



# Beacon

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## BIBLICAL SOUL CARE

BY CHEYENNE MILLER

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Recently I was having a particularly rough day, and I decided I could either stay home and cry, or I could go grab a coffee and hopefully cry less. I packed up my baby and made my way to my favorite coffee shop 20 minutes away. On my way home, coffee in hand, I realized I didn't feel any better than when I'd left (aside from being slightly more caffeinated). Hm.

Have you ever been having a rough day or week and the narrative surrounding you, whether it's friends, your own thoughts, or general society, is saying, "You deserve a break; go do something for yourself!" Or perhaps the famous, "You can't pour from an empty cup—treat yourself!" Society has become obsessed with self-care and self-love. I'm not saying the things we enjoy are wrong or that taking care of ourselves is wrong. What I am saying is that we have become dangerously accustomed to filling the voids in our lives with things other than Jesus. Think about it: You had a bad day at school, or you got into a fight with a friend—what's the first thing you want to do when you get home? Perhaps it's scrolling social media, watching Netflix, or diving into a hobby that distracts you from your rough day and makes you feel a little bit better. It's true that you can't "pour from an empty cup," but what are you filling your cup with?

**Jesus didn't tell his disciples that he was going to take a break and head to town to relax with a massage and a good book.**

Stress is inevitable, so how did Jesus cope with it? Scripture tells us that he "would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (Luke 5:16 NASB). After he sent the crowds away, Jesus didn't tell his disciples that he was going to take a break and head to town to relax with a massage and a good book. Instead, he left to pray alone and spend time with the Father. The Bible also tells us that he got up early in the morning while it was still

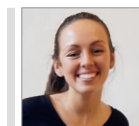
dark, to pray. Jesus had a much more difficult, draining, and stressful life than you or I do. He was constantly moving from city to city, speaking to and teaching thousands, discipling his constant following, and withstanding rejection by many. His life was not easy, and the thing he turned to was prayer. Prayer was not merely a way to pass time and unwind, it was a necessity; something he couldn't survive his hectic life without.

Prayer is our direct line to heaven, to God himself. The Creator of the universe hears your prayers. That is a fact that should completely humble us and bring us to our knees. Ask any Jew of the Old Testament how crazy it is that we can simply talk to God whenever we want!

Having a long list of rules, sacrifices, and rituals seems appropriate when approaching the Being that spoke everything into existence. Jesus gave us an indescribable gift when he became the perfect sacrifice and broke the barriers between us and God.

The next time you're having a bad day and feeling discouraged, as you're about to slip into the old habit of using whatever it is that you do to make yourself feel better, stop yourself and evaluate. Will this fulfill me? Or does this lead to emptiness? Be honest with yourself.

Anything that is used to fill what only God can fill, no matter how good or harmless it seems, is an idol. Repent, and form a new habit, one of coming to God first, and everything else second. You will find the peace and healing that you're looking for!



*Cheyenne is a stay-at-home mom in Wooster, Ohio. She and her husband, Steve, disciple and equip young adults to live out and share their faith, growing the kingdom of God.*



# Restoration

BY PHIL SWARTZENTRUBER

On March 1, 2021, folks in Eastern KY woke up to heavy rains and devastating flooding. This came in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, and these two events together brought to many people a sense of hopelessness. God immediately led Rosie and me and our church here at Turners Creek in unmistakable ways to be involved in the work of restoration.

For the last year, we have been privileged to watch God at work, using neighbors to help each other and churches to help their communities. Volunteers have come from many places to help, others have sent money or materials, and many prayers have gone up for the flood survivors and workers. All are working together to restore what had been damaged and destroyed by the flood. But we do a disservice to the kingdom of God when we separate our service into the categories of physical and spiritual. Physical and spiritual restoration go hand in hand. As homes were being repaired, hope was being restored.

**“My hope and faith have been restored by what people have done for us. We have found a family.”**

~ Larry

After a hard day of work by the volunteers, a lady gave us a picture she had painted with a note on the back, “What you did for me today, speaks louder than any testimony you could give.” Another flood survivor was Larry who had three feet of water in his house leaving it a muddy mess. In a miraculous way God led us to him. He had worked hard to move the building materials for his new garage to higher ground, only to see them swept away by the river. He talks about his feeling of hopelessness as he watched the raging river carry his things away. He and his wife have started attending church at Turners Creek. He says, “My hope and faith have been restored by what people have done for us. We have found a family.”

In Jeremiah 18 the prophet was instructed to go down to the potter’s house to receive a message from God. He watched the potter take a pot that had been marred and reshape it into one that was best for his purpose. Why reshape a marred pot rather than make a new one? Could it be that our loving and

creative God knows the value of a restored vessel? I believe God’s challenge to his people, the nation of Israel, and to the church today is that we would allow him to be that Potter shaping us into the people he wants us to be.

Our God is a God of restoration. The Book of Joel is a beautiful picture of God’s desire to restore. The first part details God’s judgment on the sin of the people and the total devastation caused by an army of locusts. In 2:12 we see God’s plea for the people to return to him with all their heart. The conditions for restoration are repentance and obedience. In 2:25 God promises to restore to the people the years the locusts have eaten. Joel 3:16 tells us, “The Lord will be the hope of his people” (KJV).

The conference leadership of CMC has adopted a goal of having 160 thriving churches by 2030. Presently, there are 111 churches in CMC. So, an important part of this goal is planting new churches. We are already seeing this and praying for and believing God will multiply this work. An equally important part of this goal is restoration and revitalization of our churches.

The pandemic of the last two years, the economic struggles of our nation, and natural disasters have taken a toll on many of our churches. Sometimes we feel like we are experiencing Joel 1:4, “What the locust swarm left the great locusts have eaten” (NIV). But our God is a God of restoration.

Revitalization comes to our churches as we yield ourselves to God, and love and care for each other. We here at Turners Creek and in Breathitt County have been humbled and encouraged by the outpouring of love this past year. Let’s pray that God will restore and revitalize our churches as we become clay in the hands of the Potter and feet in muddy water. I believe the people and churches in CMC can experience a great revival in these last days, not because we are great but because of the greatness of the God we serve.

*see photos on page 5*



*Phil is pastor of Turners Creek Mennonite Church in Jackson, Kentucky and moderator of CMC. He is a retired high school teacher. He and his wife Rosie enjoy time spent with children and grandchildren.*





# “Mistakes Were Made”

(Part 3)

BY JON SHOWALTER

## How Can We Get “Race Relations” Right?

In 1931 on the campus of Eastern Mennonite School (now University) in Harrisonburg, Virginia, a student literary program featured “a stirring debate on the ever-live question: should the Negro enjoy equal privileges with the white race?” That jolting title caught my attention recently as I read Don Kraybill’s engaging history of EMU. I was relieved, just a little, to learn that the student—a Northerner—arguing for the affirmative was judged to be the winner of the debate.

A few years later, in the spring of 1936, mission-minded EMU students organized a Sunday School for children in Harrisonburg, with one session in the morning for whites, and one in the afternoon for African Americans. Kraybill notes that, though some Mennonites at the time were against segregation, local and state laws forbade integrated meetings. According to one student, “We probably would have had a riot if we had tried to hold a mixed service. People in Harrisonburg would have risen up against us.”

### “When does fitting in with the status quo become moral compromise and complicity with injustice?”

Those episodes in Mennonite history are now nearly a century old, but they bring into focus ongoing questions about how Christians relate to unjust social structures. When is it right to quietly comply with the law, and when does fitting in with the status quo become moral compromise and complicity in injustice?

You’ve probably heard someone say, “You know, there are sincere Christians on both sides of that issue; I guess we’ll just have to agree to disagree.” Often that’s a healthy way forward. But sometimes it becomes clear, especially in retrospect, that one group of those sincere Christians was simply wrong—for example, the Christians who argued against “equal privileges.”

The question of when and how to actively advocate for social change is particularly complicated for Christians with a long history of avoiding political involvement. That’s our theological heritage. All the way back in 1527, the *Schleitheim* articles

affirmed for an early gathering of Anabaptists that, though “the sword is ordained by God,” it is “outside the perfection of Christ.” The Anabaptist refusal to assist in the state’s use of the sword quickly resulted in their social marginalization and persecution, and eventually led to a way of life that expected to remain outside of the processes of law and governance.

So perhaps it’s not surprising that in the 1930s, Mennonites, with their Anabaptist roots, were not inclined to challenge the status quo. Additionally, EMU was a culturally conservative college. Conservatives are, by definition, predisposed to conserve what is rather than push for change. That impulse, coupled with non-involvement politically, is perhaps enough to explain why most Mennonites, including CMC Mennonites, weren’t involved very much in efforts to challenge segregation or other enduring legacies of the era of slavery in America.

From the vantage point of the early 21st century, it looks like easy complacency. And perhaps even complicity. When EMU students were launching their segregated Sunday schools in the 1930s and recognized the uncomfortableness of quietly complying with the racial segregation mandated by the laws of Virginia, one refrain was, “You can’t fight City Hall.”

If there is a special danger for Christians whose convictions have generally led them to stay outside of politics, it’s perhaps the tendency to fall back on non-involvement when issues do not directly affect them, but set aside those convictions when something comes along that does.

Just a few years later, faced with the prospect of universal military conscription as the U.S. entered the Second World War, Mennonite leaders collaborated in sending a delegation to Washington to appeal for special consideration for their peace churches. In response, the Civilian Public Service

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*Jon worked for twenty-five years as an instructor and administrator at Rosedale Bible College. He and his wife, Dawn, are the parents of four adult sons. They live in Rosedale, and are enjoying being new grandparents.*



BY MADALYN



# Sheryl Hostetler: In His Grip

In Manta, Ecuador on January 18, 2022, Rosedale International (RI) worker Sheryl Hostetler passed away after a battle with COVID-19. At the time of her passing, she had dedicated over twenty years of her life to the people of Ecuador, serving as a nurse, a teacher, a mentor, and an advocate for at-risk children.

It seems an impossible task to neatly sum up the life of a woman who left deep footprints in the path of all she crossed. How to honor the fierceness of her care for others, the dedication to her calling, the impact of her spiritual motherhood? This is perhaps best accomplished through the words of those in Ecuador who called her sister and mother and friend.

“I learned from her to love God with passion and dedication. She was a woman of integrity, honesty, and faithfulness, dedicated with all her heart to the service of others. She was a ‘lioness’ championing the cause of those she loved, a mother supporting and loving those in need.”

**“I know that I am a better person and daughter of God for what Sheryl invested in me.”**  
~ Graciela

Over and over again, the words Sheryl’s community used to describe her were dedicated, faithful, passionate, and persevering. They spoke of her constant care for those around her—she never failed to buy food or medicine for people begging on the street; she called out the gifts she saw in others; she invited young people into her home for food, a movie, and conversation about Jesus.

They shared how she made each person who interacted with her feel known and loved. “I would describe her as the most faithful person you could meet,” wrote Ivonne, who worked alongside Sheryl at the Shekinah Foundation. “Sheryl was a 24/7 person. Tired or not, there she was for whoever needed her. She was always willing to help; she had a mother’s heart.”

Thelma, a former RI worker in Ecuador, spent over ten years

working with Sheryl. To her, the memory that stands out as most representing Sheryl’s heart is the night in April of 2016 when an earthquake rocked Ecuador’s coastal region. As buildings shook and strong aftershocks continued through the night, “Sheryl sat on the street outside the Foundation with children all around her. She sang an English lullaby to them over and over, and as young children can do, some fell asleep while Sheryl kept watch. She was God’s guardian angel to the children of the Shekinah Foundation during that awful night, knowing she had to stay calm in the face of the fear and chaos going on all around.” Just as she had always been, that night Sheryl was a needed rock and source of peace.

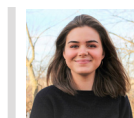
When she joined RI staff for a prayer meeting in early 2021, Sheryl spoke of the joy she found in nurturing spiritual growth in those around her. This investment of time, patience, and love was evident as her community shared the impact she’d had on their lives.

“When I began to learn about God’s plan and his love for us, he sent Sheryl to help us be free from guilt and condemnation,” shared Juan Cedeño, now a pastor of his own church plant. “I found in her a person who was not going to judge me, and it gave me confidence to confess things that had me bound.”

“All the young people that she touched with her life, young people from the churches in Manta and Guayaquil, today are the pastors and leaders of the Mennonite churches in Ecuador,” wrote Graciela, Sheryl’s longtime friend and mentee. “I know that I am a better person and daughter of God for what Sheryl invested in me.”

This is the legacy that Sheryl left behind. As Thelma aptly concluded, “Sheryl always signed any note or email, In His grip.

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*Madalyn serves as Media Coordinator for Rosedale International. She lives in Rosedale, Ohio, and attends Shiloh Mennonite Church.*

photos for article on page 2 (CMC)



Larry & Suzzane in their restored house.



Work crew that helped Larry clean out the insulation.

continued from page 3 (RBC)

program was launched as an alternative for young men who were conscientious objectors. Engaging the structures of power and advocating for change seemed necessary under those circumstances.

It's easier to identify mistakes in the past than it is to make good choices in the present. And recognizing that mistakes were made does not answer the question of what good choices look like now.

What are we complacent about that future generations will look back on and ask, "What were they thinking? How could they live passively in the face of that, rather than using whatever influence they had to pursue change?"

We can't change what they did.

But we have our own decisions to make. 🕊️

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She was in God's grip, and she gave herself and her life to those he led her to serve."

So while we grieve this great loss, we can also rejoice, knowing that Sheryl has entered into the joy of her Savior. She fought the good fight; she finished the race; she kept the faith. The blessing of her life will have a lasting impact that far outlives her time with us. "I thank God that I knew her," Graciela reflected. "She was a gift from God for my life and for Ecuador. She knew that—I always told her." 🕊️

You can view Sheryl's obituary at: [obituaries.goshennews.com/obituaries/](http://obituaries.goshennews.com/obituaries/) then type "Sheryl Hostetler" in the search bar.

Thanks to Dion, RI Ecuador Rep, for his assistance in translation and connection with Sheryl's community in Ecuador.

### Job Posting for Church Planting Catalyst

CMC and its agencies are seeking a full-time person to help catalyze a multiplying movement of disciple making and church planting across the CMC network of churches. Qualified candidates will possess a deep and sincere love for the local church, executive-level experience in leading a ministry, a history of working well in a team environment, and a proven track record of engaging the lost and caring for "the least of these." Other important qualities and characteristics for this role are: excellence in communication and casting vision, expertise

in building effective systems and structures, life experience in disciple making and church planting ministries, and affirmation of CMC's *Statement of Theology* and *Statement of Practice*. This position is an appointment of CMC in collaboration with Rosedale International and Rosedale Bible College. The person filling the position will work under the supervision of the CMC Executive Director. For more information, a job description, or instructions for applying for the position, please contact Brian Hershberger at [brian@cmcrossdale.org](mailto:brian@cmcrossdale.org) or 740-506-4682.