

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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# PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 35+ YEARS

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# Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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# Justin Trudeau, And What The Need For Two Witnesses Would Have Us Do

by Jon Dykstra



On August 4, 2000, the 28-year-old Justin Trudeau was in Creston, BC to have fun at a festival put on by a beer company. Ten days later an editorial appeared in the local newspaper, the *Creston Valley Advance*, alleging that Trudeau had groped reporter Rose Knight and then offered this apology:

“I’m sorry. If I had known you were reporting for a national paper, I never would have been so forward.”

On June 6, 2018, eighteen years later, the allegations resurfaced when commentator and former Liberal Party strategist Warren Kinsella shared a clipping of the old editorial on his twitter account and later on his blog.

## WILL THE PM APPLY THE SAME STANDARD?

Why was Kinsella bringing this up now? He wanted to know if Prime Minister Trudeau was going to treat this allegation with the same zero-tolerance approach he’d been using with other Liberals MPs. Since 2014, he has expelled two MPs from caucus, and accepted the resignation of a third from caucus, and a fourth from Cabinet, when they were faced with allegations of sexual harassment.

In the most recent instance, Kent Hehr had been the Minister of Sports and Persons with Disabilities until he was accused of sexual harassment earlier this year. A day after the allegation was made (via a tweet) and before an investigation

was conducted, the Prime Minister accepted Hehr’s resignation from his Cabinet post. Kinsella wanted to know “If what Kent Hehr did resulted in *him* being considered unfit for Cabinet, is Justin Trudeau similarly unfit?” He concluded his blog post with this question “Why aren’t you facing the same fate Kent Hehr did?”

## A CONFUSING ANSWER

In responding to the allegations, the Prime Minister noted this event occurred long ago and stated, “I am confident I did not act inappropriately.” But he went on to add that “often a man experiences an interaction as benign, or not inappropriate, and a woman, particularly in a professional context, can experience it differently.”

Was Trudeau saying he was innocent? Yes. So the reporter had wrongfully accused him? Well, no, he wasn’t going to say that.

To understand Trudeau’s answer we have to view it in light of the *#MeToo* movement that sprang up late last year. The movement started when, over the course of October and November, more than one hundred women came forward to accuse one of Hollywood’s most powerful men, Harvey Weinstein, of sexual assault or sexual harassment. The *#MeToo* hashtag went viral when it was used by many others stars to make allegations against other powerful entertainment figures. It was no shock to Christians that in an industry that exploits women’s sexuality onscreen,

women would be exploited off screen too. We could cheer as, one after another, sexual predators were being exposed.

## THE WRONG SOLUTION

But the *#MeToo* movement wasn’t anchored to a Christian idea of justice, and without that foundation, it couldn’t provide the right sort of correction. Soon demands were made for the accuser to always be believed. It was said that in a he said/she said situation, the accuser is less powerful so we should presume they are telling the truth because their risks in speaking out are great and they don’t have much to gain in reporting. Trudeau echoed this position in January shortly after the allegations against Kent Hehr were made. He told the World Economic Forum that when women bring forward accusations “it is our responsibility to listen and more importantly to believe.”

This is why Hehr had to resign, even before an investigation. It’s also why Trudeau was so hesitant to say his accuser was wrong. Because the accuser must be believed.

## POINT PEOPLE TO THE ANSWER

So is Trudeau hypocritical for disciplining others facing allegations, and not resigning himself now? Maybe. But that’s not the point we should be making here. The very different lesson that needs to be learned here is that the standard Trudeau applied to others – always believing the accuser – is one that shouldn’t be applied to anyone (Matt. 7:2).

To be clear, I’m not trying to argue

that Trudeau is innocent of what's been alleged. The point is, unless another eyewitness comes forward, we can't know...so we shouldn't find him guilty.

After all, false accusers do exist. In fact, they are so common God gave a priority to their condemnation, placing it among His Ten Commandments: *Thou shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

So always believing the accuser can't be our standard. We need something better to guide us – we need God's standard. And in Deut. 19:15 (see also Deut. 17:6, Matt. 18:16, John 8:17, 1 Tim. 5:19, 2 Cor. 13:1) He tells us how to proceed:

"One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established."

In other words, we aren't to entertain allegations made by just one accuser.

But what of the women who are


exploited and harassed away from any witnesses? It's only when we understand that the guilty, in such circumstances, can't be punished that we will understand what sort of societal changes need to be made.

What we need is to demand less privacy, and bring in more light. As Jesus says in John 3:20-21:

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

And like any needed change, God's people can model it first. So what would loving the light look like? We can see it in structural changes like how, in new schools, the offices now include one wall made entirely of glass. The school

counselor or principal can still meet with a student behind a closed door but they are in full view of any number of passersby. In professional settings meetings can take place in public areas, or in an office with the door open. And if ever we get a Christian movie mogul he should invite a star's agent to accompany the star for any meeting. This isn't a full-blown Billy Graham rule but if sexual exploitation is as common as the aftermath of the #MeToo movement has made it seem to be, then there is good reason for a move towards more accountability and less privacy.

Does that mean we're letting Trudeau off the hook? Yes, because he should never have been on the hook in the first place. While *God* knows what did or didn't happen, until and unless a second witness is found *we* can't know, so we mustn't come to unfounded conclusions. 

Jon Dykstra can be reached at [editor@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:editor@reformedperspective.ca).

## ADDENDUM: 3 FOLLOW-UP POINTS

After this article was published online, a number of issues were raised that need to be addressed.

### 1. WHAT MIGHT A SECOND WITNESS BE?

Some readers noted that evidence can serve as a witness: (DNA, security camera footage, electronic banking records, self-incrimination, etc.). That's a good outworking of the biblical principle requiring multiple witnesses. Now, what sort of evidence rises to the level of being a second witness? For guidance on this point we can ask whether we would be satisfied if such evidence was used as proof against us (Matt. 7:1-2 & Matt. 7:12).

### 2. THE CONSISTORY IS NOT THE POLICE

A concern was expressed that this article might encourage church consistories not to go to the police *unless there are two witnesses* when members come to them with allegations of sexual abuse.

To be clear, the government, and not the church, is tasked by God to deal with crime (1 Peter 2:13-17). So if a crime is alleged, then church leaders *must* report it to the authorities.

The issue of abuse and how to prevent it, and expose it, is a complex one, so it's worth noting that this article has a limited focus. I am asking what Deut. 19:15's two or three witness requirement would have us do in the context of

the public debate about the allegation against Trudeau. As citizens of a democracy, we have a say in the laws that the police administer, and we have a role in the public debate. So what direction should we give the world about the sort of laws we should have? And, just as important, what sort of rules of business etiquette can we encourage? One possibility: it should be seen as inappropriate/creepy for the powerful to invite the vulnerable to have business meetings alone in their hotel rooms.

### 3. WHAT ABOUT ABUSIVE MARRIAGES?

Some wondered, if this two-witness requirement was followed, whether it could make it difficult to get out of an abusive marriage. A particularly manipulative spouse might only be abusive when no one else is around to see it. The elders have to report any criminal abuse allegations to the police, but they do have a role in counseling. So if a wife claims abuse, should church leaders require two witnesses before they would approve of a divorce?

This is a pressing question that needs an answer. So, further on in this same issue, Douglas Wilson digs further into God's Word to addresses it in his article, "On a wife deciding to leave her husband."



# NOTA BENE

News  
worth  
noting

By Jon Dykstra

## VENEZUELA'S INFLATION TO HIT 1 MILLION PERCENT?



lejandro Werner,  
an official with  
the International  
Monetary Fund (IMF)

is predicting that by the end of the year Venezuelan inflation will hit 1,000,000 percent. What does that even mean? It would be like that \$1 dollar soda you bought with your burger increasing in cost to \$10,000 by year's end.

As recently as 2012 Venezuela was being touted by some as an example of socialist success. So what, over the space of just the last six years, has caused the sudden collapse of the Venezuelan economy?

Oil prices are certainly a factor. Venezuela's main export is oil and world prices for a barrel of crude fell from \$100 (US) in 2014 to roughly \$30 in 2016 before slowly rising to around \$70 today. But many other oil-producing countries have been able to ride out this oil price drop.



Another significant factor is surely the precipitous loss of economic freedom in the country. Since 1995 the Heritage Foundation has been ranking countries on their Index of Economic Freedom. The higher the score, the more individuals "are free to work, produce, consume, and invest in any way they please."

In 1995 Venezuela scored a 59.8, which gave them a "mostly unfree" rating but that was, at least, a couple points better than the world average.

However, since then, the Venezuelan government has taken over large parts of the economy by nationalizing everything from oil projects to glass manufacturing. The Heritage Foundation ranks countries who score under 50 as being "repressed" and Venezuela now comes in at just 25.2. (By way of comparison, the United States, Canada, and Australia score 75.7, 77.7, and 80.9, respectively.)

The Index of Economic Freedom highlights many practical reasons why a loss of economic freedom leads to a loss of economic prosperity. If a business owner has to bribe officials to get his permits, or can't hire new workers because high taxes don't leave him money to pay for them, or he isn't sure whether he'll even own his business next year for fear the government might nationalize it, we can understand that this type of business environment is going to stifle initiative and innovation. Why start or expand a business – investing your sweat and yours savings – when the government is going to take most of the earnings via high taxes, or might take it from you completely via nationalization?

But the ultimate reason socialism doesn't work is because it isn't Christian. As John Piper has noted:

"Socialism borrows the compassionate aims of Christianity in meeting people's needs while rejecting the Christian expectation that this compassion not be coerced or forced. ....[A]ll of the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, assumes both the *legitimacy* – and, I think, the *necessity* – of personal ownership. 'Thou shalt not steal' makes no sense where no one has a right to keep what is his."

SOURCE: Picture credit: sunsinger/Shutterstock.com

## ALBERTA MAN SAYS HE IS WOMAN TO SAVE MONEY ON CAR INSURANCE



**W**hen an Alberta man learned he would pay \$1,100 less for car insurance if only *he* were a *she*, he saw a loophole he could use. Identified only as “David” by *CBC*, to protect his identity, the 24-year-old got a doctor’s note that declared him a woman, and used that to change his birth certificate and driver’s license. He shared his changed “gender” with his insurance company

and now, instead of paying \$4,517 a year, it will only cost him \$3,423.

While David assured *CBC* that, “I didn’t do it to criticize or ridicule transgender or LGBT rights” his stunt has gotten folks talking. Stephanie McLean, an NDP MLA, and Marie Little, the former chair of the Trans Alliance Society, have both attacked him for *insincerely* stating he identifies as a woman.

But there’s another battleground here that isn’t being explored by the mainstream press. David has bought into the politically-correct notion that men and woman are not notably different. That’s why he was angered when he, as a man, was treated differently by the insurance company. He saw this as outrageous sexism.

Meanwhile, transgender activists like Marie Little think there are real differences between the genders. If there weren’t, then what sense would it make for a man to say he felt like a woman?

So, which of the two is right? Are men and women practically identical? Or are they fundamentally different? These two questions could get a ruckus going among the politically correct.

And here’s a third: if, instead of *insincerely* identifying as a *woman*, David had in all sincerity identified as a *safe driver*, should his insurance company have concluded: “If that’s how he identifies, then that’s what he must be”?

SOURCE: Dave Dormer’s “Transgender community upset by driver’s license ‘stunt’” posted to *CBC.ca* on July 27, 2018

## CREATIONISTS: THERE’S MORE OF US THAN WE KNEW!

**B**eing a Christian, even in the “Christian” West, can sometimes feel a little lonely, and doubly so if you are a 6-day creationist-type Christian. But, like Elijah, who despaired that he was all alone only to find out that God had preserved thousands of others (1 Kings 19), we aren’t alone either. According to a YouGov survey from late 2017, 9% of Brits, and 15% of Canadians hold to a “creationist” position. That’s nearly 1 in 10 folks in the United Kingdom, and just about 1 in 6 here in Canada. Did you suspect it was anywhere near that high?

It’s worth noting that this survey was conducted using a multiple choice questionnaire, and the “creationist” answer they gave didn’t accurately describe the creationist position. They characterized creationism as believing

“Humans and other living things were created by God and have always existed in their current forms.”

The idea of a “fixity” or “immutability” of the species – that they never change – was widely held by Christians in the time of Darwin, but it isn’t a biblical idea, and creationists don’t hold to it today. The Bible does speak of created “kinds” so we don’t believe a monkey could ever evolve into a man. But we do think a dog kind could change over time to become toy poodles, bulldogs, German Shepherds and mastiffs.

In fact, creationists believe this change can happen quite quickly, not in millions, but in just a few thousand year’s time. So the 9% of Brits, and 15% of Canadians who chose this answer either held to a slightly mistaken understanding of creationism, or were simply choosing the closest answer they could find.

Our true numbers may be greater still. Another 22% of Brits and 24% of Canadians picked:

“Humans and other living things evolved over time, in a process guided by God.”



While the word “evolved” makes this an answer most creationists would shy away from, if they understood it to mean only “change over time” some might have picked this as the closest corresponding answer to our beliefs – there may be some more creationists in the mix here.

And, finally, there may be creationists tucked in a third answer picked by 10% of Brits and 11% of Canadians: “I have another view of the origins of species and development of life on Earth which isn’t included in this list.” That would be a logical choice for creationists unhappy with option number one and two.

So, yes, we are a minority, but like Elijah, God has not left us alone.

## ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY STANDS STRONG FOR WHAT'S WRONG

**V**eteran actor Robert De Niro made news in June for a very short speech – just 17 words. His assignment, at the Tony Awards, was to introduce a performance by Bruce Springsteen. But before he did that, he decided to spend just a moment insulting Donald Trump. Standing in front of the Broadway theater community – many of whom are also stars in Hollywood – De Niro began: “I’m going to say one thing: ---- Trump!”

This brought out the wild cheers, and got the crowd on its feet. After shaking his fists above his head De Niro continued: “It’s no longer down with Trump, it’s ---- Trump!”

Now there’s any number of reasons to disapprove of Trump: he owns casinos and has lobbied the government to use its eminent domain to drive people off their property so he could expand those casinos; he’s been featured on the cover of *Playboy*; he’s bragged about his many affairs including with married women; he’s run the Miss American pageant; he’s on his

third marriage; his wife has posed nude; he often lies, even (maybe especially) about unimportant things; and he throws out his own petty insults.

But is that why these entertainment elites were jeering him? How many of them are on their third wives, and have had multiple affairs? How many have gambled in those same casinos? How many have appeared onscreen naked? So they aren’t protesting Trump’s moral failings.

But then what are they protesting? We can guess but we don’t know because De Niro used expletives rather than explanations. Later, in his introduction to Bruce Springsteen, he did give reasons – he spoke of the need for “truth, transparency and integrity in government.” But that came afterwards. What Broadway was cheering here was not a position, but simply his use of the F-word – they were siding with boorish vulgarity, over against intelligent, civil, discussion.

In related news, Major League Baseball, and the National Football League announced that they will join



the National Hockey League, and the National Basketball Association at this year’s New York City Pride March. That means all four of North America’s most popular sports leagues will be using their influence and reach to promote a lifestyle that is in rebellion to God, and which is harmful to its participants.

This leads to a question. As actors, and sports leagues too, seek to use their influence to oppose God and His standards, how much longer are we going to contribute to that influence by watching and discussing their movies, and cheering on their sports franchises? If they want to thumb their nose at God, should they hear our applause?

## THE PCUSA AND THE NEED FOR MORE PRAISE FROM THE “MOUTH OF BABES”



**T**his past June the largest Presbyterian denomination in the US – the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) – held their 223rd General Assembly. This is a denomination that already ordains sexually-active homosexuals so it’s might not seem all that surprising when they make another departure from orthodoxy. But one observer, Dr. Mateen Ellass, was surprised by just how comprehensive the departure has been.

On his blog he shared the wording of a written prayer, handed out during the June 20 morning worship service at the Assembly:

We praise you also for diverse faith among the peoples of the earth. You have bestowed your grace that Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Practitioners of traditional religions and others may celebrate your goodness, act upon your truth and demonstrate your righteousness.

As an average person in the pew, many of us are intimidated about evangelizing. We think we have to know everything about God before we can tell anyone anything about Him. Might we think differently if we understood just how desperate the need is, and how great the poverty?

Inside this 1.5 million member, formerly Reformed, denomination they don’t understand that serving other gods is not praiseworthy, but rebellion. This is a truth that their 20,000 ministers don’t seem to understand, but that we *all* know. All our children understand it. And if even our children know more than their ministers, then what excuse do we have for being too intimidated to speak?

We might even be mere babes compared to some of the wise and knowledgeable theologians out there, but if God has called forth praise “from the lips of children and infants” (Matt. 21:16) – and He has! – then we can do likewise. The world – including many professing Christians too – need to hear about God from you and me.

SOURCE: Dr. Mateen Ellass’s “No Solus Christus for the PCUSA!” posted to MateenEllass.wordpress.com on June 20, 2018





## ADAM FORD WANTS YOU TO BYPASS SOCIAL MEDIA

**A**dam Ford was a wildly successful Christian cartoonist (Adam4d.com) before he mostly gave that up to start a wildly successful Christian satire site (BabylonBee.com) that he has also mostly given up. So what's next for Mr. Ford? He's started a Christian news aggregator site (ChristianDailyReporter.com) with links to Christian perspectives on the most important news stories of the day.

Only time will tell whether this too will be wildly successful. But it won't be for lack of passion. As Ford explains in a "manifesto" he's included on the site:

The majority of people get their news from social networks. We rely on Facebook, Twitter, Google, Instagram, YouTube, etc. to such a degree that we allow them to decide what content we consume, what issues we consider important, what news is news, what is and is not allowed to be said, what's true and what's not. These companies shape the way our brains think by controlling what our eyes see every day.... Now they increasingly shut down content that they don't approve of. At their own discretion, by their own definitions and values.... We have given them extreme power over the flow of information. For a few companies to have the

power to control the way billions of people think is terrifying and dangerous. It is unacceptable.

The control that Facebook has, is control we've given it. Consider *Reformed Perspective* as an example. As much as 90% of our website traffic comes via Facebook – almost no one goes directly to our website itself. That becomes a problem when Facebook won't let us promote a post, which has been happening on a still rare, but increasing, rate. When it does happen, it means very few people will see the article show up in their Facebook feed, which means very few will read it on the website. In a very real way Facebook controls whether *Reformed Perspective* articles will get read.

Ford wants to bypass these social media sites altogether by having folks come directly to ChristianDailyReporter.com each day. And we, of course, would love people to visit ReformedPerspective.ca directly too. It's an old fashioned idea – typing websites into our browser's address bar – but if we want our news from a Christian perspective, then we need to go directly to the source, and not let Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others, act as a filter.

## OVERPOPULATION WAS ALWAYS A MYTH, AS JAPAN IS DISCOVERING

**F**or decades now, we've heard warnings about how the world will soon become overpopulated. And for decades Christians have had all the information we needed to know this is just hysteria. How could we know? Because the "overpopulationists" portray children as a curse and danger to the planet, while God says the exact opposite, calling them a blessing (Ps. 127:3, 113:9). Thus the overpopulationists couldn't be more wrong.

That wrongness is evident throughout the Western world, where we're not reproducing at even replacement levels, and our population continues to grow only because people are living longer. But that can't last forever; a decline is coming.

And in Japan, as a recently released government census shows, the decline is already happening. For nine straight years the country's population has dropped; this past year there were 1.3 million deaths with less than one million births. More than a quarter of the population is now 65 and older, so there's no reason to think this steady decline will stop any time soon.

SOURCE: "Japan population declines at fastest pace yet, with only Tokyo seeing significant growth" posted to JapanTimes.co.jp on July 12, 2018





# On A Wife Deciding To Leave Her Husband

by Douglas Wilson

**D**ear Janelle, I received your letter yesterday, and had already heard from your brother and sister-in-law. They confirmed for me the very difficult and challenging situation you are in with your husband, and they said that they had encouraged you to write to me with your question. I was glad to hear from you. From what you wrote, and filling in details from them, you really are in a terrible spot – and I hope this letter is a real help.

One of the things I like to do, if you don't mind, is repeat back the presenting problem when I am asked about something like this. I do this to make sure that I have understood properly and, if I have, I want the person I am counseling to know that they were heard. This is often a problem that people in horrific situations have – they don't feel like anybody could possibly be *listening*.

You know that you need to leave your husband, but you don't want to find yourself leaving God behind also. You know that your husband is behaving like a domestic tyrant, and so leaving him seems straightforward. But you have

certain questions about some passages of Scripture, because you want to leave, if you leave, *as an act of obedience*. And that's what it needs to be – obedience. If you leave your husband, you want to do so in the will of God. You don't want to settle for some level of tolerated disobedience, or some Protestant version of venial sin.

## TWO AND THREE WITNESSES

That said, your problem is that your husband is well-respected in your Christian community. He is an elder in your church. You believe that if you just “up and leave,” everybody is going to demand an accounting from *you*, and not from him. You have good reason for thinking that everybody would sympathize with him, and not with you. He is well-connected and well-liked in your church. You are not, and nobody knows that this is because of the insane restrictions he has placed on you. Now you know your Bible well enough to know that if you were to bring charges against your husband, the threshold to convict him would be two and three witnesses (Deut. 19:15, Matt. 18:16, 1 Tim. 5:19), and you don't

have that. Your brother and sister-in-law would be willing to testify, because they have seen a small portion of all this, but you believe that they would simply be dismissed. They don't live in your town, they are related to you by blood, the elders who would be hearing this testimony are your husband's close friends, and so on. In short, the deck is really stacked against you.

But then, on the other side of the coin, you are not sure how much more of your husband's heavy-handed hypocrisy you can take. Some days you feel like you are going to crater under his brow-beating, and other days you are simply exasperated by the two different faces he presents – to you on the one hand, and the world on the other. Sometimes you think you can go for two more days, tops, and other times you think you can manage it indefinitely. It all depends. He has never struck you, but there are times when you think he might. His fits of anger are unpredictable, and seem to you to be getting worse. You think that he is out of control, but if he answers the phone in the middle of one of his rages, he can turn off the anger like a switch. That indicates to you that

there must be an element of deliberate malice in it. He is requiring more arbitrary and very difficult things of you, and you think it might be because he is trying to provoke you into doing something that is manifestly ungodly so that you will clearly be the one in the wrong, and will give him something to point to if the whole thing eventually blows up.

Have I got the problem right? You know what his problem is, and it is an intolerable one, but you are not in a position to prove an accusation against him. Because you are dedicated to the authority of the Word, the fact that you can't meet the standards for public charges (that justice requires) troubles you. Does that mean that you are not allowed to leave until you can prove it?

### THE TESTIMONY OF JUST ONE

So this issue revolves around what justice requires in bringing a formal charge against someone, as distinct from what justice requires when a victim is simply getting out of range. But think about this for a minute. If you were attacked by a mugger or a rapist, you wouldn't be thinking about the trial, and whether you had two or three witnesses available. You would just be thinking about getting *away*.

Let me take an illustration from a law in the Old Testament concerning runaway slaves.

"You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you" (Deut. 23:15).

While the circumstances are obviously not identical, they are comparable – close enough to provide us with an *a fortiori* argument. If this principle applies to slaves, and it does, then how much more would it apply to a Christian wife? So here it is.

Suppose for a moment you lived in ancient Israel, in a time when slavery was practiced. A runaway slave shows up on your doorstep, and he tells you a horror story about what caused him to run away. The law here is straightforward. You may *not* return such an escaped slave to his master. Suppose a couple days later the master shows up and demands that his slave be returned to him. He says that the charges and accusations made by the slave are entirely false. The master denies them all, but even if he does this, the law nevertheless requires that the slave not be returned. This is the case even if it is just one person's word against another. The escaped slave does not need to show up on your doorstep with two or three witnesses in tow.

And this is where things get "curiouser," as we might read in Alice, and this is where I want to derive a principle that we should apply to your situation. Suppose the slave wanted to press charges against his master, and let us suppose further that all the abuses he alleges against his master were in fact against the law, even against slaves, and were very serious – felonies, in fact. The slave still does not have two or three witnesses, and so this means that he *cannot* bring a charge

### THE REASON FOR, AND THE LIMITATIONS ON, THE BIBLE'S TWO WITNESSES REQUIREMENT

Late last year we found out that sexual assault and sexual harassment were rampant in the entertainment industry (and not limited to just that industry). To expose the guilty and protect the victims, some have suggested we should always believe the accuser. But there is a problem with this approach: false accusers do exist (Ex. 20:16). And that's why the Bible requires the testimony of two or three witnesses for a conviction (Deut. 19:15).

But, if we need two or three witnesses, how can we go after crimes that have been committed behind closed doors? The editorial this month argues that it's important to acknowledge the limitations of what can be done for victims after the fact. When society understands that in a he said/she said situation there may not be much that the law can do, pressure will grow to prevent the private circumstances in which such victimization is possible. We should make it a matter of decorum and maybe company policy that the powerful do not meet with the vulnerable behind closed doors. We should foster a business etiquette in which it is seen as inappropriate, or creepy, to even extend such an invitation.

Forgoing privacy would offer some protection, and it wouldn't foster the false accusations that would come with always believing the accuser. But forgoing privacy isn't always possible. A husband and wife are supposed to be alone together. So what of abuse that happens in the privacy of the home? Yes, false accusers exist, but so do abusive spouses. If we promote the idea that multiple witnesses are needed for a conviction, we know some clever tyrannical husband will take advantage of that requirement by bullying his wife far from others' eyes.

So what sort of guidance does God give us in these circumstances? In this fictionalized letter Douglas Wilson points us to Deut. 23:15 to explain that while two witnesses are needed to prove abuse, the same isn't required to flee such abuse.

*... this issue revolves around what justice requires in bringing a formal charge against someone, as distinct from what justice requires when a victim is simply getting out of range.*



against his (former) master.

The master cannot be charged with crimes apart from independent corroboration, but it is nevertheless possible for the master to have a pay *some* kind of penalty for his behavior – that penalty being the loss of the slave.

Now let's translate. Your brother told me that they have already told you that you are welcome to come and stay with them. You have a safe place to go. Your kids are both away at college, and so you don't have to worry about leaving anyone behind. You show up on your brother's doorstep, and you say that your husband's behavior has been ungodly and intolerable. According to this principle found in Scripture, they have every right to take you in, *even though they have not heard your husband's side of it*. Let me say that again – there is a lower bar for a reception of a refugee than for charges to be filed against someone.

This is *not* because we suddenly don't care about Proverbs 18:17 ("The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.") about which we'll have more in a minute.

One of the first things that will happen – given what I know about your church's practices in these things – is that one of the elders will contact you and say that you need to return. If you feel you need to bring charges against your husband, he will say, they will schedule a meeting for you to do so, and so on.

At this point you should say that Scripture prohibits entertaining a charge against an elder if you don't have two or three witnesses (1 Tim 5:19), and in fact you don't have two or three witnesses. You are the only real witness. If you were to come back to charge him, it would simply be your word against his, and you know that they would be scripturally bound *not* to convict him, not to excommunicate him. You would *support* them in not convicting him. Because of your commitment to justice and due process, you have no intention of bringing a charge against anyone that cannot be independently verified.

You also have no intention of putting up with it any further.

Now if your departure shakes him

up, and your husband acknowledges his fault, acknowledges what he has been doing, then your position has been independently verified, and it might be worthwhile returning in pursuit of some kind of marriage counseling and reconciliation. But if he does not humble himself, and simply denies everything, and you know that he is denying what you know to be undeniable, you are in no way required to return.

But let me include something else here that really needs to be emphasized. Because I am saying that a wife in your position can simply "go," then it follows that all any woman needs to do is just *say* she is in your position (whether she is or not), and there she has her automatic "get out jail free card." What is to prevent a woman from applying this principle in a way that grotesquely wrongs an innocent husband?

This is a fallen world, which means we must take risks. This is one of them. The biblical approach is that it is always to be preferred to allow a guilty person to go free, a guilty person to "get away with it," than to ever penalize an innocent person. This is what necessarily happens whenever you insist upon two and three witnesses. What happens when just one person sees a person do some awful thing? You have to let it go; it is not actionable. You cannot convict anyone for anything on the basis of just one person's say-so. It is the same kind of principle here. It is far better to let one lying wife go free without penalty than to keep an

innocent wife in the penalty of living in a terrible situation. In the worst-case scenario, an innocent man loses a wife, but keep in mind it was a lying wife.

## WHEN ONE PERSONS KNOWS

But let's take that one-person-as-witness situation one step further. I am going to make up a very unlikely scenario simply in order to highlight the principle. Suppose I get called out in the middle of the night – as sometimes happens to pastors – in order to fetch somebody out of a place he ought not to be. I do so, and am escorting a straying sheep out of some nightclub and back to the parking lot. It is 2 am, and the nightclub is attached to a hotel. As I am helping him down the hallway, a room door opens and I see *another* one of my parishioners standing there behind a woman who is very much not his wife. He reaches over and slams the door. I know that I did not mistake him for somebody else. I go to confront him the next day, and he denies everything. In the interim he has lined up some other people to lie on his behalf. He was someplace else. His word against mine, and yet I *know* he is an adulterer. Would I have a problem serving him communion the next Sunday? No, I would not. He should have a problem with it, but I do not. I have no authority as a pastor to act publicly on the basis of individual knowledge that I cannot independently verify.

But there is more to the story. While I cannot excommunicate anyone on the basis of one witness, even if that witness is me, there are any number of other things I *can* do. I have the authority to arrange my personal relationships on the basis of personal knowledge. I can refuse to go fishing with him. I can leave his employment. I can decline to go into a business deal with him. I can configure my *own* decisions on the basis of what I know. Someone might guess that there is something disrupting my fellowship with this man, but not because I am making a public charge. The person who guesses is drawing an inference from personal decisions.

*...it is always to be preferred to allow a guilty person to go free, a guilty person to "get away with it," than to ever penalize an innocent person.*

## APPLICATION AND MISAPPLICATION

This is what your elders will do if you leave. They will say that even if you are not making a formal charge of “abusive tyrant” against him, people will infer that you are alleging something very serious against him, and this is why they say you must come back and make your allegations in some public way. And they will say that if you can’t *prove* your allegations, such that he is excommunicated, then you have a responsibility to remain with him. But this doesn’t follow.

It is possible that they will move to discipline *you* for leaving him without adequate biblical grounds. This is why I think they would be unjustified in doing so.

“To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.” – 1 Cor. 7:10-11

If you could *prove* that your husband were unfaithful (Matt. 19:9), or that he was utterly unwilling to have you as a Christian wife (1 Cor. 7:15), then the scriptural permission to divorce carries with it the permission to remarry. The innocent party is *not bound* in such circumstances. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But if you cannot prove either infidelity or a rejection tantamount to divorce, then your circumstances vary accordingly. If he were proven to be guilty of either of these sins, and either unrepented sin would result in him being excommunicated, and declared not a believer, then that would leave you free. But if you cannot prove this against him, then the full extent of the action you can take is that of simply leaving. But, with that said, you can leave with your head held high.

Your only options at such a point are to remain unmarried or to be reconciled to your husband. It is interesting here that Paul advises a woman not to leave if she can help it – “the wife should not separate from her husband.” That is his apostolic counsel, but it is clear from the context

that it is merely advice. If she sees that his generally good advice is not pertinent to her situation, she is left free to leave without being hassled about it by the apostle. So if *he* would leave you alone in this decision, then so should the elders of your church.

It is also interesting that Paul does not here get into the grounds for the separation. If there are not grounds for a divorce that allows for a subsequent remarriage, the church doesn’t adjudicate it. If the parties are willing, the church must provide pastoral counsel, but if there is simply a separation over intractable differences, Paul just allows for the separation, even though it may be one that has gone against his counsel – he did in fact urge the wife not to separate from her husband. Note also that it is the wife he is exhorting in this passage, meaning that in the larger scheme of things, he is assuming that wives could have plausible reasons for thinking they had to go. Husbands can be brutal, as the apostle knew.

At the same time, I have known situations where the wife thought her husband was her central problem in her walk with God, but then after she left, her walk with God *really* fell apart. It turns out in that the husband wasn’t the big problem after all. You should also know that there is a cottage industry of busybody counselors, bitter women, who will want to swoop in order to enlist your grievances into *their* causes, whatever they are. Beware of them. Steer clear of them. One of your biggest challenges will be that of staying free from resentment and bitterness, and not only is their counsel usually bad, their resentments are contagious. That is the last thing you need.

## RUNNING IT BY OBJECTIVE EYES

One last thing. The Westminster Confession, in its teaching on divorce, says something profound and wise that I believe applies to your situation. They say that the corruption of man is such that we are liable to “study arguments” that would justify ungodly divorce, and they then go on to repeat the two standard justifications for a divorce – those being adultery and willful desertion. The word used in Corinthians for an unbelieving

husband being willing to remain with his wife, or an unbelieving wife being willing to remain with her husband is *suneu-dokeo* – “pleased to be together with.” The semantic range of that word does *not* include your reports of what your husband does – constant anger, outbursts of wrath, sexually degrading behavior, ongoing manipulation and gaslighting, treating you like a slave, total control of all things physical and financial, and so on. You have no biblical obligation to put up with things like that.

In a situation like yours, they say “the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills, and discretion, in their own case” (Westminster Confession of Faith 24.6). I believe you are in a position to leave – you have run it by others who are outside the circumstance, and who have an objective set of eyes. You have done this with both your brother and with me. Having done so, you should make a plan, and then pack your bags and go. The plan should include a list of your husband’s ongoing offenses against you, a list that should be shared with your counselor/s, and with the elders of your church when they contact you. Because you can’t prove them, you should share them with no one else, and above all you should not publish them online in any way.

And so, given what you have described, my counsel would be for you to go. If you are concerned for your husband’s salvation – as you should be – you are far more likely to be used as an instrument to bring him to repentance as you pursue obedience to God this way. For the rest, leave the consequences to God. “For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband” (1 Cor. 7:16).

We will be praying for you, and God bless.

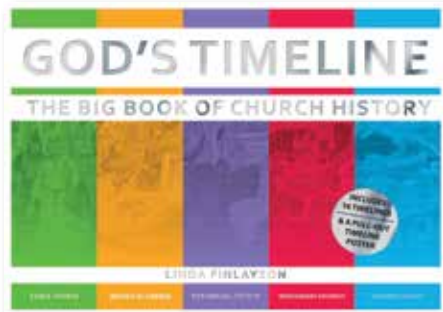
Cordially in Christ,

Douglas Wilson 

*This article is a fictionalized account, which first appeared on Pastor Wilson’s blog [dougwils.com](http://dougwils.com) and is reprinted here with permission.*

### GOD'S TIMELINE: THE BIG BOOK OF CHURCH HISTORY

BY LINDA FINLAYSON  
80 PAGES / 2018



This book will be a well-used treasure for Christian families and classrooms. It combines text, color, symbols, visuals, infographic timelines and photographs to

illustrate how Christ has been building His Church since AD 33.

Finlayson divides the time from AD 33 to 2010 into five periods: Early (33-500), Medieval (497-1500), Reforming (1500-1685), Missionary (1700-1900), and Modern (1900-2010). These are further divided into sub-periods on the timelines. This book is intended for ages 9-15, but it is helpful for any learner including adults.

Within each chapter there are definitions of special terms: heresy, council, creed, canon, Islam, crusade, the five "solas," ecumenical, etc. The history ranges over all the major denominations and leading personalities of each of the smaller timelines.

Some minor criticisms: The maps could be a little larger, and there is little or no mention of the Black Church, Martin Luther King Jr., etc – the ending of the slave trade is there but not their churches or history. The Missionary and Modern chapters need to be expanded to reflect the building of the church of Christ in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Overall, the book covers all the major events, issues, and personages that are always recounted. This is helpful for the intended audience. And the bibliography gives great resources for further study.

— DENNIS A. BRATCHER



### JUST THINKING

BY JASON BOUWMAN  
2017 / 188 PAGES



If you're a regular reader of *Reformed Perspective* you may recall some of the "Just Thinking" cartoons that have appeared in our pages over the last few years. Author Jason Bouwman, a graphic designer by trade, and a theologian by inclination, has collected 95 of these "theological doodles" and paired each with an

appropriate quote, or a few words of explanation, and made the most remarkable book out of them all. Every two-page spread is a complete thought – doodle on one side, reflection on the other, and together they grab the readers' attention and then hold it. This is a book that can't be read through quickly – each spread is worth contemplation.

To put it another way, this is theology with an artistic flair, and a devotional of sorts. It is that rare book that would make the perfect high school grad gift, as well as a fantastic birthday present for a seminary professor; we've given copies to our teenage nephews as well as to our 80-year-old aunt.

Bouwman has crafted something remarkable here, somehow managing to package "insightful and challenging" with "accessible and creative." I can't recommend it enough! You can order a copy at [JustThinkingBook.com](http://JustThinkingBook.com)

— JON DYKSTRA







## VISUAL THEOLOGY: SEEING AND UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

BY TIM CHALLIES AND JOSH BYERS  
2016 / 155 PAGES

I've read and reviewed several systematic theologies. These books were geared towards pastors, theologians, or theological students. They follow the same basic structure and, because they're Reformed, they tend to say the same things in mostly the

same way. *Visual Theology* has "theology" in the title, and it generally steers in the Reformed direction, but that's where the similarities end.

*Visual Theology* is decidedly *not* directed at the ivory tower – though scholars will certainly reap spiritual benefits if they read it. Instead, it's for regular people in the pew. It also recognizes that some of those regular people are more visual in their learning style. So, Tim Challies delivers clear prose and Josh Byers illumines with effective infographics. All up, it's not only a beautiful book, but also pedagogically powerful.

Conventional systematic theologies cover such topics as God, creation, salvation, and the last things. *Visual Theology* is different; it has four parts:

1. grow close to Christ
2. understand the work of Christ
3. become like Christ
4. live for Christ.

It's Christ-centered and relationally oriented. It's theology that, as Challies says, "is about growing in godliness." You can only grow in godliness in a healthy relationship with Christ. *Visual Theology* shows why and how. I found valuable insights new to me (especially in the third section on hating and fighting sin), but also many familiar truths expressed or illustrated freshly.

As I mentioned, generally this book leans Reformed. For example, the use of creeds is affirmed; the Westminster Shorter Catechism's definition of sin is quoted; the real spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is affirmed; and justification is properly defined as a declaration of righteousness. Commendably, *Visual Theology* teaches a monergistic view of salvation

which includes unconditional election.

By the authors' own admission, the book "is not a thorough introduction to Christian doctrine." Some readers will detect gaps. Allowing for the intent of the authors, but also for full disclosure to readers of this review, let me mention two.

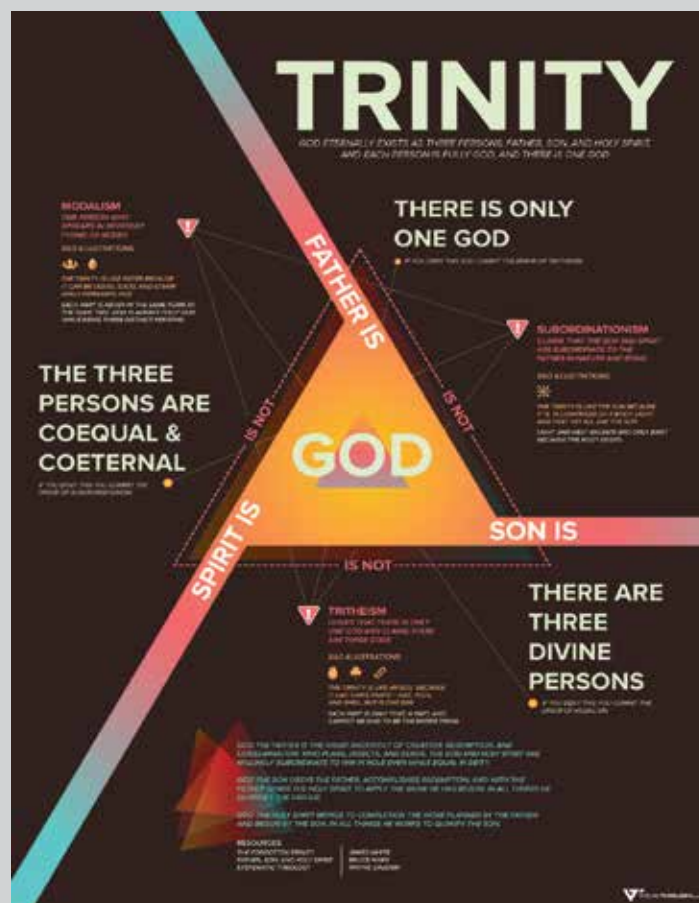
1. *Visual Theology* is almost completely *positive* in its presentation of biblical teachings. That means there's not much, if anything, in the way of exposure or addressing of errors.
2. Next, its relational framework is a plus, but it is surprising that the biblical framework for a healthy relationship between God and humanity is missing. There's no explicit mention of the covenant of grace.


I have one noteworthy concern: the authors are Baptists and this becomes evident in the description of baptism: "The water of baptism represents the washing away of sin, while going into the water and coming back out represents death and new life." The first part of that sentence is true, and the second part can be true, but more needs to be said. The authors assume immersion of the believer as the norm for baptism. As one would expect from Baptists, the sprinkling of babies is not even in the picture, nor is the relationship between baptism

and the covenant of grace. However, this is one short paragraph in an otherwise great book and it is far from being a polemic for the Baptist position.

This book could be useful as edifying reading for a Sunday afternoon. Perhaps it could also be used as a textbook for an adult education class. For those who might use it in an educational setting, there's also a website with the infographics available as PowerPoint slides and more: [visualtheology.church](http://visualtheology.church). *Visual Theology* is innovative in its approach, almost entirely reliable in its content, and attractive in its presentation. You'll find it both enjoyable and edifying!

– Wes Bredenhof





by Margaret Helder

# DON'T PUSH DAD INTO THE POND

## (And don't tell Mom about the bugs!)

An aquarium-based science experiment for the whole family

Summer is here and there are any number of projects in which the whole family can participate. Of course, some are more fun than others – painting the fence, for example, will not rank high on anyone's list. This is especially so if the junior members of the establishment spill the paint, or elect to decorate the family car with it.

However, almost everyone enjoys splashing about in water, so why not consider an expedition to a pond in your area to start off your own family aquarium? Be warned: some individuals may get a little wet while chasing aquatic insects with a bucket or net. And dad may have to venture the farthest out to catch some particularly elusive creature. But children, just remember that if you want the project to be a happy experience, don't push your Daddy into the pond! If anyone gets pneumonia, the project will definitely not be judged a success!

### STEP 1 – SET UP THE AQUARIUM

The first thing to do is acquire an aquarium. It doesn't need to be too big, and you can probably find something used on Kijiji or Craigslist for \$50.

The aquarium should be placed in a window where it will receive moderate light, or it should be equipped with a fluorescent light. Place about an inch of gravel in the bottom – soil works too, but it is messier.

Next some structure should be provided in the form of a few larger stones, a rock, sea shells, or pieces of waterlogged wood. Don't overdo the structure. Only a small proportion of the volume and at most a quarter of the bottom area should be occupied by solid objects. These are important because they provide hiding places for various animals and surfaces on which to grow. Living aquatic plants also provide structure.

Several inches of water may then be added. City water contains chlorine, which isn't good for our aquatic life so if you are using it, be sure to leave it out to sit for several days to allow the chlorine to escape. Once living creatures are in the aquarium, then any new city tap water you add (to make up for whatever evaporates) must be boiled and thoroughly cooled first, in order to remove the chlorine.

### STEP 2 – JUST ADD LIFE!

The aquarium is now ready for the addition of pond water with its contained organisms. The objective is to set up a self-perpetuating ecosystem (physical environment with its contained living creatures).

Ideally all you will need to add once the system is established is water and light. Plants use the light to combine water, dissolved carbon dioxide, and mineral nutrients into food for the rest of the organisms in the aquarium. Moreover, plants in the light release oxygen into the water. This is essential if the aquatic animals are to stay healthy.

Gathering your aquatic animals is a particularly fun part.

Before setting out for the pond, make sure that mom and dad and all the offspring are equipped with rubber boots and buckets or large jars all with tops. Scoop nets are optional. The best procedure is to fill the bucket with pond water and some submerged pond weeds. You will acquire many pond creatures simply by collecting water and weeds. A few small pieces of decaying vegetation are good to collect too. These will have



other organisms growing on them and, besides the dead material will provide for scavengers.

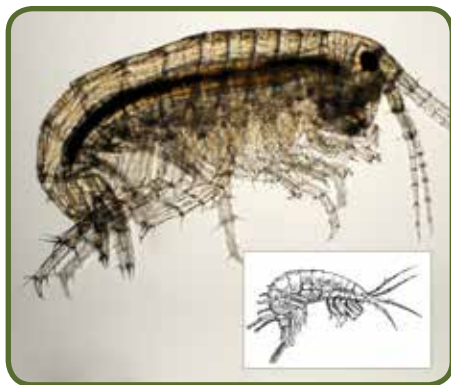
However, don't collect very much of this "nonvigorous" (i.e. decaying) plant material because too much decay will result in all the oxygen being used up. And without oxygen many animals will die and soon the whole aquarium will smell "swampy," releasing hydrogen sulfide gas and methane into the atmosphere. At this point some mothers might banish the whole system right out of the house!

### STEP 3 – LET'S FIND OUT WHAT WE HAVE

Once the aquarium is filled with water and pond weeds, then you and your children can peer into the water to discover what you have collected. Some creatures last only a few days, others last almost indefinitely.

Among the animals in your fresh water ecosystem, some will be easy to see, others hard to see because they are small or because they hide. Some will be so small they'll only be visible with a microscope. While all have fascinating life stories we will discuss only easy-to-see animals. Here are your possible cast of characters.

#### *Gammarus*



In our family the favorite pond inhabitants are the amphipods or scuds known by the Latin name *Gammarus*. These delightful creatures do well in an aquarium. They swim through the water in a conspicuous way so that it is easy to show doubters that indeed there are animals present.

*Gammarus* look much like marine shrimp. Their bodies are protected by a

hard exterior skeleton or surface made of chitin. That is a hard, not easily decomposed material like our hair and fingernails. The body is divided into numerous sections and each segment bears a pair of legs. There are five different kinds of legs. Some have gills attached. The legs are used for swimming, for grasping food, and for obtaining adequate oxygen.

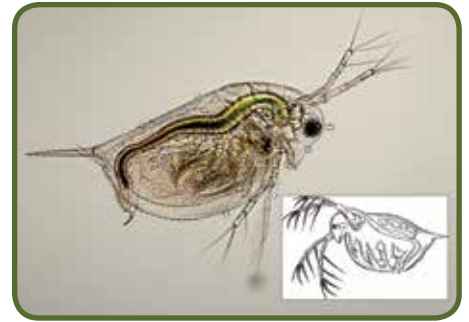
These animals swoop through shallow water in semicircular arcs. They feed on bacteria, algae, and decaying plant and animal material. Mostly they confine their activities to within 20 cm of the bottom sediments. When collected in the summer *Gammarus* are at most one-and-one-half centimeters long. They continue to grow, however, as long as they live. By March, *Gammarus* which were collected the previous summer are three cm long (approximately twice as long as their maximum size in nature). Few will survive beyond April. Outside, in the Canadian climate, they would have died with the frosts of the fall.

I add small pieces of boiled and cooled lettuce to the aquarium when the food supply for *Gammarus* seems low. If these "shrimp" are observed swimming round and round the aquarium, it is a safe bet that they are short of food. They seem to have a chemical sense for detecting food. When lettuce is placed into the water, they circle closer and closer. One individual may find the lettuce within seconds, eight or more within three minutes.

As far as reproduction is concerned, in nature this proceeds throughout the summer. Both sexes are found in the population. The females carry their eggs and developing young in a brood pouch. The young resemble adults in miniature. One or two young have appeared in our aquarium during the winter months.

#### *Water fleas*

Most likely your aquarium will harbor water fleas as tiny as they are numerous. The white specks which move in jerky fashion through the water, are most probably *Daphnia*. You might even catch a species bigger than the tiny ones which presently populate our aquarium. The largest species of all can be found in very productive waters like the Delta Marsh of



Manitoba. It boasts individuals as large as the fingernail on a lady's fifth finger. All water fleas are crustaceans, as are *Gammarus*. They have an exterior skeleton of chitin and numerous jointed legs. Water fleas are an important source of food for aquatic insects, larger crustaceans, and various fish.

Each *Daphnia* has a small head from which extend a pair of branched antennae. By moving these projections like oars, the animal is able to make awkward progress through the water. Five pairs of legs are attached to the body, but they do not show, nor are they used for swimming. Like the rest of the body except for the head, they are enclosed in a convex shell which is hinged along the back and opens along the front. Constantly moving within their confined space, the legs create a current of water which brings in oxygen to bathe the body surface and also a stream of food particles. The numerous hairs on the legs filter out the food particles and push them forward to the mouth.

During most of the growing season only females can be found in the *Daphnia* population. Like dandelions which reproduce without benefit of sex, so water fleas also reproduce by parthenogenesis. Females produce eggs which do not need to be fertilized. These develop directly into more females. A pond can fill up with females in a very short time! The number of eggs per clutch varies from two to forty, depending on the species. The eggs are deposited within the female's body into a brood chamber or cavity under the protective shell on the animal's back. The eggs develop there and hatch to look like miniature adults. They remain within the pouch under the shell until the female molts, shedding her external skeleton and



shell. Then the young are released.

As conditions in the pond become unfavorable through drought, cold weather, or decline in food supply, fewer parthenogenetic eggs are produced. Now some eggs, by a mechanism which is poorly understood, develop into males! Other eggs at this stage require fertilization in order to develop. The brood pouch around eggs which have been fertilized, now thickens into a saddle-shaped structure called an ephippium. These are released to sit through long periods of drought or freezing. Ephippia can be transported from pond to pond in the intestines of aquatic birds or simply by clinging to their wet feet. When favorable conditions return, ephippia hatch exclusively into parthenogenetic females.

### Plants

Perhaps we should turn our attention to some suitable pond plants as well. The duckweeds are the easiest to identify. Exceedingly widespread, lesser duckweed (*Lemna minor*) is common in quiet ponds. Often these tiny leaves will form a mat over an entire pond. In these circumstances hardly any plant life grows below the water surface because the duckweed has intercepted almost all the light. In an aquarium this species does not grow well unless it has very bright light available. Dying leaves are quickly eaten by snails and *Gammarus*. Another species, ivy duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*), is much more suitable for aquaria. The leaves grow in T-shaped configurations which remain tangled in large clumps below the water surface. It does very well with moderate light and it is an important oxygenating agent in the water.

Coontail and milfoil are similar plants often found floating free in tangles beneath the surface in ponds. Coontail (*Ceratophyllum*) is known for its densely bushy stem tips. The leaves, which occur in whorls, have tiny toothlike projections. This plant does only moderately well in aquaria. Perhaps the best that can be said is that the plants may take all winter to die and be eaten by scavengers. Milfoil (*Myriophyllum*) has whorled, finely divided leaves which look like fern fronds. These plants are good aerators of pond water and should do well in an aquarium.

Waterweed or *Elodea* is so suitable for aquarium culture that you can buy it in pet stores. More enterprising individuals may simply fish some out of a pond. The stems are bushy with whorls of three oval leaves arranged along the stem. These plants start out rooted but can become free floating. *Elodea* has been popular in biology laboratories for generations. Students can perform experiments on oxygen production on whole submerged plants. Individual leaves, which have only two layers of cells, are good for examination under the microscope.

A handy reference booklet, available for generations, is *Pond Life* (a Golden Guide) which was last updated in 2001.

### USOS – UNIDENTIFIED SWIMMING OBJECTS

Having acquired an aquarium, pond water, and pond plants, your family may at this moment be scanning several unidentified swimming objects. Some of these may well prove to be aquatic insects.

Among the varied inhabitants of ponds, the insects provide the greatest interest for many people. All insects have an exterior skeleton much like that of crustaceans, but, whereas crustaceans have numerous legs, insects have only six.

Many insects make fresh water their home during part or all of their lives. Most, including those which spend all stages of their development in the water, have one or two pairs of wings as adults. The young of some insects have the same general build as their parents. They resemble miniature adults and differ from them only in the partial development of their wings and the lack of sexual organs. Mayflies and dragonflies produce such young called nymphs. These develop in fresh water, but the adults spend their lives in the air. Among the true bugs, of the fresh water representatives, water boatmen are the easiest to find. They live in water throughout their lives.

Many other insects have young quite unlike the adults. These young often seem quite wormlike. Such larvae must enter a resting stage, the pupa, before an adult emerges. During the pupal stage, an individual's tissues are broken down and reassembled into those of an adult. Among

such insects, caddisflies spend immature stages in the water and adult stages on land. So do certain flies including crane flies and phantom gnats. Mosquitos act the same way. Aquatic representatives among the beetles, however, spend their complete lives in or on the water. These include whirligig beetles and predaceous diving beetles often called water tigers.

### Mayflies

Nymphs are typically found clinging to stems or stones in the water. Their



abdomens curve upward towards the rear and the tip is equipped with three feathery tails. The abdomen sweeps continuously back and forth, perhaps to create a current in the water. In side view the numerous paired flaps down each side of the body cannot be seen. Viewed from above, however, these structures, called gills, are visible. Although the flaps are called gills, they seem not to be involved in gas exchange.

Nymphs feed on small plants, on animals, and on organic debris. They live a few months to three years in the water, depending upon the species. This fall at least one adult successfully emerged into our living room after several weeks sojourn in an aquarium. Adults have four nearly transparent wings which they hold vertically when at rest. Adults are unable to eat, and they die shortly after mating. The females lay their eggs in water.

### Dragonflies

Nymphs are solid looking, flattened creatures up to 5 cm long. They do not swim much, preferring rather to wait until some suitable prey happens to pass. Then they suddenly extend a huge hinged "mask" or folding lower lip to seize the unsuspecting victim. They feed on insect larvae, worms, small crustaceans, and



even small fish. They are very fierce, and I, for one, would not offer a finger to any of them. I maintained two nymphs for several months by feeding them small pieces of hamburger. They would seize the meat only as it was sinking. Often, they would fail to notice the food. In order to keep the aquarium from becoming foul due to meat decay, I usually retrieved the missing pieces (with tongs) and dropped them in a second time near the nymph.

Some dragonfly species complete their development from egg to adult in three months, while others take as long as five years. During this time, they molt frequently. At about the fifth molt, wings begin to form. Adult dragonflies have slender silhouettes and they hold their transparent wings horizontally at right angles to the body. With their legs or jaws, adults grasp insect prey such as mosquitos, and they eat them while in flight. They live only a few months, but during that stage adults mate while in flight. The female often drops her eggs from the air into the water.

### *Water boatmen*

These adult bugs are one of the easiest insects to spot in ponds, but they do not do well in an aquarium. This is probably because they are strong fliers and can leave any body of water which they do not like. Adults appear silvery in the water since air taken at the surface surrounds them like a silvery envelope. Strong flattened hind legs enable these bugs to swim strongly. They feed on algae and decaying matter sucked out of the bottom mud. Adults lay their eggs on aquatic plants. In our aquarium, boatmen have reacted very negatively to the glassy confines of their new home. They spend their time frantically trying to swim through the glass walls. None lasted more than a day.

### *Caddisflies*



The larvae of these insects are generally easy to identify. Only the head and front legs can be seen peeping out of tube-like cases made of green leaves, sand, twigs, or bark. Each species fashions a different characteristic house for itself. The adult emerges into the air and looks much like a moth.

### *Crane flies*

Last fall our children spotted a revolting, pudgy-looking worm just under the water surface of our aquarium. It was the larva of a crane fly lurking among the aquatic weeds. It always positioned itself so that its rear tip projected up into the air. This creature had no legs at all. Our tentative identification proved correct when after several weeks a crane fly, like a large mosquito with long legs, appeared in our living

ity to maintain such a stationary position in the water. Antennae attached to the head allow these larvae to prey on mosquito larvae and other small animals. The adults, which develop from a pupal stage, look much like mosquitos, but they do not feed and hence do not bite.

### *Mosquitos*

Probably no aquarium is complete without several wrigglers (mosquito larvae). These bend double and extend to their full 1 cm length again as they wriggle through the water. They too lack legs. Frequently they return to hang almost vertically from



the surface. A tube extending from near the rear tip is extended up into the air to get oxygen. The larvae feed on microscopic organisms or organic debris. Within a few days, after passing through a pupal stage,

*If your mother does not like mosquitos emerging into her house, do not call them to her attention.*

room. Apparently, we had missed the pupa stage. Adults of some species feed on nectar, others do not eat at all. None bites.

### *Phantom gnats*

If you peer intensely into your aquarium, you may see one or two phantom larvae. Except for prominent eyes and a threadlike intestine running the length of the body, the rest of this creature is almost transparent. The rear is capped with a tuft of obvious projecting hairs. There are no legs. These larvae, 1-2 cm long, hover horizontally well down in the water. This animal is unusual among insects in its abil-

the adults emerge. The females must obtain a blood meal in order to be able to lay eggs. Males feed on nectar and ripe fruit. If your mother does not like mosquitos emerging into her house, do not call them to her attention. Alternatively, you could place a screen over the aquarium.

### *Whirligig beetles*

Often the most conspicuous insects in a pond are swarms of small oval shiny black beetles darting frenetically back and forth on the surface of the water. Their eyes are divided into upper and lower parts. They are believed to be able to see both above

and below the water surface at the same time. They eat anything they can find. Their front legs are long and slender, the others are shortened and flattened to serve as paddles. They can dive down into the water very suddenly if alarmed. Everyone chases these beetles, but they are difficult to catch. Anyway, they do not do well in aquaria.

### *Dytiscus*

Among the hungriest and meanest of aquatic insects are the larvae and adult stages of the predaceous (from predator) diving beetles. The streamlined larvae, up to 3 cm long, with upturned abdomen and fierce jaws open, stand awaiting the arrival of prey. Konrad Lorenz, in his classic book *King Solomon's Ring*, devotes several pages to the nasty personalities of *Dytiscus* larvae. These larvae will attack other insects, tadpoles, minnows, or anything that smells of animal in any way. They will bite a finger or even attack other larvae of their own kind. Through hollow jaws they inject a digestive juice which dissolves the insides of most of their victims. For people, the bite is

simply extremely painful. We had several such larvae in our aquarium, but they died within several days, probably because of lack of suitable food. The shiny oval adult beetles also manage in the air and they may grow to be as large as 3-4 cm long. The beetles enjoy much the same menu as the larvae, but the former are also strong fliers when they so desire.


### *Other easy-to-culture animals*

Both leaches and snails are easy to identify and easy to keep in an aquarium. A leach has done well all winter in our aquarium. It occasionally appears undulating through the water. It is growing, so it must be doing well eating bacteria. Certainly, it is not obtaining any blood meals. Our giant pond snails also do extremely well. With a thin, narrowly spiraled shell, these animals grow to be about 5 cm long. Often you can see the mouth opening and closing as one oozes forward along the glass. Inside the mouth is a rasping tongue which scrapes algae and bacteria off all surfaces over which it moves. Occasionally, jelly-like masses of snail eggs appear

on underwater surfaces. These soon hatch into numerous tiny snails which immediately begin eating their way around the aquarium.

### KEEP IT GOING

Now the whole family is organized for a project which can last all year. Remember not to load too many relatively large animals into an aquarium. The larger the total volume of animal life, the more likely it is that you will have to bubble in air and supplement the food supply. One minnow, for example, could eat everything living and require oxygen besides. This is not your objective. Stock with more, but smaller animals! Tadpoles, too, will require oxygen and will eat everything in sight.

Make it a practice to observe life in your aquatic ecosystem every day. It makes a wonderful topic for conversation at the supper table. You will have expanded your interests and your pleasure in God's creation. 



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# THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

by Jay Younts

**H**ere are three questions you should ask yourself about your communication with those you love. The way you answer these questions provides insight into the areas where your conversations must grow in depth and in maturity.

## **1) Do your spouse and your children have confidence that they will be able to say all that is on their heart without fear of your response?**

Is your family accustomed to being cut off or being corrected before they can finish speaking? Do you interrupt because you think you know what is coming? If this is your pattern you are building relational barriers that are difficult to overcome.

Those closest to you need to be able to express what is on their hearts so that you can know how to lovingly and wisely engage them to bring truth and healing to your lives.

“He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.” – Proverbs 18:13

“This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to

anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” – James 1:19-20

## **2) Are you an advocate or an accuser in your daily communication? Do your words create safety or anxiety for your spouse and children?**

If you love the way Christ has loved you, you will want to be a refuge and a place of safety for your family. Your goal is to point those you love to Christ, not to condemn them by reminding them how wrong they are.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” – Ephesians 4:31

“He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.

“The wise in heart will be called understanding, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.


“Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the discipline of fools is folly.

“The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

“Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” – Proverbs 16:20-24

## **3) Are you able to pray with your spouse about areas in your walk with God where you need to grow?**

It is relatively easy to pray to ask God to help your marriage partner. Don't be tripped up by your own pride — invite your husband or wife to pray for you in the areas where you need help.

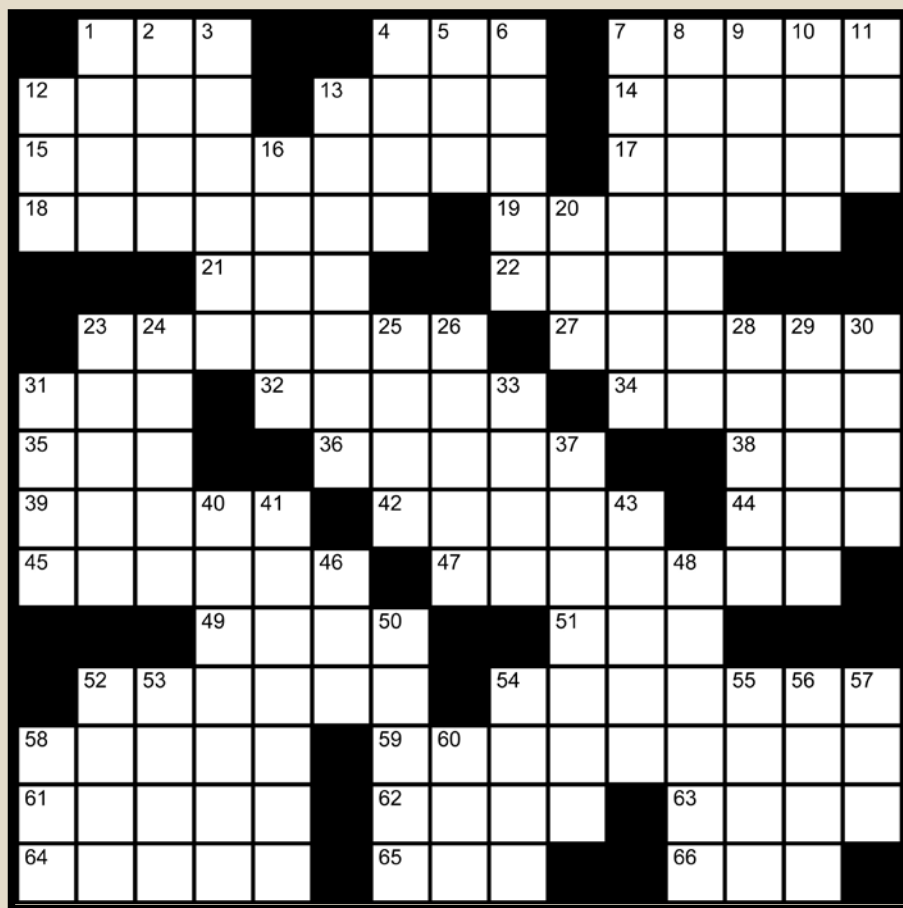
“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” – Ephesians 4:31-32 

*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.*



# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



## SERIES 4-1

## PUZZLE CLUES

### ACROSS

1. Kissing a skinned knee, for example
4. The beloved of a lass
7. Traffic metaphor for repentance
12. the den or sleeping place of a wild animal
13. "who \_\_\_\_\_ good and love... evil" (Micah 3)
14. Excessive enthusiasm
15. Funeral rites, archaically speaking
17. It's a good year, say, when you see this.
18. Curling term related to releasing a stone
19. Martial art learned by a *Kid*
21. "pant for \_\_\_ like jackals" (Jeremiah 14)
22. Pull your punches
23. Treatment for seasonal affective disorder
27. Breastplates or protections (variant spelling)

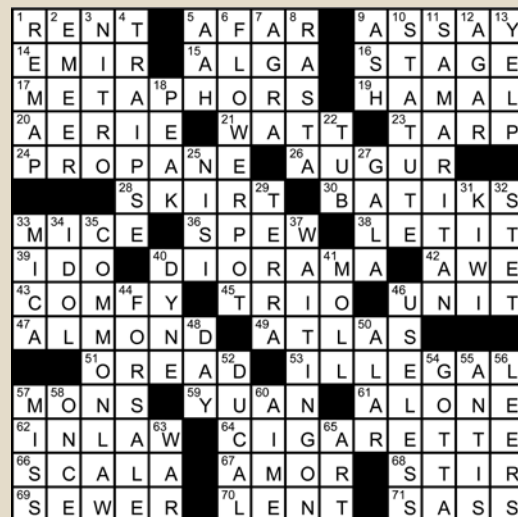
31. Response to "Do moi parlez good francais?"
32. The day of the Lord will come like this.
34. "have \_\_\_\_\_ the fruit of lies." (Hosea 10)
35. Its last day is the anniversary of the Ref.
36. La \_\_\_\_\_: Opera House in Milan, Italy
38. Significant historical period
39. It might get you out of trouble.
42. "was about to \_\_\_\_\_ the tent" (Hebrews 8)
44. Headstone abbreviation
45. Montana capital;
47. Primitive toilet emptying into a pit
49. "Thomas (called the \_\_\_\_\_)" (John 11, 21)
51. You'll get a charge out of this.
52. Festival to mark Hindu new year.

54. Capture someone's interest (variant form)
58. "And about ten days \_\_\_\_\_" (1 Samuel 25)
59. Alternate spelling for drug discussed in *RP*
61. Horse for knight or warrior
62. Alliance (e.g. \_\_\_\_\_ Quebecois)
63. Chinese dynasty famous for its vases
64. Condemns strongly (with faint praise?)
65. Response to "Is my English acceptable?"
66. Compass point(ing to hydrocarbon suffix?)

### DOWN

1. Not allowed (archaic form)
2. To shop efficiently one needs a shopping \_\_\_\_\_
3. Resident of Crete
4. "where the body... had \_\_\_\_\_" (John 20)
5. "I \_\_\_\_\_ no delicacies" (Daniel 10)
6. Classroom furniture
7. Something you take if you

## LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



## SERIES 3-12

- are offended
8. Winged sandals in Greek mythology
9. Single thing
10. (Catchy) hoarfrost that forms in ice fog
11. What Elijah said Baal was taking (1 Kings 18)
12. toilet or bathroom - British, informal
13. Last ones are people's farewells.
16. Bedding masterpiece made of many pieces
20. 14 Across is going \_\_\_\_\_ over something.
23. Plinth making a foundation for a wall
24. "hold fast... \_\_\_\_\_ I come." (Revelation 2)
25. Philistines made golden ones. (1 Samuel 6)
26. "one \_\_\_\_\_ of great value" (Matthew 13)
28. From stem to \_\_\_\_\_ (= thoroughly)
29. Spooky (sounds like an eagle's nest?)
30. Decisions like this are risky.
31. Second father of mankind (Genesis 9, 10)
33. What Saul was chasing? (1 Samuel 24, 26)
37. Referring to the ultraviolet (UV) rays from sunlight and UV lamps. (freebie: actinic)
40. "sleeping \_\_\_\_\_ two soldiers" (Acts 12)
41. Towards the interior
43. "we plighted our \_\_\_\_\_" (Heinrich Heine)
46. Sicken; feel ill (from French garlic?)
48. Bury; reverse an exhumation
50. Acronym meaning "Put it somewhere else!"
52. Just the facts!
53. Single piece of 52 Down
54. Greek name for Cupid
55. "season of the spring \_\_\_\_\_" (Zechariah 10)
56. \_\_\_\_\_ Boleyn - ill-fated wife of Henry VIII
57. Feeling after a flight over several time zones
58. Hallucinogenic drug
60. Drink found in the pub



# TAKING ON THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA'S “RELIGIOUS GHOSTS”



Back in 2004 a couple of Christian journalists were frustrated at how, in the words of William Schneider, “The press...doesn’t get religion.” So Terry Mattingly and Douglas LeBlanc started *Get Religion* (GetReligion.org), a daily news blog that would explore how the mainstream media was covering (and most often missing) the religious dimension behind the stories we were all reading. They called this missing element the “religious ghost” – it’s there in so many stories, but unseen by the media covering them.

So, for example, a July 13 story on *The Telegraph*’s website reported on how:

“a school in Leeds is attempting to tackle forced marriages by giving their pupils spoons to hide in their underwear to trigger airport metal detectors.”

According to a spokesperson for the academy:

“80% of UK forced marriages happened abroad during the summer holidays, making it a peak time for parents to take their daughters abroad to be married.”

The hope was, that if a girl was being taken against her will to be married abroad then, after this spoon set off the metal detector, it could create an opportunity for the girl “to raise the alarm with security staff privately.”

Now a reporter is supposed to get to the 5Ws of a story, but here we see a couple of glaring omissions. *Who* are these parents forcing their daughters to marry abroad? And *why* are they doing it? This is described as “‘honor’-based abuse and forced marriage” and we’re told that these girls are “often conditioned from a very young age to consider arranged marriage to be normal.” But *who* is doing the conditioning, and whose idea of “honor” is this? Might there be an

identifiable cultural or religious group linked to this, or has Britain always had this problem?

There is a religious dimension to the story that’s left unexplored. But why? Can’t the reporter see it? Or is she deliberately looking away? Whatever the case, there is a huge “religious hole.”

There probably isn’t anyone left who thinks the media is objective and unbiased. But do our children understand that this bias comes out, not just in what the press says and writes, but also in what they leave unsaid, and unwritten? When the media has no interest in the religious angle, they are treating God – who He is, and who He isn’t, what He thinks, and what He wants us to do – as unimportant. Daily doses of such perspective can have an impact, especially if we are caught unawares (1 Cor. 15:33).

What’s the antidote? You can find some of it in the pages of this magazine. We want to help you teach your kids to see through the “religious ghosts” that haunt so many front-page stories. We can’t cover the news comprehensively, but in what we do cover, we show again and again that God is central to every story.

We’re only able to do this work – to offer this help – because of the many who generously support our efforts. If you haven’t done so already, will you consider helping us reach further and help more? Will you become a monthly supporter?

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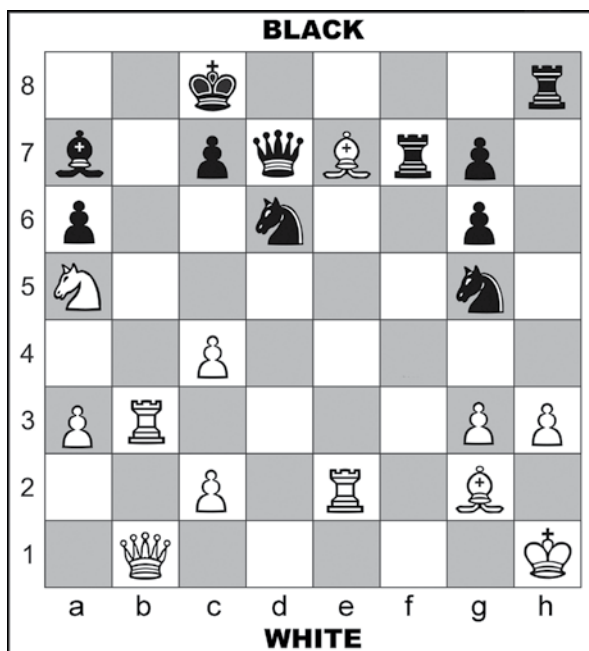
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# ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

## Chess Puzzle #247



**WHITE to Mate in 3**

Or, If it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 4**

## Riddle for Punsters #247

**"What if her Dad is an Umpire?"**

Why was the baseball player hesitant to ask out on a date his best friend's sister? He was afraid that he would say something o \_ \_ b \_ \_ e and consequently s \_ \_ \_ \_ e o \_ \_ with her. He needed some c \_ \_ \_ \_ ing from his friend on how to get to eventually s \_ \_ \_ \_ some points with her.

## Problem to Ponder #247

**"Jumbled Baseball Terms"**

Baseball is one of the favourite summer sports in Canada and America. Sort out the following baseball terms whose letters have been jumbled into anagrams. E.g. **klaws** becomes **walks**.

**One word answers:**

pie rum _____	tall fobs _____
car tech _____	red life _____
set risk _____	rich pet _____
info rum _____	nun err _____
fouled it _____	art bet _____

**Two word answers:**

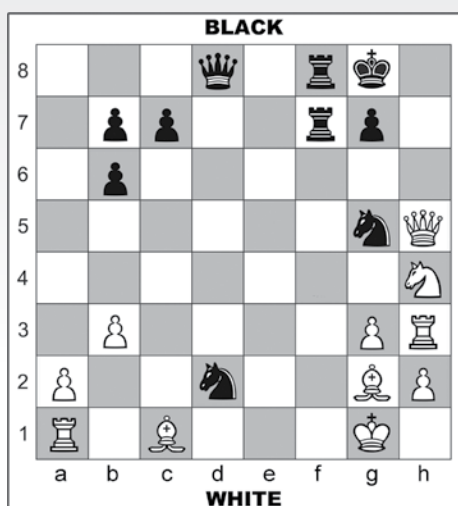
host sport _____	safe fob _____
absolve lab gel _____	thinning inn _____
loaf bull _____	has bite _____
men hour _____	heap motel _____

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to Puzzle Page,

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

## Last Month's Solutions

### Solution to Chess Puzzle #246



**WHITE TO MATE IN 3**  
(A fruitful Queen sacrifice!)

**Descriptive Notation**  
1. Q-R8 ch KxQ  
2. N-N6 ch K-N1  
3. R-R8 mate

**Algebraic Notation**  
1. Qh5-h8 + Kg8xh8  
2. Nh4-g6 + Kh8-g8  
3. Rh3-h8 ++

### Answer to 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 **charge**. Why did he throw away all their dull pencils? He felt that they were **pointless** in the store. Why did he throw away all the clothes hangers? He was afraid that the clothing staff had too many **hang**-ups to deal with each day.

### Answer to 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. Larry has grey eyes. The girl with blonde hair does not have blue eyes. Determine each student's hair and eye colour.

Harry has brown hair and brown eyes. Larry has black hair and grey eyes. Mary has red hair and blue eyes. Carrie has blonde hair and green eyes.

**BLACK TO MATE IN 4**

**Descriptive Notation**  
1. ----- Q-Q5 ch  
2. K-R1 R-B8 ch  
3. BxR RxB ch  
4. K-N2 Q-B7 mate

**Algebraic Notation**  
1. ----- Qd8-d4 +  
2. Kg1-h1 Rf7-f1 +  
3. Bg2xf1 Rf8xf1 +  
4. Kh1-g2 Qd4-f2 ++





# THAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES...

by Christine Farenhorst

## MINA AND MARCO IN EGYPT

Open Doors is a non-denominational mission working in over 60 countries where Christianity is socially or legally discouraged or oppressed. The mission recently reported that last year during Ramadan, two young boys from Egypt watched in horror as their father and other faithful believers were brutally murdered because of their faith in Jesus. The children were passengers on a bus carrying pilgrims on their way to the monastery of St. Samuel. Their father, a security guard at the monastery, was also on the bus. "Deny Jesus, or die," was the choice given to each person.

The younger boy, Mina, said:

They forced our father to get out of the bus first. The terrorists shouted

that he had to convert to Islam. But my father said "no." Then they shot him.

Although the lives of both of the brothers were miraculously spared, the tragic death of their father still plays through their minds on a daily basis. The older son, Marco, vividly recalled his last moments of his father:

My father was still breathing. He couldn't talk anymore, but he wiggled his fingers, signing us to go away. But we didn't want to leave him there. I leaned my father against my chest. Soon my clothes were soaked with his blood, but I didn't care.

The father of Mina and Marco was a

persevering father, a father training his children in the way they should go.

It is not at all unusual for parents in North America, or anywhere else in the world, to be concerned about their children's physical welfare. Moms and dads want their little ones to be warmly dressed, and to have nutritious meals. It is not unusual either for parents to want children to have things to which they themselves did not have access when they were little. These might include piano, flute or violin lessons, or swimming, karate, and soccer practice.

As well, and most importantly, parents can, or should be, concerned about the spiritual welfare of their offspring. This encompasses teaching a child to pray, to have personal devotions and to participate in family devotions, to attend church, to understand and practice fasting and to have discussions on, and knowledge of, life after death.

## SIAO-MEI IN CHINA

Sometimes, strangely enough, it is the other way around – sometimes children

*The father of Mina and Marco was a persevering father, a father training his children in the way they should go.*

encourage parents to be faithful. There is a story told by a man named Amelio Crotti, about the persecution of Christians in China in the 1960s. A mother and her daughter, a child of five, were imprisoned by the Chinese authorities because the mother had protested the arrest of her pastor. Other prisoners in the jail were indignant at seeing a little five-year-old within the confines of the prison especially because the little girl often cried because she was cold and hungry. "Have pity on your small daughter," they reprimanded the poor mother, "It is quite reasonable for you at this point to agree that you will not go to church any more. There is no doubt in our minds that you must say that you will stop being a Christian so that your child will not have to suffer the degradations which are imposed upon all of us here in prison."

The mother, after listening to the other prisoners for days on end, and beginning to feel very guilty at depriving her child of food, clothing and proper shelter, finally gave in to them. She recanted her faith and was released.

Two weeks after her release, however, she was forced by the authorities to stand on a stage in front of some 10,000 people and shout, "I am no longer a Christian." The little daughter was in the audience when she shouted this denial. Afterwards, on their way home from this horrific and humiliating public confession, the little girl spoke to her mother. "Mother, today I think that Jesus was not too happy with what you said." Her mother replied, "I only said those words because I love you. You wept in prison because you were hungry and cold. I wanted you to be warm. I wanted to take you away from that misery." The little girl, whose name was Siao-Mei, smiled as she answered her mother, "I promise you that if we go to jail again for Jesus' sake, that I will not weep."

Ashamed that she had denied her Savior, the mother went back to the prison and told the people who had arrested her that she had acted wrongly, that her love for Jesus was greater than

anything the earth could offer, and that her daughter had more courage and strength of character than she herself had. As a result, both mother and child were imprisoned again. Only this time the little girl did not cry at the cold and the hunger.

Both mother and child persevered and trusted God.

## LEAH SHARIBU IN NIGERIA

There are other stories.

On the evening of February 19, 2018, just a few short months back, more than one hundred girls were sitting down together for a meal at a secondary school in the town of Dapchi, Nigeria. As they sat around the dining table, gunshots were heard outside. It was very frightening for the young girls, especially when a bullet hit the front of their building. As the sound of the gunshots increased in volume and frequency, the Christians among the girls decided to hold hands and run away. They were very aware that they were probable targets. Teachers saw them running and tried to stop and reassure the frightened girls. But the sound of the gunshots was growing closer.

Continuing their escape, the girls made for the dormitory of a Christian friend – a girl named Leah Sharibu. Upon reaching her building, they called out loudly for her to come. Leah was caring for a sick roommate. Aware of the danger, however, both for herself and the roommate, she heeded her friends' warning. Not willing to leave her sick friend alone, Leah tried to carry the girl. Running with her burden as best she could towards the fence surrounding the school, she often tripped and fell. The sick girl eventually persuaded Leah to put her down, and managed to make it to the staff quarters on her own. But Leah herself, and some

of the other students, continued to head for the fence gate through which they hoped to obtain safety. Unfortunately, this was precisely the place where the Boko Haram truck was parked.

Leah was one of the girls captured and put on the truck. Many of the other girls hid in the thick bushes behind the school. They hid throughout the night until a teacher found them the following day. By then the terrorists, with Leah and other young captured women, were gone.

Many parents arrived to ascertain the safety of their children that morning. There were both tears of happiness when parents embraced the daughters who were at school, and tears of anguish for those parents whose daughters had been taken prisoner by Boko Haram. Leah's mother, Rebecca Sharibu had also come. Rebecca lived in the town of Dapchi. It had been a very long night for her as she had been informed by a friend that some of the students had been abducted. As soon as she was able in the early morning hours, by the light of a torch, she walked to the school. And she prayed as she walked.

When she came to the school, she stood among a crowd of other parents. She silently watched ecstatic reunions as girls who had hidden were joyfully embraced. Leah was not one of those girls. The school chaplain took roll call and Leah was the only Christian girl missing. At this point, mixed messages began to come in and government officials confessed that they were really not sure where exactly the kidnapped girls had been taken.

It was not until about a month later, on March 21, 2018, that Rebekah was told that Boko Haram had returned the girls they had stolen from the school. But at the hospital where the released girls had been taken for treatment, Rebekah could not find her daughter.

*...the captors had threatened Leah that if she wouldn't denounce Christ, she would remain a prisoner.*

Speaking to some of Leah's classmates, she learned what had happened. Knowing she was a Christian, the terrorists had ordered Leah to recite some Islamic incantations before she would be allowed onto the truck to be taken home. The girl adamantly refused and said: "I will never say these things because I am not a Muslim." Becoming angry, the captors had threatened Leah that if she wouldn't denounce Christ, she would remain a prisoner. This threat did not daunt her faith. She steadfastly refused to deny Christ. The other girls watched as Leah was left behind, a prisoner of Boko Haram. They cried and waved to her until they could not see her any longer.

When Rebekah heard how her daughter had been left behind, she fainted and was taken to the hospital. Yet there was a joy in her as she recovered from the shock. For years she had led Leah in devotions each

morning, instructing her daughter in the Word of God. Her daughter was now bearing the fruit of these devotions – fruit for the Lord. Rebekah consequently said:


I am so proud of my Leah because she did not denounce Christ. And because of that, I know God will never forsake her. When she went away to school, I gave her a copy of the Bible so she could have personal devotions even when I am not there. As her mother, I know her to be an obedient daughter, respectful and someone who puts others before herself.

Leah surely epitomizes Proverbs 22:6 made flesh. "Train a child in the way (s)he should go, and when (s)he is old (s)he will not turn from it."

There are, and due to God's grace there always will be, many persevering

fathers, mothers and children – many who cause us to remember that:

.... since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him Who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

As of August 8 Leah continues to be a captive in the hands of cruel Boko Haram. Please pray for her. 

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

## HOW TO BE A REVOLUTIONARY

When a Christian conference is titled “How to enrage the culture” you might think it would be encouraging radical and revolutionary means. And you’d be right, when you consider that getting married, having kids, and raising them in the fear and love of the Lord are pretty radical and revolutionary ideas these days. How radical and revolutionary? Well, one of the conference speakers, Pastor Toby Sumpter, shared this illustrative anecdote:

“A few years ago, I’d come home from work, and my wife was finishing making dinner in the kitchen, and I was reading. She gets a phone call....some kind of alumni survey, and at the end they’re doing the demographic stuff. And I hear her say: ‘Homemaker....homeMAKER...HOMEMAKER!!! I’m a wife and a mom – that’s what I do!’ She gets off the phone a couple of minutes later and she shares, ‘The girl I was talking to had never heard of a homemaker.’”

## HELP WANTED: MEN

“Imagine that in those ages past, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and their [associates] had said:

‘The world is out of order. But if we try to set it right we shall only make a great row and get ourselves into disgrace. Let us go to our chambers, put on our night-caps and sleep over the bad times and perhaps when we wake up things will have grown better.’

“Such conduct on their part would have [passed on to] us a heritage of error. Age after age would have gone down into the infernal deeps, and the infectious bogs of error would have swallowed all. These men loved the faith and the name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. Note what we owe them and let us pay to our sons the debt we owe our fathers. It is today as it was in the Reformers’ days. Decision is needed. Here is the day for the man – where is the man for the day?”

- Charles Spurgeon

## FEMINISM’S TWO ERRORS

“[Feminism is] the heresy that women and men are not fundamentally different and that women ought to be as much like men as possible, especially as selfish and aggressive as possible. The two most ridiculous errors about men and women are unisexism and male chauvinism. The unisex feminist says that women and men are not different in value, therefore they are not different in nature. The male chauvinist says that men and women are different in nature, therefore they are different in value.”

- Peter Kreeft, as interviewed by Marvin Olasky in “Dangerous Waves” *WORLD* July 17, 2010

## COLLEGE MORE HAZARDOUS THAN JOINING THE NORMANDY INVASION?

“We’ve seen a number of surveys that have demonstrated that of kids who are attending church regularly in their senior year in high school, by the time they finish their freshman year in college three out of four of them will have walked away from their faith and they’re no longer involved as Christians....One of the statistics, a visual image that I think helps parents to think about it is, if you were to sign your children up to be in the boats on the Normandy Beach Invasion they would have a better chance of surviving that than surviving spiritually in colleges now. That experience is not something most parents are eager to sign their children up for, but we do it in a pretty unthinking way right now.”

– Dr. Ben Merkle

## CONTEXT IS KEY

There’s many an inspirational bible text that turns out to mean quite something else when read in context. Two of the more famous are:

- *I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me* – Philippians 4:13 is used to inspire Christians to take on impossible tasks. In context we can see Paul is speaking not to all he can accomplish in Christ, but all he can *endure*. He is speaking here of how in good times and bad (which includes beatings, shipwrecks, and prison) God has taught him to be content.
- *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* – Jeremiah 29:11 is used as a frequent college graduation verse or marriage verse to alert the graduate or couple as to the material good God has in mind for them *in the near future*. But the context of this verse is God telling Israel that *in 70 years* He will return them from exile.

A meme making its way around the Internet offers up the very best verse to illustrate the importance of context. Luke 4:7 reads: *“There if you worship before me, it shall all be yours.”* Seemingly just the thing for an inspirational bookmark or piece of wall art, it is, as the meme notes, “less inspirational if you know who said it.”

## FAKE NEWS WON’T COVER IT, BUT GOD IS POURING OUT HIS BLESSINGS

The media makes its money telling us about all the horrible things going on in the world. But while examples of Man’s total depravity abound, we should not lose sight of how God’s restraining hand is at work, and his blessings abound. As Antony Davies and James R. Harrigan report in their chapter of *FEE’s Essential Guide to Navigating the News* what the public perceives, and what actually is, can be very different. For

example, over half of Americans think gun violence is getting worse in their country. But Davies and Harrigan note:

“According to the FBI, the rate of firearm deaths today is half — and the rate of non-fatal firearm crimes is one-quarter — of what they were just 20 years ago. Even with mass shootings, gun violence today is a shadow of what it was a generation ago.”

And if you’re under the impression that violence is increasing around the globe, consider this:

“During World War II, 300 out of every 100,000 people on Earth died annually in war. During the Korean War, the number dropped to 20. Today, it is 1.”

The good news continues:

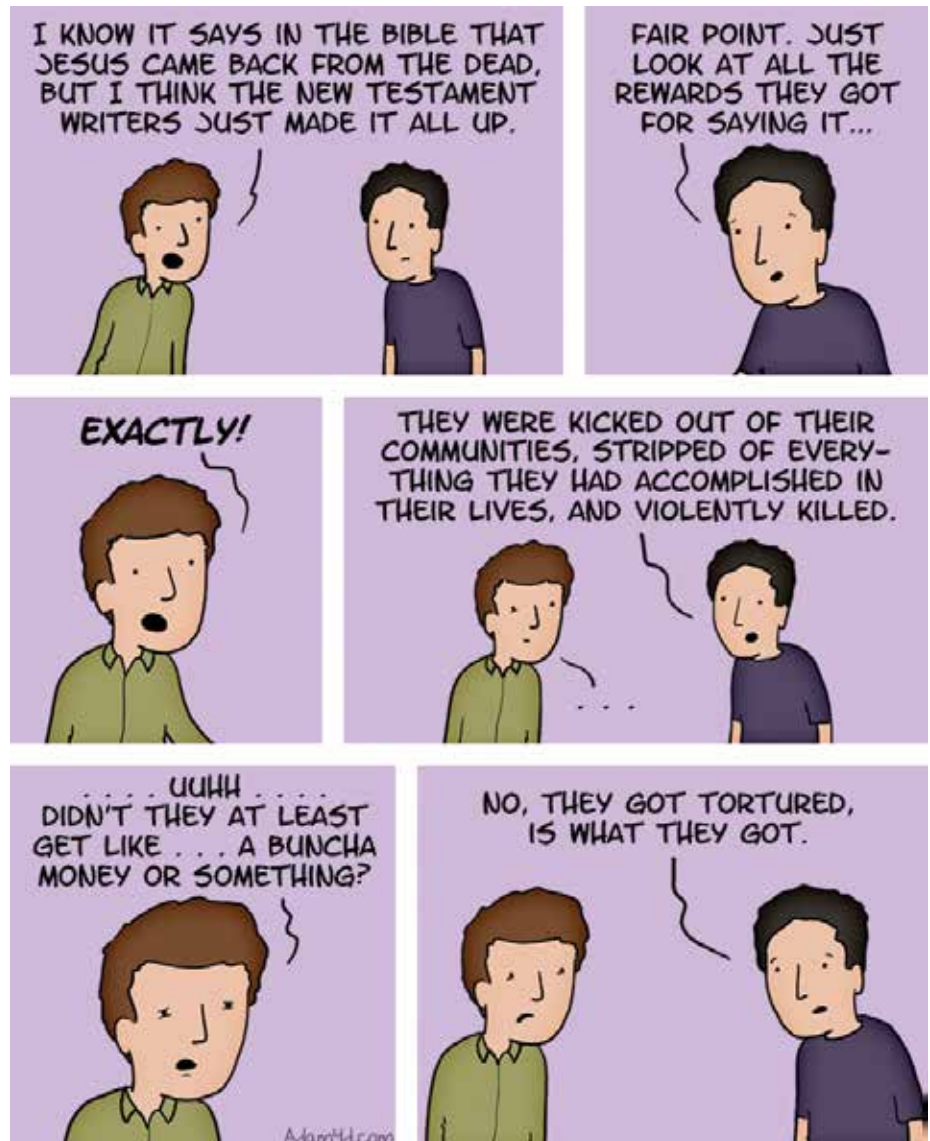
“Humans are not only eradicating violence, they are also eradicating poverty. The number of people living in extreme poverty has dropped from 70 percent of all humans in 1900, to 55 percent in 1950, to 35 percent a generation ago, to less than 10 percent today.”

Worldwide child labor rates have been halved since the 1950s, and education rates, longevity, and income, have all “risen almost 20 percent over the past generation” by United Nation measures. The world isn’t perfect – not by any means – but we shouldn’t let the media blind us to the blessings God continues to shower on this world.

## DON'T BE CHANGE-RESISTANT

In 2008 Barack Obama promised “Hope and Change.” The slogan resonated – voters’ hope was that the *change* he brought would be an *improvement*. And while it was undeniable he brought change, in 2012 he got ten million fewer votes. This bloc of voters concluded *change* and *improvement* are hardly synonymous.

When we look around us at an ever more liberal Western Church and increasingly pagan culture, we might be tempted to believe that *change* is synonymous with *decline*. But just as we shouldn’t support change for change’s sake, we mustn’t resist change for resistance’s sake. “We’ve never done it that way,” is a reason to proceed with caution, but it is not (as some treat it) a discussion ender. “Thus says the Lord” is a final word with no appeal (if indeed the Lord has said thus) but we must never give “That’s the way we’ve always done it” the same sacred status.



## WHOLE LOT OF CHANGE GOING ON

“We obviously live in a changing world. Consider a few of the following realities: the world’s largest taxi company, Uber, does not own one vehicle. Facebook, the world’s most popular media owner, creates no content. Airbnb, the world’s largest accommodation provider, owns no real estate. Alibaba, the world’s largest retailer, owns no product. Some fairly significant changes in the world order, the way we do business.”

– Tim Van Soelen, “The Seven Last Words of a Dying Church [School]?” CACE.org, May 11, 2016

## SURGEON ON WHO’S LEADING WHOM BY THE NOSE

“I believe that one reason why the Church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the Church.”

– Charles Spurgeon

# Forgiveness

Being *ready* to forgive is wonderful.  
But forgiving someone before they've asked  
prevents us from lovingly calling them to repentance.

**W**hat a wonderful word! Yet, what does it mean? How do you grant forgiveness; and, for what?

As much as Christians talk about forgiveness, you'd think they could tell you all about it. Yet, there is hardly one in a thousand who can give sound, Biblical answers to the questions above.

Forgiveness of others is to be modeled on one's own forgiveness by Christ: "...forgiving one another just as God, in Christ has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

Forgiveness must be extended to all who say they repent – even if the offense has been repeated (Cf. Luke 17:3). But it is only to be granted to those who confess wrong-doing, claim to be repentant, and ask forgiveness (Prov. 28:13). In Mk. 11:25, Jesus tells you to forgive those who wronged you when you pray, thereby avoiding bitterness and resentment (Eph. 4:32). But, that is different from granting the wrongdoer forgiveness. You do that *only* when he repents. Forgiveness of

others must reflect God's forgiveness; He forgave you *when you repented*.

## **FORGIVENESS IS OTHERS-FOCUSED**

Some Christians advise forgiving another whether or not he confesses sin. But they misunderstood forgiveness. They urge this to benefit the one who forgives. Yet, it was for *your* benefit that God forgave you. Their self-centered concept of forgiveness is unbiblical. God did not forgive you until you repented, admitted you were a sinner, and believed. Indeed, even now, when God dispenses parental forgiveness, He says, "...if you don't forgive men, then your Father won't forgive your transgressions" (Matt. 6:15).

Some think when Christ prayed from the cross, "Father, forgive them," He forgave apart from repentance. But Jesus granted no one forgiveness by those words. He was *asking* God to forgive. Did God answer? Yes. On the day of Pentecost, thousands of those same people were converted, and their

sins were forgiven. But, that did not happen apart from the means. Peter called on them to repent and believe in order to receive forgiveness (Cf. Acts 2:38).

## **PRE-EMPTIVE FORGIVENESS PREVENTS PURSUIT**

Because in forgiving one promises not to bring up the offender's sin, to him, to others, or to himself, it is not right to forgive before repentance. Jesus requires you to confront an offender (Matt. 18:15ff) in order to bring about reconciliation. If he refuses to listen to you, instead of forgiving him, you must tell one or two others. If he won't hear them, then you must tell the church. Indeed, apart from repentance, the matter, must be brought up to an increasingly larger number of persons. Why? Through their aid to *win* the offender. In love, true forgiveness seeks not to relieve the forgiver, but to deliver the offender from *his* burden of guilt. Out of concern for the other person, the offended party pursues the offender until the matter is settled before God and

*Some Christians advise forgiving another whether or not he confesses sin. But they misunderstood forgiveness.*



men. Any bitterness on his part, Jesus said, must be dealt with in prayer. Because forgiveness is a promise not to refer negatively to the offender's sin any more, it would be utterly inconsistent to forgive an unrepentant person before Church discipline has been successfully used.

People who try to be kinder than God, end up becoming cruel to others. The kind thing is not to focus on relief for one's self, by forgiving others whether they repent or not, but by every Biblical means to win offenders. It may seem unkind to bring matters up again and again when an offender refuses to be reconciled, but you must do so, not to irritate, but to help relieve *him* of the burden of his sin. To ignore him and focus on one's self, saying, "I feel better since I forgave Bob, even though he didn't seek forgiveness," is the epitome of the modern, self-centered psychological heresy.

## APOLOGIZING IS NOT REPENTING

Seeking forgiveness is not apologizing. There is nothing in the Bible about apologizing – the world's substitute for forgiveness that doesn't get the job done. You apologize, and say "I'm sorry," but have not admitted your sin. The offended party feels awkward, not knowing how to respond. You are still holding the ball. You asked him to do nothing. But, confess your sin to him saying, "I have asked God to forgive me, and now I'm asking you," and you pass the ball to the other person.

You ask him to bury the matter for good. Jesus commands him to say "yes," thereby making the promise that God does: "Your sins and you iniquities will I remember against you no more." That brings the matter to a conclusion. Apologizing does not.

## DON'T WAIT!

Is there someone to whom you should go ask forgiveness? Has someone sought it from you to whom you said "Once, yes; twice, maybe; three times, no!"? Perhaps there is someone whom you have never confronted about a matter that has brought about an unreconciled condition between you. Are any of these problems outstanding? Then you have business to attend to. Why not settle the matter today?

You don't have to feel like it to forgive. Forgiveness is a promise that you can make and keep, whether you feel like it or not. And, it is easier to forgive another – even when he sins against you seven times a day – when you remember Christ's great sacrifice for you sins by which He forgave you. And, then too, remember how many times a day He forgives you ever since you have become a believer. One other fact may help. If you have truly forgiven, it isn't the fifth, or the third; it's not even the second time. If you have truly buried the matter, truly forgiven – it's always the first. RP

## ON SIN, REPENTANCE, & FORGIVENESS

### To be forgiven we must confess

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- 1 John 1:9  
(see also 2 Chron. 7:14, Ps. 32:5, Luke 17:3, Acts 8:22,

### Forgive and forget

"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

- Is. 43:25  
(see also Ps. 51:1,9, Micah 7:19, Is. 38:17, and Ps. 103:12)

### Forgive again and again

"Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

- Luke 17:4  
(see also Matt. 18:21-22)

### Love overlooks sin

"Love...does not take into account a wrong suffered..."

- 1 Cor. 13:4-5  
(see also Prov. 10:12, 19:11, 1 Peter 4:8)

### Love seeks out the sinning brother

"If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."

- Luke 17:3  
(see also Luke 19:17, Matt. 18:15, Gal. 6:1, James 5:19-20)

# COMMUNISM'S ONGOING INFLUENCE

Though Marx, Lenin, and Stalin are dead and buried, Communism's impact on our culture is still being felt



A battered, but still standing statue of Lenin

by Michael Wagner

The Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and many thought that Communism was over and done with. But even today its influence can still be felt, and as far more than an economic system. Communist and Marxist thought has shaped our *culture*.

How so? Well, consider how the far left has long desired to overthrow the traditional concept of the family. Already in 1848, one of the planks of the *Communist Manifesto* called explicitly for the abolition of the family.

Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists. [However] on what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain.

Karl Marx divided the world into two classes: the ruling “bourgeois” class, and a servant “proletariat” class. The *Communist Manifesto* used this same terminology and claimed that:

In its completely developed form, this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution. The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital.

The Communists were saying that a family made up of mom and dad and gaggle of kids is an elitist notion, and

when the elites are taken down, this type of family will disappear too, to be replaced by the communal education and raising of children.

The evolution of left-wing thought on how to destroy the family is chronicled by Paul Kengor, a professor of political science at Grove City College in Pennsylvania. His book *Takedown: From Communists to Progressives, How the Left Has Sabotaged Family and Marriage* shows that the left originally saw heterosexual sexual freedom as the channel for undermining the family, and only came to accept homosexuality as a key plank later on.

## RUSSIAN COMMUNISM

The Communism of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin viewed the traditional

family as an oppressive capitalist institution that exploited women. They saw women as being confined to their homes taking care of children, while the men had jobs earning money. It was their view that under the capitalist system women were dependent on their husbands for survival and were stuck in their marriages as virtual slaves.

The Communists had a solution. All children would be raised in government daycares and women could go to work in the factories.

With such jobs, women would be financially independent of men and also free from the drudgery of taking care of children. They would be truly liberated from their bondage to man and child, since children would be raised by the state.

As part of their “liberating” program, when the Communists took over in Russia, they removed the Russian Orthodox Church’s prohibition against divorce. A large number of divorces quickly ensued. Kengor notes, “The divorce rate skyrocketed to levels unseen in human history.”

Besides making divorce easy, the new Communist government made obtaining abortions easy as well. The abortion rate skyrocketed just like the divorce rate.

But after a few years it became apparent that the long-term stability of the Russian population was thus threatened. According to Kengor, “The toll was so staggering that an appalled Joseph Stalin, the mass murderer, actually banned abortion in 1936, fearing a vanishing populace.” He also banned homosexuality in 1934.

Stalin’s abortion ban was lifted after he died and the Russian abortion rate quickly rose again.

“By the 1970s, the Soviet Union was averaging 7 to 8 million abortions per year, annihilating whole future generations of Russian children. (America, with a similar population, averaged nearer 1.5 million abortions per year after *Roe* was approved in 1973.)”

## COMMUNISM USA

The desire to abolish the family was embraced by Communists everywhere. In the United States, for example, many Communist Party members lived lifestyles that reflected their hostility towards the traditional family. Frequently this manifested itself in sexual promiscuity. Divorce and libertine views of sexuality were common among the Communists at a time when American society frowned on both.

One of the earliest founders of the American Communist movement was John Reed. He is still a popular figure on the American left, and a laudatory 1981 movie about him called *Reds* was nominated for Best Picture. He lived a lifestyle in keeping with his anti-family beliefs:


“The Communist cad and philanderer hopped from bed to bed, woman to woman, torpedoed marriage after marriage, and disseminated the venereal disease that made him urinate red and left at least one of his temporary girlfriends with inflamed ovaries requiring surgical removal.”

The sexual promiscuity of most American Communists, however, was heterosexual because the Communist Party considered homosexuality to be bad.

## THE NEW COMMUNISTS

This negative attitude towards homosexuality by Communists began to change due to the development of a related school of thought called the Frankfurt School. Originally known as the Institute for Social Research, it began work at the University of Frankfurt, Germany in the early 1920s. However, since many of the intellectuals involved were Jewish, they left Germany to set up at Columbia University in New York after Adolf Hitler came to power in the 1930s.

The Frankfurt School intellectuals were Marxists who realized that Marx’s original prediction (that workers would revolt against capitalist society



*The key to revolution, in this view, was the destruction of traditional Christian morality.*

and create a socialist utopia) was not working. They developed a new or *neo*-Marxist theory that focused on cultural factors rather than economic factors as the key to revolution. As Kengor puts it,

“The Frankfurt School protégés were neo-Marxists, a new kind of twentieth-century communist less interested in the economic/class-redistribution ideas of Marx than a remaking of society through the eradication of traditional norms and institutions.”

The key to revolution, in this view, was the destruction of traditional Christian morality. Christian morality repressed people’s natural sexual appetites, and only by liberating sexuality from such moral constraints could people be truly set free.

“The hard fact for these Communists was that at the core of Western civilization was a pesky morality derived from the Old and New Testaments, from the traditional family, and from tradition itself, an embedded understanding that freedom was not the license to do anything a person wanted, and the realization that one’s passions needed to be occasionally checked.”

The change in emphasis from economics to culture also changed the focus on who was most important to reach with the new message. Early Communists focused on organizing the working class against business owners, but they were no longer relevant. Kengor





"[Communists] saw women as being confined to their homes taking care of children....[They] had a solution. All children would be raised in government daycares..."

writes, "Marx and Engels had organized the workers in the factories; the neo-Marxists would organize the professors and students in the universities."

### COMMUNISTS ON CAMPUS

Wilhelm Reich was one of the key intellectuals of the Frankfurt School. He was the person who invented the phrase "sexual revolution." Prominent periodicals labeled him the "Father of the Sexual Revolution," although he shares that title with infamous sex researcher Alfred Kinsey of Indiana University.

Reich considered the traditional family, especially its patriarchal authority, as the chief source of repression in society. "For Reich, full

communist revolution required full sexual license, including homosexual sex."

Another key Frankfurt School intellectual was Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse's book *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* is considered by some to be "the Bible of the New Left movement."

Kengor summarizes the thought of Reich and Marcuse this way:

"Both comrades-in-arms battled the 'repression' represented by traditional notions of morality, especially *cumbersome* sexual restraints. They felt that erotic desires needed to be unleashed rather than inhibited. Both men saw religion as repressive, though

Marcuse went further, arguing that modern Judeo-Christian society had become 'totalitarian' in its suppression of man's 'natural' sexual instincts."

Herbert Marcuse was very popular among university students in the 1960s and 1970s and his influence extended neo-Marxist thinking into segments of Western culture. In particular, leading feminist theorists of the 1960s and 1970s were imbued with Frankfurt School ideology, and feminism also considers the patriarchal family to be the main oppressive institution of modern society.

The homosexual rights movement also fits naturally with the view that traditional Christian morality is repressive. Kengor writes, "The Frankfurt School cadre sought to reshape cultural views of sexuality via education, and... they have succeeded and continue to make astonishing progress."

### CONCLUSION

While many other groups have built on, borrowed from, and extended the family-undermining work of the Communists, their influence shouldn't be overlooked.

So how can we combat the cultural decay that these neo-Marxists and others have fostered? Well, we can sing the praises of the traditional family. Numerous academic studies have demonstrated that the ideal environment for a child to grow up in is a traditional family. Kengor writes,

"Research has confirmed time and time again that the best situation for a child is a two-parent home with a mother and a father, which should always be the goal of any culture or polity."

However, as Kengor shares, "Nothing short of a major religious revival will save [us]." Political parties or leaders cannot bring back Christian morality to any of the Western countries. It appears that only a widespread repentance and return to God can restore the traditional family model in the West. RP

*How can we combat the cultural decay that these neo-Marxists and others have fostered? Well, we can sing the praises of the traditional family."*

# SHOULD A CHRISTIAN EVER BE DISCONTENT?

On the **VALUE** of **DISCONTENT**,  
the **DANGER** of **PASSIVITY**,  
and **CONTENTMENT** as a **GOAL**

*by Harma-Mae Smit*

She sat across from me, sipping coffee, her forehead wrinkled with unhappiness. She'd struggled for two years in a job that clearly made her miserable, and which everyone else thought she should quit. But she couldn't quite agree, wondering if there was a reason God had blessed her with the position. "I'm trying so hard to be grateful," she said. "I just want to be satisfied with what I have."

\*\*\*\*

My friend's words hit me right in my chest. I didn't know what to say, because I've struggled with the exact same issues. When is it okay to give up on the path you're currently travelling on? When is it okay to quit and change what you're doing? We know God has a reason for everything He brings into our lives, so doesn't it just make sense that we should figure out that reason – figure out how to glorify Him in this situation – before we think of moving on to something else?

But like so many other situations in life, we often don't understand the invisible plans of God, or know what His goal is for us in our current season of life. And so we can be left unsure if it is okay to move on to something else, or if God means for us to learn contentment where we are.

Often, when we find ourselves feeling like I or my friend felt in that moment – recognizing the strain of dissatisfaction running through our lives – we

respond with guilt. We might think this discontent points to a lack in our spiritual lives. But is discontent always wrong?

Dissatisfaction certainly can be caused by a spiritual lack. We humans never are satisfied with what we have. We never have enough. If we had the power to change everything in our lives, we still would not feel fulfilled.

But this does not mean we should never take our discontentment seriously. Discontent might be the motivation to change something in our lives that needs changing.

## THE VALUE OF DISCONTENT

When we look at other people's lives, it's easy to recognize what's causing them unhappiness, and it's easy to say they should change these things. In fact, we often wonder why they don't. This person is still young, so why don't they try a new career? Or this person has the freedom to move, so why don't they try living in another city?

But when it comes to ourselves, we see how hard it is to justify our choices to make changes. Is "unhappiness" really a good enough reason, when we know we're called to be content? To get here



we've struggled, we've prayed, we've relied on God to achieve things – and by the grace of God we have achieved them. We know, because our strength was so weak and we needed God's strength so much to get where we are today, that our current situation is straight from the hand of God. What we need to know is if we can be grateful for God's gifts while still choosing for change.

No wonder people hesitate to make a change!

## *One way forward is to consider when feelings of discontent have value.*

One way forward is to consider when feelings of discontent have value. This is not to say discontentment should be embraced, but that the feeling can point us to areas of our lives we do actually have power over. So let's look at discontentment a bit more closely.

### *We shouldn't be content with just this world*

First, there are some obvious things God intends for us to be discontent about. We are not supposed to be content with the fallen state of the world. We are supposed to be content that all things are in the hands of God, but we are not supposed to look at injustice be pleased about it. Some of our dissatisfaction points us to the new creation we are looking forward to. When we recognize that we never feel fully fulfilled, we also recognize that we are waiting for eternal fulfillment. We live with “eternity in our hearts” – we have a vision of an ideal kingdom this world cannot live up to.

This also means that life's frustrations, dead ends, and futility were never meant to be part of God's good creation. No wonder we react so strongly to them. And yet, while we understand this, we also understand God is still holding all

the threads of our lives in His hands. We cling to His promise that in him everything that seems meaningless has meaning.

### *We shouldn't be satisfied burying our talent*

There's another aspect of discontentment to consider. Contentment ought to be separated from passivity. A wrong emphasis on contentment can make us believe we're not allowed to change anything in our lives. But contentment and passivity are not the same thing. Perhaps discontentment may be a challenge to us.

We may hide behind “contentment” because we're afraid to take the risk of change, because we might fail if we try something new. But our dissatisfaction could hint that we are not reaching for goals that we could try to reach. We are not risking the bumps and falls that might develop our skills.

Discontentment might tell us we are meant to challenge ourselves. And if we are taking the easier path without really thinking it through, our emotions may be a sign something is wrong. We should consider whether we need to choose a more challenging goal.

If we do not separate contentment and passivity, it can result in a fatalistic determinism. We might conclude that wherever we happen to be, that is where God placed us so it must be where He wants us to be, and therefore we should be content. But this cuts off the possibility that God also blesses us with opportunities. Determinism leads us to say – You're still single? God must not want you to be married. You're poor? God must not want you to be rich. Don't try to achieve anything. Just wait peacefully. Don't try to change. Everything you're meant to have will just happen if it's meant to be.

But clearly this is an unbiblical message.

## **LEARNING CONTENTMENT FROM PAUL**

Contentment is still a good thing, and it is a virtue to be pursued in our lives. After much struggle, I've realized that

while there may be something behind the vague sense of discontent that so often crops up in our lives, and that these reasons can be addressed, contentment is still the goal, not discontent.

How, then, should we pursue contentment while avoiding utter passivity? There are a few things to keep in mind.

### *Content even as we strive*

First, contentment is about where you are in the present moment. It is not a denial of any change in the future. When Paul talks of being content in all circumstances, he was working towards a goal, and the circumstances occurred while he was attempting to achieve it. Having a goal does imply you expect to cause change in the future. So perhaps it is not the goal you're supposed to avoid having, but the discontent over the difficulties that spring up on the way to the goal. It may in fact turn out to be that the goal is not one you're meant to achieve, but contentment in all circumstances includes contentment during the deep disappointment that hits when you don't achieve your goal. In other words – strive! Keep striving! But be ready to be content with what the Lord brings you.

### *Content in suffering*

Another caveat is that contentment in Scripture, including the contentment passage in Philippians 4 (“I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content”), is mentioned in relation to suffering. It is an approach to situations that are not in Christians' control. When life is hard, especially when life is hard as a result of being Christians, Christians are to be content. So the intent is not to say, “don't change your life path,” but rather, “I know you're suffering, and this is where you can find comfort.” These passages also emphasize that no circumstances of life ever prevent us from being saved by God – whether in chains or free, whether rich or poor – no one needs to be discontent because their circumstances prevent them from truly being Christians. If such circumstances did exist they would surely be reason for





they painstakingly placed stone on stone for hundreds of years, unable to see the buildings we'd gasp at in wonder today. Perhaps our grandparents did the same as they struggled to get their children to listen to a Bible story, not knowing if the generations who'd follow would do the same.

When we ask God to use our lives according to His plans, we sometimes suppress a fear that God doesn't want us to go anywhere, or do anything. This is our fear when we walk into the office and face a mountain of paperwork that needs to be done but hardly seems worthwhile – am I really contributing to God's kingdom, we wonder? But our God is not a God of waste. If we are to be ordinary, it will be worthwhile.

Our call to contentment brings us to a new understanding, where ordinary labour is not undervalued. We are not pressured to all conform to the mould of world-changer. We can put our hand to the task in front of us without fear our efforts will be washed from the earth, because we know they're seen by the eyes of God.

## CONCLUSION

What, then, is contentment?

First, it is a focus on the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of the world. It shifts our focus from yearning for the things of this world, such as money, fame, or power. We can trust there are eternal things that we are building, and contentment means that we can rest.

Second, it is not a struggle with God over what can't change. While we are not called to passivity, in our lives we will sometimes be told "no." This is where we are most often tempted to fight, not necessarily with our actions, but with a rebellious spirit that insists on despising the situation forced on us. Only by looking to God in His Word and in prayer will we find the strength to turn back to contentment again.

When my friend and I left the cafe, our lives were still the same as when we had come in. Yet somehow Christian company and very good coffee gave us new capacity to rest in the goodness of God. <sup>RP</sup>

despair – but thanks be to God there are none!

We can be content because our circumstances do not prevent our salvation.

### *Content when we have choices and when we don't*

We all suffer in some way, but in comparison to many Christians in the Bible we are faced with an endless array of choices – we can choose a career, we can choose a spouse, we can choose where we want to live, we can choose to travel, we can choose our level of education. It's not a surprise the Bible doesn't predict that we in the future would be faced with this array of choice, and advise us on how to wrap our minds around the dizzying display. And therefore it is not a surprise when we try to apply biblical principles to our choices instead of our sufferings, and end up at the conclusion that we should never desire anything, and never try to achieve anything.

But rather than arriving at this conclusion and automatically accepting it, we should think about whether this is really correct. We are to be content in situations we can't change, including those which are really, really hard. But our contentment in the present moment

doesn't prevent us moving from one choice to another in the future.

Second, we often think contentment means being stationary unless we're sure God means for us to move. But Paul did not always sit and wait until absolutely sure that God was sending him somewhere else. If he was called by the Spirit he followed, but he continued to work and preach in all places while waiting for the Spirit's call. He often made plans to go to different places, or to start new missions. When the Spirit of God prevented him from preaching throughout Asia Minor, he continued trying in place after place until he reached the sea – only then did he realized he was being called to Macedonia. In other words, sometimes we are not sure what we should do, but we do not necessarily have to wait for a firm confirmation from God before every action.

### *Content in the day-to-day faithfulness*

Lastly, we are often discontent with our lives not because of the goals but because of the mundane tasks and the drudgery. Our actions seem so little, and so dull. We cry, like I and my friend did when we were having coffee, "I just want to work in God's kingdom!" But perhaps the cathedral builders did the same, as



# ON ENVY & ITS DISGUISES

by Jon Dykstra

A few weeks ago two of my daughters were fighting over a stuffed animal, both insisting it was theirs. I wanted to stop the fight but this struck me as a teachable moment... and I knew I had just the right story to share.

"Do you remember when two women came to King Solomon and both said a baby was theirs? King Solomon was going to use a sword to cut the baby in half, so that each woman could have half." Then came the mike drop moment: "Would that be a good idea to do with your stuffie?"

The story didn't impact my girls like I'd hoped: both agreed that splitting the stuffie lengthwise was the way to go.

Hmmmm...

I was left wondering, what would Solomon have done if both women had said, "Sure, go ahead"? The best I could come up with was to have the toy bear come stay with the "king" for a while – instead of half a stuffie for both, it was no stuffie for either of them.

## KIDS HAVE A HARD TIME SEEING IT

A few days later I came across another illustration, and because of the less than satisfactory conclusion to my earlier conversation with the girls, I wanted to share this with them too.

In the June 6 "Nearer to God Devotional" Pastor Mark Stewart shared an old Jewish folktale, in which an angel visits a businessman known for being envious. The angel wants to encourage the shopkeeper to give up his envy so he tells the man that he can have one wish but with one condition: whatever he

wishes for, his neighbor will get twice as much of it. The spiteful man considers the offer for a few moments, and then makes his request: "Please make me blind in one eye."

Both my girls were shocked, and then somewhat amused. What a clever, but ever so wicked, man! He would be blind in one eye, but his neighbor would be blind in both.

This story reminded me of another, so I shared an old Cold War joke – something Ronald Reagan might have said. One day a genie visited a Russian peasant and told him he could have one wish. The peasant was quite excited and told the genie about how his neighbor had gotten a goat. He shared how the goat provided the neighbor's whole family with milk, and goat's hair for clothing, and was also a wonderful pet for that family's children.

"So you want a goat too?" asked the genie.

"No," said the peasant, "I want you to kill my neighbor's goat."

In the Bible the words covetousness and envy seem to be used interchangeably. But if a distinction were to be made, we might describe envy as taking covetousness one step further. The merely covetous man wants what his neighbor has – he wants to be rich too. But the envious man isn't as concerned with his own state as that of his neighbor's. He won't be satisfied until his rich neighbor is poor.

## ADULT CAN MISS IT TOO

I shared these stories with my daughters because there were obvious connections to be made. There are

going to be times when one child gets something – whether it's piano lessons, a new toy, an opportunity to visit a friend's house, etc. – that the other siblings doesn't get. And many a time those other children will have a hard time being happy for their sibling's opportunity. They'd be happier if only their sister's "goat" was killed.

Among adults this destructive envy is harder to spot but that's only because we're better at hiding our sins – we'll even present them as virtues.

One example: As I finished sharing the second story my wife noted, "This sounds like the Canadian healthcare system." In the great white North we aren't always pleased with our healthcare system; wait times can be not simply burdensome, but even deadly. However, one thing Canadians take pride in is how it is the same healthcare for everyone. Politicians and voters stand united against queue-jumping and against a two-tiered healthcare system. Consider though, what we are doing when we try to prevent someone from using their own money to buy better care than is available to the rest of us. Aren't we wishing his "goat" was dead? Trying to improve healthcare is a noble desire. But trying to prevent others from seeking better healthcare for themselves is envy disguised as principle.

This same "envy as virtue" is behind complaints about income inequality. We live in a time and a place where we are richer than we have ever been – every house has conveniences that even a hundred years ago were luxuries for

only the richest of the rich if they existed at all (running hot and cold water, central heating, phones, computers, TV's, dishwashers, washing machines, vacuums, etc.). So how can the Devil get us to overlook that many ways we have been materially blessed? By getting us looking over back fence at the new toys in our neighbors yard. The 10th Commandment forbids just that, but to obscure that clear commandment, the Devil presents this sin as something noble. "This isn't coveting; this is about equality," he tells us. "This isn't coveting; it is about compassion for the poor!" Poverty is a problem. When some don't have enough to eat, or a place to sleep, that is a real concern, and an evil to be fought. But income inequality is simply envy – anger at how much more someone else has than us.

## CONCLUSION

Covetousness and envy are sins of ingratitude, of not recognizing how much we've been given. Would income inequality be an issue if "poor" protesting college students understood they are richer than 85% of the world? Would my daughters fight over one stuffed animal if I had them first go count their dozens of other stuffies? More to the point, would we envy even Bill Gates if we understood what we've been given in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

As Pastor Mark Stewart has written:

"Secure in the love of Jesus Christ and our identity as the Father's children, I have no need to envy my brother or sister. I am a recipient of favor and kindness and grace that I could never earn or pay for. There is no higher or better privilege to reach for... Content in what the Father has chosen to give to me, I am now freed up to want the best for you.

SOURCE: Pastor Stewart's daily devotional on envy, ran over four days, from June 6 to 9 and can be found at [ReformedPerspective.ca/category/nearer-to-god](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/category/nearer-to-god).



2017 / 115 PAGES

## 7 QUOTES FROM *LEARNING CONTENTMENT*

An in depth review is in the works, but in the meantime, here's a taste of Nancy Wilson's wonderful and, more to the point, *challenging* new book.

### What is contentment?

"Contentment is a deep satisfaction with the will of God."

### On perfectionism

"We sometimes flatter ourselves into think that it is a good character trait to be a 'perfectionist.' But this label brings much trouble and temptation with it. A so called

perfectionist is never satisfied with his work (or anyone else's work)....As creatures we must learn to find our true satisfaction in our Creator God. Then we can be satisfied with out imperfect work. Then we can offer our imperfect work to Him and be thankful that He is satisfied with us in Christ. Then we can rest. Only God is perfect. When we think we can be perfect we are stumbling blindly."

### We're allowed to be distressed

"[Jesus] struggled in the garden in Gethsemane. He was 'sorrowful and deeply distressed' (Mt. 26:37). From this we learn that sorrow and distress are not contradictory to contentment. Jesus wrestled in prayer and asked God if there was any other possible way. But He concluded His time in prayer with "Your will be done" (Mt. 26:42).... If we want to find contentment, humility must be our frame of mind. If we want to be like Christ, we must take the form of a servant."

### This is the other side of "Train up a child...and he will not depart from it"

"The more we hear ourselves grumble and complain the more we take it to our heart and believe our own words. This is where crotchety old women come from. When they were young, they were complaining about something, and now that they're old, it has become a way of life."

### Grab a hold of your thoughts

"One of the central ways we can resist mental temptations, including the temptation to be discontent, is to pay attention to what we are thinking about.... Setting your mind on things above (Col. 3:2) literally means picking your thoughts up and moving them elsewhere. How do you begin to do this? First you have to tune in. What are you listening to all day? What you listening to when you go to bed, when you rise up, when you hop into the shower, when you drive across town? You may be surprised to notice how much fault-finding, reviewing of hurts and wrongs, wishing for things you don't have, dissatisfaction, and complaining are going on....If you want to change your thought patterns you must practice thinking about things that are 'praiseworthy' and root out the things that are not."

### There is no neutrality

"We are always either feeding discontent and starving contentment, or feeding contentment and starving discontent."

### What kind of score are you keeping?

"Contentment counts its blessings. Discontent counts its grievances. Contentment is cheerful. Discontent pouts. Contentment takes the hit. Discontent points the finger. Contentment is generous. Discontent won't share."





by Darren Bosch

*If work is worship does that mean...*

# I JUST GOTTA BE WARM AND FUZZY ALL DAY?

If God is sovereign over every square inch of creation (and we know He is!) then that includes even our vocation. Understanding that changes the way we look at our business and the marketplace. Our work, done His way, reflects God's character and unleashes His beauty. Because faith and work are seamless, our work is *worship*.

But equating work with worship is quite the idea. And some of us stand on the proverbial shores unsure, skeptically dipping our feet into these new waters. A first response is often, "So we're gonna sing 'Kumbaya' around the water cooler all day? Do you expect me to turn my business into some charity and not make any money? That's all very nice, but it's not the real world. We have to get stuff *done* here!"

Do you feel the tension in doing your work as worship? Is there a strain between serving others and making sure that your business gets its needed results? Herein lies the false dilemma that often brings us unneeded guilt. But there's hope!

## GOD'S MODEL

In His image, reflecting His beauty, God perfectly designed us for every

aspect of work. He loves our work – because of its purpose. As image-bearers, even our work is an expression of Him. God is deeply interested in every part of it. How we care for people, balance books, run systems, innovate, hire and fire and make healthy profit – it all matters to Him! He designed us to run our businesses with excellence, reflecting His character. That means He's deeply interested, involved, and holds us accountable in our businesses' customer service, sales, finances and operations. So yes, he even cares about your bottom line. It too is an act of worship!

Proverbs encourages us in pursuing excellence and shows how honest gain is an outcome of God's blessing on hard work. Competency and profits increase our capacity to do more good. As we read in Proverbs 14:23: "All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty." Proverbs 22:29 tells us that if we are skilled at what we do, we'll always be in demand.

Bruce Ashford practically writes,

"God often works through our jobs to love his image-bearers. In other words, God uses the products of our

work to provide for our fellow citizens. When God wants to feed a hungry child, He does not usually do so in miraculous manner; He usually does so through farmers, truck drivers, grocery store owners, contractors, electricians, plumbers and a myriad of other types of workers... In conclusion, our callings are our primary means to bring God glory by loving Him and our neighbour. If we are seeking to fulfill these callings faithfully and with excellence, we can

*[God is] deeply interested, involved, and holds us accountable in our businesses' customer service, sales, finances and operations.*

multiply our faithfulness in every dimension of society and culture, and across the fabric of our shared human existence.”

## OUR MODEL

So what does this look like in business terms? I work in a Christian leadership mentoring firm called DeliberateU, where we’ve honed the art of business down to three foundational pillars. Wrapped in a kingdom-focused culture these are:

1. **PEOPLE** – Creating a great place to work where people are growing and led by clear purpose and values.
2. **SALES** – Serving others, not self. Creating a “wow” experience with a great product and service.
3. **RESULTS** – Building a healthy, sustainable business that is well positioned to grow and give back.

When these spheres work in synergy something stunningly beautiful takes place! Rooted in the essence of the Great Commandment of Matthew 22:36-40 they unleash in us the capacity to reflect God’s creativity, excellence, grace and truth. They allow us to worship Him by blessing and serving our neighbor. But here’s the scoop: it always starts with people.

Why’s that you say? Well, who has God made the pinnacle of His creation? People. So as business owners we are entrusted with God’s greatest creation. Whether staff, customers, or janitors, people like you and I are His craftsmanship made in His image. If we as Christian business leaders saw all people as our neighbors, how might that change the way we steward His most precious creation? What a privilege!

How can we glorify God in the spheres of team and customer experience together with business processes, all while producing a healthy



bottom line? In a 2013 video, Cardone Industries founder Michael Cardone Jr. shared how they’ve tried to deliver on all three. His company takes apart older vehicles and then cleans and tests the parts, and sells them for as little as one half what a new part might cost, while still giving a lifetime warranty.

“We believe there’s a bottom line business-wise/profit-wise. There’s a bottom line socially – how you impact your community how you impact the people around you how you impact your vendors how you impact your customers. I also believe that there’s a spiritual bottom line.... Giving your life to God, giving your business to God, means that you’re willing to accept what God has for you. It’s not necessarily the size of your business, it’s not necessarily the growth of your business, it’s not how many competitors were put out of business – it’s doing what God’s called us to do. I believe if you do that your business will be a success.... I’m not called to be a minister. I’m not called to be a pastor. I’m called to be a businessman. I see no difference. Work is worship.”

When we intentionally lead the businesses entrusted to us in a God-

focused way, to His design, our work is worship. Our work opens up opportunities to practically serve people while blessing them, their families, and communities. Is your business an act of worship?

## DELIBERATE APPLICATION

1. If work is worship, do I view my business as something I built or something God entrusted me with? How does that change how I view work as worship?
2. Look in the mirror and ask yourself. “What primarily drives our business: People, Production, Profit or Pride?”
3. If I’m to lead with “truth and love” do I care for people, carry people or care less for people? **RP**

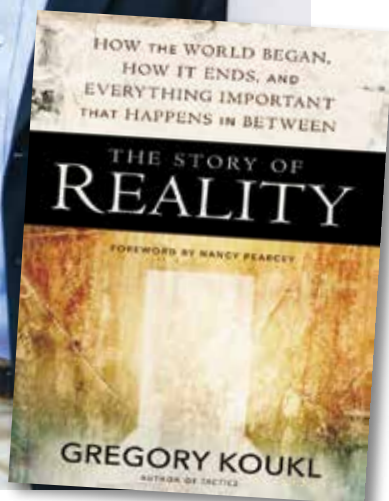
*Darren Bosch is a partner at DeliberateU ([www.DeliberateU.com](http://www.DeliberateU.com)) - leadership mentors for Christian business owners looking to grow in their workplace, families and communities. Their conviction is that God uniquely uses the marketplace to expand His kingdom purpose – serving others while growing in faith, hope and love. This is the second in the “Work is Worship” series of articles with the first appearing in the Jan/Feb 2018 issue and titled “Work is Worship.”*

Greg Koukl,  
author of *The  
Story of Reality  
and Tactics*.

# AN APOLOGETIC BOOK WORTH BUYING TWICE

A review of Greg Koukl's  
*Story of Reality*

by Wes Bredenhof



**THE STORY OF REALITY: HOW THE WORLD  
BEGAN, HOW IT ENDS, AND EVERYTHING  
IMPORTANT THAT HAPPENS IN BETWEEN**

BY GREGORY KOUKL

2017 / 198 PAGES

There are two types of apologetics books: there are the ones that tell you about defending the faith and then there are the ones that *show you how* to defend the faith. Greg Koukl's new book falls into the latter category.

It's a book written with two main types of readers in mind. It's for Christians who are struggling for answers to the big questions that come with the Christian faith. It's also written for unbelievers who are open to considering the claims of the Christian faith. For both readers (and others), I think Koukl has something powerful to offer.

## A STORY BUT NOT FICTION

*The Story of Reality* is a basic overview of most of the key elements of a Christian worldview. When I say it's basic, I mean that it's not written at a highly academic level. A high school or college student should be able to manage it. However, behind the basic level of communication, one familiar with the issues will recognize that Koukl is no slouch. The deeper stuff is in his grasp, but he has distilled it into something readily understood.

The concept of "worldview" is increasingly being criticized in Christian circles as something created by modern philosophy. Perhaps it's for this reason that Koukl recasts the notion in terms of a story. In this story, there are characters and there is a plot. The main characters are God and man. The plot involves creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. But unlike other stories, the Christian story (laid out in the Bible) is objectively true — it is reality.

Koukl addresses other competing "stories" such as

materialism, mysticism/pantheism, and Islam. He critiques these stories and shows how they're inadequate for explaining the state of things as we see them. He then also provides ample argumentation to illustrate that it's only the Christian story (or worldview) that can be true. Christianity is true because of the impossibility of the contrary.

Readers familiar with Reformed presuppositional apologetics will recognize what Koukl is doing. His method is generally in that school. Koukl is a student of Francis Schaeffer, who in turn had been a student of Cornelius Van Til. Van Til was one of the pioneers of Reformed presuppositional apologetics. One of the key features of that school is a commitment to the place of Scripture in apologetics, not only as a foundation, but also as part of the actual method. Similarly, throughout *The Story of Reality*, Koukl is constantly either quoting or, more often, paraphrasing the Bible. This is highly commendable!

...throughout *The Story of Reality*, Koukl is constantly either quoting or, more often, paraphrasing the Bible. This is highly commendable!



## A FEW CAUTIONS

This is not to say that Koukl is always consistently in the Reformed school of apologetics. There are a couple of places where I put some question marks. In chapter 21, he discusses faith. He correctly notes that faith, in itself, does not save. Rather, faith is the instrument through which we are saved. Then he writes this:


This is why reason and evidence matter in the story. It is critical to get certain facts right. Put simply — reason assesses, faith trusts. That is the relationship of reason to faith. Reason helps us know what is actually true, leading to accurate belief. Faith is our step of trust to rely on what we have good reason to believe is so.

There is some truth in this. You can say that faith needs and uses reason as a tool. However, there are also important limits to this. Above all, the unregenerate mind misuses and abuses reason because of sin. Unregenerate reason is not going to assess facts correctly. Deadened by sin, reason does *not* help you know what is actually true. Moreover, even when regeneration comes into the picture, human reason is going to run stuck with certain pieces of the Christian worldview (or story). Think of the Trinity. Reason assesses that doctrine and says, “Sorry, it doesn’t make sense.” Does faith then stop trusting? Faith has reasons for believing in the Trinity, but those reasons come down to the faithfulness and reliability of the One who revealed it to us, not the logical self-evidence of it.

There were a few other questionable statements. Koukl suggests, on page 51, that the Big Bang is compatible with Genesis. And in chapter 11, he opines that the Bible teaches that animals have souls. The biblical evidence offered for this is debatable.

I also want to draw attention to an omission. The subtitle tells us that the book will tell us “everything important that happens in between” the beginning and the end. But in Koukl’s story, an important part is missing. It’s the part where the lives of believers are transformed by the gospel. It’s the part where the Holy Spirit works to change us and make us into new people who take every thought captive for Christ in every area of life. I was hoping to read at least a paragraph, preferably a chapter, about that vital and wonderful part of the Story. It’s incomplete without it.

## CONCLUSION

Despite my criticisms, overall this is a well-written and well-argued book. Koukl deftly anticipates questions and objections. He uses helpful illustrations. The chapters are of such a length as not to be intimidating. If you know an unbeliever who is showing interest in the faith, I’d suggest buying two copies — one for yourself, and one for her or him. Offer to read it together and discuss it. You’d for sure find yourself enriched and, who knows, perhaps it would be God’s instrument to work faith in the heart of your friend too. 

*Dr. Bredenhof blogs at [CreationWithoutCompromise.com](http://CreationWithoutCompromise.com) and [Yinkahdinay.wordpress.com](http://Yinkahdinay.wordpress.com) where this article first appeared. It is reprinted with permission. Greg Koukl photo provided by [StandToReason.org](http://StandToReason.org)*

## 5 QUOTES FROM THE STORY OF REALITY

### God’s Story in one sentence

“It’s a story I can tell in a single sentence, though it’s a bit long. Here it is: *God*, the Creator of the universe, in order to rescue *man* from punishment for his rebellion, came to earth and took on the form of humanity in *Jesus*, the Savior, to die on a *cross* and rise from the dead, so that in the final *resurrection* those who receive his mercy will enjoy a wonderful friendship with their sovereign Lord in the kind of perfect world their hearts have always yearned for.”

### It’s not about you

“The Story is not so much about God’s plan for your life as it is about your life for God’s plan. Let that sink in. God’s purposes are central, not yours. Once you are completely clear on this fact, many things are going to change for you.”

### What every worldview shares

“Every worldview has four elements. They help us understand how the parts of a person’s worldview story fit together. These four parts are called creation, fall, redemption and restoration. *Creation* tells us how things began, where everything came from (including us), the reasons for our origins, and what ultimate reality is like. *Fall* describes the problem (since we all know something has gone wrong with the world). *Redemption* gives us the solution, the way to fix what went wrong. *Restoration* describes what the world will look like once the repair takes place.”

### The problem of evil for atheists

“...given a Godless, physical universe, the idea that things are not as they should be makes little sense. How can something go wrong when there was no right way for it to be in the first place?”

### We are the pinnacle of God’s creation

“If you have ever asked yourself the question ‘Who am I?’ you now have your answer. The Story says you are a creature, but you are not just a creature. You are not a little god, but you are not nothing. You are made like God in a magnificent way that can never be taken from you. No matter how young or old or small or disfigured or destitute or dependent, you are still a beautiful creature. You bear the mark of God. He has made you like himself, and that changes everything.”

# REVIEWS

## CLASSIC FILMS FOR THE FAMILY

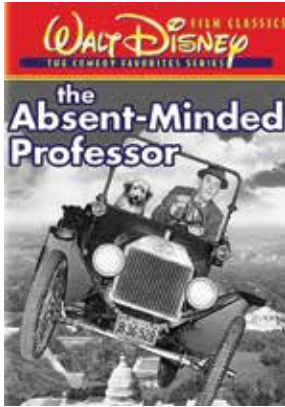
By Jon Dykstra

### THE ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR

FAMILY

1961 / 96 MINUTES

RATING: 7/10



The classic begins with a bang – a lab accident blows up Ned Brainard's garage and leaves the professor knocked out cold.

The good news? This explosive experiment has produced a wondrous new substance – a rubbery material that when rolled up in a ball and dropped *gains height with each bounce*. It's almost like this *rubber can fly* so, of course, the professor names it *flubber*.

The bad news? While he was out cold the professor missed his wedding...for the third time! While Betsy – his long-suffering fiancée – loves her Neddy, this is it: "I say, three strikes and you're out!"

When Betsy won't speak to him, Ned tries to get her attention by secretly ironing flubber on to the bottom of all of the college basketball team's shoes. With the help of flubber they can really jump, but not just over the other team – right over the gym rafters! And things just get crazier from there.

I will note a couple of cautions. One villain speaks rudely to his underlings telling them to "shut up" and calling them "stupid" and "idiots." There is also some peril that worried our four-year-old – a shoot-out in which no one gets hit.

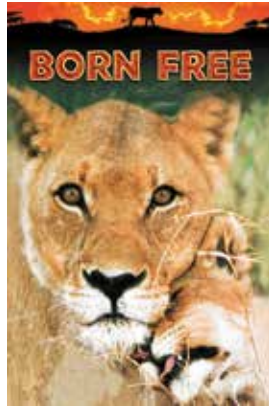
That said, this is a great one for just about all ages.

### BORN FREE

FAMILY / DRAMA

1966 / 95 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10



When a man-eating lion has to be shot, and his mate too, three little cubs are left as orphans. Game warden George Adamson takes them back to his wife Joy, and their home. They raise them, and send two off to the zoo. But Elsa, the runt of the litter, stays... until it become impossible to keep her too. But how can they send Elsa off to a zoo when all she's known was the wide spaces of the game reserve? The couple hatches a plan to teach their Elsa how to hunt and survive in the wild.

A couple of cautions to note: the story begins with a lion attacking a woman washing clothes at the river. We see the lion charging, and the woman shriek, but not the attack itself. Afterwards a shot of the river shows blood flowing by. If parents fast-forwarded this bit the rest of the film could probably be viewed by most children 9 and up. A one-minute scene (in the last 10 minutes of the film) of one lion fighting another might also be too intense for young viewers. Language concerns include one instance of "damn it."

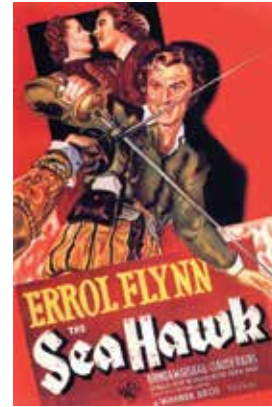
This an all-ages film that everyone can appreciate (though some more than others) so long as parents note the cautions above.

### THE SEA HAWK

DRAMA / ACTION

1940 / 109 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10



While *The Sea Hawk* is set in 1585, and pitches Spain against England, this film was all about the politics of its day. Spain is a stand-in for the Germany of 1940, and King Phillip could only have been more Hitler-esque if they had given him a small square mustache.

Queen Elizabeth does her very best Chamberlain imitation, refusing to prepare for the clearly hostile Spain. She chooses to appease the tyrant, even as Phillip is building an armada.

Then there is Captain Thorpe (Errol Flynn) with his own stand-in role. He has his ship, which is part of an English privateer fleet, the Seahawks. Even as Elizabeth appeases Phillip, the Seahawks raid Spanish towns and sink Spanish ships. Thorpe is channeling at least a little Churchill, urging the queen – and through her, the nation of England – to prepare for war.

One caution would be that there is a lot of fighting, with folks getting stabbed and shot. But there is no gore.

*The Sea Hawk* is fascinating on two very different levels: as a swashbuckling action film, and as a wonderful piece of war-time anti-Nazi propaganda.

## THE SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS

FAMILY / BIOGRAPHY

1957 / 135 MINUTES

RATING 7/10

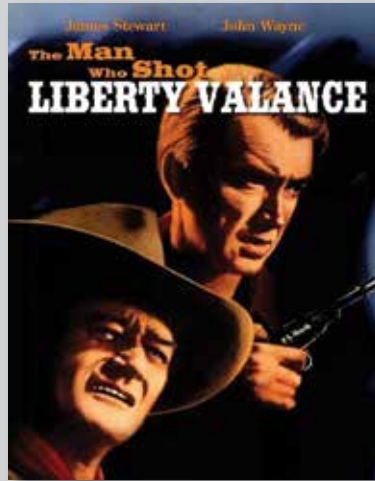


The story begins on the night before Charles Lindbergh's 1927 solo flight across the North Atlantic. Even as "Slim" is tossing and turning, trying to catch some sleep before he begins what could be a 40-hour flight, he starts remembering what led him to this point. We see, in these flashbacks, and others that take place during the flight, how Lindbergh bought his first plane, how he handled his job as a mail aviator in terrible weather conditions, how he convinced a group of St. Louis businessmen to back his transatlantic attempt, and how the Spirit of St. Louis was designed and built.

I suspect it might have lost our kids' attention if we hadn't watched it in two separate chunks. But broken up that way, it kept the attention of our whole family from 4 to 46.

A topic worth a discussion with the kids is, what sort of risk is appropriate? Also while Lindbergh's religious views seem hard to nail down, he wasn't an orthodox Christian. In the film his muddled thinking about God comes up in a few brief scenes.

The 49-years-old Jimmy Stewart was playing a man 24 years his junior, and if Lindbergh seems a little older than 25, Stewart still pulls it off. This is an interesting bit of history, charmingly acted.



## THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE

WESTERN / BLACK AND WHITE

1962 / 123 MINUTES

RATING 8/10

What does it mean to be a man? In this classic Western, Hollywood offers up two answers.

Tom Doniphon (John Wayne) is a successful horse rancher living just outside the town of Shinbone who prides himself on not needing anyone and not fearing anyone. He solves his own problems, and figures that everyone else should

do the same. Self-reliance - that, in his mind, is what makes a man a real man.

Ransom Stoddard (Jimmy Stewart) is a lawyer, newly arrived to Shinbone who starts a school for both children and adults when he discovers that most can't read. He wants to bring law and order to town, but via the law book, and not the gun barrel, and that makes him naive. But he's also principled and caring, and that, in his mind, is what makes a man a man.

To put both these models of manhood to the test, we have Liberty Valance, a bully and a killer. He and his gang do whatever they want, and none of the town folk dare stop him. Doniphon could stop him... but that would be solving other people's problems for them. Ransom wants to stop him... but he'll need more than just his law books.

### CAUTIONS

This is an all-time classic that everyone will enjoy...if they have the patience for it. It starts off slow, and the pacing throughout is far more relaxed than anything a modern viewer is used to. If it were made today, they would cut at least a half hour. But, if you go in understanding that, then this will be a grand film.

It's the nature of Western to have some violence in them, but in this one a lot of it occurs offscreen, though just barely so, as when Ransom is whipped. Onscreen we see a manic Liberty striking furiously, but Ransom is just below the frame, so we don't see the blows land. A couple people are shot, but without any real gore.

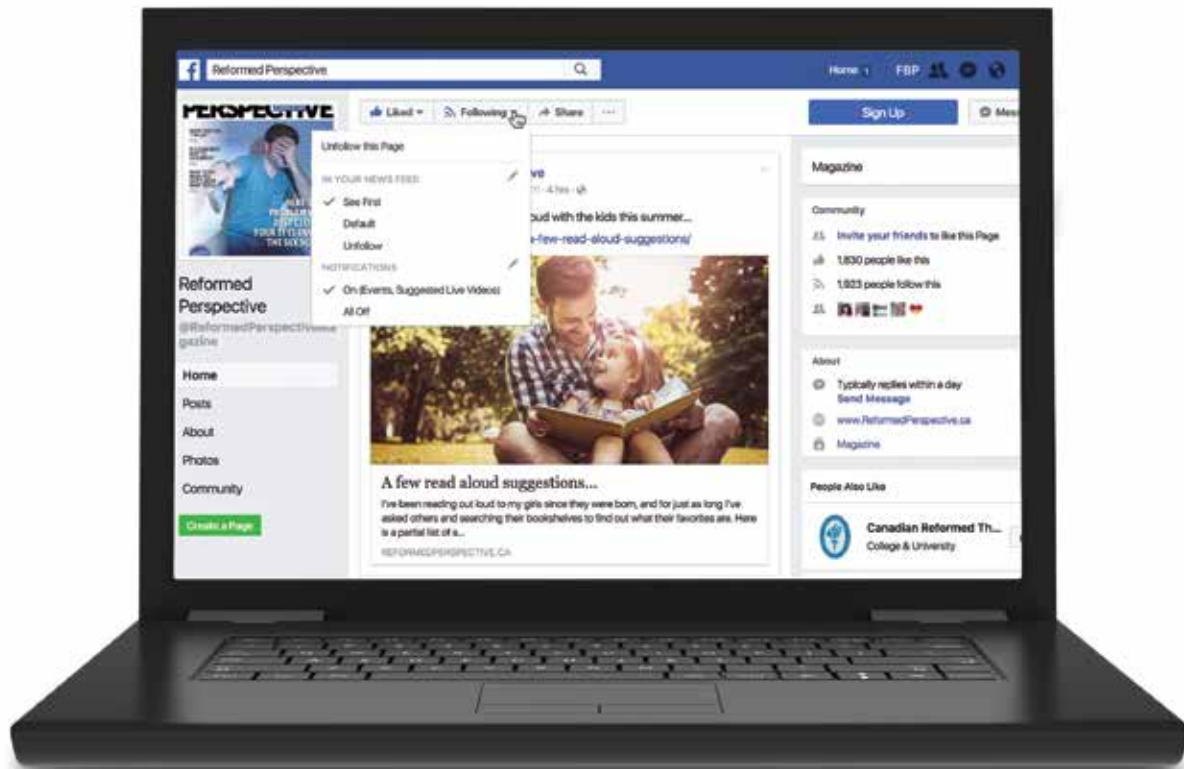
The only language concerns would be one use of "damn"

### CONCLUSION

If your children regularly watch TV then the pace of this film will be too slow to keep their interest. But otherwise this would be a classic that families with older children - probably at least 10 - would enjoy. It's good fodder for a discussion about the difference between Hollywood's ideal man, and the type of man God calls us to be in passages like Ephesians 5:21-33.



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