

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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For Subscriptions or to Change your address, contact:

Joanna deBoer - Reformed Perspective Administration,
Box 1328, 230 2nd AVE NW, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0
subscribe@reformedperspective.ca
1-855-527-1366

For Letters to the Editor, Advertising and Submissions, contact:

E-mail: editor@reformedperspective.ca

Editor: Jon Dykstra

Regular Contributors: Sharon Bratcher, Christine Farenhorst, Margaret Helder, Rob Slane, Michael Wagner

Board of Directors: Bruce DeBoer (Chairman); Henry Stel (Managing Editor and Secretary); Chris deBoer (Treasurer); Mark Penninga; Aren Vreugdenhil

Template Design: Compass Creative Studio Inc. compasscreative.ca

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READER RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR,

I am grateful for Andre Schutten's article "Transgenderism 101" featured in the Nov/Dec 2016 issue of *Reformed Perspective*. It was highly informative and well written. After reflecting on the article for a time I began to wonder if we can use statements made by transgender advocates to show that humans innately (and rightly) believe that we have a soul or spirit. We may also then be able to show how people with a secular worldview cannot advocate for transgender ideology while remaining consistent with their worldview. Let me explain. Andre writes in his article:

Perhaps the group that captures the most attention today are those who struggle with gender identity disorder, also known as gender dysphoria, a psychological phenomenon. We might hear them say something like, "I'm a woman trapped in a man's body" or vice versa.

Let's look closer at that statement "I am a woman trapped in a man's body." The question I have for the people pushing transgender ideology is this: "What does the 'I' of 'I am a

woman trapped in a man's body;' refer to?"

In order for this statement to have any meaning we must believe that there is something fundamental to the human person that is not material. It is an admission that we are more than just physical creatures.

To this I would be in absolute agreement. Humans are not just bodies but we also have a soul or spirit, which is immaterial. What else can the "I" of "I am a female trapped in a male body" refer to? If there is no part of us beyond our physical bodies then we cannot even make this statement. At the end of the day all we are left with then is biological sex and the pro-transgender arguments fall completely flat. All a person could say then is "I am a male, but I want to act like I am a female even though I am most definitely not."

The secular worldview cannot account for the existence of a soul or spirit within humans. Humans, in the secular worldview, are only material beings. This is why the secular worldview cannot allow people to make statements such as "I am a woman trapped in a man's body" while remaining consistent with that worldview. Ironically, the secular worldview needs to borrow (albeit unconsciously) from the Christian worldview – that we are more than simply physical beings – in order to push for transgenderism.

Perhaps we can speak this truth in love to show pro-transgender advocates:

1. That the secular worldview cannot advocate for transgenderism without undermining secularism.
2. As humans we are indeed more than just physical creatures but also have a soul, which in turn reveals the presence of a spiritual creator, God.
3. We need, then, to take into account that God has created us when talking about matters related to transgenderism.

Indeed, God tells us in his Word that He created humans male and female as distinct from each other but meant to complement one another (Gen 1:27-28). He designed us this way. If we go outside the bounds of God's design then we are going to end up hurting ourselves and our neighbors. In a fallen world all of life, including our sexuality, is broken. But healing is possible when we look beyond ourselves and to our Creator, who made everything very good.

Rev. Rick Vanderhorst
Winnipeg, MB

EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

This is a winsome approach – we can the more easily get to the heart of the issue by first finding where we agree before we get to where we disagree. As you note:



those arguing for transgenderism don't have it all wrong – they are right that we are more than our bodies.

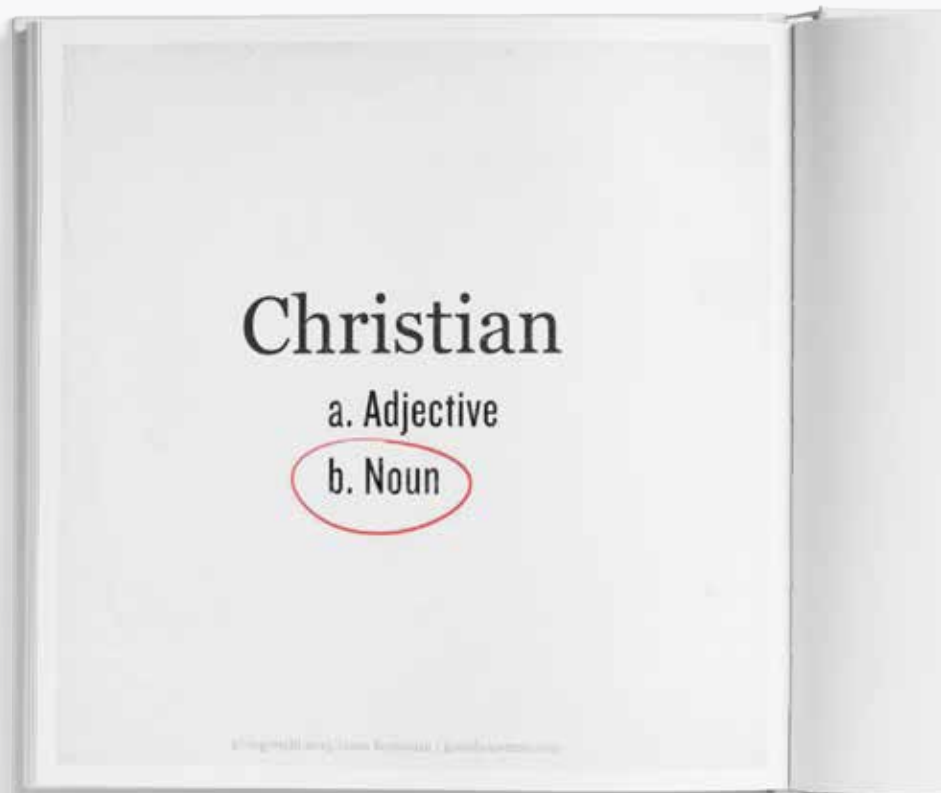
Douglas Wilson has raised another point of agreement:

Both groups understand that something has gone wrong. This is the one thing Bruce Jenner got right. What he got right is that everything is wrong.

From this common ground we quickly get to the heart of our disagreement – how to deal with this mess. Wilson continues:

This is where the two groups divide. Those who thirst for forgiveness understand that salvation must come from outside us, while the other group wants to “take personal responsibility” by commandeering our own regeneration. The former receives the virgin birth of Christ so that we might be begotten of imperishable seed, while the other tries to jury-rig its own form of parthenogenesis. The former results in true heart regeneration while the latter results in rearranging the furniture.

In his book *Common Ground Without Compromise* Stephen Wagner shows how to do something similar in the abortion debate – how we can find agreement on some points even with pro-abortion advocates. He also gives a few reasons why it can be so very helpful, and the biggest might simply be that it prevents us from fighting needless battles. These issues are contentious – abortion is a matter of life or death, and transgenderism is about someone's very identity. So heated arguments can be expected. But we don't want those fights to happen about issues that don't matter. By seeking the common ground we remind ourselves that we aren't called to oppose everything the other side says. It helps us be winsome rather than quarrelsome.



How would your view of self and others change if you stopped using the word “Christian” as an adjective? Do we still seek our identity in what we have or do instead of our life in Christ? One says, “I’m a Christian artist,” another “I’m a Christian businessman,” or “I’m a Christian teacher, Christian wife, or Christian dad.” But in all those statements we still identify primarily in a particular role or vocation - church remains a community where we still separate into cliques and groups which we can personally identify with rather than embracing the wonderful diversity and enjoying the unity of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

Could we not experience 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 more fully if we referred to ourselves instead as “artistic Christians,” “entrepreneurial Christians,” “pastoral Christians,” “married Christians,” “single Christians,” etc...

*“Christian” is a name given to a person who is “in Christ”,
This is the only identity through which we enjoy true unity.*

Excerpt from the new book



Just Thinking; 95 Doodles to
Noodle Over by Jason Bouwman

Preorder at justthinkingbook.com

Available May/June 2017.



The Bible doesn't have a lot to say about _____.

by Jon Dykstra

We often hear it said, "the Bible really doesn't have a lot to say about _____."

Into this blank liberals will insert terms such as "homosexuality" or "creation" or "gender" and, as Douglas Wilson has noted, they'll make this claim because they are the sort of liberal that still professes God's Word as authoritative, and they know that if the Bible *does* speak to their cause, then they really should listen.

But they don't want to.

So they pretend God has not spoken.

We see it, and we get frustrated. How can they ignore what God has so clearly said?

NOT A BUSINESS MANUAL, BUT....

But conservative Christians also talk this way and sometimes for the very same reason that liberals do. We know that God is sovereign, but there are some areas of our life where we want to rule supreme. For some it might be the type of music they like, or the movies they prefer. For others, it could be the way they treat their spouse, or the way they discipline their children. Of course, we know better than to say, "You can have it all Lord, but not this one part." So, instead, we pretend He has not spoken, when the truth is we haven't looked and we don't want to.

Other times Christians dismiss the

Bible's relevance out of ignorance. We insist the Bible doesn't have a lot to say about business, or the environment, or painting, or playing sports because, in our daily reading, we've never noticed chapters on business, the environment, painting, or playing sports. A fellow might say, "The Bible doesn't have a lot to say about being an executive - it's not a management manual after all." And there is some truth to that since the Bible doesn't contain all there is to know about life, the universe, and everything.

But what it does contain are God's very thoughts about the *purpose* of life, the universe and everything. Might that have some relevance to business practices?

It's easy enough to answer with a "yes" and leave everything there - a hypothetical acknowledgement of God's sovereignty in business too, but then we don't go any further. We don't pursue how exactly His rule works itself out in the boardroom.

That's why the better question here is one that apologist Del Tackett loves to ask: "Do you really believe that what you believe is really real?"

In other words, do we believe God really is sovereign over *every* square inch of creation? And do we believe that God really is wise, and really is loving? Do we really believe He knows what is best for

us? That's what we say we believe. But do we really?

Because if we do, then instead of dismissing His relevance to whatever we are doing, we should be eager to search out what He does have to say. Even if it is only a little, we know it is brilliant and completely reliable (and what business books can say that?).

GOD HAS A LOT TO SAY FOR ANYONE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR

If we start that search, the results are sure to be astounding. When we eagerly comb through the Scriptures to find every last thing God might have said about our particular interest - when, instead of avoiding His authority over our favorite activity we look to see how we can place it under His rule - then we'll find God gives us more guidance than we ever realized.

Yes, the word "business" is hardly ever mentioned in the Old or New Testament, but the Bible has lots to say about office life. One example: in a recent post¹ by business blogger David Mead, he writes about what to do when you are in a meeting surrounded by brilliant folk and you're feeling intimidated. You feel like you really don't belong here "at the adult table." Mead lays out our two choices. We can either:

... the word "business" is hardly ever mentioned in the Old or New Testament, but the Bible has lots to say about office life.

1. "Show up in an attempt to prove that we're good enough, smart enough, experienced enough, or educated enough to be there..."
2. "Show up knowing that we don't yet belong at the adult table and use it as an opportunity to learn, ask questions and contribute..."

He then notes that if you try the first approach, you're likely to find "others in the group will take some pleasure in knocking you down a few pegs." But if you go with choice two, you may just find "the group will take pleasure in helping you gain..."

I don't know if David Mead is a Christian, but I can tell you that the advice he offers here is spot on. Now, I haven't been in a lot of boardrooms so how can I be so sure? Because in Luke 14:8-11 Jesus says the same thing. In this passage Jesus is talking about a wedding feast, not a business meeting, but his point speaks to human nature, which remains the same everywhere.

"When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Maybe David Mead was trying to build on Luke 14. But whether he was or was not, *we* can. And we *should*, because we will never find a more reliable foundation than God's Word.

CAR MECHANIC

The same holds true for any profession, any recreation, our food choices, the typical time we head to bed, the friends we choose – anything!

For some, the everywhere and everything reach of God's sovereignty will strike them as an imposition – there's no square inch of creation left for us to call our own! But when we understand that God loves us, and is smarter than us, then we'll see this not as an imposition, but as a comfort. God is watching out for us, and has guidance for us, no matter what we are doing.

So let's try this again. Can we think of any subject, any area, any endeavor that the Bible doesn't speak to? Let's try and think of the toughest possible example, by focusing on something that the Bible couldn't possibly speak about because it hadn't even been invented in biblical times. *What about cars?* Wouldn't it make sense for someone to say: "The Bible doesn't say a lot about being an auto mechanic – after all, it isn't a car repair manual"?

The answer is still no. The Bible might not speak about cars, but it does offer warnings about the pull of idolatry, which may be a concern for any young gear head whose *interest* is bordering on *obsession*.

This is also a profession where most of the work he does has to be taken completely on trust. A client's automotive knowledge may well end right where the front of the car begins, so the client won't understand the problem, let alone have a clue as to the best solution. They are depending on an

honest man giving them honest advice, and putting in honest work. And the Bible has a lot to say about honesty too (Prov. 16:11 for example).

CONCLUSION

So the question is not *whether* God has something to say, but rather *what* is it that God has said? This is the calling and the privilege of being one of God's own: we get to seek out God's thoughts on math and bookbinding, art and child-rearing, environmental stewardship and counseling.

Of course that doesn't mean we are going to understand everything perfectly. We might seek God's thoughts, and have a hard time figuring out what He has to say on a particular topic. We are not omnipotent – we will never know it all. But that speaks more to our own limitations, than to the Bible's.

So enough with "The Bible doesn't have a lot to say about _____." We know God really has spoken, really is ruler of all, and really does love us. That's why we have every reason to seek out how God's Word speaks to every aspect of our lives. RP

¹ David Mead's "Knock Down Theory" posted to Blog.StartWithWhy.com on Nov, 2015



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NOTA BENE

News worth noting

health concerns. So the first reason to oppose gay pride parades is out of love for the participants.

- 2) The second is bigotry. This is the "they're different than us – ewwww!" response. It's not attractive, and with good reason. This treats homosexuals not as fellow Image-bearers of God, who share our same need for redemption, but rather as something lesser.

We should acknowledge Trost's courage in taking a stand that no other politician seems willing to take anymore. But we shouldn't overlook the manner in which he has taken this stand. Here's his complete email message:

In 2009, when a former Minister of the Conservative Government announced \$400,000 in funding for Toronto's "gay pride" week, I led the Conservative Caucus in opposing this announcement and went on the record with my opposition to any such funding. I have not marched in any "gay pride" parade. Further, I will NOT march in any "gay pride" parade as Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, nor will I march in or FUND any "gay pride" event of any kind as Prime Minister.

Then, in a follow-up, a Trost staffer released a video via Twitter (which has subsequently been taken down) in which he said, "In case you haven't noticed, Brad's not entirely comfortable with the whole gay thing."

So how does this come off? Does it come off as concerned and loving? Or does it sound more like reason #2?

Now here's our key question: why doesn't it sound good? It's what God wants. It's the right stand. So why – even in our own ears – does it sound so wrong?

Because it is standing there on its lonesome, with no support and no justification. It seems like Trost's opinion and nothing more. While liberal politicians will reference God – last month California governor Jerry Brown

BRAD TROST CATCHES HEAT FOR STAND AGAINST GAY PRIDE PARADES

BY JON DYKSTRA



go into detail. He really couldn't explain further unless he was willing to talk about sin, which would have gotten him into even more trouble. But there are really only two reasons

to oppose gay pride parades.

- 1) The first is because they take pride in something God condemns – homosexual activity. They celebrate sin. And since sin separates us from God, this is not something we should be putting our stamp of approval on – we are hurting homosexuals when we do so. There are also the right-now consequences of homosexual activity that shorten lifespans, lead to far higher rates of suicide, and result in higher rates of cancer, depression, drug use and an array of other

Brad Trost caught some heat from interim Conservative Party leader Rona Ambrose when he sent out an email to his leadership campaign supporters where he promised he would never walk in a gay pride parade. As Ambrose noted the next day, she was proud to be the first Conservative Party leader to walk in such a parade.

Trost's email got people talking but, because it was so very brief, it gave no explanation as to why it isn't a good thing to march in these parades. That was a missed opportunity.

Of course, we know why Trost didn't

argued it wasn't Christian to build a wall on the border – we seem scared to do so.

But something inevitable happens when we try to defend a biblical position without presenting biblical reasons. Then, because we have no firm foundation, we really have no firm argument.

We've seen this happen in the gender debate, where Christians are more eager to talk about bathrooms than that God created two genders. In the abortion debate, rather than talking about the humanity of the unborn – how they, like all of us, are made in God's image – Christians find themselves defending the right to free speech. Instead of arguing for the unborn, we'll get distracted into arguing that we should be allowed to argue for the unborn.

And then, when the attacks come, we're not being attacked for defending God's Word, and His position. No, we're attacked for all sorts of side issues that don't really matter.

And in some cases, we're attacked

for bigotry. Because we've presented God's thoughts as if they are only our own personal opinions. Of course, getting attacked for bigotry is likely to happen no matter what we say. But how much better it would be if this attack came while we were being winsome and loving, rather than while we were keeping close-mouthed about what God has to say.

Brad Trost is a remarkable man. He (along with Pierre Lemieux) has spoken up for the unborn when others have not dared do so. Trost has helped get the plight of the unborn back in the public eye, and in doing so has forced even some of the pro-abortion candidates to make some small concessions that could help the unborn. So my point here is not to beat up on Brad Trost. He has more courage than 10 ordinary men.

But on this issue, he has taken a stand but offered no defense. We can hardly fault the media for portraying this as simple bigotry – this is the only narrative they know, and Trost hasn't given them

any other.

So why criticize a brave man? Only because this type of *partial* stand – standing for God's Truth without saying His Name – is a failing we all share. And in seeing how Trost's public stand is now being twisted, we can see how any defense of God's truth that doesn't actually stand on God as its foundation, is going to come off as far from godly and far from good.

The fact is, we all need to be braver. The world doesn't want to hear from God, but they need to. So we all need to speak about Him more, not less. We need to offer a clear witness to the world, not just in politics but over the back fence.

When I am afraid,
I will put my trust in You.
In God, whose word I praise,
In God I have put my trust;
I shall not be afraid.
What can mere man do to me?
Psalm 56:3-4

CELEBRATE 1517 IN 2017!

BY NATHAN ZEKVELD



It's the Reformation's quincentenary – this year marks the 500th since Martin Luther nailed (or as some suggest, affixed using wax) his 95 Theses on the door of Wittenberg's Castle Church.

That's something to celebrate, and that's why the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and the Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College have announced a joint initiative to mark this important anniversary.

Their project, called "Faithful to His Word: Celebrate 1517" has the aim of encouraging our Reformed communities to remember the Reformers' love for the Lord, so that we might "never slacken in zeal."

To that end, they are soliciting entries in all sorts of different art forms to re-tell this important milestone in church history. Entries will include: essays, poetry, songs, stories and storytelling, and the visual arts. This is a competition, with the best entries being compiled together for the publication of a celebratory coffee table book in 2018, Lord willing. While there are a number of different categories for elementary, secondary and post secondary students, there is also an "open" category for all other age groups. This means that everybody is invited to submit at their age and ability level!

On the website – Tinyurl.com/Celebrate1517 – there are also pages with some already commissioned works. The two pieces of music, and five short plays, are available for use in our schools, homes, churches, towns, neighborhoods, and communities. It's a great opportunity to bring the riches of the Reformation not only to our churches, but to Canada as well.

The plan is that the commissioned

music and drama piece, as well as the many poems, songs, essays, stories, and visual arts will be showcased at local assemblies, rallies, conferences, and other celebrations around October 31. The Celebrate 1517 Committee will not be directly involved in these local celebrations, but is seeking to stimulate them. After October 31, the various works will be passed on to the committee to undergo a selection process for the coffee table book. More details about how to submit entries can be found at the website Tinyurl.com/Celebrate1517.

As a student at the seminary, I believe this is an excellent opportunity to develop the abundance of creativity and skills and gifts that are present in the membership of our churches, and an opportunity to explore the riches of the Reformation in a relevant way. Hey, if you can't preach it, then sing it, draw it, or write it. If you aren't sure if you are able to do that, it doesn't hurt to give it a go and to start developing those secret talents!

CELEBRATING WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY – MAR. 21

BY ROBYN DEWITT



i. I am Robyn. I want to tell you about World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD). I go to high school. When I go to school I do presentations. I work at school with all my friends and teachers. I like going to school because I learn lots of things. I hang out with my friends and work with my friends in class. The teachers help all the students.

I learned that we are all different because our genes are all unique. Everyone has a different kind of special code. The code is in our chromosomes. People with Down Syndrome have 3 chromosomes of #21. I am lucky because I have 3 chromosomes of #21.

On Tuesday March 21 we had a celebration at school for World Down Syndrome Day. The whole school – students, teachers and parents – joined in. All different countries were celebrating too. Did you?

This is what my school did.

First, I wrote in the school newsletter to tell my friends and their families that WDSD was coming. On Monday I stood up in front of the stage to give a presentation. High School listened to me. I told them about WDSD. My teacher and I made a slideshow. I asked everyone to read the bible text about how God created our bodies. We all watched a video about Down Syndrome. On Tuesday (World Down Syndrome Day) our school wore lots of socks or socks that didn't match – all different kinds of socks, because we are all different but all the same, just like the socks. We wore jeans too because genes are inside of our DNA. The student council set up a photo contest. High School



Picture by Deborah DeRuiter and used with permission.

students and teachers were taking pictures of lots of socks. They put them on Facebook or Instagram with hashtags like #lotsofsocks #WDSD17 #MyVoiceMyCommunity. I took lots of pictures of people's socks too. Teachers showed the students videos about Down Syndrome. I made a poster about WDSD and put it in the foyer of my school. Everyone looked at the poster.

I was thinking, maybe other people wonder about what WDSD means.

I was thinking it's very important to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day.

WANT TO WIN THE LOTTERY?

BY WES BREDENHOF



he next Lotto 6/49 jackpot is an estimated 16 million dollars" – when you hear something like that, the temptation is to imagine how that sum could solve all your problems. The temptation is to disregard God's Word in passages like 1 Timothy 5:9-10:

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

It's taught in God's Word, but even some unbelievers come close to recognizing its truth. Ask Jane Park. This Scottish young woman won \$1.6 million in the EuroMillions lottery in 2013 – when she

was just 17 years old. Today she's 21 and says it ruined her life.

The shopping and spending quickly got old. She says, "I have material things, but apart from that my life is empty. What is my purpose in life?" Moreover, she claims to be desperately lonely. Any time a man shows interest in her, she can't be sure whether it's her he's after or just her money. Strangely, she blames her problems on the lottery itself and the fact that British law allows a 17 year old to win when, if they do win, they will not be capable of handling it.

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus described the seed sown among the thorns as those who hear the word, "but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things enter in and choke out the word..." (Mark 4:19). Jesus said that riches lie to us, and those lies make the hearing of God's Word unfruitful for us. Riches lie – for example, telling us that we will be happier if we just have a little more. The problem is when we believe



the lie. Instead, we should listen to God's truth. It's like the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs put it: "Contentment does not come from addition, but from subtraction. Contentment comes from subtracting our sinful desires for more." You see, the problem is not really the lottery, but the sinful, covetous desires of the human heart.

Sadly, Jane Park doesn't get that. Do you?

SOURCE: Peter Holley's "Jane Park won the lottery at 17. Now she blames EuroMillions officials for 'ruining her life'" posted to NationalPost.com on Feb 15, 2017

FACEBOOK, FAKE NEWS, AND CENSORSHIP

BY NATHAN ZEKVELD AND JON DYKSTRA



In a post on November 9, 2016, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg outlined how he was going to tackle the “fake news” occurring on his massive social media site. He stated:

The problems here are complex, both technically and philosophically. We believe in giving people a voice, which means erring on the side of letting people share what they want whenever possible.

So far so good.

But he then went on to outline a 7-point plan that will rely on users, technical means, and third parties, to identify and flag fake news. Why could that be a problem? Because the third parties they intend to use – Snopes.com has been mentioned among others – have their own biases. As do all Facebook users; one person’s most-trusted source can be viewed by someone else as unreliable. So is Facebook going to censor posts based on the advice of biased sources?

Fast-forward to Dec. 27, 2016. Brendan Larsen of the *GodOrAbsurdity.com* website reported that he was now on his 4th Facebook page – the three previous edition having been shut down by Facebook for violating their Community Standards – and that he’d had a total of 35 posts banned by Facebook. According to Larsen:

The original page had about 13,000 likes and was reaching millions of people until atheists got it shut down. I’m taking a new approach now where we avoid posting anything that might get us banned – it’s just too difficult trying to rebuild followers from zero each time they shut us down.

While some of Larsen’s posts were graphic – he showed the brutalized bodies of aborted children – Facebook says it removes “graphic images when they are shared for sadistic pleasure or to celebrate or glorify violence.” That was certainly not the case here.

Facebook also says they will remove:

...content that directly attacks people based on their: Race, Ethnicity, National origin, Religious affiliation, Sexual orientation, Sex, gender, or gender identity...

This seems the most likely reason Larsen was banned (Facebook didn’t provide an explanation) since he has shared posts about Islamic terrorism – to link terrorism and Islam is, in some circles, automatically “hate speech.” This is the problem with biased users policing speech on Facebook – instead of censoring what’s fake, they may simply censor what they don’t like.

On Feb. 20, *LifeSiteNews.com* reported that Christian “vlogger” (video blogger) Elizabeth Johnston was having similar troubles for posting Biblical commentary on homosexuality. Johnston said:

“They are muzzling me and my biblical message while Mark Zuckerberg claims that FB is unbiased.... The post Facebook deleted included no name-calling, no threats, and no harassment. It was intellectual discussion and commentary on the Bible.”

This has a happier ending – on February

24, after *LifeSiteNews.com* brought publicity to her situation, Facebook apologized for this “error” and restored her post.

What’s the takeaway? In asking Facebook to eliminate “fake news” we are also asking them to become the arbitrator of Truth for their users. But do we really want them “policing” the news we read? God tells us that it is the presence of multiple counselors (Prov. 11:14) and access to the other side of the story (Prov. 18:17) that helps us find the truth. This is why Christians, overall, oppose censorship – we don’t want someone limiting who we can hear from. We shouldn’t trust Facebook or *anyone* with such enormous power.

Of course there is a time and place for censorship, but it is a blunt tool, and should only be used for clear and pressing problems. So, for example, Facebook should ban posts that promote pornography and human trafficking – these are on the one hand *enormous* evils, and on the other, *clear* evils. To confront this sort of wickedness requires very little in the way of judgment or discernment on the part of Facebook – it would be hard for them to mess up here. But when it comes to “fake news” the problem simply isn’t big enough or clear enough to turn to censorship as the solution.

Instead we should simply test what we read, and pass along only that which we know to be true. If in doubt, don’t pass it on.

US VP LOVES HIS WIFE – PEOPLE OUTRAGED!

BY JON DYKSTRA



When *The Washington Post* recently ran a profile of US Vice-President Mike Pence, one line caused a twitter-storm of controversy. Author Ashley Parker wrote:

In 2002, Mike Pence told the *Hill* that he never eats alone with a woman other than his wife and that he won't attend events featuring alcohol without her by his side, either.

This is controversial!

Yes, in today's world it is. Pence was said to be sexist, because this arrangement would limit opportunities for women working with him. He was said to be sexualizing women, supposing them all to be potential affairs, rather than seeing them as real people. Pence was likened to "Muslim Brotherhood officials" or people from the Dark Ages. As *Atlantic* writer Anand Giridharadas put it in a tweet:

This is a medieval vision of every man as an incorrigible adulterer or rapist, lest he be restrained by his wife's presence by his side.

It's hard to take this seriously. But there is an opportunity in the midst of this furor. When common sense is seen as crazy,

it's much easier to show the contrast between God's wisdom and the world's. So, for example, the Christian satire site *Babylon Bee* ran this headline:

Bill Clinton Calls Mike Pence's Strict Marital Practices 'Excessive'

And *The Stream* asked:

Ladies, Would You Rather Be Married to Mike Pence, or Anthony Weiner?

(Wiener is an ironically named former Congressman known for his complete lack of sexual self-control.)

The Pences' arrangement is sensible for two reasons:

- **We are sexual beings so sex can be a powerful temptation** - The same media outlets lambasting the Pences are the same ones documenting what happens when others couples don't put a guard around their marriage – they dish about entertainers' and politicians' affairs, divorces, and third marriages. As the *National Review's* Jonah Goldberg put it: "It's a very strange place we've found ourselves in when elites say we have no right to judge adultery, but we have every right to judge couples who take steps to avoid it."

And it's also these same media types who editorialize about how we can't expect abstinence from kids because, when it comes to sex, expecting self-control is just unrealistic.

- **Misunderstandings, and false accusations do happen.** What do you think would happen if a *TMZ*, or *National Enquirer* got photos of Pence dining alone with a woman other than his wife? What a story they could make out of it! Or imagine Pence dined with a woman who accused him of acting improper. It wouldn't matter that he was innocent. It would be his word against hers, and the damage to his reputation would be done.

So whether Pence is avoiding temptation, or simply protecting his own reputation, this arrangement is just a matter of common sense. Or, rather, increasingly *uncommon* sense.

WILL THE GKV "EVOLVE" ON THE ISSUE OF WOMEN IN OFFICE?

BY JON DYKSTRA



The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands are currently embroiled in a debate about whether women can be ministers. Why is a denomination, which has always held that this church office is for men only, now considering such a change? One possible reason comes up in the March issue of *Reformed Continua*, a publication from a splinter group. There, Dr. S. de Marie notes:

A survey held by the *Nederlands Dagblad* in 2009 already concluded that a mere 15% of questioned ministers of the Gkv [Reformed Churches in the Netherlands] support a literal interpretation of the days in Genesis 1.

If this number is truly representative – if 15% of Gkv ministers think Genesis 1 and 2 can be re-examined and reinterpreted in new ways – it isn't surprising that they now believe other passages can also be re-interpreted.

VIMEO BANS GOSPEL OUTREACH TO HOMOSEXUALS

BY JON DYKSTRA



In March 24 the video hosting service Vimeo notified Pure Passion Ministries (PPM) – a

Christian ministry that addresses sexual brokenness of all sorts – that their account was being deleted. Why? Because Vimeo will not allow videos on their site that characterize homosexuality as a “sexual brokenness.”

(PPM) had more than 800 videos – many of them testimonials by former homosexuals – up on Vimeo before their account was deleted. PPM

director Dr. David Kyle Foster carried on some correspondence with Vimeo after he was first issued a warning back in December. The hosting service told him:

Your statement equating homosexuality to “sexual brokenness” betrays the underlying stance of your organization. To put it plainly, we don’t believe that homosexuality requires a cure and we don’t allow videos on our platform that espouse this point of view.

As Dr. Michael Brown reported, this hosting service had previously shut down the accounts of the Restored Hope Network (which helps people with unwanted same-sex attraction) as well as “NARTH, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, which is an association of psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and therapists...”

Dr. Foster assured Vimeo that PPM was motivated by love and

a wish to help people, and a Vimeo representative did, in part, acknowledge as much when he replied:

I understand the desire to not be lumped in with the more vocally hateful anti-gay activists, and I can see nothing based on the videos I have reviewed that suggest an overtly vitriolic approach. However, even respectful advocacy of [Sexual Orientation Change Efforts] is something that we do not allow on our platform.

Vimeo has decided it is impossible for anyone to fight or change their same-sex attractions...despite the many videos that were once on their site attesting to healing through Jesus Christ.

Fortunately there are other video hosting services. At this point Pure Passion Ministries still has a YouTube channel, with over 400 videos.

SOURCE: Dr. Michael Brown’s “Vimeo Declares War on Gospel Transformation” posted to AskDrBrown.org on March 27, 2017.

MELBOURNE GROUP SPENDS \$8,400 TO FIGHT UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND FINDS OUT THEY HAVE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

BY JON DYKSTRA



ten traffic lights around Melbourne, Australia underwent a gender reassignment in March – the traditional male stick man was replaced with a skirt-wearing stick women. The change was funded by a non-profit group, The Committee for Melbourne,

and according to their spokeswoman, Martine Letts, it was done to “reduce unconscious bias.”

“...these symbols are a practical and meaningful way to demonstrate that in fact 50 per cent of our population is female and should therefore also be represented at traffic lights.”

The group’s goal is to eventually have all traffic lights in the State of Victoria divided on a 50/50 ratio between men and women.

But the reaction to the new lights was mixed. Though done for the sake of gender equality, critics noted these lights could also be viewed as sexist if one were so inclined. As *National Review*’s Katherine Timpf shared, the twitterverse was pointing out how these new lights perpetuated the

“sexist idea that women should wear dresses.” And as tweeter Gina V Dow observed:

Standard symbol can be woman in pants, no? With short hair or hair tied back. What’s with “skirt denotes woman”?

Timpf went on to note these lights are also “ablest,” excluding any who are wheelchair bound. And if people *want* to be offended, there are, no doubt, other ways they can be. But as for us, God tells his people to avoid foolish quarrels (2 Tim 2:23-24, 1 Titus 3:9-11, etc.) so we can look at this, laugh, and be grateful that no taxpayer dollars went to it.

SOURCE: Katherine Timpf’s “City Installs ‘Female’ Traffic Signals for Equality, Gets Slammed for Stereotyping Women as Skirt-Wearing” posted to NationalReview.com March 7, 2017

UNIVERSITY REQUIRES TRIGGER WARNINGS...FOR SOME

BY RAYMOND KOBES

"The event conducted just beyond this sign may contain triggering and/or sensitive material. Right to life and or Prolife messages and imagery are some of the topics included within this event. If you feel triggered, please know that there are resources to support you..."

Welcome to the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV)'s Student Union Building. The above excerpt is the exact wording of signs that were taped to doors and walls near our "Value of Life art display" this February.

How did it come to this? Some context is required.

Several years ago, some Reformed students began a pro-life club called "UFV Life Link" at the UFV in Abbotsford, BC. It has had between two and two dozen members of diverse backgrounds, with current membership sitting at around a dozen. Our club goals are to initiate discussion, increase awareness, and facilitate learning about life issues. Last year we planted 10,000 pink and blue flags on the campus green, representing the 100,000 abortions that happen every year in Canada. The event was successful, yet controversial: virtually everyone on campus saw the display, some asked questions, protestors were respectful, and we garnered coverage (albeit critical) in the school paper.

However, some students were vehemently upset that we had been

allowed to have such a provocative display in the center of the campus. They used words like "triggering," "offensive," and "upsetting."

Fast forward one year and the university did not want a repeat. Apparently, bad press and student outrage unnerved the administration enough to drive them to seriously limit the scope of Life Link's outreach. When Life Link proposed an art display, the university immediately demanded it be set up behind closed doors with "trigger warnings" at the entrance. We obliged – an art display behind closed doors is better than no art display at all, and we recognized that images can have an immense impact upon students, regardless of the university's attempts to censor their viewing.

We didn't see the trigger warnings until the day of the display and when we did we were staggered – both by the number of them and by their pernicious tone. Though the display itself was limited to an unimposing corner of the Student Union Building, *all* the entrances had warnings posted. Look at the three examples here. This was as "triggering" as it got.

Meanwhile, this past September the university allowed a display about the persecution the Falun Gong face in China. It had images of torture and organ harvesting. And yet it was held with open doors and no trigger warnings.

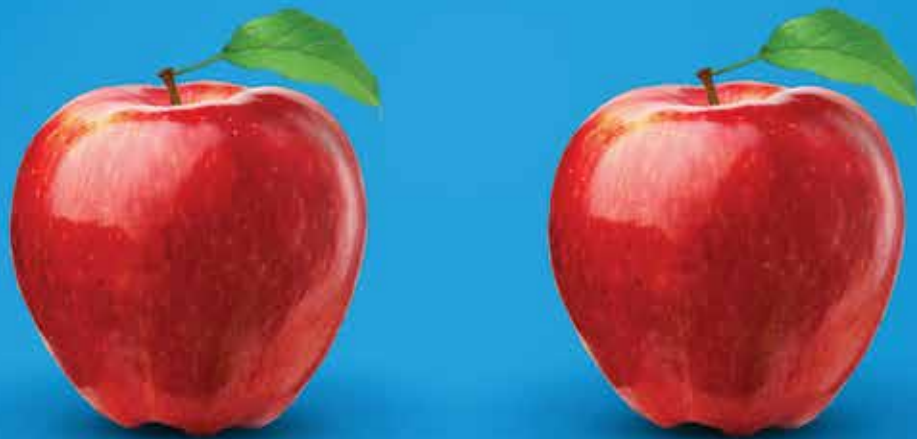
This is not simply a debate over free speech (though it is that too). Rather, it is a debate about whether we are going to protect the basic rights of the weakest members of our society. If abortion is not ending a human life, there is no debate, and we would have no reason to stop abortion. However, there is truth in the pro-life message, and deep down, the other side knows it.



That's why they want the discussion far away from them; they don't want to stumble upon it, or entertain discussion. The truth upsets them, and it does so because... confronting your own sins is always a painful ordeal. To acknowledge your own support for a decades long crime as brutal as the mass killing of the most vulnerable would be unbearable.

We need to have this debate, but we can't be consumed by hatred or frustration in propelling our message. We need to speak the truth in love and in a respectful manner. There are many people who suffer because of abortion, both distant and close to home. We often don't know the context or the circumstances, and can therefore only endeavor to show the humanity of the unborn and to implore those who oppose us to delve deeper. As Christians, we cannot stop striving to initiate discussion – this debate is best done one-on-one in conversation, and there are countless resources to aid you in the discussion. Let's shape our culture positively. Let's not stay silent.





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"...tell the next generation..."

PSALM 78:4

4 THINGS YOU CAN DO

When Someone Challenges Your Faith

by Greg Koukl

Have you ever felt “the big chill”? It’s the term I use for the cold shiver that runs up your spine when you’re confronted with what seems at first glance to be a persuasive challenge to your Christian convictions, that terrible suspicion that begins to settle in your bones that the challenger has a point. And it seems convincing. And it shakes you.

I have those moments, too, and they’re not fun. Over the years, though, I’ve learned a simple, practical system to deal with the “chill” and I want to pass it on to you. It’s not especially clever or novel – thoughtful people have been using it for ages. But it works well to sort things out and help you get to the truth of the matter.

1) DON’T PANIC

First, don’t panic. Don’t let the problem overwhelm you before you’ve had a chance to carefully assess it. There are almost always answers to these issues that are within reach if you pause, take a deep breath, then apply some thought to the matter.

Next, take a moment to reconnoiter. Get the lay of the land, so to speak. What exactly are you facing? What is the substance beyond the rhetoric that may be making the challenge look more compelling than it is? That takes two steps.

2) CLARIFY THE CLAIM

Here’s step one. Clarify the claim. Ask, “What’s the big idea?” What is the point the challenge is meant to persuade you of? That there is no God? That Jesus never existed? That the Bible is not reliable? That Christianity is false? Whatever it is, get a clear fix on that point since it’s the bridge to the next step.

3) LIST THE REASONS

Step two is to add the word “because” after the big idea.

“There is no God because...” or “The Bible is not reliable because...” etc. The point here is to now get a fix on the reasons that allegedly support the big idea. Make a list of them.

Don’t rush this step. Sometimes it takes a little work to sift through the rhetoric to uncover the specifics. Don’t be surprised if, when you look closer, there’s nothing there but noise. It happens. No real reasons, just bluster.

These two steps – clarifying the claim, then listing the reasons for it – allow you to quickly summarize the whole challenge – the basic point and the rationale behind it. If there’s more than one claim, then take each challenge individually. This is important: Deal with one point at a time.

4) DO AN ASSESSMENT

Finally, with the full argument in view do an assessment. Simply ask if the reasons offered legitimately support the big idea. An easy way to do this is to link the reasons with the basic claim by using the word “therefore.” This step of assessment can be difficult (if the argument is a technical one) or it can be incredibly simple. Let’s look at some examples.

Take the claims, “Christians are hypocrites,” or, “Religion causes violence and suffering in the world,” or, “Belief in God is a crutch.” Each is meant to implicitly undermine our confidence in Christianity (i.e., “Christianity is false because Christians are hypocrites”). And these challenges seem all the more forceful since – on my take at least – these

Get the lay of the land, so to speak. What exactly are you facing?




statements are each true in some measure. Even so, do they justify the (implied) big idea that Christianity is false? Let's see. Consider our assessment:

- Many Christians are hypocrites, therefore Christianity is false.
- Religion causes violence, therefore Jesus' view of the world must be wrong.
- Belief in God satisfies an emotional need, therefore God doesn't exist.

Hmmm. None of these work, do they? When stated clearly, these challenges all turn out to be conclusions that simply do not follow from the evidence.

These charges – even when true (and many are not true, but that's a different problem) – may tell us something about anthropology or sociology or even psychology, but they tell us nothing at all about God or Jesus or Christianity. The reasons do not support the big idea. There's nothing to fear here.

CONCLUSION

So there it is. When you feel the big chill – when you're shaken by a conversation, or an article, or a presentation that challenges your core convictions – don't panic. Instead, use the system. First isolate the claims. Second, list the reasons. Third, do the assessment. You'll be amazed at how effective this simple tool can be. 

*Greg Koukl is the author of *Tactics*, an apologetics primer, and is the founder and president of Stand to Reason (STR.org), an organization that seeks to equip Christians to be knowledgeable, wise, and godly ambassadors of Christ. This article is reprinted with permission.*



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TO APPEAR BEFORE THE LORD

by Rene Vermeulen

A young lawyer had a dream. He found himself one morning before a judge at court in a T-shirt and crumpled shorts. The judge asked him how he came to be so inappropriately dressed. “But your worship,” the lawyer answered, “I go to church in this manner.” The judge replied, “Young man you might appear before the Judge of judges in this manner, but not in my court.”

Does it really matter how we dress for church? After all, isn’t the important thing that we go to church? Well it is indeed true that the important thing is to go to church and that we appear before the Lord in worship. He calls us there. And therefore we ought to be there when He calls. There is no difficulty with that.

I also think that most of us would agree that there can be circumstances where, what at other times may be considered inappropriate, can be accepted. I think here of someone who

has been hurt and cannot wear “normal” clothes. I also think of people new to the gospel who may well wear clothes which at other times would be considered not right for church. We are not going to write about those things. Those are the exceptions.

But what should be the rule? How should brothers and sisters in the faith appear before the Lord?

HOW THEY USED TO DRESS

In olden days – say, when your grandparents were young – it was considered normal for the women to wear dark clothes, a hat and, in some instances, gloves to church. Men wore a black suit, a hat or cap, which was removed before they entered the church building. Without a doubt this was a tradition, because nowhere in the Bible will you find exactly how we should dress for church.


The question is, does such a tradition have any value? Does it make any

difference to how we experience the church service? I could answer these questions with a simple, no. There is indeed little value in tradition for tradition’s sake. And it may well be that those people long ago did not really experience a church service much different to today.

But is that really the question we should be asking? I don’t think so.

WHY DID THEY DRESS THIS WAY?

The question that is much more important is, why did our grandparents consider the way they dressed important? The answer to that question lies in how they regarded church and church going. When they went to church they recognized that they were going there to meet with the Lord. They recognized the importance of this event. They wanted to show in their outward appearance that their hearts were reaching out to the God of their salvation.



Our way of dress should reflect the importance of the occasion.

Someone may, at this point, ask me the question, did they really think about these things? Or was this simply the way they dressed for any important occasion?

Again I would have to agree. People in those days were much more inclined to dress up. That has indeed changed. During hot summer days there are not many who would go to a meeting wearing a coat and tie. If you need to sit in a stuffy room for some hours you want to be comfortable.

We can also note that our grandparents lived – most of them – in a different climate. They lived in Europe, most probably in the Netherlands which has different climatic conditions from those experienced in Canada or Australia.

So all these things need to be taken into account when considering how we should dress.

I also recognize that many today would say that no one can tell someone else what is appropriate. We live in a time that is sometimes called the *ME* generation. You know, “if it feels good, do it!” That is what we are told by the various influences which surround us. Also in the church we are being influenced by this attitude through the media, the press, TV, and magazines. Whereas once one would only see Christian magazines in our homes, today that has changed. The world has come into our homes. We need to be aware of these bad influences. We are in the world but not of this world. All of us need to examine ourselves with regard to these matters.

But is there a standard of dress that is acceptable in church? Can we lay down some rules to which everyone should adhere? Yes and no. Let us look at some very general rules.

CLIMATE

I recently had an e-mail sent to me by someone who was responding to a comment I had made in an online Reformed forum about the weather in Australia. He wrote to tell me that where his brother lives, somewhere in central Canada, it is always 40 degrees....but either plus or minus!

I have for some time held the view that the way we dress in English-speaking countries has largely been determined by the way the people in the cold and clammy English isles dress. Hence we wear a suit for formal occasions and inevitably a tie around our neck.

That may not be the best way to dress when it is extremely hot. I notice that in the state of Israel people attend cabinet meeting without a tie. Just an open necked shirt, either short or long sleeves. It is only sensible to dress for the climate – I do not think it essential to wear a suit with shirt and tie at all times.

That does not eliminate my concern with some of the outfits seen at church. There is such a thing as too informal, or too casual. Therefore I do not consider it right to appear in church with t-shirts, or sports attire and similar clothing

Another interesting observation. When sports stars receive their annual awards it is inevitably done at a formal occasion where dinner suits and bow ties are the order of the day.

MODESTY

While this is an area which should really be addressed by a lady, I guess even men can be dressed in an immodest way. There is little doubt that our ladies need to consider modesty when dressing, and not only for church. It seems to me that some ladies have little idea how their form of dress affects the opposite sex. It is not for nothing that Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:9 “I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes.” Why did Paul write this? Because he was an old stick in the mud? I don’t think so. Paul wrote this because he recognized the dangers in such immodesty. Let our ladies be aware of it and remember it when they clothe themselves.

CONCLUSION

I mentioned at the beginning of my article the dream of a young lawyer. Weekly we appear before the LORD of hosts, before Him who is far greater, and much more important than any judge


or ruler on earth. He is obviously much more important than any sports star or star of the stage or the big screen.

Each week we may appear before our LORD who owns us, body and soul, but who at the same time is our Father, who has bought us with the blood of His Son, our Lord and Savior. Shall we then, not consider these things when dressing for church on Sundays? Or for that matter, whenever we appear before Him in worship?

I realize, of course, that we are never out of His sight. He sees us wherever we are, He sees us at work, at play, at home and away from home. And at all times He wants to be proud of us. After all we are His children. Maybe each of us should ask ourselves this question: will our Lord, our Savior, our Father in heaven be proud of us in the way we dress, in the way we act, in the way we talk? He is, when all is said and done, far more important and should be far more important to each of us, than any person or group of persons on earth!

Let that be reflected in all we do and say.

Having reached the end of our article let me ask one question again. Is there an appropriate way of dressing for church?

Our way of dress should reflect the importance of the occasion. It should reflect that we come into God’s presence. Worship is joyful – that indeed! – but it is also a very solemn occasion. Joyful because we meet with our Savior, solemn because this Savior is also far greater than any person on earth. He is after all GOD. 

A version of this article first appeared in the March 2000 issue of Reformed Perspective. Rene Vermeulen was a regular columnist from 1984 to 2010.

SLIVER MUSTARD'S JOURNEY

by Christine Farenhorst

Perhaps as many as a million people lived in Noah's Grove. A thriving community, it had begun small but had grown over decades and centuries. Children were born, grew up and had more children. Farms dotted the surrounding countryside and buildings edged the skyline. Markets with fresh produce were held every Tuesday and Friday. Housewives milled about stands filled with round cabbages, bright yellow carrots, leafy greens and the like. And there were, as in all towns, the rich and the poor, the beggars and the bag ladies as well as the ones whose pockets were filled with clinking coins, the shy and the forward, the meek and the proud.

The mayor of Noah's Grove was a portly man. Well-fed and financially secure, he possessed the gift of persuading people he was the right man for his job. Amiable, he ambled through the cobble-stoned streets greeting both children and adults alike. He wore a great, heavy golden chain about his neck, a chain much admired by the younger population of Noah's Grove.

The head of the police in Noah's Grove was very much respected and recognized by all. Perhaps it was due to the fact that muscles rippled through the lining of his shirt. He wore a star on the lapel of his blue jacket. His broad jaw embodied law and order and commanded obedience.

Then there was the local judge – a man venerable and full of years. Grey-headed, thinning hair partly covered by a fur-lined beret, he walked upright – shoulders erect. His green eyes were so piercing that people

avoided his glance. They were convinced that his eyes might ferret out every little misdeed they had committed. But he was only a human as they were human – and, as such, he was also prone to sin.

There were also the bankers, the bakers, the butchers and the candlestick makers; the soldiers, the sailors and the craftsmen; and the list of Noah's Grove citizens could run on and on and on.

AN HONEST MAN

Sliver Mustard, a street cleaner, was also a resident of Noah's Grove. A tiny seedling of a man, shriveled and old, he resembled the broom he perpetually held in his hands. It was his job to sweep some of the sidewalks and the streets of the town. He didn't look up much while he was cleaning, as he was always searching the ground for dust, for dirt, for any sort of refuse. He was a kindly type of fellow, an honest man, for whenever he found anything he considered to be of value, he would pick it up and knock at the door of the house in front of which he had been sweeping.

"Pardon me. Have you lost this?" he would ask, holding up the particular object he had just found.

Mostly people would glance at the item for an instant before shutting the door in his face. The recovered items were mostly trinkets, baubles, and in Sliver Mustard's rough, grimy hands they usually appeared rather dirty and worthless. Sometimes a small child would remember and recognize a lost necklace, or a toy and a

smile of happiness would cross a little face as an eager hand reached for the article the sweeper held up.

And in these rare moments the street sweeper felt as if he had performed a singular service which somehow outshone the stars he so admired at night. He sometimes wondered at the possibility of a star falling down from the sky into his gutter. Would he then be able to knock on the gate of heaven and ask God if He had lost it? Then, pondering upon this possibility, he would smile to himself, smile almost shyly, knowing in his heart that such a thing could not be. Who was he to return a thing to the Creator? For were not all things His?

INVITATIONS GO OUT

The letter carrier brought invitations one day – invitations from His Majesty, the King, for all the citizens of Noah's Grove. The content of these invitations was the same for everyone and commanded citizens to present themselves to be painted by the greatest artist of all times – Mr. Potter.

The envelopes containing the invitations were deposited into the various mailboxes around town. Slipped into the black, open-mouthed slots, they were retrieved first by one person, then by another. Word traveled quickly.

"You'll never believe who contacted me...."

"I received a personal word from"

The street sweeper heard the town's folk talk, listening as he swept out the gutters and cleaned the grey-mouthed cracks in the sidewalks. He was glad that the widow on the corner of Church Street had received a notice. She frequently smiled at him and was a kind woman. Sliver Mustard also rejoiced when a

There were also the bankers, the bakers, the butchers and the candlestick makers...



Sliver thought: "Even if Mr. Potter did know about me, why would he want to paint an old, grizzled geezer like me?"

simple-minded fellow, a lad who helped the blacksmith at the forge each day, was ecstatically waving about an envelope. Sliver Mustard did not expect an invitation for himself. In the first place, he had no mailbox, and in the second place, what interest could Mr. Potter possibly have in him? Indeed, even if Mr. Potter did know him, why would he want to paint an old, grizzled geezer like himself – dusty, dirty and quite, quite unattractive?

Yet there it was when he came home that evening. Outlined white and pure on the faded blue tablecloth of the kitchen table, it made every object in the one-room shanty flow with warmth. Sliver Mustard gingerly wiped his right hand on his pants, thereby making it even dirtier than it had been. Picking up the envelope between his thumb and forefinger, he carried it over to the chair and sat down.

For a long while he did not move. He simply held onto the unexpected pleasure. It seemed to him this was enough. That he

had been remembered - this was beyond belief.

Finally, mustering up all his courage and strength, he opened the envelope. Or perhaps, the envelope opened itself in his hands. Later on, he could not quite remember. Fully expecting the note to read along the lines of "Sliver Mustard, perhaps next time I come to town...." or "Sorry, Sliver Mustard, but you do not meet the qualifications as I have set them...." But he read no such lines; he didn't read anything of the sort. The words that Sliver Mustard read were these: "This is to ask Sliver Mustard to present himself as he is, tomorrow afternoon, at three of the clock, at the hill."

ONE SHIRT, NO DRYER

Sighing deeply, Sliver Mustard leaned back in his chair. He had sat up straight for the reading of the letter but the words overwhelmed him. He stretched out his feet in front of him. He only owned one

shirt, a shirt which he rinsed out every Saturday night, hung out to dry and put on again on Sunday morning. He bathed weekly in a nearby creek. There was hardly time to perform these ablutions now. As he contemplated his options, he knew that he had none. Sliver Mustard both longed and feared to go. He sat in the chair all of that night, dozing and waking at intervals. He sat as the dark hours crept by and as the light of morning dawned through the small window in the kitchen.

Sliver Mustard still swept the streets that morning. It was his job after all. It was what the town was paying him to do and it would not be proper for him to neglect that job. Promptly at twelve he stopped, and, carrying the broom over his shoulder, headed home. He brushed his hair, regretted the ownership of a hat and rubbed a rag over his shoes. Then he washed his hands at the sink and ran a washcloth over his face. It was time to go. There was no doubt about it. It would

never do to keep Mr. Potter waiting. Force of habit made him pick up his broom.

Outside, Sliver Mustard trailed, by several miles, all the other people from town also going in the same direction. They were far ahead and he could just make out the glint of the mayor's chain as it shone in the noonday sun. He did appear to be last for when he turned his head, he could see no one behind him. As he walked, he noted with a bit of alarm, that it was later than he had thought. Picking up his steps, he pondered on the pitiful figure he must cut. Perhaps the invitation had been a mistake. But it had read, in unmistakably clear printing, "This is to ask Sliver Mustard to present himself as he is...."

WITH A FLOWER IN HIS BUTTONHOLE

The sun shone down hotly on Sliver Mustard's body and he began to sweat. Trudging on through what appeared to be endless stretches of road, he felt his shirt cling damply to his body. What a wretched figure he was! He sincerely wished that he was wearing a chain such as the mayor had. Not a gold chain - that would be a presumptuous thing for which to wish. But a metal chain, an inexpensive chain, one that would also glint and shine a bit. Surely the mayor, leading all the folks in Noah's Grove towards Mr. Potter, was a fine sight to behold - dapper and upright.

He glanced at the fields around him and noticed a broken lily at the side of the road. Undoubtedly someone from town in his haste to see Mr. Potter had trampled on it. Stooping down, he picked the flower up. There was no door on which to knock and ask if someone had lost it. There was only a field of flowers. For a moment

he was enthralled. How beautiful these flowers were! Dressed as the Creator had seen fit to dress them.

"Have you lost this...?"

He smiled and carefully put the lily in the buttonhole of his dirty shirt. No chain, but surely this was just as good.

But as Sliver Mustard trudged on, the thought that Mr. Potter would be unimpressed with him weighed him down more and more. Surely, he would have to be! He fingered the frayed cuff of his sleeve. And for a moment he coveted the star embroidered jacket that the head of the police would be wearing. Still, he reflected a minute later, it would be hot walking in such a uniform jacket today.

Sliver Mustard stopped to contemplate. And as he stopped, a bird alighted in his shoulder. It was a sparrow. A lily and a sparrow! What strangeness was this? There was no house here - no house at which he could ask "Excuse me, but have you lost this sparrow?", and he was secretly glad of it.

Sliver Mustard kept on walking, embellished with a flower and a bird. "Clothes make the man." That's what people were wont to say and he understood that saying and sentiment. But was it true? Mr. Potter had not said it in his invitation. The words in Mr. Potter's invitation read, "This is to ask Sliver Mustard to present himself as he is, tomorrow afternoon, at three of the clock, at the hill."

CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN?

As he pondered, Sliver Mustard almost tripped over several clods of earth in his path. His scuffed shoes kicked the mud unintentionally and they flew ahead of

him. Surely, most of the town's people had reached the hill by this time - had reached it clean and well-dressed. Would Mr. Potter be able to paint all of them simultaneously? He sighed and bent down, taking a rag out of his pocket as he did so, fully concentrated on rubbing a bit of a shine back onto his shoes. The lily touched his face as he bent and the sparrow chirped.

"Why, Sliver Mustard?!"

Startled, he looked up, finding himself face to face with the mayor, flanked by the police chief and the judge. How could he not have seen them coming?

"On your way to the hill, Sliver?"

He nodded.


The mayor's chain glinted, glinted so that it hurt Sliver Mustard's eyes. "You need not bother, Sliver," the mayor went on in a kindly sort of way. "You need not bother to go on to the hill."

Sliver Mustard was puzzled as he stood up, stuffing the rag back into his pocket. What did the mayor mean?

"Mr. Potter," the mayor continued, his voice heating up, "wanted me to take off my chain and my robe of office. Can you believe that? He wanted me to be painted without the symbols that define me. He told me to take them off."

Dumbly Sliver Mustard shook his head. The police chief and the judge had walked on without bothering to speak and the mayor began to follow them.

For a long time Sliver Mustard watched them - he watched them until they disappeared around a bend in the road. Then he turned. He smelled the lily and it was a sweet smell to him. He heard the sparrow on his shoulder sing and it was a song of fullness. In his heart he believed the words of the invitation, and he could see the words as clearly as if they had been written across the wide, wide overhead sky. "This is to ask Sliver Mustard to present himself as he is, tomorrow afternoon, at three of the clock, at the hill."

So Sliver Mustard went on and on. At three of the clock he reached the hill. The watchman at the gate opened the gate and drew him in. And Sliver Mustard was painted as he was. 

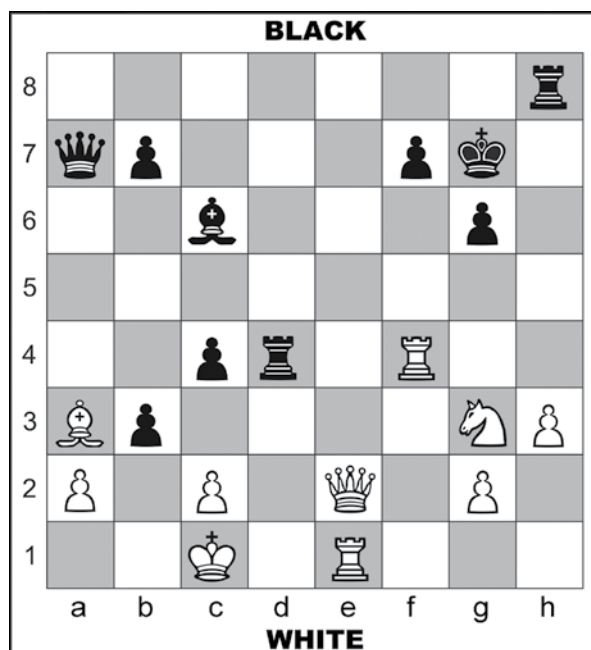


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ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #239



WHITE to Mate in 4

Or, If it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 3**

Riddle for Punsters #239

"Troubled Visionaries?"

Why did the two brothers who owned an eyeglasses store often have heated arguments?

They just could not see ___ to ___ on some minor issues and could not stay f_____ed on the matters about which they agreed, such as the need to increase the number of their business c_____s.

Problem to Ponder #239

"Financial Considerations"

Isaiah is planning to buy a nifty present for a classmate whose name he drew for a gift exchange. If he buys the item on a "tax-free" day at the store, he will be spending **less than** the \$8.00 limit by **double the amount that he will be over** the limit if he has to pay 10% tax on the item.

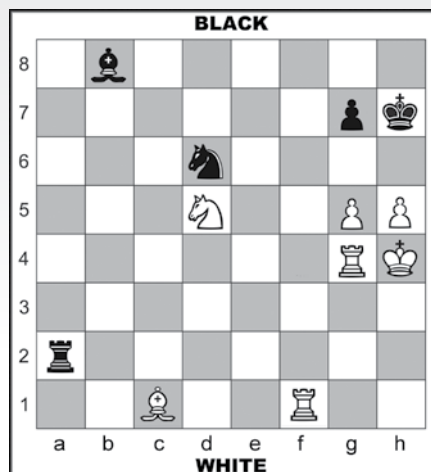
- How much does the item cost without and with tax?
- How much does he pay (including tax) on a day when the item is on sale at 10 % off? (NOTE: The 10% discount and the 10% tax do NOT cancel each other!)

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to Puzzle Page,

43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 or robgleach@gmail.com

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #238



WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

- P-N6 ch K-N1
- N-K7 ch K-R1
- R-B8 mate

Algebraic Notation

- g5-g6 + Kh7-g8
- Nd5-e7 + Kg8-h8
- Rf1-f8 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 2

Descriptive Notation

- N-B4ch
- RxN R-R7 mate

- or
- N-B4ch
 - K-R3 R-R7 mate

Algebraic Notation

- Nd6-f5 +

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#238 – "Where is the starting line?"

What do politicians need to do to get elected in a political race?

They first need to run for office.

Answer to Problem to Ponder

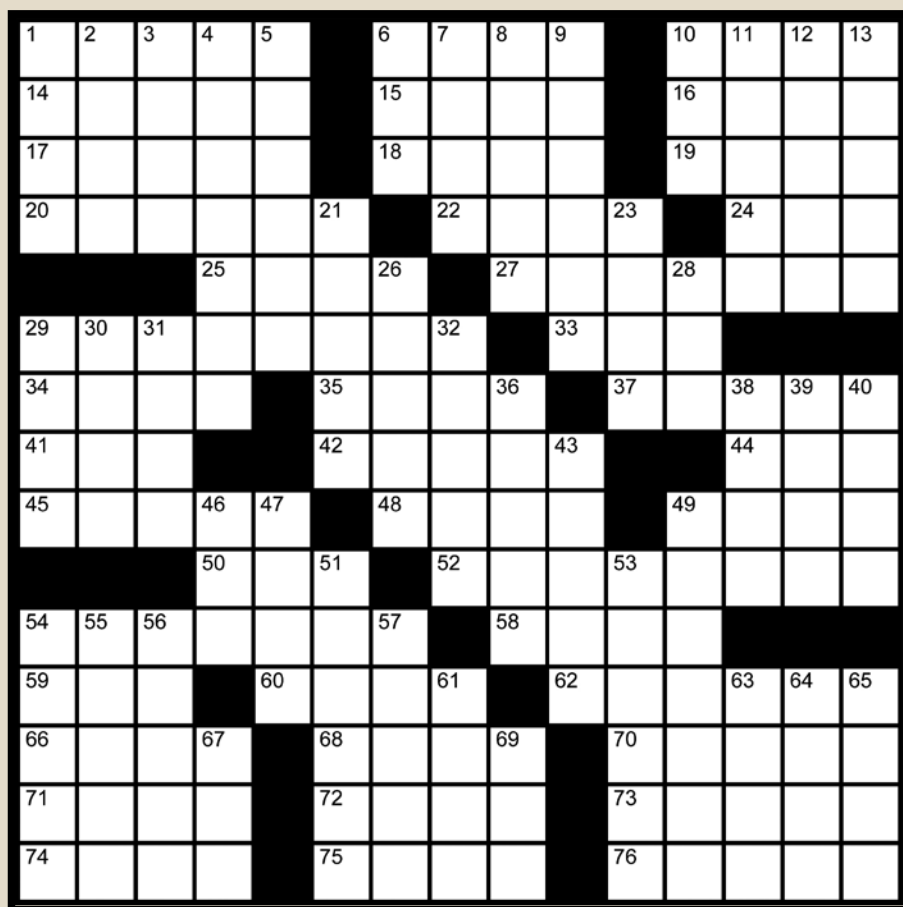
#238 – "Reindeer Accountability?"

Tommy, watching reindeer in a snowy park, saw a total of four one afternoon. His mother saw three times as many, which was one and a half times as many as his father who saw half as many as Tommy's big sister. Tommy's grandmother saw one fifth as many as the total number of reindeer seen by the whole family (including the ones she saw). How many reindeer did that grandmother see that afternoon in the park?

Tommy saw 4 so his mother saw $3(4)=12$ reindeer, which was 1.5 times as many as the father saw, so the father saw $12/1.5 = 8$ reindeer, which was half of how many Tommy's big sister saw so she saw $2(8) = 16$. Let the total number of reindeer seen be x . The grandmother saw $x/5$. Thus $4 + 12 + 8 + 16 + x/5 = x$ so $40 + x/5 = x$. Multiply both sides by 5, getting $200 + x = 5x$ thus $200 = 4x$ so $50 = x$. The whole family saw 50 so **the grandmother saw $x/5 = 50/5 = 10$ reindeer.**

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 3-5

PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

1. _____ de la _____: best of the best in Paris
6. "the lame walk, ...the _____ hear," (Luke 7)
10. Not a lad, but a woman, female, gal
14. These are better than buckets at a fire.
15. Ceramic jar used for cooking or food storage
16. Currency that's big in *Europe*?
17. Only son of Sarah; not his father's only son
18. Blob; lump; just another part of the *globe*
19. Sounds like *idle* foolishness to worship this
20. "fish that you have... _____" (John 21)
22. "What _____ of man is this...?" (Matt. 8)
24. Insulting synonym for answer to 22 Across
25. Coral growths in the ocean

27. Over-ly formal word beginning a list
29. Path to walk on beside the road
33. "put my _____ in... the sack" (Gen. 44)
34. Title of mostly Muslim rulers
35. Capital of Ukraine
37. Where a trough hangs to channel rainwater
41. Pale tone of brown (after a hide is _____ned)
42. Part of a flower found around the petals
44. "all _____ and were satisfied" (Matt. 15)
45. "who _____ it with white-wash" (Eze. 13)
48. Puerto _____ (unincorporated U.S. territory)
49. Title of pre-Communist Russian leader
50. Furnish with special gear, or with sails
52. Caption at bottom of movie or t.v. screen
54. Move quickly like child or small animal
58. Word for a long time (from a long time ago)
59. First name in Canadian coffee (____ Horton's)
60. Give off; radiate (when going back in *time*?)
62. Vandalize the face of a building
66. Reformed association taking political action
68. Abbreviation showing "See previous *item*."
70. William _____: pioneer in cancer treatment
71. After you bake, it's what you make the cake.
72. "for the time is _____" (Rev. 1, 22)
73. Good comedians have people rolling in it.
74. Give a new try after initial failure
75. Irritates; nettles; annoys
76. "_____ shall be devised against" (Dan. 11)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



SERIES 3-4

DOWN

1. Stylish, fashionable part of *Chiclets*?
2. _____ Parks – took a back seat to no-one
3. Jacob's older brother
4. Less abundant, more sparse, less satisfying
5. Deliberately live without; forgo
6. "not a _____ shall grow!" (Ex. 11)
7. Measurements of about a cubit each
8. "stand _____ from strife" (Prov. 20)
9. Material, especially in making clothing
10. "Clothing" with flowers as its material
11. Threat from the taxman; easy way to learn
12. Very dry (used to describe humor)
13. Adjective for egg more yellow than white
21. Types of hardwood found in tropics
23. "our testimony is _____" (3 John)
26. Advertising leaflet (promoting air travel?)
28. Non-medical way to treat aches and pains
29. "and as the sun _____" (Deuteronomy 24)
30. Muslim cleric; worship leader at a mosque
31. "a Pharisee asked him to _____" (Luke 11)
32. French military cap with a flat top
36. Plural of *vacuum* (needed in *evacuation*?)
38. "Bring up a _____ host against..." (Ez. 23)
39. Latin abbreviation to shorten list of authors
40. Dry and withered (describing fields or skin)
43. Both ears and brains can be this.
46. "with uplifted _____ led them out" (Acts 13)
47. "of the first _____ grapes." (Numbers 13)
49. Silvery-gray wrapping for food
51. Constellation also called *The Twins*
53. Protection at end of steel-toed boot
54. Where bellhops might fall down on the job
55. Sorceress in Homer's *The Odyssey*
56. Totally stoked (for a concert?)
57. Added condition in (horse- rental?) contract
61. "the horse and his _____" (Jer. 51)
63. "as we _____ have forgiven" (Matt. 6)
64. Member of Iron Age tribe in Britain
65. "the _____ of both were opened" (Gen. 3)
67. *Much _____ About Nothing* (Shakespeare play)
69. What marriage makes a woman, for short



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Completed forms, along with void cheques, can be mailed to: **Reformed Perspective, Box 1328, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0.**

Reformed Perspective presents our Spring Speaking Tour:

THE GRASS IS GREENER

Biblical Stewardship in an age of Climate Alarmism

If CO₂ reductions, intended to fight *future* global warming, end up increasing heating costs *now*, should Christians be for or against them? And if these same CO₂ reductions increase food costs, how will that impact the world's poorest? Why don't we hear environmentalists talking about the *negative* impact of their climate change plans? Is that because there aren't any? And how does biblical stewardship differ from environmentalism in the way each views Man? Does having a Reformed perspective on the environment really matter? You bet it does!

Dr. E Calvin Beisner is a biblical scholar who has been writing on stewardship and environmentalism for two decades. He brings this valuable perspective to the question of how Christians can be a light to the world on this increasingly important topic. When there is a push to save the planet at the expense of people, Christians need to speak up. Dr. Beisner will equip us to explain to our friends and neighbors that Man isn't merely a consumer and polluter, but rather the very pinnacle of creation, and tasked as both steward and producer.

So come join us as we flesh out a truly Reformed perspective on stewardship and environmentalism.

MAY 2017

May 1 - Hamilton Cornerstone CanRC	May 8 - Winnipeg Redeemer CanRC
May 2 - Smithville CanRC	May 9 - Lethbridge Trinity URC
May 3 - Fergus Maranatha CanRC	May 10 - Edmonton PICS School
May 4 - Burgessville Heritage NRC	May 11 - Ponoka Parkland URC
May 5 - Strathroy URC	May 12 - Barrhead CanRC



Dr. E. Calvin Beisner is spokesman for the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation and is also an author and speaker on the application of the Biblical worldview to economics, government, and environmental policy. He has published ten books and hundreds of articles, contributed to, or edited, many other books, and been a guest on television and radio programs.

Jon Dykstra has been the editor of *Reformed Perspective* for the last eighteen years. He blogs on books at *ReallyGoodReads.com*, reviews movies at *ReelConservative.com*, and is a contributor at *CreationWithoutCompromise.com*.



THE MAKING OF THE CORNWALL ALLIANCE



Cornwall Alliance
For The Stewardship Of Creation

How did we get our biblical stewardship group going?

by E. Calvin Beisner

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. E. Calvin Beisner will be featured in Reformed Perspective's Spring Speaking Tour "The Grass is Greener" so we wanted to share a little bit about him, and the organization, Cornwall Alliance, that he heads.

Where did the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation come from? It is the ongoing result of decades of study by scores of scholars – theologians, scientists, economists, and others – and myself.

My own personal background played a major role in shaping it, so let me share that with you.

When I was an infant, my father, working for the U.S. State Department, was posted to Calcutta, India. We returned to the States around my second birthday, so I don't have many direct, personal memories of life there. But two picture memories stand out starkly.

The first is of the beautiful tropical garden in the courtyard of the apartment complex where we lived.

The second is of the scores of bodies of those who had died of starvation and related diseases, over and around which I walked early each morning for several months, before trucks finally came around and picked them up. I walked, hand in hand with my "Aia," the Indian lady who led me by the hand from my parents' home several blocks to the home of an Indian family where I spent the day because my mother was paralyzed by a tropical virus that attacked her spine (from which, thank God, she eventually recovered).

Over the years, those two memories came to bespeak for me two things: the glories of God's creation, and the horrors of abject poverty.

THE BIBLE SPEAKS ABOUT THE POOR TOO

When I became a Christian, and when in high school I began dedicating my life to the service of Christ, I at first failed to recognize the connection between the Christian faith and either of those two matters. I thought the Christian faith was about nothing but the salvation of sinners – which is indeed the *heart* of the Christian faith and the most glorious part of it! I witnessed the gospel constantly to fellow students, then to teachers, and to many others, all through high school and college. I studied apologetics so I could answer arguments against the Christian faith. I rejoiced to see the Lord bring many people to saving faith in Christ. Evangelism and apologetics were my almost sole interests.

Three years after I finished college with a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies in Religion and Philosophy with double minors in Classical History and Classical Languages (in 1978), a pastor friend urged me to read a book about Christian responsibility to care for the poor. I did, and I realized for the first time how much the Bible has to say about the poor. However, I suspected that much of what the author said was mistaken – that he misinterpreted Bible passages, used faulty theological reasoning, and often argued invalidly (as a philosophy student I had studied logic). I didn't know much about

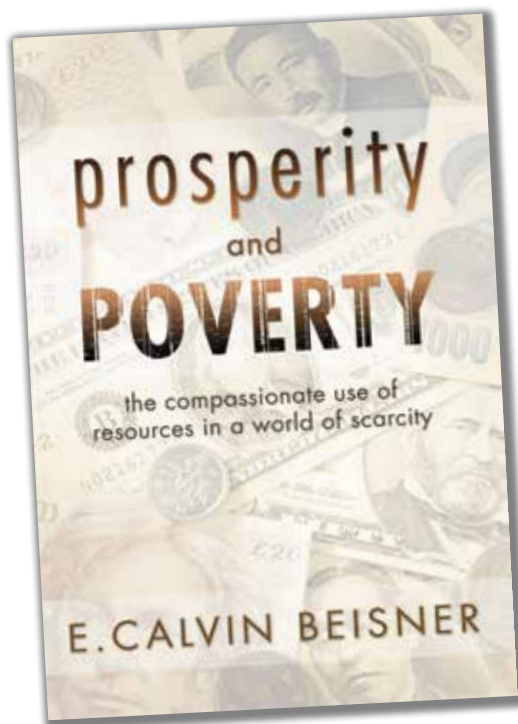
economics, but I suspected that he misunderstood that, too. Yet his book was tremendously influential, so I decided to learn economics to better evaluate the book. I read a lot of textbooks and other studies of economics. Then I earned my M.A. in Society with Specialization in Economic Ethics (International College, 1983) with a thesis focusing on economic ethics.

THE BEGINNINGS OF A GROUP

Meanwhile, a theologian friend who knew of my prior work in evangelism and apologetics had started the "Coalition on Revival" to help what eventually became several hundred Christian theologians, philosophers, historians, lawyers, educators, psychologists, economists, and other scholars to work together producing "white papers" setting forth the Christian worldview as it applied to each of the major spheres of life.

Knowing of my studies in economics, he asked me to chair the economics committee, and I consented. Dr. Marvin Olasky and Dr. Herb Schlossberg, along with about 20 others, were on that committee, and after the third year of our meetings, they asked me to write a book on economics for a series they were editing, and *Prosperity and Poverty: The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity* (1988) was the result.

One chapter was supposed to discuss how population, resources, and the



economy interrelate, but as I worked on it, I found that this topic was far too much to treat in a single chapter. Marvin told me, “Okay, then do a whole book on that.” After two more years, I finished *Prospects for Growth: A Biblical View of Population, Resources, and the Future* (1990).

BECOMING A PROFESSOR

When people in the administration and board of trustees of Covenant College read those books (and others I’d written), they invited me to teach. I did, from 1992–2000, as Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, focusing on the application of Biblical worldview, theology, and ethics to economics, government, and public policy, with special attention to economic development for the poor and environmental stewardship.

In late 1999 the trustees and administration of Knox Theological Seminary invited me to teach. As Associate Professor of Historical Theology and Social Ethics (the latter including the ethics of economic development and environmental stewardship) I taught there from 2000–2008. (While teaching at Covenant and Knox, I also earned a Ph.D. in Scottish History – University of St. Andrews, Scotland, 2005–2003 – focusing on the

history of political philosophy.)

Starting in the early 1990s, a variety of religious scholars – Jewish, Catholic, mainline Protestant, and evangelical Protestant – were studying how Biblical ethics should inform environmental stewardship. I was one among many who participated in small colloquia hosted by various groups – the Evangelical Environmental Network, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Ethics and Public Policy Center, the Acton Institute for Religion and Liberty, the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, and colleges and churches – to deliver papers and discuss ideas.

FROM WEST CORNWALL...

One such meeting, involving about 30 scholars, took place in the autumn of 1999 in West Cornwall, Connecticut. Following it, several of us thought it would be helpful to create a statement of fundamental principles, and I agreed to draft it. That became, after editing by several scholars, *The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship*, which was released publicly in March of 2000, after it had been endorsed by several hundred prominent religious leaders, and which eventually was endorsed by over 1,500 religious leaders and thousands of lay people.

In the summer of 2005, a handful of those who had been instrumental in organizing the gathering that led to issuing the *Cornwall Declaration* asked me if I would write some articles, speak in various places, and coordinate the building of a network of scholars to promote the basic ideas of the *Declaration*. I agreed to do it on the side.

...TO THE ISA

From that grew the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance (ISA), a loose-knit network of theologians, pastors, other ministry leaders, scientists, economists, other scholars, and policy experts, all donating their time, dedicated to applying Biblical worldview, theology, and ethics

together with excellent science and economics to the interrelated challenges of economic development for the very poor and environmental stewardship. Our first major product was *An Examination of the Scientific, Ethical, and Theological Implications of Climate Change Policy* (November 2005).

Over the next two years, ISA functioned as a loose-knit network of people with mutual interests. It had no budget, almost no funding (just small amounts donated by a few individuals), no office, and no staff except myself on a small part-time stipend. But the quality of that first paper, and then of our second, *A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming* (July 2006), resulted in our scholars being asked to speak for a variety of organizations and in my being asked to give testimony as an expert witness before the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (October 2006).

NEW NAME

In 2007 we changed our name to the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation to make our connection to the *Cornwall Declaration* clear. To respond to rising demand for our teaching and writing, we incorporated The James Partnership, a 501(c)3 non-profit religious, educational, and charitable organization. (Two other organizations also operate under The James Partnership).

We were able to hire a part-time assistant, and then in 2008 I left Knox Theological Seminary to divide my time between the Cornwall Alliance and serving on the pastoral staff of a church I had helped plant.

We are supported by donations from private individuals and non-profit foundations, not by corporate gifts, and by donations of time and expertise by over 60 scholars in our network, such as the authors of hundreds of articles we’ve published in scores of venues; the speakers for our *Resisting the Green Dragon* video lecture series and

documentary; the author of our book *Resisting the Green Dragon: Dominion, Not Death*; the scholars interviewed for our *Where the Grass Is Greener: Biblical Stewardship vs. Climate Alarmism* and other video documentaries; and the authors and reviewers of our major papers, including:

- *An Examination of the Scientific, Ethical, and Theological Implications of Climate Change Policy* (2005)
- *A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming* (2006)
- *The Cornwall Stewardship Agenda* (2008)
- *A Renewed Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Examination of the Theology, Science, and Economics of Global Warming* (2010)
- *The Cost of Good Intentions: The Ethics and Economics of the War on Conventional Energy* (2011)
- *What Is the Most Important Environmental Task Facing American Christians Today?* (rev. ed., 2014)
- *A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor 2014: The Case against Harmful Climate Policies Gets Stronger* (2014), and
- *An Open Letter to Pope Francis on Climate Change* (2015).

As of this writing (early 2017), with two full-time staff (our Director of Communications and me), one paid part-time staff member (our Director of Donor Relations), and two part-time volunteer staff members, the Cornwall Alliance remains largely a loose-knit network of theologians, pastors, other ministry leaders, scientists, economists, other scholars, and policy experts dedicated to applying Biblical worldview, theology, and ethics together with excellent science and economics to the twin tasks of environmental stewardship and economic development for the poor through writing, speaking, social media, and our websites www.CornwallAlliance.org and www.EarthRisingBlog.com.

RP

Sola Fide
Sola Scriptura
Solus Christus
Sola Gratia
Soli Deo Gloria
~~Sola Bootstrappa~~

Good works are a response to the gift of salvation not a requirement for salvation.

Good works are evidence of salvation not the means of salvation.

The term "*Sola Bootstrappa*" was shared with me in a conversation I had with my friend Keith and it stuck. It exposes what we're actually saying when we tell ourselves or counsel others that the way to win God's favour is to "try harder" or "pull ourselves up by our bootstraps." But it's not true.

We don't work to achieve. We work to say "thank you" for what has already been achieved for us by Christ.

#itisfinished #grace

Excerpt from the new book



Just Thinking; 95 Doodles to Noodle Over by Jason Bouwman

Preorder at justthinkingbook.com

Available May/June 2017.



"You Too?"

What Friendship Is, and Why It's So Hard to Find

by Harma-Mae Smit

Finding good friends can be a daunting process. Oh, sure, some people seem to slide quickly and easily into friendship in only a matter of days. But for the rest of us there's questions and more questions. How do good friendships begin? At what point do acquaintances officially become friends? How can you quickly move to that "comfortable stage" where you can just relax around each other? And, why is making friends so *hard*?

When I thought about my own approach to friendship, there was something very specific I was looking for in the initial stages of meeting a new person. I was searching for some sort of magical moment of "connection." C.S. Lewis put into words what this connection feels like:

"Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another:

"What! You too? I thought I was the only one."

You know what it feels like when you've been acquainted with someone for years, and done all sorts of activities with them, but still don't feel like you really know them? And then there are others you feel connected to right away? That's because with some people you reach that "You too?" moment right away, and some people you never do.

When it happens, this connection is such a gift. Who doesn't feel lonely sometimes? And who wants to face life's ups and downs by their lonesome? So it comes as unimaginable relief to find out other humans know what you're talking about. About your deep loneliness despite being constantly surrounded by people. About your guilt at not being as good a parent as you thought you would be, or not being as

patient a husband or wife. About your spiritual doubts that you wrestle with. To walk side-by-side with another through anxious times can make the path appear a little smoother.

TOO MUCH EMPHASIS?

However, it is possible to put too much emphasis on this connection. I'm making it sound like the discovery of common ground is essential to friendship, so how can a person place too much emphasis on it?

The answer is, yes. It's easy to think you don't have anything in common with someone before you reach this "You too?" moment. I certainly feel this way at times. When I'm staring at a stranger, I can't imagine what possible experiences we might share that could lead to a conversation. It's too easy to give up before ever reaching the stage of a relationship known as "friendship."



...perhaps we should consider if our friendship is really meant to rely solely on an ability to relate to each other.

consider if our friendship is really meant to rely solely on an ability to relate to each other. The first reply to this thought might be that with brothers and sisters in Christ we obviously have Christianity in common, and we need to keep that at the forefront of our minds.

But this neatly sidesteps the issue of searching for this moment in general. There may be a reason the Bible talks more about our neighbors than our friends. We are not meant to only interact with those we find something in common with. We are to seek this connection with *everyone* we interact.

We may not connect with everyone on a friendship level (and we know even Jesus had closer relationships with some of his disciples than others), but our knowledge that each of us is created in the image of God demands we give such a relationship a chance. And, perhaps, even if we're not feeling it, the least we can do is treat each person we meet as a person with unique experiences that are shared with at least some human beings, and relatable in a way that could add value to some other person's life, even if not ourselves. We may not be able to be friends with every single person, but we do know who our neighbors are supposed to be (Luke 10:25-37).

IT DOES TAKE WORK

Think about the people you now know well. When you first met them, did you realize any of them might one day be among your closest friends? You may have at least one friend that, if you'd focused on only the easily discoverable similarities, you would have missed out on them. When Christians talk of love, they often talk about going beyond the externals to

seek unfading qualities inside a person. In friendship – which is a type of love that isn't recognized enough – we do similarly, in going beyond our initial impressions of “they're so different” to seek out all the ways that they're not.

The upshot of all of this is that building a friendship will require work, and you'll sacrifice time perhaps on a level similar to that time you invest in family relationships. There may be long, tedious, awkward moments spent with a human being who feels as distant from you as if they stood across a canyon opposite you. They may not feel safe enough yet to expose the vulnerable experiences that you might discover they shared with you, and you might need more time before you'd share such an experience with them too. It may feel like hard work. But that should not surprise us, because we already expect to be called to sacrifice for each other.

CONCLUSION

This does not necessarily make building friendships appear less daunting. I still sit here intimidated by it, or perhaps even more intimidated than before. But there is freedom in knowing your weaknesses, and in knowing Who to turn to for help. After all, there is someone who promised us friendship even when we're at our very worst. “No longer do I call you servants,” Jesus says in John 15, “for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you *friends*, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”

We have a friendship that strengthens us to reach out and make friends with others. **RP**

And I don't think I'm the only one who overemphasizes finding this moment of connection. It's been stated more than a few times that, despite having more technologies to connect us than all generations before us could have dreamed of, we are one of the loneliest and most isolated generations. And it's not only that technology discourages us from meeting face-to-face – it also teaches us to seek out that “You too?” moment. We join groups of comic book fans, narrowing them down to the most obscure character in them all. We connect with like-minded cooks, sharing recipes with others who are passionate about our non-GMO, paleo, carb-free diet. Or we discuss the narrowest point of Calvin's *Institutes* on message boards of people who agree with us. But in real life, facing real people, we can't imagine what on earth we might share in common.

CHRISTIAN CONNECTION

As Christians, perhaps we should

2+2=5

You think *feelings* can redefine reality? What if I told you I *feel* like they don't?

by Rob Slane

There's a special sort of tyranny at work these days – it is the sort that not only ignores reality itself, but demands that everyone else do so too...or else.

There are many examples of this. For instance there is an idea that:

- there really are no differences between men and women, and that both can perform all tasks to the same degree.
- the unborn only become human beings when the mother decides they are human beings.
- marriage is something that can take place between two men or two women.
- a person who was born biologically male can transition to become female, and vice versa.

HOW THEY'RE PULLING OFF THIS TRICK

Transgenderism offers a good case in point. Take the recent Gender Identity Guidance issued by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. According to Eugene Volokh, writing in the *Washington Post*:

"Under Massachusetts law, refusing to use a transgender person's preferred pronoun would be punishable discrimination. (At least this is true of "he" or "she" — I saw nothing in the document about "ze" and other newly made-up pronouns.) The Massachusetts document ... makes that clear in the employment context, and it also makes clear that the antidiscrimination law rules apply to places of public accommodations (including churches, in "secular events" "open to the public") just as much as to employment."

Now, let's notice the sleight of hand that has taken place in the whole transgender issue. Take the imaginary case of Bob, who is transitioning to become Carol. He is objectively male, right? That is his factual, actual biological sex. By which I mean that at some point in the past, the midwife present at his birth pronounced him to be a boy, and we can assume that she made this assessment on the basis of objective data, rather than on a personal whim. Indeed, had she pronounced Bob to be a girl, or even non-gender specific, despite

the clear evidence to the contrary, Bob's parents would no doubt have corrected her and, had she still insisted on ignoring the evidence, made a complaint.

But at some point after that, Bob came to believe that the objective data was wrong. So he chose to undergo a process of bodily mutilation. Note, however, that the objective data was not wrong. How could it be? It is objective, including physically provable characteristics and XY chromosomes. As a recent report from the American College of Pediatricians puts it:

"Human sexuality is an objective biological binary trait: "XY" and "XX" are genetic markers of male and female, respectively – not genetic markers of disorder."

They go on to say that:

"No one is born with a gender. Everyone is born with a biological sex. Gender (an awareness of oneself as male or female) is a sociological and psychological concept; not an objective biological one."

In other words, while we can state with absolute certainty that biological sex is a demonstrably *objective reality*, Bob's decision to transition away is based on a *subjective feeling*. Indeed, the very fact that Bob needs surgery to make the transition rather proves the point. (As an aside, those arguing for transgenderism need to answer the question of why the body, which is objectively one thing or the other, should be made to conform to a subjective feeling of the mind, rather than the other way around.)

But having made this demonstrably feelings-based decision, what happens next? Having taken a decision which is contrary to objective reality, Bob now not only identifies as a sex which is opposite to his objective biological one, but now expects everyone else to accept his feelings as having the power to redefine *objective reality*.

Do you see what has happened? We've gone through four stages:

- 1) The objective reality is acknowledged
- 2) The objective reality is denied
- 3) A subjective experience is presented
- 4) Then follows the insistence that this new subjective experience is now objective truth to be assented to and obeyed

Oh and there is now a fifth stage, which is that if we don't play along, and also pretend that feelings can redefine reality, we get a label pinned to us – hater, transphobe, bigot etc – and possibly accused of a “hate crime.”

IF FEELINGS BEAT FACTS...

Here are a couple of questions that we should be asking those who insist on this:

1. If someone acts contrary to objective reality, what grounds do they then have for insisting that everyone else treat *their* feelings as objectively true facts?
2. If someone chooses to make their identity a matter of *feelings*, what grounds do they have for saying that the rest of us cannot do the same, and call them “him” or “her” depending on how *we* feel?

Those who are busy denying reality as God has given it and defined it, are too invested in their delusions to give them up.

The answer to both these questions is that they have no grounds whatsoever. Having denied objective reality in favor of subjective feelings, they have no grounds to then demand that we all accept their subjective feelings as being objective facts.

Secondly, having insisted on their own subjective experience as being the ultimate authority, they have no grounds for denying anyone else the same right to exercise *their* subjective feelings on the subject.

So if someone believes Bob to be a box of breakfast cereal, for instance, I can say that they are wrong, and I can do so on the basis that the objective data shows clearly that Bob is not a box of breakfast cereal, but rather a human being.

However, if Bob tries to deny someone the right to believe and openly state that he is a box of breakfast cereal, this flies in the face of the logic he used in the first place to proclaim against his own objective biological sex. Who knows – perhaps denying people their subjective rights to call other people boxes of breakfast cereal might even be a new hate crime. Bransphobia?

IT'S NOT GOING TO GET BETTER SOON

And yet despite having no grounds to insist on these things, they are insisting on it in increasingly vitriolic tones, and with the threat of the law behind them. This is how the new sort of tyranny works. It tears up objective reality, then imposes a new subjectivity in its place.

But it doesn't stop there. It then insists that society embraces that subjectivity as now being objectively true, and censure, shout down, and even prosecute those who refuse to play ball.

The bad news is that things aren't going to get better anytime soon. Those who are busy denying reality as God has given it and defined it, are too invested in their delusions to give them up. They aren't suddenly going to say, “Hey, I guess it is really rather stupid to insist that there are

no differences between men and women, or that two men can marry.”

No, they will double down, and triple down on it for the foreseeable future. And as they do, there will come more assaults on objective reality, more attempts to force others to embrace their delusion, and more efforts to get us all to put our rubber stamp of approval on this folly. Those who dissent will be stigmatized, penalized and coerced into silence. This is what this newest sort of tyranny does.

OUR HOPE AND OUR RESPONSE?

But the good news? It is that the Triune God of Heaven and Earth – not these tyrants – is actually the final arbiter of what is real and what is true, and He will not allow this situation to go on indefinitely. It's his world and his reality, and He will at some point overthrow those who attempt to overthrow his order. Time and time throughout history, He has risen up to overthrow his enemies and deliver his people. And He will do so again. However, these deliverances ordinarily come when his people truly “cry out to the Lord.”

So let me finish up by asking a very searching question. I recently held a discussion group with some Christian friends, where I covered a little of the history of how we ended up with transgenderism, same-sex marriage, no-fault divorce, family breakdown, tolerance and diversity, sex education, egalitarianism, feminism, “homophobia” and “hate” crimes.

Having gone through it all, and having unanimously agreed that it was all quite mad and more than a little disquieting, I asked the following question: “Put your hand up if you are praying fervently to the Triune God on a regular basis to come and save us and our culture from this mess.”

No hands went up.

How about you?

RP



ON PARENTING

The part about parenting I didn't find in any parenting book

by Cap Stewart

I tend to be a fairly methodical person, so what does a methodical person do to prepare for parenthood? Why, read a small library of biblical child training books, of course. But after going through those books (as helpful as they were), I wanted to compare what I had read with the source of all that godly wisdom: the Bible itself.

While studying Scriptural passages on child training, I encountered a principle I had not read before. Maybe there are books out there that do mention this principle and I just haven't read them. It's even possible that the books I read mentioned this principle, and I just somehow missed it. Whatever the case, I was amazed that I hadn't heard it before. I'm convinced it may be one of the most important tools in one's parenting arsenal.

TELL YOUR KIDS WHAT GOD HAS DONE

What is this hidden, or overlooked, parenting secret? Simply put: share your testimony with your children. This involves not just the story of how God brought you to saving faith, but also the countless instances where God delivered or strengthened or encouraged or provided for you.

The first several verses of Psalm 44 give us an example of how personal testimonies can affect the lives of future generations. This psalm is actually a lament (see the second half), but it begins with declarations of unwavering trust in the Lord, based largely on the writers' knowledge of what "our fathers have told us" (verse. 1). Stories from the "days of old" have led the sons of Korah to trust in God's saving power and not their own strength. Notice how often, in just the first two verses, they point away from themselves and toward God (emphasis mine)

...our fathers have told us
The work that You did in their days,
In the days of old.
You with Your own hand drove out the nations;
Then *You planted* them;
You afflicted the peoples,
Then *You spread* them abroad.

A parent's testimony is a powerful means of grace for children, because it points to tangible expressions of God's faithfulness.

SHARING IS A PRIVILEGE

Sharing one's testimony isn't a burden or a chore; it is a privilege and a joy. As C. S. Lewis has pointed out, an enjoyment of something often isn't complete until that enjoyment is shared. You know you really enjoyed a movie or a book when you tell everyone else about it. The telling itself is the consummation of your enjoyment.

Consequently, the writer of Psalm 71 begs God not to let him depart until he has had the opportunity to declare God's strength and power to the next generation:

Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come (vs. 16-18).

Sharing stories of how God has worked in our lives is a great way to help our children see the manifold effects of the gospel. It helps them see how mercifully and graciously God treats us, even as we struggle with our own sins and inabilities to live up to His perfect standards. The design of this God-centered focus is so that our children may set their hope in God – not in their own ability to obey Him.

As Psalm 145:4 puts it, "One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts." The narrative of our stories involves innumerable instances of

*As C. S. Lewis has pointed out,
an enjoyment of something
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enjoyment is shared.*

God's saving and sanctifying work.

This practice of sharing our testimony needn't be turned into a legalistic pursuit. Rather, our testimony is simply the story of what God has done; instructing our children is no more a "work" than me telling my wife about my day at dinnertime. Our testimony is all about who God is, what He has done, and what He has promised to do. It is the overflow of past grace that points us all toward future grace.

For our children's benefit – as well as our own – may we remember and recount God's faithful deeds to our children. May we vividly paint a picture of our Father's awesome wonders in action. May our stories draw the hearts of our children toward God's loving embrace. May we delight in His wondrous works so that we relish each and every opportunity to share them. And may our sharing be the consummation of our own delight in the Treasure of our souls: God Himself. ^{RP}

Think you can change the world *from a classroom?*

We do.

CHANGE can be big, like influencing the next generation big. Or it can be small, like marking quizzes small. It's about what you choose to do on the one hand, and who you are on the other. We are more than our jobs, and God has a calling for each of us, wherever we go. That changes everything. Including you.



The Problem With Explanations

by Jay Younts

God has not called parents to *explain* but to *train*. Explanations often lead to frustration and anger for both parents and children. Children are not in need of lengthy, compelling explanations. What they are in need of is the understanding that God must be obeyed. Ephesians 6:4 addresses this issue:

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Explanations tend to focus on getting someone to agree with you. The logic for explanations runs something like this: “If I can just get my children to understand the reason for my direction, then they will be more likely to follow my instruction.”

THE REAL ISSUE

While this may sound like solid reasoning, it is not. Explanations are more consistent with gaining approval and winning arguments. Neither of these are appropriate goals for biblical parenting and can lead to anger in your children as Ephesians warns against.

This doesn’t mean your parenting is to be arbitrary. You must use kind and pleasant words to instruct your children. You must be patient. You must be sensitive to your children. But you are not attempting to secure their approval for your instruction. This can easily lead to manipulation rather than discipline and instruction.

With young children and toddlers, lengthy explanations cloud the real issue. Obedience is a response to God’s authority. Biblical obedience is not a matter of winning a debate. Young children must be trained to obey right away, to do exactly as they are told, and to obey with a good attitude.

Children from 6-12 must be encouraged to obey because they know this pleases God. Your discussions will be more involved than with young children, but again you are not trying to win




their approval. You want them to grasp how important it is to trust God and the reliability of his word. This type of training will yield a conscience that is sensitive to the things of God.

LONG LECTURES DON'T WORK

It doesn’t take much insight to realize that teenagers and long explanations don’t go well together. Obedience with teenagers is to be primarily focused on helping them see the value of following God because they love him and that God’s ways are the only ones that can be trusted. Your goal is to have conversations not explanations.

Explanations may be well intended. But at the root of many conflicts in families is the attempt to *explain* rather than to *train*. Don’t provoke your children to anger. Provide them with the loving instruction of your heavenly Father.

Something to think about. 

Jay Younts is the author of “Everyday Talk: Talking freely and Naturally about God with Your Children” and “Everyday Talk about Sex & Marriage.” He blogs at ShepherdPress.com, where these articles (reprinted with permission) first appeared.

From Explanations To Dialogue, From Monologues To Questions

by Jay Younts

Explanations often lead to monologues, especially with teenagers. This is not a helpful communication pattern. The goal for good, biblical communication with teenagers is the combination of questions that lead to dialogue. But these questions must come from a genuine interest in your teenagers for who they are, not for what you want them to be.

WHO WOULD YOU GO TO?

In this context, let me ask you a question. When you need help with a problem, do you look for answers from any random person? The answer is obvious. You ask the people whom you trust and respect, someone who will really listen to you. Let me take this one additional step.

Suppose a friend from church calls and asks you for advice on some relational issue. You are thrilled because you have wanted to talk to her about this very problem. You immediately launch into your explanation about her problem. You tell her that she must not have been listening to the sermons because the pastor just spoke on that very issue. You go on to say that if she were not always late to church she might

be in better shape to actually listen to the sermon. You suggest several books for her to read and you finish by telling her you hope you have been helpful. Over time you wonder why she has never called back for more “help.”

This example illustrates the danger warned about in Proverbs 18:2; “a fool delights in airing his own opinions.”

LISTEN, DON'T LECTURE

The active, aggressive listener of Proverbs 18:15 – “the ear of the wise seeks knowledge” – will recognize the types of questions that are asked...and the questions that are not asked. If your teenagers are primarily asking logistical questions, such as “Can I have the car?” or “When is dinner?” this should alert you that the important questions are going to someone else. Your goal is to have your kids ask you about the hard things in life. But like you, your older children and teenagers will reserve those questions for the people whom they respect and trust, for the people who will carefully listen.

Monologues do not build relationships, only frustrations.

Your goal is to create a relational climate in which your teenagers want

Monologues do not build relationships, only frustrations.

to come to you. Listen carefully to your children and observe the things that they struggle with. Take an interest in the things they are interested in. Ask them genuine questions about their interests. Patience is key here. If you have not been a good listener, you can become one. Even if you do, it may take time for teenagers to begin to seek you out. Pursue your teenagers not so much for what they have done, but for who they are – your children given to you by God.

Delight in your teenagers for who they are, your children. If God can delight in you and in me, with all of our issues, then we can delight in the children he has given to us.

Being an aggressive listener will lead you to questions and then to dialogues. This is a good thing, for both you and your teenager! **RP**



IT'S STILL LEGAL TO USE PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE, AND IT SHOULD REMAIN SO

by Mark Penninga

In an article late last year, “Spanking has no place in Canada, period” – *Globe and Mail* reporter André Picard argued that physical discipline is at best ineffective and at worst harmful. He concludes it is “well past time” that the government scrap Section 43 of the Criminal Code, making spanking illegal.

The truth is that physical discipline, when administered in keeping with Canadian law, not only has better outcomes than other disciplinary techniques, but is preferred by children as less cruel than other techniques, such as privilege loss or isolation. We can learn from countries that have gone ahead with banning spanking, and have regretted it.

How can Picard and many well-intentioned child advocates get this issue so wrong? Part of the problem is that they go only skin deep into the research. Picard notes:

...there has been a significant body of research showing that the real harm from spanking and other forms of corporal punishment is not the immediate physical harm, but the lasting psychological harm.

That is about as deep as almost any mainstream media analysis goes. But if we dig deeper, we discover that the truth is far more nuanced and, in some respects, completely contradicts the mainstream spin replicated in Picard’s article.

DIGGING INTO THE DATA

Picard cites a 2012 American Academy of Pediatrics study that correlates harsh physical punishment with higher rates of mental illness and drug and alcohol abuse. He correctly acknowledges that this is *correlation*, and not proof that spanking *causes* these things.

This is an important distinction that

is lost on almost all the research that attracts mainstream attention. And the distinction matters. As any statistician worth his salt will tell you, correlation does not imply causation. Or to say it more plainly, just because two things are linked in some way or other, doesn’t mean that one *caused* the other.

For example, if we did a national survey and found that people who have undergone radiation treatment have a higher likelihood of having cancer, we should not conclude that the treatment is the problem or that the radiation treatments are *causing* the cancer. That’s to get it completely backwards.

Likewise, it could well be that aggressive children were spanked more often *because* they were aggressive. It could be that spanking doesn’t lead to aggression, but rather that aggression leads to spanking. We can’t draw any conclusions based only on a statistical correlation between aggression and spankings.

FINDING FAULT WITH EVERY APPROACH

The heavy reliance on correlational evidence makes even the most effective disciplinary tactics appear harmful. Dr. Elizabeth Gershoff, a well-known researcher on the topic, concluded: “we don’t know *anything* that works” (emphasis mine).

So will anti-spanking advocates follow their logic and also argue that *all* discipline tactics should be banned?

We need to dig deeper into the research.

NOT ALL PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE IS THE SAME

Picard, along with other anti-spanking activists, constantly appeal to research that lumps together harsh physical punishments, such as slapping and pushing, with the kind of mild physical discipline that our Supreme Court studied and approved.

In 2007, researchers conducted a scientific review of studies that compared physical discipline with alternative methods. Twenty-six studies from the past fifty years were examined. They also examined the “optimal” type of physical discipline – conditional spanking. As reflected in the parameters laid out by our Supreme Court, conditional spanking is non-abusive, and done sparingly and under control. The conclusion of the study: “Conditional spanking was more strongly associated with reductions in noncompliance or antisocial behavior

than 10 of 13 alternate disciplinary tactics.”

In other words, when physical discipline is administered in keeping with Canadian law, it came out as good as, or better than, all other forms of discipline studied.

Not only can physical discipline be more beneficial than other commonly used methods, a 2006 study came to another surprising finding:

...non-physical punishment was most frequently regarded [by children] as the worst punishment ever received, with 50% of [study members] naming at least one non-physical punishment method such as privilege loss.

As well-intentioned as Picard and others may be, before they proceed further with their anti-spanking crusade, they should talk to the children. Children who have experienced appropriate physical discipline will often prefer it because it resolves the matter in a timely way and makes it less likely to occur again. Contrast that with what so many parents revert to otherwise (yelling, forced isolation, long-term privilege loss and extended grumpiness) and we begin to understand why physical discipline is the preferred choice for many honest children.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM SWEDEN


Picard argues that 51 countries have outlawed spanking, and it is time for Canada to follow suit. But he fails to

look at what has happened in those countries.

Take Sweden. In 1979, Sweden was the first country to ban spanking. The statistics coming from Sweden since then are downright shocking. Following the ban there was a 519% increase in criminal assaults by children under the age of 15 (born after the ban) against children age 7-14. Even more troubling, 46-60% of the cases investigated under the law resulted in children being removed from homes. That totaled 22,000 children in 1981, compared with 163 in Norway and 552 in Finland.

Picard cites the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as another reason to ban spanking. But if the residential school legacy has taught us anything, it is that we better be certain we are doing the right thing when forcefully removing thousands of children from their parents’ homes.

As a side note, New Zealand followed Sweden’s example and adopted anti-spanking legislation in 2007. Just two years later, a whopping 87% of voters in a public referendum asked that the law be rescinded.

It is time to drop the rhetoric and take the time to study the issue before criminalizing a form of discipline used by half of Canadian parents. 

Mark Penninga is the executive director of ARPA Canada. He has a MA in political science from the University of Lethbridge and has authored a policy report and numerous articles on corporal discipline.

CORRELATION VS. CAUSATION

by Jon Dykstra

There is an old story about how Toronto police discovered that when ice cream sales went up, so did traffic fatalities. But while the two were clearly linked – there was a clear correlation – the police were baffled as to why this was happening. Were drivers zipping around with only one hand on the wheel, the other wrapped around the steering wheel? Was ice cream actually *causing* the fatalities?

It turned out, no, not at all. There was a third factor in play. When it gets hot in Toronto, ice cream sales go up. In addition, people get out their motorbikes. These are great for open air driving, but not nearly as safe as, say, the family minivan. Which is why the traffic fatalities went up.

Whether this story is true or not, I’m not sure. But it serves as a good illustration of why any statistician worth their salt will tell you “correlation does not imply causation”.



The Pill doesn't prevent all pregnancies.

INVESTIGATING THE BIRTH CONTROL PILL

by Nicole Van Dyke

I was married in the summer of 2015, and a few months prior to this my fiancé and I began researching Christian methods of birth control. The minister officiating our wedding gave us two articles to read.^{1,7} This was the first time I had really read anything about oral contraceptives, aka the Pill. When I was in high school, I knew girls who were taking the Pill to help ease menstrual difficulties, so I was aware that it existed. But I had no idea how it worked, or whether there were problems with using it as a contraceptive.

The two articles the minister gave us noted the Pill was not only a contraceptive, but could have an abortive function, acting *after* a new baby was already conceived. In conversations with other women my age, it became clear

that doctors weren't talking about the Pill's role as an abortifacient (something that causes abortions). They had never been informed.

THREE WAYS THE PILL WORKS

So how does the pill work?

It has three different mechanisms, and the first two do indeed act to prevent pregnancy.

The most well known mechanism of the pill is prevention of ovulation. And if there is no egg for the sperm to fertilize then there is no possibility of pregnancy.

The pill also causes cervical mucus to thicken, making it more difficult for sperm to reach the egg if the woman still ovulates. These first two mechanisms are indeed contraceptive, in that when they work, they serve to prevent the joining of

the egg and sperm.

But there is also a third action, and this one is not contraceptive, but abortive. The hormones in the Pill cause the lining of your endometrium (on the wall of the womb, where the egg needs to attach) to be very thin so the baby cannot implant. And because it can't implant it has no chance to grow and develop – it is chemically aborted.²

WHEN CONTRACEPTION DOESN'T "CONTRA" CONCEPTION

This third action isn't well known, perhaps because it is still called "contraceptive" even though it acts *after* conception. You see, if you look up the definition of "contraception" it isn't what you might expect. In the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* it says

...when we read on a box that something is a contraceptive, that doesn't mean that it just prevents conception

"contraception: deliberate prevention of conception or *impregnation*." In other words, when we read on a box that something is a contraceptive, that doesn't mean that it just prevents conception – the word also includes the abortive function of preventing a newly conceived little human being from implanting in its mother's womb.

That may be why most people don't know about the Pill's abortive function. Physicians use this word "contraception," but mean something very different by it than we might be assuming. But information about this can be easily found on the Internet. For example, an article on *WebMD.com* describes this third function this way:

Hormonal contraceptives can also prevent pregnancy by changing the lining of the womb so it's unlikely the fertilized egg will be implanted.²

As pro-lifers, we understand that "the fertilized egg" they are talking about here is actually and already a human being made in God's image.

ANOTHER SORT OF PILL?

I now thought I knew how oral contraceptives worked, so my fiancé and I would not be considering this "option" of birth control. This does not mean that we were not scared that our other options would not be as effective. We also knew they would require more "work" than taking a pill (condoms, tracking basal body temperatures and cervical mucus, etc.).

Then I started hearing from various women that "my pill is different, my doctor says it's not the type that can cause abortions." I was quite interested, thinking that since I had only read two very religious articles, perhaps there were other, different pills the article authors didn't know about – ones that do

not have the third abortive mechanism of action. Wouldn't that be great?

But it didn't take long, searching with Google, to dig up clear information on the many different brands of oral contraceptives. There are over 80 different names but they *all* contain either progestin or estrogen or a combination of both (most common), and therefore they *all* have the same three potential actions. I began reading more research articles, both Christian-based and non-Christian, and they amusingly enough agreed *that it happens* but then draw different conclusions as to what we should then do

CHRISTIAN SOURCES: We do not and cannot know how often the third mechanism has to kick in because the

first two fail, but we know it can and does happen, therefore we should not be willing to risk killing our baby.^{1,4,6,7}

NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES: There is no precise medical testing that exists which can prove how often a fertilized egg is not implanting and so Christians should not worry or care about a non-statistic.^{5,9}

Not care about a "non-statistic"? Just because we cannot get a precise number, does that mean we should just ignore that it is happening altogether?

EVEN WITH PERFECT USE, BABIES ARE CONCEIVED

We might not have clear numbers, but we do know babies are being conceived in women who use the birth control pill. There is no such thing as a birth control pill that has a 0% pregnancy rate...even with perfect use.⁸ We should also note that on most websites it states users of the pill must take it at the same time every day and not miss a pill.^{2,10} This

If oral contraceptives only worked before this point – conception – there would be no problem. But they are also designed to work after this point – after new life has begun – to prevent that new life from finding a hospitable home in the womb.



would be considered “perfect use” and even with perfection, pregnancies are still occurring.³

And the pregnancy rates go way up under “typical use” (missing a pill or taking a pill late). In an article by Dr. William F. Colliton Jr., he shared that:

“...medical literature documents an incidence of 3-5 pregnancies per 100 women per year for Pill users. Dr. Don Gambrell, Jr., a renowned gynecological endocrinologist.... noted a 14% incidence of ovulation in women taking the 50 microgram [Birth Control Pill]. This rate varies from pill to pill and from patient to patient. Now, every case of fertilization that does occur in women on the pill, in which the pill has made it difficult or impossible for there to be implantation, *contradicts the thesis of those stating that the [Birth Control Pill] is not abortifacient.*”⁴

If 3-5 pregnancies are occurring despite all 3 actions of the pill, how many more ovulations are occurring that we don't see because the conceived baby is then terminated because it can't implant in the thin endometrium? What about a 14% breakthrough ovulation rate? We don't know how many children are killed by the Pill's third mechanism, but the numbers could be very high. As Randy Alcorn writes

The Pill is used by about fourteen million American women each year and sixty million women internationally. Thus, even an infinitesimally low portion (say one-hundredth of one percent) of 780 million Pill cycles per year globally could represent tens of thousands of unborn children lost to this form of chemical abortion annually. How many young lives have to be jeopardized for prolife believers to question the ethics of using the Pill? This is an issue with profound moral implications for those believing we are called to protect the lives of children.


We could guess the numbers for Canada might be around a tenth of the American figures, potentially amounting to thousands of children lost. Regardless of what the numbers are, as Christians can't we agree that if our birth control choices risk killing even just one baby, then we need to use some other method?

CONCLUSION

While I was quite uninformed on this topic, it didn't take much time to work through the readily available information and realize that the Pill is not for us. So with all this in mind I would like to encourage anyone who reads this with the following:

- If you are a parent of a teenage girl, (and, even teenage boys should be informed too!) please talk with them about the birth control pill. Don't let them find out for themselves or assume that they know already. I didn't know, and many others did not and do not. This is important stuff because it truly is a matter of life and death!
- If you are an engaged couple considering different birth control options please do more research than just asking your doctor for a non-abortive pill. The chances are high that your doctor does not have the same beliefs as you and does not consider hormonal oral contraceptives to be abortifacient (because he may regard implantation, rather than conception, as when new life begins). Don't be tempted to take the easy way out and not ask questions. This topic is important enough to spend a few hours of your time researching it before putting hormones into your body uninformed. The information is all out there; you just have to look for it!
- If you are married and currently taking one of the many brands of birth control pills, please don't let guilt get in the way of change. What you've done in ignorance, you can turn from now that you know better. And because our God is merciful we

can depend on His forgiveness, and live lives of thankfulness.

I believe that this conversation is extremely necessary, and as important, if not more so, than walking in a March for Life or standing in a Life Chain or any other prolife work. We cannot tell others that it is wrong for them to kill their baby before it is born if we are ignoring the safety of our own unborn children. If we are pro-life, then let us truly *be* pro-life! 

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Randy Alcorn's *Does the birth control pill cause abortions? A short condensation.*
- ² Todd Nivin's (MD) “Birth Control Pills” posted to Webmd.com/sex/birth-control/birth-control-pills and retrieved August 16, 2016
- ³ *Contraception: Success and failure rates of contraceptives.* Retrieved from Youngwomenshealth.org/2009/11/03/success-and-failure-rates-of-contraceptives/ (Updated January, 2017)
- ⁴ W.F Colliton's “The birth control pill: Abortifacient and Contraceptive” in *Life and Learning X*,
- ⁵ J.L. DeCook & D. Harrison & C. Hirsch & S. Crocket's “Hormone contraceptives controversies and clarifications” in *Prolife Obstetrician* (1999)
- ⁶ M.A. Grisanti's “Birth control and the Christian: Recent discussion and basic suggestions” in *The Master's Seminary Journal* 23(1)
- ⁷ N.D. Kloosterman's “The pilgrim's pathway” in the Oct, 1994 issue of *Christian Renewal*
- ⁸ I. Milsom & T. Korver's “Ovulation incidence with oral contraceptives: A literature review” in *J Family Planning Reproductive Health Care* 34(4)
- ⁹ C. Page's “Much ado about nothing: Prolife misconceptions about contraception” posted to Rewire.news Aug 22, 2008
- ¹⁰ U.S. Food and Drug Administration's “Birth control: medicines to help you” www.fda.gov

QUESTIONING ISLAMOPHOBIA

by Hendrik van der Breggen

There's much talk lately about Islamophobia, so let's be clear on this at the get go: Muslims are people we should love and respect—and welcome.

Although I disagree deeply with Islam (the religion that centers itself on Muhammad and the Qur'an), I believe Jesus' command to love my neighbor requires that I respect those with whom I disagree. After all, all people—including Muslims—are made in the image of God.

But let's be clear on this, too: having reasonable, evidence-based concerns about Islam—especially when adherents closely follow the violent life and teachings of Muhammad—is not an instance of Islamophobia.

Please note: I am NOT saying that all Muslims are monolithic in their views, that all Muslims are terrorists or supporters of ISIS, nor that any Muslims should be treated with prejudice or in any way unjustly.

Rather, I am saying that we need to do some careful thinking.

With this end in mind, let's assess a meme I often see circulating on the Internet. The meme has two pictures with a caption under each. The first picture is of a meeting of several white-robed-white-hooded Ku Klux Klan members. The caption: "No-one thinks that these people are representative of Christians."

The second picture (immediately below the first) is of a dozen black-garbed-black-masked ISIS fighters with weapons at the ready. The caption: "So why do so many people think that these people are representative of Muslims?"

The apparent implication: just as the KKK isn't Christian, so too ISIS isn't Islamic.

Let's pause and think.

Most or all the Christians and Muslims I know are decent people, and, yes, we should protect them from being misrepresented. So far so good.

But the questions we should be asking are these: Does the KKK actually follow the example and teachings of Jesus? (Answer: clearly no.) Does ISIS actually follow the example and teachings of Muhammad? (Answer: very apparently yes.)

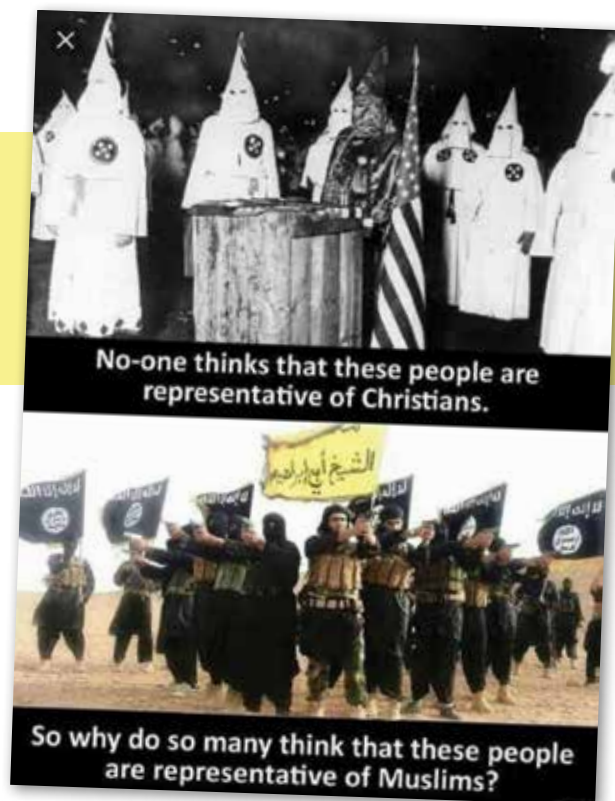
The more I learn about the life and teachings of Muhammad (see the resource list at the end), the more I am convinced that Muhammad was an extremely violent man bent on world domination by force—and he teaches his followers to be and do likewise. (It's interesting that the present leader of ISIS has a PhD in Islamic Studies.)

Unlike Jesus, who shed his own blood for others to spread his message, Muhammad shed the blood of others to impose his message.

Now consider the notion of phobia. A phobia is an irrational or ungrounded fear, aversion, or hatred.

Consider arachnophobia, an irrational ungrounded fear or hatred of spiders. Clearly, it's possible to have reasonable, non-phobic concerns about some spiders if the spiders display evidence of being harmful or lethal to humans.

In recent years I've seen too many public discussions shut down because people who raise important questions are dismissed as "phobic" when in fact they're not. The if-you-disagree-then-you're-phobic card is a smokescreen against truth—it's an *ad hominem* fallacy—and it misleads audiences untrained in logic.



In view of ISIS and its close affiliation with Muhammad's violent life and teachings, the challenge before us is threefold: (1) we should encourage Muslims who do not emulate Muhammad's violence to continue doing so; (2) we should challenge Islamic leaders whenever they preach Muhammad's violence as behavior to be emulated; and (3) we should do 1 and 2 in such ways that show love, compassion, and respect to Muslims.

Yes, this is no small challenge. It also isn't Islamophobia.

Speaking truth and loving others can—and should—go hand in hand. **RP**

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- William Kilpatrick's *Christianity, Islam, and Atheism*
- Nabeel Qureshi's *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*
- R.C. Sproul and Abdul Saleeb's *The Dark Side of Islam*
- David Wood, *AnsweringMuslims.com*

This article first appeared in The Carillon, on March 2, 2017 and is reprinted here with permission. Hendrik van der Breggen, PhD, is associate professor of philosophy at Providence University College.

REVIEWS

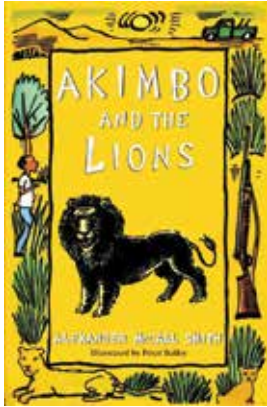
CHAPTER BOOKS FOR GRADE 2 AND UP

By Jon Dykstra

AKIMBO AND THE LIONS

BY ALEXANDER MCCALL SMITH

66 PAGES / 1992



The author, Alexander McCall Smith, is best known as the author of the *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* but he does children's books as well.

Akimbo is a boy who has access to all the coolest animals in Africa – his dad is a ranger in charge of a wild game reserve, which means that from one book to the next Akimbo is having adventures with snakes and baboons and elephants and crocodiles, oh my!

In *Akimbo and the Lions* he accompanies his father to trap a lion harassing a small village. But things don't go as planned – instead they trap a cub and scare the momma away. That means someone needs to take care of this wee little lion, and Akimbo convinces his dad that he is just the boy for the job!

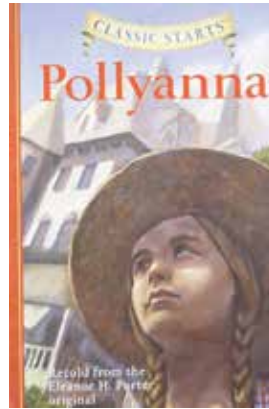
McCall does a wonderful job of balancing the tension in the book. There were moments where my 5 and 7-year-old were covering their mouths (and sometimes their eyes) but these moments didn't last too long.

This is just a good old-fashioned adventure, perfect for their age group. It is short – a book that can be read in two or three sessions – exciting, sometimes sweet, with gentle humor along the way too. We look forward to tackling others in this series.

POLLYANNA

BY ELEANOR H. PORTER & KATHLEEN OLMSTEAD

150 PAGES / 2007



I'm not one for abridged classics – why not just read the original?

However, there is an exception to every rule. I recently realized that my little ones could benefit from learning about Pollyanna's "glad game" – like her they need to learn how to look for the positive side of things. But they just weren't old enough yet to sit through the original. Fortunately Sterling Books' "Classic Starts" has a very good abridgment.

Half as long as the original, it is the perfect size for my girls' ages, three through seven.

Pollyanna is a poor but lively orphan girl who goes to live with her rich, strait-laced aunt. Hilarity ensues as this somber lady is gradually won over by her cheerful niece. There is one shocking/sad moment that could cause young listeners some distress – Pollyanna gets hurt quite badly. I peaked ahead and made sure that the chapter with the accident was the first one I read that night, and then I kept on reading the next couple chapters so we could finish on a happier note. That helped my audience work through this tense section. I'd recommend it for readers in Grade two and up, but listeners as young as 3 or 4 might enjoy it too.

ANDI'S PONY TROUBLE

BY SUSAN K. MARLOW

61 PAGES / 2010



Andi is 5 going on 6, with dreams of owning her very own horse. She lives on a farm in the West in the 1870s, and already has a pony, named Coco. But Coco can only trot, and that is not fast enough for Andi's liking. So she wants a horse for her birthday.

But as little Andi tries to prove she's big enough for a horse, everything goes wrong. Author Susan Marlow, does a good job of interjecting comedy throughout – at one point Andi ends up with eggs on her head, which had our girls giggling. There are 11 pictures throughout, which helps make it an accessible book for younger children too – I'd recommend it for five to eight.

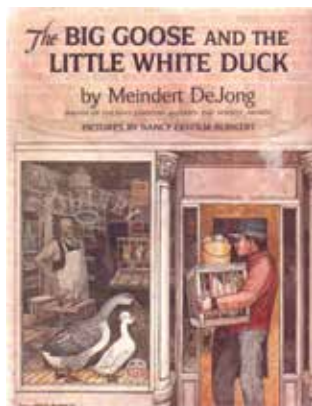
The author is Christian, and it shows – Andi also gets into some minor naughtiness, but afterwards asks her mom, and her pony Coco, for forgiveness.

The only downside is that while Andi knows she shouldn't say disrespectful things, she still *thinks* them. Quite a lot. That's okay in small doses, but it pops up more in other Andi books. I would give *Andi's Pony Trouble* two thumbs up, but this internal backtalk is the reason why we're not going to buy the rest of this series. Though we probably will get them from the library.

THE BIG GOOSE AND THE LITTLE WHITE DUCK

BY MEINDERT DEJONG

169 PAGES / 1938



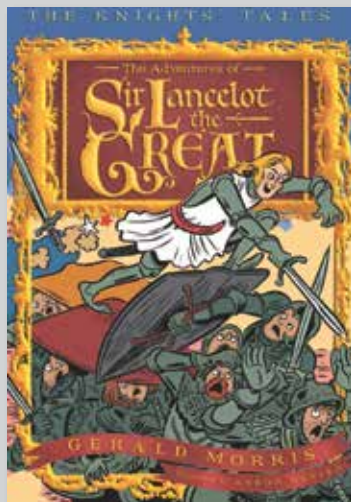
It begins with a big boy buying his mother a big goose for her birthday present – she's always wanted one for a pet. But there is just one problem: to buy the goose he had to borrow money from his gruff grandfather.

Now the grumpy old man was more than happy to loan the money but only because he misunderstood what the big boy intended. He thought the boy was buying it for *his* birthday – for his eighty-eighth birthday just a few months away. He thought the big boy was buying it so that grampa could, for the first time in his long life, *have a taste of roast goose*.

So the fun in the story is seeing how this can all conclude with a happy ending!

It was a great read-out-loud book to share with my young daughters. The big goose is an excitable character, and the grandfather likes to bellow, which means that I got to get loud too.

DeJong won both the Hans Christian Anderson and Newbery awards for children's literature, so the man could write. If mom or dad are reading it, this is good for ages 4 and up. If the child is reading it this is at least a Grade One, and maybe a Grade Two title.



THE ADVENTURES OF LANCELOT THE GREAT

BY GERALD MORRIS

92 PAGES / 2008

This has all the adventure you'd expect from a Arthurian tale, but way more humor. And maybe the best way to review it is to share one of those jokes.

Sir Lancelot wants to be one of King Arthur's knights because

"They have the bravest hearts, the noblest souls and the shiniest armor in all the world."

Lancelot is a little obsessed with his appearance but on his journey to Camelot, (to introduce himself to the King) he gets caught in a rainstorm, and his armor ends up getting "splashed all over with dirty spots." When at last the rain stopped, Sir Lancelot turns his attention to his spattered appearance. Moving his lance to his left arm, he draws a towel from his saddlebags and begins scrubbing at his armored legs. Soon he is absorbed in the task, paying no attention to where his horse is taking him. When he does finally look up, Lancelot sees a knight bearing down on him. Thinking it one of those roving evil knights and

"having no time to shift his lance to his right arm...he met the knight's charge left-handed, popping his attacker very neatly from his saddle."

Almost without pause, another knight attacks him, and then another and another, which gets Lancelot quite annoyed, as this near constant assault really interferes with his cleaning efforts. But he quickly dispatches them one after another. This happens 16 times in all, and after the 16th knight was dispatched, Lancelot hears clapping.

It turns out he had wandered into a tournament unawares, and won it quite unintentionally, *while using his lance left-handed*. Then when he finds out the King himself is the host of the tournament and wants the noble knight to join the Round Table, Lancelot is distraught. Why?

"Look at me! I'm all covered with mud! And I *did* want to make a favorable first impression!"

The rest of the book is more of the same – my girls were laughing out loud, and I was having a great time too.

The only caution would be that *other* books in this series have some magic and supernatural elements that might be of concern to some parents. But this book is just good silly, feudal fun.

I'd recommend it for Grades 2 and up, though a 5-year-old will enjoy it too, if her dad is reading it.

{ IN A TIDBITS RELEVANT, AND NOT SO, TO CHRISTIAN LIFE } NUTSHELLS

BY JON DYKSTRA

A MOST WONDERFUL SECRET

"What does it feel like?" I asked. "To have a whole new person growing inside you?"

My mom sat down on the couch and leaned back and thought for a while. A pretty smile spread over her face. "That's a big question," she said slowly, "A big answer. But I'll try. It feels like...it feels like you have the most wonderful secret that makes everything...Oh I know! Remember what you said when you got your kitten? You said that afterward, it sounded like all the regular noise in the world had turned to music. Well, that's what it's like, Clementine. The wonderful secret of having a baby coming makes all the world's noise turn into music."

"Did you feel that way when you were going to have me too?" I asked.

"Oh honey," my mom said, putting her arm around me. "I still feel like that with you."

– author Sara Pennypacker, in her *Clementine and the Family Meeting*

ONE FLESH

"The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

– From *Matthew Henry's Commentary* on Genesis 2

DEALING WITH FAKE NEWS

In the good news department, fake news sites like ABCNews.com.co and CNN.com.de went offline in mid-March (without explanation). While that might put a small dent in the supply of this misleading material, there's no shortage of fake news. Some of it is awfully hard to spot; instead of outrageous lies, some creators are settling for far more subtle, and thus more plausible, lies.

Another technique: some sites are mixing old real new articles – stolen from real sites like BBC.com and CNN.com – alongside of their fake news articles. So when you read, say, four legitimate articles, then your guard will be down when you click on a fifth, and this time entirely fake, article.

So how can we tell what's real from what's fake? There are a few steps that are helpful:

- 1) Double-check the web address. A lot of fake sites have domain names that look a lot like mainstream media outlets, but with a small difference. Like ABCNews.com.co, whereas the real site is ABCNews.com.
- 2) Double-check this news story against other media outlets. If only one is covering it, that could be because it is fake.

Finally, *Christianity Today's* Ed Stetzer has advice on what to

do if we still can't tell whether a story is fake or not.

"...don't post it. If you have not, will not, or cannot confirm a story, do not share it. As Christians, we have a higher standard than even the journalist. We

aren't protecting the reputation of an organization or a website, we bear the name of our King. If our friends and families cannot trust us with this type of news, many will not listen when we seek to share the good news of the gospel."

SOURCE: Ed Stetzer's "Facts are our friends: Why sharing fake news makes us look stupid and harms our witness" posted to *ChristianityToday.com* January 2017

THE WIT AND WISDOM OF GEORGE HEBERT

George Hebert was best known as a Christian poet, but he published a collection of proverbs he collected over his lifetime. Here are a half dozen of the best:

- *A fool may throw a stone into a well which a hundred wise men cannot pull out* – being destructive is easy; being constructive takes real effort
- *Comparisons are odious* – they are the root of discontent and covetousness
- *One hour's sleep before midnight is worth three after* – we all know it
- *He that steals an egg will steal an ox* – there aren't degrees of trustworthiness
- *St. Luke was a saint and a physician, yet is dead* – the prosperity doctrine is bunk
- *The fat man knoweth not what the lean thinketh* – we shouldn't assume that just because we were once hungry (or young, or poor, or single, or jobless, or etc.) that we still completely understand what it is like.



— East vs West —

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CONTEST

*“Let your light shine
before others, so
that they may see
your good works
and give glory to
your Father who
is in Heaven.”*

—MATTHEW 5:16

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- Best letter in a large paper (eg Ottawa Citizen, Vancouver Sun)
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- Best letter by someone under age 20
- Most letters published & submitted to contest
- One letter picked at random from all entries

CONTEST RULES

- Letters must be on a topic that relates in some way to ARPA's mission (ie it must have something to do with bringing a Christian perspective to the public square).
- Send either a link to your letter, or a picture of a published letter, to **INFO@ARPACANADA.ca**. Or mail it to **ARPA Canada, PO Box 1377, STN B, Ottawa ON, K1P5R4**

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