

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

JULY/AUGUST 2019
Volume 38 Issue No. 5

PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 35+ YEARS

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Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Published monthly by the Foundation for the publication of a Reformed Social-Political Magazine (Reformed Perspective Foundation).

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Template Design: Compass Creative Studio Inc. compasscreative.ca

Art Direction, Design and Layout: Annelies Veurink
www.facebook.com/FreshDesignByAnnelies

Contact Address for Australia:

Pro Ecclesia Publishers, PO Box 189, Kelmscott, W. Australia 6111

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Registration: ISSN 0714-8208
Charitable Organization under Canada Income Tax Act
Registration No. 118929272RR0001

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WHO AM I?

I began reading my wife's copy of *You Who?* only after she shared comments from the online critics who were savaging it. A good encouraging review won't necessarily sell me a book – I have too many others stacked up already competing for my attention – but when a certain sort of critic just *hates* a book then my curiosity is piqued and I want to know, "What could have gotten them *that* riled up?" So I owe Rachel Jankovic's detractors thanks for getting me started on one of the best books I've read this year.

BAD ANSWERS TO ONE OF LIFE'S BIG QUESTIONS

The author's premise is simple: "Who am I?" is a question everyone asks and most of us answer badly. The most common answers involve our jobs: people will say "I'm a farmer" or "I am a small business owner." But there's a problem with identifying with our career: we can lose our job, or retire from it. And who are we *then*?

Others will identify themselves with their abilities or interests ("I am an artist," or "I am a surfer"), or in their marital status ("I am single"), what groups they belong to ("I am Canadian"), or in not belonging to any groups ("I am a free spirit"). And many women look for their identity in the roles of wife and mother.

But here, too, problems exist because here, too, things can change: over time our abilities fade and our interests can shift. Over time the country we were once proud of may betray the values we thought it held. And over time even the most loving spouse will repeatedly let us down. Sure, our children can be a frequent source of pride and joy, one

week sitting side by side in the church pew, hair combed, shoes polished, lovingly sharing the songbooks, but the next week it's just as likely you'll be taking two out at a time, their legs kicking and little lungs giving full vent to their protests in front of the whole congregation. If we find our identity in being the perfect parent, it doesn't take any time at all for that bubble to burst.

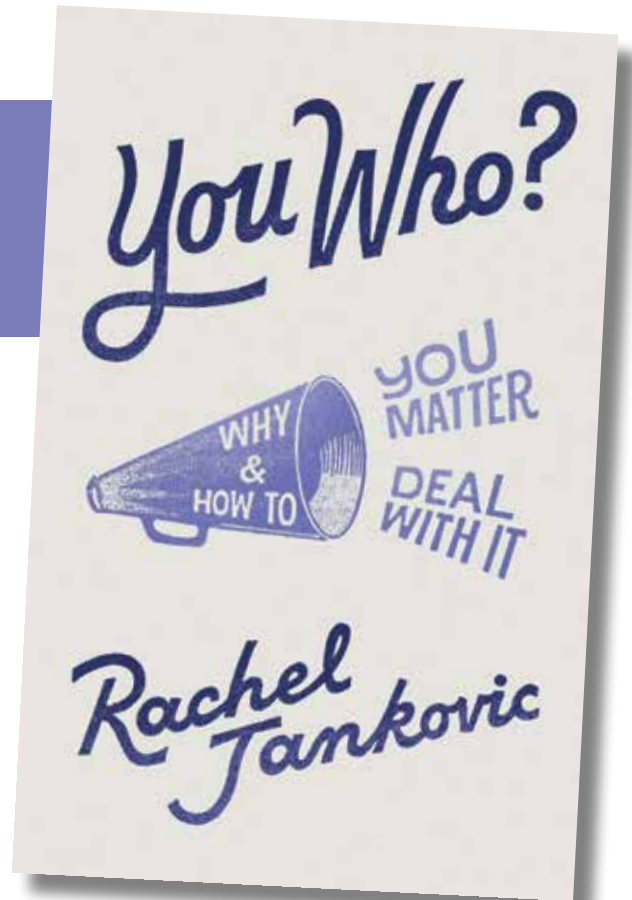
GETTING IT RIGHT

So if those are all wrong answers to the "Who am I?" question, then what's the right one? Jankovic wants to:

"encourage and equip believing women to see their identity in Christ as the most essential part of them, and to see all the ways that will work its way out in their lives, manifesting itself as strength, dignity, and clarity of purpose."

Encouraging believers to make Christ our first and foremost shouldn't be controversial. So why were critics upset? Because they were confused, mistaking Jankovic's call to God-honoring obedience for some sort of legalistic works righteousness.

There's a sense in which that's understandable. Legalism (or works righteousness) and antinomianism (or lawlessness) are a set of paired theological errors. The legalist can't believe God's grace is really *free*, so he wants to earn it by obeying God's law and, like the Pharisees of old, will



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even add to and expand on God's laws. Meanwhile, antinomians recognize that the law can't justify us and conclude that since we can't measure up to God's standard then Jesus must have come to abolish all those pesky Commandments.

CALLING CHRISTIANS TO OBEY GOD IS NOT WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS

These are huge, dangerous errors, but if you speak out against one, it's inevitable someone will mistake your point and think you are a proponent of the opposite error. And that's what's happened here.

In the Reformed circles that this magazine serves we all know we can't earn our way to heaven, but if we have a tendency to err in one direction or the other then we're probably more likely to tip in the legalistic direction (just think of all the additional rules we once had for Sunday and how often we heard "*dat mag niet op Zondag!*").

IGNORING GOD IN THE BIG AND LITTLE THINGS

But in the evangelical world – Jankovic’s target audience – the error is on the other side. In those circles many believe sin is no big deal because, after all, the more we mess up, the more it just shows how gracious God is. Or as the current star of the *Bachelorette* reality TV show (a self-professing Christian) put it this month, after she had sex with one contestant and went naked bungee jumping with another:

“I refuse to feel shame....I am standing firm in believing that maybe God wants to use a mess like me to point to his goodness and grace.”

What this neglects is the Apostle Paul’s answer to the question, “Shall we then continue in sin that grace may abound?” to which he gave a definitive, “By no means!” (Romans 6:1-2). Of course, we shouldn’t expect solid theology from reality TV. But this antinomianism – lawlessness – is working itself out in the audience of evangelical wives and moms that Jankovic is speaking to.

There we find that the false identities some Christian women are adopting, are giving them reasons to disobey God’s call to faithful, mundane, day-after-day obedience. A mom who finds her identity in her abilities will ignore her children in favor of her career aspirations. Or if she’s made herself the center of her world, then she’ll have every reason to skip the laundry folding and partake in a little “me time” instead. And if her kids become her identity, then neglecting her husband to give the little ones more attention can be spun as downright virtuous.

FINDING OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST IS FREEING

That’s what it can look like, but as much as these identities promise us meaning and fulfillment, they never deliver. Jankovic wants us to understand we were made to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Our identity is in Christ. We were made to worship. That’s our identity: *God worshippers*. And His people give Him glory by doing the good works that He has prepared for us to do (Eph. 2:10).

Does that mean folding laundry is the key to pleasing God? Well, God might be calling you to get at that pile of clothes and, if so, then you should obey. Then that is how you can glorify Him. But the kids’ homework might be a more important priority, or maybe, to take on the rest of the day, a nap is needed. If so, then that unfolded pile can also glorify God as you, in loving obedience, get some rest, or help with homework instead.


I am not a mom or a wife, but this book was a help to me too. There wasn’t all that much in here that I didn’t already know but it served as a much-needed reminder that I am not what I do. I’m at that stage of life where joints are giving out, and it’s more obvious now than it has ever been that I am no athlete. Before I read *You Who?* that was getting me down. But there is joy to be found when, instead of finding my identity in my athletic ability (or lack thereof) I bow my knee and ask my God and King, “How can I honor You?” When I make Him my focus, then it turns out I’m still able to throw a ball far enough to play with the three kids God has given me to raise and nurture. I can’t glorify *myself* anymore in my athletic endeavors, but in playing with the kids

He’s given me, it turns out I can glorify Him. I can still, in this way, do what I was made to do. And instead of being depressed at being able to do less, I can be content knowing God isn’t concerned with the declining *volume* of my output.

WE WON’T MEASURE UP ...BUT CHRIST DOES

But, as Jankovic notes, He does demand *everything I have to give*. If that sounds like a lot, of course, it is. Jankovic emphasizes obeying God in the day-to-day grind, making every moment about Him. We’re not going to succeed at that, but when we understand what Christ has done for us, and how we are His, then we will want to try. And in trying, we will glorify Him. In failing we will also glorify Him. And we can glorify him, too, in repenting and then, secure in what Christ has done for us on the cross, going to bed assured of forgiveness and getting ready to do it all over again tomorrow.

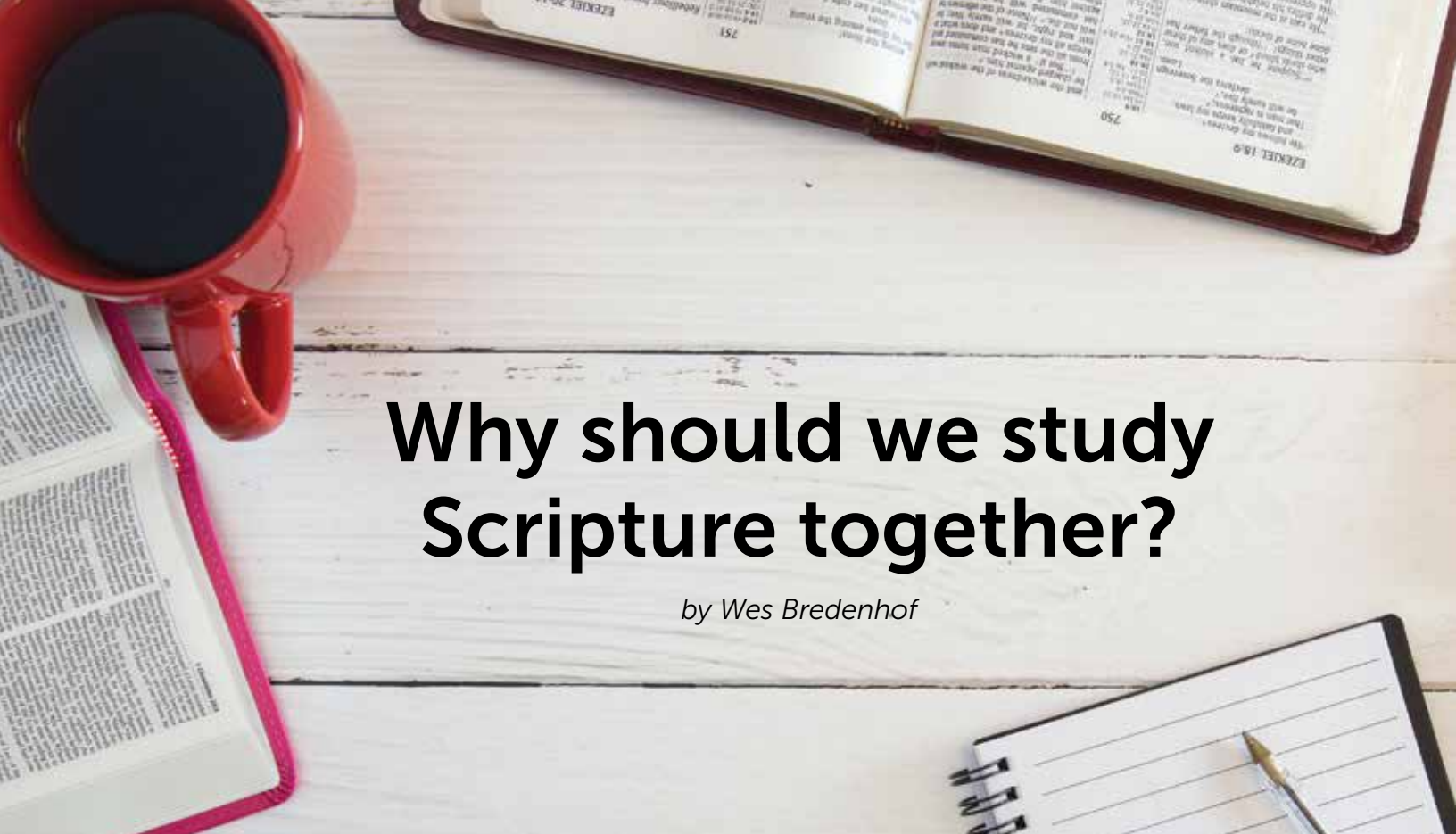
If I’m not making this sound exciting, then that’s a good reason for you to pick up *You Who?* where Rachel Jankovic says it a lot better. And if you are excited, well, what are you waiting for? You’re going to love *You Who?*!

I’d recommend it for any study group, women or men, and if your group is interested, then be sure to check out the study group e-book that you can download for free at CanonPress.com. 



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If we find our identity in being the perfect parent, it doesn't take any time at all for that bubble to burst.



Why should we study Scripture together?

by Wes Bredenhof

It's too easy to take for granted the blessings God has heaped on us, so let's stop for a moment and think about several of them.

We still have the blessing to freely worship. Not only on Sunday, but during the week too, we're free to gather together for fellowship and study. We also have the blessing of God's Word in our own language. Unlike so many believers in the history of the New Testament church, we have the Bible in a language we can understand – and these Bibles are cheap and readily available. Finally, we have the blessing of literacy. The fact that you're reading this puts you at a far greater advantage than many believers in the history of the church. What incredible riches our God has lavished on us!

DO WE HAVE A HEART FOR SEARCHING OUT GOD'S WORD?

Yet it does seem that many church members take these things for granted. In every church I've served, there is always the mass problem of Bible study. Every consistory discussed it. It's the problem of encouraging individual believers to study the Bible

for themselves. It's also the problem of encouraging believers to study the Bible *together*. I'd venture to guess that, on average, probably 25% of the communicant members in the churches I've served regularly studied Scripture together. Actually, 25% is on the generous side.

What can consistories do about it? Here's the problem: office bearers can badger members into Bible study groups for a time. But if their heart is not in it, typically they won't persevere. The heart is the issue – and how do you change someone's heart? You can't. The Holy Spirit does that. He does it, however, through us. He says in 1 Thess. 5:14,

“And we urge you brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

We're to do these things with the Word of God in our hand.

In this article, I want to lay out the Bible's answer for why believers should study Scripture together. There are two audiences I want to address. The first is the office bearer who wants to encourage

Bible study in his congregation. The second is the believer who may be lagging in conviction about the value of this practice.

PSALM 119 AS A PRAYER FOR THE WAY WE WANT TO BE

So, why study the Bible together? When our thoughts turn to Scripture and our attitude towards it, Psalm 119 is a frequent destination. This Psalm extols the Scriptures in exuberant terms. It also speaks of the believers' emotions/affections about the Bible. For example, nine times the Psalmist speaks of his delight in God's Word. Seven times he testifies of his love for the Scriptures. He witnesses to the joy that comes from the divine writings. It's important to read all these things with our eyes on Jesus. He is the fulfilment of all these holy emotions – he exhibited them with an unparalleled depth and consistency. Moreover, Christ did that in the place of us who often sag in our feelings about God's Word. His love and joy in the Word are credited to us by God.

When we see Psalm 119 that way, it puts it in a new light for us. It speaks of our Saviour's obedient life for us, but



The Bible has famously been compared to a love letter from God.

only see so much. One person can have blind spots. But when several Christians gather together around God's Word, they'll find more to be amazed at about our God. He will receive more praise and honour. That's what we want, isn't it?

ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER

However, there is not only a vertical aspect here. It turns out that what brings more glory to God is also for our benefit. When we gather together with fellow believers around God's Word, there's encouragement to be found. We support one another. We pray together. We enjoy fellowship. When it's going as it should, Bible study can feel like Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!"

We could also think of what Scripture says in Ephesians 4. There God speaks about how Christ has given the gift of office bearers to the church. He says their work is to "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." They do that work with the Scriptures. Bible study together will likewise build up the body of Christ and with exactly the same blessings described in Ephesians 4:13. Bible study together will lead to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of Christ. It will enable us to grow together in maturity. It will help pull us into the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

TWO OBJECTIONS

Some church members have keenly developed reasons for not going to Bible study. They could go (they have the health and the time), but they refuse to. Let me briefly address two reasons I've heard over the years.

One objection is that it's all the same: "The same people talk and they always say the same thing. It makes for a boring hour or two. So it's just not worth the time or effort."

I'm familiar with this one because

I used it as a young man. I remember saying this at a friend's house and his mom reamed me out. She said, "If you don't like the way it is, then it's up to you to make it different. You lead by example. You'll only get out of it what you put into it." She was exactly right.

Another reason comes from a darker place: "Everyone at these Bible studies is so dull. They don't have a good basic understanding of the Bible. It's just frustrating listening to them ramble on in their ignorance. Their lack of knowledge about the Bible is exasperating."

The essential problem here is pride. One's pride leads to impatience with other believers. Bible study presents an opportunity to share our insights with one another. One may have to pray for growth in holiness to do that humbly and judiciously, but rather than flee from that challenge, we should embrace it. Moreover, we need to be open to the possibility that there is something to learn from other believers – perhaps we don't have the exceptional level of knowledge we thought we had (cf. Phil. 2:3).

CONCLUSION

The Bible has famously been compared to a love letter from God. Of course, love letters are mostly a thing of the past, but the idea is still current. If you were to receive a love letter, you would treasure it and read it carefully several times. The Bible is God's love letter to his people. Why would any recipient not want to read and study that letter as often as possible, both on your own and with other believers?

If you're part of a Bible study, stay consistent with it. If you're not part of a Bible study, go and find one in your local church. With your meaningful contribution, God will be praised and you'll be blessed. RP

*Dr. Wes Bredenhof blogs at
Yinkahdinay.wordpress.com.*

also his sanctifying power in us. We look at Psalm 119 as a prayer for the way we want to be. In our new nature, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we want to be like Christ. We want to reflect our union with him – we want to love the Scriptures like he does!

When we do, we won't have to be coaxed into Bible study. It's something we will love to do because, being united to Christ, we love God and we love his Word. Personal Bible study will come from the heart, and so will group Bible study. Then the rest of what I'm going to write will sound perfectly persuasive.

GETTING TO KNOW OUR GOD

The chief attraction of Bible study together is a better view of the glory of God. The Scriptures are all about revealing to us the glory of the Triune God, particularly in the gospel. I'm talking about his beauty, his splendour, his magnificence, his awesomeness. Scripture reveals God to us in all his transcendent excellence.

When you study by yourself, you will see it. But when you study with others, you will see more and see further than you will by yourself. One person can



AGE

by Jay Adams

EDITOR'S NOTE:

When Dr. Adams turned 90 this year, his colleague, Donn Arms, was reminded of a prayer Adams had written back in 1978 for a book titled, Prayers for Troubled Times. Adams was nearing 50 at the time, and the prayer is one that may inspire many middle-aged readers to speak something similar to our God.

And for younger readers it offers something to consider: what would an older you wish the younger you had done more of?

I'm tired.

As I grow older
fatigue comes sooner.

This worn and weary frame
no longer functions
as it once did.

That I may continue to serve You
and live the rest of my days
to their full
is my prayer.

I know, Lord, that I must learn
to recognize limitations,
to choose among opportunities,
to eliminate excess baggage.

But that knowledge comes hard.

I am not wise;

I need to understand
much more that I now know
of the practical application
of your Word
to these matters.

Forgive me Lord
for not learning sooner,
for wasting time
and dissipating energy
I now wish I had.

I see the importance
of these commodities
now that I am beginning
to run short of them.

I want to serve You
to the end,
not in a lackluster manner,
nor in weariness of flesh,
but vivaciously,
conserving and wisely using
all my remaining strength
for Your glory,
Amen.

*This is reprinted with permission from a
February 6 post at Nouthetic.org/blog.*

TIDBITS RELEVANT, AND NOT SO, TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

IN A NUTSHELL

BY JON DYKSTRA

LONG TERM PLANNING

Reader's Digest has a number of columns in which readers can send in their true, humorous stories. This one came from an obstetrician:

"I sometimes see unusual tattoos when working in labor and delivery. One patient had some type of fish tattoo on her abdomen. 'That sure is a pretty whale,' I commented.

"With a smile she replied, 'It used to be a dolphin.'"

SOURCE: *Laughter the best medicine II*

AND NOW YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY...

In their heyday the 1980s big hair band *Van Halen* made the news for a diva-esque demand they had in their contract. Each venue was to provide them with a bowl of M&Ms with all the brown ones taken out. Critics saw this as a ridiculous extravagant request that showed just how kooky *Van Halen* had become.

But some years later lead singer David Lee Roth explained that the "no brown M&Ms" rule wasn't silly at all – *it was a test*.

At the time the band travelled with a huge set, packed away in a whole fleet of semi-trailers, that had to be constructed at every venue. And it had to be done just right or there could be major safety concerns. Every venue received a thick instruction book to follow but because it was so big *Van Halen* was worried that the construction crews might not look at it all that carefully. That's why the band "hid" their M&M demand somewhere in the middle.

That way when the band arrived at a new venue one of the first things they would do is check the backstage area for a bowl of M&Ms. If it was there, and there were no brown ones, then they could be confident that this venue's staff

had read thought the instruction book carefully. If there were no M&Ms, or the bowl still had brown ones, then they had heads-up that this venue might be taking shortcuts, and they would have good reason to double-check everything.

This story shows (and what Proverbs 18:17 teaches) is that we really can't have a good understanding of something if we just hear from the one side. It was only when we heard from David Lee Roth that further details came out. That's particularly important to keep in my mind in our increasingly quick-to-judge era.

IF THINKING MAKES IT SO...

Bill Muehlenberg is one of Australia's most insightful commentators, and in his recent column "Sex Wars: Can't get no satisfaction" (posted to BillMuehlenberg.com) he quickly and succinctly highlighted how thinking just doesn't make things so. He wrote:

...consider this meme making the rounds on various radical feminist, homosexual and trans websites:

Things that don't necessarily make you a woman:

- having breasts
- having a vagina
- menstruating
- being pregnant
- having a uterus
- going through childbirth
- having ovaries

Things that definitely make you a woman:

- identifying as a woman

Oh dear. Let's just change things around a bit and see how all this works out:

Things that don't necessarily make you an airplane:

- having two wings
- having a fuselage
- being able to fly
- having a means of propulsion
- being able to counter gravity
- having the ability to take off, fly, and land
- having landing gear

Things that definitely make you an airplane:

- identifying as an airplane

Hey, why not? I happen to have NONE of the things listed above, but I sure do identify as an airplane. So who wants to go for a ride with me? Who is ready to fly the friendly skies with me? And if you are hesitant, reluctant or doubtful about such a trip, you clearly are a lousy bigot and prejudiced hater.

This analogy is brilliant, but to expose the nonsense we need more. So how can we take this even further?

First we have to understand what point we're trying to make. In the gender identity wars, we have two points to make:

1. God made us male and female
2. Anyone who says anything else is talking rubbish.

When the other side is downright silly, then the best way to point that out is to get them to explain themselves further – we can make our point by asking them to make theirs. So, if they insist that simply feeling like a woman can make you one, we need to ask, "What does it mean to feel like a woman?"

Remember now, they're denying all

the obvious biological differences – being a woman has nothing to do with any particular body parts. As we're hearing more and more often now, some women have penises. So if gender has nothing to do with our objective biological differences, then what's left? What makes a woman a woman?

Do women have different emotions? Different preferences? Different tendencies? Do they think differently? Perish the thought – as the feminists have long told us, there are no emotional, mental or psychological differences between men and women. Suggest that boys like trucks and girls like dolls and you'll be told that's just social conditioning.... and that you're a Neanderthal for even thinking such a thing. But if there is nothing objective that makes one a man or a woman, *and nothing subjective either*, then what is

this nonsense about *feeling* like another gender? According to the world, there are no such things as “gendered” feelings.

Christians know better. God made us male and female, and while that has obvious outward biological differences, it extends beyond the physical. Sure, the different body parts are easier to identify, but the different attitudes, thought patterns, strengths and weaknesses do manifest themselves in general gendered divisions too. And in His wisdom, and perhaps even displaying His divine sense of humor, God has so arranged things that somehow these differences compliment each other so that the two can become one flesh.

Great analogies, like Muehlenberg's above, and careful questioning are fantastic ways to point out the flaws in worldly ideology. But we can't stop there. Our

goal isn't limited to exposing error; we want to share God's Truth. And when it comes to gender, what an amazing Truth it is – one even Christians don't begin to fully understand! God has not only made us male and female, but He has given us a mirror, in the relationship between husband and wife, to show us Christ's relationship with his Church (Eph. 5) It is a mystery. It is wonderful. And it is evident for any who have eyes to see.

1 X 100 VS. 100 X 1

The quotes here are not meant as endorsements of all these two authors have written elsewhere. But what they're saying below is worth chewing on:

- “To put it simply: children and adolescents do not need one 100-minute (awkward and painful)

Good Shoes

I feel like I am just beginning to walk up a very long road. There will be difficult terrain and bad weather.

Although I must walk this road, I feel afraid and dread doing so, and I feel tired just thinking about walking it.

I thank God that He is sovereign and in control of all parts of life, including this next part which cannot be avoided. This too, is part of His will, and there are things that He wants me to learn by traveling this high and low, pothole-ridden, rut-strewn way.

Frankly, I have become too accustomed to the paved highway.

I thank Him also that I have brothers and sisters to walk the road with me - it would be much harder all alone.

I also thank Him for other people who have been down this road already; they confirm that by God's grace this can be done, and give guidance as to where the potholes are.

And, knowing our Lord, who loves us greatly, I have no doubt that we will see some marvelous gardens and some magnificent sunsets along the way, also.

And He will give us good shoes.

~ Sharon L. Bratcher (sharoncopy1@gmail.com)

sexual health conversation. They need 100 one-minute conversations. They need sexual and relational education delivered in many, many sound bits, weekly, across their entire childhood and teen years.” – Tina Schermer Sellers

- Your kids will talk to you about the things you talk to them about. Your kids won't talk to you about things you don't talk to them about. – Craig Gross

AS SEEN ON A T-SHIRT

If you don't know how to break the ice and talk about your Creator, why not let your shirt do the talking? Here's another top 10 of great t-shirts easy to find at places like confessionalwear.com and others hip and happening retailers on the world wide web.

- "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter"
– Charles Spurgeon
- RPNT & BLV
- Luther nailed it
- Do you even exegete bro?
- The chief end of man it to glorify GOD and enjoy HIM forever
- God is Good
- Love God. Hate sin.
- "Be killing sin or it will be killing you" – John Own
- Abortion is bad medicine
- Die daily

PING PONG

by Jay Adams

"A soft answer turns away wrath. But a foolish word stirs up anger."

- Proverbs 15:1

Every time I read that Proverb, I think of Ping Pong.

How's that?

Oh . . . it just seems to illustrate the principle in the proverb so well!

Don't get it.

You see, many Proverbs are pictured principles of portable truth.

What about Ping Pong?

Oh! Here's what I meant. One player

slams a ball as hard as he can. What happens after that?

Dunno.

The other guy has to move away in order to receive it. It drives them farther apart.

Yeah? And.....?

And if he slams one back just as hard, or harder, that separates them all the more.

Sure.

But if he simply answers the slam with a gentle return by merely holding his paddle still in receiving it, the ball barely goes back over the net and . . .

and that draws them closer together.

Right! So what's the principle in the picture?

Don't slam people?

I give up.

SOURCE: This is reprinted with permission from a June 3, 2019 post on Nouthetic.org/blog

TRUTH WELL TOLD

An old Dutchman had not been to church for a whole month returned home from work one day to find his minister waiting for him. Now, neither man were for much small talk, so after a pot of coffee was made and poured, both sat down in front of the open fireplace, sipping occasionally, but only silence between them. This continued for a time, until the pastor stood up, grabbed a pair of tongs from next to the fireplace, and picked up one of the red-hot embers out of the fire and placed it on the tiles between the two men. He then sat down again, and both continued sipping their coffee. But now their attention was fixed on the ember, watching as it cooled from bright red, gradually losing its light and heat, until it became a cold, lifeless black lump.

At that point the old Dutchman looked up and smiled. "Thanks for chat pastor. I'll be sure to be in church again this Sunday."

SOURCE: based on a joke making its way around the Internet. h/t to Rev. Wes Bredenhof



Maranatha Christian School,
Fergus, ON
is looking for a

GRADE 5 TEACHER

This position is a **maternity leave position**. The class is one of a split class and has 15 students. Duties commence late November/early December and conclude at the end of the 2019/2020 school year with the opportunity for renewal at that point based on need.

If you are interested in the above position or have any questions, please contact Maranatha Christian School via one of the means listed below. Successful applicants will be members of the Canadian Reformed Churches or of a sister church.

For applicants, please submit your résumé, philosophy of education, and statement of faith. Successful applicants will be contacted for an interview.

Mr. Richard Hoeksema,
Principal

519.843.3029 (school)
519.787.1955 (home)
principal@mcsfergus.ca

Mr. Wayne Breukelman,
Education Committee Chairman

519.853.6995 (home)
226.979.6200 (cell)
waynebreukelman@mcsfergus.ca

Mailing Address:

Maranatha Christian School
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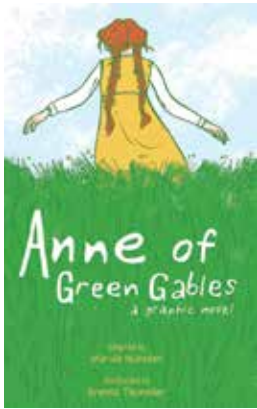
Website: www.mcsfergus.ca

BOOKS

IT'S ALL ABOUT THOSE PICTURES!

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES: A GRAPHIC NOVEL

BY L.M. MONTGOMERY & MARIAH MARSDEN
232 PAGES / 2017



L.M. Montgomery's Canadian classic, now re-imagined as a graphic novel, is perfect for the first-time reader or anyone who just can't get enough Anne. Little did siblings Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert know what would befall them when they decided to adopt a boy to help manage their farm. Instead, they get Anne, a delightful redhead who is either in ecstasies over the beauty of Prince Edward Island or in the depths of despair because of some disappointment.

Most of us are familiar with the story. Anne arrives as a neglected, mistreated 11-year-old orphan, one who has never even learned how to pray properly. That's the one caution for this book – that it shows Anne praying irreverently, because she doesn't know any better.

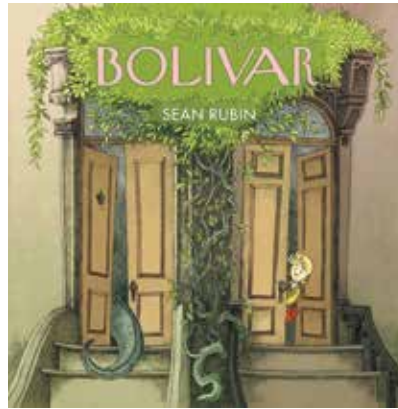
Nevertheless, Marilla is determined to shape her into a proper young lady. But Anne's enthusiastic imagination leads her into many scrapes. Over the years we see her grow into a thoughtful, quieter young woman, one whose loving heart changes the people around her. This graphic novel captures all the highlights, from the raspberry cordial, to the puffed sleeves to the schoolyard rivalries.

The gentle illustrations capture the beauty of Avonlea that so enthralled Anne. The illustrator manages to convey deepest emotions with clean, eloquent drawings. This long-time Anne fan heartily enjoyed this adaptation.

– ALIDA VANDERHORST

BOLIVAR

BY SEAN RUBIN
224 PAGES / 2017



New York is the busiest city in the world, and people there are simply too busy to notice much of anything going on around them. Except Sybil. Sybil is a little girl who *does* notice things. And she recently noticed that her next-door neighbor is, in fact, a dinosaur.

Sybil keeps getting peeks at the mysterious, very large fellow next door. But try as she might, she can't get the evidence she needs to prove his existence to anyone else. Her parents, her teacher, and her classmates all scoff. *A dinosaur in New York? How ridiculous!*

Now in a secular book that tackles dinosaurs you might expect some sort of reference to evolution. But nope, there's none of that. This utterly charming graphic novel is, in one sense, simply a chase story, with Sybil tracking her prey through New York boroughs, the museum, the subway system, never quite getting near enough for the perfect photograph. But the enormous size of this book – 1 foot by 1 foot, with 224 pages – also gives author and illustrator Sean Rubin an opportunity to show off a city he clearly loves....even as he gently mocks residents for their self-absorption.

With a girl and a dinosaur as the main characters, this is a fantastic book for boys and girls from Grade 1 on up (I loved it!).

–JON DYKSTRA

MARIE DURAND

BY SIMONETTA CARR
60 PAGES / 2015



In 1730, Marie Durand was arrested simply because her brother was a Protestant minister. Earlier, her parents were forced to have her baptized in the Roman Catholic church, the official religion of France, and to have her instructed at the local parish school. Yet her parents secretly taught her and her brother the Protestant doctrine.

Refusing to recant her faith, 19-year-old Marie was seized and taken to the Tower of Constance where she and other women and children spent their days in very uncomfortable surroundings. Despite their circumstances, they encouraged each other with the Word of God, believing it was an honor to suffer for his Name.

Marie proved a blessing to the other prisoners: she led in daily devotions, wrote letters for them, taught the children, and acted as a nurse despite her own health struggles. Only after 38 years was she finally released.

Marie Durand's life's story will tell young readers about the challenges Protestants faced in the past and show them that a life spent in prison can be lived to the glory of God.

– ALIDA VANDERHORST

TWO ON THE GREAT WARS

John Hendrix is a talented illustrator with an interest in the events of the First and Second World wars. The two books below don't quite fit properly into categories, but the first is closest to a picture book, and the second is a very text-intensive graphic novel. Both are remarkable!

SHOOTING AT THE STARS

40 PAGES / 2014

In a style that is halfway between realistic and cartoon, the author tells us the events of Dec. 24 and 25, 1914. On the day of Christmas Eve, 1914, all along the frontlines, the shooting slowed, and that night the Germans could be heard singing *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht* – “Silent Night, Holy Night.” Then the next morning, in spots up and down the frontlines, German, British, and French troops spontaneously came out of their trenches and celebrated Christmas together.

The day after that they resumed trying to kill one another.

Fighting is sometimes necessary, which is why we are grateful for the courage of Dutch Resistance and the Allied forces in World War II, who understood that stopping the Nazis was worth risking, and even giving, their lives. We need to remember their sacrifice because it was noble, and selfless, and good.

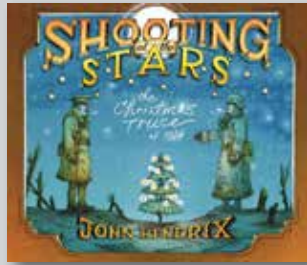
But to give our children a more complete understanding of war, we also need to teach them there are those who rush to war when it should always be a last resort.

Shooting at the Stars is a gentle way of teaching the insanity of war. No blood or gore is seen. The most war-like illustration occurs on a two-page spread where we see three corpses, as soldiers on both sides work together to bury their dead. What is striking is simply that there were men on both sides who could praise God together, then fight to the death a day later. That is a shocking bit of history. And it needs to be remembered.

THE FAITHFUL SPY

176 PAGES / 2018

The world “pastor” is not often paired with words like “plot” or “kill.” But when the Nazis took over Germany, and used nationalism and intimidation to silence its churches, and then set out to conquer the world, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer had to do something. And he felt himself pulled to do what would once have been unthinkable to him: Bonhoeffer joined a conspiracy to kill his country's leader, Adolf Hitler.



At 176 pages, and text-dense, author John Hendrix has a lot of space to explore Bonhoeffer and his time. He starts with his birth and family life, before showing how World War I impacted the Bonhoeffers – one of Dietrich's older brothers was killed – and how the runaway inflation that came shortly afterwards destroyed everyone's savings. In 1921 a German could exchange 75 marks for 1 US dollar, but by the end of 1923 to get that same US dollar he would have to bring a wheelbarrow, or maybe a dump truck, to carry the 4 billion marks that'd now be needed. Money, jobs, and hope were scarce, and this set the scene for the rise of Hitler. Germans wanted a way out, and Hitler presented himself as a savior.

Meanwhile, Bonhoeffer was learning, via travels in Europe and America, that a love for one's country doesn't mean you have to support everything your government does. So when the Nazis, only a few months after they came into power, fired Jews from any government positions, Bonhoeffer was one of the few church leaders to speak out. He published a public paper called “The Church and the Jewish Question” in which he laid out an explicitly Christian justification for resisting the government. He described three ways the Church can and should respond to an evil government.

1. Question the State and its methods
2. Aid the victims of State actions
3. Strike back

As you can tell, this “comic book” gets into some big and heady topics. What's more, “how to deal with a hostile State?” is a topic of growing relevance these days. That makes this an important book, but also one that should be discussed between parent and child. There is some serious theology here, and while the general thrust is right on – we owe our allegiance first and foremost to God, even if that means resisting the State – what exactly it looks to live that out, back then and today, is a topic too weighty for a teen to figure out on their own.

That said, this is a graphic novel worthy of both a teen and adult audience. I'd recommend *The Faithful Spy* for anyone interested working through what it means to live to God's glory in tumultuous times.

- Jon Dykstra





TECHNOLOGY AND OUR ANXIOUS HEARTS

by Reuben Bredenhof

As a pastor I get to talk to lots of people. After some conversation, I start to get a sense of where people stand. How are they doing? What's on their mind? Anything bothering them? And maybe it won't surprise you to hear that quite a few people are anxious. I don't necessarily mean that in a clinical way, as a mental health disorder. But more generally, people have this feeling of unease, being unsettled, fearful and restless.

It's common, so common that probably everyone experiences it. And there can be a host of factors that contribute to our feeling of unease. If my stomach is kind of unsettled for weeks on end, then I'm going to start getting anxious. If you're running low on money, you might be anxious. Other times there might not be a particular reason that we can put our finger on, but we still feel it: anxiety and fear. Far deeper than any one cause, it's a basic condition for human beings, a component of who we are as a weak and sinful people, living in a world that is broken, difficult, and often hostile.

Maybe you've heard this before, but

... in a single decade we have rushed from a world with zero smartphones to a world with approximately two billion smartphones.

do you know what is the most repeated command in the Scriptures? What's the thing that God tells us to do *most often*? People usually think that it's something like, "Love one another." Or "Praise the Lord." But the most repeated command in Scripture is this: "Fear not."

God says it to his special servants like Joshua. His angels say it to the people to whom they're bringing messages. His prophets say it to Israel: "Do not fear." And Jesus says it to his believers: "Do not be afraid." More than 350 times in Scripture we find the command: "Fear not."

We need to hear that, because we *do* fear. It's symptomatic of being a human.

TECHNOLOGY ON THE BRAIN

I'd like to unpack another factor in our daily fears and anxieties:

technology. By technology I mean specifically things like the portable and connective devices that we have with us so much of the time, those devices that are always nearby and available: smartphones, laptops and other computers, and tablets. Some of us sit in front of screens all day and then, even when not at our desks, we continue to engage with technology. Also for those who don't have an office job, so much time is spent with this technology: before work, during work, after work; before class, during class, after class.

It's hard for us to grasp how massive a change has happened in this area of portable technology. For instance, in a single decade we have rushed from a world with zero smartphones to a

world with approximately two billion smartphones. We bought these devices because of what they promised to do for us, but we can be sure that they're also doing something to us.

REASONS FOR ANXIETY

People have only started to think about the impact of this almost constant interaction with technology. With this relentless stimulation, the brain is not getting time to rest. And this can make us anxious for a number of reasons. Let's look at a few of these reasons, and how we can counteract this anxiety with God's truth.

Reason #1 – FOMO

One of the reasons that our use of technology can make us anxious is that it trains our brains to need a constant intake of information. Our brains are plastic and shape-able, and we are being programmed to expect continuous updates in a whole number of aspects of life. These updates are for everything ranging from significant international events in Moscow, to trivial things like what our friends had for breakfast this morning.

And when we don't get these updates, we feel disconnected and disconcerted. When we don't have a chance to read them, or when we don't have our electronic device on our person, it's like the world is going by without us. It's an affliction that is becoming widespread these days – an affliction so widespread that it has already entered the *Oxford English Dictionary*. What is it? FOMO. It's a catchy acronym that stands for "Fear Of Missing Out." According to one definition, it's:

the state of mental or emotional strain caused by the fear of missing out; a compulsive concern that one might miss an opportunity or a satisfying event.

Missing the boat, missing the bus, missing an opportunity, or missing an event with friends – we've all experienced missing out in some way or another. So the *fear* of missing out

is a universal experience. What does that look like in relation to our use of technology? The closeness of our phone to our eyeballs, and the connectivity of our computer to Wi-Fi or 4G networks, makes this a real struggle.

We're used to getting a constant refresh and update on things, whether about world events, or about how our life looks in comparison with others, or something else. As often as we log in and start scrolling around, there is a recharge of our fear that we've missed out on something. We want to know, we want to see, we want to comment. Whether it's a breaking-news alert, a vibrating notification, or a text message, there's an immediacy to every moment. Our phones make our lives vulnerable to that feeling that somewhere, somehow, something interesting is happening – right now! We're addicted to anything new, and the newer the better. See whether you can relate to these scenarios:

SCENARIO #1 – You wake up in the morning, and what is the first thing that you do? You reach over to your bedside table, and check your phone. Who sent you a message? Who posted something? And you're kind of alarmed to see that last night while you were getting your beauty sleep

there was a conversation among your friends about something important – you missed it. There's a twinge of regret.

SCENARIO #2 – You've got a few minutes before you need to get going, so you head over to your favourite social media site. You see that one of your friends has been posting pictures of her amazing holiday: beautiful beaches, exciting cities, lots of artful shots of food and drink. And here you are, getting ready to clean the toilets again, or to listen to a two-hour lecture at university. Your life is unquestionably lousy. You're missing out on fun and adventure.

SCENARIO #3 – You're going to bed at night. You brush your teeth, etc. Then you lay down and read your Bible. But then, one last time, you check your phone: Any messages? Anything new? Not this time. But what about when you wake up? What will you have missed? There's another twinge of anxiety.

As you've probably experienced, we can get into a compulsive habit of going online. It's not just checking social media, but other websites. What videos are on top at YouTube? Who is Kendall

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Jenner dating these days? What did Meghan Markle wear to the polo match with Prince Harry? What memes are trending? At one level we realize that we don't really care about all these things, but we still choose to read and watch. We'd hate to miss out.

Maybe you've heard about the studies that connect social media with depression. In an alarming number of users of social media, there is an almost immediate feeling of sadness when a person logs off. It's even become a shorthand term, "Facebook depression" – or maybe "Insta-gloom." Checking on the status of our friends

Response: you won't miss out

By now FOMO has become a joke and a hashtag. Yet it describes a deep insecurity that dwells inside each of us.

And FOMO is neither unique nor modern, but pre-dates Wi-Fi and our always-connected phones. We can remember those days when we didn't have a phone, but even back then, we had our fears of missing out, didn't we? In Grade 4 there was a birthday party, and you weren't going – that's a pretty rotten feeling. Or you heard about the excellent business opportunity that a brother in your church received. You could've been part of that – why weren't you invited?

Today that devilish offer still stands. FOMO smoulders in the human heart. The Bible calls it coveting, a faithless desire to possess something that doesn't belong to us. We attach to idols our deep longing for happiness, thinking that a person or a possession or achievement or status or experience will finally make us happy. That's why we keep searching, keep scrolling, keep buying – because we're looking for something more.

But the anxiety caused by the fear of missing out is a lie. It denies the immense riches of what we have in God and through Christ Jesus. At the heart of the gospel is the living God who sent

his only Son so that with his blood He could buy for us the gift of salvation. Scripture says that we have no good thing apart from Him, that in his presence there is fullness of joy forever. As Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt 6:33).

If you know Christ, you'll never miss out.

Reason #2 – bad news

These days there's a 24-hour news cycle. This means there's never a time of day when we can't know what's going on around the world. It used to be that you'd find out about events only when your morning (or evening) newspaper arrived, or when you watched the 10 o'clock news before you went to

bed. If it didn't make the news by those traditional times, then you wouldn't know until the next day, or even later.

Now, however, there are networks dedicated to providing news, every day, all day. This news is on TV, and it's online. The networks have correspondents throughout the world who are able to post stories within seconds of writing or filming. These news stories are compelling, because when we hear about them, these events

often forces us to deal with people who are either more successful than we are, or more attractive, more whatever. We've just seen what is not ours. We've been reminded that our life is not as interesting. We wish people could see how good we are, and we're anxious to portray ourselves in a positive light – so we keep trying to set up the perfect selfie. And then we worry when it's not possible.

More FOMO!

The problem is that our sinful natures will always say that if we could just have our idols (whatever they are), eventually they'll be able to satisfy us. That goes all the way back to Paradise. What more could Adam or Eve want than what God had given? But Satan said, "Escape your creature-hood. Define your own truth. Keep the glory for yourself. Why miss out on becoming like God with just one bite?"



are not old. In fact, sometimes the events are still happening! The technology has made it possible for us to watch these things happen *live*: a massive fire downtown, an attack in Paris, a shooting in America – we are watching it unfold, or we’re “on the ground” for the aftermath.

Because the world community is a more-connected place, we’ve been made aware of so many more events, some of them really terrible. There have always been horrific events, but now we can see them in all their detail: terrorist attacks, mass shootings, natural disasters. Instead of still camera shots we have video footage, which makes it more dramatic, and therefore more frightening. The constant news coverage also makes it seem like these things are happening more and more. The media knows that nothing gets attention like bad news – so they tell us about all the bad news they can find.

So if you connect to the news regularly, you’ve probably had the thought that the world is completely falling apart. There are wars raging in different places, and the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. There are new and unstoppable strains of disease, and catastrophic weather due to climate change. After scrolling through the news for a while, you’re sure that almost everything is crumbling.

Another aspect of all this bad news is the sense that not only is the world getting worse, but that *the church* is under attack. Reading almost any major source of news, you realize that Christian beliefs are considered a thing of the past, and that the Bible belongs in the dustbin of history. God’s standards are being dismissed, whether that relates to marriage and sexuality, or to drug use, or gambling, or something else. Fewer people these days identify as religious, and there can be vitriolic hatred for those who disagree with progressive thinkers.

With all this bad news streaming into our eyes and ears, we can feel overwhelmed. For example, when we see so much suffering because of famine or war, we feel helpless: What can I do?

How can I help? We conclude that we can’t help, so we just get used to it.

Or hearing about danger from the random attacks of terrorists in public places, we can become fearful: What if we’re next? What if it happens here?

Or seeing where society is going, and how the church is ridiculed, we worry about the church. How can the church survive? How can Christians and our old-fashioned Bible compete with people that seem to be so intelligent, sophisticated and influential?

That constant newsfeed of disturbing stories and immoral trends makes us anxious. Maybe it makes us want to check out, just withdraw and retreat to our distractions. But is that the answer?

Response: God is God

The answer to our fear of bad news is this: Do not fear, for God is God, in all his glorious sovereignty and unfailing goodness. When we see another natural disaster, confessing that God is God means that it’s not up to us to save the world. We can show mercy to those who are suffering, and we ought to. But realize that this world is a vast place, and you’re just one person. You can’t do it all, and you don’t need to.

“What if that happens here?” we say when there’s another terrorist attack. Again we confess that God is completely in control of all things. He’s not surprised by what President Putin is doing, or by what’s happening on the Korean peninsula. Meanwhile, you and I are so limited in our awareness or control. It’s like a board game, with a big board full of squares and twists and turns. We see only the square that we’re on, and we have no idea about what is coming next, whether good or bad. But God sees the whole board. He’s not restricted in anything He does, and there are no loose ends in God’s world. All of it He works out according to his own good purpose. And the beautiful

thing is that God has only *good things* in store for his people.

When marriage is redefined, and when we hear about persecution of Christians, and when there is the defiant rejection of God’s truth, remember that God said this was going to happen. He predicted all of it. He’s not surprised, even if we are. It’s actually reassuring to see his Word being fulfilled, even as people embrace the darkness, as love grows cold, and as the church is oppressed. It’s difficult, and we should grieve for those who are lost, and we must defend our faith, but remember that Christ told us all about it. It’s a reminder that He’s in charge, and that there’s no need to fear.

Reason #3 – No Time

Our technology also gives the impression that time is moving very quickly. The world is changing every hour, events are happening constantly, people are always doing exciting things! All this change and development means that time is running out. You only have one life, and it’s pretty short. Technology teaches us to think that this life might be our only chance for joy. If we miss *this* moment, there might never be another.

So we’re learning to use technology to achieve a lot of things, to access a lot of information, and to be connected to a lot of people.

- 1) Using the technology on your phone, you can schedule your day to a high degree. With a calendar and automatic reminders and planning tools, you can aim for the peak of productivity.
- 2) Using technology, you can know a lot these days. You can closely manage your fitness levels, keep up with fashion, music, world news, and read about all kinds of things that interest you.

But the anxiety caused by the fear of missing out is a lie.



The Free Reformed School Association (Tas) Inc. invites applications for the position of

Primary Teacher

We are looking to add enthusiastic, committed teachers to our team for the 2020 school year. Launceston is a beautiful city in the north of Tasmania, a scenic island with world renowned tourist attractions, food and drink.

The John Calvin School currently has 114 students from Kinder to Grade 10. Small classes allow teachers to explore diverse teaching styles.

Employment at the John Calvin School would commence at the beginning of Term 1, 2020.

Applicants must be a member of the Free Reformed Church of Australia or any of her sister churches.

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Any person who is interested in teaching at our school at any time in the future is invited to lodge an expression of interest.

For application forms, see the school website (www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment).

Forward completed applications to the Business Manager:

- E-mail: wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Address: PO Box 89, Launceston 7250, Tasmania, Australia.

For more information, contact the Principal, Mr Daniel Coote

- E-mail: cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au

**Applications close
Monday 2nd September**

- 3) Using technology, you can keep in touch with a lot of people. You can text, WhatsApp, FaceTime, etc. You don't have to spend half an hour conversing, but you can have a brief but beneficial exchange.

These are good things. Being productive is an aspect of faithful stewardship. It is fitting that we try to keep informed about world events and church life, so that we can be good neighbours and a prayerful people. It is right that we maintain meaningful contact with the people God has placed around us.

But the problem is that all this takes time. Always needing to be scheduled means the pressure of managing every fifteen-minute block of our day. Taking 10,000 steps per day takes time. Reading and processing new information takes time. Keeping up contact with all sorts of people takes time and emotional energy. So sometimes we feel anxious because there *is* no time, not for everything. Technology is wonderful and it is terrible. It has made some great things possible, but it has also made us capable of *too much*. And so we're anxious. What should we do about this fear?

Response: you still get eternity

So much to know, so much to do, so many to people to connect with – and only one life. But here's the good news: we have *more* than one life! In Christ, we have an eternal promise. All that has been lost will be found in Him. All that we have missed will be restored in Him. Peter writes, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:13). It'll be so different from now, for in the new creation only righteousness shall dwell; there will be nothing incomplete, nothing wicked, nothing to cause grief or disappointment, but only peace and perfection.

That gives us a great purpose, for we know that we're going places. We know this life isn't just about the pursuit of earthly goals. It's not even simply about

those good things like church and family and faith. Because these imperfect things are a part of something much bigger: God's great plan to restore His creation perfectly through the Son. Don't worry if you can't do everything in this life – you still get eternity! Meanwhile, give your attention day by day to living for Christ.

SEVEN SUGGESTIONS

As you've read this article, maybe you've had the thought that you probably should just throw away your phone. But you're also aware that you probably *won't* throw it out. So moving forward, what can you do with technology and your anxious heart?

- 1) *Confess your anxiety to God.* Pray for Him to forgive your worrying. Pray for Him to forgive your coveting. Pray for His strength to become more content in Christ.
- 2) *Confess your anxiety to other people.* If you have a problem, you can be sure that other people have that same problem. It can be embarrassing to talk about, but let's challenge each other to be holy.
- 3) *Be mindful about what you're doing.* Honestly ask yourself a few questions: How many people that you keep contact with are actually meaningful friends? How much has your life been improved by keeping constantly up to date on social media? Do you really need to read this article, watch this video, or comment on this post?
- 4) *Be with people.* Take time to enjoy the presence of friends and family in the beauty of everyday life. Remember that it's not true fellowship if everyone in the room is busy tapping at their screens! Instead, enjoy the gift of being together in talking, playing a game, getting outside, or discussing a good book.
- 5) *Take a break.* Have specific times when you shut down social media and turn off the television or

computer. Try to take a “Sabbath rest” from media – and not just on Sunday! You’ll probably enjoy time away from the frantic and never-ending flood of information. And you probably won’t miss out on anything important.

6) *Remember others.* A God-given cure to discontentment and covetousness is serving the people around us. Our technology has the ability to turn us inwards, to become even more self-absorbed than we are naturally. So look around and give your attention to the interests of others.

7) *Remember the good news.* Today there’s lots of bad news, but things aren’t always as disastrous as they seem. God is mercifully continuing to uphold this world – for example, through his blessings in health care and food production, many people are now able to live longer and healthier lives. We should also

see how God is still restraining wickedness in this world through the (sometimes unexpected!) election of conservative governments who implement pro-life and pro-family policies.

And don’t forget the best news of all: the truth of God’s Word and the good news of salvation and peace through Christ. We shouldn’t be so busy with everything else that we can’t get into the Scriptures. We probably have the Word on our phone, now let’s put it on our mind.

CURES FOR ANXIETY

Fear of missing out, the helplessness of hearing bad news, the pressures of having no time – we really can’t blame technology for any of this. This is because all sin originates inside the human heart, and because we’re a fundamentally weak people. But God graciously helps us and gives us his peace.


As Jesus says in Matthew 6:25-27:

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life... Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

Jesus’ words are consistent with the command which is found more than any other in the Scriptures, “Do not fear.” May these beautiful ancient words speak directly to our modern anxieties about technology! RP

Dr. Reuben Bredenhof is pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura, Western Australia. A version of this article first appeared in two parts in Una Sancta (frca.org.au/unasancta), the denominational magazine of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.





by Tim Barnett

Tactics in Defending Your Faith

In 2018, Stand to Reason's Tim Barnett teamed up with Reformed Perspective, traveling to churches across Canada to speak on "Tactics in Defending our Faith." The edited transcript below is from his March 18 presentation in the Smithers Canadian Reformed Church in Northern BC.

Alright, let's talk about tactics. I want you to imagine that you're a student and you're hanging out with your friends in the hallway outside of the classroom. One of your friends in the group says: "I've never understood how anyone could believe in a good God. Look at all the evil in the world look at the shooting that took place a couple weeks ago. Some good God, right?"

Or imagine you're at work and it's lunch hour and you're just hanging out with your co-workers trying to be social. You strike up a conversation and a coworker says, "I can't believe anyone would believe a Bible that's so full of contradictions. Who would be *dumb* enough to believe that stuff?"

Or maybe you're with your family

at Easter and your atheist brother-in-law is sitting on the couch across from you. And he says something like: "Billy Graham was a good guy except for the fact that he was an intolerant homophobic bigot."

Think about how you would respond in that situation. There's a whole lot of Christians, if we're honest with ourselves, who would say absolutely nothing.

You might make a face, or you make an awkward head nod, or something. But you don't say anything. Most of us just want to keep our mouths closed, because we want to be nice. And we're probably thinking: "Oh, I couldn't change their mind anyway. In the next five minutes how am I going to have an impact? Are they going to come to faith in Christ in the next couple of minutes? I can't get them there."

That's a typical "religious" response: "If I can't get them to accept Christ in the next three minutes, then what's the point?"

I want to say something now that may surprise you – I don't have it, as my primary goal in any one of those short conversations, to actually convert that person on the spot.

Now, I want you to hear me out: of course my overall goal is that they would come to Christ. But in that conversation I don't put that weight on my shoulders. Because if I do – if every conversation has to lead to a Gospel presentation – it can get a little awkward.

Just imagine, you're talking with your friend, your unsaved friend, about the hockey game and you say something like: "Did you see the save that goalie made? What a shot, and then he made that awesome save. Oh, and that reminds me of how Jesus saves all of us..."

You see how awkward that is to move from the hockey game to the Gospel? A little bit forced, right? A little bit contrived going from the weather to salvation.

"GOSPTECTLES"

There's also issues that get in our way.

One of them is that the culture is religiously ignorant. That's not a put-down – I'm trying to be accurate here. In our culture, when we start talking about the Gospel, it's like we're speaking Greek to them. This is truly a post-Christian culture that we're trying

to witness to. They don't understand a lot of what we're talking about when we use words like *sin* and *repentance*, and these need to be defined.

In addition, there are these things that I want to call "gospotacles" – obstacles to the gospel. Now don't look it up; it's not a real word. But it is a helpful way to remind you that apologetics is fundamental to the gospel. Why? Because when you start sharing the Gospel with this culture you'd better believe that gospotacles are going to come up, and you're going to have to respond to them.

For example, you go to your friend and you start talking about how Jesus died for their sins and all of a sudden they're talking about the Big Bang. And you're, like, "I'm talking about Jesus here; what are you talking about?" But the Big Bang is a gospotacle for them.

You go to any university campus and you try and talk about the Gospel and I guarantee you one of the top five responses will be: "I can't believe you can believe in a loving God who would send anyone to hell." Hell is a gospotacle for our culture.

Even the Bible has become a gospotacle. I don't know if you're familiar with guys like Bart Ehrman. He's responsible for more Christians walking away from their faith than any other atheists alive today – not Richard Dawkins and *The God Delusion*. Bart Ehrman is a New Testament textual critic who says you can't trust your Bible. He says those words that you're reading in the pew are nothing like what the original author recorded. And a *whole lot* of students are buying into it. So the Bible becomes a gospotacle. You want to talk about the Bible? How can you believe that book that is so full of contradictions?

Or all of a sudden evolution comes up you're thinking "I'm talking about

Jesus Christ." It's a gospotacle. Francis Schaeffer said, in our cultures, before you can do evangelism you need to do *pre-evangelism*. There are people who are looking for us to tear down those strongholds before they will give you an ear to.

So, yes, there is religious ignorance – that's something *out there*. But there's also something *in here* that we need to get over, and it's personal discomfort. There's a whole lot of people, even in this room, that if you had five minutes to give someone the Gospel, a complete stranger, well that just makes you a little bit uncomfortable. There's a whole lot of people in this room who, when they hear someone say, "Oh those Christians are intolerant" or "They're homophobic" you just want to walk the other way. You don't want to get in on that conversation. We have to get over this idea of personal discomfort. There are obstacles out there, but there also something in here – personal discomfort – that we have to get over.

AMBASSADOR MODEL'S THREE SKILLS

Now, apologetics doesn't have to be hard – that's the take-home message. And it's not hard – we're going to work through this.

I don't consider myself in any given conversation to be the evangelist. I think there are brilliant evangelists out there – Billy Graham was one of my heroes. I'll tell you what we all are called to be: *Christian ambassadors*. We are ambassadors for Christ. Second Corinthians 5:20 says this:

"Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God."

So what does an ambassador look like? It's a good question. At Stand to Reason we've come up with this ambassador model. We think an ambassador for Christ has three essential skills.

1. KNOWLEDGE

The first is knowledge. Do you want to be a good ambassador for Christ? You've got to know some stuff. I think that makes sense. You don't have to know *everything*. You don't have to be a Ph.D.; you don't even have to have a master's degree. You've just got to know a little bit. You've got to get some facts right.

2. WISDOM

Second, you also need some wisdom – this is your *method* and the tactics we're talking about right now – to communicate that knowledge in a persuasive and effective way. That might involve using illustrations and analogies, and asking good questions. There's a whole lot of ways to be winsome, and have wisdom. This is going to be our *game plan*.

3. CHARACTER

Here's the last thing: you can have all the knowledge in the world, and be winsome, but if you don't have character, then just keep your mouth closed. There's a whole lot of apologists out there who've filled their minds with all kinds of stuff, but they're *jerks*, and they actually do a whole lot more damage than good.

Character matters. If you want to talk about love with someone, you better show love. If you want to talk about respect, show respect.

I like how Martin Luther King Jr. put it – he said this talking in the context of segregation and racism, trying to change people's minds: "Whom you would change, you must first love." And here's the catch: they must *know* that you love them.

Oftentimes we get in these heated arguments – we'll call them *discussions* – where you disagree with me, and I disagree with you, and all of a sudden

There are obstacles out there, but there also something in here – personal discomfort – that we have to get over.

TAKING THE ROOF OFF:

Another tactic from Greg Koukl's fantastic book

The two apologetics tactics that Tim Barnett lays out in his presentation come from his colleague Greg Koukl's book *Tactics: a game plan for discussing your Christian convictions*. The book also contains other tactics, including one called "Taking the Roof Off." It involves getting into the driver's seat of someone else's worldview, and taking it for a spin to see where it logically goes. Koukl's illustrates how this tactics works in this excerpt.

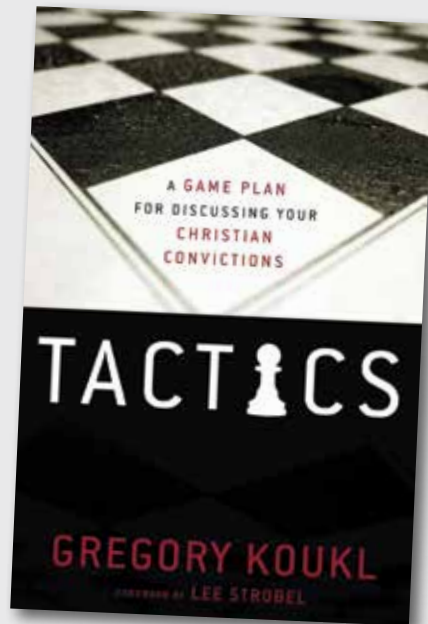
The story is told of an atheist philosophy professor who performed a parlor trick each term to convince his students that there is no God. "Anyone who believes in God is a fool," he said. "If God existed, he could stop this piece of chalk from hitting the ground and breaking. Such a simple task to prove he is God, and yet he can't do it." The professor then dropped the chalk and watched it shatter dramatically on the classroom floor.

If you meet anyone who tries this silly trick, take the roof off. Apply the professor's logic in a test of *your own* existence. Tell the onlookers you will prove *you* don't exist.

Have someone take a piece of chalk and hold it above your outstretched palm. Explain that if you really exist, you would be able to accomplish the simple task of catching the chalk. When he drops the chalk, let it fall to the ground and shatter. Then announce, "I guess this proves I do not exist. If you believe in me, you're a fool."

Clearly this chalk trick tells you nothing about God. The only thing it is capable of showing is that if God does exist, he is not a circus animal who can be teased into jumping through hoops to appease the whim of foolish people.

If you are interested in learning more about the book, you can find Dr. Wes Bredenhof's review on www.ReformedPerspective.ca.



your ears feel like they're on fire. Right? We've all been there! Then, let's take a step back and ask, does that person know you love them? And maybe we react "Oh, of course, they know I love them!" No, but do they *really* know? That's *important*.

KEY TEXTS

Most people have the impression that we're all Christian ambassadors, but that there's this subset of "apologist." It's like how there's the police, and then there's the special SWAT team that handles the really difficult situations. So all you guys are *ambassadors* but the *apologists* are the guys who maybe get paid to do this.

But no, it's not like that! Ambassadors *are* apologists; that's just the way it is – I hate to break it to you. Let me prove it to you. If we go to First Peter 3:15, a go-to verse on this issue, it says this:

"...always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..."

"Always be prepared to give an answer..." An answer? What's that? Well if you look at the Greek it's the word *apologia*, which is actually the word that we get "apologetics" from. So always be prepared to give an answer – some translations say "defense" – to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

And then there's the character part: it's almost like Peter was anticipating that when people give answers they may not be nice about it and so he says "but do this with gentleness and respect."

How about this verse; I like even better?

"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ..." (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Destroying strongholds – we destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ – that’s what an apologist does.

Or how about this one in Jude 3:

“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

How about one more?

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’” (Matt. 22:36-37).

Now think about this. I get how we love God with all our *heart* and *soul* – that’s just like during a worship song, or during moments of meditation, or prayer. But what about loving God with our *mind*? What does that look like? Well I think it looks like a couple of different things. I don’t think we check our minds out when we’re worshiping, but I think it also looks like study, understanding God’s Word, understanding arguments from the culture and how to respond to them. That’s all loving God with our minds.

Think about that parents and grandparents: how are we training our kids and our grandchildren to love God with their *minds*? What are we doing intentionally to do that?

One more verse – Colossians 4:5-6 says:

“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

“Walk in wisdom towards outsiders making the best use of your time” That’s be *smart*.

Then it says, “let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt.” You know how salt makes things taste better? So let your speech be like that – this is be *kind*.

And then finally: “...so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” – this is the tactical part, which is what we’re going to talk about. So be *smart*, be *kind*, and be *tactical*.

PUTTING A STONE IN THEIR SHOE

So what does apologetics look like? Let’s get practical.

All these verses, they’re great, and we thank God for them. But what does it look like for me when, at Easter, I’m sitting with my atheist brother-in-law? And when I’m at the lunch table and a person raises a challenge, what does apologetics look like?

I’ll tell you what it looks like: *it’s a stone in someone’s shoe*. Have you ever had a stone in your shoe before, where you’re walking along, and it’s really annoying, and you can’t seem to stop thinking about it until you take it out? You notice it don’t you?

Well, we’re going to put a stone in someone’s shoe – not physically, this is metaphorical – to get people thinking about what we just said, so they’re walking away kind of annoyed, but in a good way, until they deal with the thing that we just put in their minds.

What I want to do is give you a game plan. No matter how little you think you know, or how shy you think you are, or how scared you might be, if you follow the rules of the game plan you are going to be all right, and you’re going to be effective in being an ambassador for Christ.

We’re going to go from the *content* – what you know – to the *conversation* with the game plan.

The *whole* game plan is in Greg Koukl’s book, *Tactics*. I think you shouldn’t be allowed to graduate high school without reading *Tactics*. This is like Critical Thinking 101! I’m taking this from the book and if you’re interested in more of it then you’ve got to read his book.

MAKE THEM WORK

Now I used to think when someone raised a challenge, that it was my job to answer it – to be the “Bible Answer Man.” Maybe that’s you too. Someone raises the challenge, “Christians are intolerant” or “Christians are irrational” or “All religions lead to God” or “The Bible is not true.” And of course, I thought, “Oh, you say God does not exist? Well, yes He does!” And then I go into my arguments for God’s existence.

But notice what happened there – *they* made the claim “God does not exist” or “Christians are irrational” or whatever, and now *I’m* doing all the work.

No! If they make the claim *they* bear the burden of proof to defend the claim; it’s not *my* job to start defending something that I didn’t even assert. But this is what happens. Christians think “Oh, you said something so now I better go into Bible Answer Man mode.”

That’s the wrong approach. Our culture has been getting away with saying a whole lot of ridiculous things because they go unchallenged. For far too long we’ve allowed people to make claims and statements and then just fold their arms and say “I’m waiting Christian, answer – God doesn’t exist. Now go ahead and refute me.”

That’s not our job. Our job is not to refute random statements like that.

THE COLUMBO TACTIC: ASK QUESTIONS

I want to give you the game plan. The game plan is what I’m going to call the “Columbo Approach” or the “Columbo Tactic.” Do you guys know who Lieutenant Columbo is? Let me tell you about him. Lieutenant Columbo is a bumbling, seemingly inept, TV detective who has remarkable success in catching crooks. The detective arrives on the scene of the crime and he’s in complete disarray. I mean his hair is a mess; his trench coat looks like he slept in it; he’s got a cigar wedged between his fingers; and while he’s got a notepad, he’s got no pen or pencil



Lieutenant Columbo is a bumbling, seemingly inept, TV detective who has remarkable success in catching crooks.... I mean, this guy to all appearances looks harmless and stupid. But he's not, because Lieutenant Columbo has a game plan!

so he's got to bum one off somebody. I mean, this guy to all appearances looks harmless and stupid. But he's not, *because Lieutenant Columbo has a game plan.*

Lieutenant Columbo would poke around at the scene of the crime, and then he'd scratch his head and do his trademark move: he turned someone and he'd say "There's something about this thing that bothers me. Then he'd turn to the suspect and say, "You seem like a very intelligent person. Maybe you could clear this up from me. Do you mind if I ask you a few questions?" And then he'd ask a few questions and he'd seem satisfied. He might even start walking away but then turn on his heel and remember something and say, "Just one more ting." And then he'd one more "ting" them to death, with question after question after question. He'd say, "I know, I know it's annoying but this is a habit." But annoying or not, this is a habit that Christians need to get into. We need to start asking questions, instead of making so many statements.

There's going to come a time

when we're going to have to make statements, obviously. But there's so many instances where a question would have been better than an assertion or a statement. This tactic, the key to it, is to go on the offensive but in an inoffensive way, Colombo-style, by selecting carefully crafted questions for the conversation.

There's a book called *In but not of* by Hugh Hewitt. I'm not actually recommending the book because it wasn't that great but there was one chapter in it that was fascinating, on questions. Hewitt says in any conversation you should ask a half a dozen questions. So if you meet someone new, just start asking questions. Why ask questions? Here's a list of reasons why we should start asking more questions.

- *Questions help you understand a person's point of view.* I'll have people come up to me after a talk and say, "Tim, can you recommend a good book on Buddhism?" And I'll say, "Why do you want a book on Buddhism?" "Well, I have this

friend and they're a Buddhist. I'd really like to be able to witness to them so do you know a good book?" Meanwhile I'm thinking, "Wait, you want to learn about Buddhism. Your friend is a Buddhist. Why don't you ask *them*?" Doesn't that make sense? Instead of reading a book that may or might not be on their version of Buddhism, why not just sit down at Tim Hortons and learn about Buddhism from your friend? Seems smart enough, right?

- *Questions take the pressure off you.* When you're asking questions, you're not defending anything. Have you ever thought about that? You're asking them questions; they're doing all the work. By the way, it's not a lot of work because, turns out, people like it when you ask them questions!
- *Questions keep you from distorting the person's view.* You can learn to understand where they're coming from by getting them to clarify their view
- *Questions are friendly and they build relationships.* This is so true. When I met my wife in university it turned out that our birthdays are one day apart. I got invited to her birthday party and I didn't really know anybody. She had this one guy friend and we sat down and we started chatting. We were at this bowling alley and I spent the whole night asking him questions because I had just been reading Hewitt's book. After we all went home I later found out he called my wife-to-be and said "That Tim guy is one of the most interesting people I've ever met." *I don't even think he knew my name!* Okay, maybe that's the one thing he knew. But he didn't know anything about me; I didn't talk about me. I spent the whole night asking about him. Let me tell you something, *interested is interesting.* It just is. And it turns out questions show you're interested. We're not faking it – I wasn't faking it; I wanted to know about him. It just so happens that I just kept asking the questions and he just kept answering.

...we will end up preaching sermons that nobody wants to hear, and answering questions that nobody was actually asking.

- Questions give you an education. In many cases you don't need to go to university for this stuff. Just learn it from people who know something you don't.
- Questions don't require a defense,

You put it all together, and questions get you in the game. Someone says something and you're caught off guard, you're flat-footed, you don't know what to say. Questions get you in the game, okay? You don't have to hit home runs; you don't have to even get on base! If we had Christians that would step into the batter's box once in a while and just start swinging, I'm telling you our culture would look a whole lot different.

I also want to make a really important point and I think Blaise Pascal, the famous Christian mathematician and philosopher, hit it right on the head. Here what he says:

"People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have themselves discovered than by those which have come into the minds of others."

Think about that. If you want to convince someone to be pro-life, if you want to convince someone that marriage is a certain way, if you want to convince someone about God's existence, then don't just say, "Believe God exists" or "Here's this, this, and this." No, if you want someone to

change their mind about something, people are better persuaded by the reasons that they discover. How can you help them discover reasons? You can do that by asking really good questions.

I like how Francis Schaeffer puts it – this is so counterintuitive! He says:

"If I have only an hour with someone, I will spend the first 55 minutes asking questions and finding out what is troubling their heart and mind, and then in the last five minutes I will share something of the truth."

That is so counterintuitive, because I'd imagine I'm not the only one here who, if I had 60 minutes with an unbeliever, I'd preach at them for 55 minutes and then at the end say, "Do you have any questions?" Right? That's just what we do. But here's the problem: So many times in our culture we will end up preaching sermons that nobody wants to hear, and answering questions that nobody was actually asking. That happens all the time.

But let's say you don't like Francis Schaeffer and Blaise Pascal (who were both brilliant). You've heard of Jesus Christ and like to follow his example. Well, Jesus knew this better than anybody. Questions were Jesus' tool of choice; we can see that in Matthew 21 confronting his own questioners. They were his tool of choice for friend and foe alike in the Gospels. Here's a fact that may surprise you: Jesus *answered* 183 questions, however Jesus *asked* 307!

Jesus – the smartest person who ever walked the face of the earth – asked more questions than he answered. Was that because he didn't know a whole bunch of stuff? Not even close! The reason he was asking these questions was to get people to, like Blaise Pascal said, *rethink* things within their own hearts and minds. He used questions to get them to think about their own worldview. This was important for people to evaluate and reevaluate their own beliefs.

TACTIC #1: "WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?"

Alright, let's get to the game plan: the first Columbo question. It's going to be: "What do you mean by that?" Everyone say, "What do you mean by that?"

I'll tell you what I mean by that! "What do you mean by that?" is your go-to question because this is the kind of question that gives you more information so that you can move into the conversation. I'm just going to step into the conversation. How am I going to do that? "What do you mean by that?" Someone is going to make a challenge and I'm just completely caught off guard but I do remember this question "What do you mean by that?"

You'll get more specific, as we'll see in a second here, but this question allows you to clarify what the person is actually saying. Sometimes *they* don't even know what they're saying. So we ask, "what do you mean by that?"

Now let's put this to use.

CHALLENGE #1 Evolution disproves God

Let's say you're with someone, your friend who's maybe not a believer, and they say, "Evolution has proven that God isn't necessary."

Now hold that knee down, okay, because I know your knee-jerk reaction is to do a roundhouse kick or something, right? Your tempted to go into your creation answer mode, but you didn't make a claim; they did! Evolution has proven that God is unnecessary? Really? Instead of answering that challenge you're going to ask, "What do you mean by that?"

In fact, I would ask if I were you, "What do you mean by evolution?" because I can, off the top of my head right now, name six different definitions for evolution. Whether you are the most staunch young earth creationist in the room, you believe in evolution in some sense. That is, if we're just talking about "change over time," then of course we all believe in evolution. But if we're talking about "molecules to man" then you would say,

"No I don't believe in that."

So there you go, those two definitions shows our answer will depends on "What do you mean by evolution?" And by the way, in this discussion people do kind of the bait-and-switch. It's like, "Of course evolution is true; it happens all the time." Well now, it just depends on "What do you mean by evolution here?" That's a great question to ask.

CHALLENGE #2

Christians are intolerant

How about this one: "Christians are intolerant." You're going to ask "What do you mean by that; what do you mean by *intolerant*?" The meaning of the word "tolerance" has actually changed in our culture. Tolerance used to mean "we disagree but I'm going to respect your right to disagree – I'm going to respect you as a person." In fact, think about it: if you *accept* the view then you just *accept* it; you wouldn't *tolerate* it. The fact that you tolerate it *means* you disagree.

But today tolerance means "all views are equal and if you think that they're not all equal you're intolerant" So I would want to ask "What do you mean by *intolerant*?" If they say "Well, you think you're right and everyone else is wrong; you're intolerant" then I'd reply, "Are you saying that I'm wrong then? Do you think you're right and I'm wrong? Because, then guess what – you must be intolerant!" Their definition is self-refuting actually, if you think about it. So you want to ask some questions. "What do you mean by intolerant?" – that's going to get you in the game.

CHALLENGE #3

All religions are the same

If you're told "All religions are basically the same" you want to ask, "What do you mean by 'All religions

are basically the same' and "what do you mean by *basically the same*?"

I was out on vacation a couple years ago with my in-laws. We're at the table and my sister-in-law had taken a philosophy class in university and she was trained in the idea of religious pluralism, that all religions are basically the same, and she said that at the table. Again I had to fight my knee-jerk reaction, and I said: "What do you mean by basically the same?" Don't be surprised when you ask a question like that and they have no idea. "Well they just are." "No, you just said they're all basically the same and I'm wondering okay what part about them is basically the same." But to her credit, she said, "Well, the Golden Rule – they all have the Golden Rule.

That's actually not true – they all *don't* have "do unto others." But even if it was true, that doesn't make them all basically the same. The Golden Rule is a *superficial* moral similarity, when there are *fundamental* differences, like when it comes to God, when it comes to the resurrection, or who Jesus was, the problem of sin, or what's the big problem for humanity. There are also fundamental differences about our eternal destiny, because hell and heaven and reincarnation, annihilation and non-existence are *not* all the same in all religions.

CHALLENGE #4

Irrational to believe in God

Some says, "It's irrational to believe in the God of the Bible." Then you're going to ask "What do you mean by irrational?"

You're getting the hang of this. I know some of you are like, "I can't do this anymore." Listen, you need to practice doing this. You could also ask, "what do you mean by 'the God

of the Bible?'" I do not want to talk to my atheist friend until I define what they mean by *God*. Who is the God you don't believe in? I want to know "What do you mean by *God*" because usually it turns out the God they don't believe in is the same God I don't believe in. The God they don't believe in is like some finite Zeus-like creature who maybe has a temper tantrum here and there. This god's finite so it can't really do much, and it's created. That's not the God of the Bible, so the God they don't believe in, I don't believe in that God either! That's an idol; I don't believe in those.

CHALLENGE #5

My body; my choice

I'm sure you've heard this pro-choice slogan: "My body; my choice." You see it on bumper stickers, t-shirts you name it.

When you hear it, you're going to ask, "What do you mean by *choice*?" If we're going to talk about being pro-choice I want to know what you mean by choice. What are the choices we're talking about, because some choices I'm absolutely pro-choice about. I'm pro-choice about which school women go to, and who they marry, and what they want to wear, and what doctor they have, so I'm pro-choice about all that stuff.

But some choices are *immoral*, like killing innocent defenseless human beings. They just are. And everyone recognizes that some things we *should* be anti-choice about. Should we be pro-choice about drinking and driving? No, we should not be. In fact, there are laws against drinking and driving. Why? To protect people. So most people are anti-choice about that.

We could also ask, "What do you mean by 'my body'?" It turns out it's a body *inside* your body. That's just science. Different DNA. How many eyes does that woman have? She didn't just get two more – those are in a different body. In fact, that body inside her body could have a different gender! So it's definitely not the woman's body; there's another body in play.

...don't be surprised that if...after asking, "What do you mean by that you?" you get a blank stare and complete silence.



"...my atheist friend says, 'There's no way Noah's fitting *that* on the ark.'"

CHALLENGE #6

The Bible condones slavery

Lots of challenges are directed at the Bible. Someone says "the Bible condones slavery" and you may not know how to respond, but what you *could* do is ask, "What do you mean by *slavery*?" and "What do you mean by *condones*?"

In what passage does it say "thou shalt own slaves"? Not everything the Bible *describes* is it *prescribing*. The Bible describes lots of stuff that it's not saying "go out and do." It's just giving a description of history. So we need to ask "What do you mean by slavery?" and "What do you mean by condones?"

TACTIC #2: "HOW DID YOU COME TO THAT CONCLUSION?"

As I've said, don't be surprised that if you use the first Columbo tactic (which is very powerful) and after asking, "What do you mean by that you?" you get a blank stare and complete silence. This is not your chance to jump all over them and say "Ha!

Gotcha – you're so stupid!" No, remember the *character* part? This is your chance to show grace and love. So you're going to be patient, and you might say, "You know, maybe you need to think more about this; we could talk about it again some other time."

We're only going to give you two Colombo Tactics: "What do you mean by that?" and the second one is, "How did you come to that conclusion?"

The first question gives you more information but eventually you've got to stop asking "What do you mean by that?" It's like your kids going on, "Why, why, why?" Okay, stop it! "What do you mean by that? What do you mean by that? What do you mean by that?" Okay, now I've got enough information. You ask it until you get the information. But now you've got to find out why they are saying that. We need to ask, "Why do you believe that?" or better yet, "How did you come to that conclusion?"

This is a very generous question

because it assumes people have come to a conclusion. And from my own experience when I talk to people, usually they didn't conclude anything. They're just emoting and asserting, or they read it on a bumper sticker somewhere, or maybe heard someone on TV say it, and thought, "Yeah, that sounds good." Or maybe it was a matter of "When my favorite actress accepted that award at the Oscars she said the same thing so it must be true."

Here's the general rule: Whoever makes the claim bears the burden of proof to defend the claim.

That goes for us too as Christians. We say Jesus rose from the dead; I hope that you can defend that claim. But if *they're* making claims – like God doesn't exist – then we got to make sure we hold their feet to the fire and say "Okay, you just made a claim; now you need to defend it" so they bear the responsibility to give a defense for that claim.

Christians are not the only ones who give defenses for things – everyone is an

apologist for their view. And it turns out we just haven't done a good job of making our atheist friends, and others, defend their positions.

Let me give you an illustration of how this works. I was at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) when I was going through Teachers College. I went and got my degree in physics and then I went to Teachers College to get my Bachelor of Education so I could become a teacher. We went on all kinds of field trips to the zoo, and wherever we went they would give us a behind-the-scenes look of what's going on there, so that when we became teachers we would bring our students.

So we're walking through the ROM and I'm with my friends. You've got to understand that when I was in Teachers College I needed Stand To Reason and these other ministries because it was me against *everyone*. I went to the University of Ontario Institute of Technology with all these other future science teachers and they *all* held views contrary to my own. Every day I would spend more time going

home and looking up apologetics websites than doing my homework – somehow I still passed – and I would come back and it would be me, and I'm not joking, against 15 or 20 people. Thankfully, it was always gracious. In fact, some of these guys went on to get jobs as department heads, and people who were vehemently disagreeing with me then, were, years later offering me jobs. "Tim my physics guy is retiring; you've got to come work in my department." That's when you know you've got that good relationship, that they know you love them.

So I'm standing next to this thing, that's a Brachiosaurus – it's the largest sauropod dinosaur in Canada, actual skeleton, actual fossil – and my atheist friend says "There's no way Noah's fitting that on the ark." To which I had to fight my knee-jerk reaction, right, to do that roundhouse kick again. Again, I didn't make a claim; I don't need to defend anything here. So what I do is I ask a few questions, kind of a how-did-you-come-to-that-conclusion although they were much more specific. I

said, "Okay, you don't think Noah could get that on the ark, then clearly you must know how big the boat was." He said, "No, I have no idea; nobody knows how big the boat was." I said "Actually it's recorded in Genesis" so that was news to him. And then I asked, "Okay, you don't know how big the boat was; then you must know how many animals were on the boat because obviously, you know if it wasn't that many maybe...." And he's like "How could anyone know how many animals were on the boat?" I think, *Wait, you don't know how many animals were on the ark, and you don't know how big it was but you're certain there's no way Noah's get that on the ark.*

Anyways, there's also such a thing as a baby Brachiosaurus, which is much smaller. And so long as you get a pink one and a blue one on the ark you'll be ok.

You see the approach. You're going to want to be the Bible Answer Man. That's just how we react as human beings, even when what you need to do is start asking questions.

Apologetics for our teens

There's a need for different types of books on apologetics. We need the books on theory – and there are plenty of them. Several efforts have been made over the years to write books specifically addressed to unbelieving skeptics.

However, so far as I'm aware, there haven't been too many books written *for believers* at a popular level. I'm talking about the kind of book you could give to your teenage son or daughter when they start asking hard questions about the Christian faith. This is *that* book.

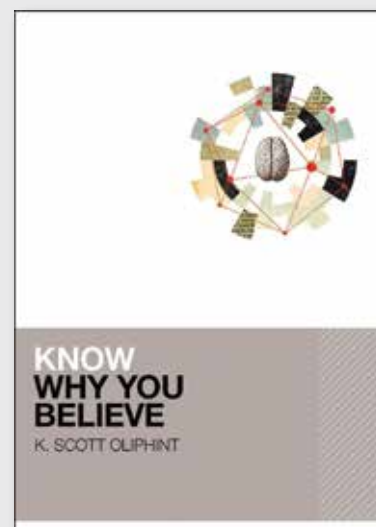
As a professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, Dr. Scott Oliphint is well-qualified to write this kind of work. He has a great grasp of the background philosophical and theological issues – and this is evident in his more scholarly apologetics books. Yet he also has a track record of accessible writing for popular audiences – for example, some years ago I reviewed his great series of biblical studies entitled *The Battle Belongs to the Lord: The Power of Scripture for Defending Our Faith*.

He's done it again. Except for a couple of more technical sections, most of *Know Why You Believe* should be

comprehensible to the average reader from young adults upwards. And the book launches with this profound quote from C.S. Lewis at his best:

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

That really sets the tone for everything following. One of the reasons I love this book and can highly recommend it is because it takes God's Word seriously. It takes Psalm



KNOW WHY YOU BELIEVE

BY K. SCOTT OLIPHINT

2017 / 221 PAGES

THE GAUNTLET

This person had thrown down the gauntlet. A gauntlet is a medieval glove but in our culture today what happens is someone throws down the gauntlet and then they celebrate like they just won. They throw it down and they celebrate.

That's not how this works. In medieval times you throw down the gauntlet, someone picks it up, *and then the duel happens*. So we have to change our approach. We have to point this stuff out: *you made a claim, now you need to defend it*.

The second Columbo question is actually, again, very, very generous because it assumes that a person actually came to a conclusion. Again, don't be surprised if you say, "How did you come to that conclusion?" and they're thinking, "What are you talking about? What do you mean, what reasons do I have for believing that?" and they don't have any good reasons. In that case, you're going to have to be gracious again.

So in summary, we've just looked at two

Columbo questions. The first one tells you *what* the person believes, and the second one tells you *why* they believe it – what they believe, why they believe it – and that's exactly what Christians need to know. We've got to know what we believe and why we believe it.

As well, notice that these questions keep you out of the hot seat and, in a certain sense, in the driver's seat. When you're asking questions you're steering the conversation where you would like it to go and that's a good place to be.

WHEN YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR DEPTH

Now let me make a couple of final remarks. It turns out that you could end up asking the wrong person the right questions. You find out this person is really smart, way smarter than you. You were thinking, "I'm going to try the Columbo Tactics on my next airplane ride" but it turns out the guy next to you is a *quantum physicist*. And you're like, "Why did I open my big fat mouth?"

So what happens when you're

outgunned like that and feeling like you're in way over your depth? Here's what you do – and this works online too by the way – let's say you're messaging with someone and you're in a conversation you can't end. That's the problem with Facebook conversations; they never end because it's just comment, comment, comment. How do I get out of this? It's a black hole!

Here's what you do. You say: "You obviously are very smart; you've done a lot of reading on this. Maybe you've got a Ph.D. in philosophy and you're an atheist and you debate people for a living. Okay, great. Tell me what you believe and I'm going to write it down. Okay, this is what you believe? And why is it you believe that?" Those are the two questions. And here are the magic words: "Now let me think about it."

You see how that works? "Let me think about it," because that's exactly what they want you to do, and that's exactly what you're going to do. You're going to think about what they've just told you, when the pressure is off, because I'm telling you, if

36:9 seriously: "For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light." God's light especially shines forth in his Word. If you want to see clearly, you need to see things God's way. This is also true when it comes to the reasons for believing the Christian faith. The best and most trustworthy reasons come from God himself – the faithful God who never lies. That's the basic approach undergirding *Know Why You Believe* – a biblical, Reformed approach to apologetics.

Oliphint covers 10 questions we might struggle with:

1. Why believe in the Bible?
2. Why believe in God?
3. Why believe in Jesus?
4. Why believe in miracles?
5. Why believe Jesus rose from the dead?
6. Why believe in salvation?
7. Why believe in life after death?
8. Why believe in God in the face of modern science?
9. Why believe in God despite the evil in the world?
10. Why believe in Christianity alone?

Each chapter deals with one of these questions. It explains the reasons and then also addresses responses or objections that might arise. There are also "Questions for

Reflection" and recommended readings with every chapter.

Just touching on one chapter, the second last deals with the problem of evil. It describes the problem and then explores two ways in which Christians have tried to address it, albeit unsatisfactorily. Instead, Oliphint attempts to offer biblical reasons as to how evil can co-exist with a good God. He points out that God has recognized the problem of evil from before creation. Furthermore, God created human beings in his image as responsible agents. When Adam and Eve fell, God rightly judged their sin. The real blame for evil is on them, not God. He then points out how God himself has dealt with, is dealing with, and will deal with the problem of evil through his Son Jesus Christ. This is a good explanation, but Oliphint might have said more. For instance, he could have added that because God is good, he must have a morally good reason for allowing whatever evil there is to exist.

Not every Christian ponders the deeper questions of why we believe what we do. But if you or someone you know does, this will be a great read. It would also make a great gift for consistories to give to young people who make public profession of faith

RP

– Wes Bredenhof.

you're like me, my neurons don't fire as well when I'm in the heat, in the middle of a conversation. Sometimes, actually, I think they shut right down. So you want to take that information down, and when you have it, you can sit in front of your computer go to Stand To Reasons website (STR.org) and you might find out, "Hey, Tim has an article about that!" Or you're going to go to ReformedPerspective.ca and see "Hey, they just wrote about this last week and look it there's – all the information I need." That's why groups like us exist: we're trying to get that information out there so that *you* can do something with it. Visit us, strengthen your own faith and then go and have an impact on the culture.

FLASHLIGHT, NOT A HAMMER

Now it's important to understand that questions are not meant to be used as a hammer to beat people up.

I'm telling you, you start doing this (and you need to start doing this) and you're going to see that you can use questions to hurt people. You just can; you may not even mean to but you can, because you're going to find out people are not as smart as they think they are. They just haven't thought things through; they don't know how to think critically. I used to teach high school – I taught in the Christian school system and I taught in the public school system – and let me tell you, a lot of the kids out there just cannot think critically because they were never taught to think critically. They're taught to memorize a whole bunch of information but never how to think.

So this is important: questions are not a *hammer* to beat people up. I'll tell you what they are: it's how Jesus used them. They're a *flashlight* to guide

people towards the truth. They're a flashlight to point people towards the truth.

SWEAT NOW

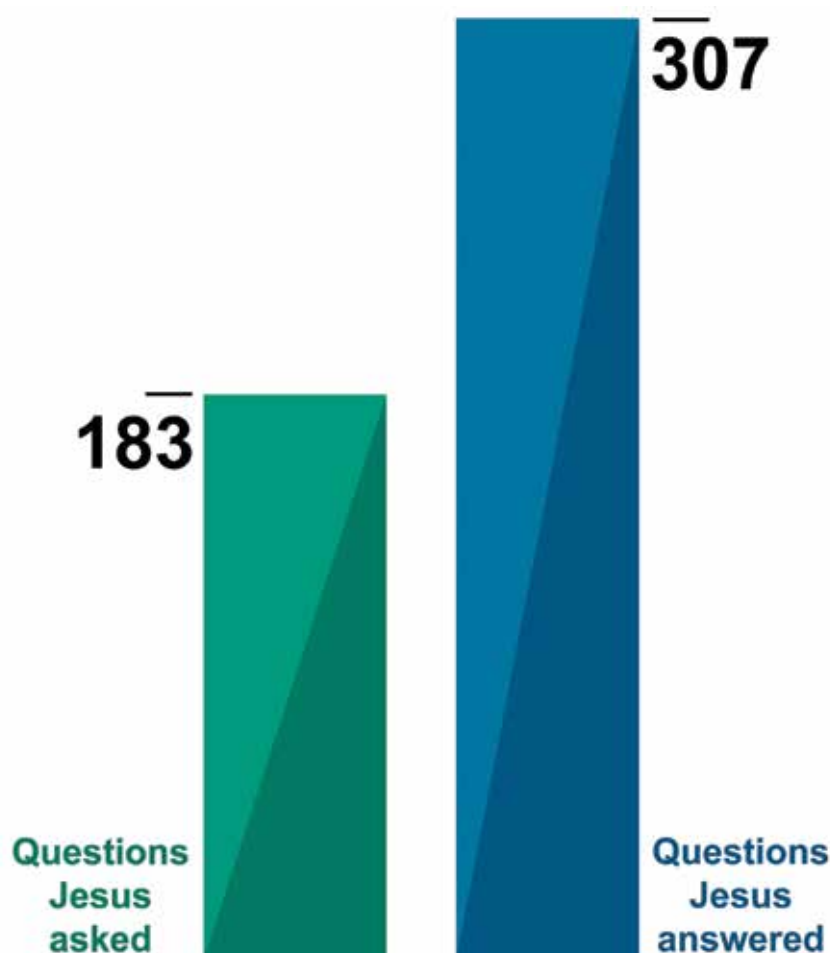
Last point: the Marines have a slogan in the United States and it's translated from Latin into English and here's what it is:

The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in battle

Why am I telling you this? Because something like 60% to 75% of young people in our congregations go off to university, many to secular universities and they end up walking away from the church. Why do they do that? The number one reason, the most popular response, is intellectual doubt and skepticism. They do not know how to interact with the aggressive professor or friend or whoever. So what I'm telling you is the more you sweat in training *now*, then when you get into those conversations you're not going to bleed out on the battlefield. And we have a whole lot of students that are bleeding it on the battlefield.

Even at the workplace or wherever, I want to encourage you that we need to practice what I'm preaching here. That may mean tomorrow morning at breakfast, start asking these questions. That may mean before we go to bed, or on the drive home, "Oh so do you guys want to stop at Wendy's?" you ask, "What do you mean by that?"

Just do it. Now it's second nature for me. I just kept doing this and kept doing it, and now my wife asks me "Do you want chicken for dinner?" and this is what happens: she gets kind of angry: "Don't use that stuff on me." But when it becomes second nature, then, when the pressure is on three weeks from now, a month from now, six months from now, and you find oh my, now I'm face to face with that opponent, that person who disagrees with me, you're going to want this to come to mind. And it won't come to mind, it just won't, if you haven't been practicing it. RP





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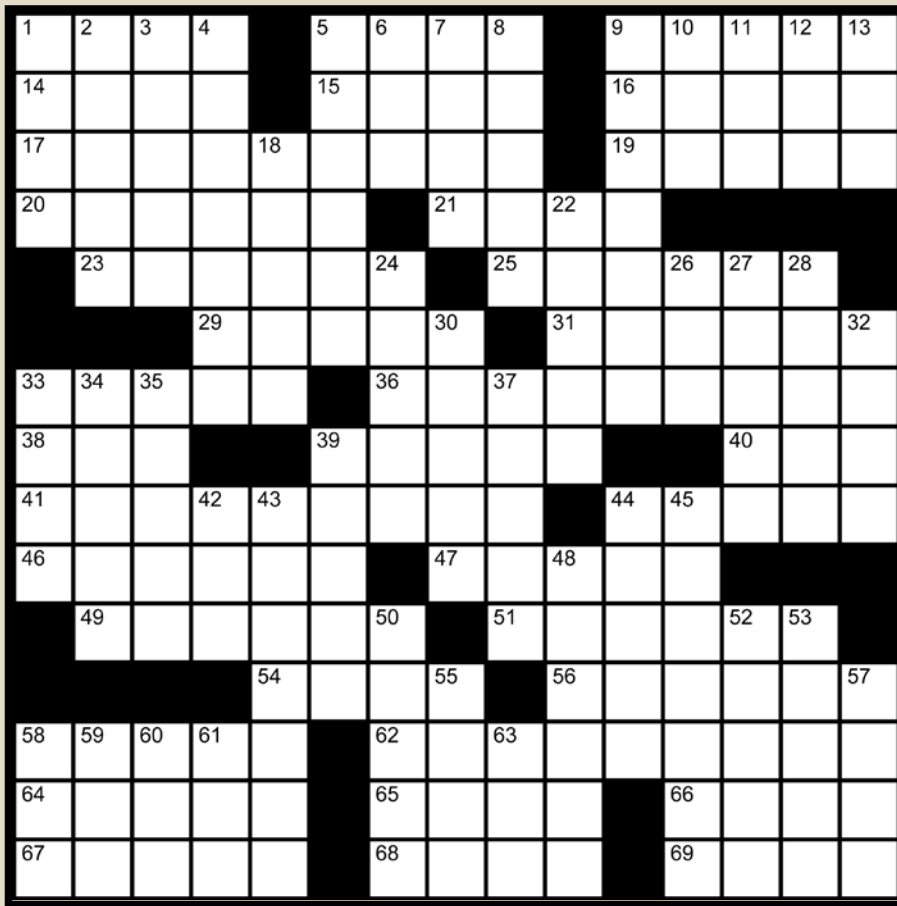
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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 5-1

PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

1. Weighty volume (to me – you see?)
5. Where and how many used cars are sold
9. Single-person rowing boat
14. Seed covering
15. Granular snow compacted into glacial ice
16. Country fought over in 1950-1953
17. Dance for two (in Paris?) (3 words)
19. Make it up on the spot (hyphenated)
20. Attract; engage; enchant; charm
21. "took a cedar... to make a _____" (Ez. 27)
23. What a Gypsy calls a non-Gypsy
25. What salespeople or ads deliver
29. "Creator" of Narnia
31. What assembly instructions often remain

33. 29 Across's Tumnus character is this species
36. Invention of Samuel Morse and others
38. First lady, or the day before
39. French military caps with flat tops
40. Relaxing place named after Belgian town
41. "Dress _____" (Caroline Dawn Johnson)
44. *Ethanol* is short for _____ alcohol.
46. Mural painting technique
47. French for *the angel*
49. The # 10 ant who pays rent
51. Alter ego of "The Ugly Duckling"
54. Head of a college or university faculty
56. Bookkeeping book
58. Old enough to vote (two words)
62. Skin disease involving

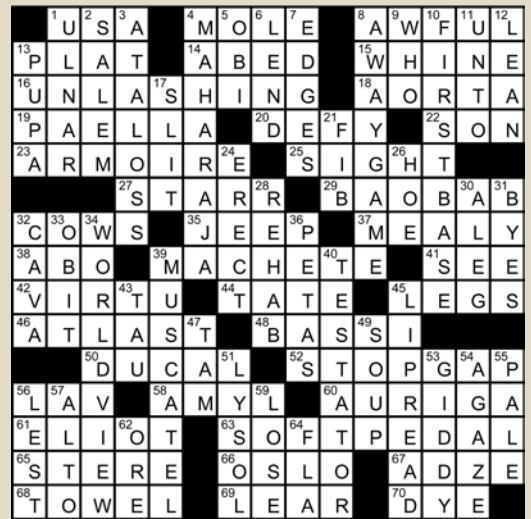
extreme dryness

64. Group Esther was pulled into (Esther 2)
65. "rule... with a rod of _____" (Rev. 19)
66. Number of times a specific exercise is done
67. "Ahoy, _____!" (typical pirate greeting)
68. "The sower _____ the word." (Mark 4)
69. "I will _____ your songs" (Ez. 26)

DOWN

1. It's sticky (especially if you're caught on it).
2. Partly orange ape (for short)
3. Make a mistake
4. Group Biblically entitled to special respect
5. Simon Peter's brother (John 6, Matt. 4)
6. Surname of Bruce or Stan or Ang
7. Egg

LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTION



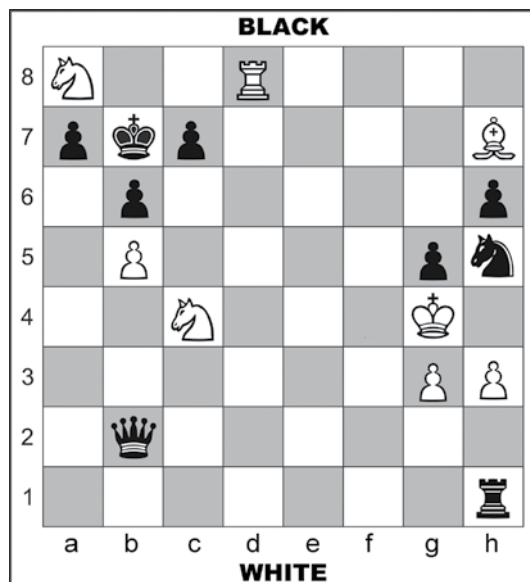
SERIES 4-6

8. Jeremiah Thomas's home state
9. No ice needed if you do this inline
10. Industry that suffered from overfishing
11. Internet address (abbreviation)
12. Flowery Hawaiian greeting
13. Black or golden canine (for short)
18. "waits with _____ longing" (Rom. 8)
22. Expel violently from mouth (variant form of "spews")
24. Word for weddings and a funeral
26. Make a mistake
27. "will you keep him on a _____?" (Job 41)
28. Syrupy (bad for a person; good for a maple)
30. Part of a flower supporting a petal
32. Indian sauce made from lentils and spices
33. Peasant serving a lord
34. Avoid; prevent
35. Laughter sound effect with three es
37. Light purple flower
39. Danish and Norwegian monetary unit
42. Electronic Serial Number (abbreviation)
43. Specialized training institution
44. _____ on (= encouraged or incited)
45. Offers to carry out work at specific prices
48. A capella group formed in Toronto in 1978
50. Cabs
52. White heron
53. Speed or pace of a musical passage
55. Emperor who probably had Paul killed
57. Coarse file
58. Unit of electrical resistance
59. U.S. federal agency overseeing aviation
60. *The _____ of War* (military classic by Sun Tzu)
61. Opposite of *Haw!* in commands to a horse
63. "A hard _____ to hoe" (= a difficult task)

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #253



WHITE to Mate in 2
or, If it is BLACK's Move,
BLACK to Mate in 3

Riddle for Punsters

#253 – "Employment Events"

Did you hear about the researcher who l _ _ _ t at the opportunity to study frog migration patterns?

Did you hear about the customer who paid the refrigerator repair man with _ _ _ d cash instead of by credit?

Did you hear about the mechanic who w _ _ _ _ _ ed his back trying to remove rusty bolts?

Did you hear about the carpenter who for weeks tried to _ _ _ _ _ er out the details of a contract with his boss then finally he _ _ _ _ _ ed it?

Problem to Ponder

#253 – "WORD JUMBLE – Types of Trees in Canada"

Change the order of letters to find the name of a Tree found for sure in Canada (and many in the United States also). For example, **koa** would become **oak**.

• DECIDUOUS (BROADLEAF) TREES

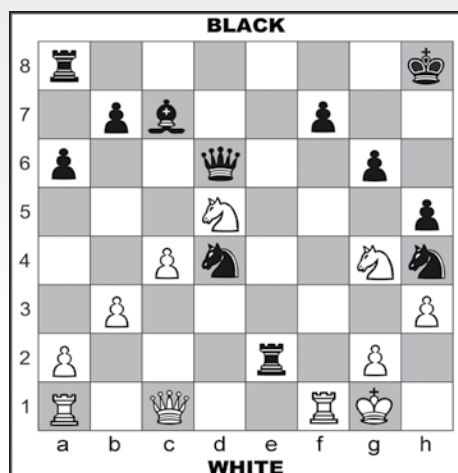
hebec	_____	gooddow	_____	hunttecs	_____
ryrhec	_____	lapem	_____	rolapp	_____
wolwi	_____	notdotcowo	_____	twanul	_____
tututreb	_____	mulp	_____	shingle lem	_____
brac pleap	_____	thiwe chirb	_____		

• CONIFER (EVERGREEN) TREES

cared	_____	neip	_____	cupres	_____
dodorew	_____	punjire	_____	laudsog fri	_____

Last Issue's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #252



WHITE TO MATE IN 3
An effective Queen sacrifice!

Descriptive Notation

1. Q-R6 ch K-N1
2. KN-B6 ch QxN
3. NxQ mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Qc1-h6 + Kh8-g8
2. Ng4-f6 + Qd6xf6
3. Nd5xf6 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- RxNP ch
 2. K-R1 R-R7 ch
 3. NxR QxN mate
- or
3. K-N1 Q-N6 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Re2xg2 +
 2. Kg1-h1 Rg2-h2 +
 3. Ng4xh2 Qd6xh2 ++
- or
3. Kh1-g1 Qd6-g3 ++

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#252 – "Flowery Language?"

Why did the greenhouse owner like to grow tulips as well as roses?

They reminded him of his beloved wife's face with its **two lips** and **rosey cheeks**.

Answer to Problem to Ponder


#252 – "April Showers Bring May Flowers?"

Now that spring has come, Heidi plans to plant flowers in her back yard. She will spread new planting soil only over as much area as is needed. Each large bag of nutrient-enriched planting soil costs \$12.20 and will cover exactly one square metre of garden to the depth Heidi wants. If Heidi plants 60 begonias (in 6 rows by 10 rows), she wants to have them 30 cm apart and 30 cm from the edge of the rectangular garden on each side. Otherwise, if Heidi plants 50 lily plants (in 5 rows by 10 rows) she wants to have them 20 cm apart and 20 cm from the garden edge on each side. Boxed begonias will cost her \$23 for six plants whereas lily plants will cost \$.55 each. Which will cost Heidi more to plant, begonias or lilies?

The plot for the 60 begonias, which has 6 plants across in each row, would have 5 x 30 cm = 150 cm for soil between the plants and another 30 cm at each end (from the outer plant to the edge of the garden on each side) for a total width of 150+30+30 = 210 cm = 2.10 m. The length has 10 plants in each row so the plot would have 9 x 30 cm = 270 cm for soil between the plants and another 30 cm at each end (from the outer plant to the edge of the garden on each side) for a total length

of 270+30+30 = 330 cm = 3.30 m. The area of the rectangular begonias plot will be 2.10 m x 3.30 m = 6.93 sq. m. Each bag of topsoil covers 1 sq. m so 7 bags are needed at a cost of 7 x \$12.20 = \$85.40 for the soil. \$23 is the cost of six begonia plants so the 60 begonias will cost \$23 x 10 = \$230. The cost for begonias and soil will be \$230.00 + \$85.40 = \$315.40 in total.

The plot for the 50 lily plants, which has 5 plants across in each row, would have 4 x 20 cm = 80 cm for soil between the plants and another 20 cm at each end (from the outer plant to the edge of the garden on each side) for a total width of 80+20+20 = 120 cm = 1.20 m. The length has 10 plants in each row so the plot would have 9 x 20 cm = 180 cm for soil between the plants and another 20 cm at each end for a total length of 180+20+20 = 220 cm = 2.20 m. The area of the rectangular lily plants plot will be 1.20 m x 2.20 m = 2.64 sq. m. Each bag of topsoil covers 1 sq. m so 3 bags are needed at a cost of 3 x \$12.20 = \$36.60 for the soil. Each lily costs \$.55 so the 50 lilies will cost \$5.50 x 50 = \$275. The cost for lily plants and soil will be \$275.00 + \$36.60 = \$311.60 in total. Therefore the begonias will cost \$3.80 more than the lily plants.

A portrait of Henry VIII, showing him from the chest up. He has a full, light-colored beard and mustache, and is wearing a dark cap with a large white feather. He is looking directly at the viewer with a serious expression.

Henry VIII died, as
all men must die,
and was buried with
great pomp and
ceremony.

O COME, SWEET DEATH

*A tale of two Mr. Hoopers,
and the end that comes to us all*

by Christine Farenhorst

Komm, süßer Tod, komm selge Ruh
or "Come, sweet death, come,
blessed rest" is a melody Johann
Sebastian Bach composed in the 1700s.
Through this wonderfully harmonious
composition, Bach evokes in Christians
the desire for death, heaven and the Lord
Jesus. The words, by an anonymous
author, are these:

Come lead me to peace
Because I am weary of the world,
O come! I wait for you,
Come soon and lead me,
Close my eyes.
Come, blessed rest!

Just recently we heard some neighbor
children express the desire to see and
speak with their grandparents, both of
whom died this last year within weeks of
one another. The children were four and
six years old.

"Can't I just send them an e-mail," the
four-year-old piped up, as his mother
smilingly shook her head.

The other one stated, as he raced a toy
car along the floor, that he preferred to get
in an airplane and soar up into the sky
to say "hi" to Nana and Grandpa. Such

anecdotes make us smile, but they should
also make us aware that most children, as
well as many adults, have no idea about
what death actually is; that they have no
inkling that it is a stepping-stone to an
eternity that never ends.

BIG BIRD'S LAMENT

Many of us who had or were children
during the 1970s, were acquainted with
Mr. Hooper on the children's program
Sesame Street. (This is a program, by the
way, which children should not watch any
longer.) Friendly Mr. Hooper, who ran
the grocery store on the program, was
well liked. When he died during the 1982
season the dilemma for the producers
of *Sesame Street* was what to tell their
audience, composed of children, about Mr.
Hooper's demise.

They came to the conclusion that the
show's adult actors should tearfully and
emotionally explain to one of the favorite
characters, Big Bird, that Mr. Hooper had
passed away and would never come back
to *Sesame Street*. Big Bird reacted tearfully
and became very upset. He was both
confused and sad. The adults continued to
reassure him that they were still there and
loved him and that they would take care

of him. Death itself was not explained,
although Big Bird pointedly did ask his
adult friends, "Why does it have to be this
way? Give me one good reason!" One of
the adults answered him in a vague sort
of way: "Big Bird, it has to be this way ...
just because." It was a very unsatisfactory
explanation of death leaving the viewers
with a void – ignoring both the promise of
heaven and the reality of hell.

ANOTHER MR. HOOPER

To offer contrast, there is the story of the
death of another Mr. Hooper, a Mr. John
Hooper who lived and died in England
during the 1500s. And intertwined with
his passing there is the story of a child who
accepted and believed that John Hooper's
death was triumphant and not at all the
end of his life.

Although not much is known about this
English John Hooper's childhood, it is a
fact that he was the only son and heir to a
well-to-do English family and was brought
up as a staunch Catholic. To tell his story,
or what we know of it, we must focus on
Gloucester, the city where he died.

By our standards, Gloucester, England,
was not, at the time of John Hooper, a
big city. Four thousand citizens lived and

worked in the small metropolis. They had various occupations; the sun rose and set on them daily; and they lived and died within its boundaries without traveling elsewhere. There were the coopers, friars, bakers, carpenters, and there were the rich, poor, blind and maimed people.

The streets were lined with inns, several monasteries, and between them were hidden both wooden and stone houses. Four main roads led in and out of Gloucester, all meeting at a main intersection where the town's high cross stood. They were named from the gates by which they entered the town. Thus there were the Eastgate, Northgate, Southgate and Westgate streets. Northgate led to London; Southgate to Bristol; Eastgate to Oxford; and Westgate to Wales. People walked, rode in carts, and journeyed by horse on these unpaved roads. Gloucester was a little world within the world.

The Roman Catholic Church held sway in Gloucester. Henry VIII had ascended to the throne of England in 1491 and was a loyal servant of the Catholic Church. That is to say, he was a loyal servant of the church until he wanted something the church would not give him – an annulment to his marriage. His disagreement with the Pope on this matter led him to establish the Church of England. God uses all things for His glory, both good and bad. The Church of England was thus born partly out of lust, and it was a church that, although free of papal authority, had a man as its head.

In Gloucester, pamphlets had been distributed and copies of the Bible were sold by tinkers and booksellers prior to Henry's divorce. People read comforting words by candlelight and many were convinced by the Holy Spirit of the truth of the Gospel. In 1538 Henry issued a royal license that the Bible might be openly sold to and read by all English people without any danger of recrimination. He then issued another decree appointing a copy of the Bible to be placed in every parish church. It was to be raised upon a desk so that anyone might come and read it.

Henry VIII died, as all men must die, and was buried with great pomp and ceremony. His son Edward, who was only nine years old, became king after

him. Young Edward had been fed the Solas of the Reformation by Protestant teachers and his youthful heart had been convinced of their truth by the Holy Spirit. It was during his brief reign that Gloucester was blessed with a Bishop who diligently and openly began to feed its citizens God's Word. His name was John Hooper, and he was no longer Roman Catholic.

ANOTHER PAUL

John Hooper was a Paul. He was a faithful pastor. At times preaching four or five times a week, both on the streets of Gloucester and inside the Cathedral, he truly loved and felt compassion for the people. He fed the poor, explained the Gospel and was diligent in visiting his flock. Consequently, John Hooper was much loved by the people of the city.

A boy by the name of Thomas Drourie also lived in Gloucester at this time. He

was a local lad and was blind. Whether he had become blind as the result of an accident or an illness, or whether he was born blind, is not known. It is not recorded that he was a beggar, so very likely he had a supportive family. Perhaps he had been educated in the school which Henry VIII had established in Gloucester, or perhaps he'd had a tutor. In any case, Thomas Drourie was well acquainted with the Bible.

During those blessed years of young Edward VI, Protestant teachers and pastors were safe from the charge of heresy. But these were only a few years – the years of 1547 to 1553. The very youthful monarch, providentially placed by God on the throne of England at this time, died of tuberculosis when only a teenager. His half-sister, Mary, succeeded him. Mary was a dyed-in-the-wool Roman Catholic, and she had no regard for the John Hoopers and the



"Death itself was not explained, although Big Bird pointedly did ask his adult friends, 'Why does it have to be this way?'"

Thomas Drouries of her realm.

After Mary's ascent to the throne, John Hooper was immediately arrested, tried for heresy and found guilty. Because he had been pastor in Gloucester, he was eventually brought back to that town in February of 1555, to die there at the stake. As preparations were being made for the burning of this faithful pastor, the boy Thomas Drourie found his way to the place where he was held prisoner. Thomas knocked loudly at the door and a guard opened it to see who was making all the noise. Thomas, after a long conversation with the guard, who took a liking to the boy, was taken to see the Bishop.

Upon entering the Bishop's cell, Thomas was overcome with love. He himself had been imprisoned just a few weeks prior for his faith but had been released with a warning. After all, he was only a child. Bishop John Hooper asked the boy why he had been imprisoned. Thomas candidly confessed his faith in Jesus and in His atonement. Upon hearing the child's earnest words, the bishop began to weep.

"Ah, Thomas!" he said, "Ah, poor boy! God has taken from you your outward sight, for what consideration He best knows; but He has given you another sight much more precious, for He has induced your soul with the eye of knowledge and faith. God give you grace continually to pray unto Him that you lose not that sight, for then you should be blind both in body and soul."

Thomas hid the bishop's words in his heart and begged the guard who led him out of the prison cell to be permitted to hear the bishop speak prior to his being burned at the stake. The guard took the boy to the cathedral sanctuary where the Chancellor of Gloucester, Dr. Williams, was working together with his registrar. Now Dr. Williams had the distinction of having had two "conversions." Originally Roman Catholic, he had "converted" to the Protestant religion during Henry VIII's later years. And now, under Mary, he had "converted" back to Roman Catholicism.

When the boy was brought before him, Dr. Williams examined him on some

minor matters, but then he questioned Thomas on transubstantiation.

"Do you believe that after the words of the priest's consecration, the very body of Christ is in the bread?"

Thomas responded strongly with a child's assurance: "No, that I do not."

Dr. Williams peered at the boy in front of him. "Then you are a heretic, Thomas Drourie, and shall be burned. Who taught you this heresy?"

Thomas, the eyes of his heart bright even though his outward vision was dull, answered: "You, Mr. Chancellor."

Dr. Williams sat upright. "Where, pray, did I teach you this?"

Thomas replied, pointing with his hand to where he supposed the pulpit was, "In yonder place."

Dr. Williams was aghast. "When did I teach you this?"

Thomas, looking straight at the place from where the Chancellor's voice came, answered clearly: "When you preached there a sermon to all men, as well as to me, upon the sacrament. You said the sacrament was to be received spiritually by faith, and not carnally and really as the papists have heretofore taught."

Dr. Williams felt a certain shame in his heart. Nevertheless, his voice boomed out through the church. "Then do as I have done and you shall live as I do and escape burning."

Thomas did not hesitate. "Though you can so easily dispense with your own self, and mock God, the world and your conscience, I will not do so."

Dr. Williams, unable to threaten or cajole or convince the boy to recant back to Roman Catholicism, as he himself had done, finally said: "Then God have mercy upon you, for I will read your condemnatory sentence."

Thomas, showing no fear, responded: "God's will be fulfilled."

The registrar stood up and walked over to the Chancellor. "For shame, man! Will you read the sentence and condemn yourself? Away! Away! Substitute someone else to give sentence and judgment."

But Chancellor Williams would not change his mind. "Mr. Registrar," he barked out, "I will obey the law and give sentence myself according to my office."

After this he read the sentence, albeit with a shamed tongue and an even more shamed conscience.

Knowing that death was but a stepping stone to life, the blind boy, Thomas Drourie was burned at the stake on May 5, 1556, almost three months after Bishop John Hooper was burned.


THE END COMES TO ALL

Chancellor Williams came to a sad end, or rather, a horrible end, about three years later. Having dined with a William Jennings, a representative of the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth I, a queen who had much sympathy for the Protestant cause, he was asked by Jennings to meet with some royal commissioners. Whether he was worried about his colorful "conversion experiences" is not known, but it is a fact that he did not want to go to this meeting. Consequently, Mr. Jennings rode off alone.

Later Jennings was overtaken in his journey by a servant who informed him that the Chancellor had become ill. It was afterwards conjectured that the Chancellor had poisoned himself, so worried was he that he would be ill-treated by the Queen's commissioner. However, upon receiving a courteous and friendly message from the commissioner shortly after he had downed the poison, the Chancellor tried to recover from his lethal dose by taking some antidote. It was too late. The poison took its course.

Heaven is real. Hell is real. And children die as well as adults. But those who die with the eyes of their hearts opened, confessing the Lord Jesus, can sing with a hope that shines eternally:

Come lead me to peace
Because I am weary of the world,
O come! I wait for you,
Come soon and lead me,
Close my eyes.
Come, blessed rest!

For the rich man, there was eternal torment. For Bishop John Hooper, there was the bosom of Abraham. For Chancellor Williams - what shall we say? For Thomas Drourie there was the light of God's countenance. 



HOW THEN SHALL WE WATCH?

by Cap Stewart

Because we live in a *totally* but not *absolutely* depraved world there are always little shards of truth and beauty in even the worst films and TV shows. But is it worth sifting them out? Why are we looking for diamonds in dunghills when we know where the diamond mine can be found?

Imagine the following scenario. A Christian friend invites you over for a movie. The evening hasn't progressed far, however, before you realize you're watching an NC-17 film, complete with pornographic sex scenes that leave nothing to the imagination. You turn to your friend in disbelief, but he assures you it'll be worth it if you just keep watching. Then comes the twist: the characters in the film express regret over their immorality, and in a powerful display of repentance, they give their lives to Christ.

Now, most of us would agree that a titillation flick – no matter what kind of redeeming “message” is tacked on – is not acceptable fare for followers of Christ. Sometimes the moral message of a story is drowned out by immoral methods. And yet, we've adopted a mindset that Trevin Wax once described with these words: “all sorts of entertainment choices are validated in the name of cultural engagement.”¹

But we need to ask a question (one Wax also asks): “At what point does our cultural engagement become just a sophisticated way of being worldly?”

There is a line that shouldn't be crossed, somewhere between the questions, “How does watching *Chariots of Fire* show us the gospel?” and “How does watching *Girls Gone Wild* show us the

gospel?” Where is that line? What does it look like?

3 QUESTIONS

We can't answer these questions with the depth they deserve in a single article. What we can do, however, is pose a few additional questions to help us evaluate our own hearts more clearly.

Question #1: Is my view of truth and beauty too shallow?

The Christian recognizes that truth and beauty have been clearly communicated by a trustworthy and glorious God. His Word is a lamp that illuminates the darkness of our surroundings. Hints of God's truth can be found everywhere – even in unlikely places. I personally have had God speak certain truths to me through movies that I now couldn't watch with a clear conscience. God can use any means – even the mouth of a donkey (see Numbers 22:21-39) – to speak to us.

However, the almost rabid rush to find truth in anything and everything might be a sign that we're starving ourselves from the “real deal” and substituting shadows and reflections for substance and clear images.

Just a couple years ago, *The Christian Post* reported on a survey that listed the mainstream TV shows most watched by

Christian audiences.² Several of the shows featured objectified actors (characters in lingerie, underwear, stripper getups, etc.), crude and crass sexual language (some of it pervasive), and sex scenes (including one show with a sex scene in almost every episode). And that's just a tally of problematic *sexual* displays.

If we need entertainment to give us explicit acts of depravity just to show how gross certain sins of debauchery are, I think it means we're far too easily pleased with finding diamond fragments in dunghills, rather than taking in the beauty of polished gems in a jewelry store.

Or, to modify imagery from Proverbs 11:22, you can deprive yourself of unadulterated truth and beauty to the extent that you find a pig decked out with a gold ring a beautiful sight to behold. You may think you're *exercising* discernment (i.e., cleverly noticing truth in even unlikely places), but you're actually *lacking* discernment (ignoring the pig because, well, shucks, that ring is *fancy*).

It may sometimes be a challenge to find creative, God-honoring entertainment, but it's not impossible. Considering the collective output of film and television from their inception, there are plenty of options available to us. There is no entertainment so popular or attractive that we must compromise real truth and beauty so we can experience inferior or tainted imitations of them.

Question #2: Do I use "gray areas" as an excuse for compromise?

We definitely want to be careful about creating universal entertainment rules that aren't Biblically justified. Depending on the varying maturity levels of different believers, certain content may be good for some to watch and others to avoid. Not everything is black and white. There are definitely shades of gray out there (just not, er, fifty.)

But just as any one person will have blind spots, so will any culture and time period. It is helpful, and sometimes necessary, to examine how other cultures and time periods have addressed similar topics. In order to properly evaluate potential gray areas, we need to have a more global and historical perspective – a

perspective that isn't mired in our own cultural shortcomings.

One such "gray area" is the pornification of much of our entertainment. In his book *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Dr. Norman Doidge says the following:

[S]oftcore is now what hardcore was a few decades ago [It shows] up on mainstream media all day long, in the pornification of everything, including television, rock videos, soap operas, advertisements, and so on.³

Dr. Doidge's book was published in 2007, and the societal trends he noticed have only worsened since then.⁴ Pornified content is so commonplace that we've become largely desensitized to its presence. You won't find many professing Christians argue that pornography is a gray area, and yet you *will* find many professing Christians argue that similar material is justifiable in a mainstream movie with a redemptive message. The cultural standard being used is a sliding scale; the "gray" is not found in the situation itself, but in our collective cloudy vision.

Question #3: Am I placing too much emphasis on being relevant?

There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to be effective in communicating with a particular demographic, including your own culture. The problem with focusing too much on being relevant, however, is that we can become so fixated on what is current and popular and fresh that we lose sight of what is lastingly valuable.

What is relevant today will be irrelevant

tomorrow. This is true in any setting, but when we are immersed in the very culture we attempt to minister in, we can be especially distracted by numerous fads, crazes, and trends.

When the Pharisees debated with Jesus about divorce in Mark 10, they were consumed with current interpretations of the Mosaic law, whereas Jesus focused on ancient realities found in the book of Genesis. In the words of commentator David Guzik,

It's striking that Jesus took us back to the beginning to learn about marriage. Today many want to say, "We live in different times" or "The rules are different today" or "We need a modern understanding." Yet Jesus knew that the answers were in going back to the beginning.⁵

Relevance is a tragic endgame. It's a horrible target to set your sights on. With such a focus, the temporal can gain more importance than the eternal, and suddenly we're majoring on minors and minoring on majors. To paraphrase C. S. Lewis, if we aim at eternal truth, we'll get temporal relevance thrown in. If we aim simply at relevance, we'll get neither.

Chasing after the moving target of "relevance" can lead one to speak and act and live in a way that is nearly indistinguishable from those in the world. To a large degree, this has happened within our western Christian subculture: our entertainment choices rarely differ from those who claim no affinity for God and His word. And if our salt loses its saltiness in the name of relevance, we become pathetically irrelevant.

3 PRINCIPLES

The above three questions are a good place to start, but we mustn't stop there. We must find sound, Biblical answers. That being the case, let us examine three Scriptural principles that can help us formulate those answers.

The Greatest Commandment

First, when asked what the most important commandment is, Jesus answered with a quote from Deuteronomy

"Will this piece of entertainment encourage me to love and value what God loves and values?"

6: “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (v. 4). This can help us better evaluate the first question: “Is my view of truth and beauty too shallow?”

As the ultimate expression – nay, the very embodiment – of truth and beauty, God must capture our foremost affections and deepest love. Entertainment can actually be an aid in our pursuit of Him. No artist denies the power of art to affect and influence us. As such, one might well ask, “Will this piece of entertainment encourage me to love and value what God loves and values? Does it call evil evil and good good? Will it point me toward God or away from God?”

It won’t work to consume entertainment that discourages us from loving the Giver of truth and beauty – not even if that piece of entertainment includes a kernel of truth or a nugget of beauty. It is self-defeating to compromise our convictions about truth and beauty in order to encourage our appreciation for truth and beauty. As one person once said, it’s like “rooting through a bin of over ripe garbage in the summer in hopes of finding a good sandwich.”⁶

Love trumps freedom

Jesus also told us what the second greatest commandment is: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). This can help us better evaluate the second question: “Do I use ‘gray areas’ as an excuse for compromise?”

One solid principle far removed from the “gray area” zone is the Christian’s duty to consider the needs of others. With that principle in mind, let us return to the pornification of our entertainment. This time, however, forget about your own wellbeing as an audience member and consider the wellbeing of the actors who are tasked with disrobing and sexually acting out for the camera.

We may not personally know these actors, but they fit under the category of “neighbor” according to the sweeping definition Jesus assumed in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Like the priest and the Levite in the parable, we may barely cross paths with Hollywood actors (we’re only handing money over to their

employers so they get paid for entertaining us). But as with the priest and Levite, that leaves us with no excuse for our lack of neighborly love.

Instead of evaluating whether or not a graphic sex scene is appropriate for you, evaluate whether or not it is your Christian duty to pay others to objectify and exploit themselves for your entertainment. Is that the best way you as a consumer can love your entertainer as you love yourself? There are scores of actor testimonials on how degrading and terrifying and horrifying it is to force oneself – or face pressure from studio executives – to be sexualized for the viewing pleasure of others.⁷

The Christian’s liberty is subservient to the Christian’s duty to love. The second commandment helps clarify certain situations that we might otherwise categorize as “gray areas.”

The test of faith

In addressing the controversy surrounding meat offered to idols, the Apostle Paul exhorted the Roman church with this bit of advice: “whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). This can help us better evaluate the third question: “Am I placing too much emphasis on being relevant?”

Paul agreed with his readers that there was no inherent sin involved in eating meat that may or may not have previously been used in pagan rituals. Such meat was not tainted. That was a fact.

Nevertheless, certain Christians experienced guilt even *thinking* about the practice. To them, it indicated a participation in pagan worship. Their conscience was, to use Paul’s term, “weak” (v. 2). Yet if they were to violate their conscience, ill-informed as it was, they would still be acting in sin.


Thus, whether or not a certain piece of entertainment will allow you to be relevant to your culture, consider whether you can engage with it in full faith that such an action is good and right. You cannot use the convictions of others to carry or excuse your entertainment choices. If your conscience is bothering

you, it is your Christian duty to heed your conscience.

The most relevant faith is a faith that clings to its convictions. In fact, sometimes the best conversations, and sometimes the best form of cultural engagement, can take place, not because you have watched the latest movie, but because you haven’t.

ENTERTAINMENT ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL

In generations past, prospectors did not typically find gold lying on the surface of the ground. They found gold through hard work: panning in the water, mining in the earth, and so on. Similarly, being a wise patron of entertainment requires thoughtful and deliberate analysis.

It takes hard work. And that work can only be successful when informed by the gospel of the grace of God. His word and His will and His ways can – and should – transform our choices. The more we immerse ourselves in gospel principles and gospel practices, the better equipped we will be to engage with entertainment in a God-glorifying way. 

ENDNOTES

- 1) Trevin Wax, *Evangelicals and Hollywood Muck*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/evangelicals-and-hollywood-muck>
- 2) Jeannie Law, *Top 20 Secular TV Shows Watched by Religious Families*, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/top-20-secular-tv-shows-watched-christian-families.html>
- 3) Quoted in Cap Stewart, *When Pornography Invades “Normal” Entertainment*, <http://www.capstewart.com/2014/12/when-pornography-invades-normal.html>
- 4) On the practice of using porn stars for mainstream entertainment, see Cap Stewart, *Seth Rogen on Hollywood’s Backdoor Connection to the Red-Light District*, <http://www.capstewart.com/2019/05/seth-rogen-on-hollywoods-backdoor.html>
- 5) *Mark 10 – Jesus teaches on Marriage, Riches, and Service*, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/mark-10>
- 6) Rachel Nichols. Comment on *When High Fantasy Becomes Porn Fantasy*, Part 1, <http://speculativefaith.lorehaven.com/when-high-fantasy-becomes-porn-fantasy-1/#comment-38831>
- 7) For a fuller treatment of this topic, see Cap Stewart, *Here’s the problem with just closing your eyes during the sex scenes*, <https://reformedperspective.ca/hollywoods-secret-culture-of-sexual-abuse>



by Margaret Helder

LOSERS ARE PART OF THE PLAN

As far as many politicians and voters are concerned, “going green” is the equivalent of “motherhood and apple pie.” Typically, the “transition to a green economy” is presented as a major step toward solving issues connected with the environment. For example, on May 1, 2019, the British Parliament declared a “climate change emergency.” According to the report in *Nature* (May 9, p. 165): “The declaration is not legally binding and there is no clear definition of what it means, but it is taken as a signal of Parliament’s intention to act.”

And what was the particular emergency or crisis that led to this declaration? There were some major demonstrations about climate change in that country in April. That may have been the emergency. In any case there is no doubt that the U.K. politicians mean business. And the U.K. is not alone in this endeavor.

ENORMOUS COSTS

The next day following the declaration of an emergency, a British think tank on climate change issued a major statement. This group recommended that the U.K. should aim for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions – including international flights and marine shipping – by the year 2050. That should prompt a question:

how exactly can society fuel jets, and ocean transport ships, without burning high intensity fossil fuels? The think tank recommended that Britain should spend 1-2% of Gross Domestic Product (about \$26-52 billion US per year) to achieve a result where emissions of carbon dioxide from industry and transportation and domestic heating and cooling are completely eliminated.

Interest and support for the “green transition” is a major concern of many governments worldwide. For example, an intergovernmental agency, International Renewable Energy Agency was founded in 2010. With headquarters in Abu Dhabi, it works closely with the United Nations to make recommendations on ways to achieve the green economy. As far as specific countries go, Germany seems particularly keen to support studies on the economic implications of adopting renewable energy on a worldwide basis. For example, the German Federal Foreign Office funds a Geopolitics of Energy Transformation project out of Berlin.

CLIMATE CHANGE AS A REASON TO ABANDON DEMOCRACY?

Four experts concerned with the worldwide political and economic

ramifications of a move towards green technology, and away from an economy based on fossil fuels, published an article on this issue on in the May 12 edition of *Nature* titled: “How the energy transition will reshape geopolitics.” They consider four scenarios with respect to energy use up to the year 2100. The one they favor, which they entitle the “Big Green Deal,” involves a wholesale abandonment of fossil fuels. The scenario they really don’t want to see is called “Dirty Nationalism” which really refers to the *status quo*.

Labels are powerful things. That’s why the activists who brought us the term “dirty oil” to refer to Alberta’s production of oil from oilsands, now bring us “dirty nationalism” to disparage any emphasis on national concerns (as opposed to an international agenda). These authors define the *status quo* as a situation when “Politicians want to protect local jobs and incumbent industries such as coal and manufacturing.” Note that they seem to consider that *manufacturing* is on the chopping block along with fossil fuels like coal.

They then continue to list what they don’t like today: “Elections bring populists to power in world’s largest democracies and nationalism grows. Nation-first

policies put a premium on self-sufficiency, favoring domestic energy sources over imported ones.”

The problem is, of course, that voters obviously desire an economy which will allow them to make an adequate living. But, the experts declare: “abating carbon will create losers.” They take this as a given. There are few people, however, who want to vote themselves into a loser category. Therefore top-down totalitarian measures may be necessary, these people declare. For example “China has scaled up renewable energy through top-down rule and state planning.” Indeed Western support for democracies should be questioned, they insist.

CAUSING A CRISIS

So what kind of costs is society facing as, or if, they contemplate a transition to using renewable resources for energy production? For a start, economies that produce oil and gas could lose a total of \$7 trillion US in the next twenty years. (p. 30). Some oil companies and some states could go bankrupt. Oil exporters might lose global influence whereas importers will be empowered. We see that already in regional conflict in Canada. None of this is at all appealing to voters in oil exporting jurisdictions. There is no point crying to government that such measures will cost many jobs. That is all part of the plan!

The Yellow Vests movement in France is a case in point. In October 2018 large demonstrations took place to call attention to the high cost of fuels which was making life so difficult for ordinary working people. Wikipedia calls it a “populist grassroots revolutionary political movement for economic justice.”

Similarly, we can consider the controversy over a carbon tax in Canada. A headline in the June 14 *Edmonton Journal* read “Carbon Tax must double to meet targets.” Apparently parliamentary budget officer Yves Giroux calculates that for Canada to meet her Paris agreements (on climate change) by 2030, the carbon tax must increase to \$102 per tonne compared to the present \$20 per tonne and it would have to apply to all sectors of the economy. At present, large industries pay on only a fraction of their emissions. This is so that Canadian manufacturing can compete internationally. The objective of the tax, however, is to make it expensive to generate energy from fossil fuels, and that will impact anyone who drives, or wants to heat or cool their homes, or works in industries. Who are the desired losers? Of course it is the ordinary citizens who will not be able to find jobs or pay for necessities. That is what the carbon tax is *supposed* to achieve. Platitudinous declarations that there will be other jobs, are not at all convincing.

Alternatively, however the zero-carbon world is not appealing either from a geopolitical point of view. A zero-carbon world does not do away with the conflict over access to fossil fuels, it merely produces different conflicts. Thus the authors point out: “In a low-carbon world, the struggle will be how to finance the infrastructure and to control the technology needed to harness wind, solar and other renewable power sources, and how to secure access to the materials required for the manufacture of that technology.” (p. 31) Significantly the rare earth metals lithium and cobalt are very important for battery manufacture and only a few countries can supply these.

Even more concerning is the issue of land use under the new regime. The authors point out that “Competition over the use of land for energy production will have implications for food and water security.” (p. 30) We are already seeing some of this kind of conflict. Solar farms, for example, cover large tracts of land and yet yield quite low energy. There are no crops, no natural plant or animal communities under solar collectors. Wind farms produce their own problems including bird and bat deaths and noise. These sources of energy are so dilute and sporadic that huge tracts of land would be required. The climate modification (cooling) that natural communities provide, would be lost. This is not the way to a greener ecology!

CONCLUSION

The interesting thing is that governments are, presumably, aware of the costs of a green transition. Yet they have been so overwhelmed by the declarations of “the established science of climate change” that they press grimly onward with the green agenda, spending billions of dollars in the process. There are, however, a number of exceptionally qualified experts who deny that carbon emissions and climate are tightly linked. Let us not act like the people of the U.K. with their declaration of a “climate emergency.” Perhaps they are like the fabled Chicken Little who fooled everyone into believing that the sky was falling. It is to be hoped that more governments will display the courage needed to review the issue of climate change in a critical light. The money saved from the green agenda, would be put to much better uses. RP

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by Jon Dykstra



GLOBAL WARMING CRISIS?

A brief biblical case for skepticism

The media tells us that the question is settled, there is a 97% consensus, and that anyone who has questions is a “denier,” likened to those who are either so foolish, or malicious, as to deny the reality of the Holocaust.

But there are reasons to question. And while climate science might be beyond most of us, God has given us another means – a far more reliable means – of discerning truth, via His Word.

GENDER: THE BIBLE SHOWS THE WAY

Sometimes it doesn't take much Bible study to be able to discern truth from error, and that's certainly true in today's gender debate. Young children are being surgically mutilated and hormonally sterilized and yet the government, doctors, psychologists, and media are applauding. While it might not be at 97% yet, the consensus is growing such that fines are being issued, teachers fired, students suspended, and Twitter mobs set loose on any who disagree.

Despite the pressure, few Christians are being fooled, though that might be

due as much to the newness of the debate as it is that Evangelicals are turning to their Bibles for guidance. But if they do open His Word it won't take a believer long to figure out God's position. In Genesis 1:27 we learn it is God, not Man, who determines our gender:

“So God created Man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

POPULATION: FOLLOWING THE BIBLE WOULD HAVE SAVED TENS OF MILLIONS

The overpopulation crisis has a longer history to it and, consequently, many more Christians have bought in to it. Since the 1950s we've been hearing that sometime soon the world's population will outstrip the planet's resources. In his 1969 book *The Population Bomb* Paul Ehrlich warned:

“The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs

embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate.”

You would think that by now it would be easy to see that these overpopulation fears were mistaken. As economist Arthur Brooks has noted, what's happened is the very opposite of Ehrlich's dire prediction:

“From the 1970s until today the percentage of people living at starvation's door has decreased by 80%. Two billion people have been pulled out of starvation-level poverty.”

Yet the overpopulation hysteria has never gone away. And the damage it has done has been on par with that of a Hitler or Stalin – tens of millions have been killed. Under threat of this crisis China implemented their infamous one-child policy, with its fines and forced abortions for couples who tried for two. And the deaths weren't limited to China; overpopulation fears were used to justify the push for legalized abortion in countries around the world. Murdering

your own children wasn't cold and selfish anymore; now it was a woman doing her part to save the planet.

Christians opposed abortion, of course, but some believers started questioning whether overpopulation concerns might be correct. Maybe God's call to "be fruitful and multiply" and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28) was just a temporary directive that we've fulfilled and should now treat as being over and done with.

But it takes only a little more digging to find out that's not what God thinks. Overpopulation proponents saw children as more mouths to feed – they saw them as a problem – but God speaks repeatedly of children as a blessing (Ps. 113:9, 127:3-5, Prov. 17:6, Matt. 18:10, John 16:21).

And opportunities present themselves when we see children as God sees them. Then we realize that not only do children come with a mouth that needs filling, but they also have hands that can produce even more than their mouth consumes. And they have a brain to invent and problem-solve. When we see children this way – *as they really are* – then we realize there's real benefit in having lots of them: as we've been told, many hands make light work, and two heads are also better than one!

That's why it shouldn't have surprised Christians when in the 1950s and 60s a group of inventive sorts, led by American Norman Borlaug, helped develop much higher yielding strains of cereal crops. This "Green Revolution" turned wheat-importing countries into wheat *exporting* countries by more than doubling yields. And while there are no prophecies in the Bible specifically mentioning Norman Borlaug, Christians could have seen him coming, and in a sense some did. Those who continued having large families, despite the dire predictions, could do so confident that any problems caused by the innumerable nature of their progeny would be solved by *something like the Green Revolution happening*.

Today, decades later, we can look back and see that a country like China, that ignored what God says about children,

is facing a different sort of demographic crisis. A young Chinese couple will have two sets of parents and four sets of grandparents to look after and support, but have no siblings or cousins to help them. As soon as 2030 China will see their population start to decline, with not nearly enough working age citizens to provide for their aging population.

It's not all that different in the Western world where, even without government coercion, our families have been shrinking and women are averaging far less than two children each. We aren't as near the crisis point as China, but by aborting a quarter of the next generation, we've created our own coming demographic crisis.

The population and gender debates remind us that the Bible is more reliable than any consensus no matter how big.

GLOBAL WARMING: A BIBLICAL CASE FOR SKEPTICISM

The population and gender debates remind us that the Bible is more reliable than any-size consensus no matter how big. They also teach us that the world can get things not just completely wrong, but *monstrously* so, leading to the deaths of tens of millions. That's why when it comes to global warming, where we're being told once again that the fate of the planet is at stake, we want any and all guidance we can get from God's Word.

Cornelius Van Til once noted:

"The Bible is thought of as authoritative on everything of which it speaks. Moreover, it speaks of everything. We do not mean that it

speaks of football games, of atoms, etc., directly, but we do mean that it speaks of everything either directly or by implication."

The Bible does speak to global warming, but not directly. This isn't like the gender debate, which runs smack up against Genesis 1:27 ("male and female He created them") or the overpopulation crisis, which directly opposes the very next verse ("be fruitful and multiply"). When it comes to global warming the Bible isn't as direct.

But there are lots of implications. Time and space only allows me to present a half dozen texts. I'm not pretending that any one of them makes the definitive case for skepticism. But I do think that together they start pointing us decidedly in that direction.

You will know them by their fruits – Matt. 7:15-20

In Matthew 7 Jesus tells us that we can tell a good tree from a bad one by the fruit on it. His concern wasn't with trees though, but with telling false prophets from good ones. When it comes to global warming the science is beyond most of us, but we can evaluate the *people*.

So let's return to this 97% consensus we've heard so much about. This statistic is used to argue that there is no question but that the planet is headed to catastrophic climate change. But is this a reliable number, or is it like the greatly exaggerated 10% figure commonly given for the homosexual population?

The figure has a few different origins, but one of the more commonly cited is a paper by John Cook and his colleagues reviewing 11,944 published peer-reviewed papers from climate scientists. Did 97% of those papers' authors agree with the statement "humans are causing global warming"? That's what we would expect. But instead of 10,000+ papers with that position, there were 3,894, or approximately 33%. So how did the 97% figure come out of that then? Well, it turns out only approximately 34% of the papers took a position one way or the other, with just 1% disagreeing or uncertain, and 33% agreeing. Thus,

of the 34% who took a position, 97% agreed that humans are causing global warming. Is it honest to ignore the two thirds who didn't state a position, and say there is a 97% consensus and no room for a debate?

How this statistic has been used reminds me of a trick from another debate – equivocation about the definition of “evolution.” In his book, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, Richard Dawkins notes that when poachers shoot elephants with long tusks, the next generation is liable to have shorter tusks. Okay, but creationists also believe species can undergo changes over time. We're the folks arguing that the array of cats we see today are all modified versions of a single cat kind brought on the ark. Dawkins has presented “minor changes over time” – a definition of evolution so broad that it enfold even creationists into the evolution camp – as if it were proof of the from-goo-to-you sort of evolution that is actually under dispute.

Similarly, the 97% consensus is being presented as if all those counted hold that the warming is *catastrophic*, humans are the *primary* cause, and there is a need for *immediate, drastic, global action*. But the agreement was only that “humans are causing global warming.” And that's a statement so broad as to enfold even many of the so-called “deniers.”

So on a statement we can verify – whether there really is a 97% consensus on catastrophic global warming – we find “bad fruit.” There are many other facts and claims we can't evaluate, but doesn't this tell us something about the “tree”?

“The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.” – Proverbs 18:17

God says that to find the truth good questions are helpful. That's not going on here, where questioners are likened to Holocaust deniers. But here's a few questions worth considering:

- Aren't there bigger priorities than global warming, like the millions

who will starve to death this year, or the billions who lack basic access to clean water and sanitation?

- If fossil fuels are harmful, and solar and wind problematic, why aren't we turning to nuclear?
- How will the world's poor be impacted by a move away from fossil fuels toward more expensive alternatives? Are we again (as we did in response to overpopulation fears) seeking to save the planet by harming those who live on it?

Samuel's warning against kings – 1 Samuel 8:10-22

President Obama's chief of staff famously said, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste” and if you want to understand what he meant, look no further than Justin Trudeau's proposed ban on single-use plastics. This past year a video of a sea turtle with a plastic straw stuck up deep inside his nose went viral, alerting the tens of millions of viewers to the growing problem of plastics in our oceans. The movement to ban plastic straws has taken off since then.

But will Trudeau's single-use plastics ban save turtles? No, because our straws don't end up in the ocean. Of the mass of plastic in the ocean it's been estimated the US is responsible for one percent, and it'd be reasonable to conclude that Canada is responsible for far less. So how, then, does all the plastic end up in the ocean? It turns out that the vast majority of it comes from poorer countries that don't have proper trash disposal. They simply dump their waste into the ocean and into their rivers. Trudeau's ban will do nothing to help the turtles...but it will expand the government's reach.

The proposed solutions for climate change all involve expanding the government, giving it a larger role in directing all things energy-related.

So, how is 1 Samuel 8 relevant? Here we find Samuel warning against an expansion of government – get a king and he'll start intruding into all areas of your lives. If there is a biblical case to be made for limited, small government (and there is) then Christians have a reason to



Meanwhile the unbeliever thinks our world is the result of one lucky circumstance after another...

question crises that seem to necessitate an ever-expanding role for the State.

“...and it was very good.” – Gen. 1:31

While we no longer live in the perfect world Adam and Eve started with, we have only to wriggle our toes, or watch a ladybug crawl across the back of our hand to recognize that God's brilliant design is still evident and at work all around us. We are on a blue and white marble, spinning at just the right angle, and orbiting at just the right distance from the sun, for it to rain and snow in season. We have a moon just the right size, and circling at just the right distance for us to study our own sun, and to bring the tides that sweep our beaches each day. And our planet is graced with a molten

iron core that generates the very magnetic field we need to protect us from the solar winds, which would otherwise strip away the ozone layer that protects us from ultraviolet radiation. It is wheels within wheels, and while we can do damage to it, when we appreciate how brilliantly our world is designed we aren't surprised there is a robustness to it.

Meanwhile the unbeliever thinks our world is the result of one lucky circumstance after another – a tower of teacups, all balanced perfectly, *but accidentally*. If the world did come about by mere happenstance, *then what an unbelievable run of happenstance we've had*, and isn't there every reason to fear change? Sure, the teacup tower is balanced now, but if we mess with it, how long can we count on our luck to hold?

"He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker" – Prov. 14:31

At first glance, this text might not seem to provide much direction in this debate. After all, couldn't a Christian

who holds to catastrophic man-caused global warming cite it in support of their position too? Yes they could. If climate change is real, then the oppression it would bring on the poor would be a reason to fight it.

Yet this text does provide a very specific sort of direction. It lays out limits on what sort of global warming plans Christians should view as acceptable: any plan to save the planet that does so by hurting the poor is not biblical. That means increasing energy costs has to be out. Millions are starving already and raising energy prices will only increase those numbers.


"Be fruitful and multiply" – Gen. 1:28

Children come with an inevitable "carbon footprint" which is why some global warming proponents echo the same sentiments as the overpopulationists before them. "Save the earth; don't give birth" is catchy,

but if that was the only possible way we could lower carbon emissions then Christians could, on that basis, conclude there was no need to worry about CO₂. Because God tells us children are a blessing, not a curse.

Of course there may be other ways to lower carbon emissions. But the more we hear people portraying children as a problem, the more we should recognize there is an element in the global warming movement intent on attacking God's Truth, rather than taking on any real problem.

CONCLUSION

Other passages could be mentioned like Romans 1:25 and Psalm 102:25-26 but this is good for a start. And that's what this is: a start. My hope here is to encourage an exploration of what Scripture says that is relevant to the issue of global warming. The Bible isn't silent on this topic; we need to look at global warming biblically. 

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FOSSIL FUELS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE MODERN WORLD

by
Michael
Wagner

“Magical” alternatives won’t provide us with the energy we need

Concern about climate change has reached a fever pitch with Canada’s Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna calling it a “climate emergency.” Her motion in Parliament on June 17, which was passed overwhelmingly, 186 to 63, described climate change as a “real and urgent crisis, driven by human activity, that impacts the environment, biodiversity, Canadians’ health and the Canadian economy.”

The burning of fossil fuels is considered to be a major culprit in global warming. Thus a principal thrust of climate change activism is to switch from using fossil fuels to carbon-free, renewable energy sources in order to create a “new energy economy.” Wind power, solar power, and battery technology are the key elements of this strategy.

Those who support this move to “green energy” often oppose further development of petroleum resources, effectively shutting in the ground the vast energy wealth of western Canada.

However, physicist Mark P. Mills of Northwestern University’s McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science has recently completed a paper that challenges the idea that such a new energy economy is even possible. This paper, *The “New Energy Economy”: An Exercise in Magical Thinking*, was published in March 2019 by the

Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank based in New York.

THE PROPOSED SOLUTION

Advocates of the new energy economy claim that recent technological developments are making renewable energy so cheap and plentiful, that soon the world will no longer need hydrocarbons, i.e., oil, natural gas, and coal.

The modern wind turbine, commercially viable solar technology, and the lithium battery were all first created about fifty years ago. They have become much more efficient and practical since that time. As Mills points out, “Over the decades, all three technologies have greatly improved and become roughly 10-fold cheaper.”

PROBLEMS WITH THE “SOLUTION”

1. Fossil fuels still power modern society

While there have been significant advances in renewable energy, as Mills states, there are inherent physical limitations that will prevent any known renewable energy source from displacing fossil fuels. As things currently stand, hydrocarbons supply about 84% of the world’s energy. That is only slightly lower than the 87% of twenty years ago. But over those twenty years, world energy consumption rose by 50%, which means that there was, in fact, a huge increase in overall fossil fuel usage.


In comparison, wind and solar energy currently provide only 2% of the world’s energy and 3% of the energy used in the United States. And none of the renewable energy sources can hold a candle to fossil fuels when it comes to “energy density” which is the amount of energy contained in any particular unit. Mills writes, “The high energy density of the physical chemistry of hydrocarbons is unique and well understood, as is the science underlying the low energy density inherent in surface sunlight, wind volumes, and velocity.”

2. Wind and solar is intermittent

Besides their low energy density, wind-generated power and solar-generated power are not consistent sources because they depend upon the wind to blow and the sun to shine. The wind does not blow all the time, and the sun does not shine all the time. As a result, they produce energy only about 25%-30% of the time. This is much lower than conventional power plants. Therefore, when wind and solar power production are used, backup power plants fueled by hydrocarbons need to be available to cover the gaps. This amounts to an admission that hydrocarbons are more reliable.

As Mill concludes,

“The issue with wind and solar power comes down to a simple point: their usefulness is impractical on a national



"...wind and solar energy currently provide only 2% of the world's energy and 3% of the energy used in the United States"

scale as a major or primary fuel source for generating electricity. As with any technology, pushing the boundaries of practical utilization is possible but usually not sensible or cost-effective."

3. Batteries don't help much, and also hurt

But wouldn't wind and solar become more practical if we could store their output via batteries? Well, tremendous progress in improving the efficiency of batteries has occurred in recent years. However, they remain vastly inferior to petroleum for storing energy. Mill writes,

"\$200,000 worth of Tesla batteries, which collectively weigh over 20,000 pounds, are needed to store the energy equivalent of one barrel of oil. A barrel of oil, meanwhile, weighs 300 pounds and can be stored in a \$20 tank. Those are the *realities* of today's lithium batteries."

And batteries will never have the energy storage capacity of fossil fuels: "The energy stored per pound is the critical metric for vehicles and, especially, aircraft. The maximum potential energy contained in oil molecules is about 1,500% greater, pound for pound, than the maximum in lithium chemistry." To put this in a bigger context:

"The \$5 billion Tesla 'Gigafactory' in Nevada is currently the world's biggest battery manufacturing facility. Its total annual production could store three *minutes'* worth of annual U.S. electricity demand. Thus, in order to fabricate a quantity of batteries to store two days' worth of U.S. electricity demand, [it] would require 1,000 years of Gigafactory production."

Manufacturing batteries consumes a large amount of energy. It also creates a high volume of carbon emissions, which is what the new technologies are meant to eliminate. China produces, by far, the largest number of batteries of any nation. Mill writes,

"70% of China's grid is fueled by coal today and will still be at 50% in 2040. This means that, over the life span of the batteries, there would be *more* carbon-dioxide emissions associated with manufacturing them than would be offset by using those batteries to, say, replace internal combustion engines."

4. Green energy has built-in limitations


Even with more advanced technological development, wind and solar power will never be able to produce energy on the scale of fossil fuels. As Mills points out, "The physics-

constrained limits of energy systems are unequivocal. Solar arrays *can't* convert more photons than those that arrive from the sun. Wind turbines *can't* extract more energy than exists in the kinetic flows of moving air. Batteries *are* bound by the physical chemistry of the molecules chosen."

CONCLUSION

Mills concludes that fossil fuels are essential to the modern world and won't be phased out any time soon:

"Hydrocarbons – oil, natural gas, and coal – are the world's principal energy resource today and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. Wind turbines, solar arrays, and batteries, meanwhile, constitute a small source of energy, and physics dictates that they will remain so. Meanwhile, there is simply no possibility that the world is undergoing – or can undergo – a near-term transition to a 'new energy economy.'"

In short, fossil fuels will continue to be necessary sources of energy for the foreseeable future. Therefore, the development of petroleum resources, such as those in western Canada, must be permitted to continue. The alternative to fossil fuels isn't clean energy – the alternative is to not have much energy at all. 

Whether Koran or Qur'an, it's important to understand

by Wes Bredenhof

More than ever, Christians need to be equipped to deal with the challenges posed by Islam. We often live beside Muslims, work alongside them, and study with them. It's good to have helpful resources to inform our conversations with our Muslim neighbours. Though it is now a couple of years old already, James White's *What every Christian needs to know about the Qur'an* is one of those valuable helps.

White is the author of numerous non-fiction books. He's well-known as an author, speaker, and debater. He is an elder in a Reformed Baptist church in Phoenix, Arizona, and the director of Alpha and Omega Ministries, an organization with a focus on apologetics (done in a Reformed, presuppositional manner).

Rather than summarize everything in this book, let me just highlight two points which stood out for me.

QUR'AN'S CARICATURE OF THE TRINITY SHOWS IT ISN'T PERFECT

One has to do with what the Qur'an says about the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. In chapter 4, White points out that the Qur'an says Christians believe the Trinity to consist of Allah, Jesus, and Mary. Christians are alleged to believe that Allah and Mary had relations to produce Jesus. This is important because:

Everyone affected would affirm that by the early decades of the seventh century, God Himself would have a perfect knowledge of what the

doctrine of the Trinity actually says. And if that doctrine does not accurately represent His own self-revelation, He would be in the perfect position to refute its falsehoods with devastating precision. But is this what we find in the Qur'an? (76)

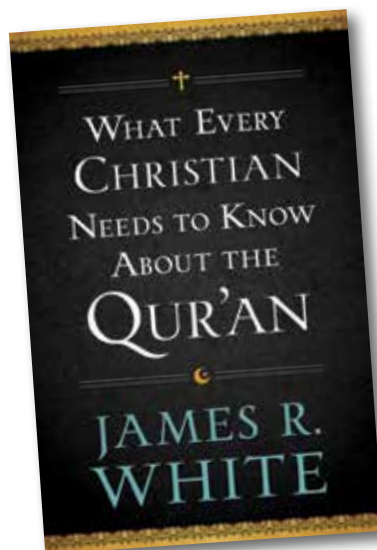
The Qur'an doesn't get the Trinity right, and so the Qur'an can't be taken seriously as a revelation from God.

QUR'AN'S CLAIM ABOUT ITSELF IS PATENTLY FALSE

In chapter 11, White has a penetrating discussion about the text of the Qur'an. Muslims claim that it is a perfect, immutable text. Of course, that's contrasted with the text of the Bible which, they allege, has been mutilated by Jews and Christians. White gives a couple of examples from Muslim writers. This is one of them:

Muslims and non-Muslims both agree that no change has ever occurred in the text of the Qur'an. The above prophecy [Surah 15:9] for the eternal preservation and purity of the Qur'an came true not only for the text of the Qur'an, but also for the most minute details of its punctuation marks as well...It is a miracle of the Qur'an that no change has occurred in a single word, a single [letter of the] the alphabet, a single punctuation mark, or a single diacritical mark in the text of the Qur'an during the last fourteen centuries. (250)

White demonstrates that this claim is patently false. He notes that "even widely published editions of the Qur'an contain information indicating variations in the very text" (272-273). He cites Yusuf Ali's edition with its note on Surah 33:6. In *The Hidden Origins of Islam* (ed. by Karl-Heinz Ohlig and Gerd-R. Puin), there is an essay by Alba Fedeli on variant readings in early Qur'anic manuscripts. It is simply not true that there is a single immaculate Qur'an text preserved from the time of Muhammad.



WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE QUR'AN

BY JAMES R. WHITE
311 PAGES / 2013

CONCLUSION

One question I wish White would have addressed is whether these claims are made in ignorance or deliberately to deceive. There is a doctrine in Islam known as al-Taqqiya. This teaching says it is permissible to lie in order to advance the cause of Islam. This is one of the things making Islam such a threat to western civilization in general, and Christianity in particular. How can you tell when a Muslim is lying about Islam?

I would recommend this book to anyone who has regular contact with Muslims. Be aware though: most, if not all, of the points raised by White in the book have rebuttals by Muslim apologists somewhere online. The rebuttals *are* weak, but if you are going to use White's material in conversations it would be advisable to prepare yourself beforehand for what your Muslim neighbour may bring back in response. **RP**

...the Qur'an says Christians believe the Trinity to consist of Allah, Jesus, and Mary.



"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Prov.1:7

TEACHING VACANCY – NEW ZEALAND

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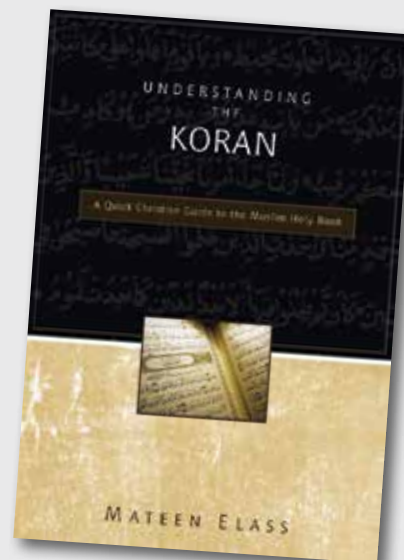
Small but mighty

The advantage of *Understanding the Koran* is its small size. The author, Mateen Ellass, crafted his book to be an introduction to the Koran that could be easily read in a few evenings. So he's made a book anyone can pick up and digest if they want to get educated about Islam's key book.

The author is a Presbyterian pastor who was raised in Saudi Arabia so he knows what he's talking about it, and can offer a solid, biblically-grounded insight. He outlines how the Koran is a compilation of muddled Bible stories, Gnostic accounts, and Jewish folk tales, and compares and contrasts Christian views on our Bible with Muslim views

about the Koran.

The only caution I had regards Chapter 6 "Is Allah a False God?" where the author argues that, like the Samaritans in New Testament times (see John 4:22), Muslims worship the real God, but in ignorance.



UNDERSTANDING THE KORAN

BY MATEEN ELASS
193 PAGES / 2009

This is a controversial stance – because Muslims insist that Allah has no Son – but it becomes less so when the author makes it clear he isn't arguing for any sort of equivalence between Islam and Christianity or that Muslims can be saved apart from Jesus.

Introductions to Islam can generally be divided into those that have nothing but good to say about Islam, and those that have nothing but bad. The strength of this title is that it takes a third approach – the author is Christian, but one knows and loves Muslims, so while he is direct, thorough, and quite devastating in his critique of the Koran, he always remain calm, and never resorts to rhetoric. *Understanding the Koran* is small and engaging enough to be read in a few evenings, but the depth of material, and the review questions for each chapter make this one worth rereading at a more studious pace. Those same questions would make it a good one for a book club.

– Jon Dykstra

I CAN ONLY IMAGINE

DRAMA

2018 / 110 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



This is the life story of *MercyMe* singer Bart Millard, or, more specifically, it's the story of what drove him to write what's been called the most popular Christian song of the modern era, *I Can Only Imagine*.

It begins with 12-year-old Bart in 1985, listening to *ELO* tunes on his Sony Walkman, and crafting a cardboard *Star Wars* fighter helmet. He's a creative dreamer, but his home life is a nightmare. When he gets home that evening his father burns his helmet, and when Bart heads to bed early his Walkman only partially drowns out his parents' screaming.

Millard's abusive home life is what makes this a film unsuitable for children. There is some violence, though mostly it occurs just off-screen, but the emotional impact would be unsettling.

While this is a story about a man succeeding despite a difficult childhood, the focus isn't as much on Bart's transformation as it is about God transforming his abusive father. As Bart tells Amy Grant:

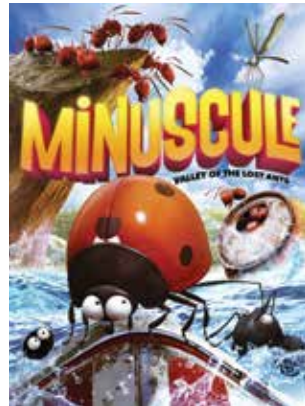
"My dad was a monster. I mean that's the only word for it. And I saw God transform him from a man I hated into the man I wanted to become. Into my best friend....I guess I didn't realize God could do that. And so I wrote this song.

—JON DYKSTRA

MINUSCULE:

ANIMATED / FAMILY

2014 / 89 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



In this utterly unique film, a lost ladybug teams up with a colony of black ants to fight off a horde of red ants who want their sugar stash.

Two things set this film apart. First, it seamlessly meshes animation and gorgeous nature footage, with the overall look more like a *Planet Earth* episode than a kid's cartoon. Second, other than 20 seconds of scene-setting narration, there is no dialogue. Our kids had to decipher the storyline from strictly physical cues which had them paying very close attention. It also meant that Dad had to occasionally "narrate" the action to help them figure out what was going on.

While that action was muted compared to many an animated film, *Minuscule's* brilliant use of sound and music can amplify the tension. If you have younger viewers – maybe 9 and under – you can help them through these sections by either turning down the sound or by doing what we did. We ended up showing our girls the last ten minutes of the film so they could know that it all turned out alright.

This is a film kids will appreciate for the story and mom and dad can enjoy for its beauty and the brilliant way it tells a story without words.

—JON DYKSTRA

THE RIOT AND THE DANCE

DOCUMENTARY

2018 / 83 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



Nature films are most often spoiled by the Darwinian approach of their makers; we're accustomed to using the "pause" button while we remind our children and ourselves that it's God who made all the beauty we are watching, not random chance. How refreshing then, to hear God's creative hand praised in *The Riot and the Dance's* beautifully filmed scenes.

Biologist Gordon Wilson starts in ponds near his home in the northwestern US, finding the familiar in water striders dancing across the water's surface, and the less familiar in giant water bugs. He pauses in Montana for bison, in Manitoba for a snake den, and in California for comical but dangerous elephant seals. He dives across gravel paths in the Sonoran desert of Mexico, catching snakes and lizards to bring their beauty right up to the camera, and ends his world tour in Sri Lanka, marveling at elephants and water buffalo.

Wilson does not ignore the brokenness of creation:

"Life is not a basket of kittens... and there's all this death, and predator prey relationships, and parasite hosts. But even in the midst of a fallen creation, the glories of God are still very present. Man needs redemption, and so does creation."

Give this one a viewing; you'll find yourself ready to dive into that field or pond, eager to explore your own corner of God's handiwork.

— MARTY VANDRIEL

TWO TO SEE FOR FREE

HOW TO ANSWER THE FOOL

DOCUMENTARY

2013 / 85 MIN

RATING: 8/10

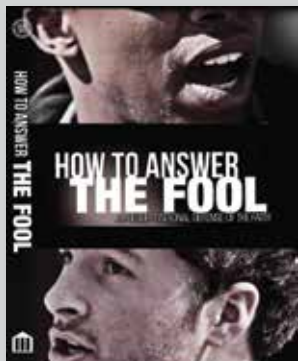
Some Christians will try to provide atheists with reasons for why they should believe in the Bible, and for why they should believe in God. In *How To Answer The Fool*, Sye Ten Bruggencate teaches us to skip past this, to start with the Bible, and to instead present to the unbeliever the fact that it is only by acknowledging God, and the Bible as his Word, that the world makes any sense. Or to borrow from a C.S. Lewis analogy in *Weight of Glory*, we believe in the Bible for the same sort of reason we believe in the Sun. It's not simply because we see it but because by it we can see everything else.

This beginning-with-the-Bible defense of our faith is called "presuppositional apologetics." Presuppositions are the things we assume as true at the beginning of an argument. Both Christians and atheists have presuppositions, but the point Ten Bruggencate makes in this film is that only ours make sense.

He focuses on the issue of *reason* here, showing that while atheists will assume the existence of reason and logic (it is one of their presuppositions) they really have no basis in their worldview to believe in their reasoning – why would we expect a randomly generated universe be a rational one, and why would we assume that any beings in such a universe would be rational, and their logic trustworthy? He makes his case so well that the university students he's interacting with give up on reason, and start to argue that they actually know nothing. That's a logical enough conclusion based on the atheist/evolutionary worldview they continue to cling to, but even they get how comical it is to hear a person *paying thousands of dollars a year to attend an institute of higher learning* deny that they can know or learn anything. Eye-opening scenes like this one make this a must-see film for absolutely every Christian.

There is another notable presuppositional apologetics film, made just a few years before *Fool*, and it's worth comparing the two. In *Collision*, Pastor Douglas Wilson takes on atheist Christopher Hitchens and, rather than reason, Wilson focuses his attention on the atheist's inability to account for *morality*. In taking on one of the biggest, baddest atheists of our time, and doing so with a smile and a wink, Wilson demonstrates apologetics at its most winsome.

That winsomeness, if not altogether missing in *How to Answer the Fool*, is at least in shorter supply. That said, *How to Answer the Fool* is the more instructive film, because it



gives us more insight into the why behind how Sye is guiding conversations.

So watch the *Fool* to figure out what presuppositional apologetics is all about, and then follow-up with *Collision* to see it winsomely demonstrated.

JOHN HUS: A JOURNEY OF NO RETURN

DOCUDRAMA

2015 / 55 MINUTES

RATING: 7/10

This docudrama covers the last months of Reformer Jan Hus's (1369-1415) life when he was imprisoned and awaiting trial on charges of heresy. His "errors" were of the sort that Luther would preach 100 years later: Hus had a problem with indulgences, and with the corrupt clergy, and he wanted the Bible translated into the Czech language. And, like Luther, he would not back down.

It's important to understand that the film is a fictional account based on historical facts. The biggest embellishment is the character Robert Tallio who is loosely based on a sympathetic jailer named Robert that we read about in Hus's letters. Hus even wrote a tract on marriage for him, so their relationship seemed to be a close one. But other than his name, occupation, and his apparent need for advice on marriage, we don't know anything else about this Robert. Still, he is a welcome addition to the film, because it is through this bit of fiction that we get to see a more human face to Hus. We know his courage, but here we see his compassion, even for his jailer.

The only caution I can think of would be regards Tallio's love interest who is a prostitute. We don't see anything sexual or revealing – I mention it only to alert parents that her occupation is discussed.

So who would like this? If you have any interest in Church history, this will be an enjoyable hour's viewing. The production values are lavish, the acting solid, and the dubbing from the original Czech, decently done. This looks good!

Both films can be watched for free at ReformedPerspective.ca.



- Jon Dykstra

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Little white lies and why we tell them

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...for your secretary in

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