

Secular

STANDING ATHWART THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

NOV / DEC 2016
Volume 36 Issue No. 1

PERSPECTIVE

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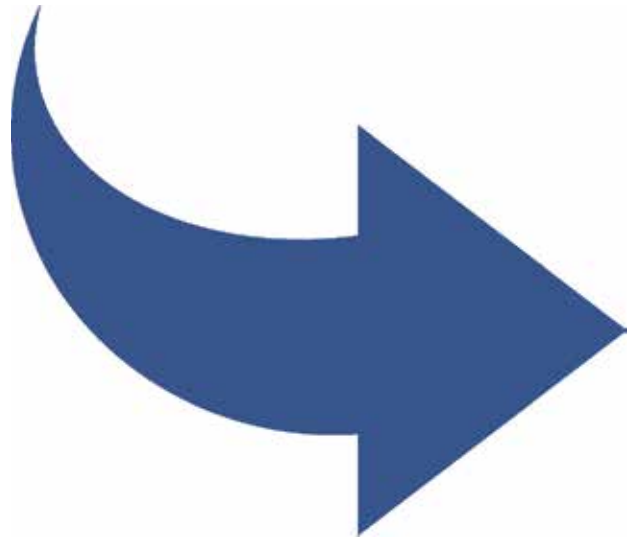
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The world loves to share
their perspective.



Let's share *His*.



For 35 years *Reformed Perspective* and our subscribers have been exploring God's thoughts on just about everything! Now, together, we can do much more – we can share God's Truth with a world that needs it every bit as much as we do.

That's why, starting right now, we're putting every issue online. That's why *RP* is going from publishing 11 times to more than 250 times a year, via our website and Facebook page – so we can all explore, and learn, and *share* God's perspective with everyone who needs to hear it.

Article after article will be made available online so they can be repostable on your own Facebook feed. Together we can be brighter lights: we can get those conversations started by sharing thoughtful and thought-provoking articles, we can repost other's words when we don't know what to say ourselves, we can point seekers to trustworthy answers. We can share God's message with a world that so desperately needs to hear it. We can do it together.

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Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

NOV / DEC 2016
Volume 36 Issue No. 1

PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS

TRANSGENDERISM 101: SHARE THE TRUTH WITH COMPASSION

WHAT IF WE COULD
SHARE RP WITH THE
WORLD?

P.8

"I'M SORRY" or
"PLEASE
FORGIVE ME"?

P.15



IN A NUTSHELL • FROM THE EDITOR • BOOK REVIEWS • CROSSWORD



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Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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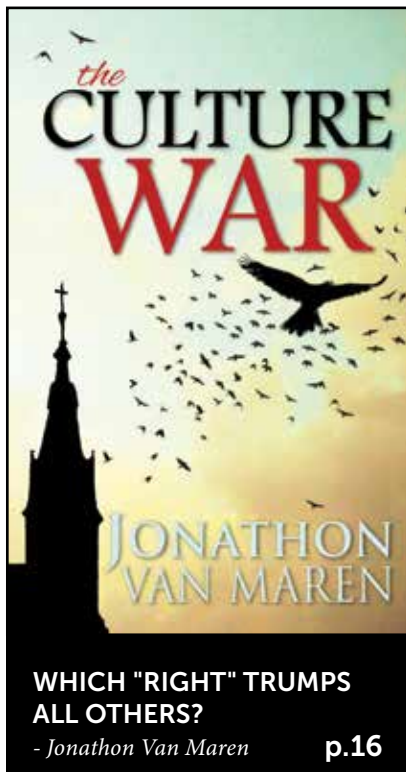
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TRANSGENDERISM 101

Share the truth with compassion

by André Schutten p.26



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READER RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR,

Upon reading Mark Penninga's article *No Other Gods* (September) I began to wonder whether we couldn't be more mission-oriented toward native peoples. I wanted to share some thoughts that might inspire those of us who are in contact with these people to search for ways to share the gospel rather than feeling the need to "protect" our beliefs.

And that is by finding out what we have in common spiritually. There are two ways that God speaks to people, one of which is sometimes called "general" revelation – making His character known through creation, and placing His laws in peoples' hearts (see Ps. 19:1-4; Rom 1:19-20; 2:13-15). Natives believe that God exists and that He made the world, for example. They have heard some of God's general message.

But obviously general revelation is not enough. God's "special" revelation, the Bible, is needed. God promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him, and ultimately, is that not the over-arching theme of the Bible? We just need to look at Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, Nineveh, Babylon and Persia (and many more) to see that God blesses those who come into contact with His people. Indeed, one of His highest goals is to redeem a people from every tribe and language (Rev. 5:9-10). Jesus encouraged and commended the faith of people of many different nations (ie. Samaritan, Roman, etc.). It has even been speculated that Acts may have been written to convince resistant Jewish apostles that the gospel was really meant for "all" peoples.

So, my thought is, in order to continue God's vision for the world as communicated throughout Scripture, shouldn't we be eager to discover more, and not less, about different cultural groups? And in order to learn how to identify the

"imprint" that God makes on cultures (general revelation) to prepare people to hear the gospel message (special revelation), I highly recommend the book *Eternity in their Hearts* by Don Richardson.

I agree with Mark Penninga that the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #64 is a challenge to Christians and churches, but maybe in a different way. Even though it should not be within the right of the Canadian government to legislate what we teach our children (will they ever learn?), we should not be afraid to learn about native spirituality if it is going to help us become better equipped to be a spiritual blessing to our native people. They need somebody to find the talking points that could "open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18).

Tanya Bouwers
Grand Valley, ON

EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

Yes, we should be sharing God's Truth with the natives. The problem here is that the government has pledged to mandate sharing in the other direction. Instead of the natives getting God's Truth, we are to get native false spirituality directed our way.

Is that a big danger for our children? The native spirituality probably isn't – our children will see through it.

The real issue is the government's unrepentant arrogance. Even as they say they regret how in the past schools were used to separate children from their parents, they're trying to do it again. They continue to look to the school system as a means by which they can pass on *their* values in direct opposition to what parents want, and not only regarding native spirituality, but also in matters of homosexuality, sexual ethics, and much more.

In other words, our difficulty isn't in the first place with what they are trying to force on us, but simply that they are trying to force it on us. As we both know, education is a parental role. So even though there may be good reason for us to learn more about native spirituality, when it becomes a government *requirement* then we need to tell the government to leave our children alone.



DEAR EDITOR,

Thank you for printing my letter regarding art in the October issue of *RP*. I found your response on point except for a few comments. You mentioned that “beauty isn’t simply in the eye of the beholder – there are standards by which we can discern what is better and worse,” which implies that beauty is a standard by which we should judge art. I agree that the quest to find the standards is a good one, and that we should look to the Bible for them. Unfortunately the Bible doesn’t say a lot specifically, so we can use the whole doctrine as a guideline. Which is why I don’t think beauty is the only standard. God loves truth and I’m convinced that truth is even more important, and sometimes truth isn’t beautiful.

You also commented that Jackson Pollock’s artwork differed from God’s because it lacked design and skill. Some art researchers have discovered that his paintings have an incredible mathematical quality to them, and others, that the level of emotion is amazingly intense. *Janson’s History of Art* (p. 1039) states:

“Despite the apparent looseness of his style, Pollock exerted great control over his medium by changing the viscosity of the paint, the size of the brush or stick he used to apply the paint, and the speed, reach, and direction of his own movements, and he rejected many paintings when the paint did not fall as anticipated. Pollock constructed his picture as he went along, with each new move playing off the previous one, and emotional intuition dictating the next gesture. The resulting image is not just a record of the physical self, but also of the psychological being.”

I would argue that Pollock has designed his art, much like God has designed his. His compositions and colors are planned and purposeful, and that takes skill.

Opinions are valueless unless they are informed. Art is a

complex subject that deserves time and study and so I encourage Christians to read up about art and artists that they don’t understand or may have preconceived negative ideas about. You might just find that you change your mind.

Sheila Van Delft
Surrey, BC



EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

Truth and beauty – have we hit on two biblical standards that can serve as our foundation for evaluating art? As you note, art doesn’t have to be beautiful to be good – there are, for example, graphic war paintings that share a brutal truth.

But when a work isn’t beautiful, to be good art, doesn’t it then need to at least be meaningful? Can something be good art if it is both ugly and pointless? Or does good art need to be, at a bare minimum, beautiful or true?

I think we’re on to something, and it will be a great topic to explore further in future issues of *RP*.

A NOTE FROM REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

In the October 2016 issue of *Reformed Perspective*, Redeemer University College shared an advertorial that featured some familiar faces for *RP* readers. One of these was Jessica Bosma, featured on page 4 of Redeemer’s insert. Jessica was part of a research video Redeemer produced this fall. The video, titled *Why Christian Research?* is available at youtube.com/redeemeruc.

We decided to share a still from this video, still underway at the time, when we put the insert together this past summer. Unfortunately this decision caused some confusion as the story beneath the photo featured Redeemer student Erin Steckley, not Jessica Bosma. Our apologies! We realize in retrospect that a caption on the photo could have prevented much of this confusion.

Those with further feedback about the advertorial are welcome to contact Redeemer’s communications team at communications@redeemer.ca

Beth Van Lingen, Communications Manager
Redeemer University College



WHAT IF WE COULD SHARE *RP* WITH THE WORLD?

by Jon Dykstra

Come January it will be 35 years since a small group with a big vision started *Reformed Perspective*. It took years for the magazine to get off the ground – before it could begin they had to bring in expertise from the Netherlands, seek out an editor, raise funds, and travel the country selling subscriptions. It was a small group, but no small task.

So why'd they do it? Why did they think it was absolutely vital to get this magazine up and running?

1. TO ENCOURAGE AND EQUIP

One big reason was a shared concern about the world's impact on the Church. They understood that our culture's secular perspective couldn't be escaped – it was in our newspapers and magazines, it was on the radio, it was a part of every TV show, every movie, every nightly news program. But if it couldn't be escaped, it could be *contended with*. So *RP*'s founders set out to combat it, and rebut it, with a solid, thorough, biblically Reformed perspective.

Now this was in 1982, back before the Internet, Netflix and Facebook. This is before the text messaging that allows our teens to be in constant contact with their peers. This is before the 500-channel cable universe, before the mobile phone, and even before the fax machine was really a thing. Their world was a *lot* less connected and yet even then they saw how a constant feed of secular perspective can have a powerful impact on what church members accept, and what they believe to be true.

So the magazine was started to give Christians something much better to chew on. It would provide a steady, trustworthy,

biblically-rooted *antithesis* that would equip and encourage readers to not only stand firm, but go into the world and “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:5).

2. TO DISCOVER AND CELEBRATE

RP was also intended to be a magazine of discovery. There are battles to be fought, yes, but also so much fun to be had in exploring the universe our God has made. We are called not simply to contend for His truth, but also to celebrate His genius! Ours is a God who made black holes, anteaters, and marriage, and now we get to follow after and explore how it is that they all work!

The areas for exploration were, like the Creator Himself, endless, and all could be God-honoring, but a particular focus was going to be on the social, political and economic realms. The world wants to tell us that God has no place in politics, or economics for that matter. *RP*'s founders knew that every square inch of creation is Jesus's, so the question is not *whether* there is a Christian perspective on politics and economics, but only, *what* is it? And there is such joy in figuring it out!

The opportunities for exploration about all things social was also endless. What are God's thoughts about...

- home decorating
- our charitable giving
- smartphone etiquette
- high school basketball
- hospitality
- rap music
- end-of-life decisions

- our entertainment choices
- work/home life balance
- etc. and etc. and etc.

Each issue the magazine would also serve as a forum for the celebration of His genius, and as a means to explore His thoughts about every sphere of life.

35 YEARS LATER, ONE THING IS VERY DIFFERENT

Now fast-forward 35 years. The world has changed, but some things are still the same. We're still getting hit with a constant stream of “secular perspective.” And when it comes to celebrating God's creative genius, we're not running short of areas to explore. So the need for a reliable, trustworthy, thoroughly Reformed perspective is just as great as ever.

What is different is the *opportunity* we have. In 1982 there was only one way to reach readers: *RP* had to be a print publication. That brought with it printing and mailing costs that had to be paid for some way, and that created the need to sell subscriptions. Subscriptions made sense. But it also meant that the magazine's purpose – to get solid Reformed materials out to as many people as possible – was running exactly counter to its business model, which limited the distribution to only those who were able to pay for it.

Today the Internet allows content to be delivered around the globe for next to nothing. Print is still important – on the Internet we only click on what we *want* to read, which may not be what we *need* to read. The print edition of *RP* aims to have a good mix of both, and if the magazine



The world is fed a constant diet of secular perspective. We can offer better.

is placed strategically in a household (maybe as a bathroom reader?) those less entertaining but perhaps more edifying articles will eventually get read.

However, as important as print remains, the Internet is an unparalleled opportunity. On our old website we shared only a hundred or so articles and book reviews. We limited it to this small amount out of a concern that if we posted all our content for free online, subscribers would stop paying for the magazine. (I mean, why pay for something if you can get it for free?) Still, even with this small selection, the website has had an impact. Reviews, articles, and a handful of complete issues have been read many thousands of times (the top article on the site had 80,000 hits), some articles have been reprinted in other publications, and others have been translated into various languages.

So what might happen if we put the entire magazine online? And what sort of impact could we have if, instead of publishing just 11 times a year, we shared the same trustworthy, thoughtful, thought-provoking, thoroughly *biblical* material 6 days a week, all 52 weeks of the year?

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

We're going to find out, and it all starts now.

By expanding our reach online, we can

be a blessing to everyone in our churches and to thousands and even hundreds of thousands. And this will allow us to be a far more effective tool for our long-time supporters. That article you wanted to share with your brother/friend/neighbor who's not a subscriber? Now you can send the link right to their inbox. All those articles you've wanted to share on your social media feed? All of them will be easily re-postable. We can work together to be saltier salt and brighter lights. We can get those conversations started by sharing thoughtful and thought-provoking articles; we can repost other's words when we don't know what to say ourselves; we can point seekers to trustworthy answers. Together, we can share God's Truth with a world that so desperately needs to hear it.

That's why, starting with this issue, *Reformed Perspective* is no longer just a magazine, but a mission – to get the truth out as far as possible. We will be doing that by:


- Increasing our publishing frequency from 11 times a year to over 200 times (by expanding our digital media platform) while still maintaining a bi-monthly 48-page print magazine.
- A new website – www.ReformedPerspective.ca – with every issue, and article after article, shared as widely as possible on our greatly expanded

social media presence.

- Giving print magazines free to all donors and asking our subscribers to now support us by becoming donors – subscriptions will be phased out.
- Giving print magazines freely to many teachers, pastors, organizational leaders, and others, with a goal of assisting them as they educate and teach
- Expanding our target audience to all NAPARC churches, and to other churches, and the broader world.
- Increasing, as we are able, the use of other platforms, including presentations/speaking tours, hosting conferences, and preparing educational resources for schools and home schools.

TO REACH THE WORLD

This is ambitious, and for it to be successful we need your support. We are phasing out paid subscription, and relying instead on donations so we can distribute *Reformed Perspective* to the world. For this to work we need the help of all our subscribers – we're asking you to continue financially supporting *RP* by becoming a donor. That's why we've included, on the inside back cover of this issue, a Pre-Authorized Debit form that allows for regular monthly donations. While we appreciate donations of any kind or size, a steady reliable source from these PAD donations is of enormous benefit because it best allows us to plan for the future.

Reformed Perspective has been busy arming and equipping God's people, and sharing discoveries about His creation, for 35 years now, and it's been because of the support of our loyal readership. Our hope is that you'll be just as excited about the greater impact *RP* can have in reaching more, both in our churches, and far beyond. The need is at least as great as it was way back in 1982, but now the opportunity is simply enormous – together, and with the Lord's blessing, we can reach the world! Will you support *RP* with its new mission? 

Jon Dykstra can be reached at editor@reformedperspective.ca.

NOTA BENE

News
worth
noting

WHAT IS "EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE"?

BY JON DYKSTRA



The Liberal government has announced plans to bring in "equal pay for work of equal value" legislation by 2018.

It would apply to almost 900,000 Canadian employees, including not only federal employees, but also anyone working in federally regulated sectors like banks and airlines.

To be clear, we're not talking about "equal pay for equal work." That's the idea that if two people are doing the exact same work, and to the same quality, and for the same amount of hours – if it is exactly the same – then the federal government should pay them the same. That makes good sense.

But what we have here is the government deciding they are going to intervene in situations where people are doing very different work from one another. And the government is going to figure out how much their work should be worth, and whether they are doing work "of equal value."

None of the newspapers reporting on this can spot the huge glaring problem with this – they talk of it as if it is simply a matter of administrating it properly.

So what is the problem?

Who decides how work should be valued?

Consider this: how valuable is the work done by a second string back-up goaltender on an NHL team? He might still make several hundred thousand, even a million or two, and yet he's not doing all that much.

Meanwhile a good teacher is helping form the next generation of minds – what could be more important? Yet this teacher isn't likely to make even one hundred thousand.

Whose job is more valuable? A

bureaucrat might decide it is the teacher. But are we going to start paying our teachers millions to even it up?

What we have here is an example of the "diamond water paradox." While water is more important for life than diamonds (we can't survive more than 3 days without water, but we can get by a lot longer without diamonds), water remains much, much cheaper than diamonds. Why is that?

As we all know, it's because water is far more abundant than diamonds. Or to say it the other way around, diamonds are more expensive than water because they are rarer...even though they aren't more important or more useful.

So something's price is not always determined by how useful it is. There are other factors involved, and when it comes to jobs, that may also include how ready a supply there is for this position vs. that position. Teachers are in a far more abundant supply than NHL players of any type. That's why the NHL player gets more.

If we start arbitrarily deciding this job is the equivalent of that one, and so both should get the same pay, only bad things can result. In our example it would either mean bumping all the teachers' salaries up substantially (which we can't afford) or lowering the goaltenders' salaries to just a hundred thousand. But if these goalies are any good they could make more than that overseas. And so, suddenly, we've created a situation in which there is a shortage of quality second-string goalies because the government restricts what they can be paid.

Of course, the government isn't going to restrict goalies' pay – this is a goofy example. But the principles are just the same – the government is going to set up some sort of system of deciding what work is equal to which. And because it's going to ignore simple economic rules (like scarcity driving prices up), it's going to be a mess.

SOURCE: Kathryn May's "Liberals promise 'proactive' pay equity legislation to close wage gaps" posted to OttawaSun.com Oct. 5, 2016.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS ARE A BARGAIN FOR TAXPAYERS

BY ANNA NIENHUIS

Alberta isn't the only province where the public perception is firmly against private schools. The public seems to believe these schools are elitist, drain resources from the public system, and engaged in brainwashing. It's happening in BC, too.

But the facts tell a very different story: more than half of these independent schools are religiously based, and fewer than 10% are considered "elite" schools. A September 2016 study by the Fraser Institute looking at private vs. public schools in British Columbia found that calls for removal of government funding are misguided. In British Columbia, the average government expense for a public school student is \$8,288, while only \$3,911 is granted for independent school students. That means if the independent schools closed, taxpayer costs for each of

these students would double! It also means the parents who choose independent schooling have a significant funding gap to make up before their schools match the funding levels of public schools, let alone become elitist and go beyond that! Further, every parent sending their children to private school also pays for the public school in their taxes, contributing equally to a service they do not use.

If the general public recognized these discrepancies for what they are, they should encourage private schools, as the public school's inflated funding for students and higher wages for teachers are likely to draw significant talent into the public



school system. Meanwhile the private system continues to largely fund itself while continuing to fund the public system. Private schools certainly do teach their own values and norms, but it is impossibly naïve to suggest that public schools aren't doing the same thing, just with very different values and at a much higher cost to taxpayers.

SOURCE: Deani Van Pelt, Szazid Hasan, & Neil Velduis' "Independent schools in British Columbia: Myths and realities" posted to FraserInstitute.org on Sept. 20, 2016

THE UNITED CHURCH TAKES A STAND: ATHEISTS SHOULD NOT BE MINISTERS

BY NATHAN ZEKVELD



Gretta Vosper is the pastor of Toronto's West Hill United Church and also a self-described atheist, with her two latest books touting not only her unbelief but encouraging others to embrace unbelief too: *Amen: What Prayer can Mean in a World Beyond Belief* and *With or Without God: Why the Way we live is more important than what we believe*. Vosper no longer uses the Lord's Prayer in her services and rarely uses the Bible, but she still

seeks to maintain her credentials in the United Church of Canada.

Her worship services promise love and inclusion. One of her congregants, Andrea DiPede writes: "The services are themed around love, justice, compassion care and responsibility, and living in right relationship with ourselves, with others and with the world." She adds that they no longer see the Bible as authoritative and when they read it in worship, they read it alongside "other sources of inspiration."

Now a United Church of Canada committee has recommended her removal, though her congregation continues to hang on. The report states: "In our opinion, she is not suitable to continue in ordained ministry because she does not believe in God, Jesus Christ or the Holy

Spirit." Bishop John Spong from the Episcopal Church in America wrote this in response to the debacle and in support of Vosper:

"If the United Church of Canada is not broad enough to embrace this creative and unique pastor then this church that I once admired so much has sounded its own death knell."

Vosper is an atheist who identifies as a United Church Pastor. It's definitely a creative and unique idea. One wonders if this Toronto leader is also able to design a square circle.

SOURCES: Moira Welsh's "Flock sticks with atheist United Church minister" posted to TheStar.com, Sept 11, 2016; David Mackenzie's "Big tent, small chapel: United Church finally defrocks atheist minister" posted to TheRebel Media, September 14, 2016; Michael Gryboski's "Canadian Church Led by Atheist Minister 'Rarely' Reads the Bible, Replaces Lord's Prayer With Secular Mantra" posted to ChristianPost.com, Oct 6, 2016

TORONTO PROFESSOR WON'T USE GENDERLESS PRONOUNS

BY ANNA NIENHUIS

Jordan Peterson, a psychology professor at the University of Toronto, has said he will not recognize the use of genderless pronouns for his students, such as *they* in place of *him* or *her*. "I'm not willing to mouth words that I think have been created for ideological purposes." He recognizes that his decision could quickly classify him as a promoter of "hate speech" but he points out that this is a problem with the law, not with him.

In an interview with *CBC Radio's* Carol Off, she noted, "In Ontario, the law states that gender is a 'person's

sense of being a woman, a man, both, or neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum." Peterson replied:

"Yes. That particular statement I regard as logically incoherent to the point of dangerousness. I think that the reason it's been rushed into law is that people haven't been paying attention."

Well, let's make sure we pay attention. All people should be protected from assault, harassment, and discrimination, not because of their sex or lifestyle, but because they are people created in God's image (regardless of whether they want to acknowledge that). To introduce new



pronouns in an attempt to distance oneself from identification with either sex, though, is an ideological pressure that, like Peterson, we should not accept.

SOURCE: Carol Off's "I'm not a bigot": Meet the U of T prof who refuses to use genderless pronouns" posted to cbc.ca/radio/asithappens on Sept 30, 2016; Picture is a screen shot of Dr. Jordan Peterson, at a Bill C-16 debate on Nov 18, 2016 hosted at the University of Toronto

THE PUSH FOR BOYS TO GET HPV VACCINATION HITS BC

BY JON DYKSTRA



Grade 6 student Nelson Roy thought it just wasn't right that girls in his Vancouver school were getting the HPV vaccine for free, and the boys were not. So he and his twin brother Elliot did just what you'd expect rambunctious, rabble-raising modern boys to do: they lodged a human rights complaint.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) has been associated with a number of cancers, but the vaccination program was originally focused on preventing just one of those – cervical cancer – which is why the vaccine was offered only to girls. But because other cancers, including ones men can get too, are also linked to HPV, six other provinces (including Ontario, Alberta and Manitoba) are already making the

vaccine available to both girls and boys for free.

According to an article in the *Vancouver Sun*, a third of girls across the province aren't choosing to be vaccinated. Should our girls, and now our boys, be among them? What should we as parents do?

HPV is a sexual transmitted disease, so a Christian couple that lives a faithful monogamous life is in no danger of getting HPV. When we consider that all vaccines come with some sort of risk (though that is normally outweighed by the benefit), what we have here is a situation in which faithful Christians who get the vaccine are being exposed to a risk, but getting no benefit. This is not a vaccine we need.

Now as parents we might wonder, "What if my boy or girl ends up marrying someone who hasn't been sexually pure? Then they would be at risk, so isn't that a reason to get the vaccine?"

It's true that if someone has lived a promiscuous life and later repents, they may have already contracted HPV, and then it could make sense for their spouse to get the HPV vaccine. But if that happens, our child can then, as

an adult, make the decision to take the vaccine – it has been proven effective up until age 26 (and maybe beyond that, but studies haven't yet been done).

As parents we might also wonder, "What if our own child ends up being sexually impure? Should we vaccinate them to protect them, just in case?"

None of us are perfect parents, and we know we don't have perfect children, so yes, our children may sin sexually. That said, should we be readying our children for sin? In Romans 13:14 Paul says,

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

It doesn't seem as if we're supposed to prepare our children so that they can enjoy sin with fewer repercussions.

No doubt, the government, and our family doctors, are going to continue to promote the HPV vaccine for our girls, and now encourage it for our boys too. But this is one vaccine we don't need.

SOURCE: Charles Buchanan's "Teen wants free HPV vaccine for all boys in B.C.", posted to VancouverSun.com on Sept. 12, 2016; "HPV Vaccine for Adults" as reviewed by Jennifer Robinson, MD on August 8, 2016 and posted to WebMD.com

4 OUT OF 5 EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS VOTED FOR TRUMP...BUT THERE'S A BIGGER STORY

BY JON DYKSTRA



When *New York Times* exit polls suggested that 81% of self-described evangelical Christians voted for Trump, many wondered how Trump could have pulled such high numbers.

After all, Trump is a thrice-married, frequent adulterer who bragged about seducing married women in his book *The Art of the Deal*. He has owned casinos and a Trump-branded strip club, appeared on the cover of *Playboy*, and helped his current wife (and America's next First Lady) pose nude for *GQ* magazine by providing his plane as the setting. He is a bully who has called women he doesn't like "fat pigs, dogs, slobs and disgusting animals" and given rivals in his own party demeaning nicknames like "Little Marco" and "Lyn' Ted" (and even insinuated that one rival's father had a role in the JFK assassination). And he is a liar. One of the more bizarre examples was a March press conference in which he responded to criticisms that his Trump Vodka and Trump Steaks and *Trump Magazine* businesses had failed. Trump said it wasn't so, and pointed to

a table he'd had set up full of Trump-branded products as proof. The problem was, there was wine, but no Trump Vodka (which is now only available in Israel). And the steaks weren't Trump Steaks; they were from Bush Brothers Provisions. And the magazine wasn't *Trump Magazine* (which went out of business in 2009) but instead an annual in-house publication called *The Jewel of Palm Beach* that only goes out to one of his clubs. The criticisms were true, but Trump thought that if he just lied – boldly and baldly – he could pull one over on the journalists covering him. And for the most part he did.

So why then would so many evangelical Christians vote for this lying, cheating, name-calling, man?

It came down to his opponent. Over one million unborn children are killed each year in the US, and Hillary Clinton vowed to do everything in her power to ensure that keeps happening. This is evil on a whole other *hitleresque* level! That's why a Pew Research Poll from two weeks before the election revealed that more than half of Trump's evangelical supporters were choosing him only because they wanted to vote *against* Clinton. They saw him as the lesser of two evils.

We can debate whether Christians should always vote for the lesser of two evils – aren't there times when the lesser evil is simply too wicked to support? But

doesn't everyone agree that voting for the *greater* of two evils is a bad idea? So the bigger question is, *why did 16% of evangelical Christians vote for Hillary Clinton?*

God has spared America from a President Clinton, and for that we can be very thankful. But how should we respond to the election of President Trump? Is the election of a very, but lesser, evil a reason for celebration or mourning?

Let's go with both. There is reason to hope – there are so many more opportunities for good than would have existed under a President Clinton. But with many key Christian figures endorsing Trump (like James Dobson, Jerry Falwell Jr., Wayne Grudem in part, and others), we should also be worried that those outside the Church may believe that Donald Trump is one of ours. What if outsiders think Christians are fine with bullying, lying, and cheating, so long as it is *our* guy doing it? That would be one way to mute our witness to the world.

So there is a need for Christians to, on the one hand, encourage President Trump whenever he does do good, but on the other, call him to repentance when he does evil. We cannot let our gratitude to God become a misplaced and fawning loyalty to President Trump.

SOURCE: Mitt Romney's March 3, 2016 speech at the Hinckley Institute at the University of Utah; Donald Trump's press conference Mar. 8, 2016 in Jupiter, Florida; "Election 2016: Exit Polls" posted to NYTimes.com on Nov. 8, 2016

"ORDER A DADDY" APP NOW AVAILABLE IN UK

BY JON DYKSTRA

The London Sperm Bank has released an app that allows women to pick sperm donors on the basis of their race, education or even hair or eye color. *The Times* called it an "order a daddy" app. If a woman can't find just the right donor, she can submit her own specific wish list and be alerted when such a donor becomes available.

The London Sperm Bank felt the need to defend themselves. They argued that the new app was simply being

an improvement on the old method. As the group's scientific director, Dr. Kamal Ahuja, put it: "You make all the transactions online, like you do anything else these days."

They are right, in part – the real problem isn't the app, but the fact the children have now become a commodity, one to be custom crafted according to consumers' felt needs. And the selfishness of this "transaction" is evident in how the children are, right from the start, deliberately orphaned



from their fathers. For it is a misnomer to call this an "order a daddy" app, since any child that results will never know their daddy.

SOURCE: Sarah-Kate Templeton's "Sperm bank offers 'order a daddy' app" posted to TheTimes.co.uk on Sept 25, 2016

MORE GOOD NEWS: WE LIVE IN A PROSPEROUS TIME

BY JON DYKSTRA

Current cultural developments have many of us depressed. But let's not forget the incredible blessing God has shared with us. We have so much more than those who lived here in the US and Canada 100 years ago. One hundred years ago:

- The average life expectancy for an American male was 47 years
- Only 14% of US homes had a bath
- Diarrhea was one of the leading causes of death
- 90% of doctors didn't have a degree
- The US workplace was about 30 times more dangerous than today
- The word "teenager" didn't seem to exist yet
- The average American house had half as much square footage as today
- No one had a radio, let alone a television
- There were no electric drills, pop up toasters, electric kettles or Zippo lighters
- And...there were no Slinkies!

SOURCE: Christine Giordano's "Stop Complaining: Homes are way bigger than they were 100 years ago" posted to credit.com on Sept. 15, 2016; "1916 Called and It Thinks 2016 Rocks: What a Difference 100 Years Made" posted to GlennBeck.com on Oct 10, 2016; Ellie Zolfaghari's "From the Sony Walkman to the humble zip: The past century's top 100 inventions that changed our lives (yet most of us take for granted)" posted to DailyMail.com Oct 8, 2013.



DOING TO OTHERS WHAT THEY DID TO US?

BY JON DYKSTRA



Is the Christian way tit for tat? In September a sign company in Washington State let a pro-life group there know that they weren't going to "wrap" the group's van. Students for Life wanted the van to be wrapped in pink, and emblazoned with the words "Planned Parenthood betrays women" but FASTSIGNS declined their business.

So how should Christians respond when we are discriminated against? This is the same state where Christian florist Barronelle Stutzman is being sued for not providing flowers to a gay wedding. So the Student's for Life president Kristan Hawkins told her supporters:

Now unlike the ACLU and many on the political left, I respect the right of the FASTSIGNS owner to decline wrapping our van. However, I will be filing an official complaint with the same folks in the state of Washington who are suing the Christian florist.

These two sentences don't seem to go together - if Students for Life respects FASTSIGNS' right to decline their business, then why would Student's for Life put forward an official complaint?

Sharing the shoddy way FASTSIGNS treated the pro-life group seems the right way to move forward - FASTSIGNS should be publicly shamed, and pro-lifers should be alerted that this is not a business they will likely want to interact with (or expect good service from). But do we really want the State to do unto them what we don't want the State doing unto us (Luke 6:31)?

SOURCE: Picture is from the Students for Life Sept. 29, 2015 Email newsletter

SOLOGAMY GAINS A HEARING

BY MARK REIMERS



A fast-growing group of "self-marriers" is getting more and more attention. "Sologamy," as the fantasy nuptials are called, offers anyone the opportunity to make vows of commitment to the self.

In a *Vice* article earlier this year, editor Hannah Ewens interviewed some of those who'd recently married themselves. One subject, Sophie Tanner, complained that she often has to defend herself against charges of being vain or narcissistic. "There's a huge difference between vanity

and self-love," Tanner insisted. "Why people find [sologamy] the most vain thing you can do in this society - when selfies are so prevalent and there's so much about putting on your best face and appearance - I don't know."

Tanner also summed up what this means to her: "People think if you marry yourself you gain a nun status," she said. "But obviously if you're a nun you commit your body to God. This is committing yourself to yourself."

Mercatornet.com's Carolyn Moynihan diagnoses the practice as plain old selfishness, paired with a culture that doesn't place any value on marriage. But that doesn't get to the root of understanding a ridiculous trend like sologamy. Self-marrying is self-worship. This is about replacing God with "me, myself and I," and the sacraments include not only sologamy, but abortion, euthanasia, and non-committal sex.

Should it be “I’m sorry” or “Please forgive me”?



by Jay Younts

“I’m sorry” or “Please forgive me” – does it make a difference? Aren’t they just two different ways of saying the same thing?

Not really. “I’m sorry” can lead to regret, which leads to enslavement. “Please forgive me” leads to repentance, which leads to freedom.

SORRY I WAS CAUGHT

Saying I’m sorry doesn’t really require a change of heart. For example, one child takes another child’s toy truck without permission. He is caught in the act. He is told to go to his brother, give the toy back and say he is sorry. He does this, but inside he is still unhappy he doesn’t have the toy. His brother, on the other hand, is happy to have the toy back, but he is upset that the toy was taken in the first place. On the surface, everything looks okay. The wrong act was discovered, the perpetrator said he was sorry, and everything is back to normal.

But what about beneath the surface? And how is saying I’m sorry not helpful, but actually destructive?

The above scenario demonstrates not only a momentary conflict, but an ongoing problem of anger and injustice. How could asking for forgiveness make a difference?

Simply saying one is sorry doesn’t address the underlying heart issues. The problem here is that while the first child may regret the incident, the regret may be focused on the fact that he was caught, not that he disobeyed God and attempted to wrong his brother. Let’s revisit the scenario, this time focusing on asking for forgiveness.

CAN WE BE RESTORED?

Mom sees that the toy truck has been wrongfully taken. She calmly confronts her son and administers the appropriate

“That was selfish of me. Please forgive me for not caring for you.”

discipline. She addresses the sin and tells her son he should seek to serve his brother rather than take advantage of him. Now the real issue of selfishness is out in the open. Then she instructs her son to go to his brother and say, “Nathan, please forgive me for trying to take your truck. That was selfish of me. Please forgive me for not caring for you.” Mom knows that repentance means not only acknowledging what was wrong, but replacing it with what is right.

In response, Nathan has been taught to say I forgive you. And with encouragement from his mom, he also says, “we can play with the truck together.”

The issue of regret has been addressed for both brothers. The groundwork is being laid for forgiveness to result in repentance and in building a solid relationship between these brothers.

CONCLUSION

Will this same scene be replayed the next day? Probably, yes! But daily training in righteousness will begin to build in patterns of forgiveness and repentance that will serve both brothers for the rest of their lives.

“I’m sorry” or “Please forgive me.” It makes a difference!

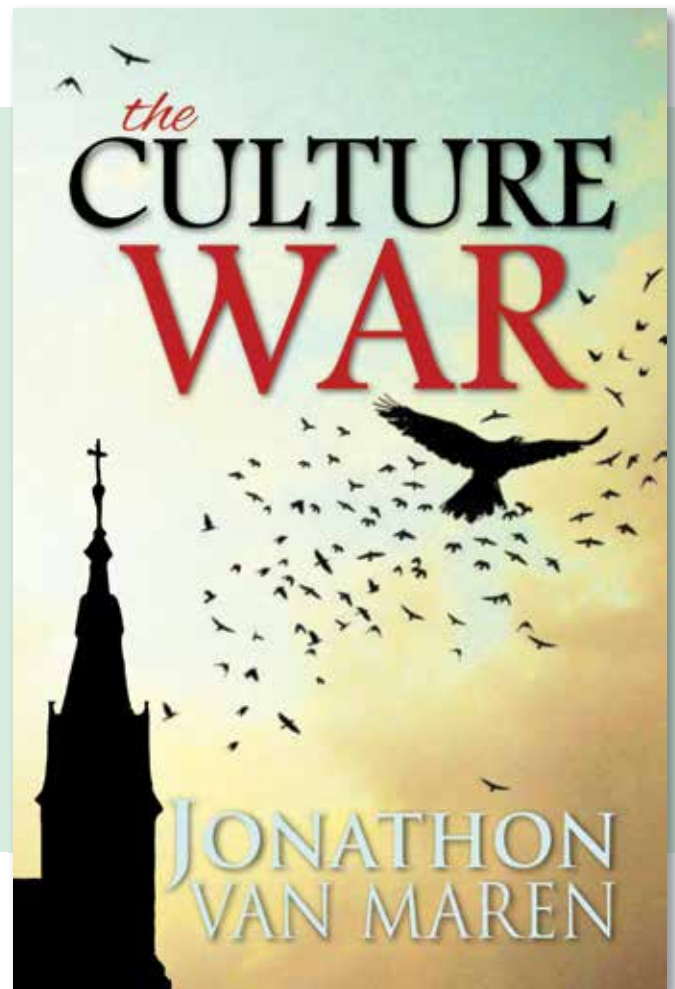
Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

– 2 Corinthians 7:10 **RP**

This article first appeared at ShepherdPress.com/blog and is reprinted here with permission of the author.

WHICH "RIGHT" TRUMPS ALL OTHERS?

by Jonathon Van Maren



In this excerpt from his book The Culture War Jonathon Van Maren lays out how sexual rights have triumphed over all others...and one of the first steps we can take in response.

When abortion activists came shrieking with rage at Canadian Member of Parliament Stephen Woodworth's suggestion that a committee examine human life in the womb in 2013, he was somewhat surprised. When the Canadian government kowtowed to feminist hysteria and shut down his colleague Mark Warawa's motion to condemn gender-selection abortion, Woodworth noticed a trend – and coined a new term. What we're seeing is "abortionism," he told me in an interview.

Abortionism is essentially a

philosophy that raises abortion to a sacred status, above all other democratic principles.

I agree with Mr. Woodworth, but I think the problem goes much deeper than abortion. Abortion's now-sacred status is symptomatic of something far more sinister: the sweeping success of the Sexual Revolution. So-called "sexual rights" are now considered to be the most important "rights" our society has, and take precedence over all other rights, regardless of how fundamental they are.

RIGHTS THAT FELL BY THE WAYSIDE

Freedom of speech?

This is now a quaint concept that does not apply, for example, to any sort of pro-life activism, especially and ironically on university campuses, once lauded as the marketplaces of ideas. Pornography, nude demonstrations, and virtually any form of sex-related

activism is welcome – unless you happen to be *opposing* something, in which case it is not. When I was in university, for example, our "Cemetery of the Innocents" display was trampled and destroyed by a student politician who then took to the campus paper to refer to us as "the Hitler Youth." On campus after campus across North America, feminists respond to pro-life activism the same way: Shut down the debate. Almost every pro-life activist I know has been censored on his or her university campus in some way or another – and usually with the endorsement, if not assistance, of the university administration.

The same applies to the right to educate your children as you see fit. Increasingly, the adherents of the Sexual Revolution are realizing that in order to get the upcoming generation of Christians to accept the New Sexual Order, they will have to force it on

Churches in Denmark have already been ordered to perform gay weddings...

them. Specifically, mandate new “sex education.” Christian schools and home-schoolers frustrate them, because they can no longer teach children about masturbation and anal sex in fifth grade. As Wendy Shalit highlights in her magnificent book *A Return to Modesty*, much of the public education system is now the systematic destruction of innocence. And if the powers that be have their way, soon you won’t be able to opt out.

Religious liberty is being dispensed with at an alarming rate as well. After all, our culture has abandoned religious values. Once we’ve chiselled and hacked the last of the Ten Commandments monuments from in front of the last courthouses, we can put those quaint beliefs in the trash can alongside it. Businesses that disagree with gay marriage are being forced to shut down. Churches in Denmark have already been ordered to perform gay weddings, and there’s no reason to think that such things won’t soon begin to happen here in North America. Our tax dollars are used to fund Pride Parades that resemble public orgies. The Sexual Revolutionaries are not, for the most part, about living and let live. They are

about compulsory acceptance.

All rights are now subject to sexual rights.

HOW WE GOT HERE

The Sexual Revolutionaries didn’t just change history. They rewrote it, because that’s what revolutionaries always do. This struck me vividly when I was traveling in China, and our tour guide, a pretty young woman named Anna, was taking my friend and I from the Forbidden Palace to Tiananmen Square to Mao Tse-Tung’s Mausoleum, where the dead dictator still lies in state in a glass-covered coffin. After listening to Anna praise Mao for hours, I asked her how she could possibly believe he was good for China when, by some estimates, he presided over the deaths of nearly seventy million people.

First she was irritated, and then agitated. After informing me that Mao was a great leader, she ended our discussion by announcing, “Denying Mao would be like denying Communist Party!” And with that, historical truth was placed firmly in the backseat to ideological obligation.

In order to understand the sex-driven lunacy and carnage that has gripped

our culture on virtually every front, we have to put history back in the front seat. We have to honestly analyze and understand how we reached this point, so that we can begin to realize what we can do – not to return, but to rebuild. To equip our children and the upcoming generation with the truth of what has actually taken place, and why it is that we believe what we do.

ONE THING WE CAN DO

This is precisely what Ted Byfield told me when I asked him what young people could do to begin the process of cultural renewal. Read history, he told me urgently. People will be stunned to find out what actually happened – “they will be astonished at the things we’ve done in [the last] century that made no sense at all. What should be emphasized in your generation is to *find out what happened*. In other words, *read history*.”

He’s right. Once we know what has *happened*, we will have a better sense of what is *happening*, and have vital context for the spreading social decay we are witnessing. That decay, as we will see, has become our culture’s new normal. RP

The Culture War is about how the Sexual Revolution triumphed in the Western World, and how Christians can respond. It can be purchased at TheBridgehead.ca.

THE CULTURE WAR

215 PAGES / 2016

BY JONATHON VAN MAREN

Whether considering the issue of transgenderism, euthanasia or widespread pornography, Christians are often left scratching our heads wondering, “What happened?” and, “How did it happen so fast?” *The Culture War* sets out to answer both of these questions, and to provide a way forward for Christians to respond.

Author Jonathon Van Maren explores several issues, including

pornography, rape culture, abortion, and euthanasia, and makes a clear and convincing argument that these issues are inextricably linked. By exploring the history of the sexual revolution and its various results, Van Maren skillfully shines light on the darkness of our current culture of death.

Due to its subject matter, *The Culture War* is at times an unsettling read. Van Maren describes the book as “a history, an analysis, and an autopsy,” and like an autopsy there are parts of this book where Van Maren’s frankness is difficult to take. That

doesn’t make this book one to avoid, but one to approach soberly, and one for parents to be ready to discuss with teenage readers.

Despite the frankness, or perhaps because of it, this book is a valuable resource for Christians in today’s society, and especially for parents. It addresses relevant issues with clarity and wisdom and ends on a note of hope and exhortation to fight bravely in the culture war before us.

– Elissa Dykstra

PORN ADDICTION ISN'T JUST A GUY THING

by Anonymous

"...but you're a girl!?"

If I had a dollar for every time I heard that given the context that is about to follow, I'd have about twenty bucks. Sure, it isn't much, but then again, I've only told my story twenty times. It never fails. I am a mother, and a wife to a wonderful, forgiving, and loving husband. I have been a member of the Church since I was baptized as an infant, and I am a sinner.

This is a story about grace. That's really all it can amount to. I would love to think that I got through all of this on my own accord and by my own strength, but that isn't the case. It's grace.

When I was still in my early teens, about twelve, I was flicking through the channels on our television. I was supposed to be babysitting, and well, I was – but all my siblings were in bed.

Click, click, click. Nothing.

And then, I saw IT. A naked couple on the screen.

It wasn't long before my parents arrived back home, and since our window was large enough to see them coming from literally a kilometer away, I had enough time to change the channel and bolt downstairs to my bed and begin to pretend I was sleeping.

IT BEGAN WITH CURIOSITY

I never told my parents about what I saw. And instead of confiding in those who had raised me from infancy, who I literally trusted with my life, I turned to our new computer and told Google instead. I was young enough that I didn't understand what exactly I was searching

for, but I was old enough to know how to work a keyboard and spell words. The next time I found myself home alone, I pulled up a chair, typed in a few key words and found what I had been looking for.

What started off as "innocent" curiosity became a full-blown addiction.

Minutes turned into hours, and the hours repeated themselves every couple days. I started to like what I was seeing and soon enough, it became a part of my daily routine. I started looking forward to those private moments, but in return,

What started off as "innocent" curiosity became a full-blown addiction.

started hating myself, my body, and God. I would stay home as often as I could just to go on the computer. I watched soap operas instead of going to school, and one day, I put a computer in my room. I struggled on and off for years without anyone knowing.

My battle began before unlimited wifi, before I had my own smartphone, Instagram and Snapchat account, or personal laptop. It was still difficult to find and pornography sites were "restricted" to those over 18 years. Now, it's *everywhere*. It's been a little over one year since the last time I watched pornography. It's been a very trying yet powerful year. I struggle with it every single day, multiple times per day.

In the midst of my battle, I pushed God aside. I figured that if God wasn't in

the picture, I didn't have to worry about whether or not what I was doing was sinful. I had convinced myself that He didn't love me anyway, so what was the point of trying to make Him happy with me.

As the distance between God and myself grew, the hatred I began to see in the mirror increased. I started to compare myself to the women I had seen on the screen; my skin wasn't smooth enough, my breasts weren't large enough, my legs weren't skinny enough (I was a size zero!), my nose was too long, my teeth too pointy... the list could go on and on. I began to think that if I looked like the women on the screen, maybe I would have the love that they had too.

THE REALITY

If only I had known the truth about the "love" that those women were experiencing. Plain and simple - porn is often drug-induced rape. Now, who in their right mind would actually *want* that? It all happened so fast. One moment they would be meeting each other and the next moment they would be on the bed. But, I didn't fully understand the truth behind the scenes of what I was watching, so I actually had myself convinced that that was what sex was like.

I suppose since it was on the screen I could pretend that it was normal. Yet, it isn't normal. I told my mother of my struggle last year, and she said something that I had never thought of before. She said "Those women on the screen, those men too, they are someone's sister. Someone's daughter, mother, brother and father. They are real people, with real families and real lives." Bam. If any statement helped me through my battle the most, that was

definitely a big contender. You have to think of it in real life, because it is real life. If you were to come across a couple having sex on the street, would you grab a chair, some popcorn and indulge yourself? Nope. And yet, what I was watching on the screen was just as real as that.

SATAN LIKES THE DARK

I remember the first time I decided I was going to stop watching pornography. It lasted a week. I had stayed up late and at that time had access to a computer. I dare say that Satan works best at night. I even remember these words running through my brain: "Go on! One minute wouldn't hurt". Well, I had gone a full week and I was on the road to recovery, but I hadn't found my strength in God at that time, and the one minute became an hour which became a daily routine. Again.

Why even bother trying to stop? I would argue with myself, It's impossible, anyway! I had become so invested in my guilty pleasure that it was easy enough to

come up with stupid excuses to shut my conscience up. I knew that even though a part of me wanted to stop, a very large part of me didn't. Even times when I would fall on my knees and pray for forgiveness, deep down I knew that I actually didn't mean it.

I was a pretty techy kid growing up, so no one actually found out about my addiction. I figured if no one really knew about it, and I could pretend that nothing was different, no one would suspect anything. There was a point in my life that I actually thought I just wouldn't tell anyone.

IT IMPACTED DATING

But then, I found myself in a serious relationship with a man whom I now call my husband. We had been dating for a few years when I told him. He was the first person I had ever told. I remember sitting in the car before I went in to see him, praying fervently to God that he wouldn't break up with me and that he would

Why even bother trying to stop?
I would argue with myself,
It's impossible, anyway!

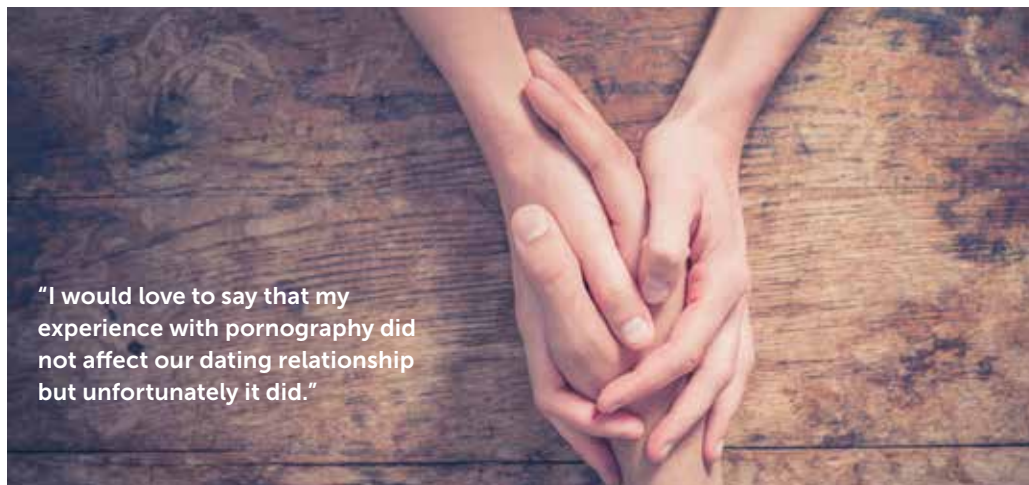
forgive me.

He did forgive me.

We dated for a long time. And well, I would love to say that my experience with pornography did not affect our relationship but unfortunately it did. It was easy to convince myself that in order to feel loved I had to be touched. After all, that is what I had polluted my brain with for many previous years! We weren't the definition of "innocent" in our relationship and I will take most of the



We know that, especially when they are young, it is important to shelter our children. So we take care to vet their inputs, checking, for example, every book in our Christian school library. But are we taking the same care when we give our children their own smartphone? Do we understand that these are carry-everywhere portals to pornography?



"I would love to say that my experience with pornography did not affect our dating relationship but unfortunately it did."

responsibility for those actions. I could chalk it up to the fact that we were young, or that we dated for a long time, or maybe that our hormones were raging.

And sure, those might have had an effect, but when it really comes down to the heart of the matter – it's just that, the heart. My heart, and if I can speak on behalf of my husband, his too, were not centered on God. Mine didn't pay attention to what God says love is: "patient, kind, slow to anger..." (1 Cor. 13). To me, love was attention from my boyfriend - any attention he wanted to give, and any attention I could take. I had tried to find satisfaction in a fellow sinner, instead of looking to our one, perfect and holy God.

We went through periods of lust and other periods of just finding pure joy in each other's company. Thankfully, with a wedding ahead, our time of engagement was focused where it should have been all along, and we began to enjoy each other as God's forgiven children.

IT DIDN'T JUST STOP WITH MARRIAGE

There is a saying: "Satan will do anything he can before you are married to get you into bed, and anything he can do when you are married to get you out of it."

It is difficult for me to write this next part, but it's part of my story. I watched pornography as a wife. I took matters into my own hands when I didn't feel like sharing my feelings or frustrations with my husband. Mainly it was just because I was bored or lonely. It happened. I hate

that it happened, but that doesn't mean that it didn't. If there were any part of this whole struggle I could wish never happened, this would be it.

My husband is so forgiving. If there is any word I could use to describe him, that would be it. He has stood by me and encouraged me in my fight against pornography more times than I dare count. He is the one to point me to my Rock. I took one evening to share with him my struggles – every last detail – all the who, what, when, why and hows. He is now my partner in my fight and I know that he would leave everything if he knew that I was being tempted, to come and help me fight.

It's been a little over a year since I have last watched pornography. I am in my mid-twenties, and have struggled with it on and off for more than 10 years. It is still a daily struggle: every time I go to the beach, the mall, pull out my phone, go on Facebook, Instagram, the computer. Videos and images I watched as a teenager will suddenly appear in my mind as I am washing the dishes, doing the laundry, vacuuming, sitting in church, even praying! The struggle has not left me, and I dare say it never will.

GOD'S GRACE

I would love to say that I have all of this under control. I don't. God does. One year ago, I put my battle in His hands and prayed with tears that He would take this cup from me. And praise be to God, He has. He has given me the strength I need to put my smartphone away, to turn off

the laptop, to double check the ratings of shows before I go and watch them. He has strengthened my faith in his Son and His forgiveness. He has given me grace and love. I have found freedom in my walk, a spring back in my step and more love for my husband than I even thought possible.

I remember sitting in church one Sunday hearing a sermon on the Lord's Supper. At one point during the sermon, the minister asked us to picture Christ hanging on the cross – I don't remember very much

after that because I knew what he meant. Picture *my sin* hanging there on Christ's shoulders. I put him there. I stood before him yelling "Crucify him! Crucify him!" That is the moment I realized it wasn't impossible. I had Christ on my side, and he had conquered sin. *My sin*. He put it to death! For *me*.

So I continue on, fighting, finding my hope in God's promises:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:16-18).

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

And as my wise mother has taught me, "Don't be surprised by sin. Be surprised by grace." Thanks mom.

ADVICE FROM A FORMER ADDICT TO YOU:

1. Talk to your children/friends. Be the one to bring up the topic in a conversation. I often find it easier to talk about the "big topics" one on one rather than in a group. Ask them to be

"WHY WAIT?" & "HOW FAR?"

Sex Matters is a frank and very helpful book for parents

by Annie Kate Arnouste

Jonathan McKee wants to make it easier for parents to talk to their kids about sex, and to that end he's written a book for parents to give to their teens, which addresses the two common questions, "Why wait?" & "How far?"

Sex Matters is a book for Christians – McKee provides answers from the Bible and explains the Bible's message using research and real life examples.

WHY WAIT?

Why wait? McKee takes over 20 informative pages to explain the statement, "God has given the gift of sex to enjoy in marriage." And in addition to making the biblical case, he shares how research shows that this command is in alignment with how human beings function.

HOW FAR?

How far can people go, and when should they stop? McKee's answer rests on the rather obvious observation that *once the process is started it is designed to be continued*.

That is why it is so difficult to stop, a fact that has been known for millennia. So his advice? Don't start the process; don't do anything you would not do in front of your grandmother.

WHAT DOES FLEEING LOOK LIKE?

Sex outside marriage is a huge temptation, especially in our media-saturated culture, and it is the one temptation the Bible repeatedly tells us to flee. McKee explains clearly what fleeing temptation means for girls and how it is different for guys.

Christians need to understand the truth, recognize natural

consequences, and establish safeguards, and parents need to help their teens do these things as well as to encourage them to take responsibility themselves.

McKee also covers the dangers of porn, questions about masturbation, and the effects of abuse. Over and over he turns to the gospel, reminding young people that Jesus offers a fresh start for everyone, whether you have sinned or been sinned against.

He also encourages young people to remain pure by pointing out that a few years of self-discipline can be traded for a lifetime of awesome connecting without baggage after marriage. Who in their right mind would choose anything else? But the trouble is that we are sinners and that disobedience seems so attractive.

Finally, McKee offers some practical suggestions:

- Marry earlier.
- Be careful what you listen to and watch, what you wear, who you are alone with, and where you go.
- Beware of the dangers of the Internet and install safety systems.

CAUTION

I will add one caution. *Sex Matters* is a book for teens exposed to our culture and, as such, it can be explicit. When parents wonder if the book itself could cause more problems than it solves, McKee's response would be that our culture is explicit, and that equipping our teens requires us to be forthright.

So do pre-read this before giving it to your teen to see if it meets your expectations.

CONCLUSION

McKee's *Sex Matters* is a valuable book (especially in conjunction with *More than Just the Talk*, which he's written for parents). It is unabashedly Biblical – so much so that our huge public library refused to buy it – but it deserves a place in home, church, and school libraries and would be a blessing to any community that has it in its public library.

What's more, it is short (only 122 pages), easy to read, and contains discussion questions at the end of each chapter. I highly recommend it.

While Annie Kate Arnouste is taking a sabbatical from her blog, you can find a ton of book reviews and more there, at AnnieKatesHomeschoolReviews.com



- honest with you, and be quick to listen and slow to speak. Humble yourself as the parent/friend. Also, don't assume that since you've talked to them once, they know and they won't do it. We are all curious and sinners by nature.
2. Pray with and for your children/friends/family.
 3. Set an example: Stay on top of what you and your children/friends watch/read. Are you setting a good example? It's one thing to say, "Hey Jonny – don't watch porn" but if they see you watching *The Game of Thrones* or even porn itself, you're setting an example of how to be a hypocrite.
 4. Use your resources! For movies there's www.kids-in-mind.com, and even the parents' guide on www.imdb.com. And www.pluggedinonline is a great resource to double check movies/books or even apps before you or your children watch them.
 5. Protect your computer. Get the laptops and smartphones out of bedrooms and into a public area. I know – it creates more clutter. But do you know what kind of clutter is more disgusting? A pornography filled mind. It's worth a messy desk. Trust me. Password protect your wifi and change the password. Turn off the wifi at a specific time at night.
 6. Don't be afraid to discipline.
 7. Have an accountability partner. This one is tough because it requires you to be honest and open with someone. If you feel temptation, that is the time to talk with them. Not after you give in, but before that – when you feel like you might give in. As the accountability partner, pray for your friend/child. Uphold them and encourage them in their times of weakness.
 8. Encourage your children and friends in their inner beauty. Compliment them on their kindness or gentle spirit instead of their new jeans or new hairstyle. Teach each other how to put on the fruits of the Spirit instead of eyeliner and mascara. Teach your son how to look for the right kind of woman and how to put on the armor of God.
 9. If you are bored, find something to do that does not include a laptop or smartphone. The Bible is an excellent place to start.
 10. Speak highly of the love of God and show the love of God in your home. Instill in your, and your child's heart, John 3:16-18.
 11. Model repentance to your children. For example, if you lose your temper and shout at them, ask their forgiveness. Let them see what seeking forgiveness, and turning to God in repentance looks like.
 12. Forgive. Forgive. Forgive. RP

5 frank quotes from a frank book

Jonathan McKee's *Sex Matters* is a frank book on the touchy topic of sex. To give you a good idea of what you can find inside, here are five good quotes from this great book.

IS IT WISE TO BE SO UP FRONT WHEN TALKING WITH OUR KIDS?

"I've never met a parent who engaged in conversations with their kids about sex too much. Not one. Ever. But in my over twenty years of youth ministry, and a decade of writing and speaking to parents, I've met thousands of parents who have done the exact opposite and looked back in regret.... The world is full of explicit lies. Sadly, very few people are telling our kids the explicit truth. But we need to. I need to. You need to. If we don't, our kids will look for the answer somewhere else..."

"SIN CAN BE FUN...FOR THE MOMENT"

"[In a recent *Psychology Today* article Dr. Mark] White defined two types of sexual 'happiness': the animalistic

thrill-of-the-moment happiness you can experience when you are promiscuous (sleeping with whoever you want) and a deeper, longer-lasting, more fulfilling happiness when you are monogamous (have one partner for life). Which do you think sounds better in the long run? Can a monogamous person experience both the quick thrill of sex and the longer lasting happiness?"

DON'T LOOK FOR LOOPHOLES

"Some people still try to find a loophole. Maybe porn is okay, right? Because then we aren't actually have sex with anyone else. We're just sort of...pretending to have sex!"

"During the time Jesus was walking around on earth he encountered some people like this. They were thinking, So long as I don't have sex, it's okay. I'll just think about it in my mind! Jesus himself decided to address this, calling it lust and labeling it just as bad as adultery(Matthew 5:27-29). Jesus wasn't

pulling any punches here. If you're thinking about it, you're no better than someone who is doing it."

ON FLEEING

"Fact: Dentists have recommended that a toothbrush be kept at least six feet away from a toilet to avoid air-borne particles resulting from the flush....How many of are going to store it right next to the toilet by the toilet paper roll?Most of us will probably store our toothbrush about twenty feet away if possible.... There is a principle here: If we discover danger to be within a certain proximity, we avoid that proximity completely. Why don't we do that with sexual temptation?"

THE "PROCESS" IS DESIGNED TO BE CONTINUED

"Any teen who has been alone with someone they are attracted to and allowed the process to start knows that it is like trying to stop a forest fire after a drought! So why is it so difficult to stop? Because *it's not supposed to be stopped!*"

GRAY HAIR MEETS GREEN

Age has its privileges – the freedom to dish out sympathetic sarcasm is one of them

Half his head is shaven. The middle part is green and the right side bright orange. He is clean, very clean. His red jeans are ripped, to show his boxer shorts. His torn T-shirt is white and clean. Lots of piercings; huge earlobe holes, like some African tribesman. Have not seen that since 1954.

He is talking to an old crying Native man. I see him going to the coffee counter and returning with a coffee and a bun and giving it to the Native man. That was the last I saw of him that day.

Two weeks later he wandered into the kitchen while Sue and I were trying to figure out how to feed about 80 people on 30 eggs and 72 buns. First we decided the staff would not eat that day. No worries there as this allowed me to stick to my diet plan. Someone brought in a hot apple strudel, six inches by twelve. We looked at it and just laughed.

He stood in the doorway as we boiled the eggs - very small eggs, not meant for sale and therefore donated to the shelter. He got in my way as I was peeling the eggs. Suddenly he found himself with a spoon and knife in his hand. "Cut the eggs right through the middle and scoop out the egg, dump it in the green bowl." The old lady, me, had spoken.

He looked at me funny and went to work. One of the guys ran out and got a jar of Mayo. In no time at all, we had egg salad on the buns and got the kid to bring out the trays to the hungry.

When all the buns were gone and

the apple strudel still on the counter, the kid got busy. He ran to the back freezer and came back with ice cream – two half full pails, chocolate and strawberry. It was just the two of us in the kitchen. He found the styrofoam soup bowls and plastic spoons. We divided the strudel into some 60 pieces and added two kinds of ice cream.

When he carried the first tray out, he was greeted with a shout of "Dessert!"

Sue came back and took the second tray. He came back into the kitchen and again it was just the two of us working together. When everything was gone, he suddenly said: "The way I live I have about 10 to 15 years to live."

"So do I," I informed him dryly.

He glanced up at me with a stunned look on his face. Then he started talking again. "I've had fun. Got drunk every day, that's why I'm here. Community service. Can't wait to get back to drinking."

"First time?" I asked him.

"No, the second and the last time," he said.

I agreed and told him that the third time would probably be jail and even more fun.

He asked, "Well did you have a fun life?"

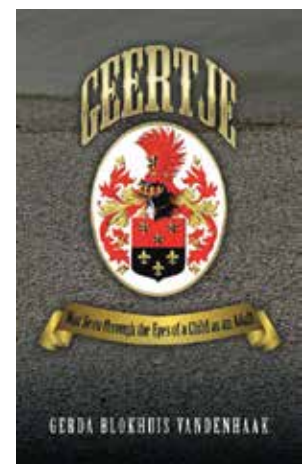
"Sure did and no splitting headache in the morning. Besides that, I can even remember the fun I had." I asked him if he'd ever played in a band, toured Europe by motorbike, or traveled all over the world. I told him that I completely understood that going to a bar and spending the evening drinking

and then staggering around with a splitting headache was, of course, much more fun. But at least I had fun for more years than he had had.

We cleaned the kitchen, no longer talking. Before he left, he told me he had six more hours to serve and probably would not see me again. I agreed with him and told him I realized that it would be jail for him. He left but came back a little while later. "Look," he said, "if I ever want to be told off, can I look you up?"

"Sure, be glad to," I replied. We grinned and shook hands! So now there is another kid in my prayers and I do not even know his name. RP

This is a chapter from Gerda Vandenhaak's book "Geertje: War Seen through the Eyes of a Child as an Adult" which is available at www.gerdavandenhaak.com.



REVIEWS

NEW RELEASES FROM RP FRIENDS

By Jon Dykstra

THE SWEET TASTE OF PROVIDENCE

BY CHRISTINE FARENHORST

296 PAGES / 2016



Seventy-four!

When Christine Farenhorst comes out with a new collection of short stories, the big question I have is, how many can I look forward to? And in *The Sweet Taste of Providence* she has given us an impressive 74.

These short stories are packaged as 4-5 page devotionals. They take no more than 5 minutes to read out loud, and end with a couple of questions for discussion. That makes this a great book to read with your kids, maybe 8 and up, before bed...or a little earlier, because this might get them discussing and dissecting right when you want them calming down. The short story length could also make this a good, ahem, "bathroom reader."

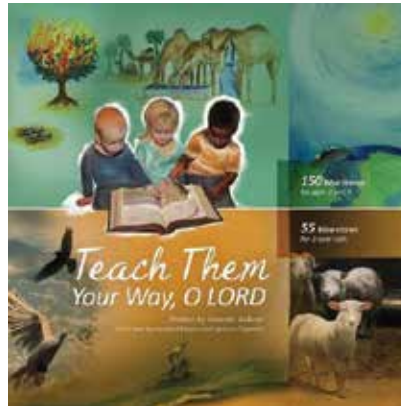
As *RP* readers know, Christine loves to share slices of history – usually bits we've never run across before – and show how God has been at work. It can be easier to see His hand in things when we're looking back than when we're looking around in the present (yes, God will turn even today's evil to our good – Romans 8:28) so these stories are maybe first and foremost a wonderful dose of encouragement. But it's also just a fun read.

The Sweet Taste of Providence is available at Amazon.ca.

TEACH THEM YOUR WAY, O LORD

BY AMANDA DEBOER

183 PAGES / 2016



What we have here is a story bible crafted by a careful, Reformed mother and teacher. I'm actually not sure about the teacher part, but if she isn't one, she sure sounds like it – Amanda DeBoer knows how to engage little children, and she peppers the text with questions and other opportunities for the little ones to speak up and interact.

The 205 stories cover the Bible twice over, with 55 intended for 2-year-olds, and another 150 for the 3 to 4-year old set. It's a story bible you can keep using for a good while!

I could say all sorts of good things about it – for example, there's a colorful picture on every page, and lots of helpful suggestions for parents. But what I most appreciated about it was the care evident throughout. One example: unlike most story bibles, where Jesus is pictured as an Anglo-Saxon, here He isn't shown at all. That a respectful acknowledgement of the second commandment. The same care is evident in getting the theology right – the author eagerly sought out feedback from ministers and others. This is, in short, engaging, and educational. It is one of the very best story bibles I've run across.

To order, look for it on Amazon.ca or email teachthemyourway@gmail.com.

TRUE RIGHT: GENUINE CONSERVATIVE LEADERS OF WESTERN CANADA

BY MICHAEL WAGNER

128 PAGES / 2016



Feeling like you're the last true conservative left in Justin Trudeau's Canada? Then you need to read Michael Wagner's *True Right* and find out that all through Canada's history great, solid, courageous conservative men have stood up to the socialist hordes.

What is a genuine conservative? How's this for a definition? *Someone who knows who God really is, and knows the government ain't Him.*

That comes out in the book, which is divided into 17 short biographies of political leaders who shaped Western Canada, some of whom were conservative another who were not. There's controversy to be had in the "weren't" camp, where the author places some big and well-loved names...but his reasoning is hard to argue with. Among the 13 who were, their faith in God is often evident. In this latter group most readers will find a pleasant surprise or two, meeting stalwart gentlemen who they'd not previously known.

You might differ with Wagner on some of his assessments – I think in noting these men's strengths, he's sometimes overlooked a notable shortcoming or two – but you'll most certainly come away encouraged. Yes, even in Canada there have always been true conservatives, good and godly men, who were willing to stand up and fight, win or lose.

TWO BOOKS ON CHRISTIANS, CREATION, AND DOING SCIENCE

When I ask recent high school graduates, "How could your Christian school have better prepared you?" they'll often raise the evolution/creation debate. At a secular university, or a Christian one, many get hit with a barrage of evolutionary arguments and evidences. How is a young man or woman supposed to stand up to a brilliant professor who insists that everything the student learned in high school about God, the Bible, and Creation is wrong, wrong, wrong? Two recent books provide some great answers.

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS APPROACH ORIGINS?

BY JOHN BYL AND TOM GOSS

42 PAGES / 2015

This is the shorter of the two, and it's evident that the authors put an enormous amount of time and effort to boil down the key issues of the origin debate into their shortest form. In just 42 pages they gave an overview of:

- the difference between historical and operational science
- why secular scientists deny miracles as a matter of dogma
- why many professing Christian scientists do, but shouldn't, deny miracles
- the basics of materialism and naturalism
- what the various origins positions are
- why Christianity is incompatible with any form of evolution
- how dating methods can be unreliable
- what books would be good for further reading



The short size makes this an ideal giveaway. The cover picture is going to spark curiosity and the small size also makes this inviting. It could be a good one for Christian schools to buy in bulk and give to all their students as a graduation gift.

But the small size does mean this is only an introduction to the origins debate, and if a student wants to go deeper they'll need to turn to additional books like...

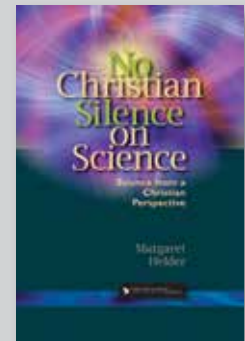
NO CHRISTIAN SILENCE ON SCIENCE: SCIENCE FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

BY MARGARET HELDER

2016 / 110 PAGES

In contrast, Dr. Helder's new book should be read over the course of several evenings. It's a slim volume, but there is a lot packed in here, and it all deserves to be slowly digested – this is worth chewing on. In five chapters Dr. Helder covers:

1. Science from a Christian Perspective
2. How Design in Nature reveals God's Character and Work
3. Christian vs. Darwinian Ethics
4. The Christian Student: Meeting the Challenge of Secular Institutions
5. Impact of Evolution Thought on Church and Society



This isn't just for students but if you have a son or daughter heading into the Sciences, then you need to get this for them – Chapter 4 alone is worth the price of the book. There Dr. Helder shares advice on how best to interact with evolutionary-minded professors and provides a case study of sorts: a new discovery that seems to prove evolution once and for all. How should the Christian student respond? Well, a student is at university to learn, right? So the best response is to simply ask questions. Start with the 5 Ws – that's always a good idea in Science (and journalism too!). And when an prepared, confident student works through their list of questions they'll often discover that this new, exciting, revolutionary find, upon closer examination, is not nearly as impressive as it first seemed.

That's not to say the creationist responses to the latest evolutionary finds will always be easy to figure out, or quick to come by. As Dr. Helder notes, in the early and mid 1900s Christians holding to a six-day creation had little supporting scientific evidence available to them, so it was only because they were so confident in the trustworthiness of God's Word that they could dismiss evolution. Today numerous problems with evolution can be pointed to, but there will still be occasions where evolutionary evidence will be presented that we cannot rebut as of yet. And perhaps we won't be able to answer it for several decades. But if we know our history, then we can wait in the expectation that sooner or later the truth will come out.

Now, the Sciences are dominated by evolutionists and atheists so there is good reason for Christians to proceed only with caution. If you have a weak and wavering faith, maybe this field of study isn't for you. And yet, while individual Christians may need to step away, the Church needs to take up this challenge. God has crafted a world for us to explore, and the further and deeper we look, the greater the sense of awe. This is a field we can't abandon to unbelievers! Dr. Helder's No Christian Silence on Science isn't simply a tool for Christians consider a career in Science; it's a challenge to the Church to speak God's Truth in this sphere too.

"How Should Christians Approach Origins?" is available at Amazon.ca, but discount bulk orders can be done through Tom Goss at tgoss@rogers.com. "No Christian Silence on Science" is available through the Creation Science Association of Alberta website (www.create.ab.ca) or can be had by sending a \$20 check (\$14 for the book and \$6 for shipping) made out to the CSAA, at 5328 Calgary Trail, Suite 1136, Edmonton AB, T6H 4J8. If you want to buy ten copies or more then you can get them for \$9 each, and the whole bunch of them will be sent to you for the same \$6 shipping.

TRANSGENDERISM 101

SHARE THE TRUTH WITH COMPASSION

by André Schutten



Transgenderism is the latest political cause du jour, dominating media headlines, saturating academic deliberation, the subject of new laws and radical educational policies across the country. Lost in the debate, from either side, are the kids themselves.

It is important that, in so far as we are able, we ensure our part in this debate isn't confused as being an attack on the dignity of individuals genuinely struggling with gender identity disorder. As psychologist Dr. Mark Yarhouse notes, in his 30 years of counselling patients struggling with gender identity, most who come into his office are

not seeking to tear down the "social constructs" of maleness or femaleness. They are simply looking for help as they navigate these very troubled waters in these times of social change.

Today people who believe they were born the wrong gender are being encouraged by the intellectual elite in media, politics and academia to embrace that notion and run with it. That might mean they start identifying as the other gender, or it might mean undergoing surgery to try to resemble the other gender.

This must be strongly opposed. Why should Christians oppose it? Because we know it will hurt people! As one

Canadian Reformed pastor said at a recent political rally, these new policies require us to love less. They silence genuine concern for transgendered kids, while advocating a celebration of an ideology that, by any measure of science and common sense, will do irreparable harm.

WHAT IS TRANSGENDERISM?

The term "transgendered" is an umbrella term for the different ways in which some people might experience or express their gender – their maleness or femaleness – differently from people whose gender matches their biological sex. Put another way, transgenderism describes the experiences or expressions of a small proportion of the population who say there is a difference between their mind and their body when it comes to the question of whether they are male or female.

One of the debates within the social

Today people who believe they were born the wrong gender are being encouraged... to embrace that notion and run with it.

sciences today revolves around the question of whether we should bring the body into conformity with the mind (via hormone injections, male genitalia removal, breast augmentation, or other surgery) or bring the mind into conformity with the body (via counseling).

Perhaps the group that captures the most attention today are those who struggle with gender identity disorder, also known as gender dysphoria, a psychological phenomenon. We might hear them say something like, “I’m a woman trapped in a man’s body” or vice versa. According to the revised language of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition* (the DSM 5),

gender dysphoria refers to the distress that may accompany the incongruence between one’s experienced or expressed gender and one’s assigned gender.

Gender dysphoria is a rare ailment: according to the same manual, it manifests in only 0.005% - 0.014% of adult men and 0.002% - 0.003% of adult women. However, we can expect those numbers to increase dramatically as the popularity of the phenomenon increases with the fawning media coverage of transgender celebrities like Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner and the gender-bending behaviors of Jaden Smith (the son of actor Will Smith who “challenges gender stereotypes” by regularly wearing dresses and make-up, etc.). The celebration and indoctrination happening more and more in elementary schools across the country only exacerbates the problem.

A somewhat related but separate condition happens when, due to genes, hormones, or body structures that differ from the norm, a child may have an “intersex condition” (in older literature, “hermaphrodites”). This could make it difficult to identify a child’s gender at birth – we live in a fallen world, and one of the results of that brokenness is that some people are born with malformed genitalia. This is not, however, what

we’re talking about with transgenderism. An intersexed condition is a *biological* disorder, and should be distinguished from a transgendered person’s gender dysphoria, which is a *psychological* disorder. It is important to note that most intersex people are *not* lobbying to pass as the other sex or as a third sex, but are simply seeking to discover *to which sex they belong*. Their biological sex identification can typically be discovered through a chromosomal or blood test.

TRUTH WITH GRACE

We know from the creation story (see Gen. 1:27 and 2:18) that God created humankind in his image (*imago dei*) and that the wonderful mystery of that design includes the binary reality of the sexes: we are made either male and female.

That means a woman’s femaleness reflects something of the image of God, and that a man’s maleness reflects something of the image of God. The binary nature of humanity is implicitly confirmed in the words of Jesus in his discussions on marriage (see Matt. 19:4 and Mark 10:6) and in Paul’s directions to the new Christians in Corinth and Ephesus and to Timothy on the distinct responsibilities and natures of men and women. (See, for example, 1 Cor. 11:7-9; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Tim. 2:12-14.)

To mar or to diminish the masculine and feminine diminishes our God-given identity as males or females. Both reflect the glory of God. This is probably why God forbade cross-dressing in Deuteronomy 22:5. This prohibition goes beyond whether boys can wear dresses (the clothing of men at the time of the exodus from Egypt probably resembled something more akin to modern female clothing today). The point is not the article of clothing *per se*; it’s the intentional diminishing or obscuring of masculine or feminine differences, which is an assault on our design.

It should be unsurprising that the sciences confirm this binary reality. With the exception of a few simple organisms, all creatures (including

KEY TERMS

Biological Sex: As male or female (typically with reference to chromosomes, sex hormones and reproductive anatomy).

Gender: The psychological, social and cultural aspects of being male or female.

Gender Dysphoria: refers to distress experienced due to incongruence between one’s experienced or expressed gender and one’s biological sex.

Gender Identity: How you experience yourself (or think of yourself) as male or female including how masculine or feminine a person feels.

Transgender: an umbrella term for the many ways in which people might experience or present/express their gender identities differently from people whose gender identity is congruent with their biological sex.

Cisgender: a term developed and used within the LGBTQ community to describe a person whose sense of gender matches their biological sex.

Transsexual: a person who has or wishes to transition from living as a male (identified at birth) to adopting a female presentation (MtF) or vice versa (FtM).

Gender Fluidity: a theory whereby a person can experience their gender not as fixed (either male or female) but fluctuating on a continuum.

Drag Queen: A biological male who dresses as a female for the purposes of entertaining others. Does not tend to identify as transgender.

Transvestism: Dressing as the other sex, typically for the purpose of sexual arousal (and may reflect a fetish). Most don’t experience gender dysphoria.

Intersex: Describes a rare biological condition in which a person is born with sex characteristics or anatomy that does not allow clear identification as male or female. The causes of an intersex condition can be chromosomal, gonadal or genital.



The world wants to present us with a buffet of sexual choices. But God's sexual ethic is narrower, clearer, and far more compassionate – He knows what we really need.

humans) are marked by a fundamental binary sexual differentiation: male or female markers are imprinted on every one of their trillions of cells. The testimony of biology, chromosomal data, and social-scientific evidence all confirm the essential biological binary of the sexes. (For more on this point, see the book review of *Why Gender Matters* elsewhere in this issue.)

But the Bible does not only speak to the issue of gender confusion, it also speaks to how we should relate and communicate on this issue. The Bible reminds us that gentle answers turn away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger (Prov. 15:1) and that “gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body” (Prov. 16:24). Jesus Christ fulfills this in his ministry and example. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, *full of grace and truth*.” (John 1:1,14). Randy Alcorn calls this pairing of grace with truth a paradox, and one Christians must emulate: our speaking and relating and communing on this issue of transgenderism must be characterized by grace and truth. Where truth is conveyed without love, it is nothing but noise (1 Cor. 13:1). The truth needs love, and the truth communicated in love will be kind, patient, and will

not be rude, irritable or boastful. (1 Cor. 13:4,5). But love also “rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor. 1:6) meaning that we cannot let our instinctive compassion run unfettered because that will end up hurting, not helping.

Having established this foundation, let's examine some of the science and policy surrounding this phenomenon.

WHEN HELPING HURTS – MEDICAL TESTIMONY

Celebration of transgenderism is seen by some as the best way to assist transgender individuals. There is no evidence, however, that the negative outcomes associated with transgender identification – including higher rates of suicide and attempted suicide, overall mortality, and need for psychiatric inpatient care – are alleviated by accepting and encouraging alternative gender identities in those with gender identity issues.

The theory behind this celebratory approach to transgenderism is not scientific – it is political. Gender dysphoria is a psychological phenomenon. Gender fluidity – the idea that we can shift from one gender to another – is a concept that is socially constructed and normalizes gender dysphoria, and thereby impedes its diagnosis and treatment. To leave the dysphoria untreated is to leave struggling individuals without help, and to ignore experienced researchers in this field.

Johns Hopkins Hospital was one of the first institutions in the United States to perform so-called “sex change” operations. Dr. Paul McHugh, the chief psychiatrist there in the late 1970s, commissioned a study of the sex change program. Its authors found that

In a thousand subtle ways, the re-assignee has the bitter experience that he is not – and never will be – a real girl but is, at best, a convincing simulated female. Such an adjustment cannot compensate for the tragedy of having lost all chance to be male, and of having in the final analysis, no way to be really female.

Some 40 years later, Dr. Sander Breiner concurs, explaining that she and her colleagues had to tell the surgeons that “the disturbed body image was not an organic [problem] at all, but was strictly a psychological problem. It could not be solved by organic manipulation (surgery, hormones)”.

Many Canadian experts in the field of psychiatry, including those who regularly work with transgendered youth, have grave concerns about the politicization of this psychiatric issue. Toronto psychiatrist Dr. Joseph Berger says that some transsexuals “have claimed that they are ‘a woman trapped in a man's body’ or [vice versa]. Scientifically, there is no such thing.” Dr. Ken Zucker sees the political approach to gender identity and fluidity as unsound. And Dr. Susan Bradley considers the political moves of some activists “disgraceful.” Dr. Paul McHugh, cited above, points out, “This is a disorder of the mind. Not a disorder of the body.” Canadian policy makers should take these warnings to heart.

APOTEMNOPHILIA: A COMPARISON

Apotemnophilia is a neurological disorder characterized by an individual's intense and long-standing desire for the amputation of a specific limb. It is a type of Body Integrity Identity Disorder (BIID). Some with this condition look for surgeons willing

Key Terms: WHAT IS A “SOCIAL CONSTRUCT”?

Part of the debate over transgenderism is the idea that our gender – i.e. whether we are male or female – is not fixed, but instead is just a changeable “social construct.” What is a social construct? It is a category or idea that doesn’t have a basis in reality, but is instead an invention of society.

So, for example, money is a social construct. There is nothing intrinsic to the paper itself that makes a twenty-dollar bill valuable. It is only because we as a society have agreed to value it that it has value. And if we decided to use something else as our money, then our old paper currency could even become worthless.

Apartheid (a policy of segregation on the basis of race, particularly practiced in South Africa) is a very different example of a social construct. It was also an invention of society, and not based in any objective reality, since there is nothing about a person’s skin color that makes them actually more or less valuable.

Now when it comes to gender, things can get confusing because there are certain aspects of gender that are fixed biological realities, and others that *are* social constructs (or inventions). The idea of the wife staying at home with the kids and the husband working outside the home is a western, post-industrial social construct. Before the industrial revolution, nearly all trades (leatherwork, blacksmith, pottery, weaving, carpentry, etc.) were done from the home in which fathers and mothers worked side by side. So where a husband and wife should work is not a fixed reality – it is an invention of society. And therefore it can be changed when society so desires.

Returning to gender, while there are some elements of male and female identities that are “constructed” (e.g. pink being a woman’s color) others are not. Men are generally stronger. Women can bear children. God gives husbands and wives different roles in marriage. Men can’t be women and women can’t be men. They are all fixed realities that can’t be changed.

But because some elements are constructed, that can be the means by which some people can then be tricked into thinking *all* elements of our gender are constructed. Our biological sex (and thus our gender) are fixed, real, natural and created. Gender is binary. The reality of two, and only two, categories of sex / gender is not the result of an oppressive patriarchy, but of God’s “very good” design. We defy it at our peril.

to perform an amputation of a healthy limb and some apotemnophiles have purposefully injured limbs in order to force emergency medical amputation. In 1997, Scottish doctor Robert Smith was performing these amputations before a public outcry brought them to a halt. What would the compassionate option be: to accommodate the person’s self-perception by amputating healthy limbs as Dr. Smith did, or to treat the psychological condition itself?

The comparisons between gender identity disorder, anorexia, apotemnophilia and other similar conditions are clear. As Dr. McHugh says,

It is not obvious how this patient’s feeling that he is a woman trapped in a man’s body differs from the feeling of a patient with anorexia that she is obese despite her emaciated, gaunt state. We don’t do liposuction on anorexics. Why amputate the genitals of these poor men?

WHAT OUGHT WE TO DO AS A COMPASSIONATE SOCIETY?

Alleviating the psychic distress of transgendered individuals requires nuanced answers. We hear about the high rates of suicide among the transgendered. Well, if we want to address this, we must distinguish between suicides that result from rejection by family, isolation, bullying, etc., (all of which are unacceptable) and suicides where psychiatric care is offered that seeks to resolve the dysphoria in keeping with their birth sex. This is not to say that bullying, rejection by family, isolation, etc., are not an issue for transgender people. They can be, and that type of behavior must be corrected. But the reality is that family rejection, isolation and bullying increase suicide risks for *all* youth, not just transgender youth.

The unfortunate politicization of this issue results in the condemning of anything less than full affirmation, reinforcement and celebration of the

gender incongruence in transgender youth, a “solution” that compounds the problem. Where family and community walk alongside a transgender individual with love and compassion, all with the goal of resolving the dysphoria in keeping with the patient’s birth sex as much as possible, we predict the suicide rates will dramatically decrease, particularly because other coexisting issues can also be properly treated. The way we frame our approach to this issue is of the utmost importance.

A compassionate society must recognize the mental illness dimensions of gender identity disorder and reject the dangerous and unhealthy human experimentation of hormone treatments and surgical amputations and modification. A compassionate society gives space for expression of struggles and helps to answer the questions “who am I?” and “where do I belong?” without deconstructing gender. And a compassionate society affirms the inherent dignity and intrinsic value of

every human being as either male or female, including those who struggle with confusion regarding their sexuality and gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of scientific and social research, the field of gender identity is still relatively new. Unfortunately, when the State attempts a radically new policy response to transgenderism, it becomes an agent of forced social and cultural change without any standard or criterion of success, and without clearly understanding the possible outcomes.

Take just one example that illustrates this concern: in an effort to accommodate transgendered children, the provincial government in Alberta wants every school to work towards eliminating gender differences not only in the classroom, but even on sports teams and in change rooms. This is not the well-reasoned, scientifically-based public policy we should expect of our representatives.

Here are a few suggestions for better public policy as it relates to protecting transgendered youth and enhancing social and public policy.

1. State actors must cease to use the phrase “sex *assigned* at birth” and maintain the scientifically accurate term “sex.” Sex is a biological reality. It is not assigned. To use the language of “assigned” instills a flawed assumption that any incongruence is a *biological* error, rather than a *psychological* one.
2. Provinces must ban all gender reassignment surgery on children before the age of 18. Further, in light of the fact that those who have had sex reassignment surgery have higher rates of attempted suicide, surgical transition should be abandoned as a treatment option even for adults.
3. Provinces must ban all cross-gender hormone treatment on children, including puberty suppressants, due to unacceptably high risks of depression, suicide and sterility. To chemically alter the natural and
4. The State must provide ample room for civil society to respond to this issue. Parents, the medical profession, churches and other community groups must have the freedom to address gender dysphoria in their families and communities without threat of enforced ideological conformity by the State.
5. Provinces must abandon laws that make gender reinforcement illegal. Such laws violate children’s rights and doctors’ conscience rights and interfere with parental decisions regarding the best interests of their children. For example, Ontario’s Bill 77 – which amended the *Health Insurance Act* and the *Regulated Health Professions Act* to prohibit services that seek to change the sexual orientation or the gender identity of patients – should be repealed. This law, and others like it, promote an ideological blindness at odds with the best interests of the patient.
6. The terms “gender identity” and “gender expression” should be removed from law because the terms are based on subjective perceptions and cannot be objectively evaluated or measured. There is no consistent policy reason to protect transgenderism, but not protect trans-racism, trans-ageism, trans-ableism, or even trans-speciesism (all of which have manifested in recent years). Further, laws that add the terms “gender identity” and “gender expression” as protected grounds of discrimination such as those passed in Ontario and Alberta and being contemplated federally with Bill C-16 are unnecessary since all transsexuals are already protected in law, no less than anyone else.
7. In the interim, we urge that a better balance of rights occur. In places

healthy development of a child with such incredible risks before the child can give their own informed consent is nothing short of child abuse.

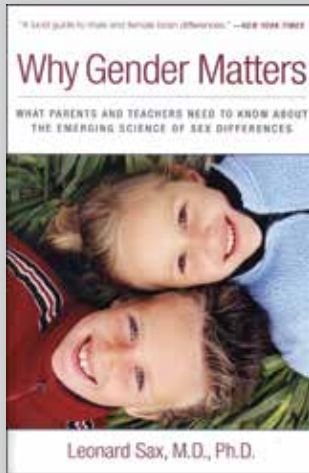
where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists, (washrooms, women’s gyms, etc.) the biological measure of a person’s sex must be the determining factor for access. Due to the reality that there is no objective means to identify a transgendered person, this measure of preventative access can help protect against devastating consequences. Interestingly, spaces of privacy have become “gender-neutral.” *Adding* different genders has had the pernicious effect of *subtracting* the difference between the sexes expected in public, and removing the privacy and the shield for natural modesty appropriate to them in certain social contexts.

CONCLUSION

Gender matters because people matter. Maleness and femaleness are distinct and complimentary realities that correspond to our biological selves and go to the core of what it means to be human. When governments ignore or undermine this reality they do so to society’s detriment. While some children struggling with gender identity disorder may need exceptional care in their various situations, the State helps no one by “breaking down gender” across the province or country. Canadian politicians must be willing to take a stand for good public policy as it relates to gender and sexuality. With sound public policy, we can help our transgendered neighbors as they navigate these troubled waters in times of social change. Out of compassion for our transgendered neighbors, inspired by our duty to love them as ourselves, we need to speak out against an ideology that harms them.

It won’t be easy, but the right thing to do rarely is. RP

André Schutten is the General Legal Counsel for ARPA Canada. This article is adapted from a fully footnoted 2016 Policy Report for Parliamentarians on Gender Identity which is available at ARPACanada.ca.



WHY GENDER MATTERS: WHAT PARENTS AND TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE EMERGING SCIENCE OF SEX DIFFERENCE

BY DR. LEONARD SAX, M.D., PH.D.

336 PAGES / 2006

Dr. Sax, a family physician and psychologist, writes an entertaining and easy to read book that combs through all kinds of research that proves what we all already know: boys and girls are different.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading *Why Gender Matters*. In it, Dr. Sax rips apart two of the modern assumptions regarding gender:

1. that there are no differences between boys and girls
2. that we should try eliminate any differences that do pop up

He also shows how when this ideology is put into action, it is done so to the detriment of boys, particularly in early years, and to the detriment of girls, particularly in teen years. The entire book is packed with references to many interesting findings and the heavy use of anecdotes makes for enjoyable reading. I was intrigued throughout as, chapter by chapter, he outlines major differences when it comes to the physical brain, the taking of risks, aggression, school, sex, drugs, discipline, and more.

I offer three cautions.

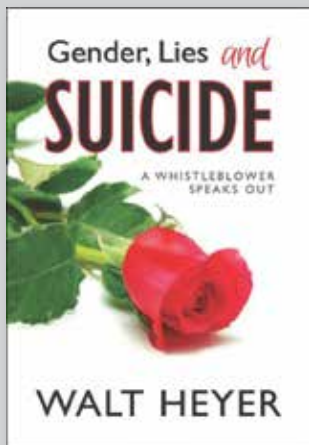
First, his chapter on LGBT issues and exceptions to the norms is a little confusing. I had to read it twice to really understand what he was advocating for.

Second, he uses too much evolutionary biology to justify his claims. He doesn't need to – there is plenty of social-scientific and medical evidence related to humans that make his case.

Third, his chapter on sex is not suitable for children or young teenagers. It is quite explicit. I think there is good reason for it to be, in order for him to get across the points he wants to drive home regarding the hook-up culture. But it does mean this is a book for adults and older teens only.

With those caveats, I'd highly recommend this book for elementary and high school teachers, as well as any parents. It can open your eyes to how to more effectively engage, discipline, mentor or raise boys and girls and how to make sure that the innate differences between boys and girls don't become limitations.

- André Schutten



GENDER, LIES AND SUICIDE: A WHISTLEBLOWER SPEAKS OUT

BY WALT HEYER

152 PAGES / 2013

Walt Heyer was once a successful, married man with children. He lost it all after he decided he was really a woman, underwent surgery to alter his body to resemble a woman's, and lived as a woman for nearly a decade. Today Walt is living as a man once again and writing about the failures of the modern approach to transgendered issues and the uncritical embrace of so-called sex change therapies.

Here he exposes the history of the transgendered movement, particularly the progression on the medical side. He attributes the high level of suicide in the transgendered community primarily to the failure of too many psychologists and doctors to dig deeper when a patient presents with gender identity disorder.

This self-published title is not as polished as an edited book would be – at points Walt gets a little repetitive. However, it is still quite accessible and easy to read. It is also controversial, tackling an extremely sensitive subject. But for anyone who finds themselves on the other side of this issue, I can't recommend it enough. The author writes about the anguish, depression and psychological and medical issues that afflicted him and so many other transsexuals, but all of which are not talked about for political reasons.

- André Schutten

UNDERSTANDING GENDER DYSPHORIA

A book worth chewing on...but not swallowing whole

reviewed by André Schutten

Christian leaders have a new, helpful and thorough resource available to help them respond to the recent phenomenon known as “gender identity disorder” or “gender dysphoria.” *Understanding Gender Dysphoria* is authored by Dr. Mark Yarhouse, a clinical psychologist and Hughes Chair of Christian Thought in Mental Health Practice at Regent University. He has a long career of counseling those struggling with gender dysphoria, a condition in which the person feels there is some sort of disconnect between their biological sex and the gender they feel they really should be – they are men who feel like they should be women, and women who feel like they should be men.

Yarhouse’s book brings a Christian perspective to the issue that avoids simplistic answers and embraces and grapples with the psychological and theological complexity. Yarhouse engages with an incredible amount of social-scientific and medical research, but avoids the pitfall of producing a merely clinical document. Rather, he emphasizes pastoral sensitivity and challenges the Christian reader to walk side by side with people struggling with their identity.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

There’s a lot in the book, so let’s begin with a quick overview. *Understanding Gender Dysphoria* is written for a Christian audience, a fact made obvious by the dedication on the first page: “To the Church, the Body of Christ.” Yarhouse is motivated by a desire to see the Church proactively grapple with this issue and help those who desperately need help.

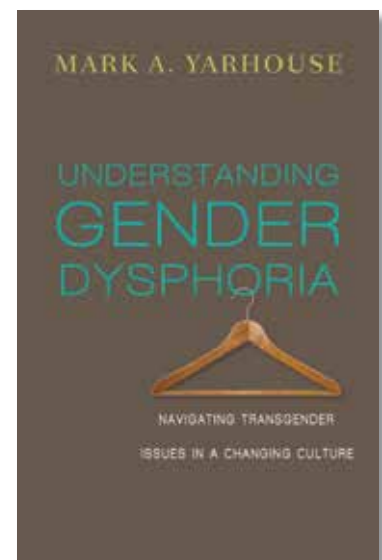
He has a lot of criticism for the “culture wars” mentality, which tends to be too simplistic in its engagement of issues like transgenderism. He lays the groundwork by explaining what exactly gender dysphoria is and how complex of an issue it really is. He then delves into Scripture, and wrestles with a number of different texts, analyzing them in light of their historical or literary context and applying them to the issue. He spends a chapter on the causes of gender dysphoria (the short answer is, *we just don’t know!*), a chapter on its prevalence and how it manifests, and a chapter on prevention and treatment. Throughout these chapters, Yarhouse cites the latest studies, and is careful to note strengths and weaknesses in the reliability of those studies. He makes it clear that much more careful study is needed.

Yarhouse ends his book with two chapters on a Christian response, one at the level of the individual and one at the level of the institution. Here he enters the pastoral realm and gives suggestions for better ways in which Christians and churches can compassionately assist and walk alongside transgendered neighbors.

GENDER IDENTITY CONFLICTS: THREE LENSES

A theme that runs throughout the book is an analysis of three frameworks or “lenses” through which different groups see the issue of transgenderism and gender dysphoria. It’s helpful to explore these in order to understand the starting point for how the various groups in society view and understand the issue.

All three perspectives have something



191 PAGES / 2015

to offer, and also have limitations. After discussing them, Dr. Yarhouse proposes his own fourth “lens” or framework, which includes aspects of the other three. So what are these frameworks?

1. Integrity framework

The integrity framework is probably the lens through which most Christians, as well as most orthodox Jews, and Muslims, view the transgender issue. This framework understands gender in terms of the sacred *integrity* of maleness and femaleness. We are our biological sex, and there’s no changing that. God created mankind as male and female, equal in dignity and worth, yet with distinct and complementary roles.

But you don’t have to be religious to believe that our gender is stamped on us and unchangeable. A naturalist (one who

denies the supernatural) might simply note that in nature we see humankind and the animals as being a binary species: male or female markers are imprinted on each and every one of the trillions of cells of each human and animal body.

According to the integrity framework, men and women are to conform to, and live in accordance with their biological sex.

Scriptural backing for the integrity framework can be found in the creation account, particularly in Genesis 2, and also some Mosaic prohibitions in Deuteronomy against cross-dressing, as well as Jesus' teachings in the gospels and Paul's teaching in his letters to the Ephesians and to Timothy. Meanwhile, the naturalist can look to the consistent testimony of biology, DNA and chromosomal data, as well as abundant social-scientific evidence to confirm the binary biological differences between the sexes.

Are there any limitations or potential pitfalls to this approach? Well, holding exclusively to this view might leave a person liable to seeing all male/female differences as unchangeable, including those that are actually just gender stereotypes (i.e. women are bad at math, men are bad at cooking). It might also lead some to overlook and dismiss the struggles of individuals with gender dysphoria (as in "He's a guy not a girl – why doesn't he just smarten up!"). And it also has the potential to paint all transgender people with the same brush.

2. Disability framework

Another way of understanding transgenderism is through the disability framework. As the name suggests, it focuses on the mental health dimensions of the phenomenon of gender dysphoria, and views transgenderism as a disorder of the mind.

Most Christians would see some value in this framework too. As our society begins to understand the realities of mental health issues such as schizophrenia, multiple personality disorders, anorexia or post-partum depression, then we get a new sense of what gender dysphoria is like.

The potential pitfall to the disability

framework is that in presenting the problem as a health one or a medical matter, it might well prevent discussion of any theological dimension. Treatment becomes very clinical; theological or spiritual responses are sidelined. As one transgender Christian said, "By reducing gender dysphoria to a mere medical diagnosis, I felt trapped and robbed of a *spiritual* solution."

3. Diversity framework

The diversity framework is the way most social progressives view transgenderism – they see gender dysphoria as a good thing, to be celebrated.

There are two subgroups within the diversity framework. A vocal minority – Yarhouse calls them the "strong" form diversity framework – sees the sex-gender binary as a socially constructed authority structure to be *destroyed* and *eliminated*.

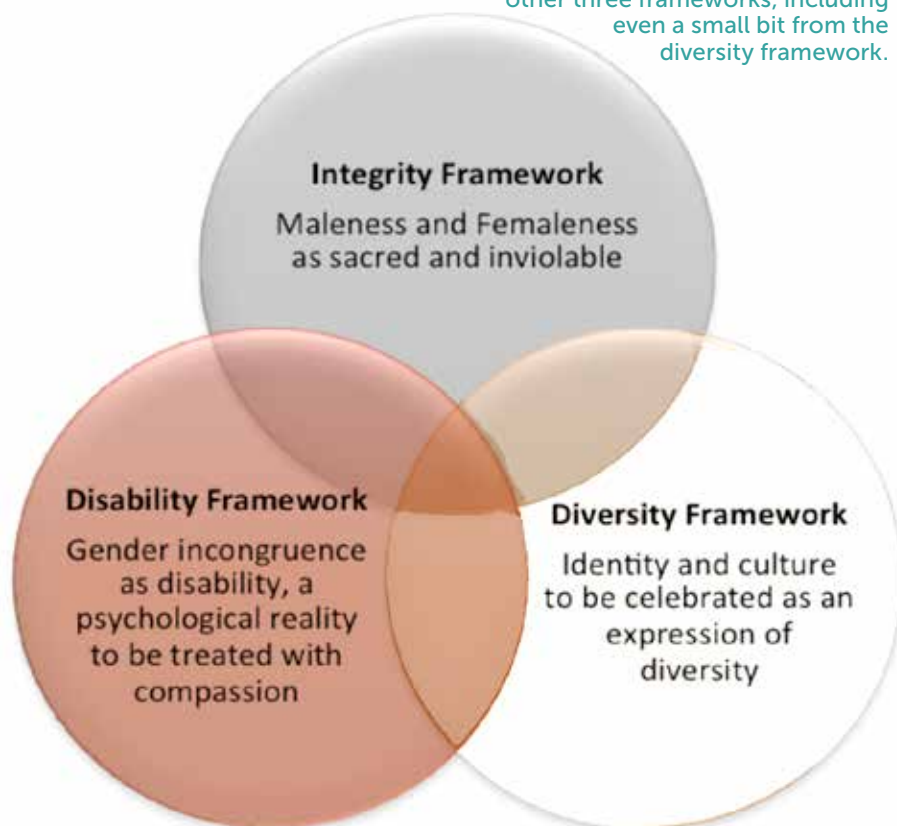
But there's another group within the diversity framework (the "weak" form) that simply seeks to give expression to the lived experience of a transgendered person

and to answer two questions of identity and community: "Who am I?" and, "Where do I belong?"

For those who subscribe to the integrity framework and, to a lesser extent, those who subscribe to the disability framework, there are many problems with the diversity framework. We know that our gender is fixed, and, in fact, a gift from God. So any efforts at undermining the reality of gender are to be opposed.

But Yarhouse argues there is still some value in the weak form of the diversity lens, particularly for the Christian community. What can we learn from this framework? Well, Christians recognize that all humanity is disordered. Any honest Canadian would agree that every human being struggles with the brokenness of life, biologically, psychologically, and spiritually. So "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" are important questions that need to be answered. There are answers, and they apply to all, including the transgendered. Indeed, there is a lesson here for broader

Yarhouse's "integrated approach" suggests we can take the best of the other three frameworks, including even a small bit from the diversity framework.



Canadian civil society: we can give space for expression of struggles and assist with answering deep questions of identity and community without having to go so far as to deconstruct gender or to embrace and affirm new and dangerous social theories.

4. An integrated approach

Dr. Yarhouse argues that we need to take the best of all three of these approaches and create a new framework altogether: what he calls “an integrated approach.” The integrated view recognizes the *integrity* of the two complimentary sexes as God has created them. It also recognizes the psychological element or *disability* associated with this issue, which needs to be addressed with compassion. And the integrated approach takes from the *diversity* framework the understanding that every individual in their particular circumstances and struggles want their experience or struggle to be understood and heard and want to know who they are and where they belong.

The Christian worldview offers a compelling alternative to the approach of the proponents of the “strong” form of the diversity framework, which seeks to deny and destroy all gender differences. Sadly, the strong form of diversity framework has been adopted – without critical reflection and to the exclusion of other perspectives – by too many provincial governments and is now being imposed onto our communities and schools with the force of law.

CAUTIONS ABOUT THE BOOK

A legitimate question can be asked at this point: Is Yarhouse’s integrated model backed up by Scripture on all three points? I think they are, with this caveat: an integrated approach does not necessarily mean taking an equal measure of each of the three views (integrity, disability and diversity). Yarhouse himself seems to favor the disability model first (he is a clinician, after all), informed by the integrity model, with the diversity model adding a smaller piece to the overall puzzle.

Dr. Robert Gagnon, a leading theologian on the bible and sexuality, has offered some push back on Yarhouse’s thought (I commend to the reader his

article published Oct. 16, 2015 titled “How Should Christians Respond to the Transgender Phenomenon?” freely available at *First Things.com*).

Gagnon takes issue with points of conflict between the disability lens and the integrity lens. While he acknowledges the disability lens, Gagnon is concerned that Yarhouse’s use of the disability label might have the unintended effect of accommodating sinful choices, since Yarhouse argues that “the disability lens also makes room for supportive care and interventions that allow for cross-gender identification in a way the integrity lens does not.” To put it in other words, Gagnon is worried that understanding this as merely a disability might lead to treatments that, in themselves, could become sinful behaviors.

It is important to note here that Gagnon agrees with Yarhouse that the mere existence of gender dysphoria is not sin itself. He writes,

I do not view the mere experience of gender dysphoria as necessarily resulting from active efforts to rebel against God... Where I would qualify Yarhouse is in noting a more complex interplay of nature, nurture, environment, and choices. *Incremental choices made in response to impulses may strengthen the same impulses.*

Gagnon suggests that it is here that Yarhouse departs from the Biblical language by referencing the clear dictates of Scripture in Deut. 22:5, and Paul’s reference to “soft men” in 1 Cor. 6:9-10. Gagnon suggests that while having the internal turmoil over gender identity is not sin, “acting on a desire to become the opposite sex can in fact affect one’s redemption.”


How far should Christians following Yarhouse’s suggestions of compassionate accommodation go? On the one hand, were a man wearing a dress to attend one of our services, his attire should not be our first concern. We can greet him, and get to know him, ask what brought him, etc. The Church is, after all, a place for sinners, so we should be able to accommodate all sorts of seekers.

But Yarhouse pushes accommodation further. He talks of intermittent (and often private) cross-dressing as a way for some Christians to manage their struggle with gender dysphoria. But this is no longer accommodating a seeker who doesn’t yet know what God has said about gender. It is accommodating someone who knows God made us male and female, who wants to indulge in sinful behavior on occasion. So Yarhouse doesn’t properly limit the extent of the accommodation the Church should show.

One final caveat: Yarhouse makes repeated reference to the Church rising above the culture wars or abandoning the culture wars on this issue. I do think there is value in the Church elevating our language and avoiding the typical style of the so-called culture wars, by avoiding debates that lack all nuance and are blunt or belligerent (the style of Ezra Levant is an easy target, but there are many on both sides of the debate who engage in this style). That being said, Christians cannot avoid the culture wars altogether – it’s one manifestation of the antithesis. The question is not *whether* we do it, but *how*. We must engage with the culture as salt and light. We must engage winsomely and relationally. Perhaps this is what Yarhouse is getting at. But simply because some do the culture wars poorly isn’t any reason at all for Christians to disengage.

RECOMMENDATION

This book was a challenging yet rewarding read. It really opened my eyes to a much fuller understanding of the issue of transgenderism and, in particular, gender dysphoria. It’s pastorally sensitive while also being scientifically grounded and very well researched. Yarhouse is definitely an expert in the field and has given me a deep appreciation for the complexity of the issue. This book does require work to get through, but the payoff is a much better, fuller and more nuanced understanding of the issue than what is readily available through any short-form articles in the mainstream or social media.

With the cautions noted above, I recommend this book for Christian counselors, pastors, elders and teachers. 

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

TEN WORDS THAT EXIST, OR SHOULD

Arghument – assertions back by vehemence, not evidence. Also, a debate between pirates

Squarele – a square circle. See “gay marriage”

Caffe’d – as in, “he was sufficiently caffe’d to finish off the paper.”

Chick-fil-A’d – to be cut to pieces for all the right reasons

Friendzy – involves inviting everyone ever encountered to be your Facebook friend

Heil’d – Damned with faint praise by noting that he/she probably isn’t a Nazi

Lastest – the latest and last draft

Questian – someone in search of their next cause

Trans-fluid – a vital engine lubricant, or someone who both does, and doesn’t, identify as gender fluid

Complimentarianism – the view that husbands and wives need to say more nice things to each other

WHY YOU SHOULD QUIT

“Cigarettes are like squirrels. They are perfectly harmless until you put one in your mouth and light it on fire.”

– meme circulating the Internet

LOSING HELL UNDERMINES THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

“[A] bestselling Christian author says... the preaching or teaching of hell is

‘misguided and toxic and ultimately subverts the contagious spread of Jesus’ message of love, peace, forgiveness, and joy that our world so desperately needs to hear.’

“If his viewpoint is true – that ultimately everyone ends up in heaven – then preaching eternal punishment subverts nothing. If we all end up in heaven, why do we even need to find forgiveness here on earth? Even us monsters who believe in hell will end up in heaven. I find it interesting that many contemporary

preachers want to save people from the idea of hell, rather than from hell itself.”
– Thor Ramsey (in *The most encouraging book on Hell ever*)

TEACHING MEDIA LITERACY

In his free e-book *Parenting the Internet Generation*, author Luke Gilkerson talks about the steps we can take to teach our children discernment when it comes to the various forms of media they watch and interact with. Gilkerson writes:

Media literacy can be taught starting at any age, but starting around the age of 7, children start to become ripe for more critical analysis of the media they see. Prior to this, the focus should be primarily on

selecting good media for your kids. After this, the focus should start to be more on discussing media with your kids. Media literacy is vital in our media-rich age for many reasons, but especially for parents who want to prepare kids well for our over-sexualized age. If our children aren’t used to thinking critically about any of the media they consume, then this will extend to sexually charged and objectifying media as well. When kids lack media literacy skills, it is like death by a thousand paper cuts. Will one uncritical, passive viewing of a video or movie with poor values ruin your child’s life? No, of course not. But if our children develop a habit of merely passive media consumption, if they aren’t trained to think about media messages, they will eventually soak up the values they consume.

You can download *Parenting the Internet Generation* at CovenantEyes.com/parenting-the-internet-generation. It is highly recommended!



Our firm is growing! JPC Chartered Professional Accountants, is inviting applications from qualified individuals for the following position.

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- Strong commitment to professional and client service excellence;
- Superior verbal and written communication skills;
- Strong ability working with and successfully manage junior staff members;
- Proven ability to deliver the full cycle of project management accountabilities involving and including the personal taxes, corporate taxes, and notice to reader financial statements; and
- Experienced with project problem diagnosis, solution development, client communications, facilitation of decision making, documentation, managing client expectations and team leadership.

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The Board of **Covenant Canadian Reformed School** invites applications for the 2017/2018 school year for the following full-time positions:

**High School Teacher
Elementary School Teacher**

Covenant Canadian Reformed School (CCRS) is a vibrant K-12 school community with a current student population of 242. We are situated 3 km from the hamlet of Neerlandia and approximately 25 km north of the Town of Barrhead. Between these two locations there are three Canadian Reformed congregations and one United Reformed congregation. CCRS is located about an hour and a half north of the cities of Edmonton and St. Albert. We anticipate growth over the next number of years and are currently planning for future expansion.

We encourage energetic, qualified (or soon to be qualified) educators, committed to Reformed education, to apply. Under our Father's blessing of a broad, highly supportive membership base and current levels of government funding in Alberta, we are able to offer a very attractive wage and benefit package. All interested individuals can apply by submitting a resume, a statement of faith, a philosophy of education, and references.

Please visit our school's website at www.covenantschool.ca

Applications can be sent in writing to
3030 TWP RD 615A
County of Barrhead, AB T0G 1R2
or to the Board secretary, **Mrs. Karen Breukelman**:
secretary@covenantschool.ca

If you would like further information about the school and the area please contact the Board chairman:

Mr. Wes Werkman – 780-674-2814
chairman@covenantschool.ca
or the principal:

Mr. Mike Nederveen – 780-674-4774 (school)
principal@covenantschool.ca

WHY SO MUCH RAP IS REFORMED

Many Christians don't think much of Rap, and that's likely because of its association with thugs and pimps and gangsters who seem to dominate this music form. There is a reason these slimy sorts gravitate towards Rap music: in its barest form Rap requires a lot less ability than some other genres. You don't need to sing or play a musical instrument; the performer only has to rhyme in rhythm. Of course, Rap isn't always so stripped down, and it can involve all sorts of instruments. But what sets it apart – its focus on the words over the music – is also what makes it appealing to talentless thugs.

But there's also a reason that Rap is a favorite form for many thoughtful, insightful, and very Reformed artists. It's because this musically sparse medium gives *primacy* to the word. Christian pop is sometimes mocked as "7-11" music (7 words repeated 11 times) but Reformed rap is lyrically dense, and some artists have made use of this words-focus to see just how deep a song can go. For example, Reformed rapper, Shai Linne, has a song titled *The Hypostatic Union*, about how Jesus became a man. Here's a *small* excerpt:

Can you truly understand fallen man's dilemma?
See, only a human can substitute for human lives
But only God can take the wrath of God and survive.
See the humanly unsolvable obstacle?
With God all is plausible, nothing's impossible.
True haters'll fight it but the story is certain
Two natures united in one glorious person
Jesus, the God-Man, official soul reaper
The hypostatic union – it gets no deeper

Grammy winning artist Lecrae is another example of this Reformed Rap presence. In *Just Like You* he begins by noting that in his rebellion he didn't want to be *like* God, but wanted to *be* God – like Adam and Eve, he refused to listen, and wanted to replace God. But in this, the last verse, he tells the story of his repentance.

I wanna be like you in every way,
So if I gotta die everyday
Unworthy sacrifice
But the least I can do is give the most of me
Because being just like you is what I'm s'pose to be
They said you came for the lame,
I'm the lamest
I made a mess, but you say you'll erase it,
I'll take it
They say you came for the lame,
I'm the lamest
I broke my life, but you say you'll replace it,
I'll take it.

There's a reason thugs like Rap. But this same words-focus is also the reason why Rap is an effective musical medium for a serious exploration of God's greatness.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears My voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and eat with him and he with Me."
– Rev. 3:20

... knock, and it will be opened to you...
to the one who knocks it will be opened.
– Matt. 7:7b & 8b

I am the Door.
If anyone enters by Me,
he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."
– John 10:9

The Afterthought

by Christine Farenhorst

A person can possess a map, but following contours and outlines of hills and valleys with fingers will not bring feet to a destination. You can stand at the door, but if you do not knock, it will not be opened for you. There is a wide chasm between factual head knowledge and active heart knowledge.

When Decius Legis, long-time pastor of Simon's Street Central, awoke on a cloudy Wednesday morning in the summer of 1922, there was a sense of unreality about everything. The curtains, the white curtains with the green leaves scattered all over them, let in light that seemed to belong to another time rather than the hour in which he was opening his eyes. The sound of the mourning dove, far away somewhere on a hillside, echoed faintly, as it did every morning. But it was not every morning.

He shifted his body slightly, hoping against hope to feel Faith's warmth lying next to him. Particles of dust floated over the bed in the sunlight and he squeezed his eyes half-shut. He did not want to get up; he did not want to face the fact that he had now been a widower for a day. His entire being rebelled against the thought of... But he knew that it was wrong to rebel – that to rebel was to fly in the face of God.

"It was not the influenza, Decius," the doctor had been very firm on that, "it was Faith's heart that gave out."

Decius was not at all sure the doctor was correct in his diagnosis. After all, there had been no hint, no hint at all that Faith had suffered from pain or had shortness of

breath. His uncle, who had suffered a heart attack some while back and had died as a result, had always been short of breath. Yet there was no denying the fact that his wife, and the child hidden within her womb, had both died within the space of a single day.

Such things had happened to families during the recent Spanish flu outbreak. But what kind of strange providence was it to have a death occur in such a manner more than two years after the flu outbreak? It flew in the face of common sense.

The nonsensical and heart-breaking rhyme to which little children had skipped and sung on the street during that time, pulsed through Decius' head even as he moved it from side to side on the pillow.

*I had a little bird,
Its name was Enza,
I opened the window,
And in-flu-enza.*

Decius' lips softly mouthed the words and he felt increasing dissatisfaction, almost anger, as he lay in the double bed staring fixedly at the white ceiling. He had stared at that ceiling often upon waking, but never until now had he noted all the

cracks in it.

The season for influenza had passed through the city – the little birds had come and gone. Everyone was in agreement about it. 1919 had wormed its way through somber days, weeks and months. And even though the year had passed through wielding a bloody scythe, burying myriads in the process, it was now a memory. It truly belonged to the past for there was no disputing the fact that it was all of mid-way through 1922 now. And although it had been estimated that more people had died of the Spanish Influenza during the 1918-1919 outbreak than during the Black Death outbreak in the Middle Ages, obituaries had not been placed for the Decius Legis family. Until now, that is. Until now when the season was supposed to be over.

He heard the doctor's voice again, "It was not the influenza, Decius." But he shook his head back and forth, rolling it on the white pillow. The doctor must have been wrong.

Decius' long fingers plucked senselessly at the blue, woolen blanket draped over the double bed. He recalled how fanatically precise he had been during the influenza year. He had insisted that Faith

wear a mask - a gauze mask.

"If you follow the rules," he had said over and over, even wagging his finger at her to emphasize the point, "there ought not to be a problem and you will not be sick. Rules govern life."

Not many doctors were left alive. Death had played no favorites. A host of caregivers had succumbed to the influenza and had died. Due to the multiple deaths in the city, he had not, during this time, permitted Faith to shop at any of the stores, had not permitted her to go anywhere. She had insisted that she continue to visit the orphanage once or twice a week. He had allowed it and felt that God had protected her because of her charitable heart. For the rest, they had made do.

It had been a strange year. Because of the surplus of deaths, funeral services had been limited to fifteen minutes. There had been a severe shortage of both coffins and gravediggers. Many of the bodies which had been relegated to the dust were presently sharing common graves. But now, even though all these grim matters were consigned to the past, a pine coffin stood in his parlor. And pine coffins in one's parlor cannot be ignored. His hands kept plucking at the wool, even as his breathing became labored.

"I've a chill," Faith had said, gazing at him with her big, blue eyes. She had said that to him only yesterday.

"Nonsense," he had replied, recalling with shame that she had looked tired, and had seemed to have some difficulty breathing. "Nonsense," he had repeated, "it's warm outside. What you need is a bit of work out in the garden, in the sunshine, to warm you up."

Obediently she had risen from her chair by the window, standing in front of that chair for a moment, sighing. The sighing had irritated him. It had seemed disrespectful of his words, of his well-thought-out opinions. Faith had always been outwardly obedient, and so she had been the day before yesterday, a day hovering by so closely he could touch it. After standing quietly for a moment,

she had gathered her garden apron from where it hung on a hook in the kitchen corner, had slipped it on and opened the green door leading to the backyard. He had watched her walk to the garden through the window and had observed how she had diligently begun to weed the long rows of green beans, hoeing slowly and methodically, stopping every now and then to lean on the hoe. The outline of the unborn child under her apron was clearly visible and he had felt rather proud of it. At the same time he heard Mercy, the day-girl, singing on her knees, as she cheerfully scrubbed the front steps. The house had hummed with proper activity and satisfied that all was as it should be, he had retreated to his study to begin writing the Sunday morning sermon.

It was Mercy who burst into his study, without knocking, barely half an hour after he had started to write. "Sir, it's mistress Faith. Sir, you must come quickly," she panted.

Removing his glasses, he stared at her, preparing severe words for a reprimand. "What's the matter?" he demanded, without really listening. "I do not like to be disturbed unless the matter is really serious, Mercy. You know that."

"She's not well, sir. Mistress is not well. I found her in the garden..."

He had moved then, almost tripping

in his haste, sliding past the big oak desk, running past the girl who moved aside.

"Sir," she called as he passed her, "Sir..."

Faith was lying on the path between the beans. The wooden hoe, its triangular metal still half embedded in the soil, was stretched across her belly.

"Faith," he called out as he sprinted down the steps and again, "Faith." There was a slight bluish tinge to her skin. He had often seen it before and it filled him with foreboding. She opened her eyes but did not seem to see him as he bent over her.

"Faith," he whispered, "Can you stand up, love?" He put his right arm under her shoulder, even as he knelt down next to her on the path not minding the dirt on his knees.

"It is very warm now." She spoke to no one in particular and through the short sentence he could hear the humming of the bees. A butterfly alighted on her hair and he brushed it off. Butterflies, he had thought irrationally, usually alight on inanimate objects, objects that cannot move.

"Faith," he urged again, "do try to sit up and lean on me, love. Do try." The last words came out as a plea for he could tell there was not going to be a response. Mercy came up behind him. She was a tall girl, Mercy, and her skirts rustled as



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she moved and the garden soil crumbled under her feet.

"Mercy," he commanded, without turning around, "you take mistress' feet, for we shall have to carry her inside together."

Faith's large eyes had closed. It had looked as if she were sleeping – sleeping peacefully. And perhaps, he had thought, he had only imagined the bluish tinge of her skin for it suddenly appeared very pale to him. Her breathing was slight, very slight. The bodice of her dress was almost still. For a moment he thought she had gone, had left him right there between the beans, right when he was about to help her. But then movement returned, up and down, up and down. "Faith," he iterated for the third time, and rather loudly, "Faith, Mercy and I are going to carry you inside. Do you understand, love?"

He stood up, Crushing several bean plants, he passed around the prostrate body of his wife so that he could put both his hands underneath her shoulders and half-raise her to a sitting position. Her head slumped even as a cricket chirped and sprang onto her right hand, before jumping off into the dirt.

"All right, Mercy, you take mistress' feet."

The girl did so and together, Mercy and he had carried Faith inside. She was quite light, Faith was, even though she was six months pregnant. They had laid her on the couch in the living room and then he had instructed the girl to run for the doctor. With a last look at her mistress, Mercy had obeyed.

He had seated himself on a chair next to the couch, speaking out to Faith almost incessantly. "My love, can you hear me?" There was not even a flicker of a response.

"My love, shall I read somewhat to you?" The clock ticked and ticked and he'd had the erratic notion to get up and smash its face. But that had been, of course, a ridiculous thought. Faith coughed through the ticking. It was a cough that erupted from her inner being. All at once her breathing became very labored and she appeared to be fighting for each breath. Getting up from his chair, he knelt down next to the couch and propped a pillow under her head.

"There, love," he managed, adding, "Don't worry, the doctor shall be here shortly." His blood had turned cold watching her. For had he not heard other people cough that way before they had died? Was he afraid of death? He had preached about it often enough. He had also preached about pain, acceptance and forgiveness. Even now as his fingers plucked the blanket, he contemplated whether or not he had been frightened at that moment by the fact that he might possibly lose his wife and the unborn child? Faith's eyes had opened and then fastened on him.

"There, love," he repeated, "rest easy."

"Sore," she pushed out slowly, "so sore." Then she coughed again, coughed horribly and spittle spilled out around the corners of her mouth. In spite of himself, he had shuddered. Her eyes had stayed fixed on him. "Afraid." Softly the words came out, but not so small that they did not fill the whole room.

"What are you afraid of, Faith?" The clock ticked steadily, ticked through the spittle oozing down her chin, ticked past the words, and ticked under the couch.

"I have done..." she began, and then, out of breath, halted, continuing a moment later, "You don't know... afraid to die, Decius."

Reaching into his pocket, he found his handkerchief, a white handkerchief, one that had belonged to his father. Gently he wiped Faith's chin, and smiled at her. "There's no need to be afraid, love."

"But," she retaliated with sudden strength of voice and emotion, "but I am so very sinful, Decius. So very sinful. And you don't know..."

He could see the child kicking under the apron. "You are and have always been a good wife, Faith. And you will be a good mother when the child is born. You work hard. You are kind..."

The words required no thought but spilled out of him. It was what he thought. He would have gone on enumerating more virtues, but she grasped his sleeve.

"No," her voice still strong, protested, "you mustn't say those things, Decius. You don't know..."

"Of course I know," he responded, pulling free her grasp of his sleeve and

taking her hand, "You are my wife, are you not? You have been a wonderful example to all the women in church and in town. Only just think how faithfully you visit the orphanage."

A tremor passed over her face. Decius went on. "You need not fear death at all, Faith, and anyway, I do not think that you will die. You have become ill, yes, but the doctor is on his way here right now."

"But I am afraid, Decius." Her voice had lost its strength and her blue eyes closed again for a moment, the lids transparent. But then they opened once more, and bored into his own. He was made uneasy by the gaze, and was about to stand up to pace about when the door behind him opened. The family physician, Dr. Charles Ross walked in carrying his black bag. Mercy followed close on his heels. Decius got up off his knees and sat back down in the chair.

Dr. Ross was one of the few doctors left in town. A short, middle-aged man, who was balding and rather on the rotund side, he wore a white shirt, and a black vest. His gleaming eyes were hemmed in by laugh wrinkles, and gold-rimmed spectacles perched on the end of a knobby nose. His perpetual cheerful countenance had endeared him to many in town, especially to children.

"How's Faith?" he smiled as he approached the couch.

In slow motion, Faith turned her gaze from Decius towards Dr. Ross. "Afraid," she repeated, almost gasping for breath.

Dr. Ross' face lost its benevolent smile. Putting down his black bag on the ground, he came closer and seated himself very carefully on the edge of the couch. He picked up Faith's right hand and cradled it between his own large hands.

"Scared, my child?"

She flickered her eyelids in agreement, and he stroked her hand.

"No need to be scared," he softly murmured, "No need at all."

Dr. Ross' action irritated Decius, who guiltily felt that he ought to be the one sitting on the edge of the couch, and not someone else.

"She collapsed," he interjected, intuitively sensing that his words were interrupting a personal moment between



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the doctor and Faith, "and we, Mercy and I, we carried her inside."

"I see," Dr. Ross answered, "and you did right."

Faith had closed her eyes again, her breathing becoming labored. Decius stood up from his chair and moved so that he stood behind the couch. He lifted his eyebrows at the doctor, questioning with that gesture as to how the man thought his wife was doing. Gently, Dr. Ross let go of Faith's hand and stood up as well. Contemplating the young woman for a long moment, he slowly turned away and made his way over to Decius.

"She is very ill," he communicated in a soft undertone, "very ill indeed. Was she poorly the last few days? This morning?"

"No," Decius declared back in a whisper, "she was fine this morning. A little tired and downhearted maybe," he added, as if to himself, "and her feet were swollen a bit as well, but she is with child, after all. I have been told these things are normal and nothing serious."

Faith coughed into his words. Again spittle trickled down from the corners of her mouth. Dr. Ross was immediately back at her side. He bent over his patient, wiped her face, and spoke to her as if to a child.

"You are doing fine, Faith," his voice soothed, "just rest easy. Just relax."

Her eyes opened once more. "Afraid," she once again said.

"Why, dear child," the doctor asked, "why should you be afraid?"

"To die," she murmured, "I have been so bad...have not told..." Her voice trailed off. This time it was the doctor who raised his eyebrows at Decius as he walked back over to him. Decius shrugged helplessly. Dr. Ross' face changed. It became serious, almost angry.

"Have you not allayed her fears? Spoken to her as you ought to have... spoken as a pastor, Decius?"

"I have spoken," Decius replied defensively, "I have told her that she need not be afraid. That she is a good wife and has done well."

"That is all that you have said?"

Decius nodded rather woodenly. Reaching over, he stroked Faith's hair. Then he sighed deeply and strode out of the room. The whole time Mercy stood off to the side against a wall. Her fists were clenched. She loved her mistress and did not know what to do to help her.

The door closed behind Decius, but not quite. He left it open a shade and stood in

the hallway looking through the crack and listening. He saw that Doctor Ross once more deposited his body bulk on the edge of the couch and that he was very careful not to disturb his wife's still form.

"Listen to me, Faith," he murmured softly, "you need not fear death." He waited but there was no response. He continued.

"Let me relate a conversation to you, Faith. It is a true story and you know it well even though perhaps not in the words that I will use. Listen carefully."

The doctor folded his hands and spoke to the girl as she lay before him with her eyes closed. "In eternity a Father, that is, God the Father Almighty, said to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, 'Let us save Faith, that young woman who cannot save herself and Whom we love so dearly'. Ah, Faith, this conversation was holy and good and although we, you and I, Faith, were not privy to the exact words spoken, I'm quite sure that what I now tell you was the gist of what they said to one another."

There was a slight movement, a slight sound on the couch. It was as if the girl groaned deeply within herself. The doctor kept talking.

"The Lord Jesus, Whom the Father loved from eternity, and kept close to His bosom, then offered to be cursed for you, Faith. And the Lord Jesus set His face towards hell so that you, Faith can go to heaven. Such was the agreement within our Triune God, Faith."

For the briefest flicker of a moment, Faith opened her eyes. The doctor smiled at her and took her hand. "Death is merely a door like the door to the backyard, child."

Faith's eyes opened wider. A glimmer of a smile slid across her face and her eyes lit up. Dr. Ross smiled back, patted her hand and went on. "I know that you love the Lord Jesus, Faith; I'm convinced that you believe He died for your sins. Is that not so? Squeeze my hand, if that is so."

There was a visible effort on the part of his patient to move her hand. The smile begun in her eyes, now crept around the corners of her mouth. "I love ... Him, so much," she whispered.

"Well, then," Dr. Ross, now stroked both her hands as he spoke, "Well, then, you

are a forgiven child, Faith. From eternity this was so. Jesus stands at the door and you have heard His voice and opened the door. He has allowed you to believe. You are His child and will be carried by the angels through that door to the arms of your Savior."

Faith's eyes would not let him go.

"Mercy," Dr. Ross commanded, "come here, girl. Stand next to me and sing with me.

"Sing?" Mercy repeated.

"Yes, sing," the doctor also repeated, and to emphasize his point he began in a deep baritone.

Jesus, Lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly,

While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.

Hide me, O my Savior, hide, till the storm of life is past;

Safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last.

Faith smiled, smiled more broadly now, eyes still wide open and fixed on the singer. Her hands tried to creep within the doctor's hands who enfolded them. Slowly, very slowly, her eyelids closed. Mercy, who had slowly walked over from where she stood by the side cabinet, joined in with the doctor as he continued on into the second stanza.

Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on Thee;

Leave, ah! leave me not alone, still support and comfort me.

Mercy's clear voice and the doctor's baritone now interwove. They spun the words as a warm web around Faith's form on the couch.

All my trust on Thee is stayed, all my help from Thee I bring;

Cover my defenseless head with the shadow of Thy wing.

Faith's hands, now secure within Dr. Ross' palms, suddenly grew limp. Her eyes opened again and she stared beyond the two by her side. "Not afraid now," she whispered, "No, not afraid. He is taking

me home."

Dr. Ross began the third verse. His voice was softer now and Mercy followed along. Behind them the door was flung open wide and Decius came back in.

Wilt Thou not regard my call? Wilt Thou not accept my prayer?

Lo! I sink, I faint, I fall - Lo! on Thee I cast my care;

Reach me out Thy gracious hand!

While I of Thy strength receive,

Hoping against hope I stand, dying, and behold, I live.

Between these words, Decius recalled falling back on his knees, clutching the side of the couch. "Faith," he had called, and again he had called louder, "Faith, my love."

But there was no answer. The doctor lifted the hands, still held within his own, onto Faith's rounded belly.

"I should have..." Decius began, but the doctor shook his head.

"There was nothing you could have done, Decius," he responded, "Nothing at all. Faith is living now, living forever."

"And the baby?"

"The baby is with her in heaven, Decius."

Decius stopped moving his head back and forth over the pillow. Half-sitting up, he swung the covers away from the bed. His feet found the slippers waiting for him on the braided carpet. Although his movements were slow, they were purposeful. He dressed appropriately in a black suit. There was much to do, much to arrange today. Various people in church had to be notified. The service time, the visiting hours, the funeral text – these were all matters which required thought. Should he himself preach or should he ask a neighboring pastor? To be busy, he concluded, was good, for it stopped him from thinking overly much.

It was not until later that evening, after a day filled with people coming and going, that Mercy knocked at the door of the study again – the study where Decius had taken refuge.

"Yes," he called out in answer to the knock.

Mercy opened the door timidly and stood in the doorway. She held a notebook in her right hand. Decius had seen it before, but could not recall exactly where that had been.

"Yes?" he repeated rather dully.

"I found this, sir", the girl said softly, "I found it in the garden close to where mistress was... well, you know, sir."

"What is it?"

"A writing book. I think mistress was doing some writing in it," the girl responded, walking towards the leather fauteuil in which he was seated.

"Writing?"

He could not focus properly and held out his hands to receive the proffered notebook bound with a white ribbon. He stared at it and then fixed his gaze on Mercy. "Where did you say you found it?"

"In the garden, sir. Between the rows of beans."

"I see."

Mercy turned to leave, and he called out to her retreating back.

"Thank you, Mercy."

Looking over her shoulder at him, she smiled, tears welling up in her eyes, "She was a good mistress, sir."

"Yes, I know, Mercy. You may go."

As Mercy left, her tall form awkwardly lumbering towards the half-open oak door of the study, Decius remained sitting in his upholstered armchair, holding the notebook on his lap. A few minutes after the door shut behind Mercy, he absently began to leaf through its pages. Faith's small and precise writing peered up at him. He stroked the script with his hands. It seemed to him that he was touching her. He could not read for tears blurred his vision and dropped onto her writing. Wiping them off, he marred some of the paragraphs. No matter. Words enough left. He would read them tomorrow. He would read them sometime later but not now. But he could not help it that his eyes took in the beginning words in the first line.

Once upon a time there was a girl...

He smiled wanly to himself. Faith had written a story – perhaps a fairy tale. She

had been a bit of a dreamer, his Faith, always speaking of what she hoped, always looking for things he could not see. He had tried to correct that tendency. He had also reasoned to himself that surely motherhood would take away her fanciful, child-like spirit.

His hands abruptly shut the notebook. There would be no child now – no son. He had been so sure that it would be a son and that this son would have wavy, brown hair, Faith's blue eyes and her smile. As well, he had imagined that he would condition this son to have a serious, studious nature and that the boy would grow to become extremely obedient and godly. And he had decided that he would teach, that is to say, he would have taught the child, all that he knew. Yes, he would have. Why could not God have granted him this one thing? Surely these were lawful and faithful desires and surely he was a faithful pastor, a good believer, doing what God required.

He took the notebook up to the bedroom that second night and slid it under his pillow. He felt for its smoothness several times during the evening hours when the moon was lighting up the sky. Touching it comforted him, for it seemed to him that in this way somehow Faith touched him. Her fingers, though generally accomplishing much, had seemed frail and delicate and what would those fingers have been directed to write? He half sat up, turned on the lamp on the side table, plumped up the pillows behind his back, and placed the notebook on his lap. There was no title to Faith's story. It simply began.

Once upon a time there was a girl... and her name was Faith Joy Eleven. Actually, the girl was me. I had two sweet parents who loved me very much. My father, Peter Eleven, was a cabinetmaker and my mother, Helena Eleven, was, well, she was a mother. She was very beautiful and had blond hair piled high on her head. I was their only child. There were no brothers and sisters for me to play with but I rarely missed having siblings because my parents were so good to me and filled my life completely. They included me in everything they did. On days when the

sun shone my mother would take me to the park and on Sunday afternoons, after church, my father would often take us both for a walk past the art gallery where paintings were displayed in the windows. He would stand with us in front of the window and explain what the paintings were, what they depicted. In the evenings he would read to my mother and me and we discussed what we read. My parents taught me how to pray; they taught me how I might live and trust Jesus. My parents always spoke to me, spoke to me about everything, and encouraged me to be my name. Faith, they said, was a very good name, a name which instructed me how to live and I must think on it.

Decius laid the notebook down. He had not known Faith's parents. A strange surname, Eleven. Strange indeed. He had not known any of her family at all. Truth be told, he had never asked her much about her childhood either and ... His reverie was interrupted by a fierce knocking at the bedroom door.

"Sir! Sir! Are you awake, sir?!" It was Mercy whose room was on the first floor, just off the kitchen. What did the girl want at this time of the night?

"Yes, Mercy," he answered, "What is it? Why are you up at this time?"

"Sir," the girl's voice quavered, "I heard a noise in the parlor just a few minutes ago. I was afraid, but I did get up and look. And, oh, sir, there's a child."

"A child," Decius repeated, thinking he had heard wrong.

"Yes, sir, there is a child sitting next to the coffin of mistress. Oh, forgive me sir, for waking you, but I could not think what I ought to do."

"A child," Decius repeated stupidly, closing the notebook and sliding it back under his pillow, "You have had a dream, Mercy. What would a child be doing in the parlor, girl?"

"No, sir, it is not a dream?" Mercy insisted, "There is a child."

"Whom have you let in this time of the night?"

"No one, sir," the girl wailed in the hall, "No one at all. I've no idea how this child came in. But please, sir, what shall I do?"

"You must be imagining things, Mercy.

But wait and I shall come down with you and we shall have a look together."

Decius swung his feet over the edge of the bed, put on his slippers, reached for the housecoat lying on a nearby chair, and stood up. A child, indeed! Mercy was surely overwrought and not herself. She was, generally speaking, a very sensible girl and not given to vapors.

The hallway was empty. Mercy had already disappeared downstairs. Decius proceeded cautiously, leaving his bedroom door open for some light and flipping on the electric light switch at the top of the stairs before descending. The light in the parlor, just off to the right at the bottom of the stairs, was also on. Softly padding down, he reached the parlor door, a door with small opaque glass panes set between its wood. He turned the handle and cautiously opened the door. The coffin had been set on the large oak table in front of a flat-topped sideboard. Their good dishes were stored on its shelves. The high-backed oak chairs which matched the table perfectly, had been pushed against the wall away from the table. It had seemed ludicrous somehow, to have empty chairs surrounding a table with a coffin on it. He carefully avoided looking at Faith's corpse. Yet a few days ago, he could not help but reflect, he had spoken with her, had eaten dinner with her, and had advised her to not wear a red dress to the women's social as this had appeared too frivolous to him.

"Hello."

Startled, Decius looked around but saw no one. The greeting had been given by a little voice and not one that caused fear. The chairs along the wall were empty, quite empty.

"Hello." There was a movement under the table and Decius peered down. An oval face with two large blue eyes stared up at him. Wavy brown hair, a bit tousled and unkempt, covered a little skull; and a shy grin brought out one tiny dimple in a full round cheek.

"Who are you?" Decius spoke slowly, not giving a return greeting, but eyeing the child with astonishment. As if he had not been thinking, no praying, to God for a child – a child that fitted the mold of this boy exactly.

"My name is John Peter."

"What is it?"
"A writing book.
I think mistress was doing
some writing in it,"
the girl responded.



"John Peter?" Decius repeated, and again, "John Peter?"

"Yes." It was all the voice divulged. Decius stood up straight. He had been bending over to look under the table the whole time. He stepped backwards towards the wall and sat down heavily on one of the high-backed oak chairs. The child, John Peter, crawled out from under the table and stood, arms dangling at his side, next to the coffin. First under the coffin and now next to it, Decius thought. They gazed at one another for what seemed like an eternity. Then Decius spoke.

"Who are you, John Peter? Where are you from and why are you here?" Having begun to speak, the questions tumbled off his tongue with rapidity.

"I am her son," John Peter replied, pointing at the coffin, adding, "and she told me to come here and that the door would be open."

The child stood erect, almost like a little soldier and Decius half-expected him to salute. He experienced an unexpected urge to shelter this child, to lead it. He wagged his finger at the boy. "Come here, John Peter."

The child obeyed instantly. That act alone ingratiated him with Decius. Standing in front of the occupied chair, the child eyed the man clad in the bathrobe. Then he walked on and unhesitatingly climbed onto Decius' lap. Decius, curiously enough, did not protest. He held the boy in his arms and marveled at the strangeness of it all. How God worked miracles! For in that moment he firmly believed God had sent this little one.

"John Peter," he whispered and in some vague way felt he was holding Faith.

The boy was, of course, some stray street urchin and not Faith's child at all. Perhaps she had met him through the orphanage. How he had managed to get into the parlor was a mystery, but the morning would reveal many things. And yet, how the child resembled what he had thought his own child would look like. The boy nestled his head against Decius' shoulder and fell asleep almost instantly. The coffin stood in the center of the room, a wooden exclamation mark punctuating

the situation. Decius could see Faith's face. It was almost as if she were smiling, approving. Yes, she would have been kind to this child as well. It had been in her nature to be kind.

He stood up, slowly and carefully, and made his way over to the door. John Peter did not waken. When he opened the door with his right hand, his left cradling the boy, he came face to face with Mercy. Eyes wide open, she gaped at the picture of Decius carrying the child.

"How..." she began, but a stern look from her master quieted her.

"I'm going to put this boy on the cot in the spare room, next to your room, Mercy. His name is John Peter. You are to keep your ears open tonight. If he wakes up, see to it that he is not frightened. Do you understand?"

She nodded fervently and together they walked down the hall into the spare room. Mercy pulled the covers off the cot and watched as Decius laid the boy on the little bed. For a moment Decius contemplated the scene in front of him. It was not the nursery he and Faith had planned. But here was a boy – a God-given boy. He was convinced of it. Perhaps just for this night he would be a father. Then he and Mercy walked out on their tiptoes. Back in the hallway, Decius once more instructed Mercy concerning the care of the lad before bidding her goodnight.

Back in his bedroom, Decius left the light on. He knew he was too full of thoughts to be able to go to sleep.

"How did the child get into the house?" he lisped to himself, and "Why did he come, and who is he?"

But the truth of the matter is that God works in strange ways. Decius knew this and smiled. It was a half-smile, his bottom lip slightly jutting out to the right. Faith had always called it his crooked smile. Faith, oh, Faith!! He ran the palm of his hand over the spot on the blanket where she had snuggled against him each evening. Well, every evening for the last three or so years. She had been an orphan when he had met her and had worked at the orphanage, teaching younger children, cleaning and doing other such things as were required in that institution. Not that she had lived at the orphanage. She'd had her own apartment on Delphi Street. Absently he recalled seeing her in church the first time, remembered the way the sunlight had fallen through the stained-glass window, bringing out a halo-like glow on her auburn hair. She had been young – twenty-three years old to his thirty-three, but she was so refined and delicate and had seemed so mature in her character. He picked up the notebook and began to read where he had left off before Mercy had called him.

It was good, that life with my parents. It was so good I almost became frightened.

For surely, I thought, and I clearly beheld it around me, there were many poor, many disabled people, many unhappy souls. But I was not one of them. And why was that? This time, however, of serenity and peace with my parents was not to last, for when I was ten years old, both my mother and my father died in a house fire. I was spared. My life was spared.

Decius stopped. He had known this about Faith's life. Faith had spoken of the tragedy, albeit haltingly and sadly. It had obviously been a devastating chapter in her life. Somehow the sadness of that chapter had appealed to him in that it made him feel protective towards her. He continued reading.

For a while, for seven years, that is, I lived in the city orphanage. The people there were good to me and I learned how to keep house, sew, cook, care for little children...

Decius laid down the notebook. For seven years? So she was seventeen when... when what? What exactly did he know anyway about these interim youthful years except that her parents had died when she was ten and that she had lived in the orphanage? He painfully recalled as he sat up in bed with her notebook in his hands that he had mostly spoken to her of himself; of a future with himself; and of how she could become his helpmeet. He had never really spoken to her about what she did each day, what she thought about and ... He stopped, sighed and sorely regretted that he had not asked more. Then he began to scan the lines again, began to scan them with a deeper curiosity.

It was hard work in the orphanage, but I did not mind that. There was a sort of security in the work. There were early mornings and late evenings and...

Several pages detailing with precision Faith's daily routine followed and Decius yawned. His interest waned a little and he flipped pages.

Because I lost my parents at such an early

age, it was given to me to grow steadily in the knowledge that God was ever-present. Not that He wasn't there when my parents had been living, but my awareness of Him became greater and greater. When I was very little, my father once told me of a man for whom he had to build a cabinet. He was a very tall man – more than six and a half feet, I think. This man, my father said, had all the handles on the doors of his house raised so that he would not have to bend every time he passed through them. This was good and well for himself, but for the rest of the family it became more difficult, especially for his children. Father went on to speak to me, small child that I was, of Jesus. Jesus is the Way, my father explained to me at that time, the Door, if you will, but one that never has a handle which is out of reach for His children. It was only a story, but it stayed with me. For so I experienced it when my parents were gone, that the Door was easy to open and no matter my size I was able to enter into fellowship with Him. But even though I was aware of Jesus in such a way that He was very close to me, I was still lonely - lonely for someone with whom to speak. After all, God did make Eve for Adam and said "It is not good for man to be alone." And then one day I met and fell in love with John Almsman...

Decius, who had been smiling at the analogy of the door, suddenly stopped smiling and found his fingers crumpling the edges of the page he was reading. Who was John Almsman? He had never heard Faith speak of him, had never heard her mention his name. He forced himself to read on, but his breath had turned shallow and his mouth felt dry.

John was an orphan like myself but from the east coast. Sponsored by a wealthy man from his city, a philanthropist, he had been able to pursue the vocation of doctor. But that is another story. On this particular day, being a doctor, he had come to examine one of the children at the home who was ill with a fever. A kind and gentle man, John was about twenty-eight years of age at this time. Because this child was in my care, we

spoke afterwards in the hall and on a subsequent visit he brought me some books to read. He was interested in fine arts and painting, even as my father had been interested in these things. One Saturday, John took me to an art gallery with an exhibition of French paintings and we talked for a very long time afterwards - talked of art, favorite authors, and how amazing it was that God had gifted certain people to create such beauty.

Decius' hands trembled and he gripped the pages with such ferocity that he almost tore the thin sheets. He did not recall that he himself had ever spoken to Faith about paintings, about art, or any such topic. It had never occurred to him to do so. His interests did not lay with such matters. He did recall that on one occasion she had mentioned that the green leaves on the curtain in the bedroom reminded her of a forest somewhere and she could imagine walking right into it with himself by her side. He had thought the whole idea ridiculous and had told her so.

"Don't be silly, Faith," he had said and had added, he remembered now, "it's time the curtains were washed. I see a smudge in the right-hand corner."

She had not responded. Perhaps, at the time, she had been thinking of John Almsman and of what he might have said. His eyes returned to where he had left off in the narrative.

John was a very kind man - a good man. He was sweet and after six months of acquaintance, we were married and were very happy.

Decius laid the notebook facedown on the blanket. He not only laid it down, but he shoved it under the pillow. Then, a few seconds later, he took it out again and bending over the edge, he shot the little book, white ribbon and all, as far as he could under the bed. Then he pulled himself back up onto the bed.

Why had he not known any of this? Why had Faith never told him any of these things? It was true that he had never specifically asked about her past. Within himself he knew that this was because he

had assumed that she had no past, that she was simply an orphan, a poor and needy orphan, who, until she had met and married himself, was a nobody. He had assumed that she would be grateful to share her life with a well-to-do pastor, a man whose reputation was as clean and spotless as the well-polished table in his parlor.

Pulling the covers over his head, Decius lay for the space of half an hour. He pulled his knees up to his chest as he lay in the bed and hugged them, thoughts rolling hotly within himself. How did one pray about such a matter as this? How did one approach God with such a problem as this? Was there a problem? Gradually calming down, he pushed the blankets off and sat up. Then he got out of bed, lay on his belly on the floor and retrieved the notebook. Crawling back into bed, he gingerly held Faith's autobiographical confession between his thumb and his forefinger. He did want to know more. There was no doubt about it.

On April 16, 1917, the US Congress voted to declare war on Germany. At first it did not seem that many trained troops would be sent to Europe. John and I, we followed the news. John was very excited by what

President Wilson called "fighting for the ultimate peace" of the world. Then the Selective Service Draft was issued that very same year, our first year of marriage. It was a universal draft – black people, white people, immigrants and, yes, even orphans were drafted. John was drafted. His occupation of doctor was needed for the war effort. He was interred in a cantonment training camp and early on in 1918 was sent to France. He was killed, my lovely John was killed, during the Third Battle of the Aisne.

Decius raised his head for a moment. He saw the white curtains with the green leaves on them hanging in front of the window. Perhaps there had been times when Faith had wanted to walk through the white forest she saw in those curtains because she'd had so many bad memories, memories of which he knew nothing and memories of which she had not told him. Perhaps he could have helped her, had he known. But why had she not told him? His eyes went back to

the small, precise handwriting.

The Lord was and is, my Shepherd. Our son, John Peter, was born a few weeks after I received a telegram. The telegram had, in effect, these words, as I recall. They are not the exact words because I ripped the telegram to shreds after I read it and cannot be certain anymore. But this was the gist of it. "We regret very much to tell you that your husband, John Almsman, was killed in action on the night of the sixteenth. Death was instantaneous and no suffering occurred. The Company was taking part in an attack and your husband's team was one which advanced against the enemy. A shell fell on your husband's gun and killed him as well as wounding one of his comrades. It was impossible to salvage his body and to get

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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 excellence in teaching. The school has a population of 340 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

his remains away. He lies in a soldier's grave where he fell. We who were in his Company deeply sympathize with you in your loss. John did his duty and has given his life for his country. We trust you will feel some consolation in this.

Decius put the notebook down on the blanket. He could picture Faith tearing a telegram to pieces. It must have been a devastating moment for her. But what if John Almsman had lived? He sucked his breath in deeply and knew that if the man had lived, he, Decius Legis, would not have been able to marry Faith. Had Faith loved him when she married him? He wished with all his heart that he might have her standing in front of him, laying next to him, so that he might ask her, "Faith, what am I to you? Why did you marry me? Why did you not tell me about your previous marriage – about your child?" He picked up the notebook again and kept on reading. The faint morning light shone in under the curtains.

The baby was sweet from the beginning. I named him Peter John – Peter for his grandfather and John for his father. Peter John slept well, ate well and was a cheerful baby. And surely I had need of cheer. But the strange thing was that there was such a wonderful comfort surrounding me. I felt so blessed in that I had possessed such love as my parents had given me, such sweetness as John had given me, and such cheer as the child now gave me. I was totally confident that God had let all things come to pass in His good providence. I knew this to be true for a fact and felt it wrapped around me like a warm comforter. For a small fee, my kind landlady, Mrs. Stringer, offered to help me care for the child so that I might ask if I could resume my work in the orphanage. And when I did apply, they were happy to have me return there. Each day I worked from early mornings into mid-afternoon hours and the rest of the day I could be home with John Peter.

The church I was attending at that time closed. The pastor left for another city and one by one the congregation dwindled down to a handful of people - people who gradually all joined other congregations.

Mrs. Stringer had heard tell that Simon's Street Central had a good preacher and advised me to try attendance at that place. So I did.

Decius shifted position in the bed. Simon's Street Central was his church, his pastorate. It was where he preached and from which pulpit he looked down at the congregation.

Decius Legis was the pastor of Simon's Street Central. When he preached that Sunday morning the first time I attended services there, I was moved. His sermon centered on Psalm 112:1 which reads: 'Blessed is the man who fears the Lord.' He said that a person could be in the middle of miseries but that he was still blessed if he was a godly man; he said that a person might be under the cross, but that if he was a believer, he was still privileged; and he concluded by saying that a faithful person was always blessed in affliction because the Spirit of God certainly rested on that person. These words so spoke to my heart, my afflicted but peaceful heart, that I felt that the pastor was being used by God to comfort me. "Mourning begets joy and happiness." These words echoed off the pulpit. They were indeed encouraging words for me at that time, because, although I was at peace, I was still mourning. They were words which I felt I had need of hearing. So I resolved to make Simon's Street Central my church home.

Decius laid down the notebook again. He did not really recall the sermon. In a sense, he felt buoyed by the praise from his dead wife especially in light of the fact that he had now come to a sudden

realization that he had not really known as much about her as he thought he did. He sat for a moment, sat perfectly still, fixing his gaze on the white curtain fluttering uncertainly as the open window let in an early morning breeze.

I still don't know why, but the pastor sought me out after the third or fourth service. He was very kind, asking me where I lived and what I did. I'm afraid I was rather tongue-tied and shy, only responding very briefly. After all, this man dressed in a shiny black suit, was one who had just exhorted God's Word, and so he seemed almost holy to me. But he persisted in his attentions, making an appointment to call on me later that week.

Mrs. Stringer, who was very fond of John Peter, had taken him for a visit to her sister for a few days and so I was alone when Decius Legis came to call. But when Mrs. Stringer came back and heard from me that the minister had come to see me and that he was coming back for another visit, she was silent for a long while. Then she advised me not to mention to him that I had a son. The fact was that I had not yet mentioned John Peter in that first visit and we had spoken only briefly. When I asked Mrs. Stringer why she would advise this, she did not answer immediately. "Would you not like a good home for your child?" she eventually said. I nodded for I did feel this was a good thing for which to hope. "Well, then, for now," she urged, "do not tell him about John Peter. It will only frighten the man. I will take the child for a walk prior to his visit so that you will be alone with him."

I listened to her and therein lay my downfall. In my heart of hearts I did know that Mrs. Stringer was right about

She had come into his study, had entered without knocking, something she usually did not do when she knew he was writing a sermon.



two things: firstly, that Decius Legis was seriously interested in me and secondly, that John Peter might possibly hold him back.

Decius was fascinated now and remembered vividly how enthusiastically he had first called on Faith; how he had taken her flowers; and how he had combed his hair very carefully. It must have been rather overwhelming to Faith for he had worn his heart on his sleeve from the onset of that first short visit.

Even now, as he thought about her and her sweetness, he wished with all his might that he could woo her once more. But she was gone and there was the coffin in the parlor. With a shock he suddenly recalled the boy – the boy John Peter. He really was Faith's child and she had never even come close to telling him about this part of her life. He returned to the reading.

Decius, I found to be a very correct person – a person surrounded by rules of all sorts. Not, mind you, that this was wrong, but he was organized, very organized. You ate at a certain time; you went to bed at a certain time; and you rose at a certain time. With him there was never any guesswork, never any surprise in living. I know he loved me truly from the very beginning and he never deviated from that. I think he had never felt that way about a girl before. He told me that he thought God had placed me on his path. It was a very beautiful and sweet thing to say and when he said it I think that I began at that moment to love him also. It was a strange and beautiful awareness.

Decius glanced at his wedding band – the band that Faith had placed on his finger the day they were married. It would have been the second time that she had done such a thing. Had she truly loved him? He did not know any more.

Mrs. Stringer, who continued to take John Peter for walks and visits when Decius called, seriously advised me to marry Decius before telling him of the child. Truly, the longer I waited, the more difficult it became and before I knew it, I was married to Decius and was living

with him at the parsonage without the child. Mrs. Stringer, whom I called upon each Tuesday and Friday afternoon...

Decius laid down the paper. Tuesday and Friday afternoon? That's when he had supposed her to be visiting the orphanage, doing volunteer work. Indeed, he had greatly admired this in her – the helping of children who, like herself, had been bereft of parents. He glanced down at the paper again.

It became so easy, this way of life. It became so easy to deceive. And truly, looking back, I do not know why I did not confess. Mrs. Stringer received half of the household money Decius gave me each week. I managed to buy and provide for our needs adequately, with the other half, for Decius was generous. John Peter grew and the afternoons I spent with him were times of joy and happiness. I think that he was so used to the set pattern that he never questioned as to why he did not live with me. He loved Mrs. Stringer like a grandmother and then she became ill. It was not a serious illness at first – just a cough and a bit of tiredness. I encouraged her to see a doctor, but she would not hear of it. But as she did not begin to feel better over the ensuing months, she suddenly began to urge me to tell Decius of John Peter's existence. I was puzzling over how I might do so when I found out I was with child again.

Decius laid down the paper. He remembered as if it were yesterday, that Faith had told him she was expecting. He had been jubilant at the news. She had come into his study, had entered without knocking, something she usually did not do when she knew he was writing a sermon.

"Decius," she had said, shutting the door quietly behind her, and again, "Decius."

He had looked up, and had known straight away that she had something unusual to tell him. He had hoped and prayed that they would have a child. They had been married more than a year and a half and although he had told himself that other couples waited longer and that even if there was no child, it would not matter,

he had known deep down inside that having a child was extremely important to him. She was wearing a light green dress. It suited her very well. Strange that he would recall that. The boy had worn a light green shirt last night. It had looked, now that he pondered it, to have been made from the material of that dress.

"What Faith?" he had asked, as he leaned back, "What is it, love, that you should come and talk to me at this time."

She had stood in front of his desk, fidgeted with her hands and then, as if on impulse, had walked around the oak structure and had sat on his knee, even as the child had done last night. The parallels surprised him.

"I..." she began hesitatingly, and then stopped.

"You must not start a sentence," he had corrected gently, "and then stop, Faith."

"Yes," she agreed readily, "you are quite right."

"Let me guess," he whispered suddenly as he nuzzled the soft nape of her neck, and to this day he did not know why he had said it, "you are expecting our first baby."

"Yes," she immediately responded as she rested her head on his shoulder, "but Decius there is something else..."

He had not let her finish, but had picked her up and had carried her over to the big fauteuil and had put her in it, standing back to stare at her. "A little mother," his voice had sung out, "and we are going to be parents. We are going to be parents, Faith! It's something neither of us has ever done before and we should thank God for it and ask for His help." Then he had knelt down in front of the chair, had taken her hands, and had prayed that God would bless her and the child. Perhaps, thinking back now, perhaps that might have been the time that she was trying to tell him about John Peter. Perhaps. His eyes went back to the notebook. It was time to turn a page.

Decius was ecstatic.

Those were the only words on the next page. Puzzled Decius turned it. Again a blank page. It was not until he turned several that he finally came to more writing. But the words no longer recorded

what had happened. The words were now directed to him. The sentences were not written in diary form any longer. These words were more like a letter - a letter to himself.

You were so very, very happy, Decius, with the news of a baby. And I was glad that I had been able to make you happy. I know that if you are reading these pages, that I will be gone. So I will write them to you as I had hoped I would one day speak directly with you. My dear husband, for that is what you are and I truly do love you, I do not know how to begin to fit John Peter into the picture. Mrs. Stringer is failing. It will not be long and she will not be able to take care of the boy any longer. And next to that, guilt overwhelms me. What if you, upon learning about him, will not allow the child to be part of our home? You can be, my husband, so very dogmatic, so very black and white. Your sermons, although comforting in the beginning when I first listened to them, now often plague me. And this, more

than anything else has kept me from speaking to you about John Peter. Your words are often like decrees. You must do this and you must not do that. Of course, the commandments are true and pure and must be held up, but the fact that the fulfillment of the law is but a small afterthought is beginning to wear me down.

I realize that I have sinned gravely by not telling you about John Peter and every day it seems to me that forgiveness is slipping farther and farther from my grasp. Sometimes I wallow in guilt and it pains me so. There are nights when I fear that I will die before I have confessed to you and that I will die in my sin without forgiveness. But I know that the door handle is low for little children and, indeed, I am a little child... I have told Him...

The writing stopped. The last paragraph was written in a bit of a scrawl, Faith's precise, neat script changing radically. He flipped through the book, anxious

to hear more. But the words "I have told Him" were the last ones he could find. Faint sunlight was creeping in through the white curtains with the green leaves on them. It was almost morning. And Decius wept. For the first time since Faith had died, he sobbed. He put the notebook back under the pillow. Gently he laid it there.

Then he pushed away the covers and sat up on the edge of the bed. His feet found his slippers and standing up, he retrieved the housecoat flung on a chair. Putting it on and breathing in deeply, he opened the door of his room. Retracing the steps he had taken earlier that night, he walked downstairs to the spare bedroom. Taking hold of the door handle, he cautiously inched the frame open and beheld the outline of the child sleeping on the cot. He stood there for what seemed like the duration of his marriage. Finally he pulled the door shut again and turned to go back up to his room.

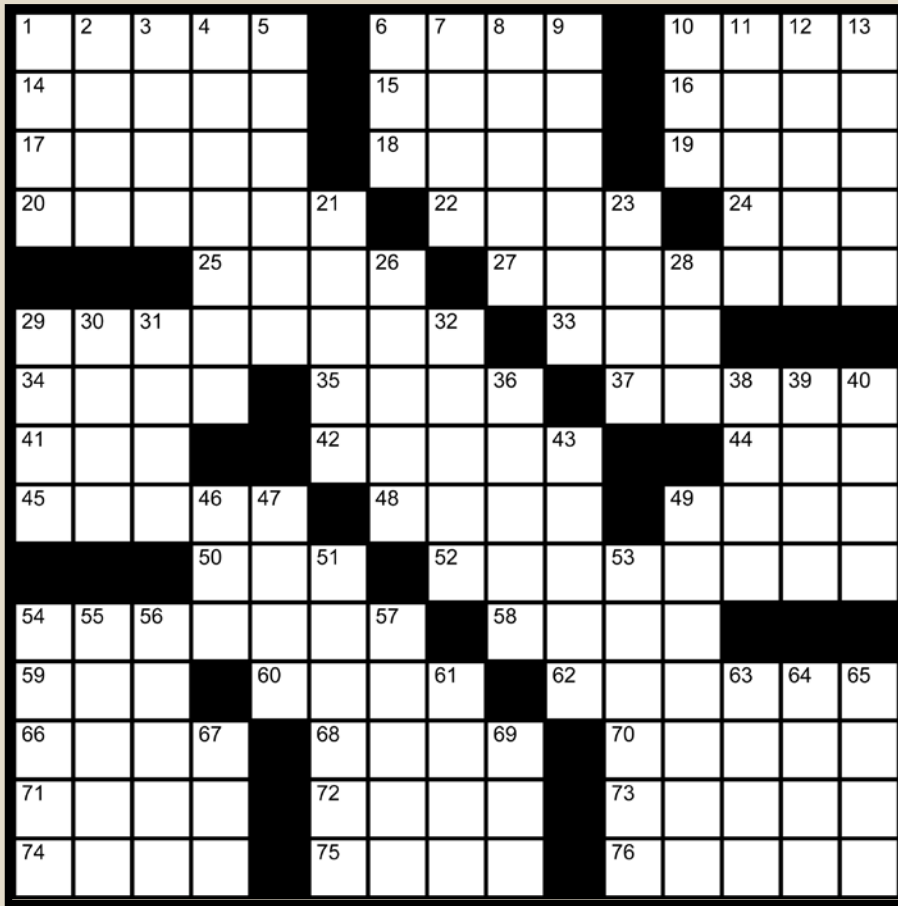
But halfway up the stairs, he stopped and, in an afterthought, returned to the child's room, opening the door wide. RP



O
COME
LET US
ADORE HIM!

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 3-3

PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

1. Saudi Arabian religion
6. Semi-circular end of a cathedral
10. "Pond scum" plant (singular)
14. Dramatic work in one or more acts set to music
15. Niels _____ (Nobel-Prize-winning physicist)
16. Sound effect of regular pistol
17. When a new wrestler wants in they "_____"
18. "200 _____ and 20 rams" (Gen. 32)
19. Support for a sail (not totally spare fixture)
20. "they... _____ me in... anger" (Ps. 55)
22. What to do the decks under 19 Across
24. "See what large letters I _____" (Gal. 6)
25. Smear ((sur)face) with (paint or) night cream
27. First stanza of an ancient Greek choral ode
29. Ventilated place for your ears (of corn)
33. Sound effect of space pistol
34. Double-reed woodwind musical instrument
35. Nut partly used to make cola drinks
37. _____ alcohol (also known as ethanol)
41. _____-shooter ("Eat your ammo, dear!")
42. Place to make a (cut-down?) speech
44. Note to show I owe you money
45. Cliff-top eagle's nest
48. Fleishy seed covering (partly visible in April?)
49. Wapiti/moose (big members of deer family)
50. Main point (of the matter); crux (of issue)
52. It's worn around a wrist

- (not a frayed cuff).
54. Narrowly braided hair worn close to scalp
58. Earth crust "stuff" (rich in silica, aluminum)
59. "you tithe mint and _____ and..." (Luke 11)
60. The _____ is _____!" (It's our responsibility.)
62. "I love your _____ tones!" (Sweet!)
66. Cut or engrave (lettering) into a surface
68. "when you _____ restless," (Gen. 27)
70. Plural of cirrus (those high wispy clouds)
71. Menmaatre _____ (Egyptian pharaoh)
72. Capital city of Norway
73. Edict of Russian tsar or emperor
74. Pace faster than a walk, slower than a gallop
75. Put baggage away carefully and neatly
76. Underground conduit for waste or drainage

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



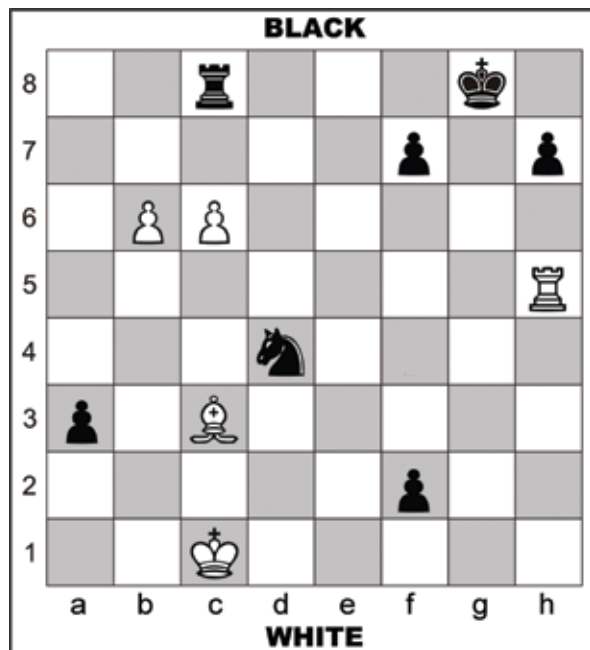
SERIES 3-2

DOWN

1. "not an _____ will pass from..." (Matt. 5)
2. Places with hot tubs and saunas
3. Appendages that aren't arms
4. Woman who helped Theseus in Greek myth
5. Madman (half *man*, half something else)
6. First name (short form) of "Honest" president
7. Acronym for prisoners of war
8. Archaic form of shows (Ed Sullivan style?)
9. Adjective describing a poor substitute
10. Muscles found in your "core" (short form)
11. Totally buy into (like a cat does with milk)
12. "they _____ their teeth" (Lamentations 2)
13. "I _____ with the law" (Romans 7)
21. "he _____ in ambush like a lion" (Ps. 10)
23. Steep bank or hillside (Scottish dialect)
26. Animal and plant life of specific place/time
28. Select (for or in)
29. Manage or survive (with) a difficulty
30. "_____ your parents in..." (Eph. 6)
31. "The _____ of the... fierce lion..." (Job 4)
32. Teaser on the cover of a book or movie
36. Arab rulers (variant spelling)
38. "every mountain and _____ shall be" (Luke 3)
39. "He possessed... 500 _____ of oxen" (Job 1)
40. "the _____ of defiling passion" (1 Peter 2)
43. Checkered or tartan twilled cloth
46. "no place for them in the _____" (Luke 2)
47. Currency that's a big part of European Union
49. Slippery, like a certain slender fish
51. Drums played in pairs with the fingers
53. Meeting of political party's sitting members
54. Top of a wave (of toothpaste popularity?)
55. "the inner and _____ rooms" (1 Kings 6)
56. Right-hand page (opposite to verso)
57. German/Austrian sausage (close to worst?)
61. Part played or sung alone (not a hi point?)
63. "It stuck in my _____!" (part of eating crow?)
64. Irish Gaelic language (archaic word)
65. Row or level of seats or wedding cake
67. Strike (a person) or better than strike (a ball)
69. Palindromic exclamation of amazement

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Chess Puzzle #237



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

Riddle for Punsters #237

"Striving for Flying"

Why did the raven do poorly on the flight school written tests?
Instead of studying for each test, he would always try to _ _ _ g it.
On the other hand, the raven had top marks for gliding which always made the eagle students s _ _ _.

Problem to Ponder #237

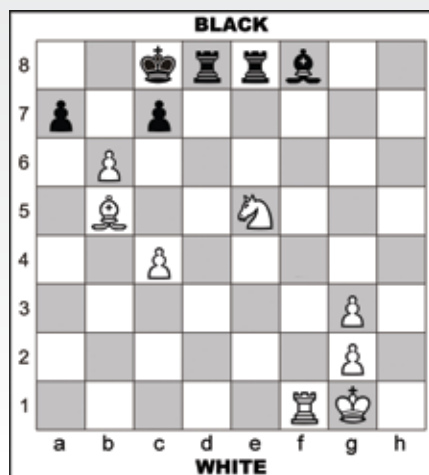
"WORD SCRAMBLE"

Unscramble the words related to the season we are now experiencing, namely "laft" (fall).

manutu
clouffour selave
ingramiot
lordec
torsher yads
restvah
hitionnareb
flea-nrstew
skinmupp
nakrig
rebzey
giltwin

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #236



WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

1. B-R6 ch K-N1
2. N-B6 ch K-R1
3. P-N7 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Bb5-a6 + Kc8-b8
2. Ne5-c6 + Kb8-a8
3. b6-b7 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 2

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- B-B4 ch
2. R-B2 R-Q8 ch
3. K-R2 R-R1 mate

BLACK WINS SOONER IF

1. ----- B-B4 ch
2. K-R1/R2 R-R1 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Bf8-c5 +
2. Rf1-f2 Rd8-d1 +
3. Kg1-h2 Re8-h8 ++

BLACK WINS SOONER IF

1. ----- Bf8-c5 +
2. Kg1-h1/h2 Re8-h8 ++

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#236 - "Shuffle the Cards?"

Why did the tailor like to play card games? He felt competent playing games that had four suits and liked to be able to provide others with a good deal.

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#236 - "Road Trip Statistics?"

Due to the low value of the Canadian dollar, the van Johnson family drove across the border from the United States into Canada for a road trip. They drove at an average of 100 km/h for 13 hours, 110 km/h for 5 hours, 80 km/h for 8 hours and 50 km/h for 6 hours. Their vehicle averages 10 km/L and the average price of gasoline on their trip was \$1.10/L. They stayed three nights at hotels (each providing a free continental breakfast) at an average price of \$153 per night (including taxes). Besides the free breakfasts, they ate 4 lunches and 3 suppers on their trip. The average meal price paid was \$22.50 per lunch and \$42.25 per supper. Snacks for the trip they brought from home. They spent an average of 75 minutes in restaurants for each lunch and supper and spent a total of 210 minutes for gas fill-ups with washroom breaks and a total of 12.25 hours sightseeing on the trip and stayed an average of 8 hours per night at each hotel. All expenses were in Canadian dollars and the average exchange rate was \$0.77 US for each \$1 Cdn.

- a) In Canadian and American funds, how much did the road trip cost the van Johnson family?
- b) How long (in hours) did the entire trip take them?
- c) Finally, what was the average cost of the trip per minute, in both Canadian and American funds?

a) 100 km/k x 13 h = 1300 km and 110 km/k x 5 h = 550 km and 80 km/k x 8 h = 640 km and 50 km/k x 6 h = 300 km for a total of **2790 km**. 2790 km/(10 km/L) = **279 L of gasoline** at a cost of 279 L x \$1.10/L = **\$306.90**

Cost of hotels: 3 X \$153 = **\$459** Cost of lunches: 4 x \$22.50 = **\$90** Cost of suppers: 3 x \$42.25 = **\$126.75**

Total cost = \$306.90 + \$459 + \$90 + \$126.75 = **\$982.65 Cdn** and \$1 Cdn = \$0.77 U.S. so the Cost is \$982.65 x 0.77 = **\$756.64 U.S.**

b) Time for driving: 13 + 5 + 8 + 6 = 32 hours or 32 x 60 = **1920 minutes**. Time for fill-ups: **210 minutes**. Time for meals: 7 x 75 min = **525 minutes**. Time for sightseeing: 12.25 h x 60 min/h = **735 minutes**. Time in hotels: 3 x 8 h = 24 hours or 24 x 60 = **1440 minutes**. **TOTAL TIME = 1920+210+525+735+1440 = 4830 MINUTES or 4830/60 = 80.5 hours.**

c) For the whole trip the cost is \$982.65/4830 min = **\$0.20345/min = about 20 cents Cdn per minute** or \$756.64/4830 min = **\$0.1567/min = about 16 cents U.S. per minute.**



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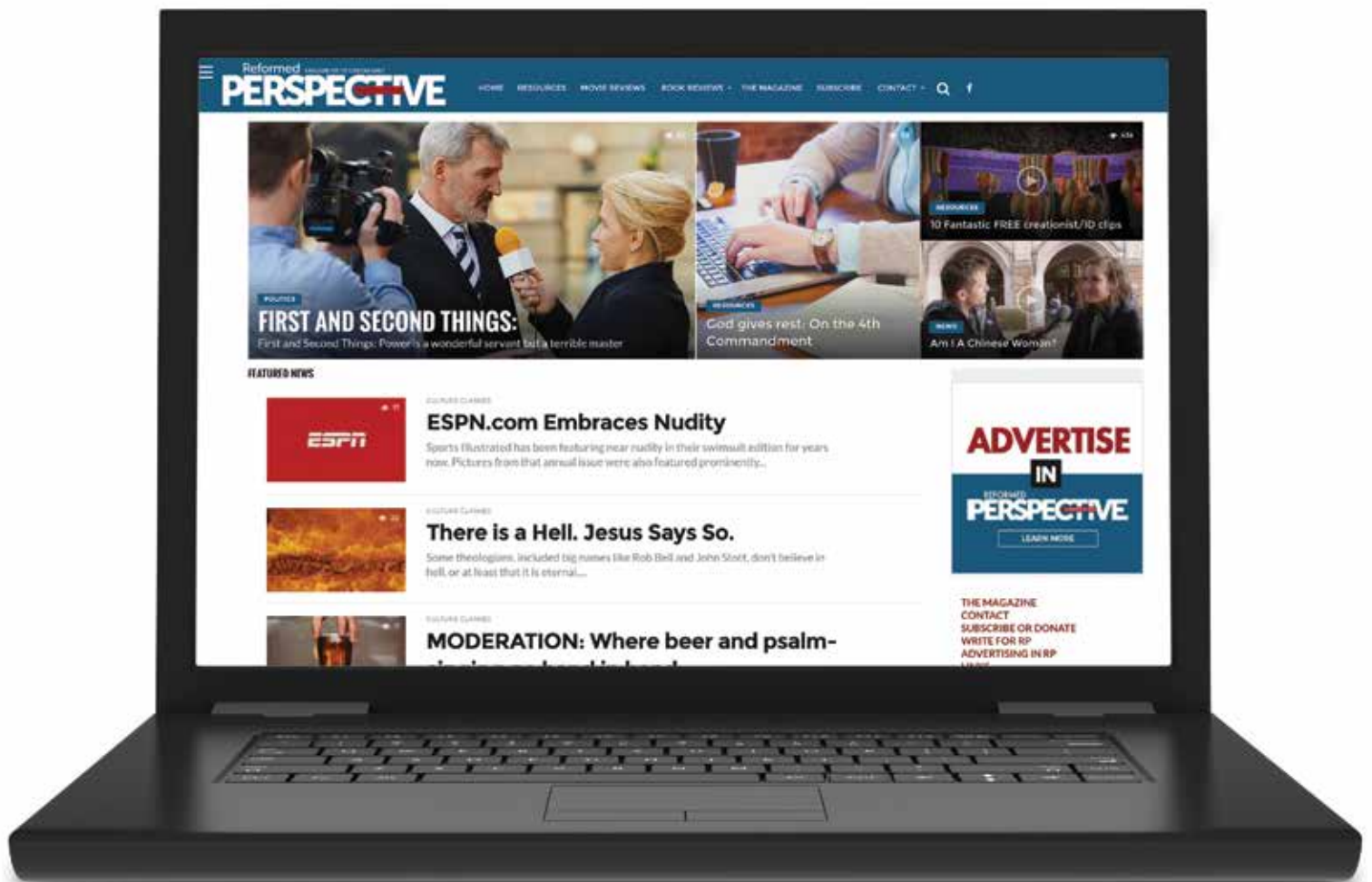
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