

IDENTITY: WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST

BY DAVE SWARTZ

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Sermons in Rosedale Network of Churches

Continuing a multi-year theme of hearing how God is at work in our churches, the 2025 Feature Beacon articles focus on preaching within Rosedale Network of Churches. Each article features a recent sermon by a Rosedale Network pastor. May we all be encouraged by the faithful teaching of God's Word.

How do we determine value? Think about how we evaluate a car—age, color, engine size, gas mileage, features, condition. More features usually mean more value. But here's the question: *Do you evaluate people the same way?* Does appearance, age, race, weight, or abilities change how you see someone's worth?

Culture says our value is tied to looks, possessions, or status. But God says otherwise. John 3:16 tells us He loved the world so much that He sent His only Son—not to condemn us, but to save us. Your worth was purchased with Jesus' own life. That means you can't increase your value by being "better," and you can't decrease it by failing.

Now, think personally: *How do you devalue others?* Through gossip, criticism, payback, or ignoring them? Proverbs 20:14 warns against cheapening others' worth. On the other hand, valuing people is essential to helping them find God, because if they don't like you, they likely won't be interested in your God.

Consider this mindset shift:

- If I see you as hurting, I'll help you.
- If I see you as broken, I'll fix you.
- But if I see you as valuable, I'll serve you.

Serving puts others first—always. Yet, when we're hurt, we often build walls to protect ourselves. Those walls may feel safe, but they also keep love out. Don't let one bad experience define your future relationships. Galatians 5 reminds us that love is the highest standard, and nothing you do can make God love you more or less.

Jesus modeled relationships His way:

- **He ate with Zacchaeus (Luke 19).** Zacchaeus was despised by the people of Israel. He was a tax collector for the Roman government. Tax collectors extorted money from people and kept it for personal gain. How would you speak and act towards a modern-day Zacchaeus?
- **He spoke to the Samaritan woman (John 4).** This woman was living in adultery. Not only was she living with a man, but she was "shacked up" with him. Doing her ordinary duty,

she comes to the well to draw water and finds so much more in Jesus. She was set free because Jesus was willing to cross cultural barriers and bring no accusations or condemnation.

- **He defended the woman caught in adultery (John 8).** "If you are without sin, then you can throw the first stone." That's a statement that will stop anyone in their tracks. He asked, "Where are your accusers?" Jesus simply presented the gospel and told her to leave her life of sin. Once again, no condemnation.

Religious leaders judged Him for it, but Jesus came for the lost, not the comfortable. Religion often pushes outsiders away; relationships draw them close.

Here's a picture: a man falls into a pit. People come by with opinions—a philosopher analyzes it, a pessimist predicts it will get worse, a legalist says he deserves it. But Jesus simply reaches down and pulls him out. That's the heart of God.

Maybe you feel like you're in your own "pit"—stuck in addiction, hurt, or hopelessness. Maybe you've kept going back to dry wells because they're familiar. Jesus is still the one who rescues, restores, and values you beyond measure.

Here's your challenge:

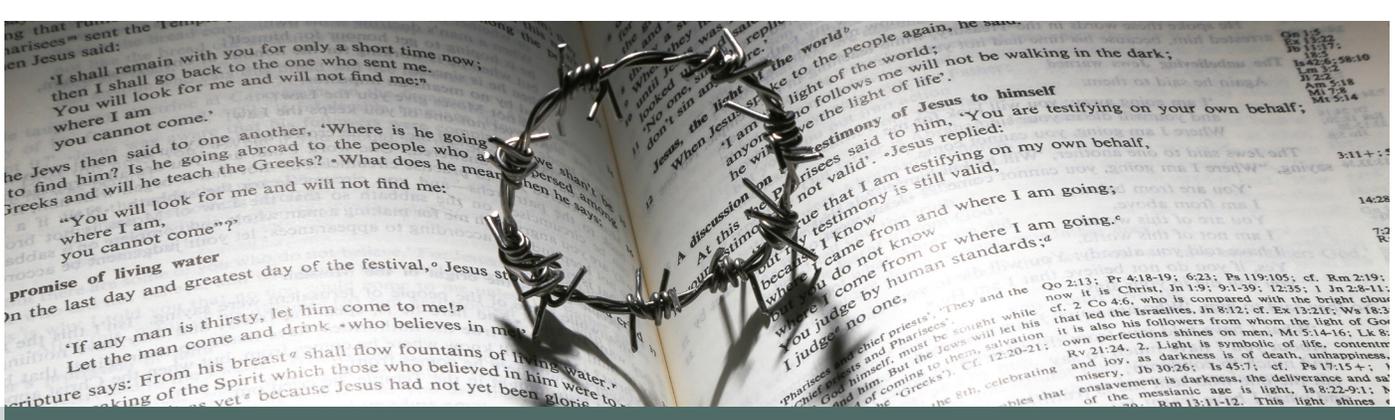
- Will you stop evaluating people by the world's standards?
- Will you see them as God sees them—valuable, worth serving & loving?
- Will you risk tearing down your walls so you can let love in?

No matter what's in your past, there's victory at the foot of the cross. Your value isn't earned—it's given by the One who made you, and He's ready to meet you right where you are today. 

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Dave and his wife, Rhoda, live in Cannelburg, Indiana, where Dave serves as senior pastor at Berea Mennonite Church. They have three adult children and three granddaughters.



For the Sake of the Gospel

BY IVAN YODER

What would you do to gain something that you deem valuable? How about the opposite? What are you willing to give up? The average financial savings rate in the U.S. is about 4% of disposable income. While savings aren't a loss, you are giving something up to have access to it later. Recently, our congregation commissioned and sent a young couple to a distant part of the world as long-term workers to share the gospel. They have sacrificed much over the last few years as they have prepared. They were excited that their airline ticket was one-way. They are anticipating that through language and culture learning over the next few years, they will have the opportunity to share the gospel with this unreached people group. Caleb and Maria shared 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 as a way of expressing how they intended to begin to engage with this people group.

How can we, as churches and individuals of Rosedale Network, bridge this widening chasm of perspective?

We were all encouraged by this young couple's willingness to live out what the apostle Paul describes as his ministry of servanthood. The passage they shared summarizes Paul's willingness to do anything he could for the sake of the gospel, even giving up many of his freedoms. Caleb and Maria are committed to learning the culture and language so they can be effective in bringing the hope of the gospel to this people group.

"Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible" (1 Cor. 9:19 NIV).

This text, in 1 Corinthians, is one of the guiding texts in Rosedale Networks' value statements, which underpin our *mature and multiply* mission. Rosedale Network values submission to the Trinity, the Word of God, and each other. We believe there is an urgency to the gospel because there are many who live and die never knowing Jesus. We are committed to discovering ways of learning and adapting to better engage in our world. In essence, we want to encourage each other to become servants of the gospel in order to save some (1 Cor. 9:22-23).

"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22b).

I realized recently that part of the challenge of our mission is that the world we live in really has little concept or acknowledgment of a need for this kind of good news. I did a quick search of the top five worries or challenges of our world. The lists were diverse and reflected the perspectives of those conducting the surveys—from climate change and conflict to inflation and corruption, many global issues consume our thoughts. What was missing was any understanding or influence of an eternal perspective.

How can we, as churches and individuals of Rosedale Network, bridge this widening chasm of perspective? If we follow the apostle Paul's example of engaging people in their culture for the sake of the gospel, we often find ourselves willingly laying down our perspectives, our preferences, and sometimes even our traditions. This may be a bit different for every church or individual, but it is not a new concept. The apostles lived this as they learned it from Christ. Motivated by the urgency of the gospel, we can no longer afford to isolate ourselves from the world but should be looking for ways to engage people where they are.

I commissioned Caleb and Maria with tears of joy in my eyes, grateful for their love of Jesus that motivated them to take this step. I was challenged once again, personally, to continue to do whatever I can for the sake of the gospel. I invite you to join me in engaging in our neighborhoods through different means so that many people may come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. Let's encourage each other with the stories that many of us have of engaging with our neighbors, so that together, we can more effectively *mature and multiply* churches locally and globally. 

Names have been changed

Photo credit: [wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org/)



Ivan is moderator of Rosedale Network of Churches and lead pastor at Locust Grove Mennonite Church. He and his wife, Pam (who serves part-time in women's ministry), are the parents of two adult children.



Anabaptism and Quakerism

BY MARK SNYDER

Anabaptism and Other Denominations

On this 500th anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement, Rosedale Bible College's Beacon articles look at a wide variety of denominations within the household of faith. We hope to foster a humble, rooted, appreciation for how the gospel has come to us and to consider how Jesus might be calling us forward.

George Fox began his spiritual searching around the age of nineteen, when he left his family and traveled through England during the turbulent years of the English Civil War in the mid-17th century. Dissatisfied with the answers offered by both ordained clergy and countryside preachers, he turned inward in search of God.

Fox recounts the life-altering encounter that followed: "And when all my hopes...in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy."

Fox's experience is foundational for those who call themselves Quakers, or Friends, and not just because it marks their beginning; it also establishes their central conviction—God can be encountered directly, and these encounters should be sought.

From a distance, the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition looks very similar to the Quakers. Neither takes oaths, both are committed to nonviolence, and both emphasize the priesthood of believers. These similarities reflect our shared desire to return to the teachings of Jesus and the early Christian tradition.

Our most significant difference, however, is where we find our authority. Anabaptists have historically been the most stubborn defenders of *sola scriptura*, the belief that Scripture alone is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Church. This can be seen in a letter written by Conrad Grebel to Thomas Muntzer, which says, "We...entreat and admonish you as a brother... to esteem as right and good only what is found in crystal-clear Scripture, to reject, hate, and curse all proposals, words, rites, and opinions of all men, even your own."

The Quakers, however, share a different view. Robert Barclay, an early Quaker theologian, wrote, "They [the Scriptures] are not even to be considered as the adequate primary rule of all faith and practice. Yet, because they give a true and faithful testimony of the source itself, they are and may be regarded as a secondary rule that is subordinate to the Spirit, from which they obtain all their excellence and certainty... Therefore, according to the scriptures, the Spirit is the first and principal leader."

This belief, that Scripture is "subordinate to the Spirit" in matters of faith and practice, is most clearly seen in how Quakers worship.

If you were to enter a traditional Quaker meeting for worship, several things might stick out to you. The first is the seating—rather than facing the front, worshipers sit facing one another. This reflects their belief in the priesthood of all believers, much like the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, where "each one" is invited to contribute (1 Cor. 14:26).

A second observation would be the absence of a pastor. While some evangelical Quakers today do employ pastors and have more structured services, historically—and especially among liberal Quakers—worship has always been without clergy. Since the goal of worship is to encounter the "Inner Light" of Christ's presence, Quakers maintain no set order of service, no instruments, and often, no sermon.

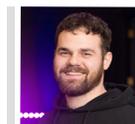
Despite our foundational differences, the Quaker tradition reminds us not to brush by the "still small voice" of the Spirit (1 Kgs. 19:12).

Quakers are careful to avoid "form without substance." In worship, they move only when they feel the Spirit move them. For this reason, they have historically rejected outward symbols of faith such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, primarily viewing them as spiritual realities meant to be inwardly experienced (e.g., baptism of the Spirit, communion with Christ, etc.) rather than outwardly practiced through the elements.

Instead, the primary form of worship is what they call "waiting worship" or "silent waiting," where stillness creates space for the

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Photo credit: [pexels.com-Kamil Zubrzycki](https://www.pexels.com/photo/portrait-of-a-young-man-with-a-beard/)



Mark serves as youth pastor, along with his wife, Esther, at Forty One in Mechanicsburg, Ohio. He is a full-time seminary student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.



Meet REACH 2025-26

BY HUNTER

On August 30, the REACH class of 2025-26 arrived at the Rosedale International Center (RIC). This year's class is the thirty-fifth in the program's history and is composed of fourteen participants representing two countries, eight states, and fourteen churches.

In the first three months of the program, REACHers will stay at the RIC as they complete Discipleship Training School (DTS). They'll participate in educational sessions that cover a multitude of topics, ranging from the Holy Spirit to healthy sexuality to writing a blog post. Each session equips students with skills and knowledge that will be utilized in their overseas work.

In addition, they will spend time learning to connect with each other as teammates, building close relationships through recreational activities, outreaches in the city of Columbus, and shorter in-country trips designed to serve as a trial run for overseas outreach and to deepen their relationships with God and others.

This first month has been a time of adjustment, but these young adults are already beginning to experience growth. Reflecting on a recent prayer challenge in downtown Columbus, Elliot shared, "The main objective is to talk to as many strangers as possible and hopefully have the opportunity to pray for them and listen to the situations they are going through. Something we discussed as a team during this time is how evident it was that people want to be heard, not just heard but listened to. I've started to realize it's not always about fixing people's problems but just listening and joining in their story and giving them the chance to be understood."

After DTS, the REACH teams will transition to outreach on the field. **Team Zambia** will build on the work of previous REACH teams, living in a rural village and serving alongside Love's Door staff. Love's Door has worked for decades to bring holistic, empowering development to neglected neighborhoods in southern Zambia. The team of four will join their church planting movement, their work with orphans, and their discipleship of new believers.

Team Mediterranean Trek will be directed by an RI long-term worker family to travel to mountain villages and make contact with unreached peoples. They will carry solar-powered players with the good news and will find creative ways to engage in the community through language acquisition and relationship building. They will also serve through work projects and sharing the good news.

Team Mediterranean will join RI's long-term team as childcare providers and home education aids. They will spend time in language

school, where they will work on building friendships with classmates and teachers. They may serve through teaching English, caring through hospitality, prayer walks, and supporting the long-term team and their families.

Team Himalayas will work alongside a local believer in connection with RI. They will trek to various communities to minister to local churches and believers. They may serve through teaching English, preaching, sharing their testimony, or service projects.

Since its beginning in 1992, the REACH program has played a significant role in RI's identity and work. It has allowed young adults to sow new seeds and to reap fruit from the work of those who have come before. We trust that this year will be no different. As Madeleine, a 2024-25 REACHer who returned to lead the Mediterranean Team, reflected, "This program has changed me so much in the past year, and I cannot wait to see how much our team learns and grows over these next nine months. Thank you for all your support, and we ask that you continue to pray for us as we create stronger relationships."

Due to the secure locations of this year's teams, RI will not share about their work as freely on social media as we have in the past. We encourage you to follow the team blogs to get first-hand insight into what they're learning and experiencing throughout DTS and their overseas assignments. We're excited to see what God has in store for each of this year's participants and invite you to support them through prayer over the next nine months! 🙏

You can find the team blogs at <https://rosedaleinternational.org/reach/teams/>

Photo credit: [Mladen Janic from Pexels](#)



Hunter lives in Columbus, Ohio, and works at Rosedale International. He is a 2021 alumnus of Rosedale Bible College and recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in marketing.

presence of God. Quakers believe that in silence, God can be most clearly encountered and heard, making it their primary means of approaching God and the medium through which God is experienced.

This practice can best be described by Ecclesiastes 5:1-2: “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools...Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few” (ESV).

Despite our foundational differences, the Quaker tradition reminds us not to brush by the “still small voice” of the Spirit (1 Kgs. 19:12). The mantra repeated in Revelation 2 and 3 is, “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” If it is not already part of our lives, we could do well to cultivate the habit of sitting quietly before the Lord and waiting on him, listening to what He might be saying to us (Isa. 40:31, Ps. 27:14, Lam. 3:25–26).

This practice has been a staple for the Quaker community, and it remains a model for us today.

Still, the strength of Quakerism can also be its weakness. At times, the emphasis on personal experience has led some to elevate the “Inner Light” above the authority of Scripture, leaving individuals to define what is right and wrong for themselves. Without pastors or clear community standards, accountability can be lacking. Furthermore, a rejection of physical expressions of worship can lead to hyper-spiritualization, which can lead to a form of Gnosticism that rejects the idea of the biblical God who calls his creation “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Worship needs to be both “in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24).

The Quaker movement serves as a reminder to be sincere in our worship and to avoid heartless lip service and empty sacrifices, something that God has had to remind His people of quite often (Matt. 15:8-9; Hos. 6:6, 1 Sam. 15:22, Mic. 6:6-8). Its legacy continues to urge Christians to wait patiently on the Spirit, listen for His voice, and respond accordingly. At the same time, the movement serves as a warning not to separate our experiences from the guidance of Scripture, since doing so can easily lead to subjectivity and, ultimately, error. At their best, then, the Quakers remind us that true worship arises from sincere hearts, fully present, and yielded to the guidance of the Spirit. 🕊️



The *Missionary Bulletin* was the predecessor of the *Brotherhood Beacon* (now *Beacon*), and the August 1968 edition is a window you might enjoy peering through. Did you know our conference was sending people to Ethiopia, Costa Rica, Luxembourg, Germany, and Nicaragua as well as multiple outreach locations within the States? Can you locate anyone you know among the families pictured? And if Dorcas Miller’s poem is any indication, some things haven’t changed much in the intervening decades!

Full article available at rosedalenetwork.org/media/from-the-archives/