

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

MAY/JUNE 2018

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PERSPECTIVE

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Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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AGING IN HOPE!

- Johan D. Tangelder

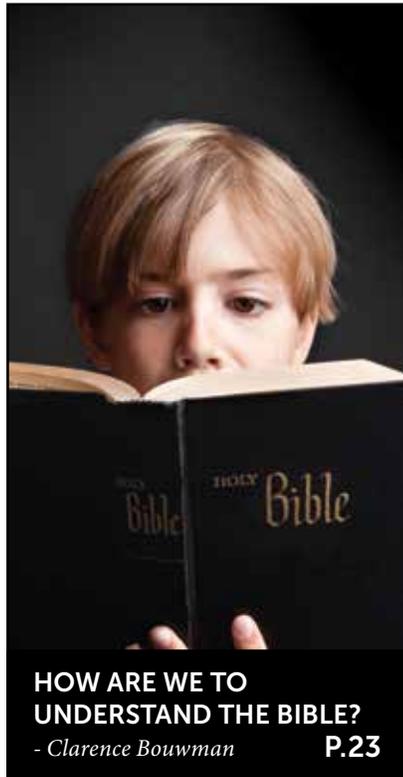
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READERS' RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR,

I was disappointed by the article on Jordan Peterson in the Mar/Apr issue of the *Reformed Perspective*. Strictly speaking I do not disagree with the article. It might be helpful to a Christian who is tempted to follow Jordan Peterson in every way, but it is not helpful to Christians who actually want to take the time to learn from Jordan Peterson.

Peterson is actually a fascinating character and his work has much wisdom to offer the Christian. McDurmon admits that in his article, but spends most of the time noting what is wrong with Jordan Peterson. He undermines his work by taking him to task for his Jungianism and his Nietzscheanism. Ultimately, McDurmon ends up rejecting the whole Peterson phenomena and argues that Christians need to focus on other persons who have a similar message to Peterson, but do not carry his intellectual baggage.

It should be noted that the title is unhelpful as well, "Is Jordan Peterson the champion we are looking for?" Well of course not. Christ is the champion. We look for champions who believe in and reflect Christ. A better title would have been, "Is Jordan Peterson helpful to the kingdom of God?"

McDurmon makes the basic mistake of worldviewism. He takes every insight that Jordan Peterson has and declares that it is wrong by its association within his greater Jungian meta-narrative. This is foolish. Jordan Peterson is observing the same world we are and his astute observations need to be wrestled with. Much of his wisdom can be integrated into the Christian understanding of life. McDurmon's worldviewism allows for no meaningful interaction between the Christian worldview and Peterson's worldview.

McDurmon claims that you can find the same insights that Jordan Peterson has in other thinkers that have a better worldview. To him it is a mystery as to

why we would spend any time with Jordan Peterson. Insights, however always need a fresh voice, they always need to be brought to bear on a new generation. Besides Jordan Peterson is speaking to the world of today with the language of the world of today. We need Jordan Peterson because we need to learn what is effective in our own context.

I would particularly take McDurmon to task for his simplistic equation with Burkeanism. Peterson's call to speak the truth and to clean your room (a metaphor to talk about cleaning up what you have control over), would suggest that Peterson is ready to take a stand against institutions that have become tyrannical. Peterson also pays attention to the importance of youth giving their parents the ability to see properly again. A little more time with Peterson's work would disabuse McDurmon of that notion.

The Reformed world has historically been willing to engage philosophy at a deep level. In fact, this is not only the Reformed World, the church, as a whole, has engaged philosophy and has been happy to find truth where it could be found. We should continue to engage with philosophy, not only with Plato and Aristotle, or stuff that is over a thousand years old, we should be engaging with Peterson and his intellectual fathers, Nietzsche and Jung. We might learn something helpful in understanding how to talk with our culture today.

One example of thoughtful engagement with Peterson has come from men such as Alastair Roberts. (We also might mention here the Davenant Trust: I Google either of those names alongside Jordan Peterson and you will

find lots of good material). Alastair Roberts gives a list of things pastors could learn from Jordan Peterson. According to Alastair, we can (1) learn that people long to hear true and weighty words, (2) they desire true authority, (3) they need both compassion and firmness, (4) that they desire to see a genuine openness and reality, (5) that study of human nature matters and (6) that a compelling presentation of truth is enough to get people's attention. All of a sudden Jordan Peterson becomes somebody we can be strengthened by through interacting with his work, rather than a Jungian to be rejected posthaste.

I readily admit that McDurmon's approach is necessary at times, but I believe that what we need more of is principled interaction. A principled interaction, which would work itself out in a humility and an openness to learning wherever we might find truth

Rev. James Zekveld
Niverville, Manitoba



EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

Christians can learn from Jordan Peterson's *example* but what Dr. McDurmon made clear in his article is that we have nothing to learn from his *philosophy*. That was an important point, since in many a conversation Dr. Peterson comes off sounding like quite the wise Christian. He will, for example, profess a belief in Hell, and speak with respect about how "the Logos is Divine." That coupled with the courage he regularly demonstrates, could make him seem an attractive teacher.

Dr. McDurmon's article was helpful in pointing us to Carl Jung as a pivotal Peterson influence. Jung thought mankind's myths – the big epic tales including the Bible, but also Greek myths, and Norse and Aztec and all other sorts too – told us something true about ourselves on a deep and foundational level. He saw them as revealing our collective subconscious. It's like how, if we read our young daughter's stories and they all feature dogs or horses, though none of the stories might be factually true, they would still tell us something true about our little girl: that she has a deep-set longing for a pet.

That's how Jung saw the Bible, and it is in that respect that Jung – and in turn Peterson – deems the Bible true. Peterson has a great appreciation for the Bible *but not as history*. Peterson respects the Bible as the most important *myth* in the Western world. He respects it as telling us something deep and foundational about ourselves. But no matter how Christian he can sound, the "gospel" Peterson preaches *doesn't have a risen Christ*. His message is yet another of the self-help variety – boys, start making your beds because you have to help yourself!

Now, as Christians, we like well-made beds. We believe in personal responsibility. We appreciate courage. And we share many of Peterson's enemies. But it would still be a mistake for us to view Peterson as an ally, and especially as a teacher. As Douglas Wilson explains in *Empires of Dirt*:

"An ally fights the same enemy you are fighting, and for the same reasons. A co-belligerent fights them for different reasons."

Peterson is a co-belligerent, fighting a common enemy, but not in common cause. This it is a distinction worth noting, because while we may, for the moment, be fighting alongside him, we most certainly don't want to follow him. *We need to call him to follow us*.

To some that might seem arrogant – this is a brilliant and brave man, after all, speaking with a courage that so many Christians lack. So isn't it we, who should be learning from he? Here Peterson stands on his shaky foundation yet still willing to take on all comers. And meanwhile there we are, our feet planted on the firm foundation of God's Truth, and we're afraid to proclaim that Truth publicly lest we actually get in some kind of tussle. So yes we can learn from Peterson's *example*. We should be put to shame by his *example*.

But when it comes to Peterson's *philosophy*, we have nothing to learn. The Bible tells us even the littlest Christian child is wiser than he.

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Dethroning The Dictator

A simple electoral reform that might actually make our democracy more representative

by Jon Dykstra

Canada's democratic system has been likened to a four-year "elected dictatorship." Why? Sometimes the fault is lain at the feet of the First-Past-The-Post electoral system which allows a political party with only a minority of the popular vote to form a majority government. We saw that again in 2015, when the federal Liberal Party won a majority government: 54% of the seats in Parliament with only 39.5% of the votes cast.

But does this make Canada a dictatorship? No, not this alone. The

bigger issue is the control that party leaders have over who gets to run for their party – anger your party leader and he won't sign your nomination papers. Then your only option is to run as an independent. And independents don't win – there have only been two elected independents over the last three elections. So if you want a seat in Parliament you'd best not do anything to annoy your party leader.

That means that, while the Liberals control Parliament, Justin Trudeau controls his party. That allows him to set the agenda for Parliament. He also

chooses who will get Cabinet positions, he selects individuals to the Senate, and he picks Supreme Court Justices. Three hundred and thirty-eight Members of Parliament are elected, but all the power of Parliament is concentrated into the hands of this one man. Canada is an elected dictatorship.

THIS IS A PROBLEM

This would be a problem even with the best and most noble of men leading our country – unfettered power is a potent temptation. As Lord Acton put it, "Power tends to corrupt, and

... all the power of Parliament is concentrated into the hands of this one man. Canada is an elected dictatorship.



absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Our neighbor to the south recognized this corrupting effect, and it led the American Founding Fathers to design a system of government that split power between three separate branches of government: Congress would vie with the President and with the Supreme Court. The three would compete with and hold the others in check to ensure that power was never concentrated in any one branch.

But what holds the prime minister’s power in check?

Theoretically, it’s the other Members of Parliament (MPs). The prime minister has only one vote, so if his MPs don’t like what he is doing, they could vote against it and stop him.

But that’s not how it works. As party leader he has both carrots and

sticks with which he can control his party. An MP who stays loyal may eventually get rewarded with a Cabinet position. An MP who makes trouble may get demoted or even kicked out of the party. The result? MPs dare not disagree with their leader.

MORE PARTIES IN CONTROL

So what can be done? One frequently mentioned proposal is to replace our First-Past-The-Post electoral system with some form of Proportional Representation (PR).

Though there are a number of different versions of PR, under the simplest version parties would receive seats in proportion to their popular vote. So if the Liberals received 39% of the popular vote across Canada they would receive only 39% of the seats in Parliament.

This would result in many more minority governments, forcing the PM to share his power with the other party leaders. Instead of dictating to them, he’d be forced to cooperate with them to get his bills passed.

The problem with Proportional Representation is that it most often involves voting for a party, not a candidate. A party puts out some sort of list, often with an order of their choosing. If they get enough votes for, say, three MPs, then the three people at the top of their list will get in. This gives the party leader *even more* power over his party, because anyone who’s unwilling to shine his shoes will get put far down the list, or not make it at all.

PR would move us from a dictatorship to an oligarchy; instead of rule by one party leader we would be ruled by a council made up of two or three party leaders. However, those party leaders would have an even firmer grip on their parties.

That’s not much of an improvement.

EMPOWERING MPS

A better option is to change the way a party leader is chosen.

Presently, party leaders are chosen by the party members. This method

means that, come the next leadership election, a party will be able to sell a lot of memberships. But this is what’s behind the power imbalance: a party leader still has his carrot and stick, and the MPs have no way to constrain their party leader because he is hired and fired not by them, but by their party’s membership.

What if the party leader was chosen by the MPs? That’s how it used to be done in the United Kingdom, up until the early 1980s. Under such a system a party leader would still be able to exert considerable control over his caucus, but he wouldn’t be able to run roughshod over them. If he annoyed too many, then out he’d go. There would be some balance.

Individual MPs might then feel free to occasionally vote as they think best, or as their constituents think best, and not simply as their party leader thought best. We might well end up with a more representative democracy, which seems to be what all these reforms are about.

Of course, in a sin-stained world a democracy isn’t always ideal either: just consider how giving the people their say won’t put an end to either abortion or euthanasia any time soon.

But a democracy is a step up from our dictatorship of one. RP



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

NOTA BENE

News worth noting

world so that what we put out did not come back to us, and that our sinful nature does not reap the obvious death. That's the point. It should keep us humbled. It's not our own good works that get us through the gates of heaven."

So it was to the surprise and disappointment of Christian fans that the band is ignoring God's prohibitions against murder and homosexuality and is encouraging their fan-base to do likewise.

Bono has often spoken of God as being love. Now, it seems, he thinks love is God. What's the difference? When we understand that God is love, then we are willing and even eager to submit to His wisdom and direction. Then we know that it isn't loving to encourage behaviors He forbids. We understand that His restrictions protect us, in much the same way that a loving parent's rules protect their children. Why does God forbid homosexuality (and abortion too)? Because as our Maker and our Father He knows this isn't good for us.

But for Bono and his band, "love is bigger than anything in its way." Are God's commandments standing in the way of you and the same-sex partner you crave? Well, U2 wants you to know that love is bigger than God.

But pursuing love while running from God isn't going to bring anyone happiness. Oh, sure, rebellion can make us happy for a time. So can drugs, sex, and fame. But it doesn't take long for the meaninglessness to become evident.

In a strange turn, this brokenness is even evident in the video for U2's latest song. More than three dozen lesbians, homosexuals, and transgender men and women dancing, hugging, and kissing. U2 is trying to tell us that this is love worth celebrating... so why does everyone look so miserable?

Yes Bono, God is love. But love as a replacement for God? That's going to be misery.

PICTURE CREDIT: Screenshot from U2's video "Love is bigger than anything in its way"

U2 SHOWS US HOW LOVE CAN HURT

BY JON DYKSTRA



It was quite a week for U2. In the space of just four days, the Irish rock band took public stands in favor of homosexuality, transsexuality, and abortion.

On May 1st the group tweeted their support for legalizing abortion in their native land. They told their 1.5 million Twitter followers that they wanted to "Repeal the 8th" which is the amendment to the Irish constitution that protects the unborn.

Three days later they released the video to their song "Love is bigger than anything in its way." More than three dozen people are shown, all in brief

clips, and what's most noticeable is the fashion choices made, particularly among the gentlemen. One man is wearing a bra, another a corset with thigh high boots. Many of these men have lipstick, pink shirts, pink pants, or a pink backpack. Among the women are some who look to be men dressed as women. Lest anyone think this all just a case of unique fashion choices, the video also includes shots of lesbian and gay couples kissing.

We wouldn't expect different from most any other rock band, but this is U2. The group has never publicly identified itself as Christian, but their songs contain dozens and dozens of biblical references, including 40, which is based on Psalm 40 and Psalm 6. And the lead singer, Bono, has professed to be a Christian, publicly talking about his family's prayers, and noting that they regularly read Scripture. In an interview with music journalist Michka Assayas he gave a decent explanation of the atonement:

"The point of the death of Christ is that Christ took on the sins of the

POSSIBLE EVIDENCE OF LIFE ON MARS MAY HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED...PERHAPS. OR NOT.

BY JON DYKSTRA



When the Mars Rover's latest findings – organic molecules – were reported in early June it unleashed the latest round of hype about the possibility of life on Mars. Stories on *FoxNews.com*, and in the *New York Times* ran the far too hopeful headline "Life on Mars?" but clarified further on in their articles that, no, this wasn't actually proof of life. Of the three possible causes for these organic molecules, biology – *life* – was one of them, but there were two other less hype-worthy possibilities: geology and meteorites.

Anyone who reads the newspaper science section regularly knows that life-on-Mars stories pop up repeatedly, with the previous round happening

just a year ago. *FoxNews.com* ran this headline:

"If you're hoping humans find evidence of life on Mars, scientists have some very good news."

That story talked about evidence of there being water and oxygen in Mars' distant past. Water and oxygen are key elements that life might have needed "if it ever existed on Mars." But this finding was akin to saying since cars need aluminum, if we were to find evidence of aluminum deposits this would be an exciting development in our search for evidence of cars on Mars.

Perhaps the biggest "life on Mars" story of them all took place back in 1996 when all the newspapers covered a NASA team's announcement that the Martian meteorite they were studying seemed to have evidence of microscopic life. It was billed as being possibly the greatest scientific discovery of the century.

Except it wasn't. Ten years later and scientists had found non-biological

explanations for all the meteorite's microscopic features.

So why this ongoing hype about life on Mars, despite the less than encouraging findings to date? Because secular science *needs* to find life elsewhere. There is a problem with the evolutionary account, one that even evolutionists acknowledge – *life's origins*. Selection and mutation need something to be already living – and self-replicating – before they can operate. In other words, evolution can't begin until *after* life has begun. So how, then, did that first simple life form come to be?

Just consider, even with thousands of brilliant minds, and billions of dollars worth of the most amazing tools and machinery, and we still can't create life *on purpose*. How very far we are then, from explaining how it could happen *by accident*.

But if we could find evidence of life on Mars, well wouldn't that show life can just...happen? Finding life on Mars would make things a little less awkward for evolutionists.

Thus the search continues.

NATIONAL REVIEW BRINGS THE TRANSGENDER DEBATE INTO THE CONSERVATIVE FOLD

BY JON DYKSTRA



In the six decades since its founding, the commentary magazine *National Review* has had a significant role in shaping the political Right in the US. Sometimes that's been for good (in its stands against abortion and euthanasia) but in May the magazine published articles both against and for a conservative compromise on the issue of transgenderism.

David French took the "against side" and did a solid job of rebutting J.J. McCullough's suggested compromise. French notes the issue at stake here is whether someone's *thinking* trumps their *biology*. He wants conservatives to hold fast to their conviction that while some people do feel they are the wrong gender, the problem is not with their body, but with their thinking.

What compromise is possible on that point? As French puts it, McCullough's "proposed compromise looks a lot like capitulation."

French ably rebuts McCullough, but damage was done simply by having the debate inside the pages of America's most influential conservative magazine. As Pastor Douglas Wilson noted, our

side "lost because this transgender lunacy is now officially an intramural debate among conservatives at *National Review*." They've used their influence among conservatives to give the other side a stamp of legitimacy – that men can become women is not treated as *ridiculous* now but as *debatable*.

It sometimes takes wisdom to know when to, and when not to, answer a fool in his folly (Prov. 26:4-5), but is it ever a good idea to give a fool print space in your magazine?

SOURCE: Douglas Wilson's "Two strippers instead of four" posted to *Dougwils.com* May 10, 2018; David French's "in the transgender debate, conservatives can't compromise the truth" posted to *NationalReview.com* May 9, 2018

AUSTRALIAN RUGBY PLAYER WON'T BACK DOWN

BY LEN JANSSEN AND HENRY HAMELINK

In Australia there are four main “football codes” (i.e. sports that fall under the general heading of “football”): Australian rules football, soccer, rugby league and rugby union. Recently, one of these, rugby union, had a major problem on their hands. A player had responded to a question he had been asked online, and his response was causing outrage both on and offline. Through it all, the player called Israel Folau, stood tall. Lets consider what he did, and try to summarise his response using some of his own words as you can find them in his April 16 article, “I’m a sinner too” at PlayersVoice.com.au.

So what happened?

Twenty-eight-year-old Folau currently plays rugby union for the Waratahs club in the Super Rugby competition that has teams from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. He also plays for his country, the Australian team known as the Wallabies. This very talented sportsman has played professionally in three of the four football codes, having previously played rugby league and Australian rules football. Earlier this year he was ranked in the top ten rugby union players in the world.

Folau had injured his hamstring quite badly in a recent game and was likely going to be sidelined for some time. Folau wrote:

“...that afternoon I put up the following Instagram post, referring to James 1: 2-4: ‘Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials, because the testing of your faith produces endurance ... so that you may be lacking in nothing.’”

He continued:

“In the comments section of that post, I was asked a question by somebody about what God’s plan is for gay people. My response



to the question is what I believe God’s plan is for all sinners, according to my understanding of my Bible teachings, specifically 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10...‘Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor the drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.’”

This response created a furore, and not only in the media. Some key Wallabies sponsors, such as Qantas Airways and Asics sportswear, threatened to withdraw their financial support. Many fellow players also condemned him for his position, and there was a strong implication that he shouldn’t be allowed to hold his view, at least not publicly. Sports commentators were very strident in their condemnation of Folau and called for him to be sacked or resign. Rugby union governing body, Rugby Australia, tried to diffuse the situation and issued a statement that Folau had been spoken to, and that he would tone down his message. Folau denied ever agreeing to this, and reaffirmed his opposition to same sex marriage, and same sex relationships.

While Folau quotes the Bible, his

theology is somewhat unclear. He’s said to attend a Trinity-affirming Pentecostal denomination, but on Jan 18th Folau responded in a tweet that made it seem as if he may be a member of the Trinity-denying Oneness Pentecostal cult. He did not respond to a request for clarification.

Still, what he is being attacked for is a belief that he holds in common with us. He stated the Judeo-Christian position on homosexuality and he is railed down. You might expect that he would back down. Not Folau. In a meeting with the code’s hierarchy he told them that if they

“...felt the situation had become untenable – that I was hurting Rugby Australia, its sponsors and the Australian rugby community to such a degree that things couldn’t be worked through – I would walk away from my contract, immediately...I would sooner lose everything – friends, family, possessions, my football career, the lot – and still stand with Jesus, than have all of those things and not stand beside Him.”

Folau is not without support and supporters. In fact, his stance has gained the attention of many international teams who would be willing to pay considerably more than he is currently receives.

It is a shame that so many of our politicians don't have the same backbone and willingness to openly live and declare their worldview. Bill Shorten, the leader of the main opposition party, the Labor Party, is one among quite a number of Australian politicians who claim to be Christian, but from whom we see no actions or words to back it up. If only they dared to be a Daniel, or that they took a lesson from Israel Folau, then perhaps integrity may return to the corridors of government.

Now we might question why Folau chooses to play professional sport, which includes much time away from Sunday worship. We could assume that we might disagree with him on other things as well. But would any of us be so open, so courageous and steadfast when the pressure is put on?

As Folau noted, freedom of speech means that sometimes people will say things that others find disagreeable. So we should, firstly, stop trying to silence those who offend us. We cannot argue for these freedoms if we don't allow them ourselves. We are heading into a new world, a new kind of tyranny, where contra opinion is muzzled, and dissent is howled down and crushed into submission. This is what we need to highlight, to raise our voice of concern on the silencing of opinion and freedoms.

Secondly though, it is one thing to fight for these freedoms, it is a bigger challenge to honestly and openly use them and express God's truths, our worldview, just as Folau has done. Are we, and would we be, willing to do the same? Would we be willing to actually exercise our diminishing freedoms? Would we be willing, for example, to stand up and openly call out homosexuality as a sin? We can hope and pray that Folau's message has struck a cord in some ears that should be listening.

A version of this article first appeared in the May 19 edition of *Una Sancta*. Photo is adapted from one by David Molloy (www.davidmolloyphotography.com) and used via a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

ARE YOUNG PEOPLE THE LONELIEST?

BY JON DYKSTRA

In our ever more connected age, somehow loneliness seems to be growing. Earlier this year the British Prime Minister, Theresa May, appointed a "minister of loneliness" to address the situation. And this past month a study on loneliness among Americans found loneliness a particular problem among youth – those aged 18 to 22 felt far more isolated than those aged 72 and over. On the study's 80-point scale, anything at a 43 and up was considered lonely. Generation Z, 18 to 22 year olds, scored an overall average score of 48.3. This compared to a 38.6 for the "Greatest Generation" of 72 and over.

So why would young people feel lonelier than their grandparents and great grandparents? Might it be due to social media, with young people perhaps making more Facebook "friends" than real friends? Heavy users of social media did score higher (i.e. felt lonelier) than those who never used social media but the difference was only 2 points, and not enough to explain the nearly 10-point gap between youth and their grandparents.

Another possibility? The study found those who lacked regular "meaningful in-person social interactions" were far lonelier. Might it be that tweets, texts, instagram photos, Facebook statuses, and Snapchats – constant, quick, but *shallow* engagement – doesn't leave a lot of time for the slower, deeper, more meaningful exchanges?

Loneliness happens in the Church too, and often times for the same reasons. We may have the opportunity for social interaction – there are a lot of people in our churches – but that doesn't automatically mean those interactions are going to be of the meaningful sort. Christians also put on masks – for public viewing it's tempting to play the part of the always-perfect parent, ever-supportive spouse, or trouble-free son or daughter. We're good at talking sports and the weather. It's easy to have a ten-minute chat that's about nothing at all.

God has a prescription of sorts for



more meaningful conversations. He wants older men and women mentoring their younger counterparts (Titus 2). And He wants parents and grandparents to talk about how God has worked in their lives. David puts it this way:

"One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts" (Ps. 145:4).

Of course, there's a bad way this can be done. Older folk are sometimes amazed when a young fellow is willing to listen to what we have to say...so we try to squeeze every last bit of wisdom in that we can, and don't let them get a word in edge-wise. But relationships aren't built that way – to be a help to the next generation we have to care enough about them to ask them about their interests, struggles, and joys.

Young people, you have a role in this too. God wants you seeking wisdom from your elders (Prov. 3:1). If they aren't coming to you, it might be because they can't imagine the younger generation really wanting to get to know them and learn from them. So, after church, introduce yourself. Ask yourself over for coffee sometime. Ask questions. Grab hold of that wisdom with both hands.

There is more to relationships than simply sharing our joys, sharing the good God has done us. As David models in Psalm 3, 6, 25, and others, it also involves letting others know about our struggles. Finding a group of people you can trust and count on and "be real" with can be hard. But it is worth pursuing. God has given us the communion of saints for a reason – He knows what we need, and He has given us each other.

SOURCE: Jayne O'Donnell and Shari Rudavsky's "Young Americans are the loneliest, surprising study from Cigna shows" posted to USA Today.com on May 1, 2018; "2018 Cigna U.S. Loneliness Index" posted to Multivu.com May 2018

NEW EUTHANASIA CODE ILLUSTRATES DUTCH SLIPPERY SLOPE

BY EMMA ELLIOTT FREIRE

Doctors in the Netherlands are getting mail. Every single general practitioner in the country – some 14,000 – will receive their own copy of the new national code of practice for euthanasia. An updated edition of the code was published in May by the Dutch committee that oversees euthanasia. The committee reviews each reported instance of euthanasia to ensure the doctor followed the law. This new code of practice is supposed to help doctors understand how they will be evaluated. However, the new code also illustrates how quickly the Netherlands has gone down a slippery slope

The Dutch government's Minister for Public Health, Hugo de Jonge, inadvertently hit the nail on the head when he told a Dutch newspaper, "The new code of practice has to offer guidance because for many doctor it feels unnatural to administer euthanasia."

The Netherlands was the first country in the world to legalize euthanasia in 2002. The law was written to permit euthanasia for patients with "unbearable suffering with no prospect of improvement." Thus, it was not strictly limited to patients with a terminal illness.

At the time, critics pointed out that this wording was highly problematic and would eventually lead to euthanasia for people who are still years or even decades away from their natural death. How right these critics were.

The new code of practice devotes considerable attention to euthanasia for patients with an "accumulation of old age complaints." These complaints are described as things like

"sight problems, hearing problems, osteoporosis, arthritis, balance problems, cognitive decline."

In other words, these are the degenerative conditions that are a normal part of getting older. The patient does not need to have a terminal illness. In fact, there is not even a minimum age requirement.

The only consideration is that the patient has unbearable suffering with no prospect of improvement. And the code of practice readily admits this



can be subjective. "The unbearability of the suffering is sometimes difficult to determine because the experience of suffering is deeply personal." Doctors are instructed to look at "the medical history, biography, personality, values, and pain threshold of the patient." From there, a doctor should place himself "not only in the situation but also in the perspective of the patient."

The code of practice also talks at length about euthanasia for patients with advanced dementia, even though this practice is highly controversial and many doctors refuse to participate. In January, ethicist Berna van Baarsen resigned from the oversight committee because, as she told a Dutch newspaper, she considers it to be "indefensible."

The new code of practice also discusses euthanasia for psychiatric patients. They are eligible if their suffering meets the criteria of "unbearable with no prospect for improvement" – even if they're still very young. In January, psychiatric patient Aurelia Brouwers was euthanatized. She was 29-years-old and had no terminal illness.

The code of practice says doctors must consider carefully whether there are further treatment options for the psychiatric patient, but it also says the patient is not obligated to try every option. Jacob Kohnstamm, chairman of the oversight committee, told a Dutch newspaper,

"You can always argue that there's another treatment to try. But the question is – given strength of the patient and the odds of seeing improvement – whether it is worth it."

Euthanasia for psychiatric patients has grown at an astonishing rate. In 2011, there were only 13 reported instances. In 2017, that number had shot up to 83.

Euthanasia in general has increased enormously in the Netherlands. In 2010, there were 3,316 reported instances. In 2017 there were 6,585. Thus, death by euthanasia has doubled in less than a decade. The chairman of the Dutch Royal Medical Association recently asked the Dutch Ministry of Public Health to communicate to patients that euthanasia is not a "right" and that doctors are never obligated to administer it. Even if this is successfully communicated, rates of euthanasia are unlikely to decrease any time soon. As the new code of practice illustrates, the threshold for euthanasia in the Netherlands keeps getting lowered.

POPE TWEETS THE PATH TO WORLD PEACE

BY SIERRA SCHRIEMER

The threat of war is a danger that is constantly on the mind of many people. But is there a solution to create world peace once and for all? According to a tweet that Pope Francis released on April 29, 2018, he has found one. Pope Francis tweeted:

“Do we really want peace? Then let’s ban all weapons so we don’t have to live in fear of war.” - Pope Francis (@Pontifex) April 28, 2018

Soon after being published, the responses came rolling in. Twitter users erupted in confusion.

What sort of weaponless folks will be enforcing this ban? - Gabi Maltese (@gabixmaltese) April 29, 2018,

Others were concerned what would all

fall under the title of weapon:

Do you also mean baseball bats, box cutters, and moving vans? - Gregory T. Angelo (@gregorytangelo) April 29, 2018.

In order to enforce the ban of all weapons, one would need to convince all of the world powers that they need to give up one of the main items that may be giving them security. And if we were able to convince one group to get rid of their weapons, what is stopping another group from taking advantage of them?

If it were possible that all weapons could be banned, what would fall under the category of weapon? We’ve seen vehicles, planes, and kitchen knives all used as weapons in some form or another, so should they be



banned as well?

With a statement like this, Pope Francis is ignoring the real problem in our world. It is not the weapons themselves but the people standing behind the weapons. Even if it were possible to eliminate all weapons, fear and hatred will never leave our sinful hearts. We must strive to bring the good news of salvation to all four corners of the earth, showing that the only way to true peace is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

10,000 COMMANDMENTS CUT DOWN TO 9,999

BY JON DYKSTRA

During his campaign, Donald Trump promised he would get rid of two regulations for every one that he added. Why make such a pledge? Because regulations come with all sorts of compliance costs. How many lawyers and accountants does it take to help businesses comply with tax regulations? Safety regulations might require a business to buy bright yellow vests for their employees, and that’s a compliance cost too. Then there are also required certifications, and mandatory training, and it all adds up.

In fact, the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) – an American free market think tank – estimates federal regulations (this doesn’t even include state or city regulations) cost US taxpayers \$1.9 trillion annually as of 2017. That works out to \$15,000 each year for the average American household.

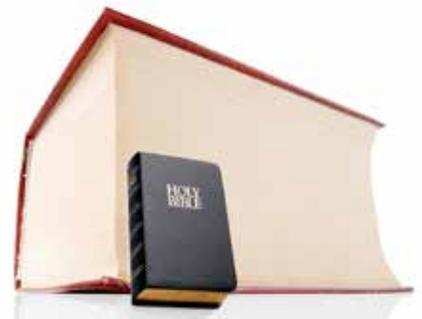
In this year’s edition of their annual regulations report “Ten Thousand

Commandments 2018” the CEI gave Trump credit for reducing some regulations. But they figured it amounted to bumping the metaphorical 10,000 in their title down to 9,999.

This secular think tank has picked an intriguing title for their regulation report. “Ten Thousand Commandments” seems to be a reference to a very religious statement attributed to G.K. Chesterton:

“If men will not be governed by the Ten Commandments, they shall be governed by the ten thousand commandments.”

Chesterton’s point? When a culture rejects God and His call for self-control and self-regulation, the State steps in, trying to replace Him and his Law. But they do a muck of both. When everyone is looking out for number one, and isn’t trying to reflect God, or look out for his neighbor’s interests, then instead of



compassion and care, we will have to have regulation and legislation.

So how then should Christians view regulations in a godless culture? As a sometimes necessary evil. They are costly, but there is a reason for many of them.

However, in the midst of 1,000-page healthcare bills and 500-page omnibus budgets, we can be sure they are sometimes a very unnecessary evil too. Whittling them down isn’t going to impact the country’s spiritual health – no matter how successful his efforts, Donald Trump isn’t going to take the US from Ten Thousand to just Ten Commandments. But with this type of effort many countries could have a positive impact on their material wealth.

SOUTH KOREAN BABIES: GOING, GOING....

BY JON DYKSTRA

Last year South Korea had the lowest number of babies born since their statistics agency started tracking this back in 1970. The decline has been enormous: in 1970, just over one million children were born, while in 2017, the number had dropped to a third of that, at just 357,000. Back in 1970 women were, on average, having about 4.5 children each. Last year that number dropped to 1.05, or half the 2.1 number needed to keep the population stable.

South Korea is facing a demographic crisis – as *The Globe and Mail's* John Ibbitson reported, Statistics Korea says that by 2060 the population will have declined as much as a third, from the 51 million it has today, to somewhere between 34-44 million.

Why has the South Korean baby become such a rarity? The same reason babies are becoming a rarity all over the developed world: having children is seen as a hindrance to personal fulfillment and career advancement. So, for example, the South Korean government's "Family Minister" Chung Hyun-Back – the official tasked with addressing her country's population crisis – is herself a childless 64-year-old woman who

chose to remain single so she could pursue her career goals.

She sees the problem as being one of discrimination and excessive work demands. Women who take maternity leave are often pressured to resign, rather than return, because companies find it problematic to accommodate their time away. And, when women have children *and* a career the statistics show that their husbands are not carrying the same load at home as they are. Thus women feel pressured to choose either a career *or* children. And more and more are choosing careers.

Chung's solution is to increase the accommodations companies make for mothers, and to push for more help at home from husbands and fathers. She doesn't want women making a *different* choice – to choose children as a more important priority than career – but wants them to be able to do *both*.

But is this realistic? In the real world we have only so many hours in the day. We recognize this limitation means that if the CEO of Apple also wanted to be the CEO of Microsoft – if he knew he had the talents and interest needed – time simply wouldn't permit him to hold two full-time careers at once.

So why do many think that time allows for both a committed career outside the home, and committed parenting inside it? It's only because

the world has so belittled the importance of parenting that we've come to believe it can be done on a part-time basis, or handed off to daycare workers and schoolteachers.

But deep down, even the world knows a choice is involved, because justice simply can't be done to both roles. If both mom and dad are at the office or on their way to and from it for 9-10 hours a day, who's caring for little Timmy after school? And when mom and dad get home, which parent is going to have the energy to listen patiently, correct lovingly, and seize teaching opportunities enthusiastically in those short hours that remain before the children head to bed? Maybe some do have that energy reserve, but for most of us both is simply not an option – not if we understand how important the parenting role is.

That means if South Korea and the West want to address their coming demographic crisis, then they need to stop pushing the impossibility of both. Instead the world needs to elevate the role of parenting, honoring it as a task worthy of our energies, our intellect, and our passion. It is a challenge to take on, one that demands much but offers its rewards too.

Christians *also* need to remember that raising children is no part-time gig, and no trivial pursuit. God has given parents the task of being our child's primary educator, their disciplinarian, and their example of godly living. Raising them up in the ways of the Lord is quite the challenge but also quite the opportunity. Finances don't always allow for one parent to stay at home. Divorce and death sometimes take one parent away. And when our kids head to school, then there might be time for parents to take on additional roles. But if we recognize parenting as the God-given calling it is, then we'll understand that having a parent readily available to meet our children's needs is an ideal worth pursuing.

SOURCES: "Birth strike": South Korea takes on falling fertility rate" posted to JapanTimes.co.jp on Jan. 19, 2018; Marcus Roberts' "The disappearing South Korean baby" posted to Mercatornet.com Apr. 10, 2018; John Ibbitson's "A bleak future and population crisis for South Korea" posted to TheGlobeandMail.com, on March 25, 2017

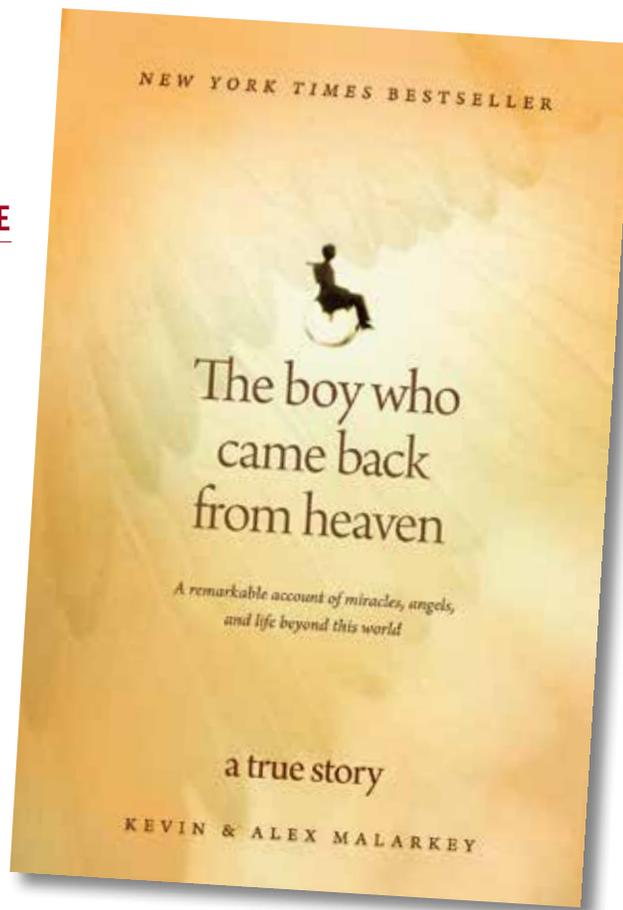


"BOY WHO DIED" SUES TYNDALE

BY MADISON VANLEEUWEN

The *boy who came back from Heaven* is a 2010 book written by Kevin Malarkey about his son Alex's experiences in heaven after they were both involved in a car accident in 2004. Alex was in a two-week long coma and permanently paralyzed.

The book quickly gained popularity and by 2013 more than a million copies had been sold. Alex was listed as a co-author but five years after the book was published, he sent a letter to Christian bookstores saying his near-death experience was fake. Because of this, starting in 2015, the Christian publisher Tyndale



House stopped printing the book and Christian bookstores took them off the shelves.

In April *Christianity Today* reported that the now 20-year-old Alex is suing Tyndale for defamation, financial exploitation, and placing a person in a false light, accusing Tyndale of going forward with initially publishing and promoting the book while knowing he didn't want to be named coauthor.

Think you can change the world with a brushstroke?

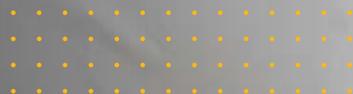
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That changes everything.

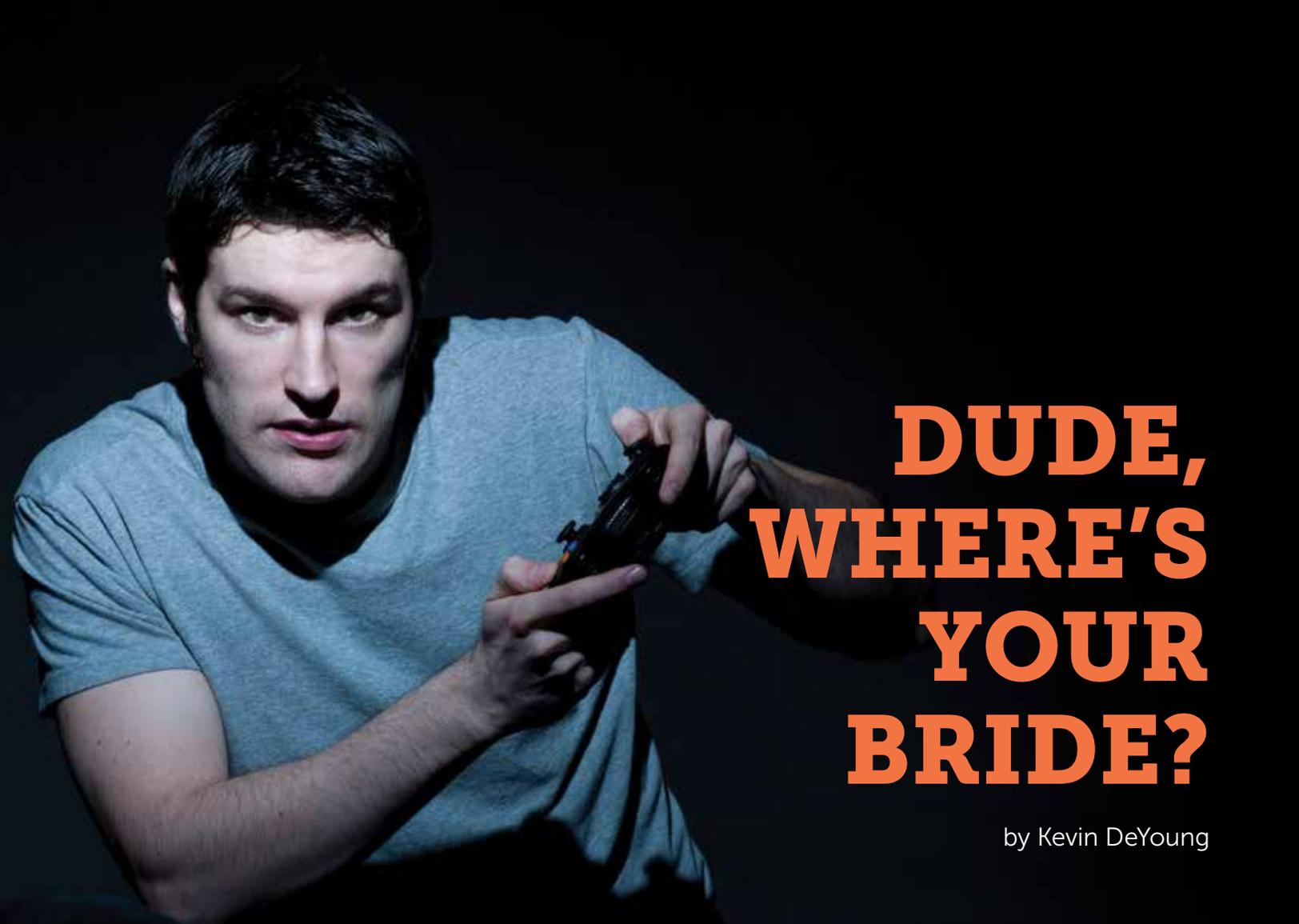
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DUDE, WHERE'S YOUR BRIDE?

by Kevin DeYoung

As I speak at different venues across the country, one of the recurring questions I get comes from women, young women in particular. Their question usually goes something like this:

“What is up with men?”

These aren't angry women. Their question is more plaintive than petulant. I'm not quite sure why they ask me. Maybe because they've read *Just Do Something* and figure I'll be a sympathetic ear. Or maybe they think I can help. They often follow up their initial question by exhorting me, “Please speak to the men in our generation and tell them to be men.”

BOYS APLENTY, BUT WHERE ARE THE MEN?

They're talking about marriage. I have met scores of godly young women

nearby and far away who wonder “Where have all the marriageable men gone?” More and more commentators – Christian or otherwise – are noticing a trend in young men; namely, that they don't seem to be growing up. Recently, William Bennett's *CNN* article “Why Men Are in Trouble” has garnered widespread attention. The point of the post is summarized in the final line: “It's time for men to man up.” Sounds almost biblical (1 Cor. 16:13).

Virtually every single person I know wants to be married. And yet, it is taking couples longer and longer to get around to marriage. Education patterns have something to do with it. A bad economy doesn't help either. But there is something even more befuddling going on.

Go to almost any church and you'll meet mature, intelligent, attractive Christian women who want to get married and virtually no men to

pursue them. These women are often in graduate programs and may have started a career already. But they aren't feminists. They are eager to embrace the roles of wife and mother. Most of the women I've met don't object to being a helpmate. There just doesn't seem to be a lot of mates to go around.

What's going on here? Why are there so many unmarried, college graduated, serious-about-Christ, committed-to-the-church, put-together young women who haven't found a groom, and who don't see any possibilities on the horizon?

WOMEN CAN MAKE THINGS MORE DIFFICULT...

Maybe women have impossible standards. That is a distinct possibility in some circumstances. I'm sure there are guys reading this thinking to themselves, “I've pursued these young women, Kevin! And they pushed me over the edge of the horizon.” Some

women may be expecting too much from Mr. Right. But in my experience this is not the main problem. Impossible standards? Not usually. Some standards? Absolutely.

On the other end of the spectrum, some women may be so over-eager to be married they make guys nervous about showing any signs of interest. There is a fine line between anticipation and desperation. Men don't want to spot the girl they like inside David's Bridal after their first date. The guy will panic – and be a little creeped out.

...BUT THERE'S A SERIOUS PROBLEM WITH THE GUYS

This path of prolonged singleness is a two way street. But I think the problem largely resides with men. Or at least as a guy I can identify the problems of men more quickly. I see two issues.

...the Christian men that are "good guys" could use a little – what's the word I'm looking for – ambition.

1. Where's the drive?

First, the Christian men that are "good guys" could use a little – what's the word I'm looking for – *ambition*. Every pastor has railed on video games at some point. But the problem is not really video games, it's what gaming can (but doesn't always) represent. It's the picture of a 20-something or 30-something guy who doesn't seem to want anything out of life. He may or may not have a job. He may or may not live with his parents. Those things are sometimes out of our control. There's a difference between a down-on-his-luck fella charging hard to make something out of himself and a guy who seems

content to watch movies, make enough to eat frozen pizzas in a one room apartment, play Madden, watch football 12 hours on Saturday, show up at church for an hour on Sunday and then go home to watch more football.

I don't think young women are expecting Mr. Right to be a corporate executive with two houses, three cars, and a personality like Dale Carnegie. They just want a guy with some substance. A guy with plans. A guy with some intellectual depth. A guy who can winsomely take initiative and lead a conversation. A guy with consistency. A guy who no longer works at his play and plays with his faith. A guy with a little desire to succeed in life. A guy they can imagine providing for a family, praying with the kids at bedtime, mowing the lawn on Saturday, and being eager to take everyone to church on Sunday.

Where are the dudes that will grow into men?

2. Where's the commitment to Christ?

The second issue is that we may simply not have enough men in the church. Maybe the biggest problem isn't with nice Christian guys who lack ambition, maturity, and commitment. Maybe we have lots of these men in the church, but they're all married and there aren't enough of their brethren to go around. I don't know which is the bigger problem, the lack of good men or the lack of men in general. It's probably a combination of both. The church needs to train up the guys it has. And by "training" I don't mean "clean 'em up, plug 'em in the singles ministry and start matching them up with a spouse." I don't believe most unmarried Christians are looking for a church community full of Yentas. But a church full of godly, involved, respectable, respected, grown up men? That's a project worth undertaking.

WHAT WE CAN ALL DO TO HELP

So, what can be done about the growing tribe of unmarried women? Four things come to mind.

Everyone, pray. Pray for a joyful accepting of God's providential care, believing that godliness with

contentment is great gain. If you are single, pray more for the sort of spouse you should be than for the sort of spouse you want. Pray also for the married couples and families in your church. If you are married, pray for the single people in your church, for those never married and those divorced or widowed. All people everywhere, pray for ways to start serving the Lord now, no matter what stage of life you are in or wish you were in.

Women, don't settle and don't ever compromise on requiring solid Christian commitment in a husband, but make sure your list of non-negotiables doesn't effectively exclude everyone outside of Mr. Darcy.

Churches, don't make church one giant man cave or machismo, but think about whether your church has been unnecessarily emasculated. Do you challenge and exhort? Do you sing songs to Jesus that men can sing with a straight face? Does "fellowship" at your church always focus on activities men don't typically excel at, like sitting around and talking about how you feel? Does your church specifically target the discipling of men – particularly young men in high school and college? Grab them young and get them growing up in their teens instead of their twenties.

Men, you don't have to be rich and you don't have to climb corporate ladders. You don't have to fix cars and grow a beard. But it's time to take a little initiative – in the church, with your career, and with women. Stop circling around and start going somewhere. It's probably a good idea to be more like your grandpa and less like Captain Jack Sparrow. Even less like Peter Pan. Show some godly ambition. Take some risks. Stop looking for play dates and – unless God is calling you to greater service through singleness – start looking for a wife. 

This article first appeared on The Gospel Coalition blog and is reprinted with permission of the author.

IN A NUTSHELL

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY JON DYKSTRA

LAME DUTCH JOKE OF THE MONTH

A Canadian and a Dutchman were out riding horses.

Canadian: "We've got quite the set of fine horses here. How do you say 'horses' in Dutch?"

Dutch equestrian: "*Paarden.*"

Canadian: "I'm sorry... what I said was HOW DO YOU SAY 'HORSES' IN DUTCH?"

SOURCE: Modified from a joke I saw somewhere on the Internet

G.K. CHESTERTON ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REFORMER AND DEFORMERS

As a young man I had questions about how my denomination conducted services:

- Why did we have a fenced table?
- Why did we have an organ?
- Why did we sing so many psalms, and so few hymns?
- Why did we have two services?
- Why did we have Heidelberg Catechism sermons?
- Why did we get so dressed up for services?

And I thought, because I had questions, and because answers were not always at the ready, that meant we should do away with all these practices. But just because an answer isn't easy to come by doesn't mean it doesn't exist. And Chesterton had a caution for young guys like me when it came to doing away with old practices - old "fences":

"In the matter of reforming things, as distinct from deforming them, there is one plain and simple principle; a principle which will probably be called a paradox. There exists in such a case a certain institution or law; let us say, for the sake of simplicity, a fence or gate erected across a road. The more modern type of reformer goes gaily up to it and says, "I don't see the use of this; let us clear it away." To which the more intelligent type of reformer will do well to answer: "If you don't see the use of it, I certainly won't let you clear it away. Go away and think. Then, when you can come back and tell me that you do see the use of it, I may allow you to destroy it.

"...Some person had some reason for thinking it would be a good thing for somebody. And until we know what the reason was, we really cannot judge whether the reason was reasonable. It is extremely probable that we have overlooked some whole aspect of the question if something set up by human beings like ourselves seems to be entirely meaningless and mysterious. There are reformers who get over this difficulty by assuming that all their fathers were fools; but if that be so, we can only say that folly appears to be a hereditary disease." (*The Thing*, "The Drift From Domesticity")

Now, no denomination is perfect, so there will be practices

that could be improved, and maybe some that will need to go. But before any change is made, a properly humble Reformer is going to want to first find out why things are being done this way in the first place. This is living out Prov. 18:17 – only when we hear "both sides" can we then evaluate whether a change is truly needed. It is a part of youth to question why things are the way they are. It is a part of maturity to actually seek the answers.

"PASTOR, I ALREADY KNOW HOW TO FARM BETTER THAN I DO"

In an April 16 post at nouthetic.org, Donn R. Arms recounted how, as a young pastor in a rural western town, he eagerly shared with one of the deacons about his plans to attend "the latest and greatest conferences on church growth."

The deacon gave a surprising response; he said: "Pastor, I already know how to farm better than I do."

As Arms notes: "It was, of course, his kind and gentle way of telling me we simply need to do the things we already knew to do rather than constantly seeking the next big thing to make our church grow."

ON THE REAL REASON FOR DEMOCRACY

"Thus the principle of democracy does not in itself testify that everyone is so competent that their opinion must be acted upon. The principle of democracy testifies that everyone is so subject to corruption that the reins of power must not be left for long in anyone's hands without check."

– Harry Blamires

DIRECTION MATTERS

"So if one man wants to drive to the East Coast in a Ford, he has more in common with a man who wants to do the same thing in a Chevy than he does with another man driving to the West Coast in a Ford. Couple this with the fact that it is possible to pass someone on the road who is going the opposite direction, and at the precise moment when you do that, you are in exactly the same spot. Further, somebody else who is going to the same place you are might be a hundred miles behind you"

– Douglas Wilson in *Empires of Dirt*

ADDRESSING THE BIBLE'S TROUBLING TEXTS

Whether it's passages about slavery, or gender roles, or the imprecatory Psalms, some sections of Scripture make Christians uncomfortable. God's command to kill all the Canaanites in Deut. 20:16-18 is one example. Here we read:

But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete

destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God.

When confronted with a text like this, a liberal Christian will offer a full-throated apology. “The text doesn’t mean what it says,” he’ll explain, “because the writer was confused about what God wanted Israel to do – God didn’t want anyone killed.”

The conservative Christian, who professes the Bible to be the Word of God, knows better than to explain away the passage. If God said it, it must be right – that’s what our heads tell us. But our hearts might say something different – this is *genocide!*

So we split the difference and instead of an apology, we are simply apologetic. We try to modify the apparent nastiness by focusing on whatever good we find, maybe noting that this was just a one-time command, for only a particular situation. And we’ll point out that this same God who is punishing the Canaanites here is also the loving God who took our deserved punishment on Himself by coming to earth in the person of the Son.

Good points, all. But there is more going on here, and being apologetic is getting in the way of understanding what God is telling us about Himself, and about ourselves in this passage. It’s only when we approach a troubling text like this in humility, with a desire not simply to get past it but actually understand it, that we can search its depths.

A closer look at Deut. 20:16-18 will reveal that God’s command here should be understood in the context of Genesis 15:13-16. It’s there that God tells Abraham his ancestors are going to have to wait 400 years to take possession of the land of Canaan. Why so long? Because “the sin of the Amorites [the then residents of Canaan] has not yet reached its full measure.” What was this “sin of the Amorites”? Leviticus 18 details it as including incest, adultery, homosexuality, child sacrifice, and bestiality.

So, it’s by digging into these passages on the Canaanite destruction that we learn:

- God is holy – We minimize evil, especially when it’s our own. But God will not overlook evil.
- We think we’re not so bad – In objecting to the destruction of the Canaanites, we misunderstand our sinful nature. Sure, as Christians, we speak of deserving hell...but we don’t really believe it, not of ourselves, and not of the Amorites. We object to their destruction because we think they couldn’t actually have deserved it. But in sharing this passage, God wants to clear away that kind of delusion... about the Amorites, and ourselves.
- God is patient – He waited 400 years to deliver a deserved judgment, and today too, even as the West kills millions of its own unborn children each year, God is being patient. But as Proverbs 29:1 makes clear, if we stubbornly reject His rebukes, our destruction could happen suddenly. We should not put off our own repentance.

- God is gracious – There is a reason these lands were taken from the Amorites, but the Israelites hadn’t done anything to deserve getting them.

It goes to show there’s lots to love in troubling texts! And if we avoid a passage like Deut. 20, then we rob ourselves of a better understanding of our own depravity, our need for a Savior, and the holiness and graciousness of God. Worse, when we are embarrassed by such passages we are judging God and saying, at least implicitly, that He isn’t living up to our standards. That is an arrogance that we need to repent from.

Now, that doesn’t mean we have to pretend there are no troubling passages in the Bible. It only means we need to recognize the fault lies with us, not God.

ENGLISH IS...INTERESTING

Words that *should* rhyme: cough and tough, boot and foot

Words that *shouldn’t* rhyme: Pony and bologna; money and funny

Words that *don’t* rhyme with anything at all: bulb, angel, silver, purple, husband, and woman

APOLOGETIC ON HOMOSEXUALITY?

“Imagine this. Imagine I’m standing up here to preach a message about adultery. And as I introduce my message on adultery I say,

‘I just want everyone to know I love adulterers. I have friends who are adulterers. And I think we need to be kind to adulterers. We need to embrace adulterers.’

“That would sound kind of odd, wouldn’t it? If I was talking about pedophilia, or if I was talking about drunkenness, it would sound odd. But folks, that’s the way almost every sermon on homosexuality starts today. With a thousand excuses and explanations and apologies for what’s about to come.”

– Voddie Baucham

ONE VERSE TO REBUT THEM ALL

Christians know that while there are many groups battling it out for influence and position in our cultural wars, there are only two sides: God’s, and the other. And that dividing line is spelled out right in the very first verse of the Bible:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

As Henry Morris has noted in his *The Genesis Record*, this short verse presents a stark contrast to so many of the ideologies of the past and present. It rebuts *atheism* (God created), *pantheism* (because God is separate from His creation), *polytheism* (because *one* God created), *materialism* (because something before and beyond matter created matter), *humanism* (because God, not Man, is the measure of all things), and *evolutionism* (because God created).

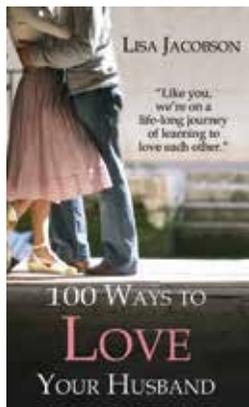
Dr. Joel McDurmon has noted that this verse also seems to (though less explicitly) rebut *unitarianism*, which says God is one person, because, even as the verb *created* here is singular, the word for God here *Elohim* is in the plural, giving a hint as to God’s Triune nature.

BEST BOOKS

SUPER AND SHORT

100 WAYS TO LOVE YOUR HUSBAND

BY LISA JACOBSON
136 PAGES / 2014



With warmth and humour, Lisa has written this little book for women giving them 100 practical suggestions with many Bible verses as how to love their husbands and so strengthen their marriage. She remarks that after Christ, a woman's most important relationship is with her husband and it should reflect in the decisions she makes with her time and energy. One snippet is:

...to lovingly bear with him. He'll have his faults. ...one of our daughters asked us why he and I rarely fight with one another. He answered, "She doesn't let the irritating things I do, bug her."

Lisa then adds her thoughts: "Well, at least not too much. * Wink."

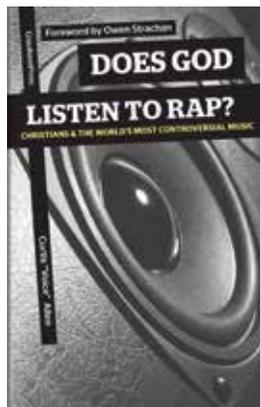
She talks about extending grace even if he might not deserve it because isn't that what grace is all about? We ourselves have experienced so much grace as we read in Eph. 2:8-9. In fact "A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers."

This small book can be read in an hour or just savoured a little bit at a time. It would make a good wedding gift for a mother to give to her daughter.

- JOANNA VANDERPOL

DOES GOD LISTEN TO RAP?

BY CURTIS ALLEN
99 PAGES / 2013



"Why wouldn't He?" That's the answer the author gives to his title question.

Whether you agree or don't might depend on what you think of Rap's sinful origins. In chapters two and three, in the space of just 25 pages, Allan gives an authoritative, detailed account of these beginnings. He explains it started back in the late '60s, and that even though some earlier innovators tried to use Rap to promote a social consciousness, it was the pimp/drug dealer-glorifying "Gangsta Rap" that ended up dominating the genre.

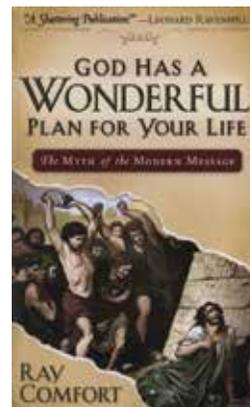
Allen then investigates whether its sinful origins are reason enough to dismiss Rap. If they are, what then, he asks, are we to do with music itself, which seems to find its origins in the sinful line of Cain (Gen. 4)? A good point, but I think more examples would have been helpful. It is a fallacy – the "genetic fallacy" – to condemn something simply for where it comes from. We don't do that with classical music composed by immoral composers, or foreign foods from pagan cultures, or anything else, so why would we with Rap? One large issue left unexplored is whether the driving beat of Rap impacts its appropriateness for conveying Christian content. That is a significant omission, since this is the key issue for some Christians.

That said, the book is worth buying for the historical background alone.

- JON DYKSTRA

GOD HAS A WONDERFUL PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

BY RAY COMFORT
128 PAGES / 2010



Comfort think he knows why 90% of seeming converts in Christian crusades are gone from the church within a year. He argues the cause for this distressing statistic is the "modern message" which promises earthly happiness for those who turn to Him. The problem is, the Bible and church history show persecution as the likely result of following Christ.

Comfort tells us that the "lost key" to true evangelism is *the use of the law*. Only knowing our sin – specific sin, not just our weakness or brokenness – begins "making grace amazing."

To illustrate this, Comfort makes a brilliant analogy about giving parachutes to two airplane passengers. The first man is told that the chute will make his flight much more comfortable. When, instead, he finds that wearing it makes him feel silly in the eyes of the other passengers and makes it hard to sit in his seat, he gives it up in frustration. The second passenger is told that the chute will save his life *when*, not *if*, the plane crashes – a metaphor for our inevitable appearance before the judgment seat of God. You can imagine how much more grateful he is for his "gospel chute."

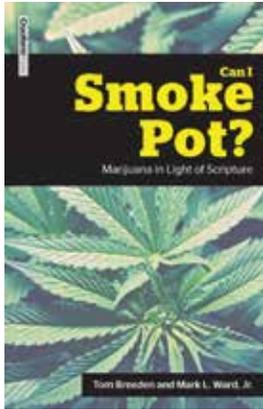
As Comfort shows Jesus Himself used the law to convict sinners of their need for forgiveness through God's grace – the only chute that can save us from the crash of our condemnation.

- JEFF DYKSTRA

CAN I SMOKE POT? MARIJUANA IN LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE

BY TOM BREEDEN AND MARK L. WARD JR.

103 PAGES / 2016



This book is valuable in two very different ways. First, it's valuable for anyone considering the title question *Can I smoke pot?* for themselves or for others.

Second, about half of the book is spent making the argument that the Bible is our go-to whenever we have questions. Even on marijuana? Yes. The Bible doesn't directly mention it but it doesn't take much digging to find principles that apply. As Cornelius Van Til put it:

"The Bible is authoritative on everything of which it speaks. Moreover, it speaks of everything."

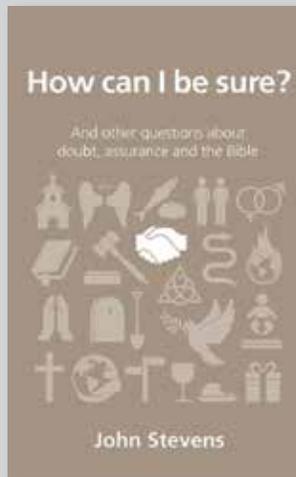
That makes this a very useful book for anyone interested in learning how to use God's Word as a guide for all of life.

Though it is short, the authors tackle a lot including:

- when we *do* and *don't* have to listen to government
- the OT and NT on medicine
- what we need to ask when considering the wisdom of using medical marijuana
- how recreational marijuana use compares to alcohol use
- is it possible to smoke marijuana recreationally in moderation?

The authors don't give a simple yes or no to their title question, but when it comes to recreational use, they want Christians to understand there are many reasons we should just say no. So read the book, and share it with your church. Let's have a ready answer for this increasingly common question.

- JON DYKSTRA



HOW CAN I BE SURE? AND OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT DOUBT, ASSURANCE AND THE BIBLE

BY JOHN STEVENS

93 PAGES / 2014

This book is sure to be useful for any Christian who wonders whether he or she believes, or whether what he or she has always believed is still true. Author John Stevens defines doubt, demonstrates its dangers, outlines doubt's root causes, and helps readers understand how to seek to strengthen their faith.

Sidebars within four of the five chapters in this small book deal briefly with specific questions like:

- How do I respond when friends fall away?
- How can I be sure that God loves me?
- What is the gift of faith mentioned in the Bible?
- If God is the one who gives faith, why do I still have doubts?

To see just how helpful this book is, let's look at the answer to the first question. If friends are falling away, Stevens tells us, we should do the following:

1. Pray for them and seek to share the gospel with them again, urging them to come back to Christ. (Sadly, excommunication in our churches often ends all contact with the former members, rather than making that contact much more deliberate, intentional, and lovingly corrective.)
2. Don't be surprised or think that God has failed them in some way. Stevens reminds us that unbelief is the responsibility of the individual.
3. Make every effort to strengthen and protect our own faith, joining with other believers in prayer and studying God's word.
4. Finally, the falling away of our friends should prompt us to examine our own doubts to be sure that they do not become unbelief.

Stevens' conclusion invites us to consider why doubters are suffering with doubt, and how we can help them. And he gives us his own view, as well as some final words of comfort and exhortation.

An appendix lists resources to help Christians struggling with doubts regarding science and God, history, suffering, homosexuality, the Bible, truth, and other questions.

Two small notes for Reformed or non-British readers:

- Stevens mentions his own doubts and change of heart about infant baptism (now disagreeing with it), though he "respect[s] the views of Christians who come to a different conclusion."
- A look at physical causes of doubt mentions PMT (a British version of PMS).

With that aside, I can recommend this as an edifying and comforting book!

- Jeff Dykstra

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How Are We To Understand The Bible?

3 approaches to consider:
foundationalism, postmodernism,
and something in between

by Clarence Bouwman

Some years ago I attended a three-day conference on the topic of how to read the Bible. Actually, the conference organizers used a big name for the topic: *hermeneutics*. But they explained what they meant with the term: how does one correctly handle the Word of truth in today's postmodern world?

The conference included professors from three different seminaries. Half a dozen winged their way across the Atlantic from the Theological University in Kampen. This university trains ministers for the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Two professors from Mid-America Reformed Seminary (MARS) in Dyer, Indiana – which contributes to the ministerial supply in the United Reformed Churches – braved wintery roads to add their contribution. The host was the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton, whose faculty also did what they could to supply a clear answer to that vital question.

CONFERENCE BACKGROUND

I am a minister in the Canadian Reformed Churches, which has Dutch roots. Specifically, many of our parents

or grandparents were once members of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. There is, then, a very strong historic and emotional bond between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

The reason for the conference was the concerns, slowly growing in our churches, about developments we saw happening in these Dutch churches in general and in the Theological University in particular. Given the historic link between these two denominations, it was considered right before God to do a conference with these men in order to understand better what the Kampen men were thinking, and to remind each other of what the Lord Himself says on the subject.

HOW DOES ONE READ THE BIBLE?

There was some common ground. All agreed that the Bible comes from God Himself, so that what is written on its pages does not come from human imagination or study, but comes from the Mind of holy God Himself. So the Bible contains no mistakes; whatever it says is the Truth. Yet this Word of God is not given to us in some unclear divine language, but infinite God has been

pleased to communicate in a fashion finite people can understand – somewhat like parents simplifying their language to get across to their toddler.

As we read the Bible, then, the rules common for reading a newspaper article, a book, or even this article apply – i.e., you get the sense of a particular word or sentence from the paragraph or page in which it's written, and when some word or sentence is confusing you interpret the harder stuff in light of the easier words or sentences elsewhere in the article. That's the plain logic of reading we all use.

So far the professors of Kampen and Hamilton and MARS were all agreed.

GENESIS 1

Differences arose, however, when it came to what you do with what a given text says. Just a moment ago I made reference to a “toddler.” We all realize that the use of that word does not make this an article about how to raise toddlers. Genesis 1 uses the word “create.” Does that mean that this chapter of Scripture is about how the world got here? We've learned to say that yes, Genesis 1 certainly tells us about our origin. (And we have good reason for

saying that, because that's the message you come away with after a plain reading of the chapter; besides, that's the way the 4th commandment reads Genesis 1, and it's how Isaiah and Jeremiah and Jesus and Paul, etc, read Genesis 1.)

But the Kampen professors told us not to be so fast in jumping to that conclusion. Genesis 1, they said, isn't about how we got here, but it is instead instruction to Israel at Mt. Sinai about how mighty God is not the author of evil. Just like you cannot go to the Bible to learn how to raise toddlers (because that's not what the Bible is about; you need to study pedagogy for that – the example is mine), so you cannot go to the Bible to find out how the world got here – because that's not what Genesis 1 is about, and so it's not a fair question we should ask Genesis 1 to answer.

Or so they argued.

1 TIMOTHY 2

A second example that illustrates how the Dutch professors were thinking comes from their treatment of 1 Timothy 2:12-13. These verses record Paul's instruction:

“¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve....”

This passage was featured on the conference program because a report had recently surfaced within the Dutch churches arguing that it's Biblical to ordain sisters of the congregation to the offices of minister, elder, and deacon.

1 Timothy 2 would seem to say the opposite. So: how do you read 1 Timothy 2:12 to justify the conclusion that women may be ordained to the offices of the church?

The Dutch brethren answered the question like this: when Paul wrote the prohibition of 1 Timothy 2, the culture Timothy lived in did not tolerate women in positions of leadership. If Paul in that situation had permitted women to teach in church or to have authority over men, he would have placed an unnecessary obstacle on the path of unbelievers to

come to faith. Our western culture today, however, gives women a very inclusive role in public leadership. If we today, then, ban them from the offices of the church, we would place an obstacle in the path of modern people on their journey to faith in Jesus Christ. Had Paul written his letter to the church in Hamilton today, he would have written vs. 12 to say that women would be permitted to teach and to have authority over men.

That conviction, of course, raises the question of what you do with the “for” with which vs. 13 begins. Doesn't the word “for” mean that Paul is forming his instruction about the woman's silence on how God created people in the beginning – Adam first, then Eve?

Well, we were told, with vs. 13 Paul is indeed referring back to Genesis 1 & 2, but we need to be very careful in how we work with that because we're reading our own understandings of Genesis 1 & 2 into Paul's instruction in 1 Timothy 2, and we may be incorrect in how we understand those chapters from Genesis. So vs. 13 doesn't help us understand vs. 12.

Or so they argued.

CONFUSED...

I struggled to get my head around how brothers who claim to love the Lord and His Word could argue for such positions. A speech on the third day of the Conference, by one of the Dutch professors, helped to clarify things for me. The audience was told that the old way of reading the Bible might be called “foundationalism,” describing the notion that you read God's commands and instructions (eg, any of the Ten Commandments), and transfer that instruction literally into today so that theft or adultery or dishonoring your parents is taboo.

This manner of reading the Bible does not go down well with postmodern people, because it implies that there are absolutes that you have to obey. The alternative is to disregard the Bible altogether and adopt “relativism,” where there are no rules for right and wrong at all – and that's obviously wrong. So, we were told, we need to find a third way between “foundationalism”

and “relativism.”

This third way would have us be familiar with the Scriptures, but instead of transferring a command of long ago straight into today's context, we need to *meditate* on old time revelation and trust that as we do so the Lord will make clear what His answers are for today's questions. If the cultural circumstances surrounding a command given long ago turns out to be very similar to cultural circumstances of today, we may parachute the command directly into today and insist it be obeyed.

But if the circumstances differ, we may not simply impose God's dated commands on obedience or on theft or on homosexuality into today. Instead, with an attitude of humility and courage we need to listen to what God is today saying – and then listen not just to the Bible but also to culture, research, science, etc. After prayerfully meditating on the Scripture-in-light-of-lessons-from-culture-and-research, we may well end up concluding that we need to accept that two men love both each other and Jesus Christ. That conclusion may differ from what we've traditionally thought the Lord wanted of us, but a right attitude before the Lord will let us be okay with conclusions we've not seen in Scripture before.

ANALYSIS

This speech about the “third way” helped clarify for me why the Dutch professors could say what they did about Genesis 1 and 1 Timothy 2. They were seeking to listen to Scripture *as well as* to what our culture and science, etc, were saying, and then under the guidance of the Holy Spirit sought to come to the will of the Lord for today's questions. To insist that Genesis 1 is God's description about how we got here (creation by divine fiat) leads to conclusions that fly in the face of today's science and/or evolutionary thinking – and so we must be asking the wrong questions about Genesis 1; it's not about how we got here.... To insist that 1 Timothy 2 has something authoritative to say about the place of women is to place us on ground distinctly out of step with our society –

and so we must be reading 1 Timothy 2 wrongly. As a result of deep meditation on Scripture *plus* input from culture etc, these men have concluded that God leads us to condoning women in office in our culture, accepting a very old age for the earth, and leaving room for homosexual relationships in obedient service to the Lord.

This, it seems to me, is the enthronement of people's collective preferences over the revealed Word of God. Our collective will, even when it is renewed and guided by the Holy Spirit, remains "inclined to all evil" (Lord's Day 23.60; cf Romans 7:15,18). There certainly are questions arising from today's culture that do not have answers written in obvious command form in Scripture, and so we undoubtedly need to do some humble and prayerful research and thinking on those questions. But the Bible is distinctly clear (not only in Genesis 1) about where we come from, and distinctly clear too (not only in 1 Timothy 2) about the place of women, and distinctly clear also on homosexuality. To plead that we need different answers today than in previous cultures lest the Bible's teachings hinder unbelievers from embracing the gospel is to ignore that Jeremiah and Micah and Jesus and Paul and James and every other prophet and apostle had to insist on things that were "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1:23).

One questioner from the audience hit the nail on the head: the Dutch brethren were adapting their method of reading the Bible to produce conclusions accommodated to our culture.

WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US?

There was a time when the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and their Theological University in Kampen were a source of much wisdom and encouragement in searching the Scriptures. Given that all the men from Kampen spoke more or less the same language at the Hermeneutics Conference, it is clear to me that those days are past. It was fitting that at the Conference we prayed together as



... the Dutch brethren were adapting their method of reading the Bible to produce conclusions accommodated to our culture.

brothers in the Lord, but it's also clear that we now need to pray that the Lord have mercy on the Dutch sister churches – for this is how their (future) ministers are being taught to deal with Scripture.

I was very grateful to note that the professors from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (and MARS too, for that matter) all spoke uniformly in their rejection of Kampen's way of reading the Bible. They insisted unequivocally that

“the whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence

may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men” (Westminster Confession, I.6).

Postmodernism does not pass us by. May the Lord give us grace to keep believing that His Word is authoritative, clear and true. 

A version of this article first appeared on the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church blog (SmithvilleCanRC.ca/blog) where Rev. Bouwman is a pastor of the Word.



FarmFed, a poultry processing company in Abbotsford B.C., has two immediate job opportunities available. Wages & Benefits for both positions competitive to the market and offered based on experience and qualifications. Opportunity for further advancement within the company based on aptitude and attitude.

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FATHERS, FEAR, & SELF- INTEREST



by Jay Younts

Men, our legacy since the fall is that we tend to either be indifferent or become angry at our children's sin. Both responses are dangerous and destructive.

FROM ADAM ON...

When it comes to relationships, men are often intimidated and become fearful, even if we may project the opposite emotions. The two most damaging male responses, indifference and anger, stem from the same root cause – fear and self-interest. We become indifferent in order to mask our fear of not knowing what we should do. We often become angry because we have lost control of our children and lash out in an attempt to regain control. This keeps us from doing the hard relational work of putting our families back together.

God created men to be confident, compassionate leaders. But then came the fall. Eve chose to verbally engage the serpent. Even though he was with her, Adam did not protect his wife. Instead, in fear and self-interest, he observed the most destructive conversation in human history and said nothing (See Genesis 3:6). When confronted with his sin, Adam did what men still do – he passed the buck and blamed his wife.

DAVID TOO

King David's fear of confrontation cost him dearly! Imagine two physically striking, proud young men. They both believed that they were wronged by their father. Absalom was angry that David had not punished Amnon for his sin against Tamar. Adonijah was angry because he believed he should have been made King instead of Solomon.

Both sons shared something else in common. They had not received loving discipline from their father. David's pattern

with Amnon continued with Absalom and Adonijah. His failure with Adonijah is recorded in I Kings 1:6:

Now his father, King David, had never disciplined him at any time, even by asking, "Why are you doing that?"

Never, at any time!

David, the warrior, was not daunted by the lion, the wolf, the bear, or even by the giant, Goliath. But David, the father, lacked the courage to lovingly confront his sons. They all paid a horrific price for his fearful indifference. David, like his first father, Adam, cowered and failed to protect those whom he loved. Being angry doesn't help, acting as if problems don't exist doesn't help. A fearful father, who fails to lovingly engage his children will encourage rebellion.

COURAGE AND TRUST

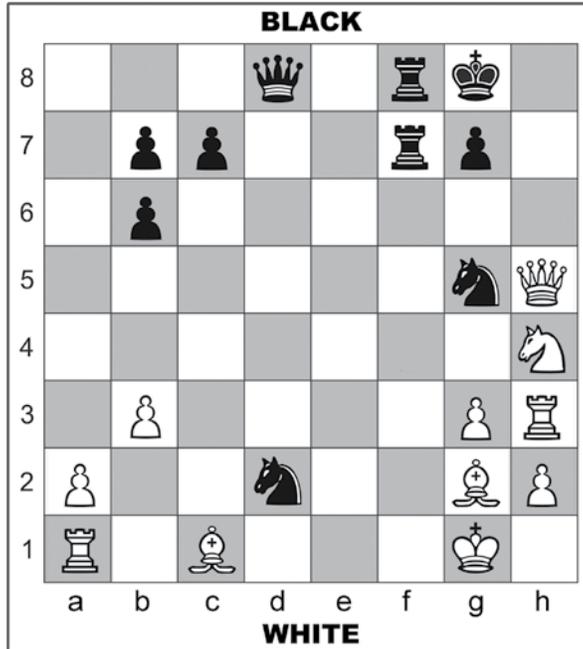
Loving confrontation requires courage and trust in God. Yes, it is a challenge. Learn from David's sin with his sons. Fathers, husbands, we must engage our families. We must use pleasant words combined with truth to ask the hard questions that show courage rather than fear. We must engage in God's discipline if we are to show mercy to our children. Failure to engage our children with the truth of the gospel will provoke them to anger and destruction.

Speak the truth in love to your children. **RP**

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

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Chess Puzzle #246



WHITE to Mate in 3

Or, If it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 4**
(HINT: The first move is with Black's Queen)

Riddle for Punsters #246

"The Novice Worker Who Meant Well?"

Why was the new thrift store clerk giving away all their rechargeable batteries? The sign above them said that they were being sold with no c _____ e. Why did he throw away all their dull pencils? He felt that they were p _____ less in the store. Why did he throw away all the clothes hangers? He was afraid that the clothing staff had too many _____ -ups to deal with each day.

Problem to Ponder #246

"Colourful Chess Club Competitors"

Four students bought used chess sets at a Pawn Shop (pun intended) and started a chess club. The 2 male students are Harry and Larry and the female students are Mary and Carrie. The students all have different hair colour (brown, black, red or blonde) and different eye colour (brown or grey or blue or green). One student has red hair. Carrie's hair is not red or brown. One male student has hair colour the same as his eye colour. Harry is not blond or blue eyed. One girl has green eyes. One boy has black hair. Mary's hair is not black or brown. One girl has green eyes. Larry has grey eyes. The girl with blonde hair does not have blue eyes. Determine each student's hair and eye colour.

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to Puzzle Page,
43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 or robleach@gmail.com

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #245



WHITE TO MATE IN 2

Descriptive Notation

1. N-B6 dbl ch K-R1
2. QxP mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Nd5-f6 + (dbl ch) Kg8-h8
2. Qe4xh7 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 2

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- QxR ch
2. NxQ R-B8 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Qh5xd1 +
2. Ne3xd1 Rf8-f1 ++

In an editorial oversight, the chessboard displayed in the March/April #244 solution was wrong, though the written solution was correct. Readers can turn to the Jan/Feb issue for the proper #244 chessboard.

Answer to Riddle for Punsters #245 – "Fired? You can Bank on It!"

Why was the bank manager fired?

He no longer showed any real **interest** in his work. At any **rate**, that was the **prime** reason he was fired. He could no longer give a good **account** of how he spent his workday. He did a bit of work when he arrived at the bank but the **balance** of his working hours he did very little to **earn** his salary.

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#245 – "Using Cruise Control on the Highway?"

Hannah lives out in the country and her house is right beside a long highway. She drives out onto the highway shoulder, stops to check that there is no traffic, then at 12 o'clock noon she accelerates uniformly at 5 km/h per second for 18 seconds, then travels at a constant speed for 135 minutes then slows down uniformly at a deceleration rate of 10 km/h per second until she comes to a stop at a stop sign. How far (in km) has she travelled and at what time does she come to a stop? (HINT: when acceleration is uniform, the average speed is $\frac{1}{2}$ (initial speed + final speed). ALSO, what was her average speed for the whole trip (to the nearest tenth of a km/h)?

Hannah's initial speed is 0 km/h and her acceleration rate is 5 km/h per second so in 18 seconds she reaches a speed of $5(18) = 90$ km/h. One hour is 60×60 seconds so 18 seconds is $\frac{18}{3600}$ hour = $\frac{1}{200}$ hour = 0.005 hour. During that time she travels a distance = average speed x time = $\frac{1}{2} (0 + 90)$ km/h x $\frac{1}{200}$ h = $45 \times 0.005 = 0.225$ km. One min is $\frac{1}{60}$ hour so 135 min = $\frac{135}{60}$ hour = 2.25 h so when she travels at that reached constant speed of 90 km/h for 135 min she travels a distance of 90 km/h x 2.25 h = **202.5 km**.

She then slows down at a rate of 10 km/s so takes 9 seconds to go from speed 90 to speed 0 km/h and 9 seconds is $\frac{9}{3600}$ h = 0.0025 h. The distance in that time is again distance = average speed x time = $\frac{1}{2} (90+0)$ km/h x $\frac{1}{400}$ h = $45 \times 0.0025 = 0.1125$ km. The total distance travelled is $0.225 + 202.5 + 0.1125 = 202.8375$ km. The total time taken is $0.005 + 2.25 + 0.0025 = 2.2575$ hours. 0.2575 h x 60 min/h = 15.45 min and 0.45 min x 60 seconds/min = 27 seconds so **she stops at 2 hours and 15 minutes and 27 seconds after 12 o'clock**. The average speed is **total distance/total time = 202.8375 km / 2.2575 hours = 89.9 km/h**.

A New Addition!

by Jon Dykstra

Since mid-May *Reformed Perspective* and the folks at the Nearer to God Devotional have been teaming up to offer you their daily devotional on our website. This was a perfect pairing, as their organization also aims to equip and challenge God's people. Just how perfect? Take a look at the Nearer to God Devotional's tagline – it reads: "A *Reformed Perspective* on the Bible!"

The devotional was started back in 2014 to fill a need for a "solidly Reformed devotional for families to use." It's written by pastors from churches that many of our readers will be very familiar with:

- the United Reformed Churches
- the Canadian Reformed Churches
- the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches
- the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches
- the Reformed Churches of New Zealand
- the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

It has always had two intended audiences: Reformed folk to use in our own families, but it's also meant to be shared with neighbors and friends as an evangelistic tool. Just imagine the conversations that could be had if both you and your questioning friend were reading the same devotional, and the same biblical texts each day.

The devotional was available only in print, so we've teamed up to present it online on our website. That makes it just that much the easier to share with everyone you know.

Where can you find it? Every day a new post can be found at ReformedPerspective.ca/category/nearer-to-god. Another way to find it is to visit ReformedPerspective.ca and hit the link near the top marked "Daily Devotional."

So what does the devotional cover? That depends. Pastors take turns, each tackling a month's worth of devotionals.

So, for example, in June Pastor Mark Stewart of the Burlington, WA United Reformed Church tackled the seven deadly sins. He took them on one by one, spending four days on each. For the first two, he defined what the sin entails – he gave a definition of sorts – because if we're going to do battle, we need to know the enemy. Then he pointed us to Jesus's example and what it looks like to reject this sin. And finally he pointed us to how Jesus' death liberates us from these sins. Each devotional was just a couple hundred words or so, plus the Scripture reading. All in all, it would take about 10 minutes to read.

If you've been following along this month I know you'll agree that Pastor Stewart's June devotional series has been encouraging and challenging. If you missed it, you may want to look it

up now, and make it your July or August devotional. (I think that's allowed.) 

The print version can be ordered on the Nearer to God Devotional website NTGgdevotional.com. They also have a bulk order option for your whole church.





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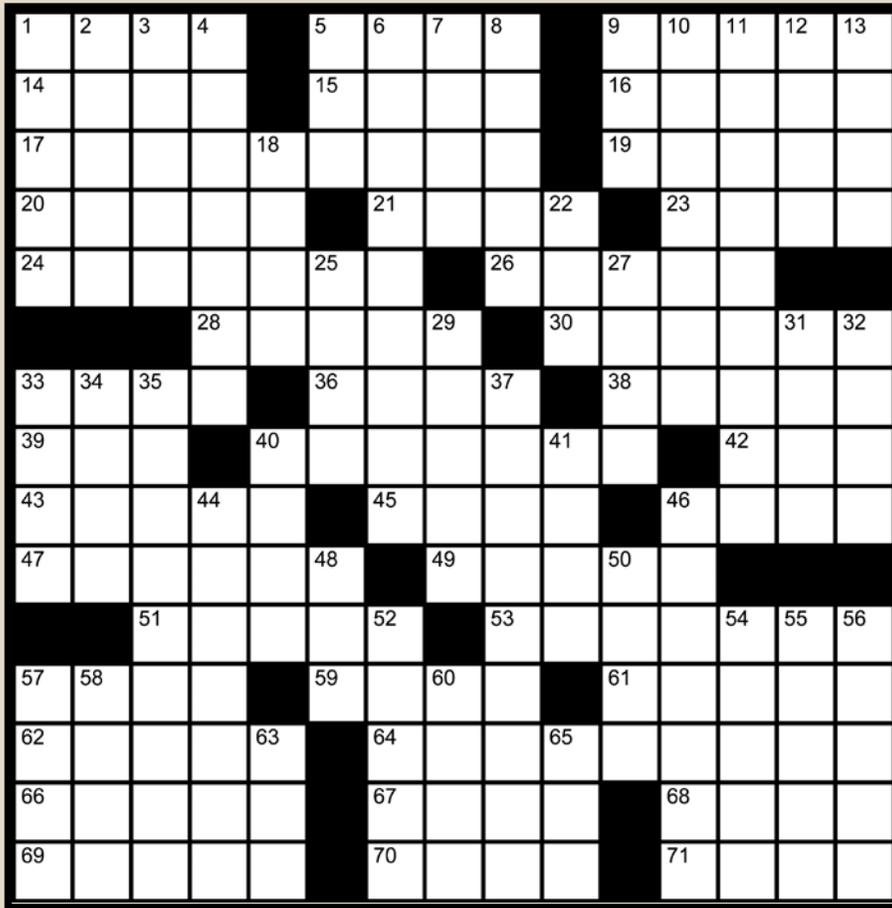
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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 3-12

PUZZLE CLUES

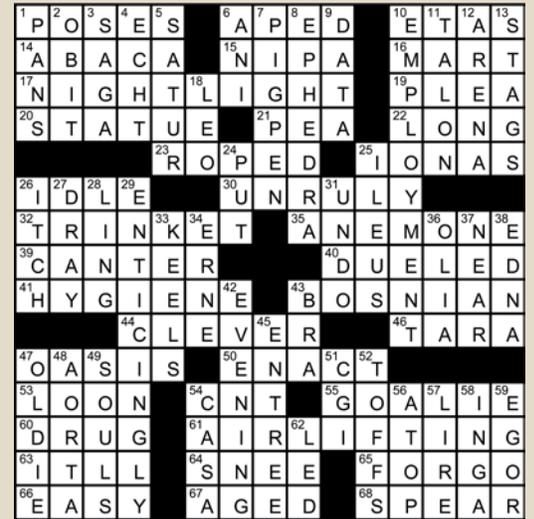
ACROSS

1. It Hertz to get a car this way.
5. "and greeted them from ____" (Heb. 11)
9. Test the quality of a metal or ore
14. See 2 Down
15. Single unit of pond scum
16. "All the world's a ____" (Shakespeare)
17. Figures of speech like the one in 16 Across
19. Porter (in some Middle Eastern countries)
20. Eagle's nest
21. He thought of WHAT? – The steam engine.
23. Sheet or cover, especially over a campsite
24. Fuel that comes in thick-walled tanks
26. Show as likely a good or bad outcome
28. "seized the ____ of his robe" (1 Sam. 15)
30. Fabrics dyed in special way

33. The Philistines made gold ones (1 Sam. 6).
36. Expel profusely, rapidly, and forcefully
38. "____ Snow" (cheerful winter song)
39. What two say in public (with some ado?)
40. 3-D model of a scene (miniature or life-size)
42. "with reverence and ____" (Heb. 12)
43. Cozy, snug
45. Small musical group
46. One third of 45 Across?
47. German sounding nutlike in France?
49. Greek Titan with sore shoulders?
51. Mountain nymph in Greek mythology
53. Criminal (to sound like sick bird?)
57. Battle of ____ (early conflict in WWI)
59. Unit of Chinese currency

61. "So I was left ____ and saw" (Dan. 10)
62. Someone you gain by marriage
64. What H. L. Mencken smoked at age nine
66. La ____ (opera house in Milan, Italy)
67. "____ Vincit Omnia" (= "Love Conquers All")
68. "I will ____ up your sons" (Zech. 9)
69. You don't want to drop in when it's open.
70. "have ____ him to the LORD." (1 Sam. 1)
71. Slang for disrespect, impudence

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



SERIES 3-11

DOWN

1. Put it in the atlas again
2. Islamic head of state (variant form)
3. Explosive heart medicine
4. Trudge, tramp, or tromp (around)
5. Sound of saathisfaction at the spaah
6. _____ Island (in Georgian Bay, Ontario)
7. Home of the Taj Mahal
8. Short for Rastafarian
9. "the needy from the ____ heap" (Ps. 113)
10. "a _____ for Israel, a rule of" (Ps. 81)
11. He was famously good in the parable.
12. Thickener obtained from red seaweed
13. Noise you make when you "bark" your shin?
14. Top of the mountain to you!
15. "Rub-a-dub-dub" vessel
25. Latin legal term meaning "unless"
27. Big classy party, often involving dinner
29. _____ firma (dry land)
31. Small flightless bird
32. "Let it stand" (proofreading instruction)
33. Shiny silicate mineral
34. "a sacrifice to the ____" (Acts 7)
35. It's based on precedent, not on 10 Down.
37. _____ tables (restaurant job)
40. Unit of force
41. Gun ____ (gangster's girlfriend)
44. Sign you see before the SOLD sign
46. Vain; futile; utterly ineffective
48. "the ____ of his coming" (Mal. 3)
50. Controversial chemical sprayed on fruit
52. Relating to a duke
54. " ____ get a Gund" (advertising slogan)
55. Those opposed (to nieces and nephews?)
56. Looks rudely (at someone else)
57. "sling a stone... and not ____" (Judges 20)
58. " ____ more they cried out" (Rev. 19)
60. Like, if you're French, it means "like."
63. "which wage ____ against..." (1 Pet. 2)
65. "an image formed by the ____ of" (Acts 17)



One Good Deed Is More Worth Than A Thousand Good Intentions

by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might..." Ecclesiastes 9:10a

“Whatever your hand finds to do,” refers to works that are possible. These are tasks and deeds that you, with your skills and abilities and resources *can* accomplish. Now, there are many things that our hearts want to do which we'll never actually do. It is fine to have these desires in our hearts; but if we are to be at all useful, we must not be content with making plans in our hearts and talking about them. No, we must practically carry out *“whatever your hand finds to do.”*

The fact is, one good deed is more worth than a thousand brilliant theories.

So let's not wait for some big opportunity, or wait until just the right sort of situation pops up. Instead let's do the things we “find to do” day by day. Today is what we have - we have no other time. The past is gone; the future has not arrived; we never shall have any time but the present. So don't wait until you know more, or can do more, or are more mature before you attempt

to serve God. Strive *now* to bring forth fruit.

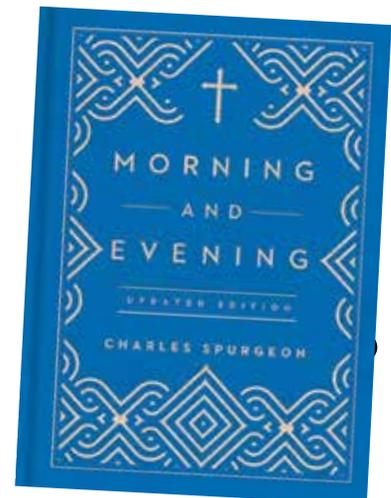
Serve God now...but be careful as to how you perform what you find to do – *“do it with all your might.”* That means, do it *promptly*; don't fritter away your life in making plans for what you intend to do tomorrow. As if that could make-up for the laziness of today! *No man ever served God by doing things tomorrow.* If we honor Christ and are blessed, it is by the things that we do *today*. So whatever you do for Christ throw your whole soul into it. Don't give Christ a little grudging labor, done as a matter of course now and then. No, when you serve Him, do it with heart, and soul, and strength.

Where is the might of a Christian? It's not in ourselves, for we are perfectly weak. No, our strength lies in the Lord of Hosts. Knowing that, let us seek His help; let us proceed with prayer and faith, and when we have done what our “hand finds to do,” let's wait upon the Lord for His blessing. What we do in

this manner will be well done, and will not fail in its effect. 

This is a modernized version of the November 26th morning reading, from Charles Spurgeon's twice daily devotional “Mornings and Evenings.”

You can find both original and modernized or “updated” versions at online bookstores.



A large, detailed eye is the central focus, with its iris and pupil area filled with a cluster of several analog clocks of various designs. A red ladder is positioned vertically, leaning against the clocks, with a small figure of a person standing on it, reaching up towards the center of the clock cluster. The background is dark and textured, suggesting the skin around the eye.

by Margaret Helder

We've All Got **RHYTHM**

To my husband, the idea that all humans are able accurately to measure time, without recourse to clocks, seems laughable. For if this is so, why is it that I am so consistently late? To that question there may never be an answer.

It is nevertheless a well-documented fact that some people can estimate time with an error of less than 1% even after 3 or more days.

CLOCKS HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE

This phenomenon, the ability to measure time, is extremely widespread among living creatures. The only exceptions appear to be bacteria, mosses, embryos, and creatures that live in constantly dark environments.

A variety of functions in plants and animals, such as enzyme activity, vary in intensity with time of day. These cycles appear to be the source for biological clocks. In humans, for example, 20 functions have been shown to vary with time of day. These include wakefulness and body temperature.

Processes in plants or animals which show a regular pattern of increase and

decrease every 24 hours, are called *circadian rhythms*. The term comes from the Latin *circa* (about) and *diem* (day), so to be a true circadian rhythm a process must take about 24 hours to complete. Moreover, the force driving the process must originate *inside* the organism. That is, the process must continue for several days at least, even when conditions are constant. In many plant species, for example, flowers are already beginning to open before dawn. It is almost as if they “know” the sun is about to rise. Even in constant darkness these flowers still open at the correct time.

It is an interesting feature of biological clocks that they cannot be reprogrammed to cycles shorter or longer than approximately 24 hours. Studies on humans and test animals in space have shown that they do not adjust well to external cycles which deviate too much from 24 hours.

While the *length* of a rhythm cannot be altered, the rhythm can be shifted. Organisms can adapt to new time zones but the adjustment may take some time. When, for example, someone switches from working the day shift to working the night shift, rhythms such as body

temperature may take as much as 9 to 10 days before inversion is complete. No wonder we experience jet lag!

EVEN ALGAE HAVE IT!

In nature, the variety of organisms able to give off a glow of light include some bacteria, some fungi, and some marine crustaceans.

The only *photosynthetic* organisms able to emit light, however, are tiny one-celled marine algae called dinoflagellates. In these organisms the capacity to glow follows a circadian rhythm. They give off light when they are jostled at night. When there is wave action the glow from concentrations can be seen for miles. In one such species the brightest luminescence occurs about 6 hours after nightfall, and the dimmest flashes occur 12 hours later. Even in the laboratory where there is no change in the surrounding darkness to indicate passage of night and day, luminescence during the night phase may be as much as 14 times brighter than during the day phase.

Biological clocks which measure tidal rhythms (12.8 hours) and lunar cycles (29.5 days) also occur. Certain diatoms

How are these organisms able to anticipate the changing tides?

(algae with glass walls) emerge onto tidal flats at low tide. They retreat down into the sand just before the tidal waters return – otherwise they would be washed away. This rhythm continues in the laboratory under constant conditions. How are these organisms able to anticipate the changing tides?

Most famous of the organisms which measure lunar rhythms is the palolo worm of the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. It reproduces only twice a year, during the neap tides of the last quarter moon in October and November.

QUITE THE MYSTERY

Although ability to discern tidal and lunar rhythms clearly enhances many organisms' ability to survive, the same cannot be said for many circadian rhythms. It is a curious fact that many circadian rhythms lack obvious selective value. That is, the possession of these rhythms does not seem to enable the organism to survive better. If these capabilities came about by natural selection, as evolution theory demands, then they should confer those possessing the ability with some kind of advantage over those lacking it.

Even more frustrating for the evolutionist is the question of the mechanism driving these rhythms. Experts assume the driving force must be physical rather than chemical, as temperature changes do not affect the clock. Temperature changes do affect chemical reactions, so these cannot be involved. What evolutionists would like to find is a driving force which is the same in all organisms. Conclusions about common ancestry would then be easy to draw. The evidence, however, seems to point away from such a common mechanism. It seems the different organisms keep time in different ways. Not only that, but different rhythms within one organisms, seem to run independently of each other. Such apparent independence of origin bodes ill for evolutionary theory. 

This article is a classic from Creation Science Dialogue, Volume 8, Number 2, 1981. For a fun sequel published this year, see "Celebrating Rhythm!" from Creation Science Dialogue, Volume 44, Number 3, 2017, which can be found online at www.create.ab.ca



The Board of
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invites applications for the 2018/2019 school year
for the following full/part time positions:

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Covenant Canadian Reformed School (CCRS) is a vibrant K-12 school community with a current student population of around 240. We are situated 3 km east of 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 Christian 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 benefits package. All interested individuals can apply by submitting a resume, a statement of faith, a philosophy of education, and references.

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secretary@covenantschool.ca

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

Mr. Jordan Tiggelaar – 780-307-8449
chairman@covenantschool.ca

or the principal:

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

AGING IN HOPE!

by Johan D. Tangelder



I am 68 years of age and retired, so I suppose I am considered old. In our politically correct times, I am called either a “senior citizen” or “chronologically gifted.”

What is aging? How do we react to it? These questions are no longer academic for me. When I was in my teens, I thought that people in their fifties were old. At this juncture in my life, a fifty-year-old seems relatively youthful. So aging is ambiguous. Bernard Nash describes aging as a paradox: “Does it not strike you that we all want to live longer but none of us want to grow old?”

Throughout our lives we think *other* people grow older until we gradually realize that we ourselves have aged. Some say that aging can be compared with the fall season when the fruits ripen and the leaves fall; others claim that the moment of aging has arrived when the sum total of memories has become greater than our expectations. Aging, says the American gerontologist Howel, “is not a simple slope which everyone slides down at the same speed. It is a flight of irregular stairs down which some journey more quickly

than others.”

To grow old also means to lose acquaintances and lifelong friends to distance, illness, and death. Obituaries testify that life is the process of aging, and aging is the steady progress of dying within us. Every moment we are alive, we are aging. Life and death are intimately linked. The day is coming when all our earthly possessions will be swept away, including our ability to enjoy them. This is not a morbid view of life – it is simply reality. As the 17th century poet Robert Herrick wrote,

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying.
And this same flower, that smiles today,
Tomorrow will be dying.

So how do we cope with aging? We live in a society that has shown little understanding of growing old, and valued it even less. The Christian literature on aging seems sparse, with far more attention paid to childrearing. Too little attention has been given to caring for aged parents.

DENIAL CAN'T LAST

It seems the fear of aging has contributed to a denial of reality – if we don't talk about it, maybe it won't happen to us, right?

This sort of denial is why some find visiting a nursing home a burden. They can't imagine themselves ever being there. They don't want the reminder of their own mortality.

Our society views frankness about death as deviant, a subject not to be discussed in polite company. For many, death is the last taboo in Western culture; for others it has become an exploited sentimentality: people don't attend funerals anymore, but instead “celebrations of a life lived.”

And when they do talk about death, it is to make light of it, with styrofoam tombstones on the front yard on All Hallows' Eve. But their atheistic naturalism leaves them unable to face the brute finality of death. And because they are unwilling to return to a biblical perspective, a new generation puts their faith in reports of out-of-body experiences and in New Age mysticism.

Still, try as it might, the world cannot keep death out of sight and mind. The moment we are born, we begin to die.

PERPETUAL TEENAGERS

The world's death denial is evident, too, in how it is now a common goal among the aged to stay young. Or, rather, not just stay young, but stay immature. Whereas in the past becoming an adult was the ideal, today the older generation wants to look as young as possible, with some trying to camouflage their age by dressing like teenagers.

In his own inimitable and not very flattering way, British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge reported on a month he spent at a resort in Florida. He said that everything was done to make senior citizens feel that they were not really aged, but still full of zest and expectations; if not teenagers, then *keenagers*. These seniors, he said, had withered bodies arrayed in dazzling summer wear, hollow eyes glaring out of garish caps, skulls plastered with cosmetics, lean shanks tanned a rich brown, bony buttocks encased in scarlet trousers. Muggeridge's description may be exaggerated, but it does say something about the affect contemporary youth culture has had on our society. It has a negative and morbid view of aging.

FOREVER ON EARTH?

The advertisement industry contributes to this mood. Wherever we look, there are ads for anti-aging creams, yoga routines, nutritional programs, and medical interventions. Growing old is seen not so much as part of the human condition but rather as a solvable medical and scientific problem. Hence, doctors and scientists search for a solution to the "problem of old age."

What are the chances that scientific advance will find a way to extend life indefinitely? A number of investors have paid large sums to have their bodies frozen at death by means of cryogenics, which is used to freeze beef and vegetables, as well as people. But as Dr. Russell points out in his secular work *Good News About Aging*, those who cherish dreams of being defrosted

and living forever some time hence are probably cherishing an implausible dream because freezing destroys human body cells. He adds:

...even if we can overcome this and other problems, no scientific evidence suggests that we can expect to eliminate death now or in the future because all things break down over time.

And what if we could live forever? In our fallen world, would we really want to?

And what if we *could* live forever? In our fallen world, would we really want to? In his 1922 play *The Makropulos Secret*, Karel Capek probes this issue with the 337-year-old character Emilia, who notes:

... no one can love for three hundred years – it cannot last. And then everything tires one. It tires one to be good, it tires one to be bad. The whole earth tires one. And then you find out there is nothing at all: no sin, no pain, no earth, nothing.

What a hideous future! To be given an everlasting longevity without being regenerated by the Holy Spirit, without hope to be with the Lord in the new heaven and earth, is a dismal prospect. It is to live under a curse.

If we could live on in this world with all its pain, conflicts, without solving the immense human problems, a medically-expanded life would simply set the stage for more of same human conflicts and social injustices.

IMPATIENCE INSTEAD OF HONOR

Death denial is also evident in our youth's treatment of the elderly. Aging frustrates modern youth – it interferes with their desire "to get things done."

Have you ever noticed the impatience shown in a lineup at the bank when a senior is trying to carry out a transaction? Their slower pace often exasperates the clerk and the younger customers waiting for their turn. These young people can't imagine ever being in the same situation. Sure, other people age...but not *them*.

The conflict between the generations is a subject of much discussion. Many seem to view aging as a process to endure and suffer through, rather than as a temporally contingent gift from God to be approached with gratitude. The Canadian philosopher George Grant observed that old age is more and more seen as an unalleviated disaster, not only for those outside of it but by those people who are old themselves. And he noted that we do not see age as that time when the eternal can be realized, and we therefore pity the aged as coming to the end of historic existence.

Sociologists even refer to ageism, which can be defined as a general distaste for the elderly in our culture, as equivalent to racial prejudice. Unfair generalizations are made about any who are old: "all elderly people are forgetful," "all elderly people are ill-tempered," "all elderly people suffer from depression," or "mental impairment is endemic to aging." Contrary to the myth about aging, seniors do not necessarily decline in intelligence or lose their decision-making abilities. History gives us countless examples of creative, active, and productive seniors.

- At 71, Michelangelo (1475-1564) was appointed the chief architect of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome.
- After he was 63 years old, Joost Van den Vondel (1587-1679), Holland's greatest poet, wrote *Jephta, Lucifer* and *Adam in ballingschap* (Adam in exile).
- George Bernhard Shaw (1856-1950), Irish dramatist and author, wrote *Farfetched Fables* at 93.
- Polish-born Arthur Rubinstein (1882-1982) gave a stunning performance at Carnegie Hall at the age of 90.

Like these famous people, there are

Florida Does Not Exist

by Johan Tangelder



Some seniors have a phobia about aging. They see their retirement years as a curse of boredom and uselessness. Others see them as an opportunity for the pursuit of leisure. During the winter some seek a warmer climate, away from their family, friends, and their local church.

But the Church is the kind of community that insists that those who have grown in years are not relieved of moral and spiritual responsibilities. They cannot move to Florida and leave the Church to survive on its own. For Christians, there is no "Florida" even if they happen to live there.

From the Biblical perspective, seniors are a significant resource God can use for His Kingdom in these critical times. Old age is not just a time to relax and play golf, nor is it a time only to reminisce about the past. (Though relaxation and reminiscence surely have their rightful places in our lives.) Instead, in old age, as throughout our lives, we must continue to pursue the way of service, conforming our own lives to the self-giving pattern of Jesus. The Christian practice of growing old is shaped by the example of Jesus, who emptied himself and became obedient, even to the point of death, for our sake (cf. Phi.2:1-13). Our Lord never promised His followers an easy path to tread. The way of discipleship leads to the cross (e.g., Mark 8:34-38; Luke 14: 25-27).

Seniors can still do so much in reaching a spiritually dark world for the Lord. Some retirees are engaged in volunteer work for a mission agency. They spend time overseas assisting in some building projects. Others volunteer for city

mission work in one of the big cities in North America. The volunteers I have met over the years have all testified how blessed they felt in Kingdom service in their retirement years. They still considered themselves useful soldiers in the Lord's army.

Of course, not every senior is able to volunteer for mission or church work. Some have multiple health problems. Their physical disabilities limit them in their activities. Yet they can still engage in spiritual warfare as they pray for the advance of the Gospel around the world. Millions of unreached people are still held captive by the strongholds of Satan.

Multitudes are blinded by the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). Why not encourage seniors to think of the great ministry of prayer available to them? The younger generation can tell them, "You are able to spend more time in prayer than us! You know more about the ups and downs in life than we do. You can pray especially for missionaries on the field. They need your prayer support! And pray for your pastor and congregation. We need your prayer ministry! A missionary leader wrote that one of his greatest fears is the lack of interest in missions by the praying and giving church of North America. Every week I receive via e-mail urgent prayer requests from missionaries and mission organizations. As an old hymn says:

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters heaven with prayer.

Seniors can be brought specific prayer requests. The persecuted church requires constant prayer support. Our covenant youth need intercessory prayer. Someone wrote that no other population segment of Christians has more discretionary time for serious, global prayer than the experienced, mature elderly! Prayer offers a wonderful and powerful opportunity for Kingdom involvement. RP

millions of elderly people who are still productive and active in their own way and want to remain so. Ageism seems to come about because people know little about old age, and because what they know is based on myth and fear.

People even talk about generational wars. In recent years, the conflict between the generations has become most noticeable due to the decreasing ability of government to pay for health and pension benefits. The pinch is already provoking generational conflict in the ambitious welfare states of Northern Europe, where birthrates and immigration rates are lower than in the United States and where the elderly wield considerable political clout. Young Europeans are complaining about the high cost of healthcare for the elderly, and are resentful of fees that are eroding the tradition of free university education. One German youth leader gained notoriety by suggesting that old folks should use crutches rather than seek expensive hip replacements.

Unfortunately, this generational conflict is also seen in churches today. Seniors don't like to call their dominee "Pastor Jack" and they certainly don't like his casual appearance when he comes visiting. But when a vacant church thinks of calling a pastor there is a strong emphasis on youth. It seems that some search committees look for a twenty-five-year-old man with thirty years of experience.

A CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE

The differences between the generations don't need to lead to conflicts. Christians can offer alternative understandings of aging. The Bible views the conflict between generations as abnormal. Yes, youth is a wonderful thing, but it is not the only thing. It is a blessing in many ways, but it can, on some occasions even be a curse. When Isaiah pronounced judgment on Jerusalem and Judah, he said, "I will make boys their officials; mere children will govern them" (Isa.3:4).

Young and old can come to mutual understanding and appreciation of each other. In the Kingdom of God, "Children's children are a crown of the

The Church cannot be the Church without the elderly.

aged, and parents are the pride of their children" (Prov. 17:6). Old men dream dreams and young men see visions (Joel 2:28; cf. Acts 2:17). And God promises that He will be with His people of every age bracket. "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you" (Isa. 46:4).

So how do we face the twilight years of life? With feelings of dread... or of hope? Let's delve further into God's Word and see.

AGING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament we find that God regards great age as the supreme reward of virtue. The aged were shown respect and honor. Old age is a blessing and not a curse. Scripture says, "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God" (Lev.19-32).

The psalmist testifies to growing old in hope. He says,

The righteous ... will still bear fruit in old age; They will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, The Lord is upright; He is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him (Ps. 92:14-15).

Growing old became a symbol of blessing, wisdom, and righteousness – an honorable process by which God rewarded those who were obedient, for example, in honoring their own parents:

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you (Ex. 20:12).

In Proverbs readers are essentially promised a long life if their hearts will but, "keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare they give you" (3:1-2). The very display of gray hair itself, a sure sign of growing old throughout the centuries, becomes in Scripture "a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life" (Prov. 16:31).

By pushing the elderly aside to fringes of society, we diminish them and make our society the poorer through the loss of their experience and maturity. When Moses was 80 years old, God called him to lead His people to the Promised Land. At that greatly advanced age, Moses became the historian, leader, and statesman of Israel. At about 85 years of age, Joshua was divinely commissioned to succeed Moses. At his death at 110 years of age, he was deeply mourned and his eminent service widely acknowledged (Josh. 24:29-31).

A NEW TESTAMENT BLESSING TOO

In the New Testament the attitude towards aging is no different from that in the Old Testament. Those who reached an advanced age were honored and esteemed in the community. Aged saints have a significant role in the opening chapter of Luke's Gospel. The first characters to appear on the stage are the priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth, who were both "advanced in years" (Luke 1:7). They are the instruments of God's purposes and the first interpreters of God's saving acts.

Simeon and Anna are the prophetic chorus welcoming the child Jesus on the occasion of his purification in the Temple (Luke 2:22-38). The remarkable thing is that the aged Simeon dies in the beginning of the Gospel account. His eyes are fixed in hope on the one newly born, in whose life, death, and resurrection the world will know peace. He has long been hoping for "the consolation of Israel," and has been promised by the Holy Spirit that he will not die before he has seen the Lord's Messiah. Anna – an eighty-four-year-old prophetess who frequents the Temple to worship and pray night and day – recognizes Jesus, gives thanks to God, and declares the news about him "to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38). As people who have clung to

God's promises over many years, they embody the virtues of long-suffering patience and trust in God's ultimate faithfulness. They also exemplify faith and hope, even when circumstances seem hopeless.

Aging was not seen by the early Christians as a "problem" to which some sort of religious solution was required. In the entire New Testament, particularly in the Pastoral Epistles, the respect due to older members of the community is emphasized. The exhortations imply and speak explicitly of dutifully caring for widows, honoring the elderly, imitating their faith, and faithfulness. For example, "Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as you would a father." Here we find also specific directives that the community should provide assistance to widows over age of sixty, and that women recognized by the Church as widows should devote their energies to prayer, hospitality, and to service to the

afflicted (2 Tim.5: 3-16).

In our youth obsessed culture, the elderly are strongly tempted to act youthful. They are expected to get a workout to remain in shape, get beauty treatments to rejuvenate themselves, and to dress in youth fashions. Should seniors long to be young again? I don't think so. For Christians old age is not a dead-end street. As we age, we can still grow spiritually. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians "Do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being *renewed* day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). He said to the Ephesians that we can progressively succeed in putting off the old self and putting on the new self and "be made new in the attitude of our minds." This renewal through the Holy Spirit impacts our mental attitude, state of mind, and disposition with respect to God and His world throughout our life. In other words, we continue to develop our walk with God (Eph. 4:22-24).

NEVER TOO OLD TO SERVE THE LORD

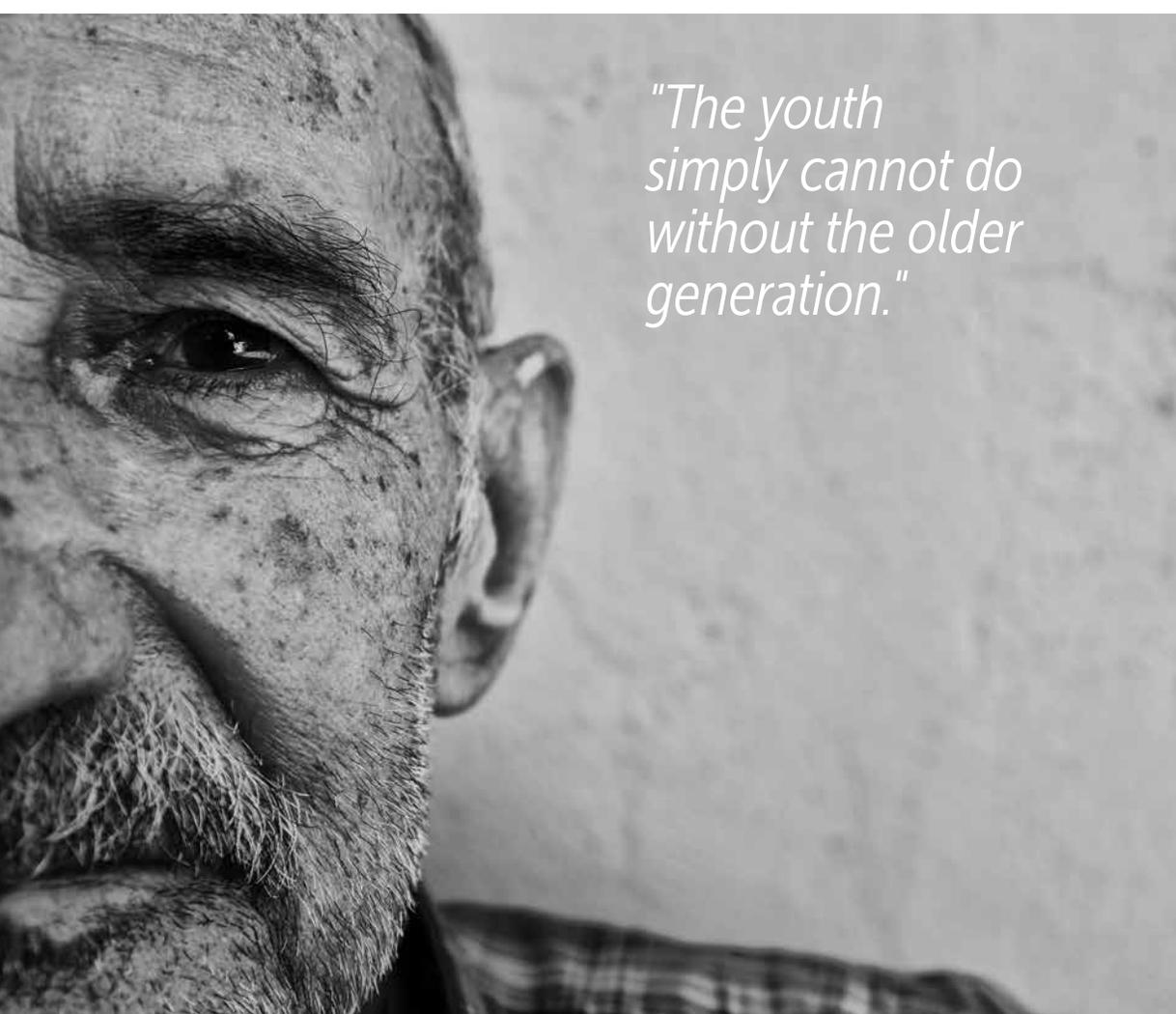
Dr. Viktor E. Frankl, who suffered unspeakable horror in Nazi concentration camps, says that there is no reason to pity old people. And he adds this remarkable statement, "Instead, young people should envy them." Why? Because seniors have something young people don't possess. Frankl says that seniors have realities in the past – the potentialities they have actualized, the values they have realized – and nothing and nobody can ever remove these assets from the past.

In Book X of his *Confessions*, Augustine (354-430) calls memory a "vast court" or "great receptacle." The elderly have a rich storehouse of memories, and inner landscape to explore: times lost in idleness, opportunities well used, a fulfilling career, children grown up, and suffering gone through with dignity and courage. What an opportunity for our youth to tap into the memories of their grandparents! Covenantal obligations

never cease. The Christian faith is passed on from one generation to the next. It depends on that transmission. That's why there must always be a most intimate relationship between the present and the coming generation if there is to be a future generation of Christians.

The Church cannot be the Church without the elderly. They are the embodiment of the Church's story. Of course, we do not expect that all the elderly will be able to express the "wisdom of their years." But there can be no substitute for some old people in the Church passing on their wisdom to the younger generation.

The youth simply cannot do without the older generation. In our



"The youth simply cannot do without the older generation."

culture, for a few years young adults may pretend (egged on by social and cultural forces) that they can live forever as autonomous, self-reliant, self-fulfilling beings. The pretense, however, collapses soon enough. The presence of the visible vulnerable elderly is a reminder that we are not our own creators. All of us will age; dark and blond hair will turn grey. Consequently, young Christians need the elderly so they will not take their lives for granted. I will say it again: the Church cannot be the Church without the elderly. That's why throughout history the Church has frowned on separating the young from the old through conducting youth services. I have even read about a Church where no older people were expected to attend. But according to Scripture old and young belong together. They are all part of the great family of God.

Our covenant youth need to hear from their grandparents and seniors in the Church what it means to be a Christian. Grandparents know the family traditions and values. They can tell the story of their wartime experiences, their immigration with its hardship and adventures, and the reasons for leaving the country of their birth. Seniors can give to the youth the lessons and spiritual resources that have been harvested over a lifetime.

Our times are so confusing and threatening for our young people. Why not explain to them that the Christian faith is for all of life: hence the founding of Christian schools, colleges, universities, a Christian labor association, Christian magazines and bi-weeklies, and a Christian political party? Why not tell them that doing good works is doing your work well? Why not testify to them how the Lord's promise "Surely I am with you always" (Matt.28:20) is a reality and not a myth? The lessons learned from godly grandparents and other Christian seniors are often long remembered.

HOPE IN CHRIST

As we age, we become more aware of the swift passing of years. We can either let the fear of death put a mental

stranglehold on us or we can look to the future with hope. Let's remember, the best is yet to come! Jesus Christ, the risen and ascended Lord is the ground of our hope and the promise of our deliverance.

The hope of the resurrection lies at the heart of the way in which Christians embody the practices of growing old. We serve a faithful God who will never forget us! We are strangers and pilgrims on earth, the older we become the nearer we are to our eternal home. This truth encourages even the oldest individual to cherish each moment of life while preparing to relinquish it.

Each day is a gift from God. We look to Him for our daily bread while making sure that we seek first the kingdom of God rather than squandering our time and energy on secondary concerns. With the prospect of a glorious future for all who are in Christ, we can identify with Martin Luther's suggestions that "in the purpose of God, this world is only a preparation and a scaffolding for the world to come." I also think of John Calvin's teaching in his *Geneva Catechism* that we are "to learn to pass through this world as though it is a foreign country, treating all things lightly and declining to set our hearts on them."

We all face death some time or another. When we are old, it is more of a reality than in the days of our youth. I pray that our attitude

toward death may resemble that of Lutheran pastor, scholar, and resistance leader Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who with shining face in joyful expectation, said to the two Nazi guards who had to come to take him to be executed, "For you it is the end, for me the beginning." RP

Rev. Johan Tangelder (1936-2009) wrote for Reformed Perspective for 13 years and many of his articles have been collected at ReformedReflections.ca. This is an edited version of a two-part article that first appeared in the 2004 November and December issues.



The Board of Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School (ECRS) is thankful for the applications for the 2018-2019 school year. Now due to expansion and retirement, we invite applications for the 2019-2020 school year for:

- A full-time high school position
- Two full-time elementary positions



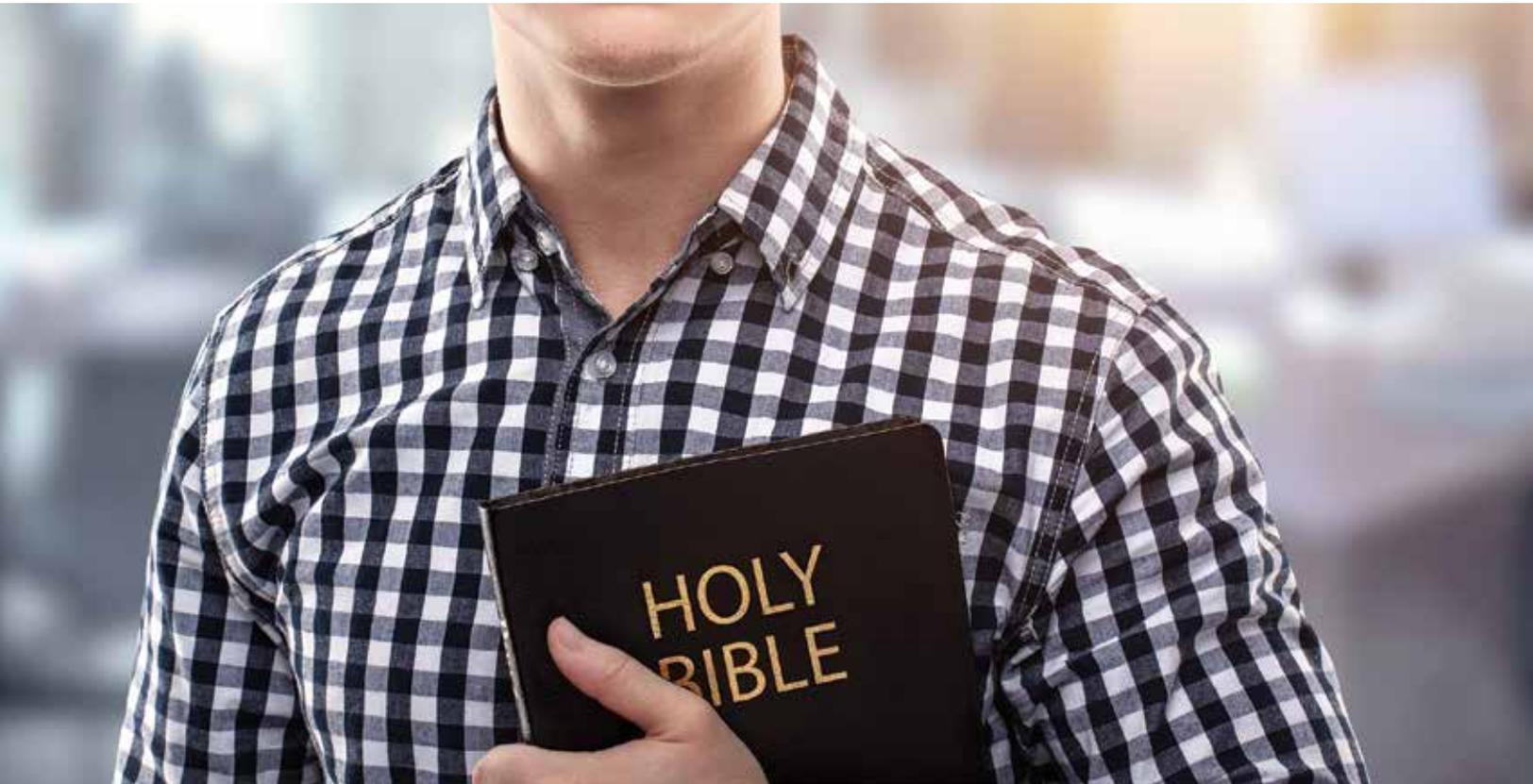
Applicants need to be professing members in good standing of a Canadian Reformed Church, United Reformed Church or sister church. They must have or be able to obtain a BC teaching certificate. We can help with that process.

If you are qualified but not sure about teaching in Smithers, contact us to discuss arranging a complimentary flight from anywhere in Canada. Or come and spend your summer holiday here and check out life in the valley.

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"Assisting parents in equipping our children... to function as prophets, priests and kings in this world."



HELP WANTED: Prophets

Our leaders, and neighbors,
need to hear God's Word from us

by Mark Penninga

God's Word cuts. We acknowledge that is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). It may even be that it's because we know it can have such strong and contrasting reactions that we don't often hear God's Word directly referenced or quoted, even by Christians, in our work places, the mainstream media, our legislatures and courts, or other places in the public square.

Ready reasons come to mind for our silence. "I'm just a grandma / just a laborer / just a teen / just a _____ [fill in the blank]." Or, "I'm not gifted with words." When it comes to speaking God's Word to the world, we might like to leave this job to our pastors, missionaries, or maybe people who get paid to bring a Christian perspective to our secular leaders. Another common hurdle is our concern of throwing the

pearl of the Gospel before the secular swine, resulting in a mess we would rather avoid.

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

So God's Word is generally excluded from the public square, and not by governmental dictate, but by Christians' own reluctance to speak it.

What might happen if we decided again to speak God's Word out loud, in



When Josiah was 18, he made orders to make repairs to the temple. Then something strange happened. Apparently when renovating the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found the Book of the Law. He proceeded to give it to the king's secretary, who passed it on to the king with these rather uninspiring words "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." I call this strange because it suggests that the Book of the Law was lost and forgotten – even by the high priest and in the temple! What does it say of the spiritual health of the covenant nation of Judah when the Book of the Law is forgotten? There may have been a form of spirituality in the land, but clearly there was little faithfulness.

When Josiah heard the words of the law, it struck him to the heart. He immediately tore his cloths and asked the priest, and others, to inquire of the LORD, recognizing that he and the people had not been faithful. After hearing God's response of judgment and grace, Josiah demonstrated true leadership. He gathered all the people together and "he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD" (2 Kings 23:2). He then covenanted before the LORD, "and all the people joined in the covenant" (23:3).

These were not just words and good intentions. In the following weeks, Josiah proceeded to reform the entire nation. He destroyed the idols, broke down the houses of the cult prostitutes, eradicated child sacrifices, and went from place to place removing the high places and shrines. After this he commanded the people to celebrate the Passover, "for no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel or of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah (23:22).

Based on what we know of Josiah, it seems he stayed faithful in his leadership till he died in battle.

A KING WHO LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN THE LIGHT

As was so often the case with the kings of Israel and Judah, a faithful father did not at all mean a faithful son. Josiah had

a son named Jehoiakim, who became king after his younger brother Jehoahaz's very short three-month reign ended in captivity. Jehoiakim had no use for God's Law or his father's reforms. Rabbinical literature describes him as a very evil man, guilty of much incest, murder, and adultery.

But for those familiar with the Bible, most of us will better know Jehoiakim as the king who burned God's Word, as recounted by the prophet Jeremiah.

God instructed Jeremiah to write down all the words that He had told him. He added "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin" (Jeremiah 36:3). Through his scribe Baruch, Jeremiah wrote all the words down on a scroll. Since he was banned from going to the temple, Jeremiah had Baruch go there instead, and he read God's Word to the people. News of this made its way to the government officials, and Baruch was ordered to take his scroll and read it to them. God's Word filled them with fear and they decided "we must report all these words to the king" (36:16).

Eventually king Jehoiakim had the scroll read to him. When he would hear three or four columns "the king would cut them off with a knife and throw them in the fire in the fire pot, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire" (36:23). Unlike his father Josiah's response to the finding of the law, Jehoiakim was not fearful or repentant. Rather he ordered that Baruch and Jeremiah be captured.

GOD'S WORD STILL CUTS

Repentance and reform, or fire and persecution. Two kings, two generations, and two very different responses to God's Word. Both kings responded with conviction. But the conviction went in two very different directions.

Western society today likes to be nice. We are known for wanting to avoid controversy. Christians aren't immune to these societal trends. We generally don't like to rock the boat of culture. And citing Scripture tends to do just that. It is one thing to quote the Bible at a Bible

public discussion and debate? Well, we can't control how our neighbors will respond to God's Word, but we can have a hand in determining whether they are even exposed to it.

Two remarkable Old Testament stories illustrate this well, and serve as good lessons for today. They feature two kings of Judah who lived shortly before the kingdom was conquered and the people exiled to Babylon.

A KING WITH EARS TO HEAR

The first king, Josiah, assumed the throne at age 8. According to 2 Kings 23:25,

"Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him."

When we think of righteous kings, David and Solomon often come to mind. But neither compared with Josiah.

The temptation we all face is to avoid using Scripture in public discourse

study or in the privacy of our home. It is another to bring it to our civil leaders, our business associates, or community friends.

The temptation we all face is to avoid using Scripture in public discourse. Out of a desire to reach a secular and pluralist audience, we stick to language that doesn't turn people off. There are indeed times when it is appropriate to communicate biblical truth in a way that our neighbors will listen. If we don't know who our readers or listeners are, there can be wisdom in not triggering them before our point is made. For example, a hardened atheist or jaded ex-Christian may read our letter to the editor, see a reference to Scripture, and immediately stop reading. If it is possible to communicate the same truth without directly quoting Scripture, there may be wisdom in doing so.

There are also times when we simply are not the gate-keepers of communication. If we know that

those gate-keepers will not allow their publication to become a forum to communicate Scripture, there again may be wisdom in putting that Scripture into our own words. For example, when staff from the organization I work for contribute articles to large secular newspapers for publishing, we have learned that Scripture may not be welcomed. If we want to still get published, we have to show some creativity. But that said, we may be surprised by a new generation that is far more open to considering a faith-based perspective than their baby-boomer parents.

Whether it is through direct quotations, or by means of rephrasing it to be appropriate for the context, the bottom line is that the communication of Scripture is not only still acceptable, it is absolutely necessary. We know that hearts are changed by the Holy Spirit through the Word. And it is our job to communicate that Scripture. Lord's Day

12 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks what it means that we are called Christians. We confess that it means we carry the three-fold office of Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King. That means that every Christian is called to "confess His Name." Prophets carry the words of God to those who need to hear it. This country is full of people who need to hear God's truth. This isn't a job we can pass off. It is an integral part of the job description of every Christian.

We don't know whether the person we speak to will respond like Josiah or Jehoiakim. But changing hearts is not our job. It is God's. God calls us to be His agents. We really are modern-day prophets.

None of us can do this well in our own strength. Let us constantly pray to "set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth, keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3)! We can also ask God to open our eyes to see opportunities to testify of Him, and embolden us to seize those opportunities while we still have them.

As with many difficult things, the best way to learn is by simply trying, and not giving up. Let's encourage each other to shine the light of God's Word across our nation. 

Citing Scripture Doesn't Give Us Immunity: Two Cautions

Although we need God's Word shared, it is also important to remember that the way we share it should reflect the grace and truth that Christ exemplified. There are two common and related mistakes to avoid.

First, simply because we quote Scripture does not mean that we are in the right. The Pharisees knew Scripture well, and quoted it endlessly. But they lost perspective and didn't recognize God Incarnate, right in front of them. If we are wrong, or simply misguided, adding a Bible text doesn't change that. In fact, it can reflect very poorly on Christ Himself.

Second, even if we are communicating truth, if it doesn't come alongside grace it isn't faithfully representing Christ. Christ never communicated truth without grace, just as He never communicated grace without truth. We humans naturally don't do that. Some of us tend to want to always get to the truth of the matter. And people get hurt in the process. Others emphasize grace, and compromise truth in the process. There are no shortage of examples of

Christians who throw out Bible texts in their letters and meetings, while showing little love and grace to those who they are addressing. We need to realize that the person we are speaking with likely does not share our belief about the authority of God's Word, nor do they understand its context. And this will be compounded if we never actually meet (e.g. if our communication is written).

Put ourselves in the shoes of our readers. What happens when we hear a Muslim referencing the Koran and urging the West to submit to Mohammed? Not only do we disagree, we end up not listening to anything else they say. We write them off. So it is so important that our communication makes it clear that we too have to measure up, and we too struggle and fail when trying to do so. God's Word is for us as much as it is for the people we are addressing. Truth without grace and love is a clanging gong. This world doesn't need more noise.



THE CONCEITED APPLE-BRANCH

by Hans Christian Andersen

Was Hans Christian Andersen thinking of Romans 12:3-8 when he wrote this? Perhaps not.... but he could have been.

It was the month of May. The wind still blew cold, but from bush and tree, field and flower, came the whisper “*Spring has come.*” Wildflowers covered the hedges, and under one little apple-tree, Spring seemed especially busy, telling his tale to one of the branches which hung fresh and blooming, and covered with delicate

pink blossoms that were just ready to open.

Now the branch knew well how beautiful it was – this knowledge exists as much in the leaf as in our blood. I was not surprised when a nobleman’s carriage, in which sat a young countess, stopped in the road right by. She said that an apple-branch was a most lovely

object, and an example of spring at its most charming its most charming. Then the branch was broken off for her, and she held it in her delicate hand, and sheltered it with her silk parasol.

Then they drove to the castle, in which were lofty halls and splendid rooms. Pure white curtains fluttered in every open window, and beautiful flowers stood

Romans 12:3-8

"For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

in shining, transparent vases. In one of them, which looked as if it had been cut out of newly fallen snow, the apple-branch was placed, among some fresh, light twigs of beech. It was a charming sight.

Then the branch became proud, which was very much like human nature. People of every description entered the room, and expressed their admiration. Some said nothing, others expressed too much, and the apple-branch very soon came to understand that there was as much difference in the characters of human beings as in those of plants and flowers. Some are all for pomp and parade, others are busy trying to maintain their own importance, while the rest might not be noticed at all. So, thought the apple-branch, as he stood before the open window, from which he could see out over gardens and fields where there were flowers and plants enough for him to think and reflect upon, *it is the way of things that some are rich and beautiful, some poor and humble.*

"Poor, despised herbs," said the apple-branch, "there is really a difference between them and one such as I. How

unhappy they must be, if that sort can even feel as those in my position do! There is a difference indeed, and so there ought to be, or we should all be equals."

And the apple-branch looked with a sort of pity upon them, especially on a certain little flower that is found in fields and in ditches. No one gathered these flowers together in a bouquet; they were too common. They were even known to grow between the paving stones, shooting up everywhere, like bad weeds, and they bore the very ugly name of "dog-flowers" or "dandelions."

"Poor, despised plants," said the apple-bough again, "it is not your fault that you are so ugly, and that you have such an ugly name. But it is with plants as with men, – there must be a difference."

"A difference?" cried the sunbeam, as he kissed the blooming apple-branch, and then kissed the yellow dandelion out in the fields. All were brothers, and the sunbeam kissed them all – the poor flowers as well as the rich.

The apple-bough had never considered the extent of God's love, which reaches out over all of creation, over every creature and plant and thing which lives, and moves, and has its being in Him. The

apple-bough had never thought of the good and beautiful which are so often hidden, but can never remain forgotten by Him – not only among the lower creation, but also among men.

However, the sunbeam, the ray of light, knew better. "You do not see very far, nor very clearly," he said to the apple-branch. "Which is the despised plant you so specially pity?"

"The dandelion," he replied. "No one ever gathers it into bouquets; it is often trodden under foot, there are so many of them; and when they run to seed, they have flowers like wool, which fly away in little pieces over the roads, and cling to the dresses of the people. They are only weeds. But of course there must be weeds. Oh, I am really very thankful that I was not made like one of these flowers."

Soon after a group of children came to the fields, the youngest of whom was so small that he had to be carried by the others. And when he was seated on the grass, among the yellow flowers, he laughed aloud with joy, kicking out his little legs, rolling about, plucking the yellow flowers, and kissing them in childlike innocence. The older children broke off the flowers with long stems,



bent the stalks one round the other, to form links, and made first a chain for the neck, then one to go across the shoulders and hang down to the waist, and at last a wreath to wear round the head. They all looked quite splendid in their garlands of green stems and golden flowers.

It was then that the oldest among them carefully gathered the faded flowers – those that were going to seed in the form of a white feathery crown. These loose, airy wool-flowers are very beautiful, and look like fine snowy feathers or down. The children held them to their mouths, and tried to blow away the whole crown with one puff of their breath.

“Do you see?” said the sunbeam, “Do you see the beauty of these flowers? Do you see their powers of giving pleasure?”

“Yes, to *children*,” scoffed the apple-bough.

By-and-by an old woman came into the field, and, with a blunt knife, began to dig round the roots of some of the dandelion-plants, and pull them up. With some of these she intended to make tea for herself, but the rest she

was going to sell to the chemist, and obtain some money.

“But beauty is of higher value than all this,” said the apple-tree branch; “only the chosen ones can be admitted into the realms of the beautiful. There is a difference between plants, just as there is a difference between men.”

Then the sunbeam spoke of the abundant love of God, as seen in creation, and seen over all that lives, and of the distribution of His gifts to all.

“That is your opinion,” said the apple-bough.

Then some people came into the room, and, among them, the young countess – the lady who had placed the apple-bough in the transparent vase, so pleasantly beneath the rays of the sunlight. She carried in her hand something that seemed like a flower. The object was hidden by two or three great leaves, which covered it like a shield, so that no draft or gust of wind could injure it. And it was carried more carefully than the apple-branch had ever been. Very cautiously the large leaves were removed, and there appeared the feathery seed-crown of

the despised dandelion. This was what the lady had so carefully plucked, and carried home so safely covered, so that not one of the delicate feathery arrows of which its mist-like shape was so lightly formed, should flutter away. She now drew it forth quite uninjured, and wondered at its beautiful form, and airy lightness, and singular construction, so soon to be blown away by the wind.

“See,” she exclaimed, “how wonderfully God has made this little flower. I will paint it with the apple-branch together. Every one admires the beauty of the apple-bough; but this humble flower has been endowed by Heaven with another kind of loveliness; and although they differ in appearance, both are the children of the realms of beauty.”

Then the sunbeam kissed the lowly flower, and he kissed the blooming apple-branch, upon whose leaves appeared a rosy blush. 

This is a slightly modernized version of “The Conceited Apple-Branch,” published in 1852, and translated into English in 1872.



When it comes to helping, not hurting, Christians mustn't be naive or hard-hearted.



by Christine Farenhorst

Go To The Ant, You Sluggard...

...consider its ways, and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provision in summer and gathers its food in harvest. (Proverbs 6:6-8)

Often when we go shopping on Tuesdays we pass men who stand at intersections at various parts of the city of Kitchener. Usually wearing a hat, mittens and some sort of great coat, often a dog seated at their side, these fellows are shamelessly panhandling. With their hands they display a sign that reads something like "No Job - Anything will Help," or "Hungry and Homeless, Thanks so Much." One of my daughters sometimes takes a lunch bag with her in her car prior to going out. She will put a sandwich in there, a piece of fruit and a tract and will hand that out.

On December 12, 2016, the *Dallas Morning News* published an article about a new initiative to recruit panhandlers for day labor. The job program which was being proposed would pay people \$10.37 an hour for cleaning up litter or working in parks. This particular program, however, did not work out, the article went on to say, because some panhandlers were reportedly making more than 50 dollars an hour just by begging.

The city of Bloomington, Indiana recently installed 28 signs downtown that read, "Please help. Don't encourage panhandling. Contribute to the solution."

The sign has a large 'no panhandling' symbol in the middle and a web address at the bottom that links to a webpage which lists several organization combating homelessness.

One of these organizations is Shalom. Shalom Community Center is an all-inclusive resource center in Bloomington for people who are living in poverty and experiencing hunger, homelessness, and a lack of access to basic life necessities. Last year, Shalom's re-housing program helped nearly 200 people, a third of whom were children, move off the streets and into homes. Although concerned with bodies rather than souls, Shalom's effort to help the homeless, does seem to be a laudable effort.

WORK IS A BLESSING

There have been both workers and sluggards throughout history.

British Field Marshal Wade, (1673-1748), was an enterprising man and one who would have been ashamed to stand on British street corners for a hand-out. An officer who served in several wars, he worked hard to attain the rank of Field Marshal. (The rank of Field Marshall has been the highest rank in the British army since 1736.)

Between 1725 and 1737 Wade oversaw the construction of some 250 miles of road, plus 40 bridges. Roads linking Perth, Inverness, and Fort Augustus appeared where previously there had been tracks suitable only for single file passage of men or horses. Wade was popular with the British people and is the only person mentioned by name in the English national anthem. It's not a stanza with which people are familiar or one that is often sung.

Lord, grant that Marshal Wade
May, by thy mighty aid,
Victory bring.
May he sedition hush
And, like a torrent, rush
Rebellious Scots to crush.
God save the King.

Field Marshal Wade did have a sinful weakness. He loved gaming, which is a polite way of saying that he really enjoyed gambling. When he was occupied in this pursuit, he was not greatly concerned about the company he kept and could so totally lose himself in the moment of concentrating on his cards, that he became oblivious to all else. Gaming houses, or casinos, for that matter, are

not mentioned in the Bible. God does, however, warn against temptations associated with gambling. There are numerous verses which warn against the love of money.

One evening as Wade was totally absorbed in a card game, he noticed that his valuable gold snuff box was missing. Snuff, a smokeless tobacco, is made up of pulverized tobacco leaves. It is inhaled or 'snuffed' into the nasal cavity, delivering a shot of nicotine. These pulverized leaves were usually kept in a snuff box. As Wade absently reached for the box in his pocket, his fingers could not detect the coveted container - a container which had diamonds set into its frame.

"Stop the game!" he cried in a booming voice, suddenly very much aware of his rank and military prestige, "and no one shall leave this room without being searched!"

Every eye was on him and quiet descended on the gaming room.

There was a rather destitute gentleman seated next to Wade at the table. Dressed very shabbily, he was a soldier as well. The man had lost several times at the games and with great politeness had asked that Wade back his bets. When the problem of the missing snuff box emerged, and Wade insisted that everyone be searched, he alone objected.

"You will not search me," he repeated several times rather vehemently, "I'd rather fight a duel to defend my honor or die in the attempt."

His challenge was accepted with alacrity by Wade, who thought to himself that the fellow was obviously the thief.

The two men retired to an anteroom with two other men who had volunteered as seconds and the duel was about to take place. Upon reaching for his sword, however, Wade suddenly detected the snuff-box in a secret pocket compartment - a compartment he had completely forgotten to check while searching. Stopping short, he walked over to the other soldier.

"Sir," he began, and his voice did not boom quite as loudly as before, "Sir, I have every reason to believe that I need to apologize to you and ask your pardon. And I hope that in the morning

you might do me the honor of having breakfast with me."

The other man looked surprised, but agreed to the arrangement.

The next morning, as they were eating together, Wade posed the other man a question. He was intensely curious.

"Why, friend, did you refuse to be searched?"

"Because, sir, being upon half-pay and alone, I am obliged to watch every penny. Yesterday I had little appetite; and as I could not eat what I had already paid for, nor could afford to lose it, the leg and wing of a chicken were wrapped up in a piece of paper in my pocket. I would have been mortified had these been found on me and I preferred fighting a duel rather than facing that embarrassment."

Wade stared at the man opposite him at the table, weighing him, before exclaiming: "Enough said! You, sir, will also dine with me tonight. And afterwards we will talk about what to do regarding your dilemma."

That night Wade presented the shabby-looking soldier who had been reduced to penury, with a commission, and a purse to enable him to join the regiment. The man who had attached such a great value to his dignity, received the commission with gratitude and began work immediately.

HOW BEST TO HELP?

For Christians, work ought to be a great blessing especially when it is pervaded with gratitude to the Creator God. Work alone, however, will not open the gates of heaven for someone. Only the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ can do that. Nevertheless, Christians have a working God. In creation God worked for six days and rested on the seventh. Our days, which have for the most part been reduced to a five-day work week, should reflect God's work ethic. We see and read of many people who are unemployed. There are those who truly want to work and can't find employment, but there are also many who are welfare recipients and prefer to remain welfare recipients.

The Biblical welfare system, as described in Lev. 19:10 and Lev. 23:22,

The Biblical welfare system, as described in Lev. 19:10 and Lev. 23:22, was a system of work. Panhandling was never prescribed for Israel.

was a system of work. Panhandling was never prescribed for Israel. The Bible is quite clear in its condemnation of those who are sluggards - those who are lazy. The Christian work ethic is straightforward. In I Tim. 5:8 we are taught: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Should we give money to panhandlers? The desire to give is a good one. Generosity is a virtue and should proceed from a heart which knows it has been given all by Jesus Christ. To give money to someone on the street is a personal decision with both positive and negative aspects. Perhaps satisfying an immediate relief that you have helped someone, the truth is that you will not know whether or not your gift will be used for alcohol, tobacco or drugs. It might be better to search for a Christian organization, so that you can be assured that your money will go towards definite needs. Or it might be better to take the panhandler out for a sandwich and a cup of coffee.

It is true that we presently labor among thorns and thistles and in the sweat of our brow. Yet our attitude should be the same as that of our Lord Jesus, whose food was to do the will of the Father Who sent Him and to finish His work. Someday, in the new heaven and the new earth, the sweat, thorns and thistles will be gone. 

FIVE THINGS

Christians should know about income inequality

by Anne Bradley



Income inequality is still at the forefront of conversation for many people. Thankfully, there are biblical principles that help Christians understand whether income inequality is a problem, and if so, how we are to respond.

At the Christian research organization I work for – the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics – we talk a lot about various aspects of income inequality and how to think about it. Today, I'd like to summarize this tough topic through these five points dealing with the best approach to bringing about flourishing, especially for the poor.

1. How income inequality is measured

Income inequality measures income differences across groups of people using a statistical tool called the Gini coefficient. It ranges between zero and one. A score of one indicates perfect inequality: one person makes all the income and everyone else makes zero. A score of zero indicates perfect equality: everyone earns exactly the same amount.

The U.S. Gini coefficient is 0.45 according to the CIA World Fact Book. For the sake of context, the impoverished country of Bangladesh has less income inequality than the U.S. (Gini of 0.32). Meanwhile Hong Kong has slightly more income inequality than the U.S. (Gini

of 0.54). Alone, income inequality data doesn't tell us that much about whether one country is "better" than another.

2. Cronyism makes income inequality worse, and it's unfair

Cronyism occurs when corporations pursue the government for benefits, protections, or subsidies benefiting their business at the expense of competing firms and consumers. It is a growing trend evidenced by the hundreds of lobbying firms popping up on K Street. Politicians have responded quite favorably to these lobbying efforts and have created a culture in which the most well-connected win.

This is inherently unfair. An unjust system is prevailing where ordinary businesses and entrepreneurs are failing because they lack the resources to buy off politicians. The unfortunate result is that they can't succeed, and the well-connected rich get richer and stifle more opportunities for the poor.

3. Diversity is a biblical premise of creation. We are born with different gifts, resulting in different incomes.

We are created in God's image (Gen 1:27) and, while we bear many physical similarities, we are all distinct. That means that, by definition, we

are unequal. God knew that our uniqueness makes our work and talents inherently dignifying and brings us into community with one another. Our interdependence makes us able to achieve things we never could on our own.

We use our gifts and skills to provide goods and services that others need. We then trade for goods and services that we need but aren't able to provide ourselves. The market return for our services is our income, and that income is based on the market supply of what we provide and the value people place on it.

This means that our incomes will be different. However, because we do not operate in a vacuum, those who do earn high incomes tend to create lots of value for everyone, including lots of job opportunities. High incomes are not a sign that the rich have stolen from the poor. Quite the contrary, wealthy individuals have often innovated products and services that make us all richer and ease our way of life.

4. Income mobility is a better measure of prosperity

Income *mobility* is quite different from income *inequality*. Income mobility tracks the lifetime income of a person. It's a way of understanding if people are able to earn more income over their lives as a result of increases in

their education, skills, and productivity.

The trouble with the data on income inequality is that it doesn't track individuals over time. If we look at the poorest income bracket in 1990 and again in 2014, we have no idea if the people who were poor in 1990 are still poor today simply by looking at the data.

In fact, mobility data suggests that almost sixty percent of individuals who were in the lower income brackets moved into higher brackets in under a decade.

5. We should focus on what God has called us to do, not on what others are doing

In a flourishing society, there are going to be lots of people who make high levels of income. Think how different the Congo or Vietnam would look if local entrepreneurs had the opportunity to create and innovate. The world would have a lot more people like Bill Gates and a lot more wealth and opportunity for all – not just the rich.

It's easy to want for ourselves what

others have, but we can't all be Bill Gates. God has gifted each of us to do something specific and special. We need to focus on our unique callings and do them with excellence rather than focusing on what others have.

Unfortunately, some of the talk around income inequality is about coveting what others have rather than wanting more for the poor. I can tell you from living in a county with the highest per-capita income in the country that it is easy to want what others have: the newest car, the bigger house, the better wardrobe. It is a deceptive trap to believe that if we have these things, we will feel better or live better.

What can you do about income inequality?

Be aware of the cronyism all around us that often shows up in seemingly benign programs like laws mandating certain light bulbs, sugar subsidies, and occupational licensing.

Government is increasingly giving in to the entitlement culture of lobbying.

We need businesses to stop asking for favors and political leaders who will stop the handouts.

Furthermore, prayerfully discern the path to which God calls you and pursue it with integrity, hard work, and faith. No matter what income it brings, it gives you a chance to serve others in the here and now and achieve everlasting significance for God's kingdom. 

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in general, things are actually improving?

Well, maybe it has something to do with the growing popularity of the term "income inequality." By one measure, the term is almost twice as common as it was in 1988. So, perhaps a growing focus on income inequality is part of the problem. After all, focusing our attention on how much more our neighbor has can make it hard to appreciate our own blessings (Prov. 14:30).

Why do more people feel like have-nots?

by Jon Dykstra

Back in 1988 a Pew Research poll of Americans found that a majority thought they were doing well, describing themselves as "haves," and just 17% said they were "have-nots."

Twenty-three years later, and there was quite the change: a 2011 Pew poll found that self-identified have-nots had doubled to 34%.

So, why this pessimistic turn in Americans' economic self-assessment? Is it because things got so much worse? Well, no. Things have improved in big ways and little since 1988.

Consider, for example, how many Americans had cellphones in 1988. It was under 5% of the US populace. Today 95% of Americans have a cellphone, and more than

75% of them have a smartphone. In other words, three quarters of the population are walking around with a device in their back pocket that their 1988 forbearers couldn't even have imagined, but if they did, they would have thought this music-playing, direction-giving, movie-showing, call-anywhere, super computer would have to be a tool reserved for only the super rich. And yet we all have one. And when it comes to the basics, in 1988 necessities used to eat up 39% of the average American worker's income. In 2013 that had fallen to just 32%, meaning more disposable income for most everyone.

So, again, why do more people feel like they are badly off when,



REFLECTIONS ON TONY REINKE'S

12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You

by Sally Davey

The phone has had a huge impact on our way of life.

This was true already, back in the 1920s, when the coming of the telephone to rural New Zealand made a huge difference to isolated farmers' wives, allowing them to communicate daily with friends. "Party lines" – which involved several homes sharing the same line – meant calls were not necessarily private...but if you needed to chat, then you could.

By the time I was a child the family

telephone was a fixture on the wall, either in the hallway or in the kitchen. That meant it was in a public place where anyone could answer it and know who was calling you – or at least hear your end of the conversation.

CUTTING THE CORD

When I was in my early adulthood cordless phones arrived. You could now take the phone into the privacy of your bedroom, and carry on a conversation unheard by anyone else. This began to

worry parents, who knew the phone was somewhere in the house – but where? And what was being said on it?

Then came cellphones, when suddenly, calls could be made and received way outside the house, and when instant communication was, for the first time, privately accessible to all. You could speak to anyone – seemingly anywhere. I remember my astonishment at a call from Paul while he was on the top of a mountain in South Canterbury helping on an autumn muster. It

Reinke finds that phones are causing us to disengage from the kinds of person-to-person interaction that love requires of us.

was revolutionary to think of the possibilities of limitless accessibility.

Now, since 2007, and Steve Jobs' introduction of the first iPhones, smartphones are everywhere. More than simply telephones, they are portable, computer-like devices that enable us to be online, all the time, and wherever we go. We can browse, we can post, we can keep up with the news – in short, do most things possible previously only at home. What's not to like?

CAUTIONS TO CONSIDER

Well, lots, actually. As *DesiringGod.org*'s Tony Reinke has argued, our phones are changing us more than we know. I've just finished reading his book *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* and found it just as full of insights as all the reviews had promised. Everyone who owns a smartphone would likely benefit from a long, slow consideration of Reinke's conclusions. He has thought hard about the implications of many of our common phone habits.

In general, Reinke finds that phones are causing us to disengage from the kinds of person-to-person interaction that love requires of us. We are becoming more detached, more isolated in our own little worlds, less caring, more frivolous.

Despite the fact that technology is a gift from God – the product of our inventiveness as creatures made in God's image – our use of this particular piece of technology is making us less like Christ. It's time that we took a good look at ourselves and reclaimed the use of our phones for good purposes.

1. Always available distraction

One of the most obvious problems with smartphones is their capacity to distract us. Beeps, buzzes, and tunes of all sorts destroy our concentration when



we ought to be attending to work – or to someone in our proximity who deserves our attention.

I'm sure you've noticed the way vast numbers of people walk down the street with their heads down, thumbs tapping at their phones. (You've probably almost collided with more than a few). Not so long ago I was in a café and noticed a sign on the counter: "Sorry, the wireless is down today. You'll just have to talk to each other." Shock, horror! The girl serving the coffee thought it was exciting – and I don't blame her.

Our phones are also distancing us from our flesh and blood – the people right in front of us, our families, our friends, and the people who need our help. Every time we flop on the couch for 15 minutes of mindless scrolling and skim-reading, we could be ignoring an opportunity to edify, encourage, correct, love – and even learn from – a human being for whom God has given us responsibility. Those 15 minutes will

never be given back, either.

While some still think that our smartphones can end loneliness by connecting us to others, Reinke believes (and I agree) that face-to-face interaction cannot be replaced by screen-to-screen communication. We were created to respond to facial expression, tone of voice, and physical touch. Neither texts nor Facebook messaging can match what can be expressed face-to-face.

Of course we can communicate with many more people at far greater speed than is possible if we're limited to where our bodies can be at any given time. But perhaps God has intended us for fewer, more meaningful friendships than Facebook could ever cater to.

2. Ever present peer pressure

I have never been a consumer or user of social media, mainly because I feared the distraction and time-wasting, but Reinke suggest there are other reasons

Being constantly online and fed a continuous diet of news we agree with is light years away from an older world.

these media are harming us.

He explains that we are becoming something like peacocks, preening and arranging our personas for the admiration of an online audience. Learning how others carefully shape their profiles to appear interesting, successful, witty, and up-to-date, we inevitably desire to be seen the same way. So Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, etc., become platforms from which we can project the same attributes.

I had not realized the full extent of this, but Reinke notes that many a person wakes in the morning to check how many comments or “likes” their posts from the night before have generated. It’s obvious that young people sensitive to peer pressure can fall for this, but many a lonely adult person who lacks security in Christ can be equally susceptible. It’s time to get off social media, on our bikes and start visiting lonely people face-to-face!

3. Distance diminishes consideration

Another effect of the distance our smartphones can put between us and others is the impunity with which we criticize and demean others, via our screens. Apparently people feel less sense of remorse for what they say to others online than for what they might say in person. They think clicking “send” has nowhere near the consequences that saying something in personal conversation does.

We’ve all seen the horribly offensive things people say, apparently without compunction, on Twitter or in the comments section beneath news articles. It seems that if the recipient of your spite is not visible through your screen, then guilt about how we make them feel is lessened.

I can’t quite understand that, since each of us is capable of imagining how it would feel to be on the receiving end

of vindictive words on a screen. But certainly, increased use of screens for communication seems to be hardening us. We are getting accustomed to this unkind and demeaning discourse-at-a-distance, and it appears to be imitated by others. For instance, last month I read about our Minister of Foreign Affairs referring to our Leader of the Opposition as “simple Simon.” Does that kind of epithet sound vaguely familiar – on Twitter, perhaps?

4. Privacy brings temptation

Much has been written about the danger of what Reinke calls “secret online vices” like pornography. The scary thing is that this kind of vile material is available, on phones, any time and any place. Many people think they are able to view it without anyone else knowing; and therefore without consequence.

Christians need to remember that God sees everything we do: nothing is hidden from him. God has made our eyes and our ears, but he expects them to be used with discretion. How can we use them to pollute ourselves? Reinke would not be the first to suggest that in the end, if your eye is causing you a problem, pluck it out. Smartphones are indeed disposable, and certainly able to have their contents blocked and curbed. The consequences of addicting yourself to such vices are too awful to contemplate.

5. Algorithms feed us one side (Prov. 18:17)

There is one final way that our smartphones are changing us, and it concerns me more than the others because it affects our ability to distinguish truth from error. We are so overloaded with online input (resulting in what Solomon called a “weariness of the flesh”) that we are

inclined to retreat to bubbles of like-minded communications, dismissing all the rest as biased, wrong, or simply doubtful or unverifiable “noise.” The result is that the world is becoming an increasingly partisan place consisting of groups of people who, day by day, shout at each other, distrust each other, even hate each other – intractably.

Being constantly online and fed a continuous diet of news we agree with is light years away from an older world. Once upon a time (maybe 20 years ago) people read a range of news sources, mindful of the biases of each, in order to arrive at some semblance of the truth. In those days discerning readers knew that if one news source got things wrong, the others would pounce and correct it. The truth prevails in the end, as historians generally know. Nowadays there is little true dialogue, and a cynicism about anything other than the source I read. All else is “fake news,” we hear.

This is really scary, since unless we are willing to expose even our most deeply-held views to scrutiny, we will lose the power of discernment. And that is what tyranny thrives on.

CONCLUSION

So I’d suggest, along with Tony Reinke, that it’s high time to take a close look at our uses of our smartphones. Are they changing us? Yes, and in ways that we might not realize. 

This is an edited version of an article first printed in the May 2018 issue of Faith in Focus www.rcnz.org.nz where it was published under the title “We and our phones.” It is reprinted with permission. Sally Davey is a member of the Reformed Church of Dovedale, Christchurch, New Zealand.

10 QUOTES ON: TECHNOLOGY AND THE FAMILY

We need to control our technology; it can't control us

"...it is absolutely completely possible to make different choices about technology from the default settings of the world around us....it is possible to love and use all kinds of technology but still make radical choices to prevent technology from taking over our lives."

– Andy Crouch, author of *The Tech-Wise Family*

"The essential question we must constantly ask ourselves in the quickly evolving age of digital technology is not what *can* I do with my phone, but what *should* I do with it? That answer...can be resolved only by understanding why we exist in the first place."

– Tony Reinke, author of *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*

"Am I entitled to feed on the fragmented trivialities online? In other words, am I entitled to spend hours every month simply browsing odd curiosities? I get the distinct sense in Scripture that the answer is 'no.'"

– Reinke

Your family may need to restrict technology

"There is a better way. It doesn't require us to become Amish, entirely separating ourselves from the modern technological world, and it doesn't require us to deny the real benefits that technology provides our families and our wider society. But let me be direct and honest: this better way *is* radical. It requires making choices that most of our neighbors aren't making. It



requires making choices that most of our neighbors *in church* aren't making. Let me put it this way: you don't have to become Amish, but you probably have to become closer to Amish than you think."

– Crouch

Parents need to be examples

"Can we really tell our kids, 'Do as we say, not as we do?'"

– Delaney Ruston, doctor and the documentary filmmaker of *Screenagers*

"The kids know we need help too.... An awful lot of children born in 2007...have been competing with their parents' screens their whole lives."

– Crouch

We need to act sooner than later

"Many parents fear that if they approach certain topics too early it will give their kids ideas about those things before they actually need to face them. Let me ask you some questions.... Do your kids ride the school bus with older kids? Are there older kids in your neighborhood? You may shield your tweens from talk of dating

and teen relationships, but what about the eleventh graders making out in the back of the bus? You might supervise Internet activity, but what about the computers at friends' houses?"

– Nicole O'Dell, author of *Hot Button Topics: Internet Edition*

"An astonishing 62 percent of teenagers say they have received a nude image on their phone, and 40 percent say they have sent one."

– Crouch

We need to be parents, not policemen

"Research shows that parenting with rules and boundaries but with love and caring promotes better everything; better grades in school, better relationships with their friends and family, everything!"

– Ruston

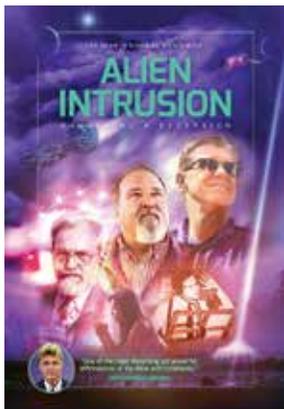
"Our children need to feel love, not condemnation. They should trust that we're an ally, not the enemy. You're not fighting *against* your kids in hopes of coming out victorious over them; you're in a battle *for* them."

– O'Dell

by Jon Dykstra

ALIEN INTRUSION: UNMASKING A DECEPTION

DOCUMENTARY
2018 / 109 MINUTES



Can we dismiss UFO sightings as just a bunch of hysteria? Before you answer consider this: millions have reported UFO sightings, including American former president, Jimmy Carter. And while some of those might be weather balloons, tricks of the sun, or other optical illusions, what are we to think of the many *who claim that they've actually seen aliens themselves?*

This fascinating documentary, produced by Creation Ministries International, doesn't offer the answers you might expect from a Christian creationist organization. Early on it seems as if they are making the case that at least some of these sightings and encounters are, in fact, real. However, at the very same time we're told why they can't be *aliens*. The distances in space are simply too vast, the speeds required too high, to the point that physics seems to rule out the possibility that we are encountering visitors from far distant galaxies.

So what's really happening?

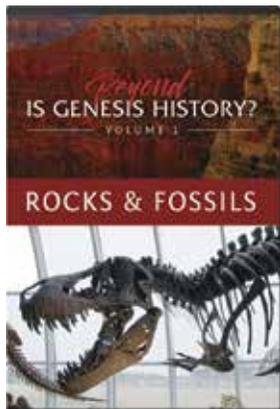
SPOILER ALERT: The film argues that these visitations are spiritual beings – demons – *masquerading as aliens!*

The only caution would concern age-appropriateness. There is a brief discussion concerning claims of sexual violations by the "aliens." The discussion is far from lurid, with the Dove Foundation describing it as "clinical, clean talk."

This would be enjoyed by any and all who are fascinated by UFOs, science fiction, and aliens.

BEYOND IS GENESIS HISTORY?

DOCUMENTARY
2017 / 400 MINUTES



In Del Tackett's 2017 documentary *Is Genesis History?* he interviewed PhD-holding scientists with various areas of expertise, all of them happy to share why their field of study backed a literal understanding of the first few chapters of Genesis.

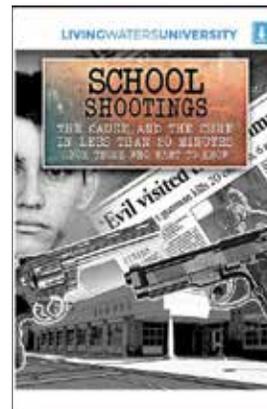
It was among the best creationist documentaries ever made, and it left viewers wanting more. We wanted more with geologists Steve Austin and Andrew Snelling, and more with paleontologist Kurt Wise, and more with the many other experts consulted.

So that's what Tackett has given us in *Beyond Is Genesis History?* Tackett shares 20 interviews – all of them 18 to 21 minutes – with six of the experts he consulted for the feature documentary.

I *loved* the documentary, but I thought, at 400 minutes, this follow-up was too much of a good thing, and I gave it a pass. But then my dad saw it, loved it, bought me a copy and told me I really needed to see this. And boy was he right! This isn't something you'll watch straight through – anything more than an interview or two at a time is going to be intellectual overload – but it is spectacular! Much more than talking heads, this is heartfelt, concise, *deep* discussion! Anyone who enjoyed *Is Genesis History?* will be sure to *love* this too.

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS: THE CAUSE AND THE CURE

DOCUMENTARY
2018 / 20 MINUTES



Ray Comfort's new movie is worth watching for the first few minutes alone when he asks young people if they're willing to call a school shooter evil. Shockingly, they are not. Our culture doesn't want to condemn evil because then they'd have to own up to the evil in their own hearts.

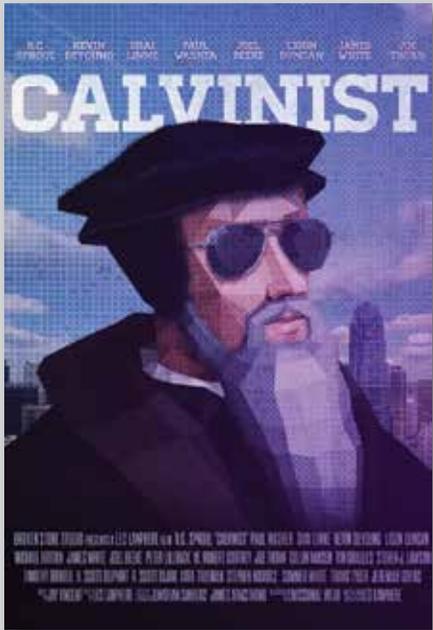
We get to watch as Comfort coaches and encourages these young people to own up to what they already know – that this was wicked, that sin is real, and that they are sinners too.

When they own up to that then, and only then, does Comfort tell them about Jesus. As he puts it in one of his books, there is a need to first bring people to "Moses" – to God's Law and to a realization they are sinners – before bringing them to Jesus, who saves us from our sins.

The only caution I'd offer is that at one point Comfort makes it sound as if the reason to turn to God is to reduce school shootings. That isn't his point (as his book *God has a wonderful plan for your life* makes clear - see the review this issue).

Like every Ray Comfort film, this has an evangelistic intent, which becomes explicit about halfway through. Most Christians could benefit from seeing Comfort in action.

Watch it for free at livingwaters.com/school-shooting-movie.



CALVINIST

DOCUMENTARY

2017 / 89 MINUTES

Calvinist is the story of a generation of young men and women who went searching for answers and found them in Reformed theology.

I found this a fascinating film because what they discovered is what I've always had as my birthright. I grew up in a Reformed home, attended a Reformed church, and went to a Reformed school, and it was the same for most of my friends and family. What was so very fun about *Calvinist* was the opportunity to see through new eyes, the knowledge of God that I had taken too much for granted.

The "young, restless, and Reformed" were a product of the late 90s and early 2000s – they had questions, and the Internet gave them access to all sorts of answers. When they googled "How do I know if I'm saved?" or "How do I know the Bible is true?" the best answers they found were by Reformed theologians like R.C. Sproul, John Piper, John MacArthur, and more.

So this documentary serves at least three purposes:

1. It is a history of how God steered this questioning generation towards just what they needed to know Him.
2. *Calvinist* also shares many of the answers these seekers were after. Producer Les Lanphere went to today's biggest name Reformers and hit them with some of the biggest questions. So, in addition to learning some recent history, the audience learns timeless biblical truths.
3. The film also introduces us to a host of solidly Reformed teachers. In addition to Sproul, Piper and MacArthur, Lanphere talks to:

- Michael Horton
- Tim Challies
- Robert Godfrey
- Joel Beeke
- Paul Washer
- James White
- Carl Trueman
- Jeff Durbin
- ...and many more

That's an impressive, long list; Lanphere has put in the time and effort needed to make this a very special film.

That extra effort also comes out in all the slick transitions and special effects – this looks *good*! One fun bit is running gag of sorts. Lanphere used 80s-era computer-game-style graphics to animate and illustrate some points. So, for example, when discussing Roman Catholicism's "faith plus works" position, we see what looks like an old arcade game, and scroll through some possible "fighters" until the selection stops on Martin Luther.

An interesting tangent that's briefly explored is the impact Reformed Rap had on these young seekers.

I watched this with a group of 20-somethings who had never heard of Timothy Brindle and Shai Linne and they were amused and maybe even a little shocked that "Rap" could be paired up with "Reformed." But is it really so surprising that a medium which gives primacy to the word would be a great one for communicating the deepest truths about God?

CAUTIONS

While all the Reformed teachers we're introduced to are quite conservative, they do have some differences among them that aren't ever discussed. The most notable concerns baptism – there's a roughly 50/50 divide among the speakers, with half believing in credo-baptism (Piper, MacArthur, Durbin, White, Challies) and the other half, infant-baptism (Sproul, Horton, Trueman, Beeke, Godfrey).

Other differences also exist, so while a discerning student can learn much from these men and their writings, discernment is indeed needed.

CONCLUSION

I've shared this film with two different sets of friends and everyone has really enjoyed it. This will be a hit with anyone 18 and up who has an interest in Reformed Theology. It probably won't convince a non-Reformed friend all on its own, but it will probably give the two of you a lot to talk about and explore further.

If you use it for a group movie night, consider having an ice cream and brownie break at maybe the one hour mark. There's just so much packed in here, that a break is needed to allow folks to think through and discuss what they've been seeing and hearing.

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