for the devil.  
Would you give your testimony even if no one said “Amen”?  
God requires a test before He expects our testimony.  
If you don’t believe in miracles, don’t pray for one.  
Unity is good only when it leads us to the Truth.  
When Jesus arose, no one was there to see it.  
Resurrection turned the cross into victory.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

*This section offers some questions to think about, or for Sunday afternoon discussions, or to prompt future articles from our readers, etc. Readers are encouraged to offer questions.*

Romans 8:11 says, *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”*  
This is a *fascinating* Scripture. As the Spirit raised up Jesus, so shall He quicken us also and make us alive by this same Spirit.  
If this Scripture is true, then this will be accomplished and have evidence

in the lives of His redeemed ones.  
1. Is this speaking, not only of resurrection after this life, but also of the *resurrected life* now?  
2. Do I see this in my life?—Darkness being made light? Life within where there was death? Hope where there was despair? The fruit of this Spirit instead of the works of the flesh?  
3. Does my family and do my co-workers sense this life in me?

## GENERAL ITEMS

### BAPTISMS

Jan. 24, 2024, Lower Twin, OH  
Amelia Brubaker

### NEW MEMBERS

Jan. 12, 2024; Pleasant View, OH  
Annie Sink

### COMMISSIONS

Jan. 10, 2024; Stillwater, OH  
Rusty Flora (with wife Ellie)  
Ordained to the Eldership  
Steven Denlinger (with wife Emily)  
Called to the office of Deacon

### COMMUNIONS

Mar. 2, 2024..... West Manchester, IN  
Mar. 2, 2024..... Morning Star, OH  
Mar. 9, 2024..... Dallas, OR  
Mar. 30, 2024..... Fall Creek, IN  
Mar. 30, 2024..... Modesto, CA  
Apr. 6, 2024 ..... Cascade Valley, WA  
Apr. 6, 2024 ..... Fair Haven, KS  
Apr. 6, 2024 ..... Mt. Zion, PA  
Apr. 13, 2024 ..... Salem, OH  
Apr. 20, 2024 ..... Caldwell, ID  
Apr. 20, 2024 ..... Shiloh, OH  
Apr. 27, 2024 ..... Bear Creek, OH  
Apr. 27, 2024 ..... Cutler Ridge, IN  
Apr. 27, 2024 ..... Sugar Grove, OH  
May 26, 2024 ..... AM, Cedarville, OH  
Jun. 22, 2024..... Mission Valley, MT and  
Mountain View, ID held jointly in ID  
Nov. 2, 2024..... Bethel, OH  
Nov. 9, 2024..... Shenandoah, VA

### HARVEST MEETINGS

July 14, 2024 ..... Lower Twin, OH  
July 21, 2024 ..... Bethel, OH  
July 28, 2024 ..... Shiloh, OH  
Aug. 4, 2024..... Maple Grove, OH  
Aug. 11, 2024.... Covington/Sugar Grove, OH  
Aug. 18, 2024..... Salem, OH  
Aug. 25, 2024..... Stillwater, OH  
Sept. 22, 2024..... Bear Creek, OH  
Nov. 28, 2024..... Pleasant View, OH

### CASP PROJECT NOTICE

Greetings in Christ:

On the night of July 27, 2022, seven inches of rain fell on eastern Kentucky in just 12 hours. This historic rainfall caused the North Fork of the Kentucky River to rise by over 18 feet in ten hours. The resulting flash floods killed 37 people and caused extensive damage to homes and towns throughout the region.

It is with joy we write that nine young men and six support staff are heading to this area for the month of April, Lord willing, on a CASP project to rebuild homes damaged near the Kentucky/Virginia border.

We would appreciate your prayers that the love of Jesus Christ will be keenly experienced by all those involved in this project: by the young men who serve, by those whose homes are restored, by the neighbors who observe selfless Christian acts of kindness. Also please pray for the physical safety of the young men during this construction project. We also covet prayers for the support staff—for wisdom and discernment in organizing work assignments, guiding the crews, and for strength to prepare the mountains of food required to fuel energetic young men!

If anyone is interested in visiting the project please contact the project coordinator, Sam Benedict, to discuss arrangements.

For the glory of Christ and the upbuilding of His church,

Dean Crawmer  
CASP Secretary

## POEMS

## GETHSEMANE

In golden youth when seems the earth  
A summer-land of surging mirth,  
When souls are glad and hearts  
are light,  
And not a shadow lurks in sight,  
We do not know it, but there lies  
Somewhere veiled 'neath evening  
skies  
A garden which we all must see—  
The garden of Gethsemane.

With joyous steps we go our ways,  
Love lends a halo to our days;  
Light sorrows sail like clouds afar,  
We laugh, and say how strong we are,  
We hurry on; and hurrying, go  
Close to the border land of woe  
That waits for you, and waits for me—  
Forever waits Gethsemane.

Down shadowy lanes, across strange  
streams  
Bridged over by our broken dreams;  
Behind the misty caps of years,  
Beyond the great salt fount of tears,  
The garden lies, Strive, as you may,  
You cannot miss it in your way;  
All paths that have been, or shall be  
Pass somewhere through Gethsemane.

All those who journey, soon or late,  
Must pass within the garden's gate;  
Must kneel alone in darkness there,  
And battle with some fierce despair,  
God pity those who cannot say,  
"Not mine, but Thine," who only pray,  
"Let this cup pass," and cannot see  
The purpose of Gethsemane.

—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

## DAY BY DAY

Day by day the manna fell:  
O, to learn this lesson well.  
Still by constant mercy fed,  
Give me, Lord, my daily bread.

"Day by day," the promise reads,  
Daily strength for daily needs:  
Cast foreboding fears away;  
Take the manna of today.

Lord! My times are in Thy hand;  
All my sanguine hopes have planned,  
To Thy wisdom I resign,  
And would make Thy purpose mine.

Thou my daily task shalt give;  
Day by day to Thee I live;  
So shall added years fulfill,  
Not my own, my Father's will.

—*Josiah Conder*

## WIDE SPACES

I need wide spaces in my heart  
Where faith and I can go apart  
And grow serene.

Life gets so choked by busy living,  
Kindness so lost in fussy giving,  
That love slips by unseen.

I want to make a quiet place  
Where those I love can see God's face,  
Can stretch their hearts across the earth,

Can understand what Spring is worth  
Can count the stars, Watch violets grow  
And learn what birds and children know.

—*Author Unknown*

**THE POTTER'S WHEEL***Dwayne Stoltzfus*

One day a lump of clay was thrown  
Upon the potter's wheel.

Its shape and form was undefined;  
It greatly lacked appeal.

But as the potter turned his wheel,  
A vision he could see.

He saw beyond the useless lump;  
He saw what it could be.

His fingers gently pushed into  
The feeble, helpless clay.

It must be soft and pliable;  
It must give up its way.

To give it shape while on the wheel,  
The clay must suffer pain.

The potter pinches, pulls, and pries  
A vessel to obtain.

He pushes down while pulling out;  
Soft pressure he applies.

To his delight, the clay responds;  
It quickly starts to rise.

The potter's focus is to first  
Create the inner space.

For once the inside is complete,  
The outside shows its grace.

The potter's hands are wet but firm;  
The lumps they must reveal.

For imperfections in the clay  
Are smoothed out on the wheel.

The vessel now completed stands  
So tall and fit for use.

But wait—it is not finished yet;  
Its air he must reduce.

The firing of an earthen pot  
Removes the gaps of air.

It shrinks the clay with intense heat  
A vessel to prepare.

For vessels to be useful tools,  
They must be tried with fire.

A thin, clay vase will stronger be  
When flame is turned up higher.

The potter watches carefully  
While turning up the heat.

He never knows the end result—  
Will it come out complete?

The Bible tells us we're the clay;  
The Potter is our Lord.

When we are soft and pliable,  
Our spirit is restored.

The Master Potter sees ahead;  
He knows what you will face.

He wants to make your lump of clay  
Into a useful vase.

So don't resist the fiery trials—  
The heat that makes you kneel.

Remember that your Potter Lord  
Is sitting at His wheel.

He's sitting at the wheel of life  
And looking at your clay.

Will you be soft enough for Him  
To shape you just His way?

God wants a useful vessel clean—  
A vessel fit to pour

His blessings out to those in need.  
He has so much in store!

The Master Potter loves you much;  
His grace is always real.

As day by day He shapes your clay  
Down on the Potter's wheel.

Selected from

*Beside the Still Waters* by

Darryl Filbrun

## OBITUARIES

**GARBER** — Helen F. (Miller) was born September 7, 1931, to Marvin Oliver Miller and Martha Viola (Cherry) Miller in Anderson County, Kansas. On December 29, 1951, Helen became the bride of Richard Donald Garber, the son of Lee Roy Garber and Ada Frances (Miller) Garber of Brookville, Ohio. The marriage ceremony was held at the home of her grandmother, Anna Belle Cherry, in Garnett, Kansas. God blessed this union with four children: Stanley (Bonnie) Garber, Sharilyn (Mark) Miller, Sheldon Garber, and Sandra (Paul) Baker.

The family enjoyed farming together, as well as traveling and camping. On April 17, 1979, God took Richard to Himself, leaving Helen a widow for 44 years. She enjoyed cooking, sewing, and gardening, blessing many people with the gifts God gave her.

At a young age she accepted Jesus as her Savior and was baptized. She chose to fellowship with the Old German Baptist Brethren. She had a strong faith in her Lord. She eagerly anticipated her final reward and God granted her wish on December 23, 2023, at the age of 92 years. Along with her children, she is survived by ten grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

We have received many blessings from Mother's hands, for which we are thankful. We now joyfully commend her spirit into the loving hands of our Heavenly Father.

On December 27, the family held an informal viewing at the Salem Meeting House from 10:00–12:00. As we met in a common area of the sanctuary, it was encouraging to reminisce with family and friends. Lunch was served to the family from 12:00–1:00 in the basement. A funeral service at 1:00 P.M. was opened by Elder Glen Landes, sharing memories of childhood days, growing up with Richard at Salem, Daddy and Mother getting married, then moving to Elyria and serving as a C.O. in the hospital there. Elder Gary Peters gave a message of comfort from God's Word; also warning us to be ready, for our time is coming and may be soon. Elder Sean Sowers shared the Scripture "Come unto me" as the family gathered at Royal Oak Cemetery. Forty-four years ago we stood in this same spot to commit Daddy's body to the earth. We look forward, with anticipation, to that final reunion in Heaven.

The Family

**RIFFEY** — Marilyn Kay (Flory), age 83, of Garnett, Kansas, was born on February 2, 1940, to Henry

D. and Ruth Ellen (Long) Flory near Baldwin City, Kansas.

She passed from this life to her eternal reward January 7, 2024, just moments after the beautiful evening sunset lit the gray sky and illuminated both Mother and Dad's faces. This gave us an extra measure of assurance that God was in our midst.

Mother accepted Jesus Christ and was baptized in October 1956 and was a member of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church.

She was united in marriage to Homer Alva Riffey on September 21, 1957. They enjoyed 66 years of marriage and were blessed with 4 children.

Mothers life reflected Proverbs 31 with her special gift of hosting gatherings of family, friends, looking out for those less fortunate, and extending fellowship to those in the community.

She is survived by her companion Homer; children Debra (Kendall) Eichman, Bonita (Stanley) Baker, Edward (Karla) Riffey, Gayla (Gary) Hufford; and 13 grandchildren, Melody (Nathaniel) Bauman, Brett (Mary) Eichman, Logan (Carrie) Eichman, Trent (Malinda) Baker, Todd (Sara) Baker, Tamera Baker, Kenya (Jake) Deaton, Kodi (Beth) Riffey, Lane (Marcia) Riffey, Lanta (Doug) Lavy, Klayton (Julie) Hufford, Cyrena (Kyle) Metzger, and Angela (Patrick) Garber; and 31 great-grandchildren, all of whom held a special place in her heart. Also by her siblings, Norma Brubaker, Donna Wingert, and Howard Flory.

Preceding her in death were her parents, her in-laws, and her husbands little sister, Wanda.

### The Family

### Terms

Subscriptions should be made through the congregational contact or through *The Testimony* office. Subscription price is \$30.00 per year. New subscriptions should be paid (prorated) through the remainder of the current year. All renewals begin at the first of the calendar year. Newly married and those unable to pay for a subscription may receive a free subscription through the agent of their local congregation.

### Contributors

Authors of essays, devotionals, poems, etc. are asked to review the Statement of Purpose on the back page of this periodical. Articles should

be based on Scripture. References are appreciated. Shorter focused articles are more desirable than articles that move from one topic to another. Selected material will be considered. Original writings are preferred. It is recommended that writers submit themselves to the Spirit, which reveals the will of God to the Church in every age, according to the varied needs and circumstances.

Written articles should be legible. Typed material is preferred and should be double-spaced. Electronic transmission or CD will be accepted. The author's name and address must be included on all material. An attempt will be made to contact the author of articles that are not accepted.

Old German Baptist Brethren  
Church—New Conference

## THE TESTIMONY

353 Billman Rd.  
New Paris, OH 45347-9102

*The Testimony* is a Christian publication intended for those who desire nourishment in their spiritual walk, and for writers who wish to express witness to the Truth of the Gospel as experienced in their own lives. It holds the Holy Scriptures to be its only Creed. Its purpose is to bear witness to the Truth of God's Word as it is applied in the daily life of committed Christians. It supports the anabaptist and pietist foundations of the Brethren of Schwarzenau, Germany (1708) including the biblical principle of the community of believers bound by a confession of faith in the Lord Jesus confirmed by adult immersion baptism (Mark 16:16). It strives to promote a life of true living piety among all who confess Jesus as their Lord. It seeks to restore and

maintain a fellowship of true primitive Christianity through the communication of all good things.

Send all communication to:

*The Testimony*  
353 Billman Rd.  
New Paris, OH 45347-9102  
Phone: (937) 604-9464  
[thetestimony@emypeople.net](mailto:thetestimony@emypeople.net)

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### **The Testimony Committee**

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Phil King  
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### **Associate Editors**

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