

Heart and Home Harmony

Aiming for hearts, homes, and lives in harmony with:
God and His Church, and the rest of His creation through the Holy Spirit.

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Here in the North Country

There is Hope

Dear Readers,

Spring has fulfilled many of the hopes of winter. The days are warm and the countryside is awash with new life and color. The maples gave lots of syrup. Luke and the horses have been busy logging and sawing; Daniel (29) has been sawing to fill lumber orders and keep some on stock. The children have been busy setting up the new roadside market at Daniel's farm, also planting and weeding — hoping to supply it with produce — hoping it will be a benefit to the community and an opportunity for many. Luray (17) started selling tomatoes and cucumbers from his greenhouses in May, earlier than ever.

Our honeybees give us a sweet hope. The apples, pears, plums, and cherries bloomed heavily, giving us hope of an abundant harvest. Two years ago, hail pelted our apple and pear blossoms. There was no crop. It seemed to even affect the next year's crop, as it was small. We think it's time now to get a good crop. Nevertheless, we trust that God will give us what we need.

One day I was wondering what else to add to the menu. *I know*. I got a bowl, went out under the clear, blue sky and plopped myself down, where little bursts of sunshine littered the

grass. I picked the dandelions, removing all the stem. *I'm making sunshine for dinner. I'm thankful we live in the country.*

The cliff swallows are back, darting around, repairing their mud nests under the eaves of the woodshed. With them around, we hope there will be fewer mosquitoes.

I could hear the bang, bang of a hammer on the anvil. *I wonder what Tim (26) is forging now.* Melvin (19) parked the old truck he has been fixing. We are thankful for the opportunities the children have to use their various talents. We are thankful for each of our children. They are such a blessing. What a joy it is that they seek to serve God! Ellen (28) and husband Mike are serving in Bolivia. Dawn (23) has been like a rising light in our lives. Joy (21) is just that. It seems there is no guile in Nathaniel (14) (See John 1:47). Larisa (12) is a blossom, opening fast. Jonathan (10), our charming baby, is not a baby anymore.

I mixed the dandelions with beaten eggs, breadcrumbs, a bit of pickle juice and herbs. I spread the mixture in a frying pan, then turned and cooked it on the other side. Usually we top it with cheese and salsa or chives.

June 5th was our 31st wedding anniversary. On the 4th, we decided to sleep in the cabin on the rock in our woods. We enjoyed the peaceful setting, the thrushes serenading us with their rich song. We talked, prayed, and shared. More than ever, each of our joys, our

pain, our struggles became a part of the other.

We forgot to take a watch along. The next morning, guessing it to be nearing noon, we decided it's time to go back. In a light drizzle, we walked back down the hill, back to earth.

That evening Emily (24) and her husband Rob, took us out to eat for our anniversary. On the way home, they stopped at their place to check on their puppies. She invited us in to see their new, blue puppy. As we entered the empty, half dark house I heard a baby crying in the kitchen. *Why is Jasmine here alone?* I knew the children had been left at our place. Then "Surprise!" From different directions, people popped out of other rooms. Our family and friends sang "Happy Anniversary." After the cake and other treats, we sang, including songs we sang at our wedding. It was an anniversary we will remember.

Often when we hear the news or consider events around us, there seems to be more reason for despair than hope. Without God, there is reason for man to despair. But God is alive. He is waiting, longing for us to come to Him and find hope — hope that is alive.

Isaiah wrote about Jesus: **The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for**

the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. Isa 61:1-4

It doesn't matter what our problem or our prison is. It doesn't matter how desolate is the legacy that has been passed to us. It doesn't matter how ignorant we are of the cause or the cure of our problems. Christ brings light and healing. He came to repair the desolations of many generations.

As long as we are willing to learn, there is hope. Hope of finding truth. Hope of learning a new skill or understanding His creation. Hope of understanding another. Hope of understanding ourselves. Hope of uprooting problems. Hope of healing. Hope of knowing our Creator. Hope of harmony.

We hope you have a fruitful summer. May your fields and gardens, both natural and spiritual, yield rich harvests. We hope to hear from you.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Rom 15:13

Love, Luke and Rachel Martin

Heart and Home Harmony

156 Newton Rd
Potsdam, N.Y. 13676

Editors: Luke and Rachel Martin
Parishville Christian Church

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*A father bares his burden for affirming children—
and tells how to do it.*

Celebrating Our Children!

by Val A. Yoder

At least twice Father God broke through the curtain of earth's atmosphere to supernaturally affirm, ***"Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*** Even if the Father had not spoken out of heaven, Jesus was, nonetheless, His beloved Son. But it is significant that, even if Jesus did not "need" this affirmation, He was still given it. First, at His baptism, and later, on the Mount of Transfiguration, God significantly and publicly gave approval to His Son. It may be more than coincidence that these statements of approval came just before great trials for our Lord—His temptation in the wilderness and the debacle of Calvary.

Zephaniah 3:17 gives us another window into the pleasure God's children are to Him. Zephaniah tells us the Father rejoices over His children with joy. The Hebrew wording intimates that God is *bright, cheerful, joyful, and ecstatic with joy*. The verse continues, *"He will joy over thee with singing,"*

describing God's strong affection.

Is the Father's affirmation of His children a model for parenting our children? What was the impact and message of His affirmation? Usually we are quicker to reprove our children than to affirm them. Though brief, the Father's two statements from heaven conveyed three critical messages that all children long to hear from their parents.

First, **children want to know that they belong.** *"This is my Beloved Son . . ."* communicated that Christ had a place of protection in the heart of God, that Jesus was attached, cherished, treasured, adored, and valued. The Father was not willing to part with Him.

Secondly, **a child longs to know he is approved.** *"In whom I am well pleased"* verbalized that Christ was admired and appreciated; that the Father delighted in what proceeded out of His Son's being; and that He relished His Son's righteousness.

"Celebrating our Children" by Val Yoder. ©2002 Christian Light Publications, Inc., Harrisonburg, VA. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Thirdly, at the Mount of Transfiguration the final phrase was added. **“Hear ye Him”** pronounced a transferal of authority and responsibility and **proclaimed His competence, qualification, and trustworthiness.**

With imperfect children, we cannot say these things as absolutely as the Father did to Jesus. But these expressions should make up the atmosphere we create for our offspring. The people of Israel were certainly less than perfect when God delighted in them.

Our homes are not mere motels for coming and going. They are to be havens of laughter, joy, and tears that emerge from our family bonding. Within this fragrance of love and affirmation, Scriptural discipline is immensely more effective than in its absence. My growing up was liberally permeated with affirmation; consequently my perspective is generally optimistic. In contrast, I’ve fellowshiped with people superior to me in talent, insight, and energy, yet dogged by a persistent pessimism. Their lives are characterized by a constant drive to succeed, to be approved, to appear competent. Many of them have told me they felt little approval from their parents. There is a significant connection between a child’s relationship with his parents and his basic outlook on

life, even before reaching the age of accountability.

Even in the spiritual family of the church, Paul demonstrates that an atmosphere of blessing and affirmation is essential. He told his readers that they belonged, were approved of, and were competent even as he firmly reproved them.

Paul wrote in Romans 1:8-12, *“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that **your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.** For God is my witness . . . that without ceasing **I make mention of you always in my prayers;** . . . **For I long to see you,** that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.”*

Paul reproves the Galatians for their foolishness by saying, “O foolish Galatians”: “Am I therefore become your enemy?” yet, he profoundly affirms them in Galatians 4:19, 20; and 5:10 when he says, ***My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now. I have confidence in you through the Lord,** that ye will be none otherwise minded.*

Paul’s letters continue this theme of affirmation and connection to those he labored among until Christ was formed in them. The

Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians all heard that their lives were carried dearly in Paul's heart.

Maybe his most significant affirmation is to the church at Corinth, a brotherhood plagued with problems. They struggled with carnality, lawsuits between members, incest, spiritual infancy, and the Judaizers. Yet, Paul says, *"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (I Corinthians 1:4-8).

Though childless, Paul modeled how to nurture children as he guided the spiritual children of the family of God.

Can our children say that we show delight in their righteous desires and actions? Do they hear our "Well done!" more often than our "You should have . . ."? We certainly are not to "puff up" self-centeredness or fleshly pride, but our heavenly Father's example calls us to practice an approval and

affirmation which is missing in too many homes.

As parents, let's praise a child who joins others for prayer and Bible study, who gives the biggest piece of cake to a sibling, who waits till last to serve himself, who holds the door for the family, who memorizes Scripture, who reaches out in a prison ministry, who dresses modestly, who is prompt, who fulfills assignments diligently, and who spends his money wisely.

But, beyond affirming good behavior, we need to affirm our children's personhood, their value as our beloved children. We need to rejoice, not just over their performance, but over their placement in our home, as extensions of heaven, entrusted to our love and training by God Himself. What a privilege! What an incredible blessing. That God would place a being of His unique creation in our care is a sacred trust of such proportions as to reduce us to humble, grateful reliance on Him.

When we think of our children, what first comes to our mind? Are they thoughts of delight or thoughts of disapproval for their selfishness, childishness, and immaturity? Must our child have all his "ducks in a row" before we can enjoy the "ducks" that are in order? If one or more areas of his life is gray or black, can we still enjoy what is white?

Potential for disagreement and disapproval abound in the daily routine of home life. This easily leads to critical words, which when multiplied over time, create a climate of disapproval. Building an atmosphere of affirmation will not happen by default. If we don't discipline ourselves as parents to create that atmosphere, it will be a dull home at best, and a chaotic, angry home at worst. It will take work. It will take prayer. It will take humility. It will take unconditional love.

Prepare yourself to tell your children how delighted you are that God placed them in your home. Tell them how special He has made and gifted them. Declare how honored you are to be their parent. Let them get a taste of the Lord's delight in His children as God channels His delight in them through you. □□□□□□□□□□



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Amanda Hall (in 1999) delights in helping Aunt Joy mix bread....

... and feels a little smug!

Love

I love you
 Not only for what you are,
 But for what I am
 When I am with you.

I love you,
 Not only for what
 You have made of yourself,
 But for what
 You are making of me.

I love you
 For the part of me
 That you bring out;
 I love you
 For putting your hand
 Into my heaped-up heart
 And passing over
 All the foolish, weak things
That you can't help
 Dimly seeing there,
 And for drawing out
 Into the light
 All the beautiful belongings
 That no one else had looked
 Quite far enough to find.

I love you because you
 Are helping me to make
 Of the lumber of my life
 Not a tavern
 But a temple;
 Out of the works
 Of my every day
 Not a reproach
 But a song. . . .

Mary Carolyn Davies



Some houses try to hide the fact
That children shelter there.
Ours boasts of it quite openly.
The signs are everywhere.

For smears are on the windows,
Little smudges on the doors.
I should apologize I guess,
For toys strewn on the floors.

But I sat down with the children
And we played and laughed and read.
And if the doorbell doesn't shine,
Their eyes will shine instead.

For when at times I'm forced to choose,
The one job or the other;
I want to be a housewife,
But first, I'll be a Mother.

Author unknown

How To Make Cottage Cheese

Take fresh raw milk and let it set at room temperature until it has coagulated. Remove the cream, use as sour cream. Ladle the curd, or cut it, and pour it into a cheese cloth lined colander. Let it drain in the colander or tie the opposite corners of the cloth and hang it to drain. Stir the curd occasionally. Let drain until it is as dry as you like. It may take a day or two. Add sweet or sour cream and salt to taste.

This method works best with

Jersey cow's milk or other cows with high milk solids. If you have Holstein milk it will probably be necessary to warm the curd after cutting it. Warm slowly or in a double boiler to 90 - 110 F, stirring often. Usually, the warmer you make it, the firmer and drier the curd will be, and the faster it will drain. I say "usually" because I have found cheese making to be unpredictable at times. Watch it, especially in hot weather. It will mold if you let it set too long. RM