

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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Volume 38 Issue No. 1

# PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 35+ YEARS

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# Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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# READER RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR,

In recent issues of *Reformed Perspective* (and other Reformed periodicals) I have noticed an underlying theme on the topic of manhood. I'm grateful for these articles because men are being subtly attacked everywhere today and these articles are helping expose these, sometimes subtle, attacks.

Why are men being attacked? The easy answer is because we are the heads of our families, and serve in Church leadership. If the shepherds can be waylaid, it is that much the easier to get the rest of the sheep.

So we need our Christian men to be good leaders. Sadly men today are no longer being taught and equipped with what I see as the four essential basic characteristics manhood. We need to be taught to:

- 1: **Reject passivity** - As iron sharpens iron lean on the Lord and your brothers in the Lord as you encourage one another (Proverbs 27:17). Do not be a coward or a wimp! Stand firm in the faith (Matt. 25:21) that the Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted you with and ask for more as you put on the full armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-17). A soldier of the cross does his best fighting on his knees.
- 2: **Accept responsibility** - No blame-shifting! Take full responsibility for your sins. Ask yourself these tough questions. Why are you a man? What has made you a man? How are you doing as a man?
- 3: **Live courageously** from your heart in the front lines of this battle with God's armour as we wage against the devil, the world and the flesh that wage war against us daily and every moment.
- 4: **Invest eternally** so that we all will one day hear the Lord say "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." (Matthew 25:23, 1 Corinthians 16:13,14).

Over a few years I was taught these four characteristics in a curriculum called *Authentic Manhood 33 The Series*. I would highly recommend this series to the men in the Reformed churches – it is a biblically-based curriculum that includes contributions by well-known Reformed figures like Matt Chandler, Timothy Keller, Lecrae, Paul Tripp, Tedashii, the late John Gresham Machen, and Ed Welch. And most importantly, the curriculum acknowledges and recognizes all of God's Word as our inerrant and infallible guide.

What it means to be a man is as important a topic today and tomorrow, so I appreciate this focus in *Reformed Perspective*. And I really commend *Authentic Manhood 33 The Series* to the Reformed Churches (1 Corinthians 12:7) for anyone looking for a challenging curriculum for men desiring to be an authentic man.

Peter Riemersma  
Concord, North Carolina, USA.



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# BACKING AWAY FROM FROM BIG BROTHER

## Government overreach isn't limited to China

by Jon Dykstra

Who should get to decide what information you see? And who would you trust with your own personal information? On the other side of the globe one government is taking on the dual role of data collector, and information gatekeeper.

And while it is nowhere near that bad here at home, we do have reason for concern.

### COLLECTING AND RESTRICTING INFORMATION IN CHINA

We've known for some time now that the Chinese government, via its "Great Firewall" restricts what information its citizens get to see. Social media giants like Facebook and Twitter have been blocked, as are many mainstream media sites like the *National Post*, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* (though *Reformed Perspective* seems to have slipped past the censors' notice).

While search giant Google is also banned, Ryan Gallagher, at the *Intercept*, reports that Google is now willing to comply with the Chinese government's restrictions. Google plans:

"to launch a censored version of its search engine in China that will blacklist websites and search terms about human rights, democracy, religion, and peaceful protest."

The company that once had as its slogan "Don't be evil" is now siding with the government censor.

In addition to restricting the access its citizens have to information, it's being widely reported that the Chinese government is collecting personal information on its citizens so it can assign everyone a "social credit" rating – a three

digit number – that would increase or decrease based on behavior both online and off. That "social credit" rating would then be used to determine what services a citizen would be allowed to receive. If you behave, you can book flights. But if, like journalist Liu Hu, you publish claims critical of the government, you may find yourself ground bound.

It's not clear just how far along China is in developing this social credit system but there are plans for a grand unveiling in 2020, and local experiments are already taking place.

Even in its unfinished state, there is interest from overseas. Venezuela is getting Chinese help to implement their own system and *Reuters'* Angus Berwick reports that the information the Venezuelan government is collecting seems to include not only phone numbers and home addresses but "emails... participation at Socialist Party events and even whether a person owns a pet."

### CLOSER TO HOME

In the West we are still quite free, but even here the government's data collection is expanding. And the government also restricts our access to information.

In October *Global News* revealed that the Canadian government was planning to compel banks, starting in the new year, to give them the personal banking records of 500,000 citizens. It promised to use the information only to analyze overall trends, and not to look at any individuals. But it was planning to do so without the individuals' permission or knowledge.

This same government asked businesses for information as to their position on abortion if they wanted to qualify for funding under the summer jobs program.

And only pro-choice businesses received funding.

When it comes to restricting information, the Ontario government tried to keep the province's abortion statistics secret, and it was only a successful 2017 court challenge (spearheaded by ARPA Canada) that made that information available again.

And whereas parental notification and consent is required for school field trips, in Canada and parts of the US abortionists don't need to tell parents when their underage children are getting an abortion.

More recently, in Alberta the government has passed a bill banning schools from informing a child's parents that their son or daughter has joined a Gay/Straight Alliance club. That's information that the government has decided parents don't need to have.

### BIGGER AND BIGGER

In China, the government manages every aspect of its citizens' lives, from where they might be allowed to live to how many children a couple is allowed to have. It's hardly surprising that a government that's already this intrusive doesn't recognize any limits on what it can do.

Here in the West, our governments do less than the communist state, but perhaps more than we really realize. A partial list of what we expect from the government shows that in Canada, too, there is hardly an area of our lives untouched by the government. Canadians expect our government to:

- supplement our retirement income
- deliver our mail
- provide us with national radio and TV stations
- provide care for us when we are sick



- ensure there are affordable places to live when we are old
- create summer jobs for our teens
- verify the safety of our food
- build recreation centers and neighborhood playgrounds
- subsidize the creation of professional hockey arenas
- educate our children
- help provide daycare for them before school
- pay for abortion
- provide euthanasia

Some of these responsibilities are small and some are enormous. It's hardly surprising, then, that Prime Minister Trudeau wants more information and defends his government's data grab by arguing government decisions need to be based on evidence. Can we really expect a government to mind its own business after we've invited it to take on some of the biggest responsibilities in our lives? It would seem our lives *are* their business.

## BACKING AWAY

In China the government has taken on the role of Big Brother, dominating all of life...but that's not how it thinks of itself. Big Brother never thinks of itself as Big Brother – it looks in the mirror and sees a kind benevolent Nanny State whose only concern is the care of its citizens because, well, citizens aren't really capable of caring for themselves, are they?

In the West we might think ours is still the kind and gentle Nanny State – we are grateful for its provision of free healthcare, and free education. But it is in those two roles – those two enormous roles – that our

government is also doing its worst, providing the facilities or funding for the murder of one-quarter of its citizens. And that doesn't even include the murders it now manages of the elderly!

The Alberta government wants to use its educational role to teach children that

the State, not God, is supreme. That's a recent development, but for years now the government has been teaching our children the very opposite of God's Truth when it comes to sex, marriage, human worth, the environment, and much more.

So if our Nanny State isn't already Big Brother, we can certainly see how natural the progression will be.

What can we do about it? This is a massive problem, so there's any number of fronts on which we can take up this battle. But perhaps a useful first step is to consider the warning Samuel gives in 1 Samuel 8:10-22 against relying on the power of kings. If we demand that someone rule over us, rule they shall, but it's quite likely they will not rule as we hoped.

When the government directed summer jobs funding to only pro-choice companies, Christians were outraged at the favoritism. But what few considered was, why were we expecting the government to fund summer job creation in the first place? To do it they have to take money from some companies – and doing so limits those companies' opportunities to create jobs – to give to other companies to fund their summer jobs.

From the start, such a program involved the government rewarding some at the expense of others. And when we expect the government to pick winners and losers, why would we be surprised when it decides the winners need to think like they do?

Lord Acton gave a warning that matches up well with Samuel's: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." If we want a less arrogant government, it would help if we started asking for a much smaller one. **RP**

## TWO QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

**Q1:** ARPA Canada and other Christian groups protested the government's discriminatory summer job program requirements. If, as this article argues, the government shouldn't be expected to create summer jobs, was it misguided to protest the discriminatory nature of the program? Shouldn't the protest have targeted the program itself?

**A:** When there are two wrongs to right, is it misguided to take them on one at a time? The discriminatory nature of the program was the far more topical issue and the more winnable one. It made good sense to take it on first.

**Q2:** If we wanted a smaller government, where could we begin? Where could we ask it to do less?

**A:** Two of the government's biggest expenditures are healthcare and education. Even if the government continued to *fund* both why do they need to *provide* both? If parents could direct educational funding to the school of their choice that would put them back in charge of their children's education. That's a step in the right direction.



&



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# NOTA BENE

News worth noting

## SCOTTISH MINISTER CHARGES POLICE WITH HATE FOR THEIR HATE CRIME CAMPAIGN

BY NATHAN ZEKVELD AND JON DYKSTRA

**T**he Scottish government and police have joined together under the banner “One Scotland” to campaign against hate crimes using videos and a variety of billboards. One billboard reads:

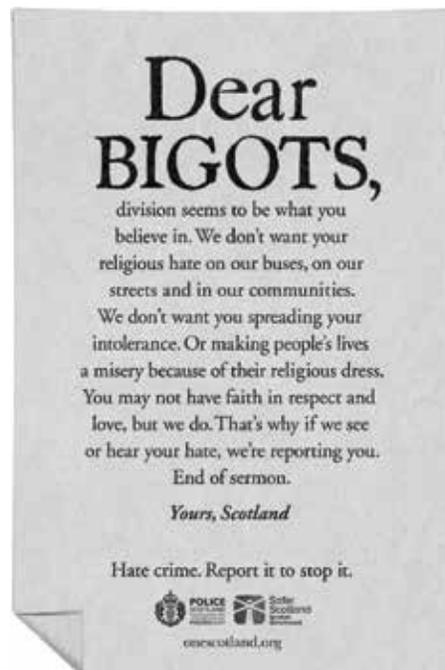
*Dear bigots,  
you can't spread your religious hate here.  
End of sermon.  
Yours, Scotland.*

Another, longer one, says:

*Dear bigots,  
division seems to be what you believe in. We don't want your religious hate on our buses, on our streets and in our communities. We don't want you spreading your intolerance. Or making people's lives a misery because of their religious dress. You may not have faith in respect and love, but we do. That's why if we see or hear your*

*hate, we're reporting you.  
End of sermon.  
Yours, Scotland*

The minister at St Peters Free Church



(and former moderator of the Free Church of Scotland) David Robertson, was quick to point out the problem with this campaign – the police have lumped hate crimes (crimes motivated by hate...as opposed to those motivated by love?) in with “hate incidents.” Vague definitions mean that the police’s hate crime campaign might well be violating their own definition of a hate incident.

On his blog (theweeflea.com) Robertson shared a letter he had written to the police and government to report to them their own “hate incident” and began with their definition:

“A hate incident is any incident that is not a criminal offence, but something which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hate or prejudice.”

On these incredibly vague grounds, he points out that on a day-to-day basis, he experiences a lot of anti-Christian “hate.” He gives as examples, parishioners who have been bullied at work and in higher education. But he also quotes a number of emails that he regularly receives, such as:

“Personally, as a secularist, I hate religion and feel I have every right to, despite attempts by the Scottish government to sneak a blasphemy law round the back door by making it an offence this year to hate religion.”

He then points out that the inundation of billboards is in and of itself “hate incidents,” promoting anger and hatred against religion, possibly resulting in vandalism against churches and worse. He also points out that the problem with the term “hate crime” is that it bears with it the threat of criminal prosecution.

We can learn from Robertson’s response to the officials in Scotland. With some wit, he points out the self-contradicting nature of their own propaganda, and then takes the time

to ensure there is no doubt that he is against bullying and hatred...and also governments that exceed their proper limits.

Hatred, as we know from Scripture, is a sin, but things such as murder and assault are sins as well as *crimes*. Sin must be repented of, and then forgiven in Christ. Crimes must be punished by the government, and it is difficult to judge something based on feelings in a court of law.

At the end of the day, the irrationality of such a billboard campaign may be clear enough for even the culture at large to see. It is internally incoherent, as can be seen in their two fundamental principles:

- 1) Hatred is a crime
- 2) I hate haters

One other Christian voice has chimed in with wit and humor to expose this campaign. A Christian think tank and advocacy group, Christian Concern, created three alternative posters copying the very same style. One read:

*Dear One Scotland,  
All people should be free to express their views, even if they offend other people. This is what freedom of speech means. How about promising to protect those whose views others might find offensive? This is how democracy works.  
Love,  
Some Christian friends*

And we'll leave them with the last word:

*Dear One Scotland,  
Do you really think that churches are teaching their members to be hateful towards others? Or to be violent towards people we disagree with? Why not pop into a church sometime and find out what we really think?  
Love,  
Some Christian friends*



## REAGAN'S CHALLENGE TO HIS DYING ATHEIST FATHER-IN-LAW

JON DYKSTRA

**E**arlier this year a note was discovered in Nancy Reagan's personal effects – dated August 7, 1982 – written by Ronald Reagan to his father-in-law. What makes the 36-year-old letter special is the topic – the president of the United States was taking time on a Saturday afternoon to write to Loyal Davis, his ailing father-in-law. Reagan was concerned about his health, but even more so about his eternity – Davis was a self-declared atheist.

Reagan was 71, and just 16 months removed from being shot in the chest by crazed gunman John Hinckley Jr. So maybe he understood what his father-in-law was facing, how he was being confronted with his certain mortality. From the letter it's clear that Reagan has been doing some reading about God, sharing with his father-in-law arguments that probably came from C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* and Josh McDowell's *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*.

What he began with was one of his own experiences. During his first year as governor of California, Reagan developed an ulcer that gave him sharp pains, and other times only

discomfort, but which never went away entirely. Then one morning, as he reached for his Maalox, he discovered he didn't need it – he was healed. That same morning the first and second letters of the day were from people telling him that they and others were praying for Reagan. Inside of an hour, a member of his legal staff popped in "on some routine matter" and on the way out the young man shared that some of Reagan's staff would arrive early every day to pray for him.

An appointment two weeks later confirmed that not only did Reagan no longer have an ulcer, but, the doctor added, "there was no indication I'd ever had one." Reagan understood this as God answering these many prayers. But he knew his skeptical father-in-law might dismiss this as coincidence, so he presented him with more to consider.

Some seven hundred years before the birth of Christ the ancient Jewish prophets predicted the coming of a Messiah.... All in all there were a total of one hundred and twenty-three specific prophesys (sic) about his life all of which came true. Crucifixion was unknown in

those times, yet it was foretold that he would be nailed to a cross of wood.\* And one of the predictions was that he would be born of a Virgin.

...But Loyal, I don't find that as great a miracle as the actual history of his life. Either he was who he said he was or he was the greatest faker & charlatan who ever lived. But would a liar & faker suffer the death he did when all he had to do to save himself was admit he'd been lying?

The miracle is that a young man of 30 yrs. without credentials as a scholar or priest began preaching on street corners. He owned nothing but the clothes on his back & he didn't travel beyond a circle less than one hundred miles across. He did this for only 3 years and then was executed as a common criminal.

But for two thousand years he has had more impact on the world than all the teachers, scientists, emperors, generals and admirals who ever lived, all put together.

And with that, Reagan pleaded with his father-in-law to turn to God and place his trust in Jesus Christ. And there is some reason to hope that he did.

Karen Tumulty of the *Washington Post* discovered the letter while doing research for a biography on Nancy Reagan, and, rather than simply place it back in the box, she brought it to her paper, where they published it this past month.

And so it was that, some 35 years after it was written, God used this private plea to challenge the many hundreds of thousands who have now been able to read it.

*\* Reagan isn't quite right on this point. King David does prophecy, in Psalm 22, of Jesus' hands and feet being pierced (which points to the cross) but nowhere does it prophecy specifically that he would be nailed to a cross of wood. This is important only in as much as Christians do not want to be accused of overstating things.*

## WAX ON, WAX OFF: THE WORLD'S INCREASINGLY SHAKY UNDERSTANDING OF TOLERANCE

JON DYKSTRA



A man who says he is a woman is using the BC Human Rights Tribunal to make life difficult for Vancouver-area estheticians. "JY" (the Tribunal has prohibited the publication of his real name) has approached female estheticians who only offer services to women, and asked them to give him a "Brazilian" bikini wax – a hair removal treatment for the groin area. When they've refused he's filed complaints against them with the Tribunal. To this point, JY has done this to 16 different estheticians.

Lawyer John Carpay and the Calgary-based Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms has been helping two of the women, free of charge. In an article, he wrote for *The Post Millennium* Carpay noted legal representation could otherwise have cost the women \$20,000 to \$30,000 each. A bill that size could put a small business out of business.

But, as Carpay explained, with at least one woman, "JY was willing to withdraw his complaint in exchange for \$2,500." That's quite the motivation to settle – either spend \$20,000+ on legal fees with no assurance you won't be found guilty and also fined, or settle for \$2,500 and the problem goes away. If he made a similar offer to the 14 other women, JY would look to make \$35,000 from his human rights complaints.

However, with the Justice Center backing her, Shelah Poyner decided not to settle. In September, they informed JY, that they were going to call in an expert who was going to note the treatment JY was after – known as a "Manzilian" wax – is very different than a Brazillian, involving a different wax, and using a different process that this estheticians didn't know and didn't want to do.

Once JY understood he was in for a fight (and not simply a payout) he withdrew his complaint.

This highlights a huge problem

with the Human Rights Tribunal: its process has become the means by which a complainant can extort cash settlements: pay up now, or, whether guilty or innocent, you'll have to pay much more later.

But the bigger issue here is how we are going to treat those we disagree with. This dispute is over the question: "What sort of tolerance do we believe in?"

### CHRISTIAN TOLERANCE

God calls on us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31) and to do to others as we would like done to ourselves (Matt. 7:12). That's the Christian basis for tolerance. We would like to enjoy the freedom to act as our conscience demands, so we give that freedom to others so much as we are able. Under this Christian understanding of tolerance, we would allow conscientious objectors to avoid military service, let Sikhs wear kirpans, and try to ensure Jews weren't called to Saturday work, even though we think



their views are mistaken or wrong.

Another basis for Christian tolerance is that we know we can't *make* anyone Christian. God hates hypocritical worship (Matt. 23:27-28) so there is no point, then, in forcing people to go to Church or forcing them to, in other ways, outwardly observe the Christian religion. Christian tolerance has limits – if we could, we'd ban abortion or euthanasia no matter how sincerely the practitioners might believe in it. But Christians are willing to tolerate other religions, philosophies, and beliefs that we disagree with, so long as they aren't harming others, because we understand the alternative – coercion – won't yield the inward heart-change that God is after.

### THE SECULAR VERSION

The West's Judeo-Christian heritage means that the godly type of tolerance will still pop up from time to time.

But in rejecting God, our society has had to come up with a new basis for tolerance. And the best secular justification is relativism: there is no single Truth true for everyone, and since there is no truth, no idea can

be better than any other idea, and we should, therefore, tolerate them all. The irony here is that the world only tolerates those who agree with them that there is no one Truth. Christians who think there's a real right and wrong are denounced as arrogant. And, of course, the world isn't willing to tolerate our arrogance!

We can see this worldly "tolerance" in how JY isn't willing to let these 16 estheticians alone. He's demanding that they treat him as if he really were a woman with only woman parts.... despite the fact he still has all his male bits. This sort of tolerance doesn't accommodate those who think differently, but demands, "Do what the guy in the dress says, or else!"

And while God hates hypocrisy the world is happy to have us say what they want to hear, whether we believe it or not. Oh yes, they'd love it if we truly believed men can become women, homosexuality is fantastic, and abortion empowers women. But so long as we're willing to wear a rainbow lapel pin when the office celebrates Pride Week, and we keep our Bible in our desk, not on it, they're willing to let us continue thinking our secret thoughts...if we keep them to ourselves. They aren't much worried about a mere show of outward compliance because outward compliance is all they have to go on.

The Devil also isn't put off by hypocrisy. He knows that we are either for God or against Him. So if we bow a knee to the gods of political correctness, sexual freedom, career advancement, homosexuality, sexual freedom, and more, it doesn't matter if our hearts weren't really in it. Our outward compliance to these gods is an inward denial of the supremacy of Christ in our lives, because we are placing job security, status, our income, or our business as more important to us than God.

### CONCLUSION

Understanding the Devil's strategy makes it clear what we need to do. It's what we've always needed to do,

## TWO TYPES OF TOLERANCE

Someone once said that apologetics is a battle over the dictionary: it is a battle over how we will define words.

### World's tolerance

The world equates *tolerance* with *acceptance* and even *endorsement* – these are all seen as *synonyms* of each other. Under this understanding, tolerance is actually extended only to those we already agree with. And if that is the meaning we use, then Christians certainly don't tolerate evil of any kind – we don't find it acceptable or something we would endorse.

### Original sort

But the original understanding of the word had *tolerance* and *acceptance* more as *antonyms*. So whereas we wouldn't find, say, coveting an acceptable thing for us to do, we might tolerate others doing it. Under this understanding, tolerance is what we give to those we disagree with – those who are acting in ways we can't accept as good.

and the blessed opportunity God has given us to have a part in the spreading of His Gospel. Instead of bowing the knee to the world's gods, we need to profess the Name of the one True God. And one way we can do so is by showing our friends and neighbors and coworkers and family how Christianity's tolerance compares and contrasts with a worldly tolerance that would have these women either agree to give an intimate treatment to a man's private parts or have to pay up one way or another.

It comes down to this: whereas Christians are willing to tolerate other religions, philosophies, and beliefs that we disagree with, the world only tolerates those who agree with them that there is no one Truth.



Alice Kuik, age 3



# WAR THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

Alice Kuik shares her memories of World War II

*by Jane Deglint*

*“The horror and sacrifices of those who endured a war must be recorded and remembered. If we fail to do so, we will soon take peace for granted and exaggerate small inconveniences.”*

– Jan Hendrik Luiten

## A CHILD OF WAR

My birth must have been a moment of mixed emotions for my parents. To be sure, I have every reason to believe that they were delighted with the arrival of their first-born child. However, my birth took place just three months after the German army had invaded the Netherlands. I was not born in a country where we could speak freely or go outside without worry. No, I was born in a country that was tightly controlled by an enemy. Fears and secrets were a normal part of my life. I was born a child of war.

Yet, the horror of war was not unbearable for me. I endured it with acceptance and resilience. This remarkable ability to take things in stride had two reasons. First of all, I did not know what it meant to live in peace. I was not able to compare my current situation to better days. War was all I knew. But the second reason was more significant. At all times I felt supported by people who cared for me. My mother absorbed my fears when she took me in her arms. The members of our extended family provided emotional support and practical help. And, last but not least, I was comforted by the prayers that were spoken at meals, at church, and at times of great concern about loved ones.

It is to honour my parents and family members that I feel compelled to share my story. I understand now that their practical helpfulness and their natural loyalty were expressions of their love for God. By their actions they unwittingly taught me that the Lord can always be trusted, and that He always hears our prayers. Even when the enemy is constantly harassing us.

## THE WAR COMES HOME

My memories of the war would not have been so vivid if my parents would not have provided a hiding place for a

Jewish couple. But they did, and soon the Germans suspected it. Without delay they placed our house under surveillance. I was completely unaware of the hiding place. But the stress of being watched by the Germans without knowing the reason for their suspicion had a deep impact on me. Mind you, my parents did not seek the danger. Their defiance of the Germans happened as a natural outflow of their faith in the Lord and their love for the neighbour.

Our family belonged to the Reformed church in Enschede. Their minister was a man whose faith showed itself in his works. He had taken it upon himself to obstruct the plan of the Nazis to eradicate the Jews. Not only did he preach this conviction from the pulpit, but he also practiced it. With relentless determination he collected the names of the Jews who were short-listed for transportation to the death-camps. He then carefully selected members in his congregation who would be suitable to hide these Jews. It is telling of my parents that they were among those whom he selected for this onerous task.

Of course, I was too young to know what was going on. But even if I had been old enough, my parents would not have discussed this matter until I was asleep in my bed. I can imagine that my father was immediately convinced that this was a task that the Lord placed on his path. My mother probably thought so too, but my father’s conviction allowed her to voice the objections. Where do we hide them? We cannot risk putting Alice’s life in danger! And we have no idea how long this war will last! What if the Germans find out? Then we will all die! What if the Jews get sick? And how do we keep it a secret?

But soon all the concerns faded to background. My parents were already making plans. A hiding place could be constructed upstairs. The cupboard in the spare bedroom could be enlarged toward the back. Soon the construction started, with the help of my father’s brothers. The back of the original cupboard was replaced with a door that

could be locked from the side of the room under construction. Attention was paid to details. The newly created space was decorated with brown-yellow wallpaper. I remember that wallpaper distinctly because after the war my sister and I used to play with our dolls in that room. But of course I do not remember anything of the construction. Neither was I aware of the fact that my parents had opened their home to Alfred and Reina Hen, whom they soon affectionately referred to as “our Jews.”

And so it happened that my parents, Jan Hendrik Luiten and Geertruida Klos, became personally involved in the Second World War.

## NOISES AND WHISPERS

I have no early childhood memories of a carefree summer evening, or of a cheerful family gathering. No. My first memories consist of unpleasant noises. I could clearly hear them in my bedroom when my uncles and aunt visited my parents. It sounded as if they were all talking at the same time, at the top of their voices. Through the closed door of my room I could feel the tension. Something was wrong. My uncles were very agitated. They were discussing the war. They always talked about the war. I got the impression that the situation was getting worse. The voices of my aunts sounded very worried. Once in a while I could clearly hear them sigh. All the voices together sounded restless. It was oppressive. I wished my mother would come to my room.

*Suddenly the house was filled with dark-grey uniforms and Wehrmacht army caps.*

The daytime had bad noises too. There was one sound in particular that scared me. It was quite different from the secretive talking of my family. This sound came from outside. It started as a rhythmic rumble in the distance. As it came closer I could sense its vibration in the air. Then the group of marching German soldiers appeared in full view. Proudly they paraded through our street, loudly stamping their boots to the beat of a song. The sound of the song was aggressive. I vividly remember the words "*Ach wehr fahren, ach wehr fahren gegenüber England,*" "We will make war, for sure, we will make war with England." It made me feel terrible. I felt the fear in my stomach.

But the most alarming noise may well have been the roar of the fighter planes. I could already hear their faint drone when they were still far away. Slowly the faint drone turned into a deafening rumble, right above our heads. Then it faded away again, like a ripple. It left me wide awake and worried. At the time I did not even understand that these planes were bombers on their way to a target.

To my surprise I noticed that the sound of the family gatherings at our house was changing. The uncles and aunts still visited us. We needed each other. But they started to whisper, afraid to be heard. To me their muffled voices were much more unsettling than their loud noises had been. It was clear that my family needed to be very cautious. They were on guard, constantly. No-one else was allowed to hear what they were talking about. Someone could be listening in! A German soldier, or a traitor. It was very unsettling. I tried to be brave. But it was not easy.

## WITHOUT MY FATHER

Little did I know that my family had good reasons to be on guard. Not only did we hide two Jews, but my father had made the decision to join the Resistance. Both were serious infractions of the German rule of law. Both were punishable by death.

After my father joined the Resistance he did not come home anymore. Often we did not even know where he was. This was very difficult for us. We felt lost and lonely without him. Thankfully our extended family continued to look after us. My grandfather supplied us with bread from his bakery. Another relative, who owned a branch of the well-known grocery chain "Spar," always made sure that we had a sufficient supply of groceries in the house. My mother's

*Fears and secrets were a normal part of my life. I was born a child of war.*

younger brother and his wife, who were childless, visited us often. Together our relatives were a source of light in these dark days.

Not surprisingly, the Germans noticed that my father stopped coming home. His absence seemed convincing proof to them that we were hiding Jews. As a result our family was placed on an even higher level of suspicion. At any time of the day a group of Germans would come to our house, banging on the door with great force and shouting, "*Wo Sind die Juden?*" "Where are the Jews?" But, however thoroughly they searched our house, they did not find Jews. In no uncertain terms they questioned my mother about my father. Boldly she would enter into an argument with them, explaining that they had no reason to be suspicious. With brave determination she dodged their questions about my father, calmly stating that she expected him home in the next day or so.

My mother would always take extra time for bringing me to bed on days that the Germans had searched our house. "Where is Papa?," I would ask

her. She could not say. But she prayed with me, and sang songs. Her soothing voice helped me to feel safe again.

It was during these dark days that my sister Hinke was born. One morning it was not my mother who called me out of bed, but Tante Aaltje, my aunt. I was very surprised. I was even more surprised when I noticed that my mother did not come to the breakfast table. She was staying in bed. That was not like her at all. But, thankfully, Tante Aaltje took charge of the things my mom usually did. She was also the one who told me that I had received a sister. I did not know what to think. Where did the sister come from? Where would she sleep? Tante Aaltje suggested that I should see the baby. But I was not sure. Everything felt unreal and scary. Soon I realized that things had changed. My mom and I were not together anymore. We were joined by a little person who needed care around the clock. It was sad that we could not tell my father about our baby sister, because we did not know where he was. Would things ever become normal again?

I kept asking about my father. And I always received the same answer. We did not know where he was, or when he would come back. We were not even sure if he was still alive. Over time this uncertainty became our new normal. We accepted the pain of not-knowing and forced ourselves to carry on. For my mother this new normal included looking after the Jews upstairs.

Then we received the devastating news that my father had been caught by the Germans. He had been transported to a concentration camp in Germany. I did not fully know what that meant. But I did understand that his situation had become dreadful. And that he might die.

I felt lost. I wanted to cry. Everybody seemed numb. The silence did not feel right. But at that moment there were no words. Only sighs. And silent prayers.

## THE WORST OF TIMES

The news that my father had been caught changed the way I looked at

things. I gave up hoping that he might come home soon. I started to imagine how we would live without him. I was sure that my mom would manage well. The evidence was clear. She kept looking after her regular commitments. She took care of my sister. She kept our house tidy and clean. And she prepared the meals with the groceries that our family provided. At the time I did not understand how lonely she must have been.

One day I noticed that my mother took a tray with food upstairs. I was confused. Maybe she brought it to her bedroom for a late-night snack. But I could not figure out exactly where she took it. I sensed that it was not any of my business to ask about it. But boldly I asked her anyway.

“Mom, where are you going with the food?”

Without blinking an eye my Mom answered,

“I am looking after a sick dog.”

That was exciting! It had never occurred to me that the secret would be a surprise for me! My imagination soared. Soon my mom would take a healthy dog downstairs, and I would have a playmate. I would take the dog for walks. I could look after feeding him. And maybe he could sleep in bed with me.

At the first opportunity I shared the exciting news with my friend next door. The friend hastened to tell her mother.

At that point the situation took an unexpected turn. My friend’s mother rushed over to our house. She talked to my mom in a hushed, but agitated voice. Only after the war I was told what transpired in the conversation. The neighbour lady explained to my mom that soon the whole neighbourhood would know that she was bringing food upstairs for a sick dog. But they would very likely understand that we did not have a sick dog upstairs. And not all the neighbours could be trusted. My mother should be careful not to draw any attention to our house. We were already under suspicion!

But I think that the Germans had made up their mind already at that point. Their suspicion that there were Jews in our house was all but proven. They were dead-set on finding them. One day we heard the loud singing and stamping of marching soldiers in our street. It stopped at our house. We were holding our breath. But soon all doubt was removed. After a loud knock a large number of German soldiers barged inside. Suddenly the house was filled with dark-grey uniforms and Wehrmacht army caps. My mother placed her arms securely around me. The soldiers searched for a long time,

especially upstairs. But again, their search was unsuccessful. Venting their anger they grabbed my mom by the throat and kicked her into the hallway closet. Then a soldier looked at me, picked me up and threw me into the cupboard too. Another soldier started to kick me viciously. I felt the blows of his heavy boots on the lower part of my back. It was hurting badly. Their kicks damaged my spine. For life.

The incident in the closet changed me. It destroyed my hope that things would get back to normal. I lost my childlike optimism. The Germans would undoubtedly come back to



Alice’s father, Jan Luiten



The house today: Alfred and Reina Hen hid in the attic

our house. My father was gone. Dead maybe. My back hurt. I was concerned for my little sister. I was confused by the secrets. But I felt safe with my mom. And I loved it when the relatives came. Thankfully my family had an inner resilience. They had a faith that passed understanding. I felt that.

### NO MORE WAR

A while later I noticed that the conversations of the relatives were changing again, slowly but surely. But this time it felt like a good change. Their voices became less hushed and more cheerful. Excited even. Other things changed as well. The German soldiers were not marching through the streets of Enschede anymore. Their bragging songs had stopped. Then the exuberance broke loose. The war was over!

It took a while for me to understand what it meant to live without fear for the enemy. The marching Germans had disappeared. There were no strange secrets anymore. But there were surprises.

One day my mother called me to the kitchen. Two people were sitting at the table. A man and a woman. I had never seen them before. My mother told me that these people were Jews. They had lived upstairs in a secret room. My eyes must have been wide with surprise and my mouth probably fell open. The Germans were right then. We had been hiding Jews. Our Jewish guests turned out to be good company. It was very nice to have them in our house.

Not much later the relatives began to discuss the Dutch Resistance workers in the German concentration camps. Supposedly many of them had started

to walk home from the camps. That was very good news! Filled with new hope I asked my mother when my father would be coming home. To my disappointment she told me that we could not be sure that he was coming back. He could have died. In the camp. Or on the way home. That worried me. But I remained hopeful.

My hope started to soar when my mother told me a few days later that trains had been arranged to bring the liberated prisoners home. A train was scheduled to arrive at the Enschede railway station once a day. Names of passengers could not be provided. Although there was no certainty that my father would be on one of the trains, this was very good news.

On the day that the first train was to arrive we got up early. It would take us about an hour to walk from our home on the outskirts of Enschede to the railway station in the centre of town. And we surely did not want to be late. We left the house in high spirits. My sister sat up in the stroller which my mother pushed with joyful determination. And I walked, hopped and skipped the whole way. As we came closer to the railway station we met several other excited people. This would be a day of happy reunion. It could be. We knew that not everyone would come back. But we wanted to be hopeful.

We arrived at the train station plenty on time. The wait was long. But finally we could see the train in the far distance. It came closer and closer till it screeched to a halt. The doors opened. Strange-looking men came out. Their eyes were hollow and their bodies had points sticking out at the shoulders, the hips, and the knees. All the women looked closely to see if they recognized these strange men. Soon shouts of joy filled the air. But my mom was not showing any excitement. However hard she looked, she was not able to pick out my dad. Slowly it started to dawn on us. He was not on the train. The way home seemed very long. My mother was crying.

But the next day we went again, in

good cheer. We were convinced that this would be day that my father would have made it on the train. If he was alive. But again he was not there. On the way home I looked at my mother. She was crying.

And so it went, for what seemed an endless number of days. Every morning again we left hopeful; and every afternoon we came home sad. Then the trains stopped coming. My mother was informed that the transportation of liberated prisoners to Enschede was completed.

I decided not to believe any rumours anymore. The devastation of false hope was more hurtful than the nagging pain of hopelessness. I tried to stop thinking about my father.

Life continued. I helped my mom and I spent time with my friends. One day I was playing in our backyard with some of the neighbour girls. Suddenly we heard happy shouts and laughter coming from our house. My mother appeared in the door opening and started calling my name. I ran over to her, curious to hear what was going on. "Alice! Sweet girl! Dad has come home!" What? Really? I could hardly believe it. Overjoyed I rushed inside. I ran into the kitchen. There was a man sitting at the table. I stopped in my tracks. Was that my father?

He talked to me. "Hi Alice," he said. "I am so glad to see you again. Mom was right. You have grown into a beautiful girl."

Gently he reached down to hug me, but I drew back. This man could not be my father. He did not look one bit like the wedding picture that we had treasured so dearly during his absence. And he stank terribly. I was scared. I looked up at my mom, and ran away. My mom did not call me back. At the end of the day she asked me if I would kiss my father goodnight. But I couldn't.

The next morning "our Jews" joined our family for coffee. We had a nice time with each other. It was clear that Mr. Hen and the man who said he was my father knew each other well. My supposed father used Mr. Hen's

nickname, "Frans," rather than his formal name "Alfred." It made me think. I was still not sure that this strange man was my father, but I was starting to consider the possibility.

Mr. Hen must have been watching me. Turning towards me, he said, "Alice, do you trust me?"

I had to think about that for a minute. Then I nodded.

"Very well," he continued, "Would you believe me if I said that this strange man is your father?"

After a pause, I nodded again.

Mr. Hen had one last question.

"Would you give your father a little kiss to show him how happy you are that he came back?"

I decided to stand up. Slowly I walked over to my Dad. He smiled at me.

Then I did it. I gave him a little kiss. It was scary. And it was good.

I was only five years old when I reconnected with my father. But the connection lasted till death parted us. And his memories are alive in my heart.

From this moment on "our Jews" became our honorary relatives: Uncle Frans and Aunt Reina.

It took time before my Dad was ready to share his story with us. He never told us the whole truth. He was not able to. He left out the most painful, most disturbing parts. He did not want to relive them, and he wanted to spare us the extent of his misery. And no one prodded him.

He did, however, share the story of his liberation from the concentration camp. The Resistance workers in the concentration camp were never officially informed that the Germans had surrendered. But when the rumours of the German capitulation were eventually confirmed, the prisoners started to escape in small groups. My father and two other captives decided to undertake the journey home together. It was not an easy trip. Much of their physical strength had been lost due to the hard labour, mistreatment and malnutrition during their camp years.

*There was a man sitting at the table. I stopped in my tracks. Was that my father?*

But they were helped along the way by German farmers. They discovered that many Germans had hated the war. These people were grateful for the opportunity to provide hospitality to the survivors of the camps.

After several weeks my father and his two friends arrived at the border-crossing between Germany and the Netherlands, not far from Enschede. It was a very emotional moment. Soon they would embrace their loved ones again. They did not know what had happened to them in their absence. Maybe not all of them would have survived the war. But they trusted that the Lord, who had stood by them in their dark hours, would also have cared for their loved ones.

In that confidence the three men traveled their final miles back to their families.

## THE WAR REMEMBERED

The war may have been over, but its horror continued in my soul. Throughout my childhood I relived the fear that I felt when the roaring fighter planes dropped their bombs on our town. For many years I had nightmares about the sight and sound of these low-flying bombers. In these dreams I vividly heard the rumbling roar of bombs that fell on homes and stores, reducing them to ruins. I would wake up in a sweat and run to my mother's bedroom. She comforted me with tight hugs and soothing words. I did not know at the time that these bombings were accidental droppings by American planes that missed their targets in Germany.

After the war our family stayed in close contact with Uncle Frans and Aunt Reina. They found a place to live not far from our home. This provided us with the opportunity to visit each other regularly. Together the families reminisced about the hiding years. I was impressed to hear that Uncle Frans had kept himself busy with reading as well as writing. Together with other Jews who survived the war they decided to rebuild the synagogue in Enschede. When the restoration was completed they invited my parents for a tour. To their joy my parents accepted the invitation. Soon I was old enough to help Aunt Reina with small housekeeping chores. There was always something to do, the more so after the birth of their son. On Saturdays I had a special task. They did not do any work on that day of the week as it was set aside as the Sabbath. They could not even switch on a light. However, they did not object if I performed this task for them. Aunt Reina then treated me to a piece of delicious cake which she had baked the day before. Eventually the three of them emigrated to Toronto, where Uncle Frans started a successful tailor business. But their immigration did not prevent us from staying in touch with each other.

My Dad needed to regain his strength. But in due time he, my mother and our dear relatives were all convinced that he was ready to return to work. Without delay he contacted the textile factory where he worked before he was taken prisoner. It was a great joy for him to hear that his previous position was available! I am sure that it made his transition from captive Resistance worker in a concentration camp to fulltime employee much easier. The fact that I passed his place of work every day on my way to and from school made it even more wonderful. What a big difference for me, from fearing that you might never see your father again, to walking by his workplace twice a day. I was very happy.

A number of years later my brother Andre was born. We were very excited,

*"This is the hiding place," I uttered. "Our Jews lived here."*

and exceedingly thankful for our abundant blessings: health, family, friends, food, employment, and now a baby brother who was born in a time of peace.

Several years later our family of five emigrated to Carman, a small town in Manitoba. Our correspondence with Uncle Frans and Aunt Reina gained a new dimension. We could understand their situation much better having experienced an emigration ourselves. My mother sealed the mutual friendship when she traveled by plane to Toronto. She was a brave, loyal woman. And my father was proud of her.

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Several decades later it was me who made a historic trip, together with my husband Bert. We had decided to pay a visit to the country of our birth. One place we were sure to visit was Enschede. I was eager to show him the place where I was born.

It was not difficult for me to find the old family home. "Bert, here it is," I said. As I was saying these words, the present merged with the past. This was the place where I was born. In this house the Jews were hidden. Here it was where I had suffered the fear of separation from my father. Here it was that I endured the house-searches by the Germans. Here it was that I was kicked into the hallway cupboard by German soldiers.

As I was sharing these stories with my husband, the front door opened. A woman stepped outside.

"Are you looking for someone?" she asked.

"No, this is the place where I was

born," I answered spontaneously.

Immediately the woman opened the door wide and invited us in. But I was hesitant. Would it be appropriate to accept her invitation? Would I not impose on her privacy?

But Bert put a bit of pressure on me. He would not want me to have regrets later, and he was curious to see the house.

I felt a bit tense as we walked through the front door. Tentatively I looked around. The house was not as big as I remembered. But I recognized the hallway, the door to the living room, the kitchen.

We went upstairs. The lady explained that her husband was working on some renovations. With anticipation I turned my head to the place where I expected the entrance to the hiding place. But all I saw was a wall with holes and loose boards on the floor. The husband was taking the hiding place out, board by board. Then, with a shock, I noticed that the brown-yellow wallpaper was still covering the walls.

"This is the hiding place," I uttered. "Our Jews lived here."

"Really?" the lady called out. "Please tell me more about your parents, and about the people that lived here in hiding."

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Throughout my life I have often reflected on the war in the Netherlands. At the time I saw it through the eyes of a child. I feared the marching Germans. I was worried about my father. But I found comfort and safety in the arms of my mother. Now I have reached the age of the strong. Over the years I have learned to see the magnitude of the Second World War. Entire nations lived in fear. Many Jewish families were killed. Healthy young men died a horrible death, on both sides of the war. And wars continue to be waged. Yet, I have also learned to trust the Lord. We do not have to fear. He is our shield and our tower, our comfort in life and in death.

RP

# LIVING OUT LORD'S DAY 1

## A Cuban Story

by Gerda Vandenhaak



*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." – Jeremiah 29:11*

**W**e make plans, many plans and yet God has other plans for us. For 14 years, Luis had laid on his bed. He had broken his back in a motorcycle accident and now spent his days just lying on this bed in an eight-by-eight-foot room, built out of concrete blocks, in the back of his parents' property.

Some years ago my husband Andy and I had made a trip to Cuba, and we became aware of the great need for Bibles and study books for the pastors there. So we began to make regular visits, providing those things, along with other much needed articles. We'd been told about Luis – we knew he had a Bible to read, but we were told he needed glasses. We had glasses for him, but could not find Luis. We had been told his house was within one kilometer of the hotel that we would be staying in.

We asked every one if they knew Luis, the man with the broken back. It took us three trips to Cuba before we met someone who remembered him and took us to his "forgotten prison." He was overjoyed with his glasses and asked for his Bible to loudly read to us. His dirty mattress had no sheets. He wore rags. Just him, his Bible, his cot and one chair in this room. But his joy shone out of his eyes. Andy and I just cried, for him, and for his joy.

Two years later, someone gave us a copy of the Heidelberg Catechism...in Spanish! We decided to give it to Luis. We also took him four more books we had found at Value Village. How happy he was with those books. Then he opened the Catechism at Lord's Day 1 and started to read.

What is your only comfort in life and death?

That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil.

He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.

Therefore, by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Luis started to cry. Tears were flowing down his face and he was praising God at the same time. "This is what I believe!" he kept saying.

We cried too. We had sometimes thought and said that all those old writings and confessions were so out of date and no longer applicable to our lives. And now this! We prayed together being so very aware of the hand of God.

Two years later we again stood at his bedside. Again we had more books and sheets for his bed, plus clothing for him. He could hardly contain his joy when he saw us, not because of us, but because of what he had to tell us: "I have studied this book and all that is explained to me in this Heidelberg. I also explained to the only friend who has visited me all those years!" And he went on to tell us that this friend now had completed the study and was attending church, for this friend had become a believer.

He told us that he now understood the plans God had had for him. That he had been privileged to help bring a friend to faith. It was not to harm him, but to strengthen him and others in their faith.

A year later, shortly after we visited him and knew his time on earth was coming to an end, he succumbed to bedsores. Thankfully, we had a chance to say goodbye to this faithful child of God. For now, he rejoices before God's holy throne. RP

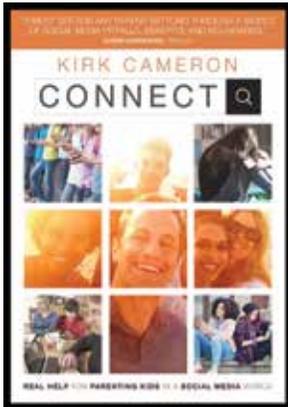
# REVIEWS

## SOME RECENT RELEASES

By Jon Dykstra

### CONNECT

DOCUMENTARY  
70 MINUTES / 2018  
RATING: 8/10



*Connect* offers “real help for parenting kids in a social media world” and the host, Kirk Cameron, starts things off by scaring parents with the story of a boy who was Internet-stalked by a “grown adult man.” The dad intervened in time... but it was a close thing. I watched this with 30-or-so other parents and this opener certainly grabbed our attention.

But now, what can we do to protect our kids?

Cameron makes clear, it isn't just creeps we need to watch out for. We need to teach our children to see through a number of lies that social media fosters, including: “I deserve to be happy all the time” and “I am the center of the universe.” Our children need to know God is the center of the universe, and instant gratification is not only not a right, but not even healthy.

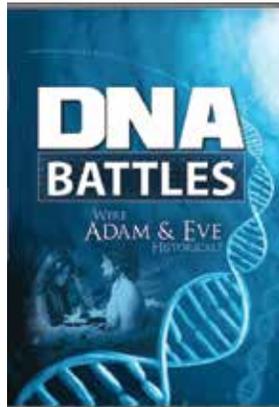
More important: parents need to correct their own addiction to social media, and then get actively involved in their children's lives. We are all busy, but we cannot be, as one of the experts put it, “mentally-absent parents.”

There was a fantastic discussion starter for all the parents and teens who attended our viewing.

One caution: there is some topic matter – about pornography addiction and suicide – that is not appropriate for the very young.

### WERE ADAM & EVE HISTORICAL?

DOCUMENTARY  
59 MINUTES / 2018  
RATING: 7/10



In 2011 the Christian evolutionary group Biologos made a splash with widely published views that questioned whether Adam and Eve were historical. This documentary is a rebuttal – primarily on the scientific front but on the theological front too – of their claims that Christians have to accommodate our views to the “reality” of evolution.

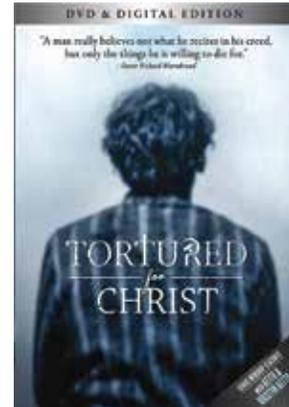
While the theologians tackle objections you may have heard before, the seven consulted scientists are sharing quite recent developments in biology that show how certain evolutionary assumptions have been proven untrue (like Junk DNA).

*DNA Battles* is a great documentary, with books and book worth of material condensed into a one-hour presentation. But it isn't going to be for everyone – you'll need to remember some of your high school science to really be able to follow along. But for any viewer interested in the subject matter, this is going to be fascinating and worth multiple viewings.

What this most reminded me of was *Evolution's Achilles' Heels*, the very best creationist documentary I've seen. *DNA Battles* doesn't quite rise to that level, but anyone who enjoyed *Evolution's Achilles' Heels* will certainly appreciate this one too.

### TORTURED FOR CHRIST

DRAMA  
77 MINUTES / 2018  
RATING: 8/10



Shortly after the Soviet Union takes over Romania, the new rulers invite all of Romania's most prominent religious leaders to come attend a “conference of the cults.” At this conference – broadcast over the radio – these leaders are supposed to, one after another, talk about how respectful to religion the new rulers will be.

It is a lie, and all the religious leaders know it. But the people don't. And none of the leaders have the courage to tell them.

But in the auditorium audience sits Pastor Richard Wurmbrand and his wife. As they listen Wurmbrand turns to his wife: “If I speak now, you will have no husband” His wife's reply? “I don't need a coward for a husband.” Whoa!

So up he goes to the podium, he has his say, and he makes himself known to the authorities...who eventually arrest, imprison, and torture him for 14 years for his absolute refusal to deny his love for his Lord.

Though the torture scenes are muted, this is not family viewing. But it is a film I wish I could make everyone 16 and up see. The trust that Wurmbrand has in his God, and the way that the Lord does equip him is so very beautiful and encouraging to see.

## I SURVIVED I KISSED DATING GOODBYE

DOCUMENTARY

77 MINUTES / 2018

RATING: 8/10

Twenty-one years ago 21-year-old Joshua Harris caught the attention of Christian teens and their parents with his book *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. It was written for Christian young people by a Christian young person, on a topic that every young person was interested in – how to find that special someone. It sold more than 1.2 million copies and was a big part of a purity movement that helped shape the way a generation of Christians thought about sex, dating, and looking for a spouse.

Fast forward to today, and in a just-released documentary the now 42-year-old author revisits his book and meets Christians who were impacted by it, for good, but also for ill. With a title like *I Survived "I Kissed Dating Goodbye"* it's no surprise that the documentary presents a rather negative overall assessment of the book. Early on Harris's wife Shannon puts it this way:

I think it was a good book, and a well-intentioned book...well, I don't know that I can say it was a good book. But it was a well-intentioned book.

So why watch a documentary about a seemingly-not-so-good 20-year-old book? Because the film is about much more than a single book. It tackles the Purity Movement overall, and more specifically, what it got wrong.

Of course, the Purity Movement got a lot right – hey, they want young people to abstain from sex until marriage, and that's even in the Bible! But it's because the Purity Movement seems so obviously good that the unveiling of their errors is so instructive. As Spurgeon once noted, discernment isn't the ability to tell right from wrong, but rather to tell right from almost right. The Purity

Movement is almost right – if we weren't worried about grammar Nazis we might say they are so very, nearly, almost right.

So if we can learn to spot *their* mistakes, then we'll be able to apply that lesson to most any other well-intentioned, but similarly misguided Christian movement.

### THE BOOK AND HOW IT'S MISREMEMBERED

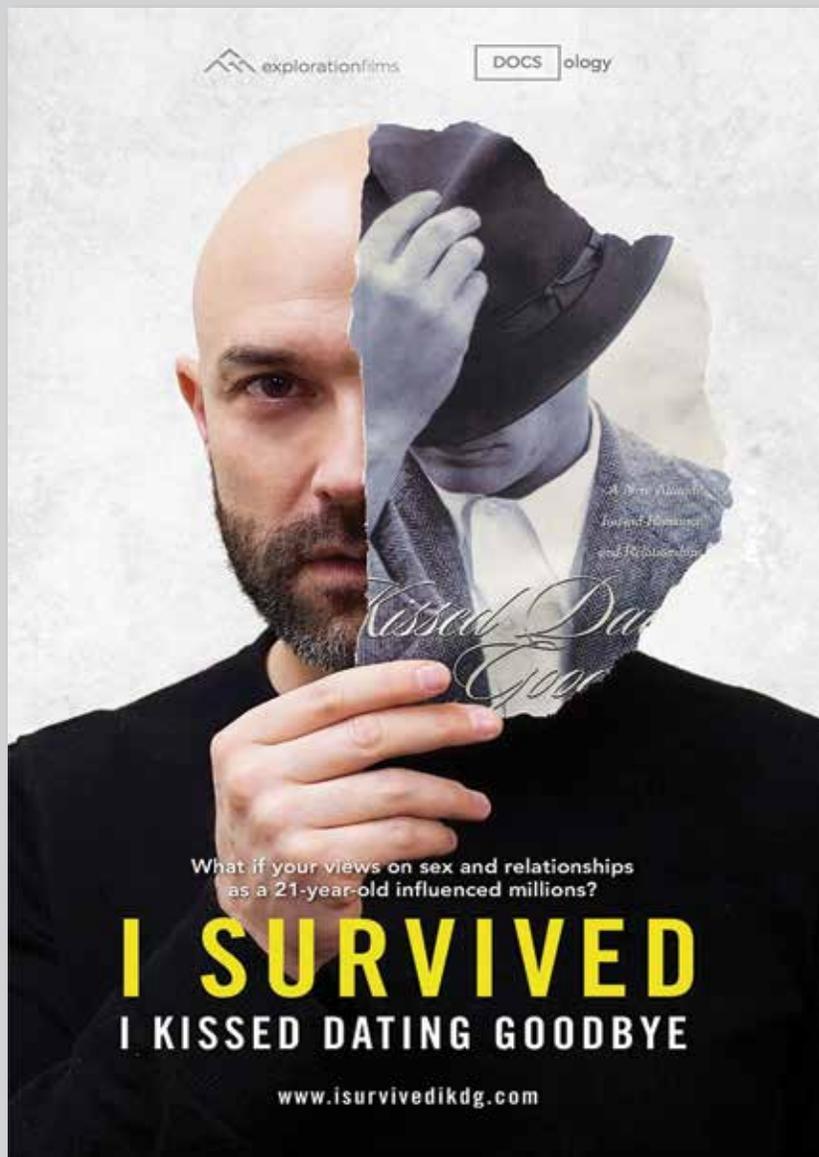
While I love this documentary, my biggest criticism would be that it isn't fair to the book. If you only watched it, and never read *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* you'd think the book must have been completely against dating, and all about courtship.

But after rereading it this week I would describe it as a strong

condemnation of dating as *it was commonly being done in the Church*. Harris was against the recreational dating that had guys and girls paired up quickly, intensely, and most often briefly, with the focus on pleasure or prestige, and no thought spent on how to honor God through dating.

He was cautioning against teenagers experiencing too much too soon: too much physical intimacy, too much emotional intimacy, paired with too much immaturity – selfish and uncommitted kids pressuring each other to go further and further. Harris was speaking against turning girlfriends and boyfriends and dating and sex into idols that push God out of His proper place as first and foremost in our hearts.

But in taking a stand against an



Archie Andrews-type of dating, was Harris pushing the courtship model?

Well, there's courtship and then there's courtship. Under one definition, courtship would require a man to first ask a woman's father before he could take her out on a first date. But a broader definition would define courtship as dating done with the specific intent of seeking a marriage partner – dating that isn't done just for fun – and conducted with some level of parental involvement/supervision.

In *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* Harris does encourage more parental involvement, and also intentional, marriage-focused dating. But the book spends far more space highlighting all that's wrong with modern dating than it spends prescribing a cure. And when it does come to presenting the alternative, Harris is more about general and often clearly biblical principles, than any specific outworking of those principles. He argues at one point:

The Bible doesn't provide a one-size-fits-all program for moving from friendship to marriage. Our lives are too different, our circumstances too unique, and our God too creative to have only one formula for romance.

While a lot of what he says does align with a courtship model, Harris simply wasn't pushing that model as hard as his critics in the documentary make it seem.

## THE PURITY MOVEMENT

In the documentary, the book serves as the leap-off point for a look at the Purity Movement. It turns out it wasn't just reckless, immature kids who were turning sex into an idol. Strangely enough, the Purity Movement was doing it too.

*I Survived "I Kissed Dating Goodbye"* begins with Harris traveling to Washington DC, where he recalls a 1994 conference he attended there with 25,000 other young Christians. A part of the conference was a "True Love Waits" rally. With rubber mallets in hand, young people staked more than 200,000 True Love Waits commitment

cards into the lawn of the Washington Mall. These commitment cards read:

Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, my friends, my future mate and my future children to be sexually abstinent from this day until the day I enter a biblical marriage relationship.

As good as that sounds, there's a hint here of the Purity Movement's big mistake. It comes down to one question: Who, or what, is the god here? Calvin noted it is in man's nature to perpetually be manufacturing one new idol after another – we continually put this god and that in God's place. So in this pledge who or what is the "god"? Is it God? No. He's only one of several this commitment is being made to. But this commitment is being made in service to a very specific desired outcome: the securing of true love. That's the "god" here.

In a conversation with Christine Gardner, author of *Making Chastity Sexy*, Harris discusses how the Purity Movement sold abstinence, not so much as a way to please God, but as the way to secure the very best sort of sex. There's truth to what they were saying: studies have shown that on average married people enjoy sex more than sexually active unmarried people – married sex *is* best. But while "great married sex" can be a reason to stay abstinent, there's a problem when it becomes *the* reason. The Purity Movement lost its way when it started placing something – even fantastic married sex – ahead of God.

## FALSE GODS AND FALSE GUILT

In setting up a variety of false gods, the Purity Movement also caused people a lot of false guilt. As my wife put it, false guilt happens when we sin against, not God, but the idols we've made.

These idols of our own making are often entirely unforgiving. Consider the idol some have made out of maintaining their virginity. Serving this god, they've been told, is the way they can secure the spouse of their dreams (false gods always offer some version of the prosperity doctrine – serve your god in

just the way it asks, and you can force it to give you what you ask).

But what of the boy or girl who has lost their virginity? What offering can be given, what forgiveness can be had from this god? You can't become a virgin again. No wonder then, that the followers of this god feel unrelenting guilt – where no forgiveness can be had, guilt remains.

Isn't it amazing that we keep setting up these false gods? They bring us only misery and guilt, while the one true God offers us real forgiveness....and we don't have to earn it!

## CONCLUSION

Of course, false gods and false guilt aren't limited to the Purity Movement: money, career advancement, exercise goals, new year's resolutions, the spotless home, the perfectly behaved child – all of them can become idols of our own making. That, then, is what makes this is a must-see documentary. The discernment it fosters is desperately needed in every sphere of life.

More could be said: the film also explores legalism, and critiques how Christians will often treat certain books as if they were on par with the Bible itself. And while I have a far greater appreciation for *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* than the author seems to at this point – the film concludes by noting that Harris and the publisher have agreed to stop publishing *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* – I'd agree there are some notable flaws.... but nothing that would keep me from sharing and discussing it with my own daughters.

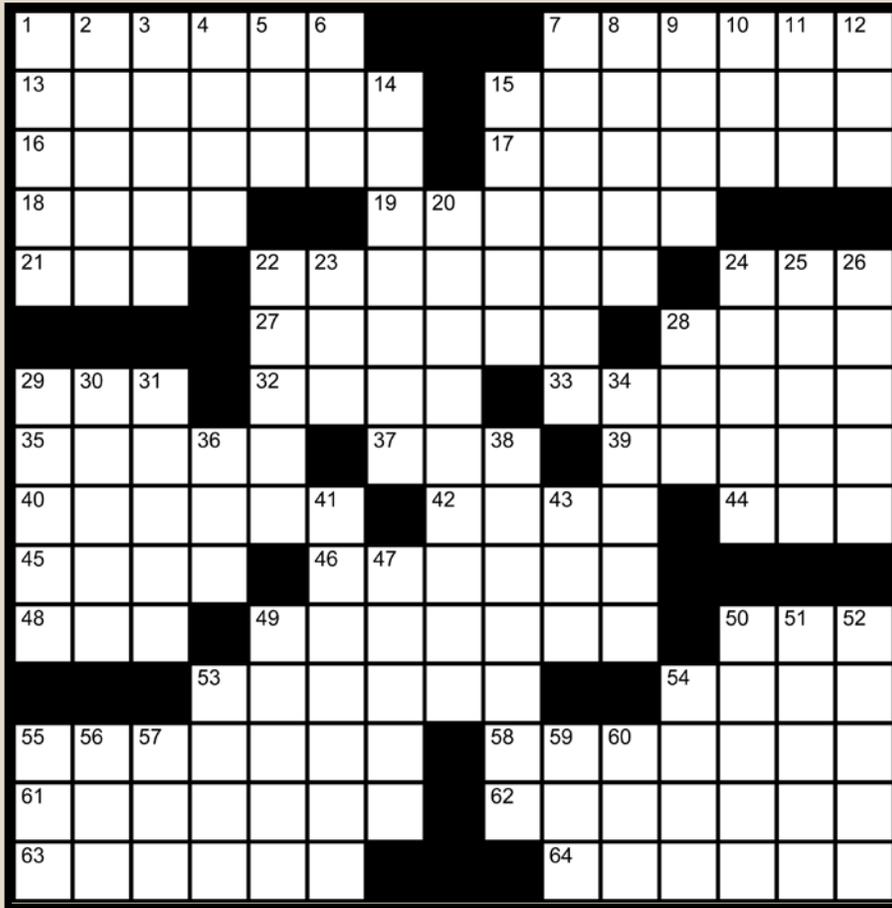
And I'll be just as enthused to share this film with them, knowing it will be a springboard to all sorts of great conversations.

*I Survived "I Kissed Dating Goodbye"* can be watched for free at [ExplorationFilms.com/survived](http://ExplorationFilms.com/survived) if you're willing to give them your first name and sign up for their email newsletter (which, I presume, you can unsubscribe from at any time). Otherwise you can go to the same link to buy the DVD or rent it for \$4.99.

*Jon Dykstra also blogs on movies at [ReelConservative.com](http://ReelConservative.com).*

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



## LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



## SERIES 4-2

## SERIES 4-3

# PUZZLE CLUES

### ACROSS

1. Set down the music for the words
7. "my \_\_\_\_\_ the king of Assyria" (Is. 36)
13. Repetitive, recurring
15. Christopher \_\_\_\_\_ - wrote *Doctor Faustus*
16. There are several of it in a revolver.
17. Went around and around and around...
18. Where 40 Across live.
19. Blossoming; flowering
21. Weather that makes 19 Across less likely
22. Flier; pilot
24. Hoover or Grand Coulee, for example
27. A Grand place to see evidence of the Flood
28. Richard Henry \_\_\_\_\_ (ship-board author)
29. "write with \_\_\_\_\_ and ink." (3 John)
32. "It was I who \_\_\_\_\_ you" (Hos. 13)
33. \_\_\_\_\_ Pete (*Toy Story 2* character)
35. "\_\_\_\_\_ from the dead" (Eph. 5)
37. Make ready for sailing
39. They store film and fishing line.
40. "horses... swifter than \_\_\_\_\_" (Jer. 4)
42. Old way to spell the opposite of *old*
44. "he \_\_\_\_\_ his right foot on..." (Rev. 10)
45. Pale grayish color (of a cigarette?)
46. Former name of the Indian city of Chennai
48. Rhyme with 44 Across
49. What you get from parties or friends
50. Rhymes with "aah" (logically enough)
53. Refuse to acknowledge any connection with

### DOWN

1. Alloy-based battery (half a nickel worth?)
2. "on the \_\_\_\_\_ hand" (Heb. 7)
3. Crying (because mostly weary?)
4. The side that plays the Navy in football
5. Computer key (partly found in a tablet?)
6. Specific compass point
7. Shades of brownish crimson
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Day - for putting greenery in scenery

9. \_\_\_\_\_ chance (ironically also a fat chance)
10. Youngster (in a family group, part of total?)
11. "\_\_\_\_ look great!" said the ram to his wife.
12. One color of horses in Zechariah 1 and 6
14. It's flown by 22 Across while learning.
15. Very (in musical directions)
20. It might stick out when you look outside.
22. Fruit that is deadly when unripe
23. Family vehicle
24. Hamlet's countrymen
25. "the water... was \_\_\_\_\_ deep" (Ez. 47)
26. Archaic second person present form of *may*
28. "that we might \_\_\_\_\_ to sin" (1 Pet. 2)
29. Song of praise
30. Rub out, but without violence
31. "neither day nor \_\_\_\_\_" (Zech. 14)
34. Lock with no key
36. Cunning (like a fox)
38. Verbs that act like nouns
41. What Gretzky did to previous records
43. "became mighty in \_\_\_\_\_" (Heb. 11)
47. "\_\_\_\_\_ it; do not go on it" (Prov. 4)
49. Micro\_\_\_\_\_ (information storage medium)
50. Tallest part of cathedral
51. Small outboard boat in developing world
52. "slow to speak, slow to \_\_\_\_\_" (James 1)
53. Untidy but likeable people (Australian slang)
54. Soviet missile used in wars in Middle East
55. Each of them has 60 min.
56. It shows my debt (to 2/3 of you?).
57. You see this before you see 19 Across.
59. It's either high or low in a suit.
60. Prefix that's also a French word

# REACHING OUR YOUTH

## It takes a team

by Jon Dykstra

**H**ow can we reach our youth?

That's a question parents, pastors, elders, teachers, and other Christians leaders are always asking, and here at *Reformed Perspective*, it's high on our agenda too. When the RP board met face-to-face this past October (in the wonderfully hospitable locale of Carman, Manitoba) that was a big focus for our two days of meetings.

So how are we doing right now?

Well, this past year the *RP* website has had roughly 250,000 page views, and while we don't have exact figures, we can guesstimate that just 6% of those views were from those in their teens or early 20s. That's 10,000+ articles read – so that is something – but clearly there's lots of room for improvement.

What are we doing to attract younger readers? There are some sections of the magazine that, while they don't exclude older readers, are meant to have a younger focus:

- The "In a Nutshell" column (missing this issue, but back for the next) with its mix of meat and sugar – educational and humorous bits
- The Nota Bene news column, with its focus on topical issues, and (usually) smaller items
- Feature articles that tackle issues of interest to young people, like the Jordan Peterson phenomenon, and the legalization of marijuana

One initiative that came out of the October meetings was to try to reach these younger readers where they are at, and that doesn't seem to be Facebook. So we launched *RP*'s Instagram account – [Instagram.com/reformedperspective](https://www.instagram.com/reformedperspective) – which has quickly topped 750 followers.

But perhaps the biggest effort is still our website – yes, the one where only 6% of the readers are 24 and under. But even as the number of young people visiting the website is low, the potential is there. It's on the website that everything we publish is instantly shareable, whether it's to someone on the other side of the globe, or to your son or daughter stretched out on the couch on the other side of the living room. *RP* is doing what we can to be accessible to young people, but, ultimately, if we all want our young people reading challenging, edifying, thoroughly Reformed material, it's going to be up to mom and dad to put it in front of our children's faces.

Just think back to your own parents'

influence on you. Why am I interested in black and white World War II movies? Because I caught my dad's passion. My brother is into photography for the same reason. My parents had the same influence on my reading. I first started reading the *National Post*, *National Review*, *WORLD* magazine, and *Reformed Perspective* because of my parents. And it was my parents who introduced me to Piet Prins, RC Sproul, Chuck Colson, Francis Schaeffer, William F. Buckley, Douglas Wilson, Jay Adams, and more. That's how it works – if we want our children reading about God, learning Who He is, and learning what He wants us to do, then we have to pitch our passion to our offspring.

So if you like *Reformed Perspective*, and think it's something young people should be reading, then pitch your passion to your sons and daughters.

*"Hey, son, we've been talking about social justice – here's a link to an article on two kinds of equality. Do you think the social justice warriors are pushing for the wrong sort?"*

*"Emily, attached you'll find a link to a great article on someone your grandma knows, and how she made it through World War II. I just loved how encouraging it was – how much this lady's parents just trusted the Lord. I think you'll love it too – let me know!"*

*RP* is going to do all we can to be the best tool we can be for parents to encourage and guide their children, both while they're still at home, and afterwards too. But no tool is useful when it's stuck in the toolbox. Make use of us – hit that share button and send us around the world...and around your home! 



The Reformed Perspective Foundation Board and Editor from left to right: Aubrey Vandergaag, Sharon de Boer (Secretary), Marty VanDriel (Treasurer), Aren Vreugdenhil, Chris deBoer (Executive Director), Jon Dykstra (Editor), Bruce DeBoer (Chairman).



# I want to share my Reformed perspective with the world!

By filling out the form below, and becoming a monthly contributor, you give the *RP* Foundation the steady support that will enable us to reach many, many more with a thoughtful, thought-provoking and thoroughly Reformed perspective on every sphere of life.

## PRE-AUTHORIZED DEBIT:

I want to support the mission of the *Reformed Perspective* Foundation through monthly contributions. As a registered Canadian charity, Canadian donations will get a tax receipt.

Please debit my bank account: (attach VOID cheque for banking information)

\$10    \$20    \$50    \$100   Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Withdrawn on the \_\_\_\_\_ (1,2, or 28) day of each month

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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This payment is made on behalf of  an Individual  a Business

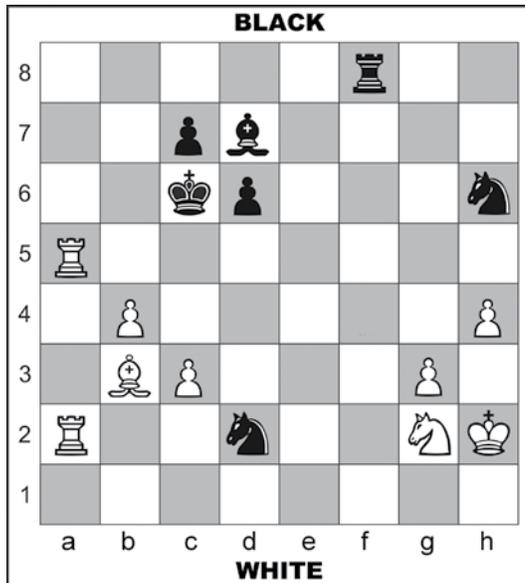
I may revoke my authorization at any time, subject to providing notice of 30 days. I can obtain a sample cancellation form, or further information on my right to cancel a PAD Agreement, at my financial institution or by visiting [www.cdnpay.ca](http://www.cdnpay.ca). I have certain recourse rights if any debit does not comply with this agreement. For example, I have the right to receive reimbursement for any debit that is not authorized or is not consistent with this PAD Agreement. To obtain more information on my recourse rights, I may contact my financial institution or visit [www.cdnpay.ca](http://www.cdnpay.ca).

**Thank you for standing with us as we together proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all spheres of life!**

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

# ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

## Chess Puzzle #249



## Riddle for Punsters #249

### "Tales of the Tall or Famous?"

Why are giant-sized people so nice to everyone.

It is because they are so b \_ \_ - h \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

Who was the baby-boomer bank teller's favourite country singer?

Johnny \_ \_ \_ \_ .

## Problem to Ponder #249

### "Food Fast but Not Cheap?"

Ikuya bought 4 hamburgers, 3 hot dogs, 2 milkshakes, 4 cans of pop and 5 ice cream cones for his family at Conrad's Hamburger Place. The burgers cost twice as much as the hot dogs and three times as much as a can of pop. Ice cream cones cost as much as a can of pop plus a hot dog whereas shakes cost as much as a cone and a can of pop. Ikuya paid the bill exactly with two \$20 bills. How much did each hamburger and each milkshake cost?

### WHITE to Mate in 3

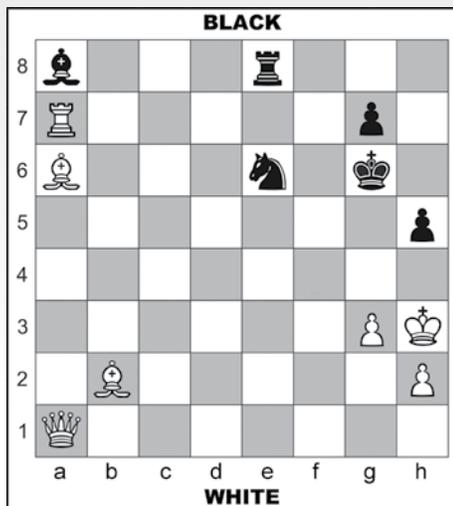
Or, if it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 3**

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 #248



### WHITE TO MATE IN 4

Descriptive Notation	Algebraic Notation
1. B-Q3 ch B-K5	1. Ba6-d3 + Ba8-e4
2. BxB ch K-N4	2. Bd3xe4 + Kg6-g5
3. B-B1 ch N-B5ch	3. Bb2-c1 + Ne6-f4+
4. BxN mate	4. Bc1xf4 ++
OR	OR
1. B-Q3 ch B-K5	1. Ba6-d3 + Ba8-e4
2. BxB ch K-R3	2. Bd3xe4 + Kg6-h6
3. BxP ch NxB	3. Bb2xg7 + Ne6xg7
4. Q-B6 mate	4. Qa1-f6 ++
OR	OR
1. B-Q3 ch B-K5	1. Ba6-d3 + Ba8-e4
2. BxB ch K-R3	2. Bd3xe4 + Kg6-h6
3. BxP ch K-N4	3. Bb2xg7 + Kh6-g5
4. Q-K5 mate	4. Qa1-e5 ++

## Answer to Riddle for Punsters

### #248 - "Puns Tailor Made to the Topic?"

Why did the tailor often imitate people around him? He would see them do something and then he would feel compelled to follow **suit**. Why was the tailor never fully satisfied with the items that he made? He always found his work to be **sew-sew**. Why was the tailor good at debating? He clearly knew how to **pin** down his arguments and people could easily follow the **thread** of his reasoning.

## Answer to Problem to Ponder

### #248 - "Weighty Calculations"

A snowball gathered more snow as it rolled down a hill. It started with a diameter of 10.0 cm and gained 15% more diameter for each 0.5 m it travelled down the hill. If it rolled for 0.25 minute at an average speed of 4.0 m/s,

- What was the total % increase in diameter and final diameter of the snowball?  
0.25 minute = 15 seconds. Therefore, distance down the hill = speed x time = 4.0(15) = 60 m.  
60 m = 0.5 m x 120 so the total % increase was 15% x 120 = 1800%. The final diameter was 10.0 cm x 1800% = 10 x 1800/100 = 180 cm = 1.8 m.
- If the snowball was approximately spherical and the volume of a sphere is  $V = (4/3)(\pi)r^3 = (4/3)(3.1416)r^3$  where  $r$  is the radius = half the diameter, what was its final volume? The final radius  $r$  was half the diameter so  $1.8/2 = 0.9$  m. Thus the final volume was  $(4/3)(3.1416)r^3 = (4/3)(3.1416)(0.9)^3 = 3.0536$  m<sup>3</sup>.
- If the snowball's packed snow had an average density of 120 kg / m<sup>3</sup> what was the snowball's mass (to the nearest kg)?  
Mass = density x volume = 120 kg / m<sup>3</sup> x 3.0536 m<sup>3</sup> = 366.43 kg. Thus the mass was about 366 kg or about 805 pounds!
- If the density of water is 1000 kg/m<sup>3</sup>, what would be the volume of water produced if the big snowball melted and made a puddle?  
Volume = mass/density = 366.43/1000 = 0.36642 m<sup>3</sup> or about 1/3 of a cubic meter.

### BLACK TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation	
1. -----	N-N4 ch
2. K-R4	R-K5 ch
3. P-N4	RxP mate

### Algebraic Notation

1. -----	Ne6-g5 +
2. Kh3-h4	Re8-e4 +
3. g3-g4	Re4xg4 ++



# SONG OF SONGS

*Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?  
Tell me, if you understand.  
Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!  
Who stretched a measuring line across it?  
On what were its footings set,  
or who laid its cornerstone –  
while the morning stars sang together  
and all the angels shouted for joy?  
– Job 38:4-7*

by Christine Farenhorst

## CHAPTER 1

There are innumerable, worthy symphonies which have been composed over the ages. Think of Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony, Handel's *Pastoral* in his great work *The Messiah*, Mendelsohn's *Scottish* symphony, Haydn's *Clock* symphony, and many other amazingly wonderful works of music. But the oldest and most beautiful of all symphonies is often forgotten.

Entitled *Ephesians 1*, it was written by the Trinity. An orchestration wrought before the beginning of time, it is a harmony par excellence. Its arrangement, which is found in the Holy Book, sings of the chosen ones, the ones who are blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Its first performance took place in eternity.

Preludes resound.

\*\*\*\*

When little Marsha Tennison enthusiastically raised her hand towards the ceiling to ask a question, even her

thin pigtails danced with earnestness. "Pigtails," Jason Brook mused, even as he nodded his head that she might speak, was a strange term. Little Marsha was anything but a piglet. The wispy curls which escaped from both her red barrettes were auburn; red freckles jumped about on her cheeks; and her bright, blue eyes were filled with joy at being allowed to talk.

"If the stars," the child began clearly in a well-modulated voice, "are the work of God's fingers, then He must be really big. But my eyes are not big enough to see all of the stars at night."

She stopped for a moment and caught her breath before continuing. "I was thinking that it would be a wonderful thing if you could catch a bus and climb up into the sky to get closer to the stars. You know, like Jacob's ladder."

Her voice petered out. Some of the children were giggling. The sound subdued her somewhat. "We will see God, I know," she added in a much lower tone, "when we die."

Samantha, one seat over from Marsha, gasped audibly. She was a sweet child

too, but one steeped into supposing that a person could climb into heaven on a Ten Commandments ladder, certainly not on a bus resembling a Jacob's ladder. It was well-nigh three thirty and almost time to go home. Bible was the last subject on the agenda.

"It's a good thought, Marsha," Jason encouraged "And anyone who has ever looked at the multitude of stars at night will understand what you were saying."

Marsha beamed and settled back in her desk. She held one of her long, thin braids between the fingers of her right hand. A trusting eleven, as were most of the children in his Bible class, she was a dreamer. Jason smiled at the sea of upturned faces. Half of the faces were focused on him; the other half were focused on the clock.

"If any of you think God is small, then surely you will not expect Him to be able to do great things. But if you think, or rather know, that He is big," he added, "and that the stars are the work of His fingers, then you will believe He can do mighty things. When we die," he went on, "we will see Him as He is."

Even though we can't understand how that will be, Marsha, we know it is true because the Bible tells us so."

Samantha raised her hand and spoke quickly, almost before he could nod permission.

"But God is not a person, pastor Brook, so how can anyone think of Him as, well, as just plain big? Isn't that wrong?"

"Well, you are right in one way, Samantha. God Almighty is not a person as we are, although we should never forget that He took on our flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. I think though, that what Marsha meant by her question was that God is mighty beyond what we can physically see and understand? I think she tried to say," and here he looked straight at Marsha who moved her head up and down vigorously all the while clasping one of her brown braids, "that it is amazing that the stars which are so high above our heads, were formed by the words of God's mouth and that the Bible actually calls the stars the work of His fingers. And how can it be possible that we, little and sinful people that we are, will eventually be able to see such a mighty and holy God."

Marsha blushed. They were fine words, the words of pastor Brook. She felt them inside but could not always iterate them clearly. But he had read her question rightly. Those were matters she thought about a lot. She would like to ask him to explain more things, but she dare not ask them now lest Samantha criticize that as well. Perhaps later. Her teacher winked at her and she blushed again.

"We have a very mighty God, Marsha," he added, "and He does not mind what we ask, as long as we ask questions on our knees, full of reverence."

"Can we ask Him anything?" Samantha suddenly said, not even raising her hand.

"Yes," Jason responded quietly and confidently, "anything at all as long as we ask sincerely and according to what He wills."

Another hand shot up. This time it was Penny, a twelve-year-old going on eighteen. When she had been given permission to speak, her truculent voice

struck the wooden desks with a certain amount of bravado. "Well, I'd like to ask Him to give you a wife, pastor Brook."

A stillness descended on the classroom. Little Marsha stopped fidgeting with her braid and anxiously scanned her teacher's face for his reaction. Samantha turned around to raise her eyebrows at Penny. But Penny, unperturbed, went on. "I'd like to ask Him to give you a wife who doesn't mind that you limp. You need some looking after and your mother is getting older. Besides, everyone says a pastor shouldn't be a bachelor."

Jason held up his hand at this point to stop the inappropriate waterfall of words gushing out of Penny's mouth. He smiled at her even as he grimaced inside. "Thank you, Penny, for your concern. That's very kind of you."

Everyone stared at him - the girls sympathetically and the boys uneasily. He closed in prayer and then they trooped out.

\*\*\*\*

It was mid-June and nearing summer vacation. Jason Brook taught two Bible courses at the local Christian academy every Friday afternoon. His first class consisted of the fourteen and fifteen-year-olds whereas the second class was comprised of eleven through thirteen year olds.

"Pastor?"

He startled and then smiled broadly. It was little Marsha who had returned to the room. There was no denying that she was one of his favorite students. She lived in his neighborhood and he often spoke with her. "Thank you for teaching me.... for teaching me that you can talk to God about anything. You are so helpful. And you know what," she added softly, "I never notice that you limp."

She flashed a grin at him and then she was gone, brown braids spindling behind her. Jason stood still for a moment, a small frown on his face. Even coming from a sincere child, a child who meant to comfort and build him up, the words hurt somewhat. He was thirty-six years old and in the sudden stillness of

the classroom after Marsha's departure, he could hear his mother's voice, could hear it as clearly as if she were standing next to him. "You have a false sense of pride, son."

She'd said those words to him just last week, just before informing him that Gena Ardwick, the daughter of an old friend, had been invited by her for a few day's visit. His face must have shown dislike and apprehension because that's when he had been reproved. "You immediately suspect I'm setting you up and you retreat behind that shell of yours. There is no sin in having friends, Jason, and you need not look for me to be matchmaking behind every tree."

"You are right, mother," he had sighed, "and I apologize. I'll be a good host, I promise."

\*\*\*\*

Later, after straightening out his desk and cleaning the blackboard, he picked up his briefcase and began his walk towards the bus stop. People, he reflected, as well as adults, were often most comfortable with the status quo, with the way things were always done. There was no denying that he sometimes fell outside the accepted status quo. Perhaps his childhood polio endowing him with this uneven gait, or perhaps the early loss of his father, had marked him. Yet these events had not been bad, he mused on, but rather had worked for his good, for had they not made him depend on His Creator more and more?

He breathed in deeply. Sure he prayed for a wife, prayed punctually as one might pray for good weather. But if it rained, the truth was that he was quite content to sit at home and read a good book, or to take a walk under an umbrella.

He vaguely remembered Gena Ardwick, the girl who would be stopping in to see his mother today. She had lived next door to his family years ago when he had been a boy about the age that little Marsha was right now. Gena had been a snippy, self-willed girl, if he recalled correctly, and he had not cared for her. She'd always been ready with

an opinion and she had not liked either dogs or cats. Strange that he should remember the part about pets.

Unconsciously he shrugged as he walked. In spite of his mother's protestations to the opposite, there had been questionable female visitors in the past: a far-off distant cousin afflicted with a slight stutter; the organist's older sister over for holidays from Amsterdam; and the neighbor's orphaned, sewing pupil. He suddenly laughed out loud, switched the briefcase to his other hand and chided himself for brooding.

\*\*\*\*

There were no other people waiting at the bus stop. Setting down his briefcase, Jason unashamedly stretched his tall form. Friday afternoons could prove to be long, even trying, but he enjoyed them - enjoyed the teaching and the interaction which he had with his students, even students like aggressive Penny.

Glancing at his watch, he expected that the bus would be along shortly. He'd known the bus driver for years. Sure enough, rounding the corner right on time, the front end of a grey bus turned towards him. Automatically he picked up his briefcase with his right hand while his left hand reached for a bus token in his pants' pocket. The bus smoothly slid to a stop in front of him and the door opened.

"How're you doing, Jake?"

"Great! And yourself, Jason?"

"Fine."

Smiles were exchanged and Jason habitually walked towards the seat where he was wont to sit. Only...someone else was sitting there.

It was a woman wearing a dark blue hat, a light blue sweater and a grey skirt. He saw this all in one glance. She nodded slightly when he caught her eye, moving past to a seat behind her. It miffed him a trifle that she was sitting in his spot, but he knew this was bordering on the ridiculous. Public transport was just that, public transport and the public could sit wherever they pleased.

Ten minutes later he stood up. His



...her heel caught in a crack of cement causing her to stumble and fall.

stop was next. He'd always counted it a blessing that he lived only a few houses away from the bus stop, especially during bad winter weather. The woman stood up with him simultaneously. She picked up a small leather suitcase from the floor and eased into the aisle in front of him walking towards the exit door. He could smell a faint scent of jasmine exuding from her person. The bus came to a halt. Stepping down, the woman turned in the direction of his house, leather suitcase dangling from her right hand.

It came to him suddenly, as he followed her steps, that this woman could be Gena Ardwick. But his mother had gone to pick her up at the train station in South Hanker. Maybe mother had missed connecting with Gena and the girl had taken matters into her own hands.

Sure enough, she was slowing down and peering at house numbers. Then, before Jason's very eyes, her heel caught in a crack of cement causing her to stumble and fall. The incident occurred right in front of his home. The small suitcase flew out of her hand and landed neatly at her side, but as he hobbled up behind to reach her, the girl had already scrambled back to her feet.

"Hey, are you all right?"

She nodded, but he noticed a shining

in her eyes - unshed tears just like the ones his students blinked back after they had been given a very low mark or had inadvertently tripped over someone's feet in class. Reaching over to pick up her suitcase and putting her full weight on her left foot, the woman gave a small cry of pain

"I think you better lean on me."

Unquestioningly she took the arm he offered, reinforcing his notion that she was indeed Gena Ardwick. A surge of protectiveness washed over him. Shuffling up the sidewalk as she held on to him, she didn't say a word.

"What providence," he said, glancing at her as he spoke, "that I was just behind you, Gena."

She stared up at him. But then another tremor of pain passed over her face.

"I hope you didn't break anything," Jason went on, "We'd better get you to sit down quickly so we can have a look."

\*\*\*\*

It was quiet in the hallway and the cat ran down the stairs to meet them, rubbing up against Jason's legs.

"This way to the living room, Gena," Jason spoke softly, "and I hope you don't mind cats now. Harry is a people cat and hates it when I'm gone."

She shook her head as he led her



through the hallway door into the living room, carefully sitting her down on the edge of the couch. Resting back, she smiled up at him wanly, her face very white.

"I think I'll put on the kettle for a cup of tea. Just sit for a minute before we have a look at that foot."

Propping up a pillow behind her back as he spoke, Jason expertly pushed a footstool in front of the couch. "There you are. Can you lift your foot up on it?"

She obliged and Harry jumped onto the couch next to her. It brought a tiny smile to her face and somehow this pleased Jason a great deal. He disappeared into the kitchen and pondered his next move. Hopefully mother would be home soon and that would take the onus off himself. The situation was a bit awkward. She hadn't said a word so far and she was also a bit chunky or, as his mother would say, pleasingly plump.

The doorbell rang. Now who could that be? Striding back to the front door, he was surprised to see little Marsha standing on his steps. Grinning broadly, she was holding a tray of cookies in her hands. She lived only a few doors down from him. "My foster mother made these for you, pastor Brook, because you taught me all year and because you visit all the time."

"Well, thank you, and please thank your foster mother. That's very kind of you both."

A luminous idea struck him. He gestured that she step inside and when she happily obliged, he walked her past the closed living room door leading the child into the kitchen. Once there he spoke in a low tone.

"Marsha, I have a visitor in the living room and she's hurt her ankle. She's my mother's friend and will be a guest here for a few days. Would you mind helping me with her for a little while?"

The girl was all smiles and nodded eagerly. "No, pastor Brook, I wouldn't mind that at all."

"Thanks, Marsha, I appreciate that very much."

He pointed towards the living room and she immediately stepped back into

the hallway, making her way to the living room. He followed her. Opening the door, they could see Gena bending over, trying rather unsuccessfully to take off her shoe. Marsha lost no time. She was by the couch and on her knees in a trice. Assisting nimbly, her small fingers undid the buckles, even as she spoke in a low tone. "My name is Marsha, but most people call me little Marsha because I'm not as big as I should be. What's your name?"

"Gena." It came out softly and it was the first word Jason heard her say. So he had been correct then in surmising that she was his mother's guest.

"Gena's a real nice name," Marsha went on, "and look, your shoe's off and that's good because I think your foot's a bit swollen. I can see it through your nylon stocking. Hope it doesn't hurt too much."

Arnica, thought Jason who was still standing in the hallway door, mother's arnica in the medicine cabinet would help right now. Turning, he made his way to the bathroom and checked cupboards until he found the arnica tube. To his disappointment it was almost empty. He'd have to go to the pharmacy for a new tube. Maybe he should also offer aspirin with the tea for pain? He slowly walked back into the living room.

"Her foot's not broken, pastor Brook," Marsha called out cheerfully from the couch while stroking the cat's head, "You can wiggle your toes, can't you Gena?"

Gena nodded.

"That's fine," Jason said, very much relieved, "but I think I'll walk over to the pharmacy anyway to pick up some arnica. It's a good remedy for bruising and swelling. I can see from here you might have a bit of a bruise."

Gena shook her head. "There's no need for you to do that," she protested weakly.

"Not a problem," Jason waved away her protest, "Little Marsha, can you stay here until I come back? You can put the kettle on for tea and you know where the mugs are. You can also serve some of the cookies you brought along."

The girl nodded eagerly. "Sure thing. And I'll phone Aunt May to let her know

I'm helping out."

## CHAPTER 2

The symphony of *Ephesians 1* has a recurring theme. The consonance which weaves through its melody is that of predestination. With singleness of purpose the notes again and again point to children adopted through Jesus Christ in accordance with His pleasure and will.

We don't always hear a theme until it is pointed out. But the truth of it is that election reverberates throughout *Ephesians 1*.

\*\*\*\*

After little Marsha had telephoned her foster mother, she asked Gena if she wanted a cup of tea and a cookie. The woman smiled at the child standing in front of the couch. "You are eager to help. You're a very kind little girl."

Marsha dimpled. "Any friend of pastor Brook is a friend of mine. And I'm sorry you hurt your foot. Shall I put pillows under it?"

The doorbell rang.

"Excuse me," little Marsha said.

She got up from the couch and stepped back into the hallway, leaving the door to the living room half-open behind her.

\*\*\*\*

There was a coolness in the foyer and the child shivered before she opened the entrance way which Jason had locked behind him. Two women stood on the doorstep. They smiled at Marsha.

"Hello, it's a nice day isn't it?" One of the women, portly but gracious, extended the greeting.

"Yes," Marsha replied.

"Is your mother at home?"

"Yes," the child answered for the second time and without hesitation, "She is."

On the couch in the living room, Gena, who could hear each word, winced. The girl was lying. That was a whopper.

"Can we speak to her?"

"No, I'm afraid you can't."

The second of the two women coughed delicately into a hanky.

"And why will you not let us speak to your mother?"

"Because she's in heaven with the Lord Jesus."

There was silence on the doorstep for a long moment. Shifting her position on the couch slightly as she leaned forward, Gena strained her ears.

"I know," Marsha's voice reached her, "that you are Jehovah Witnesses because you come down the street a lot and start by saying that the weather is nice. Pastor Brook has told me to be careful about you."

There was another silence and then one of the women opened her purse, taking out a small tract. "Well, I'm sorry to hear about your mother, honey, but maybe I can leave this little booklet with you."

Little Marsha put her hands behind her back. "No, thank you," she answered clearly, "Jesus would not like me to do that. Pastor Brook told me that too. You see you don't know.... that is, you don't believe...." She stopped and took out her right hand, fingering one of her braids thoughtfully.

"We don't know or believe what?" Both of the women responded almost simultaneously, talking through one another and eyeing little Marsha with a mixture of both disdain and interest.

"That Jesus is God," little Marsha said, finishing her sentence carefully.

"He is *a* god," this time the women spoke in unison, the back one trying to read the girl's face as she stood in poised in the doorway.

Unfazed by their scrutiny, Marsha responded once more. "No, He is not *a* god. He is the only God there is and we can't say lies about Him. You see, God says, and I forget where He says it, 'I am He and there are no gods with Me.'"

The two women looked at one another.

"Pastor Brook told me that too," little Marsha added as an afterthought, "and you might like to think about that. But now I have to stop talking to you because I'm helping out a friend who has a sore foot."

The two women turned and began to walk away, the first one shrugging as she left. But the second glanced back over her shoulder, giving Marsha a smile and a little wave. Closing and locking the front door carefully, Marsha made her way back to the kitchen. She plugged in the kettle and leaned against the countertop as she waited for the water to boil. When it did, she pulled the plug and made tea. Carrying a stone mug into the living room, she saw that Gena had taken her foot off the footstool and was gingerly bending over, rubbing it.

"How does it feel? Does it hurt a lot?" she asked sympathetically.

"A little bit, but it'll be all right, I think."

Marsha deposited the mug on the end table. "Would you like some sugar and milk with your tea?"

"No, that's fine. Thank you for your help and for making the tea."

Marsha sat down on the floor in front of the couch, resting her back against it.

"Tell me about yourself, Marsha."

Turning her face, Marsha stared up at her. "About myself? There's not much to tell."

"Why did you tell the women who came to the door that your mother was home when .... well, when you don't even live here?" Gena put her foot up on the footstool again as she spoke and reached for the tea.

"Well, my mother is at home. Only her home is in heaven. I did tell them that."

The clock ticked and Gena folded her hands cautiously around the hot cup of tea.



The clock ticked and Gena folded her hands cautiously around the hot cup of tea.

"I'm sorry, Marsha," she eventually said, as she put the cup back on the end table, "not having a Mom must be hard."

"No," Marsha answered rather matter-of-factly, "you needn't feel sorry for me, Gena. You see, I'll be seeing her soon."

Gena picked the cup up again. "What do you mean?"

"I've got.... I mean, I'm sick and right now I'm OK, but the doctor says...." She stopped and Gena could not take her eyes off the child, wispy braids dangling disconsolately on her thin shoulders.

"I'm sorry," she began again rather lamely, and then stopped.

"No," little Marsha repeated rather earnestly, "You don't have to be sorry."

"Can I comb and braid your hair, Marsha? I used to have long hair myself and I miss doing the braids. Maybe you can borrow a comb out of the bathroom. We just won't tell anyone."

Marsha smiled. No one ever offered to braid her hair for her. Her foster mother was too busy and her own fingers were a little messy. She got up and disappeared down the hall, reappearing shortly with a long blue comb.



**"Can I comb and braid your hair, Marsha? I used to have long hair myself and I miss doing the braids."**

"That's great. Now come and sit in front of me."

Marsha sat on the floor, eyes wide with expectation. Gena had moved the footstool and had positioned her sore foot at its side. Taking a tiny sip of her hot tea before undoing Marsha's braids, she began untangling the knots in the child's hair. Marsha blissfully shut her eyes as she leaned her shoulders against the gray skirt. Gena massaged the little scalp with the auburn hair, and listened to the clock ticking as she worked at fashioning a French braid around Marsha's head.

"Why," she suddenly heard herself saying, "Why are you not sad, or scared, or well, upset. You don't seem to be upset, Marsha."

The girl smiled, her eyes still closed. "Sometimes I am. I really am," she admitted candidly, "But then I try to remember a story that pastor Brook told me. He heard it, or read it somewhere and then he told it to me."

"What was the story?"

The child stretched out her legs in front of her and took a deep breath as if she was about to plunge into a pool

of water. Gena stopped braiding and listened, her hands resting on the child's head.

"Well, in the story there was a little girl. Maybe she was my age. This little girl was out on the street, sitting on the doorstep of a house in the middle of the night all alone. Someone came along the street and asked her, 'Little girl, why are you sitting there? Do you not have a house to live in?' She said, 'No, sir, I don't. I have no home.' 'Where is your mother?' 'My mother is dead,' said the little girl. 'Where is your father, then?' 'I have no father,' she replied. 'Have you no home at all to which you can go?' 'No,' answered the little girl, and she shivered. You see, Gena, it was night and she was shivering with the cold."

Marsha stopped and unexpectedly turned her head, causing Gena to cluck in distress as auburn strands of hair flew out of her hands. Marsha apologized, even as she spoke. "I'm sorry to have moved, Gena, but are you not very sorry for this little girl?"

Gena moved her head up and down even while she was trying to sort out the wisps of hair that had broken loose

from the French braid. She was, indeed, both puzzled and fascinated by Marsha's account. Satisfied that her audience was paying attention, Marsha positioned her head forward again and went on.

"Well, I was sorry for this little girl too when pastor Brook told me this story. It was so sad. I think I even cried. Then pastor Brook said to me, 'In a way many people in the world are like that little girl, Marsha. Although they have a home for their bodies, they have no home for their souls. And at night they sit on the doorsteps of the world and their souls have no place to go.'"

It was quiet for a bit. Gena was intrigued. She prodded the child with her good foot.

"Go on, Marsha. There must be more to this story."

And Marsha continued. "Then pastor Brook said, 'I know you love the Lord Jesus, Marsha, and because you love the Lord Jesus, your soul does have a place to go. You have God for a Father and His Son Jesus has made a home for you in heaven where there are many, many rooms for His children.'"

Marsha stopped her narrative again and rubbed her right hand along the carpet.

"Is that the end of the story?" Gena asked in spite of herself.

"No, it isn't. Only when I get to this part, I often cry, you see, and I don't like to do that in front of other people. But I'll tell you the story to the end."

Marsha's right hand stopped caressing the carpet and she pushed her shoulders back so that they touched Gena's stomach.

"Yes?" Gena encouraged.

"Well, I'm guessing you think that I'm the little girl in the story, sort of. But actually my story is just a bit different. In my story I'm sitting on the doorstep of heaven. An angel stops by and asks me if I have no house to live in and I answer him, 'Yes, sir, I do have a house. It is my Father's house and He is making a room ready for me in His house.' And after I tell the angel that I believe that Jesus is God and that He has died for me on the cross, he smiles and opens the door for me behind the doorstep and tells me that

he knows that my room is quite, quite ready."

Marsha's voice trembled with the telling of the last sentence and after she stopped speaking there was only silence again and the constant ticking of the clock.

"I see." But Gena didn't see. Her hands came away from the hair and rested in her lap. The flat-bosomed, trusting eleven-year-old sitting on the floor in front of her, with a tiny French braid crisscrossing her head, suddenly seemed lovely beyond comparison. Inexplicably she was jealous. She could not fathom it.

"Maybe you will get better," she offered, "and then you will not...."

But she didn't finish the sentence, because she didn't know how to finish it. Marsha turned and looked up at her.

"Are you all right? Is your foot throbbing?"

"No, actually it is feeling quite a bit better and I should be going now. I've stayed way too long as it is."

"Stayed too long?"

Marsha's voice was surprised and she scrambled to her feet even as she continued to speak. "But you just got here. And pastor Brook's gone to get some medicine to put on your bruise to help you. And his mother is not even home yet."

"But I think I can walk now," Gena answered, and to prove it she stood up as well.

Indeed, her leg was able to bear weight and she took a few steps.

"But where are you going? Are you not supposed to stop and visit here for a few days?"

"No, whatever made you think that?"

"Pastor Brook. He told me you had come to visit his mother for a few days. She should be home soon, I think."

"His mother! But I don't even know his mother and I don't know pastor Brook either."

"But you came into their house!?" Marsha could not comprehend the way things were going. She watched in amazement as Gena slowly but purposely limped towards the front door.

"But why did you come in if you didn't



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know who lived here?"

Gena's fingers were wrapped around the doorhandle. "I don't understand it myself, little Marsha. I think it was because he knew my name."

"Your name?"

"Yes." Gena winced even as she spoke. "And now, little girl, perhaps you can call me a taxi."

### CHAPTER 3

Sometimes the *Ephesians 1* theme appears to be lost. Raucous notes and cacophony seem to drown out the sweeter airs. But, as in many musical compositions, there is frequently a coda, a conclusion, a postscript, a postlude as it were. And the *Ephesians 1* postlude is praise – praise of the glory of the grace of God. Listen carefully.

\*\*\*\*

It was only a half a year later that little Marsha's funeral took place. Conducted by pastor Brook, it was in the church he shepherded.

There were not very many people who came to the funeral. The school Marsha had attended, the same school at which Jason taught Bible every Friday afternoon, did come out in full number. The children and teachers had been given leave and they sat in the front pews. As well, a few members of the congregation showed up. Some had known little Marsha; others were curious.

The coffin stood in front of the pulpit. It was a small coffin. Made of white pine, smooth and shiny, it would not be very heavy for the pallbearers. It was snowing lightly outside and Jason's text fell with the snow: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."

"Little Marsha had faith," Jason said and his voice faltered.

It faltered because even as he spoke he could not fathom why this child, who had been so wholly trusting in her Lord, might not have lived a longer life, might not have had the possibility of being a mother in Israel. Of such, indeed, they had much need. He studied the young

faces in front of him, and he preached. He preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He always did. But the why of the coffin continued to confound him even as he spoke. And through his sentences he saw a little girl with two wispy, auburn braids dancing her way up his sidewalk to tell him some new wonder that she had thought of during that day.

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Afterwards, when the "amen" had fallen, opportunity was given for classmates and others to speak. Jason issued the invitation and waited. A long silence hung over the sanctuary. He did not think it likely that any of the children would come forward and certainly did not expect any of the adult members to speak. So few had really known little Marsha.

But just as he was about to conclude the service, a figure at the back of the church stood up and began a lonely trek towards the front. Jason strained his eyes. It was a woman and he did not know whom it was. He did not recognize her and neither did any of the people in the pews. They all watched her advance. She was uneasy. Everyone could sense it in her uncertain gait and yet she continued her walk to the pulpit. Having reached it, she sighed, glanced upward and proceeded to climb the steps. The lectern seemed to give her some measure of security, for she gripped the wood with both hands. It was only when Jason handed her the microphone and caught the scent of jasmine, that he remembered her.

"Hello," she began, addressing the people in the pews.

The voice took Jason back to a summer afternoon earlier that year, an afternoon



In the distance a car honked its horn and white snow still fell past the sanctuary windows.

in which someone had taken his seat on the bus.

"You don't know me," her voice went on.

Jason sat down in the chair behind the pulpit. He could see that the woman was taking a deep breath before continuing. "I had the pleasure of meeting Marsha, or little Marsha, as she told me people called her, a number of months ago."

In a row of children on the second bench, Penny nudged Samantha. "She's a nice looking lady."

"Shh," Samantha whispered back.

The woman's voice stilled both of them. "I apologize if my story seems a bit stilted, but I'm not a trained speaker like your pastor here behind me."

Jason looked down at the floor.

"I'll introduce myself and hope that you won't all leave after I do. My name is Gena and my second name is not important. I am, or I should say, I was," and here her voice faltered, "a prostitute."

A palpable hush fell on the sanctuary. Penny pinched Samantha. "Do you know what a prostitute is, Sam?"

Samantha pinched her back. "Quiet."

"About a half a year ago, I hurt my foot

in front of your pastor's house. Summer had just begun. It was a beautiful day. Your pastor did not know me, but when I hurt my foot in front of his home, he took me inside and ...." She stopped speaking. Someone coughed in the back of the church, but on the whole it was deathly quiet. Only the coffin spoke through the stillness proclaiming that little Marsha was dead.

"My parents divorced when I was about Marsha's age. My father left and my mother was given custody. Not that it meant anything. She was always gone. When I came home from school every day there was no one."

Both Samantha and Penny listened with rapt attention. Indeed, the whole church was fixated on the figure in the pulpit. Gena was wearing a blue coat. Open at the collar, a grey scarf covered her neck. Jason's eyes had lifted from the floor and were now riveted on the back of Gena's head.

"I'll spare you the details of my tumultuous teenage years. There were

parties, drugs and boyfriends. I know now that I was looking for love, for some semblance of acceptance. I wanted someone who was interested in me, someone who would...."

Samantha and Penny without being aware of it, were leaning into one another.

"My mother eventually threw me out when she came home one day and found me drinking with several boys."

The silence into which Gena's words were spoken became louder. "The day that I spoke of, the day that I hurt my foot and your pastor took me in, that was the day I was on my way to have an abortion. Only I had gotten the address mixed up and had gotten out several stops too early."

Gena took a kleenex out of the pocket of her blue coat and blew her nose. Jason felt an incomprehensible bond with the girl. He did not know why. Everything he stood for had been repulsed by her. And yet here she was on the pulpit, confessing sins.

"Little Marsha came to the door to bring your pastor some cookies. She came inside and introduced herself to me. When he left to buy some ointment for my foot, the child made me some tea and then, well then we talked together."

Jason could see his mother in the fourth row. Her eyes were lifted attentively towards the girl, the girl whom he had supposed was Gena Ardwick. The real Gena Ardwick, it turned out, had not shown up at all because she had caught influenza. Strange that this girl's name had also been Gena.

"Little Marsha told me that she was ill and that she would probably not live much longer. She was right, wasn't she?"

Everyone's eyes automatically shifted to the small, white coffin in front of the pulpit. Samantha remembered with a pang of conscience that she had ridiculed Marsha when she had asked Pastor Brook how she could see God when she died, because God was so big that He had made the stars with His



fingers. She shivered a little.

"Marsha was a very special girl," Gena's voice broke over the sentence and Jason could see that her right hand clenched the kleenex which she still held. "She had a gift - and that gift was faith. She believed with all her heart and ...."

Her voice broke again and Jason fought the urge to go and put his arm around her.

"The truth is," Gena went on, "that God used little Marsha in my life. When I told her that I was leaving and that it was only by chance that I was there in pastor Brook's home, she called a taxi for me. Then she persuaded me to sit down on the couch again and she sat next to me."

Penny and Samantha and the other children held themselves rigidly quiet, waiting for Gena to finish a story of which they could not guess the ending.

"I say she sat next to me, but the actual truth was that she leaned into me. 'I like you, Gena,' she said, 'and I wish you could be a foster mother to me. I've had about six, you know.' 'Six?' I asked her. 'Yes, six and some of them were quite nice. But I'm always moving to another place. I guess it's hard to have someone like me who is in the hospital a lot.' And then Marsha added something else. She said, 'I think you will be a good Mom to this baby you are having, Gena. That is a really lucky baby to have you for a Mom.'"

A child cried in the back of the sanctuary and was shushed by its mother. Gena stopped for a moment and blew her nose again.

"I said, 'Marsha, how do you know I'm expecting a baby?' And she lifted her head from my shoulder and looked up at me. 'I felt the baby kick,' she said, 'when I leaned against you and you were doing my hair. My shoulders felt your stomach and I felt a little kick and I thought the baby must be so nice and cozy and safe in there. My last foster mother was expecting a baby too and she let me feel her tummy.' "

Samantha felt a tear slide down her cheek. She let it slide right down to her chin. Then she took the back of her right hand and wiped it off. Penny cast a

sidelong glance at her and then put her hand on Samantha's knee.

"I told Marsha that she was right, that I was expecting a baby. 'What will you call it?' she asked. I told her that I didn't know. 'Perhaps, you can call it little Gena,' she suggested."

Gena shifted her position behind the pulpit. Bending over, she put her elbows on the lectern, supporting her face with her hands for a moment. Then straightening up again, her gaze went up and down the pews.

"Then Marsha asked me the most important question anyone has ever asked me. She said, 'You do believe in the Lord Jesus, don't you Gena? Because if you don't, I'll never see you again.'"

She stopped and looked down before she continued. "I have to tell you all very honestly that I did not believe in God at that time, let alone His Son Jesus. And I told her so."

The ceiling lights flickered on and off and back on. In the distance a car honked its horn and white snow still fell past the sanctuary windows.

"Then Marsha did what no one has ever done for me before. She wept for me. Curling into my side, she sobbed her heart out. I hugged her but she would not be consoled. She kept on crying. Eventually she managed some intelligible words and these words were: 'I don't want you to be lost, Gena, I want you to come to the doorstep of God's house just like me.'"

And Jason thought of all the sermons he had preached, of all the benedictions he had given, and he knew that not one of them came even close.

"The taxi driver came to the door then, and I stood up. My shoulder was wet, wet with little Marsha's tears. I never saw her again."

Gena was finished. She stepped back from the lectern and moved towards the pulpit steps. But then, as if she had forgotten something, she returned. It was for the postlude.

"Oh yes," she said, "I do want you all to know that I will see her again. And so will Faith, my little daughter. Faith, who was born the day little Marsha died." 



## The GTA Mission Project

### MISSIONARY WORKER

Are you excited about sharing the gospel and using your God given talents in Urban Mission?

Grace Canadian Reformed Church of Brampton in cooperation with Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto is working towards an Urban Mission Project in the GTA. The GTA board; having completed the ground work of establishing a board, a council mandate, preliminary budget and startup funding are now seeking full time missionaries to begin the work.

The GTA Board is currently seeking qualified missionary worker(s) with a heart for urban mission. The qualified applicant must be a member in good standing of a Canadian Reformed, United Reformed or sister church. Being blessed with established churches within the growing GTA communities, a tremendous opportunity exists for outreach in a mission field on our doorstep.

The position is open to anyone with a heart for mission work (Ordained or Non-ordained) and not limited to those who have formal training although formal training and experience would be valuable assets.

If you are interested and would like more information along with a more detailed job description please contact

**Art van Halteren**

(GTA Board Chairman)

@ artvanhalteren@bell.net

# ONEQUALITY

by P. Itcher

I was recently confronted with the disturbing statistic that evidences the ultimate case of gender inequality: the life expectancy of males is 6.1 years lower than that of females. This phenomenon must be properly discussed.

What is a more valuable commodity than life? Nothing, I would say. And yet females habitually possess over 8 percent more of it than men. It is clear that when it comes to life, there is no level playing field in our society between males and females.

I, therefore, call upon the government to take measures to empower men to overcome this glaring inequality. What we need is legislation, programs, and lots of funding.

First of all the government should enact human rights legislation which will unequivocally state that males have the right to the same life expectancy as females. This legislation will empower the government to make proactive adjustments in Health, Social, and Education programs. I would like to share with you the following suggestions for such adjustments.

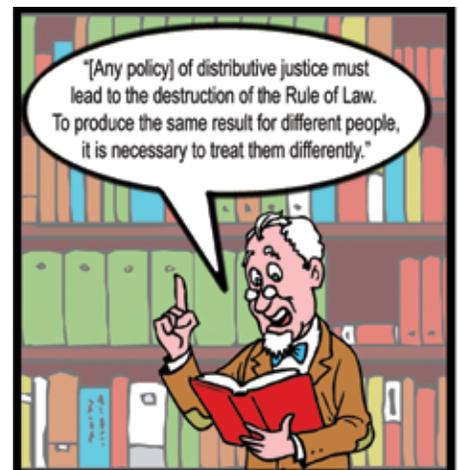
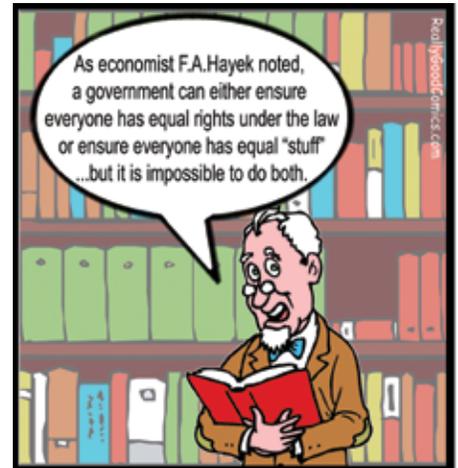
1. An immediate transfer of medical research dollars from female diseases to male diseases.
2. The inclusion of a mandatory life expectancy rights component to be taught in all our schools starting at the kindergarten level.
3. The appointment of kommissars (also call commissioners) for each federal and provincial ministry who are to scrutinize all proposed legislation for life expectancy bias.
4. Mandatory sensitivity training for all our judges to ensure that crimes against women are not more discouraged than crimes against men.
5. Mandatory affirmative low-stress jobs action for all businesses employing more than 10 people to ensure that men will be employed in at least 50 percent of such jobs.
6. The creation of Men's Issues Department at both the federal and provincial levels.

Thus far my suggestions.

If we do not want to lose the image of Canada as a caring and nurturing society we had better implement these suggestions regardless of costs.

Of course, some naive people may suggest that it would help if men changed their lifestyle by smoking, drinking, fighting, and fornicating less, and by being more spiritual and less macho. However, though in the past this might have been a solution, we now know that we can only lead fulfilling lives if we are true to ourselves. Since institutions of education and our public media zealously indoctrinate the populace with this new gospel, it would be futile to appeal to "the man kind" itself to heal the wound of life expectancy; the government is our only hope. 

*This post first appeared way back in May 1999.*



# WHEN WE HAVE TO PARENT OUR PARENTS

## HELP AND HOPE FOR CAREGIVERS

by Sharon L. Bratcher

*Paul pulled the car into the driveway. "Okay, Dad, now stay there and I'll come around and help you out of the car."*

*"Okay."*

*Paul put the car into Park, turned off the lights, and opened the door. He rounded the back of the car planning to open the passenger side back door to retrieve Dad's walker. But there was Dad, door open, lying face down in the gravel already.*

*Paul was not amused.*

\*\*\*\*

Aging parents want to be independent. They want to continue living the way that they always have. They don't want any help from strangers, and they certainly don't want to give up their beautiful home and move into "one of those places." What they want...may be impossible. What they have to choose between...is sometimes a choice too impossible for them to make.

Dealing with one's aging parents is like walking barefoot down a long series of gravel roads branching in every direction. It's painful, uncomfortable, and confusing. Sometimes suddenly, and sometimes over a period of a couple of years, offspring are thrust into the position of having to parent their parents. It's a role reversal that doesn't please anyone.

\*\*\*\*

*"You are NOT my mother – I am YOUR mother!" Mom yelled angrily.*

*"I know that," Susan said.*

*"Then STOP bossing me around all the time!" Mom shouted.*

*Susan sat down hard on the dining room chair and put her head in her hands. "You need to take your medicine now, Mom. Please?"*

\*\*\*\*

The coming months, or years, will at times strain the relationships between the siblings, their spouses, and the aging parents. Who will help them? How often? Should someone quit a job to do so? Cancel a vacation? Who will pay the bills? Who will make the decisions that they won't like? For those who know very little about medicine, caregiving, diseases, Alzheimer's, or even the best way to deal with a doctor's visit, it may be even harder.

In 2018, it's very common to hear both the aging and their younger family members say that parents really don't want to live any longer if they cannot live independently as they used to. They would rather die. They don't want to be a burden. Our culture has become so health-and-happiness oriented that the Right To Die (or euthanasia) movement grows stronger every year, not only in

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be a blessing.

– Psalm 37:23-26

the Netherlands but here in Canada and the United States as well. It seems that the general public can see no purpose for an imperfect human being to exist.

So when is it time to step in and step up? Each case will differ but according to one doctor, Mark Sawka, everyone always waits too long to make their decisions. Usually, by the time the senior citizens move into independent living, it should have been done sooner, and by the time they move to assisted living, they would have benefited greatly from going there sooner than



that. We all want to maintain the status quo, keeping life as much like it has been as possible. Many older folks do not want to “face the music,” accepting their new limitations, and being grateful for what they are still able to enjoy.

\*\*\*\*

*“Mom, you have fallen several times lately. We are worried about you living here in this house by yourself. Please... you can come and live with Susan and*

*me, or you can go and live with Betty and Randall. Either of us would be happy to have you,” Paul said gently.*

*“Oh, no, I could never do that. I won’t be a burden, and I don’t want to move away from my home.”*

*Paul and Betty exchanged glances. What Mom didn’t understand is that since her children lived 3 hours away, she was being much more of a burden by living in her own home than she would be living with one of them.*

\*\*\*\*

*“Dad,” Susan began. “Your balance is not good. Your eyesight is nearly gone, you need constant help with your hearing aid, and to be honest, you need help with everyday things like bathing and dressing.”*

*“Naw, I don’t need any help.”*

*“Yes, you do, Dad.”*

*“Mum can help me, can’t you, Mum?”*

*Mom nodded her head, but had a weary and wary look about her. She was 82, used a walker, and took about 15 prescriptions a day, mostly to deal with back and shoulder pain. “I can help you if you stop being so stubborn!” Mom said.*

*Susan tried again. “You either have to move into an apartment where people can help you, or you have to have people come to your house and help you here.”*

*“I don’t want anybody coming into our house. I don’t need any other help.”*

*“What if Paul and I moved in with you?” Susan offered.*

*“No. Now you know that wouldn’t work. We would all end up fighting with each other. It’s hard enough for two of us to decide things, let alone having four opinions in the house,” Dad said.*

*“Okay, then can we get some help through the Senior Citizens agency in town?”*

*“We’re staying in our own home. And we don’t need any help,” Dad said with finality.*

### THREE LESSONS TO LEARN

The first lesson to learn is that the best way to make your way through it is to view caregiving as a ministry given to you by God, instead of as the burden that your parents never

wanted to be. There will have to be a lot of Scripture reading and prayer for patience and guidance. In her book entitled *Ambushed by Grace: Help and Hope on the Caregiving Journey*, Shelly Beach says:

When I began caregiving six years ago, I did not expect to embark upon a journey of grace. I expected to learn of service and sacrifice, to explore new facets of patience and tolerance, love and forgiveness, but I did not expect to be changed at the core of my being. I did not know then what I know now — that caregiving, by the power of God’s grace, can be a work of redemption powerful enough to reverberate into the hearts of those around us....

To make caregiving simply a task is a distortion of its purpose; rather, it is a divine appointment, a redemptive encounter, and an act of worship.... It wasn’t until I learned to relinquish

my stride to His, to abandon control of my direction, and to match the rhythm of my pace to His that I discovered He was carrying me like a child standing upon her father’s shoes, clinging to his legs as she stared into his face, waiting for the next step.

The second lesson is that none of this is going to be easy. It is very difficult to explain to your dad that he simply must let a staff member (read: stranger) help him to bathe, or tell your mother that she definitely must quit driving. It is difficult for siblings who have grown apart to mesh their ideas and agree on a plan of action. It is exhausting to add to one’s already busy work and home schedule the long days of research, packing and moving, doctors’ visits, cleaning, searching for lost dentures and wedding rings, meetings, and regular visits to these loved ones.

\*\*\*\*

*“Mom, you drove 15 miles past your apartment building the other day and couldn’t find your way back. And last week you turned the wrong way and ended up going ten miles in another direction. You need to stop driving and give up your car.”*

*“I need my car. I can still drive just fine.”*

*“What if you have an accident?”*

*“If I die I’ll go to Heaven, and that’s fine with me.”*

*“Yeah, well, what if you crash into another car and hurt a woman and her baby, what then?”*

*“I haven’t crashed into anybody and I’m not going to.”*

\*\*\*\*



The third lesson is that there is a lot of critical information that one or more of you must learn. Information such as:

- What is your parents' financial situation? Is Assisted Living an option (at anywhere from \$3000-10,000 per month!) or will they move in with someone or have someone move in with them? Or, how do you find an affordable assisted living apartment that will give your rapidly declining father all of the care that he requires and let your parents live together in more than one room?
- How many days will the insurance company or social benefits pay for your parent to stay in rehab, and will he be released earlier if he doesn't cooperate in physical therapy?
- When should you contact the patient advocate in the hospital to intervene when your parent is not being treated well, discharged from the hospital as promised, or given the correct medication?
- How do you sign up for financial assistance from the various government or social agencies? For example, in the U.S. the Veteran's Administration may send a monthly check if your parent served in the Armed Forces during a war. This research and application may take many hours, but it is well worth it.
- How do you accurately and safely hook up an IV with Vancomycin antibiotic to a port in your mother's arm every single day for 8 weeks, or give your father his daily insulin shot? What is the purpose of the medications that they are taking?

## FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

I will leave you with four recommendations.

The first would be to read. Read books such as the aforementioned book by Shelly Beach and *The Overwhelmed Woman's Guide to Caring for Aging Parents*, by Julie-Allyson Ieron. You may also find encouragement in John Calvin's *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*.

Second, contact people who have gone through this and ask a multitude

# QUOTES FOR THE CAREGIVER

## On Honoring Our Aged Parents

"What does it mean to honor our parents? In childhood honor usually meant obey. In young adulthood, it meant respect...We can take a cue from the verb's synonyms: to prize, to value, to hold precious, to revere.... If we hold our parents as precious (despite their foibles), we will find ways to invest our limited emotional, physical, and financial resources in their care."

– Julie-Allyson Ieron

"The Three C's of Caregiving are Calmness, Comfort, and Compassion....Offering those three C's to our parents and parents-in-law... could be the most parent-honoring — and God-honoring — gift we could give. When we look at this season of life in hindsight, we will have nothing to regret."

– Ieron

## The Impact Family Can Have

"One common factor in nearly every success story is the family's active involvement. Hospital and rehab nurses...said, 'We know you kids are here. We see your faces. We know you love your father. That makes it easier for us to want to care for him and get him well.' Frequent presence plays a role in the quality of care that your loved one receives."

– Ieron

## Feeling False Guilt

"It's important to listen to our guilt and recognize whether we're dealing with true guilt stemming from an offense that we're responsible for or false guilt stemming from self-condemnation or the weight of trying to live up to the expectations of others."

– Shelly Beach

## Denying Ourselves As Christ Did

"If we focus first on magnifying God, on appreciating others, on reinforcing biblical truth, on intercepting negativity, and on evaluating our motives, we can learn to live above the level of frustration and spiritual subsistence."

– Beach

"We should seek the good of other believers. How extremely difficult it is for you dutifully to seek the advantage of your neighbor, unless you quit all selfish considerations and almost forget yourself. How can you perform the duties which Paul teaches to be works of love, unless you renounce yourself, and devote yourself wholly to others?... We are not our own, therefore we should not seek what is expedient to the flesh. We are not our own, therefore let us forget ourselves and our own interests as far as possible."

– John Calvin

## Getting Trapped In Self-Pity

"Martyrs are looking for someone to notice them — for someone to reflect their feelings about how bad their lives are and to affirm the fact that they're entitled to a bad attitude....There's nothing a martyr loves more than another martyr who will reflect back their negative, twisted view of life."

– Beach

"Resentment always boils down to one thing: believing we're not getting what we deserve. It means we're telling God and ourselves He doesn't know what He's doing after all and we're entitled to something better. The real struggle for those who are resentful is that their self-justifying attitudes make them blind to the poison in their own hearts."

– Beach

of questions. Ask for one of them to be a prayer partner. It's helpful if you know someone in the medical field who is able and willing to be consulted on occasion.

Third, it's very important to involve all siblings in decision-making, even those that are reluctant to participate. They will have opinions. If possible, encourage everyone to be involved in the care, whether it is hands-on, financial assistance, regular visits, letters in the mail and regular phone calls, doing research online, shopping, or driving a parent to one of many doctors' appointments. It is often the case that some step forward quickly and others hang back hoping not to have to do very much. Clear communication, understanding on all sides, and forgiveness may prevent anger and bitterness from occurring.

Finally, encourage your parents in their faith in God as they live out these difficult days, and give them love in every way that you can. Remember that these loving parents cared for you when you were young, and it was not always convenient, exciting, or fun to do so. This ministry

may go on for numerous years, but someday they will be gone, and you will miss them. This is your opportunity to be used by God to serve them.

## CONCLUSION

Shelly Beach writes:

Caregiving teaches us to see what is precious and valuable in life. It teaches us what it means to live out commitment and honor. It gives us the opportunity to love someone better who we may have struggled to love in the past. It gives us the opportunity to demonstrate God is sufficient and that He is a God who redeems. Caregiving is the hardest work we will ever do because it demands that we love as Christ loved, sacrificing our time, our jobs, our commitments, our friendships, and our health, while standing against the tide of culture... It is a call to suffer, to sacrifice, and to serve. It is a call to abandonment and tears, to hardships and difficulties. It is a glorious call to be conformed to the

image of Christ and join the God of the universe in ministering grace and mercy to one of His image bearers.

There will be difficult terrain ahead, and you will likely feel fear and dread about walking this road. Remember that God is sovereign and in control of all parts of life, including this next part which can not be avoided. This, too, is part of His will.

Unlike our culture around us, we who follow Jesus Christ can know that God has promised to care for us all of our lives – even as we watch our parents get old and feeble, and then walk that path ourselves. If He didn't have a purpose for them to still be here on the earth, He wouldn't have left them here. Your caring for them, in whatever way you are involved, is a part of that purpose.

*Sharon L. Bratcher is the author of Soup and Buns: Nourishment From God's Word for Your Daily Struggles which is available by emailing [sharoncopy@gmail.com](mailto:sharoncopy@gmail.com).*



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WARNING:  
This piece may contain traces of satire.

# 27-YEAR-OLD WINS UNDER-10 RACE

by Rob Slane

A 27-year-old man from Great Britain, who identifies as an 8-year-old boy, has become the first Transage winner of a gold medal at the World Cross Country Championship. Brian Potts, a fitness instructor from Hull, won the under-10s 6-kilometer race in a time of 17 minutes and 21 seconds, over four minutes ahead of his nearest rival.

Potts, representing Great Britain for the first time, celebrated his victory on Twitter, writing:

“First Transage world champion ... ever.”

Allowing adults who self-identify as children to compete in junior sports events has been a controversial subject, as critics have argued that it puts their opponents at an inherent disadvantage. However, Potts was quoted in the *Hull Gazette* earlier this year, arguing that banning Transagers from competing with children would be discriminatory:

“As a society, we cannot have adults identifying as transage, and it not be recognized in sports. Focusing on performance advantage is largely irrelevant because this is actually a rights issue. We shouldn't be worried about transagers taking over the Olympics. What we should be concentrating on is things like fairness and human rights instead.”

To those who have questioned his win, and whether it was fair to allow a 27-year-old to compete with boys nearly 20 years younger than him, Potts went onto

## WHAT IS SATIRE GOOD FOR?

Satire is sometimes understood as being mean-spirited. Like all humor, it can be, but at its best, satire offers attention-getting, memorable clarity. How? It exposes the foolishness of an idea – of an idea that is not commonly thought of as foolish – by showing how it is very much like an idea that everyone still recognizes as foolish. It shows the linkage between what really should be rejected, with what already has been rejected.

Twitter to vent his frustration with what he sees as an attitude born of prejudice, and which belongs firmly in the past:

“I can't believe we're still having this discussion in the 21st century. This is much bigger than sports. It's about human rights. And catering to the Transage-o-phobes only furthers the oppression of those who only seek to be the age they feel. People, I won. Get over it.”

Not everyone sees it that way, though. After the race, the silver medal winner, 9-year-old Daniel Song from Canada, and bronze medal winner, 8-year-old Manuel López from Spain, lodged a complaint with the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), alleging that

Potts had an unfair advantage and should not have been allowed to compete in the under-10s.

However, this approach may well have backfired, with latest reports suggesting that they could find themselves stripped of their medals, and sent to a Transageist re-education camp before being allowed to compete again. 

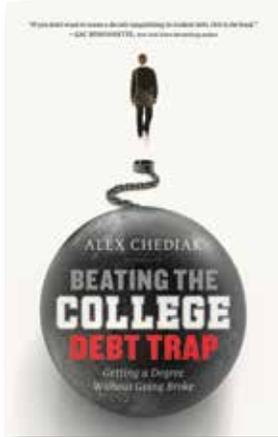
*Rob Slane is the author of “A Christian and an Unbeliever Discuss...Life, the Universe and Everything.” In this article he is responding to the recent gold-medal winning performance by Rachel McKinnon, a man who says he is a woman, who, on Oct 14, won the women's 35-44 age bracket at the 2018 Masters Track Cycling World Championship. The transgender winner argued that because he's lost to the women he was competing against more times than he's beat them, and because many women have a higher FTP (Functional Threshold Power, or the maximum average power a rider can produce over the course of an hour) than him, that makes it fair. While that might make it competitive it would do so in much the same way that if a 40-something-year-old on foot raced his 8-year-old daughter on her bike, it might be close. God made us male and female, and that brings with any number of differences. Those difference might mean that an average man might be competitive with women in some events, but that doesn't make it any less a matter of apples competing against oranges. So what's the root issue here? The world says we can be whatever we think we are. But Christians know that only God's thinking can determine reality.*

# REVIEWS

## A POTPOURRI OF NON-FICTION

### BEATING THE COLLEGE DEBT TRAP

BY ALEX CHEDIAK  
212 PAGES / 2015



In Canada, the average student debt among university graduates is now more than \$26,000, and in the States, over \$37,000, with only three in ten graduating from college debt-free. This may seem an inescapable reality – college tuition levels are on the rise, as are other costs like housing and textbooks.

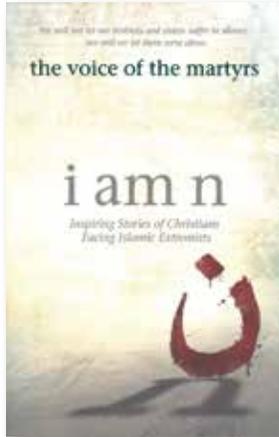
But author, Alex Chediak, makes the case that students can, and should, pursue post-secondary education with no, or manageable, debt. He does so by illustrating nine “traps” or commonly held notions about college that lead many students into debt. These traps include the ideas that a four-year degree is best for everyone, spending a fortune on a prestigious university is always a good idea, and that student loans are always worth it.

This book is written from and for the American context, and the author acknowledges that although he’s “writing as a Christian” this isn’t a densely religious book. In spite of this, the principles taught in this book are applicable for a broader audience. And, while the pages aren’t brimming with scriptural proofs, the advice given is grounded in sound scriptural teaching about finances, stewardship, and debt. This is an excellent read for prospective post-secondary students, but maybe even more so for parents looking to give them sound advice.

- BRIAN DELEEUW

### I AM N

BY THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS  
293 PAGES / 2016



The “n” in the title is Arabic shorthand for “Christian,” and Islamic extremists will paint it on houses owned by Christians as a means of intimidation. It is, in some places, the equivalent of being marked for death.

This was a very different and much better book than I thought it would be. I was anticipating something hard to endure: story after story of Christians getting beat up, beheaded, or jailed. And it is that. What our brothers and sisters are suffering in the Islamic East is horrific.

But this is also an incredibly encouraging book, and challenging too. In the 48 present-day accounts shared here we read of people who understand far better than we do, that God is all. If they are willing to risk losing everything to tell others about our Father, then what exactly is slowing us down?

The Christians we meet sometimes know very little of the Bible, which makes for some errors. For example, in one instance a new convert speaks of himself as a son of Christ. So don’t read this as a theological treatise. But do read it! Then pass it along to others, share the stories with your children, contact your elected officials, and pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters.

-JON DYKSTRA

### SPURGEON'S SORROWS

BY ZACK ESWINE  
144 PAGES / 2014



Drawing on over eighty sermons by C. H. Spurgeon (largely from the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*), the author paints a vivid picture of the recurring bouts of depression, melancholy, and helplessness that harassed Spurgeon. But Spurgeon’s difficulties also enabled him to minister from the pulpit and in correspondence with many suffering from depression and from the callous comfort of “friends.”

The book is organized under 3 themes:

- 1) Trying to understand depression
- 2) Learning how to help
- 3) Aids for daily coping

The author places a strong emphasis on the fact that depression often has “circumstantial, biological and spiritual contributors and challenges” and “that the spiritual side of things could originate its own kind of depression.” He draws on sources contemporary to both Spurgeon and our day on depression,

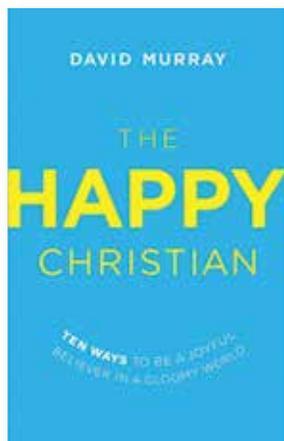
A section named: “Jesus Suffered Depression Too” may raise eyebrows! Spurgeon on Heb. 4:15 and 2:18:

“readily applies this sympathy of Jesus to include not only our physical weakness but also our ‘mental depression.’... Realistic hope is a Jesus-saturated thing.... [He] is an ally, a hero, a companion-redeemer, advocating for the mentally harassed.”

- DENNIS BRATCHER

## THE HAPPY CHRISTIAN: TEN WAYS TO BE A JOYFUL BELIEVER IN A GLOOMY WORLD

BY DAVID MURRAY  
256 PAGES / 2015



David Murray sets out to:

“identify the major causes of negativity and unhappiness in our lives and outline ten biblical and practical ways to tilt the balance of our attitude, outlook, words, and actions that will lift our spirits, compel attention for the Christian faith, and make the Church an energizing force in a life-sapping culture.”

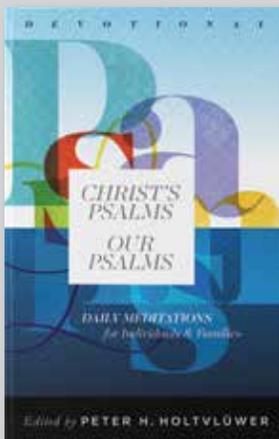
The “key is individual Christians and the Christian church repositioning the positive symbol of the Christian faith, the cross of Jesus Christ, at the center of their faith again.”

Murray combines biblical breadth and depth with current research and statistics on happiness and mental health. He presents this in an older more Puritan-style of writing, full of alliteration and multiple angles of description and application. Throughout the book there is much meat and sweetness to savor and meditate upon.

The chapter on “Happy Differences” deals with the topic of “diversity” or “Why can’t everyone be more like me?” He carefully distinguishes between issues of ethnic/cultural diversities and seeing all moralities/immoralities as the same.

One quibble: I do find it odd that virtually all the Scripture citations are in the end-notes and not in the text.

- DENNIS BRATCHER



## CHRIST'S PSALMS, OUR PSALMS

EDITED BY REV. PETER H. HOLTVLUWER  
383 PAGES / 2018

The Psalms are a rich treasure for God's people: so many inspired words of comfort, so many choruses of praise to our Father in Heaven! For generations, Christians have used these songs as a beautiful means to meditate on God's faithfulness and love.

In *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms*, Rev. Holtvluwer has compiled daily meditations that show how Jesus Christ is revealed and glorified throughout the 150 songs that make up the Psalter. Sixteen reformed

ministers, professors, and theologians contributed to these one-page devotions, each focusing on a few verses of a psalm, often with suggested short readings from elsewhere in Scripture.

The writers act as guides, helping us to see the work of Christ in every psalm: in the imprecatory psalms with their themes of judgment, in the songs of lament, in the joyous choruses that praise God the creator, in the songs of deliverance from enemies. By providing this redemptive historical perspective, these teachers have done a great service to help Christians appreciate the Psalms more fully, and see Jesus revealed on every page.

The writers also bring our attention to godly living. As Christ was the perfect Israelite, so we are called to lives of obedience, thankfulness, praise and prayer. Like the psalmists, we are reminded how far short of God's perfect standard we live, and how we are called to repentance and comforted with forgiveness.

*Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms* is suitable for personal study, or for family devotions at mealtime for example. Since many Christians have the practice of starting their morning by reading a psalm, this may be an excellent aid to this good habit.

In addition to one or two meditations on each psalm in numerical order, the book also has sections dealing with psalms about Christ's birth, his suffering and death, his ascension, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A final section highlights psalms suitable for use at special occasions like Thanksgiving, the turning of a new year, and prayers for fruitful crops. Beautifully bound in a long lasting hard cover format, *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms* is a welcome addition to our bookshelves and breakfast tables.

And if you enjoy this devotional, a companion study resource will also be available in 2019, written by the same authors, and intended as a pastoral commentary to help preachers and laymen see the themes of the redeemer in the psalms.

All proceeds from *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms* go to benefit mission work in Brazil, and specifically the Reformed Reading Room in Recife. Canadian, US, and International order can purchase it at PremierPublishing.ca. It is also available at Amazon.ca and Amazon.com.

- Marty VanDriel



by Michael Cook

## THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?

If the stress of euthanizing animals drives some vets to suicide, what will happen to euthanasia doctors?

Every year, about 1.5 million cases of euthanasia take place in the United States. Does this have a negative impact on healthcare workers?

Sorry, about 1.5 million cases of *cat and dog* euthanasia take place. But the question is still relevant. Veterinarians, veterinary assistants and shelter workers experience great stress at having to put animals down.

Vets are idealists. They love animals and choose a career so that they can help them. Instead, many find that a significant part of their daily routine is killing animals, often for frivolous or utilitarian reasons. Bernard E. Rollin, a philosopher at Colorado State University who specializes in veterinary ethics, recently observed:

The consequences are manifest. One recent study showed that one in six veterinarians has considered suicide. Another found an elevated risk of suicide in the field of veterinary medicine. Being asked to kill healthy animals for owner convenience doubtless is a major contribution.

*Every year, about 1.5 million cases of euthanasia take place in the United States.*

What makes the vets so uncomfortable with the deaths of cats and dogs? Professor Rollin attributes it to a condition which he has called “moral stress” which “grows out of the radical conflict between one’s reasons for entering the field of animal work, and what one in fact ends up doing.”

With euthanasia or assisted suicide legal in seven jurisdictions in the United States, plus Canada, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, it’s worthwhile examining the experiences of vets to see what the future may hold for doctors.

The emotional connection between the work of human doctors and animal

doctors is closer than you might think. Rollin points out that most pet owners feel that their companion animals are “part of the family.” In some surveys the proportion reaches 95 percent. Owners often react to a pet’s death with the intensity of grief which appears equivalent to the loss of a beloved relative.

### A MORE STRESSFUL SORT OF STRESS

So the moral stress which vets experience is relevant. Rollin points out that moral stress is different from other kinds of workplace stress, which can be relieved with psychological techniques.

Furthermore, normal avenues for alleviating stress are not available in this area. Whereas if one is stressed by normal stressors, standard stress management vehicles are quite helpful, for example relaxation techniques or talking it out with peers and family, these modalities are not available for moral stress.

He explains that vets may not be supported when they try to share the stress of having to kill animals.

As one woman who worked in a shelter told me, “I tried to explain to my husband at dinner that I had killed the nicest dog earlier in the day. He responded by clapping his hands over his ears and telling me he did not want to hear about it.”

## SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

If the stress is not handled properly, it can have very serious consequences for their health.

The eventual effect of such long-term, unalleviated stress is likely to be deterioration of physical and mental health and well-being, substance abuse, divorce, and even, as I encountered on a number of occasions, suicide.

Suicide amongst vets has been the topic of several studies. “Veterinarians are four times more likely than members of the general population and two times more likely than other health professionals to die by suicide,” according to a 2012 study in the journal of The American Association of Suicidology, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviour*.

Australian research found that “veterinarians who perform a greater number of euthanasias each week experience greater levels of job stress than those who perform less” – and job stress is a significant factor in suicide.

Why? Performing euthanasia day in, day out, also appears to make some vets less able to resist the temptation to commit suicide. The authors of the 2012 study found that:

... individuals who have had more experience with euthanasia were less fearful regarding the prospect of their own death, and this was accounted for by the diminished distress about euthanasia that comes with repeated exposure ... That performing euthanasia is

something relatively unique to the veterinary profession may explain why veterinarians die by suicide more often than members of other professions ... all else being equal, veterinarians may be more likely than members of other professions to enact a lethal attempt when they desire suicide because their exposure to euthanasia has rendered them less fearful of death.

Aren't there lessons in these findings which are relevant to doctors who euthanize their patients? Sometimes doctors in Belgium or the Netherlands are quoted as saying that the death they helped was beautiful or peaceful. Could that be bravado masking their own nonchalance about human death?

No matter how much affection people feel for their companion animals, the similarity between veterinary euthanasia and human euthanasia is far from being exact. But there are lessons to be learned.

## HOW MUCH THE MORE SO FOR THOSE WHO KILL PEOPLE?

How many times have we all heard the argument, “They shoot horses, don't they?” Its logic is that if the suffering of animals and humans is essentially the same, they both should be released from suffering in the same way. “You wouldn't let a dog suffer like this...”

But if the animal-human parallel works for the patient, why not the doctor? If we allow euthanasia, surely we can expect the same burnout rates and the same suicide rates as veterinarians ... at least the same. That should scare us all – especially the doctors who will be responsible. 

*This article by Michael Cook was originally published on MercatorNet.com under a Creative Commons License.*

*MercatorNet.com is not Reformed, but holds to a general Judeo-Christian outlook, defending the inherent dignity of Man. If you enjoyed this article, you can find many more like it at MercatorNet.com.*



The Canadian Reformed School Society of Edmonton, operating **Parkland Immanuel Christian School,**

invites applications for the 2019-2020 school year for the following full-time position:

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Parkland Immanuel Christian School operates a reformed K-12 school that offers a supportive school community, competitive wages, and a collaborative and professional environment that encourages and supports innovation and excellence in teaching. The school has a population of 405 students and is experiencing a time of significant increase in enrollment.

Applicants must be a professed member in good standing of a Canadian Reformed, United Reformed, or sister church, and must have the necessary post-secondary qualifications to teach in Alberta. For further information please contact the Principal,

### Mr. Ken Leffers

Phone: (780) 444-6443 (school)  
(780) 297-8841 (home)  
kleffers@parklandimmanuel.ca

Applications should be directed to:

### Mr. Wayne de Leeuw

Chair of Personnel Committee  
c/o Parkland Immanuel Christian School  
21304 35 Ave, NW Edmonton, AB  
T6M 2P6  
vicepresident@parklandimmanuel.ca

Reformed A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY  
**PERSPECTIVE**

RP's editor, yours truly, had an opportunity to chat with Al Siebring on this week's edition of *Lighthouse News*. He wanted to discuss last month's editorial "What if speeding tickets went to charities?" and you can [tune in to our conversation here](#).

Should your friends be getting this newsletter? Let them know they can sign up for free [here](#).



### God wants young men to be brave, not crazy

If a young man is willing to ski, dive, or bike off a cliff, but doesn't dare ask out that godly girl sitting next to him at church, he needs to learn the difference between brave and crazy...

[READ NOW](#)



### Facebook...to God's glory

One way to use Facebook to God's glory might be to actively accommodate our fellow brothers and sisters who don't want to use it at all.

[READ NOW](#)



The untimely death of Emmett Louis Till, and the power of graphic pictures

# GET RP IN YOUR INBOX

Every Saturday we send out *The RP Roundup*, our email newsletter, which contains links to the 5-6 articles we've published that week.

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2. Fill in your first and last name and email address, then hit the "Subscribe" button at the bottom and check your email inbox
3. Click on the "Yes, subscribe me to this list" and you're good to go!

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