

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

JULY/AUGUST 2021
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PERSPECTIVE

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Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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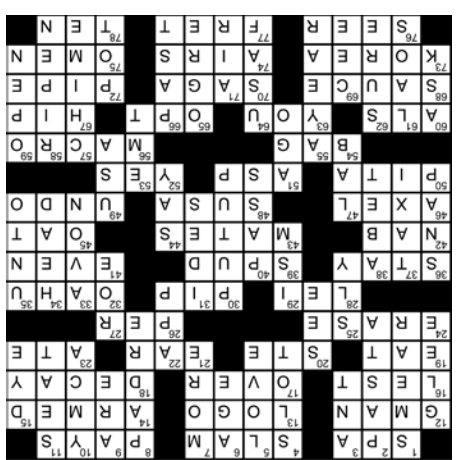
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WHEN STEVE WANTS TO BE CALLED SUE



by Jon Dykstra

It had seemed a regular Monday morning before co-worker Steve arrived. Now his outfit had everyone buzzing: instead of his standard slacks/dress shirt combo, he'd paired black pumps with a floral print dress. In the morning staff meeting, the supervisor informed everyone that Steve was now "Sue" and we should start calling him *her*.

It's a scene playing out in offices across the West, and for Christians in these companies, it can seem like our choice is between compromising on God's Truth (Gen. 1:27) by going along with the transgender lie, or compromising on our winsomeness (Col. 4:5-6) by confronting the lie.

So what's a Christian to do?

I think a middle road of sorts can be charted, one that doesn't compromise on God's Truth, but which also shows a willingness to try to get along in as

far as we are able. It involves using a person's chosen new name, while avoiding any use of pronouns for them. So, in the case of Steve/Sue, even as it is odd to call him by a girlish name, we all know names that have gone from being boys' names to girls' names and vice versa. It doesn't need to be our place to designate a name too girlish for a boy to have it. We can show our willingness to get along by agreeing to call our coworker by his new name of Sue.

But if that were all we were to do, that approach might lead to confusion about where God stands on the issue of gender. If we, as Christians, call transgender folk by names that align with their adopted, but not actual, gender, then we would be sowing the seeds of confusion *if that was all we were to do*. The reason we can go along with using "Sue" is because we're doing so as part of a package treatment: we'll

explain that we will also be trying to avoid any mention of Sue's pronouns. It is one thing to call a man by what would be an odd first name for a man, but it is something else to call a him *her*.

Though it might not be perceived as such, we would explain that this is us doing our best to get along. Sue would see any use of male pronouns for him as offensive. We would understand it to be a denial of God's revealed truth about gender to use female pronouns for him. Therefore to minimize offense, and yet not lie, we will agree to speak of "Sue" and "Sue's presentation" and how "Sue did a good job." It'll be "Sue this" and "Sue that" but never *she* or *her*.

It would be good to make this clear at the start, rather than have it be discovered by coworkers wondering why we seem to be using Sue's name to excess. Getting ahead of it makes sure that our Christian witness is clear.

Will that satisfy our employers? Perhaps. But whether it does or does not, it shows our willingness to do what we can. In extending ourselves as far as we can go, we speak the Truth as winsomely as it is in our power to so speak it. This approach may or may not please Man, but it does glorify God.

1. WORDS HAVE POWER

A strange form of encouragement for this approach can be found in the words of those we oppose.

In a recent position statement proposing "chestfeeding" as a possible alternative to "breastfeeding," the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) began by stating, "We affirm that language has power." They want to adopt "chestfeeding" to be sensitive to new mothers who don't identify as being women and who, therefore, might not like to be reminded of their breasts, as those are exclusively *female* body parts. Language has power, so the ABM's fix for a woman who doesn't want to be a woman is to stop reminding her that she is a woman.

Now, as people of the Book, and followers of the Word made Flesh, we agree that "language has power." Where we differ with the ABM is on how that power should be used.

God used words to speak the universe into being – His words *define* reality. Our words can either *communicate* or *obscure* that reality. So that's how the battle lines are drawn: between God's people, using language to clarify what God has done and who God is, and the Devil's forces using language to confuse and conceal. As Douglas Wilson has noted, all our cultural battles are really battles over the dictionary.

What we need to understand then, is that using female pronouns for Sue is harnessing the power of language to confuse. Sue is deceiving himself, but in today's culture, he's going to get a lot of help from those around him to perpetuate his lie – everyone else at the office is going to echo and commend his lie.

In the face of that attack, not only on God's Truth but also on Sue, we have

CONSERVATIVE MEDIA FAIL THEIR SHIBBOLETH

In the lead-up to the Olympics, one New Zealand athlete got more attention than his athletic ability warranted. What drew the media spotlight to him was that he was participating in a woman's event. Gavin Hubbard had changed his name to Laurel, and the International Olympic Committee was willing to buy into his delusion and pretend he had become a woman.

Hubbard had reportedly gotten into the sport as a young man in the hopes it would masculinize him, and something could be said about whether weightlifting is an inherently masculine sport. The world would now laugh at the notion, but for 100 years at the Olympic level it was exclusively male, only changing at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Should Christians laugh at the idea of a sport being for one gender and not the other? While there is a fuzzy line between what exactly is masculine and what is feminine, God has assigned men and women different roles, made us differently, and wants women to be women and men to be men (Deut. 22:5). That Hubbard could look quite like the female competitors was not because he looked feminine, but rather that their bulked-up bodies looked quite masculine.

But the real story here was the media coverage of Hubbard. Predictably, mainstream media outlets like the New York Times and ESPN referred to him as her. This was a shibboleth of sorts – a one-word test to uncover whether the media source you were reading had bowed down to the woke mob in defiance of science, common sense, and most importantly what the Bible has revealed, that God decides gender and no one else (Gen. 1:27). If an outlet called Hubbard her, then they'd outed themselves as being part of the problem.

While the mainstream press all bowed, how did "conservative" media outlets fare?

Fox News carried stories about how unfair it was for Hubbard to compete in the women's division, and yet still used female pronouns for Hubbard. It might have been too much to hope that the National Post would stand strong, and, in fact, they did not. But it will surprise some to learn that Canada's "renegade" news outlet, Rebel News, followed the same pattern, making the case against Hubbard's participation, and yet still referring to him as her.

At least some of National Review's coverage passed the test. *WORLD* magazine's few articles on him seemed to studiously avoid any use of pronouns for Hubbard, using his name instead. One of the only news outlets to actually use male pronouns for Hubbard was LifeSiteNews.com.

While these outlets passed the test, that's not an endorsement of all they write – this is just one mark in their favor. What's more definitive is what it reveals about the outlets that failed the test. If they can't even be relied upon to state a simple biological fact everyone knows to be true, they've shown themselves incapable of standing up to the mob and not worthy of our trust.



a calling to use language's power for good and not evil, for clarity and not confusion.

2. MISGENDERING IS HATEFUL

For years already, Twitter has banned "misgendering" transgender people under their "hateful conduct policy." It was for misgendering that they suspended conservative commentators Allie Beth Stuckey and Erick Erickson for pointing out that New Zealand weightlifter Laurel Hubbard, competing on the women's side, was, in fact, a man.

What is misgendering? The online Cambridge Dictionary defines it (as of Aug 24, 2021) as:

misgender: to use the wrong pronouns or other gender-specific words when referring to or speaking to someone, especially a transgender person.

That's a definition we can get behind, and under this definition, we could also

agree with Twitter that misgendering is hateful conduct. Deliberately perpetuating a lie about someone is not loving. Where we'd differ with both Twitter and Cambridge is on what pronouns are the "wrong" ones.

Some on the Left have gone as far as to call misgendering *violence*. We can agree on that point too. Real physical harm is done when confused individuals are so encouraged in their delusions that they seek out surgeons to cut off or mangle what were previously healthy body parts. We're talking breasts and testicles being cut off, and penises being turned inside out. Others will seek drug treatments to prevent puberty, which will also render them infertile. Calling someone by the wrong pronouns can contribute to this real physical harm.

Of course, the misgendering I'm talking about is the very opposite of what the world means by the term. But they are right that using the wrong pronouns can indeed be harmful and therefore hateful.

When we're talking about the harm these surgeries can cause, the counterpoint sometimes offered is that transgender folk may commit suicide if they aren't embraced as the other sex. While Christians should have sympathy for just how lost these people are, we also need to be firm that encouraging them in their rebellion against God's Truth is never going to be the loving response. Yes, God loves sinners, but He also tells us to turn away from our sin. So we should not affirm the transsexual, or homosexual, adulterer, alcoholic, glutton, sluggard, idolater, etc., in their sin.

GRATITUDE FOR THE TROUBLES/ OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE COMING

Many of us are too quiet about God, so even as stressful as Steve's new wardrobe is going to make our lives, we should also recognize this situation for the peculiar blessing that it is. Do we find it hard to go out and evangelize? Well, God is bringing an evangelism opportunity right to our cubicle door! He is so arranging things in offices across the West, that His people will be given a clear choice of either publicly defending His Truth, or denying Him entirely.

That's not a gift many of us are asking for, but it is quite the blessing to be presented with such a clear choice.

PREPARING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

So let's go to the next step. What if we call our coworker "Sue" but not "her" and that turns out not to be enough for our boss? What if our stand gets us fired?

That's an eventuality Christians should be getting prepared for, individually and as church communities. Many of our readers have parents and grandparents who refused on principle to join unions. Unions back then were demanding loyalty oaths that Christians would have difficulty making, and most had a decidedly Marxist (adversarial) approach to working with management that conflicted with the 5th Commandment. There were other reasons our grandparents opposed unions, some specific to that time and others that are just as relevant today, but for our discussion what's important is what our grandparents did next. Since they couldn't work union jobs, they began creating their own jobs by starting their own businesses. When they were successful, these entrepreneurs ended up also creating employment opportunities for other brothers and sisters looking for non-union work.

That entrepreneurial spirit, a generation ago, has been greatly blessed by God such that we still see the fruit today. Our schools, churches, and

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missionary efforts have all been aided by these businesses, whether through the owners' contributions, or the employees'.

It's time for Christians to once again embrace that entrepreneurial spirit. It begins with recognizing the need, that there is a time coming very soon that any Christian not willing to lie about gender, and not willing to perpetuate this lie against transgender individuals, is going to be fired for their stand. That's both a shame and an

opportunity. If God's people are stuck in companies that hate God and promote homosexuality, transgenderism, abortion, feminism, and more, how freeing it will be, and how much louder we will be, when we're cut loose from these companies!

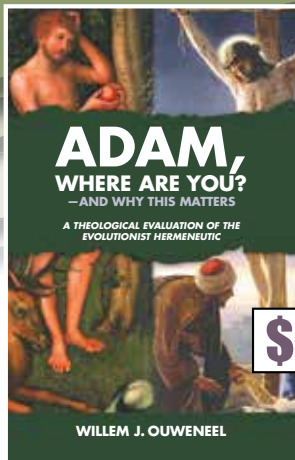
So when that day comes and we see our own coworker Steve come sashaying in, with his black pumps and floral print, let's remember how faithful God has been to us in the past and ready ourselves to take whatever opportunities

He presents to uphold His Truth and glorify His Name. Let's thank Him for backing us into a corner, and making the way forward so very clear. And let's ask God to so bless our entrepreneurial efforts that future generations will still be harvesting the fruit. RP

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" – Isaiah 5:20

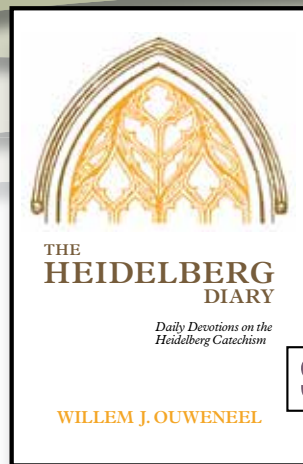
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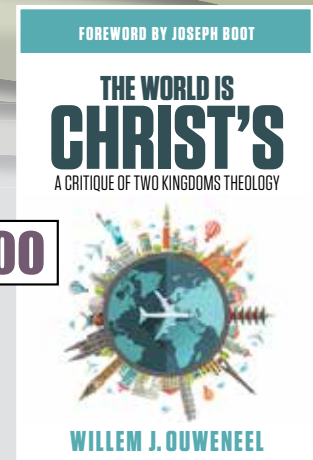
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NOTA BENE

News worth noting

based on the false principle that their bodily autonomy trumps all, how can they also argue for the government to mandate the insertion of all kinds of chemicals into one's body? Shouldn't it be: my body, my choice?

Absolute autonomy – the rule of one's self – is also the rationale against conversion therapy, and it is the rationale for stripping parental rights in all kinds of areas, but this is probably most damaging when parents want to resist their child's wishes for sex alignment therapies and surgeries. Because we must let everyone do with their bodies as they wish, without limit, and without any opposing opinions offered.

Does it not strike you as extremely ironic, and terribly inconsistent, that the warriors for abortion, conversion therapy bans, and for stripping parental rights – all in the name of autonomy – are the same warriors arguing for mandatory vaccination? (Might this be an irony we can point out, to the benefit of the unborn?)

Of course, Christians do not claim, "My body, my choice", nor do we claim that we are autonomous selves. Rather, we understand that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit; that we belong body and soul to our faithful Saviour. We also know that we have been given stewardship of those bodies, to care for them as best as we know how.

That means that while some of us may get vaccinated to God's glory, others will refuse to do so to God's glory. Some will argue: "Because my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, I will not get vaccinated" while others: "Because my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, I will get vaccinated." That's okay. We do not all have to agree. But Christians should be agreed, it seems to me, to be against mandatory vaccinations. We need to have the freedom to act according to our own conscience when it comes to weighing the consequences of receiving, or not receiving, the vaccination; we need freedom to make the best decision in how we serve the Lord with our body. **RP**

ON MANDATORY VACCINES AND "MY BODY, MY CHOICE."

BY CHRIS DEBOER

Don't we live in strange times? Thousands of people are calling on governments all over the world to mandate vaccines for everyone twelve years old and older. These same

people are often the loudest proponents of the principle: "My body, my choice!"

How does that make sense? If the argument for allowing women to end the life of their unborn child is



DOES MARRIAGE IMPACT IQ?

BY JON DYKSTRA

Charles Murray's new book *Facing Reality* features some American statistics that are so politically incorrect it is surprising they exist: he charted estimated IQ by race.

As *WORLD* magazine's Marvin Olasky noted, in his review of the book, there's good reason not to give IQ all that much weight. It is only one measure of intelligence, giving more weight to bookish learning than to the wisdom that the Bible says is really praiseworthy (a person with the IQ of Einstein can still be a fool). That said, Olasky made an observation about how the IQ racial rankings matched with the racial rankings of two-parent homes. IQ by race was:

1. Asian American (108)
2. White/non-Hispanic (103)
3. Hispanic (94)
4. African American (91)

And the ranking of two-parent homes was:

1. Asian American (84%)
2. White/non-Hispanic (77%)
3. Hispanic (66%)
4. African American (37%)

Such statistics don't allow for direct lines to be drawn from effect to cause. But these numbers do align well with a Christian understanding that marriage was God's genius idea, and He hates divorce. With that as our starting point, there's reason to think these numbers could indicate a "nurture" component to IQ that can best be experienced in intact homes. And, as Olasky considers, they might also show the lasting impact of what happens when families are broken apart, as was done to many African American families under slavery. We already know both parents matter, and these statistics might back that up. **RP**

SOURCE: Marvin Olasky's "Questions about IQ" in *WORLD*, August 14, 2021



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TEXAS DECLARES THAT CUTTING OFF CHILDREN'S BODY PARTS IS CHILD ABUSE

BY JON DYKSTRA

In August, Texas Governor Greg Abbott asked his Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to review whether transgender surgeries on children could be classified as abuse. In arguing that they should be, Governor Abbott wrote, "Subjecting a child to genital mutilation through reassignment surgery creates a 'genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child.'" It took some courage for him to ask for the review. But it might have ended there if DFPS commissioner Jaime Masters hadn't run with it and agreed that yes, it was abuse. Both men were pursuing an opportunity to defend these children, and by backing each other up, by adding courage to courage, the two men made common sense common again. And we can all make it the more so by spreading news of their sensible stand.

But even as we can celebrate their stand against the emasculation of boys, we can still ask when the self-emasculation of Christian politicians will end. Even these two, among our bravest political leaders, were unwilling to defend God's truth here as God's truth, that transgender surgeries are abuse because gender is determined by God and no other (Gen. 1:27). RP

O'TOOLE: DOCTORS SHOULDN'T BE FORCED TO MURDER AGING ADULTS THEMSELVES, BUT THEY DO NEED TO MAKE SURE THE MURDERS GET DONE

BY JON DYKSTRA



On Aug 6, the leader of Canada's Conservative Party, Erin O'Toole, unveiled an election platform that promised conscience protection for medical professionals. The relevant section read:

"We will protect the conscience rights of healthcare professionals. The challenges of dealing with COVID-19 have reminded us of the vital importance of health care professionals - the last thing Canada can afford to do is drive any of these professionals out of their profession...."

The same day he doubled down on conscience protection by coming out against mandatory vaccinations for federal employees.

If you're unfamiliar with the terms "conscience protection" or guaranteeing people "freedom of conscience," this is allowing those who think differently than we do, to act in a way consistent with their own beliefs. So, for examples, we allow pacifists to be exempt from fighting in the army (though they may be required to serve in the mess hall). In Alberta, Hutterites are allowed to have driver's licenses without pictures, because they object to being photographed. We don't share these beliefs, but we still make room for them because we're treating them as we would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12) were the positions reversed and it was our own convictions that didn't match with what the majority believed.

Just four days after taking a stand for conscience protection, O'Toole backed down. He now insisted that if doctors didn't *provide* euthanasia they should be required to *refer* for it, directing the "patient" to another doctor.

His new position makes no sense when we consider what those who oppose euthanasia know it to be. We don't just find it distasteful. This is the willful killing of another human being, which God forbids in the Sixth Commandment. This is murder.

And for Christians who recognize just how wicked euthanasia and abortion are, O'Toole isn't doing us any favors. Under Canada's criminal code, arranging for someone to be murdered is an indictable offense, punishable by as much as a life sentence. That's as it should be – arranging a murder is a monstrous evil. Yet this is the bone O'Toole is throwing to his social conservative backers: we don't need to do the killing ourselves; but he will do what he can to force us to be accessories before the fact. RP

WHY WE EXIST

River's Edge Haven of Hope was founded in the Spring of 2020 to support children and youth to grow spiritually, mentally, and socially in a unique farm setting. Our organization is for all ages, however, our core focus is for participants in the age range of 6 to 18. Approximately 50% of our participants come from broken homes where either a parent has passed away or there is some sort of separation challenge. 30% of our participants are struggling with anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts. The remainder come from a past abused situation or struggle with substance abuse. We also have some special needs participants that enjoy the farm for enrichment purposes. Currently, 70% of our participants come from the Reformed churches, and 30% come from an unchurched home.

Our core purpose is to share the hope, love, and saving grace of Jesus Christ in a broken world. We share this hope by matching young people of any age and ability level with adult mentors to explore the beauty of creation in a fun-filled and safe place of adventure and challenge. We respect the dignity of every person and commit to doing our best to encourage growth through the mentoring relationship. To date we currently have 60 participants per week.

WHY HORSES?

While our adult mentors are indispensable, what you might notice first is our horses. Because of how God created horses, they are *by nature* very empathetic. As herd animals they often function similar to a family or other social units. Horses want to be with their herd because they feel protected



and safe, and communicate non-verbally via their body language. And because God made horses this way, they have the ability to sense when humans are sad, happy, anxious, depressed, angry, etc. Our horses, therefore, are a real help in facilitate growth in leadership, compassion, love, respect, problem solving, teamwork, critical thinking, and overcoming obstacles. In this interpersonal growth, the mentor can point the participant to the love of God in Christ and His daily protection and care.

WHAT WE DO

Some of you may wonder, what exactly is done in a mentoring session, or how it exactly works. Most mentoring sessions start off with some sort of chore based on the level of the participant. Chores can be simple like sweeping the barn, getting some hay for the horses, or scooping manure in the stalls or paddocks. Some participants love to work and we find ourselves working for the entire session! Typically, however, after about 15-30 minutes of work, we engage in an activity. This can include horsemanship, crafts, woodworking, small animal care, kayaking, fishing etc. Then over time, we build a relationship with the participant and are able to speak into their lives. In some of the

sessions we are just having fun working on the relationship, while some of the sessions are spent talking about life issues and faith matters. This is varied on the many different types of participants and situations. Horses are a particular asset in helping forge these relationships.

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THE IMPACT OF SAYING, “I’M SO BUSY”

by Darren Bosch

How many times have you asked someone “How are you doing?” and they respond with “Busy!”? In that response, they did not actually answer your caring inquiry and they unknowingly sabotaged their credibility as a leader. Further, in their hurriedness, they potentially hijacked an opportunity to bless. As Christ-following leaders, here’s why I suggest we do well to remove this response from our repertoire... and learn better ways. Let me explain.

We’re all busy. That comes with the position of being any sort of leader. However, even as deliberate leaders are often busy, they are not hurried. Jesus

himself was very busy, but not hurried. I would suggest that responding with, “I’m so busy” does three things:

1. Reveals our leadership
2. Drains our credibility
3. Limits the God-story

1. IT REVEALS OUR LEADERSHIP

Newsflash: We are not a “hero” by being busier than others. Being busy is not a badge of honor. Our culture has hoisted the notion of “busyness” onto such a pedestal that many have simply learned to respond this way merely as a status symbol.

In the past, I would work ridiculous

hours – and be sure to let others know (*subtly of course to maintain my “martyr syndrome”*). I burned the candle at both ends with noble church and community work. I would even brag about my lack of sleep that week, or not attending my family’s vacation because “I have so much to do.” Worse yet, I thought less of others who didn’t. I viewed them as lazy or irresponsible. I was unaware and delusional, arrogant, and prideful. I wore my hurriedness as a badge of honor.

Not only was it destructively sad, but it was also poor thinking. More yet, it was weak theology, because I didn’t have my identity in Jesus. My sense

of worth came from what I did and accomplished... and what it took to get there. I would even show up to public functions late and rushed, hoping guests would think, “*Man, that guy sure works hard. Look at all his obligations and responsibilities. He’s so industrious... such a servant-heart.*”

Does that mean all who respond with “*I’m so busy*” are like I was? Of course not... but an addict can easily spot another addict.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Hang around effective leaders for a while and you’ll notice an inner calm and resolve, despite being in the press. A Christ-following leader rests in the unresolved. They offer a vulnerable, gracious, or inquisitive response... despite being busy.

2. IT DRAINS MY CREDIBILITY

Rather than being a badge of honor, responding with “*I’m so busy*” can actually convey:

- a) I’m not helping others grow: Show me someone who keeps telling everyone they’re busy, and you often see a leader who needs to grow in investing in others. Effective leaders know how to build, enable, and inspire people to accomplish something bigger and better than they could do on their own. They look for smarter ways.
- b) I’m disorganized: In a lot of cases, a frantic pace is simply a lack of organization and healthy habits.
- c) I don’t have clarity of what matters most: Without clarity of purpose, and focusing on what’s most important, it’s easy to get lured into the frenzy of putting out fires because “*I’m so needed.*” It might look like hard work, but in many cases, it’s just squandered energy.
- d) I can’t say no: Enough said.

3. IT LIMITS THE GOD-STORY

Starting conversations about how busy you are is a great way to miss

an opportunity to witness and bless others. Why? Unknowingly, you put up a wall with someone who cared enough to genuinely see how you’re doing. We’ve also stunted the opportunity to share deeper reflections about where God is at work in your life. We’ve limited others to see His beauty in the middle of trial or challenge.

Ultimately, by saying, “*Oh, I’m so busy*”, others don’t get to be blessed by the work God is doing in this challenging season of life you’re in.

DELIBERATE APPLICATION

So, what might be a better way to respond when someone asks, “*Hey, how are you doing?*”

- **Be thoughtfully deliberate.** Because being real opens meaningful conversation. Maybe something like, “*I’m doing well. Life’s a bit challenging right now, but it is well with my soul. Pressed but not crushed. You know, God is really showing me...*”
- **Be vulnerable and curious.** Because vulnerability builds trust and invites in a God-story. “*I’m actually in a season of struggle right now. Doing well, but feel stretched too thin. How do you manage to juggle all your roles these days? ...Could we pray together?*”
- **Be a hope dispenser.** Because everyone needs encouragement in their busyness. “*Yes, well I’m really enjoying where God has me right now. What that looks like is...*” RP

This one of a ten-part series, “Moving from Hurried to Purposeful” that Darren Bosch has written for DeliberateU, a Christian business leadership mentors group. You can read more from this series at www.DeliberateU.com

BOOKS TO HELP US PRODUCE BETTER

by Jon Dykstra

There are plans for longer reviews of these three books in upcoming issues, but it seemed worth at least a mention of them alongside this article. David Murray’s *Reset*:

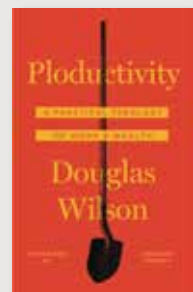
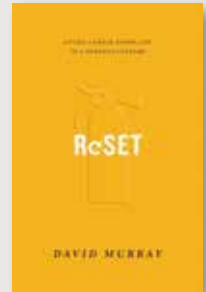
Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture (208 pages) comes from a pastor, and also counselor, who has had to

contend with burnout himself. I’ve given this book away, read it multiple times myself, and read quite a few reviews about it, and the thought expressed by

all seems to be: “This was just what I needed.” Tim Challies’ *Do More Better: A Practical Guide to Productivity* (126 pages) is shorter and maybe more practical, but

like Murray, there are a few needed slaps about the head for those who too busy either because they are workaholics, or due to a lack of organization. The last on the list is Douglas Wilson’s

Ploductivity: A Practical Theology of Work and Wealth (122 pages). Not having read it yet, all I can offer is that it clearly has the best title of this bunch. RP



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

YOU MIGHT BE A DUTCH CALVINIST IF ...

- you can sing “Ere zij God” even though you can’t speak Dutch
- you’re suspicious of the environmental movement but reuse plastic margarine containers
- your post-church Sunday lunch has cake as the entree and soup for dessert
- you can quote Lord’s Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism
- You consider hagelslag on bread a major food group
- You’ll sugar coat your food, but not your words
- you’ve got more lace on your windows than on your laundry line
- your closet is divided into Sunday clothes, and everything else

SOURCE: As adapted from items seen here and there on the Internet

THE MOMENT WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT OPENED A ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST’S EYES

In a recent blog post, Dr. Wes Bredenhof told a story about Franco Maggiotto (1937-2006), “one of the most memorable men I’ve ever met.”

At one point in his life, he’d been a Roman Catholic priest in Italy. The papal hierarchy saw potential in Franco and he became involved with the Vatican. One day, Father Franco was saying mass at a basilica. In the process, he happened to read to the congregation from Hebrews 10:11-12:

“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...”

When Franco read this, the Holy Spirit suddenly opened his eyes to the reality of the gospel. He told the congregation, “I’m fired! You should go home now. It’s all done. I’m fired. Jesus has done it all!”

SOURCE: “When it’s done it’s done” posted to Yinkahdinay.wordpress.com on May 24, 2021

GOING REALLY OLD SCHOOL IN SCHOOL

Even as our schools are getting decked out in technology – with laptops and tablets replacing textbooks and binders – can a case be made for the efficacy of chalk and slate? As Carol Wilson has described it, the process of education is about:

1. Inputs – the teacher presenting
2. Understanding – the student taking in
3. Demonstration – the student shows they understand
4. Retention – the student uses the information in different ways, so as to remember it

One reason big classes can be hard to manage is this third step, demonstration. Just consider that if a teacher was to call on students in oral discussions, if they had a class of 30, each student might only have to offer an answer every few days. If a

student kept their head down, the interval might even be weeks. Then the teacher might not know until quiz time, or when an assignment comes in, whether the class understood the day’s lesson.

To remedy this – to allow for more instant feedback, from more – Carol Wilson suggests a return to the slate, relaying how a class might look with the tool in hand:

Material to be taught has been presented, and the discussion is in progress. The teacher asks a question, and this time *everyone* writes an answer on his board. ...the students turn their boards at the request of the teacher, and in a matter of seconds he knows who gets the point and who does not. Then the teacher very quickly makes an appropriate comment to each child, usually taking up his most pressing mistake, but not forgetting praise where due, either. Here, again and again, in a short time many crucial knowledge transactions take place. These boards are highly versatile for all kinds of classroom work: dictation of sentences, spelling lists, sentence diagramming, math problems, vocabulary sentences and tests, as well as all kinds of comprehension questioning and interpretation...

Her suggestion was first made 42 years ago, in the October 1979 edition of the *Biblical Educator*, but even as we’d update her individual chalkboard to whiteboards instead, might the merits of this old-school approach remain?

EVIL IN UNVARNISHED ENGLISH

“Abortion is the world’s resounding answer to the question: ‘If you had to murder in order to have an unfettered sex life, would you do it?’” – unknown

SOME ARE SHORTER, OLDER, SMARTER – SO IN WHAT WAY ARE WE EQUAL?

No two of us are alike in any measurable way: neither by height, breadth, income, intellect, speed, or strength. So what’s all this about us being equal? Well, as John Stonestreet notes, there is only one basis for equality: that we are all made in the very Image of God (Gen. 9:6, etc.).

“The image of God is essential to understanding the notions of human equality, human dignity, and human value. We all know that the Declaration of Independence says that ‘we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’ Yet, if you look around a room full of people, the most evident thing is not that we’re equal. Instead, we’re actually quite different. If there’s anything about our humanity that grounds equality and dignity and value, it can’t be any quality

that we share on the outside, because there is no quality that we all share on the outside. Some of us are older. Some of us are taller. Some of us have higher IQ's. And so on. Even atheist thinkers have recognized that the only source in history that has grounded equality, dignity, and value and given us an understanding of a shared humanity is the image of God."

SOURCE: John Stonestreet, in "The Essential Hope," posted to Breakpoint.org on April 7, 2021

TWO WAYS GOD HAS SPOKEN TO US OUTSIDE THE BIBLE

"...God has spoken to us through the majesty and beauty of the world that He has made. But there is another way, still apart from the Bible, in which God has spoken to His creatures. He has not only in the wonders of the world outside of us but also through His voice within. He has planted His laws in our hearts. He speaks to all men through the voice of conscience. He speaks through the majestic words which all but the most degraded men utter, the words: "I ought." He speaks through the majesty of the moral law. A law implies a lawgiver. Conscience testifies of God."

– J Gresham Machen, *Is the Bible Inspired?*

CHRISTIANS DID BETTER DURING THE PANDEMIC

In a June 15 article in *Scientific American*, psychologist David H. Rosmarin outlined that in the midst of the loneliness caused by Covid lockdowns, there was a group whose mental health actually *improved*:

In the past year, American mental health sank to the lowest point in history: Incidence of mental disorders increased by 50 percent, compared with before the pandemic, alcohol and other substance abuse surged, and young adults were more than twice as likely to seriously consider suicide than they were in 2018. Yet the only group to see *improvements* in mental health during the past year were those who attended religious services at least weekly (virtually or in-person): 46 percent report "excellent" mental health today versus 42 percent one year ago. As former congressional representative Patrick J. Kennedy and journalist Stephen Fried wrote in their book *A Common Struggle*, the two most underappreciated treatments for mental disorders are "love and faith."

The psychologist takes these findings in a secular direction, proposing that his colleagues consider encouraging essentially a faux form of spirituality in patients, for their mental health's sake. What he's managed to miss, Christians can see clearly: that this demonstrates how our God knows us, and knows what we need. In giving us a day of rest where we can gather – even if only in a virtual sense – God, every week again, reminds us of Who remains in charge, and gives us the opportunity and encouragement of being a hand and foot to one another. There's *real* comfort in knowing that God remains in control, and also in experiencing the fellowship of being with His people.

SOURCE: David H. Rosmarin's "Psychiatry needs to get right with God" posted to *ScientificAmerican.com* on June 15, 2021

ON THE NEED TO READ RIGHT

Encouraging our children to read for reading's sake is a popular notion, but akin to encouraging them to watch TV for TV watching's sake. If there's no quality to the content, then our goal shouldn't be just to have them consume more of it. As Katherine Patterson put it, "It is not enough to simply teach children to read; we have to give them something worth reading."

- "You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them." - Ray Bradbury
- "The man who does not read good books is no better than the man who can't." - Mark Twain
- "I believe we should spend less time worrying about the quantity of books children read and more time introducing them to quality books that will turn them on to the joy of reading and turn them into lifelong readers." – James Patterson
- "Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read." – attributed to Groucho Marx
- "Somebody who only reads newspapers and at best books of contemporary authors looks to me like an extremely near-sighted person who scorns eyeglasses. He is completely dependent on the prejudices and fashions of his times, since he never gets to see or hear anything else." - Albert Einstein
- "We read to know we are not alone." William Nicholson (putting the words into C.S. Lewis' mouth, in his play *Shadowlands*)

HOW YOUR PHONE IS HINDERING YOU

When teacher Julie Holland Griggs' class was studying *Fahrenheit 451*, she decided to run an experiment. She had her students:

"...make a tally mark each time they got a notification on their phone. Grand total for today: 1,687 notifications. That's 1,687 interruptions to learning caused by cell phones. One of the central ideas of [*Fahrenheit*] 451 is that constant, mindless distractions prevent people from developing authentic relationships and suppress deep thought. Hmmm..."

Griggs is a highschool teacher in Alabama, but when she posted about the experiment, news of it spread to some pretty far corners of the world. A teacher in Iceland, Hrönn Árnadóttir tried it out on his 7th graders, and by day's end his 20 students had received 1,963 notifications, or an average of 98 per student. Most of them were not personal messages – just notices from Snapchat, etc. – but the lure to check it remains nonetheless. Then, when it was lunch time, the students turned to chat with each other via their phones, rather than face to face.

SOURCE: Kristín Sigurdardóttir's "Received 1,963 mobile notifications," posted to *www.RUV.is* on May 18, 2021

NERO

BY JACOB ABBOTT
2009 / 202 PAGES



How do you make history come alive for teens? Sometimes it means turning to an author long dead. Jacob Abbott died 125 years ago, but a quick read through this volume explains why his books endure. The original 1853 edition of *Nero* is available for free in many places online, and is well worth downloading to your Kindle.

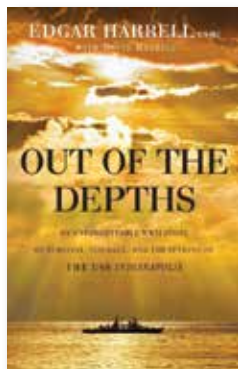
But it does benefit from the updating that publisher Canon Press has done to their version. Some longer 70-word sentences have been broken up and editor Lucy Zoe Jones has also replaced a few obscure words like "declivities," "salubrity," and "preternatural." Little else was required.

Now, *Nero's* life might not seem like appropriate material for a biography aimed at teens – this Roman emperor indulged in every sort of immorality. However Abbott is both a tactful and talented writer. He doesn't delve into the salacious details, so younger readers will only encounter a broad overview of Nero's wickedness. But Abbott does tuck in a bit more information in between the lines, there to be read and understood by older, less naive readers. It's an impressive feat.

Like many good teen books, adults will enjoy this as well - it is an engaging introduction to a key figure in both Church and Western history.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

BY EDGAR HARRELL, USMC
2016 / 208 PAGES



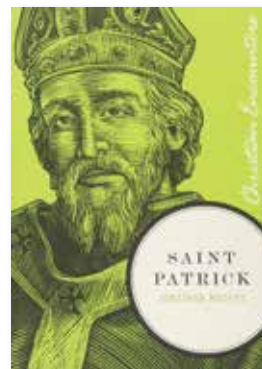
On July 30, 1945, Edgar Harrell was serving on board the *USS Indianapolis* when it was sunk by a Japanese torpedo. The "Indy" had been on her way to the island of Tinian carrying the component parts for the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Because of the secrecy of the mission, no one missed her when she was sunk, and so no one started looking for the crew. The survivors spent five harrowing days plagued by shark attacks, dehydration and saltwater poisoning, paddling in kapok-filled life jackets trying to keep their heads above water. It was only because of a miraculous sighting by a surveillance airplane (whose crew was not even aware of the sinking of the *Indy*) that the 316 survivors, out of the original crew of 1,195, were finally plucked from the waters.

The theme throughout the book is the great faith of Harrell, who was able to spiritually encourage them while in the water. His group of 17 were brought to the bare bones of their faith, and to the acknowledgment that they were completely dependent on God. This is a short memoir with a powerful message of faith, trust and dependence on our Creator and could be included in the biographical section of any church library.

– JOANNA VANDERPOL

SAINT PATRICK

BY JONATHAN ROGERS
2010 / 132 PAGES



While legends about St. Patrick (385-461) abound, facts are hard to come by. Jonathan Rogers explains that the most substantive information we have about the Irish saint comes from just two documents, which are the only pieces of writing we have from the man himself.

The Confession of Saint Patrick, lays out his theological beliefs, even as he shares the story of his capture by Irish slavers, and his later escape back to civilization. *The Letter sent to the soldiers of Coroticus*, was a plea to a British raider to return the newly baptized Irish Christians the man had stolen and taken off to slavery. These two documents are included, in their entirety, as appendices in the back of this slim volume.

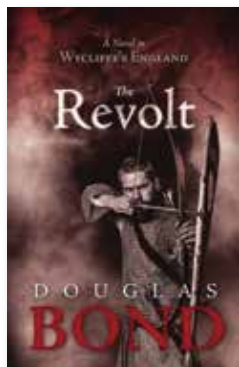
Rogers uses the remaining 100 pages to put Patrick's writings in a historical and cultural context. The biggest eye-opener for me was the reason Ireland hadn't yet been evangelized. With the Christianization of the Roman Empire, people of this time saw "outside the Empire" as being "outside the Church." So to most it was unthinkable that the barbarian Irish could even become Christian. But it wasn't inconceivable to Patrick – what made him special was his zeal for lost people that others thought irredeemable.

Print copies are getting rare but the e-book is readily available.

THE REVOLT: A NOVEL IN WYCLIFFE'S ENGLAND

BY DOUGLAS BOND

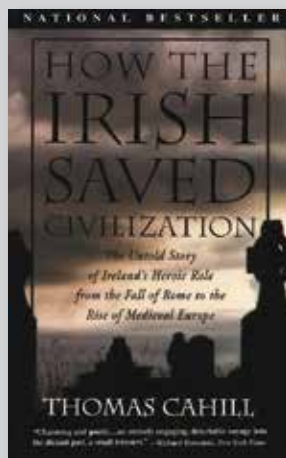
2016 / 269 PAGES



This is a fictionalized take on John Wycliffe, a early Reformer who died more than 100 years before Martin Luther nailed up his 95 theses. Like Luther, Wycliffe was a man on his own. He was the trailblazer who decided that, contrary to what the Pope and Church has pronounced, the common people needed to hear the Bible in their own tongue.

Wycliffe doesn't show up until page 62, so this is as much about his times as the man himself. It begins with a young scholar on the battlefields of France, where the English army is surround by a much larger French force. The scholar has been assigned the task of recording the events, so while everyone else has a bow, or a sword, he's armed only with his quill. From then on we follow along with this scholar who serves as the story's narrator. Through him we meet peasants, other scholars, and finally Wycliffe himself.

Adults will find this an easy and enjoyable read. It'd also be a good one for teens who have any interest in Church history. I can't imagine a more enjoyable way to learn more.



HOW THE IRISH SAVED CIVILIZATION:

BY THOMAS CAHILL

1996 / 245 PAGES

When I think of the Irish, what comes readily to mind are the Irish Rovers of traditional folk music fame, or Riverdance, the world-renowned tap-dance troupe, and of course, Saint Patrick who chased all the snakes out of Ireland. But in truth the latter would never have considered himself a "Saint," nor is it probable that there were ever any snakes in Ireland for him to chase. But this Patrick did become a saint in the biblical sense and had a profound effect on

the history of the church in Europe.

Patrick's life story is only part, but a pivotal part, in the story of how the Irish saved civilization. After the fall of Rome until the time of Charlemagne, Europe entered a period known as the Dark Ages, a period during which culture, learning, and scholarship disappeared; throughout Europe the barbarians looted artifacts and burned books, from the Greek and Roman classics to the Jewish and Christian classics.

But Patrick's role in all this started when he, as a teenager, was kidnapped from Britain by the Irish, and suffered the next six years as a lonely shepherd-slave with only hunger and nakedness as his companions. In these impossible circumstances this young man, as he writes in his *Confession of Saint Patrick*, grew in faith and was roused by the Spirit. So much so that twenty-five years after his escape from this slavery, he returned to Ireland as a missionary. On his death almost thirty years later, pagan Ireland, once a shifting world of darkness, had become a Christian nation.

And that is only the start of the story; his mission in Ireland eventually had many marvelous results including the preservation and transmission of classical literature and the evangelization of Europe. Read this book and see how the Lord worked in wondrous ways to bring His word to these ends of the world.

How this all came about is a story of adventure, drama, suspense, danger, hardship, cruelty, and courage. It is a book that you will probably read a second time. *How the Irish Saved Civilization* is recommended only for adult readers because history in our sinful world also brings many disturbing elements to our notice. Pagan practices, including sexual perversions, that are described may be troubling to some readers, but these accounts are also what makes this story all the more powerful. God molds Patrick, through his slavery and suffering, into an indestructible force to bring His Word to these Irish pagans with their detestable practices. And then He uses these once perverse people as His instruments to spread that message to Europe. As William Cowper wrote, "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform."

- ADOLPH DYKSTRA

T H E R E I S
M O R E

T O O U R L I V E S T H A N

“**N O W .**”

I F T H E R E I S N O T , T H E N E V E N
T H E N O W I S M E A N I N G L E S S .

|
R.C. Sproul

R I G H T N O W
C O U N T S F O R E V E R

|
**I N V E S T I N Y O U R
S P I R I T U A L G R O W T H T O D A Y .**



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WHAT DOES A REFORMED ENTREPRENEUR LOOK LIKE?

by Marty VanDriel

What is it about Reformed Christians that has so many wired to be entrepreneurs? Think about all the landscape professionals and nursery operators in Ontario, the construction companies and dairy farms in BC, and the myriad cabinet shops in southwestern Australia! Very different businesses, but every company began with the dream of an individual or team that saw a need in the marketplace for their expertise: “We can do this better than others, and we can provide for our families and employees by sharing our expertise with the public, and charging the right prices for what we do.” That concept might sound mundane to some, but it’s incredibly invigorating and challenging to an entrepreneur!

But what should we as Reformed Christians look like as entrepreneurs

and employers? And how can we use God’s Word to guide us as leaders in the workplace? How can we be effective witnesses for the Lord, and conscientious stewards of what He provides for us?

BE WILLING TO TAKE ON RESPONSIBILITY

Along with the excitement of starting something new, the Christian entrepreneur will also face many hurdles and pressures. When you work for someone else, you are rarely confronted with the realities of making sure there are enough funds in the bank to make payroll, or worrying that your biggest account won’t pay their bill on time so that you can send out checks to your vendors and partners. Especially early in a company’s life, the owners have many

decisions to make and can feel like they are the only one worried about whether or not their enterprise will survive.

These pressures multiply when the owners hire their first employee: we have to recruit the right people with the right skills so the company can grow; we need to file reams of paperwork with multiple government agencies; we need to choose and purchase benefit packages we might never have thought about. Despite the additional pressures, entrepreneurs who have a team can be many times more effective than when they are on their own.

BE AMBITIOUS

Throughout the Scriptures, the Lord commands His people to be hard-working, diligent, and industrious, not so that they would become rich, but

because He wants us to use for His glory the gifts He has given us.

In Matthew 24, the Lord Jesus praises the work of the two servants who managed well the funds their master entrusted to them. The master is furious with the servant who just buried his treasure in the ground: “You wicked and slothful servant!” And he commands that this “worthless” man be cast into the outer darkness. We do not know specifically what the two righteous servants did with the money they received (the first “traded with them,” and the second “made two talents more,”) but we do know that they were commended for their diligence. “Well done, good and faithful servant!” While some in today’s culture may look askance at profit-making, the Bible never condemns this basic tenet of capitalism that makes a free market function.

USE YOUR GROWING INFLUENCE TO AID AND NOT EXPLOIT

As they worked hard, and aimed for a return on their investments, God’s people were also to deal righteously with their servants and laborers. In Deuteronomy 24:15, the Lord through Moses instructs landowners: “You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers, or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns. You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets (for he is poor and counts on it), lest he cry against you to the Lord, and you be guilty of sin...”

The Lord is angered when profits are made by those who mistreat or cheat their employees. In James 5, those who have “hoarded wealth” are warned that “the wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you... The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”

PAY OTHERS AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE PAID


In a recent issue of *Reformed Perspective*, Peter Jacobsen wrote about the negative effects of minimum wage policies – unintended consequences such as higher unemployment among the young and less skilled, and even intentionally evil consequences such as economic punishment of recent immigrants willing to work for lower wages than native-born employees. Jacobsen cited the writings of economist Thomas Sowell, a black American economist who delights in using real data to debunk “woke,” generally accepted theories about socialism, communism, racism, and more. Christian business leaders need wisdom to discern what is best for their employees, for the health of their company, and for their customers. Since we are commanded to be righteous and generous in how we treat our fellow workers, hopefully a hike in a mandated minimum wage does not have a significant impact on our businesses, since we are likely being far more generous with most of our workforce.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHERS TO BE FRUITFUL

Not only must we never withhold the wages earned by employees, we are also not to be so focused on profit that we leave no opportunities for others to profit from our enterprise. After instructing about paying wages on the same day as earned, Moses commands that farmers should leave enough crops in their fields for others to glean: “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands” (Deut. 24:19). King David’s great-grandmother benefited from this generosity to the poor!

Are there ways that we in our modern workplaces can put in place similar policies that would help our neighbors, and our brothers and sisters? In my hometown, a local company owns and maintains a scenic, rural retreat and training center that it makes available for no cost to Christian organizations. This same company has hired a part-time chaplain to be available for their employees as they need a listening ear, and invites other local employers to avail themselves of this minister’s services. Another company nearby hires mentally disabled employees for janitorial work. Might the floors be cleaner and the windows sparkle more if a contract service were used? Possibly. But what a joy to be able to provide work and routine for those who otherwise might not have such opportunities.

SEIZE THE CHARITABLE OPPORTUNITIES THAT COME WITH BUSINESS SUCCESS

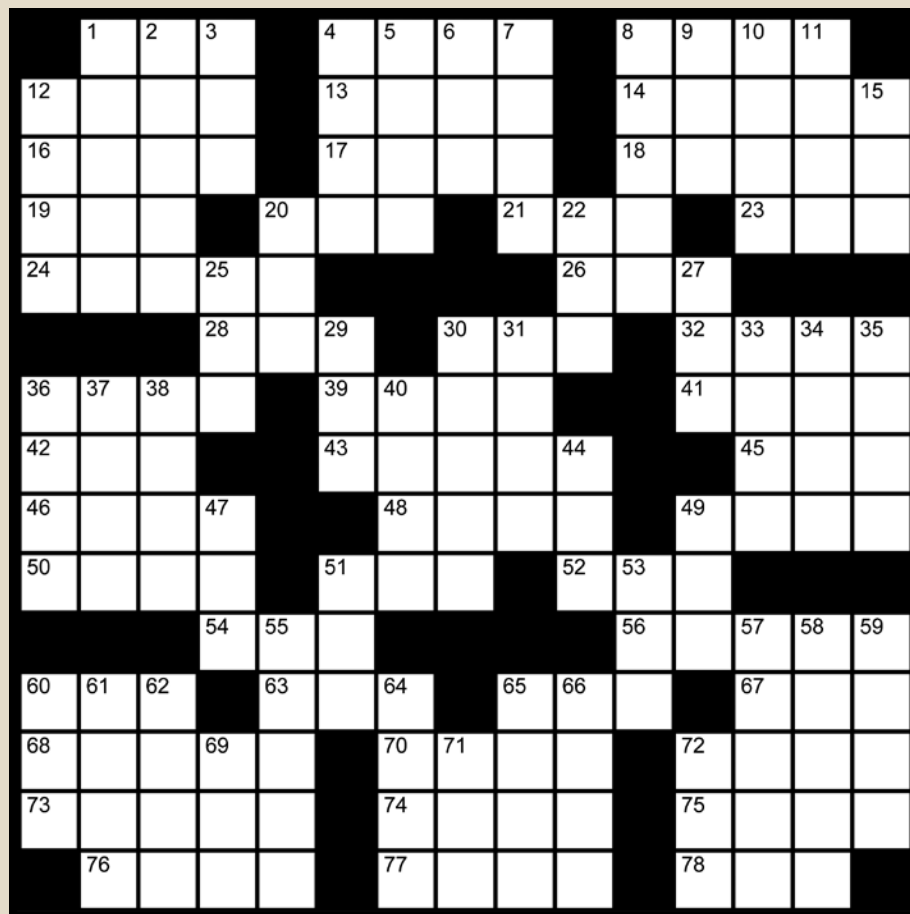
The principle of tithing and charitable giving also has a place in this discussion. Christians are expected to be generous with what the Lord has given. In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul reminds his readers “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” And in 1 Corinthians 16, Paul writes “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income” (NIV). The phrase “in keeping with your income” (or “as he may prosper” in the ESV) is telling: business owners often enjoy seasons of prosperity beyond what a typical wage earner may experience, and should be known for their generosity to causes that benefit their church community, and their neighbors’ well being. May the Lord continue to bless the businesses in our church communities, and give wisdom to those entrusted to run them for his glory. 

Marty VanDriel is the CEO of a manufacturing company in Ferndale, Washington. Comments, feedback, and also suggestions for future topics dealing with business, employment, and finance are more than welcome via mvandriel@trivan.com.

...how can we use God’s Word to guide us as leaders in the workplace?

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 7-1

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 2!

ACROSS

1. Therapeutic place (for the partly Spanish?)
4. It's "grand" to get this at the ball game.
8. "He who _____ the piper calls the tune."
12. FBI agent (slang)
13. Chick-fil-A's is a chicken's head.
14. "men _____ with weapons" (Judges 18)
16. "_____ they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, ..." (Acts 28 ESV)
17. Not under, but rather "a shade _____ his head" (Jonah 4)
18. Rot; what teeth are afraid of
19. " 'Rise, Peter; kill and _____' " (Acts 10/11)
20. Abbreviation for female saint in French
21. " 'give _____ to my words...' " (Acts 2)
23. "Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and _____ bread with him." (Job 42)
24. Wipe out (pencil marks, computer data)
26. Middle part of MPH or KPH
28. Token of aloha landing
30. Dickens narrator; Gladys Knight backup

32. O, a human (partly) would love this isle!
36. "when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to _____ with them" (John 4)
39. Tater; French fry food
41. Not odd
42. Catch a criminal after a crime.
43. Ships have the first ones.
45. Cereal grain mostly fed to livestock
46. Figure skating jump
48. Ahasuerus's royal city (Esther 1)
49. Word-processing "Oops!" command
50. Mediterranean round flatbread
51. Egyptian cobra
52. "let your ' _____ ' be ' _____'" (James 5)
54. You can _____ small game, then use a _____ to carry it home to the freezer
56. Opposite of micro
60. Lou Gehrig's disease (abbreviation)
63. Neither me nor either of them
65. Choose (based partly on optics?)
67. Really cool (back in the 60s!)
68. "What's _____ for the goose is..."
70. Icelandic prose narrative from 1200s
72. It can be played – or smoked!
73. Site of 1950-1953 war
74. Something one should not put on
75. What 31 Down was for Caesar?
76. Person who looks for a 75 Across
77. Worry (about the top part of a guitar?)
78. There are _____ Commandments

DOWN

1. Tactic used by dishonest campaigners
2. Italian staple (with a past that's confused)
3. "Go to the _____, O sluggard;" (Proverbs 8)
4. Where change goes in vending machine
5. "_____ your enemies" (Luke 6)
6. Is it just a number?
7. "the man who was miraculously healed was _____ than forty years old." (Acts 4)
8. Christian clergyman (Italian for *father*)
9. 100 square metres _____ known as an _____.
10. Young Men's Christian Association
11. Pants have one, and so do thrones
12. Merriment; mirth
15. Tint; pigment (to paint a die, as we say)
20. "lest they should _____" (see 16 Across)
22. Program for phone (to make you 'appy?)
25. Cunning, like a fox
27. _____ versus Wade, 1973 abortion ruling
29. Ideological suffix
30. _____-_____ job (= trick; hoax; scam; con job)
31. Caesar told to "Beware" this in March!
33. Shakespeare's hometown river
34. "nowhere to lay his _____" (Luke 9)
35. ...*Sickness* _____ *Death*, (Kierkegaard)
36. Open-handed hit; effective hockey shot; type of pea
37. "Big Yellow _____" (Joni Mitchell song)
38. Assist a criminal in a crime
40. "And it shall come to _____" (Joel 2)
44. "nothing evil to _____ about us." (Titus 2)
47. Experimental edifice, or type of dog (both in short form)
49. Mexico's northern neighbor
51. " 'built many years _____' " (Ezra 5)
53. Emergency medical technician (abbr.)
55. " _____ and six months" (Acts 18 – two words)
57. The wind makes it sound melodious.
58. Become better with age
59. "O Lord, _____ my lips" (Psalm 51)
60. " ' _____ him, he is of age.' " (John 5)
61. Country next to Vietnam and Thailand
62. "is _____ as the dawn" (Hosea 6)
64. Sky-high U.S. military force (abbr.)
65. Monster overcome by Puss in Boots
66. What you see in hindsight
69. Bee-low average, but not Dee-sastrous
71. " 'birds of the _____ come' " (Matthew 13)
72. "chop... up like meat in a _____," (Micah 3)

You Can't Beat Something With Nothing

or, why RP has so many book and movie reviews

The first article I wrote for Reformed Perspective was to propose an alternative to the drunken high school graduations parties that had become the norm in my school and every other Christian school that I knew. My class had decided we'd ban alcohol altogether, but when the night came we found out that simply taking away the alcohol without replacing it with something else just made for a very dull night. It didn't take long before most everyone left for an alcohol-fueled bush party nearby.

In my article I shared something the local Christian Reformed high school had implemented. They banned alcohol too, but then substituted in a whitewater-rafting trip in Jasper. After their grad dinner, graduates piled into a bus and were driven through the night to the mountains so they could hit the river the next morning. It was still a fun and crazy time, but the sort that could be done to the glory of God. What the CRC high school had discovered is that for them to do away with the drunken nonsense, they needed to create an alternative: they had learned that you can't beat something with nothing.

ENDING EVIL INVOLVES GRABBING HOLD OF GOOD

Parents see this all the time: it isn't enough for a child to stop being bad. That might work for a moment, or even minutes, but unless they actually start doing something constructive or kind – helping mom with the dishes, reading a book to their sister, asking friends what *they'd* like to do – then it won't be long before there is another blow up. The child needs to get out of the bad rut and into a good one or their badness will resurface shortly.

God presents this same truth in Eph. 4:28 when He talks about how a thief shouldn't simply stop stealing, but should start working so they will have something to share with the needy. To break from his thievery it isn't enough to stop taking; he has to start giving. In other words, repentance isn't only turning away from evil, but turning *towards* God. When we go with half measures, the pull of the evil persists. Jesus describes this in Matthew 12:

“When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first...”

We aren't able to stand against evil on our own. We need to turn towards God for the strength to persist.

WHAT THAT CAN LOOK LIKE

When it comes to our culture, there's so much that's wicked and needs to be rejected – parents are going to have to tell their children, “No” again and again when it comes to all sorts of entertainment options.


But what, then, is the alternative that we can point our children *to*? It's one thing to steer kids clear of LGBT-this, and self-absorbed-that, but what can we point them toward, that they can enjoy and celebrate?

It's to answer that very question that *RP* offers so many book and movie suggestions, both in the magazine, and

collected by the hundreds on Reformed-Perspective.ca. It's why we'll be featuring lists of suggestions in upcoming issues to give you more possibilities to consider, lists like:

- 50 wordless books to encourage the reluctant reader
- Beyond Archie: 100 graphic novels
- 200+ movies King David might watch
- Fantastic fantasy: 80 novels to take you to other worlds
- 100 chapter books for early readers
- 1,000 books for your school library
- Educational fiction to make learning history a breeze

Christians shouldn't believe in “reading for reading's sake” any more than we'd believe in “TV-watching for TV watching's sake.” We all know there is some horrible stuff out there that we don't want our kids to see, so we need to consume with care.

How wonderful then, that there are so many good and glorious stories that we can point our children to instead. We can beat the empty nothingness of the world's philosophy by sharing with our children beautiful stories that can teach, encourage, and edify. That might also mean spending some money to buy books our local library doesn't carry (though maybe you can put in a request that they do). It might mean adding a line item to your family budget called “edification expenses.” It involves effort, but it's also an opportunity to celebrate, along with your family, all the good and glorious works that are out there to discover and enjoy. 

– JON DYKSTRA



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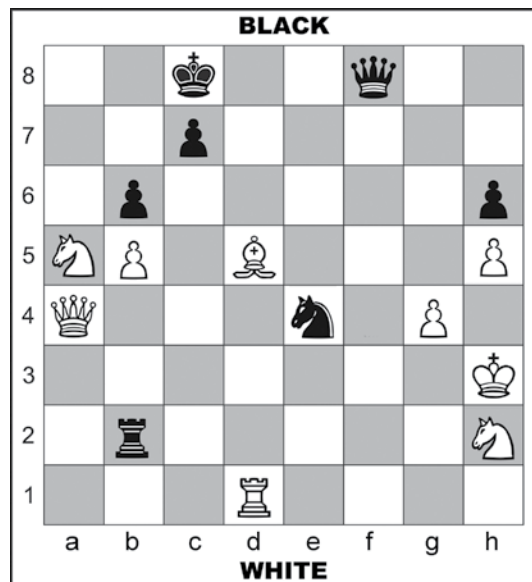
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ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #265



Riddle for Punsters

#265 - "Shockingly Simple Advice for No Charge?"

I am cur _ _ _ _ ly dealing with anger issues because my laptop battery only lasts a re _ _ _ _ ngly short 15 minutes after being charged. My best friend has advised me to find an _ _ _ let for dealing with that problem.

Problem to Ponder

#265 - "A big MOOve for the family?"

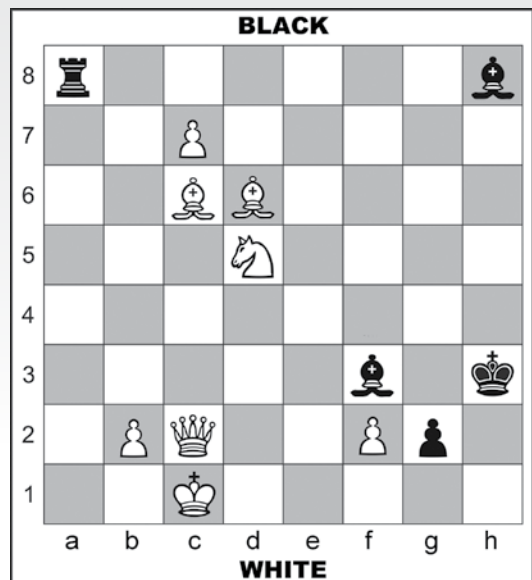
Hilda's parents bought a farm that had chickens, cows and horses. There are five times as many cows as horses. Hilda counted all the animals' legs and there were 104. She also counted a total of 8 wings. How many cows are there on the farm?

WHITE TO MATE IN 3
Or, if it is BLACK's Move,
BLACK TO MATE IN 2

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

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTIONS

Solution to Chess Puzzle #264



Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#264 - "Will they grind out a confession?"

What happened to the coffee thief when he was arrested? The police took his **mu**g shot. Why was he the main suspect? His fingerprints showed that he had **be**an at the crime scene. Also, police records indicated that he was charged with coffee bean robbery a **lat**te in recent years. He was also suspected because of his national-ity, namely Col**omb**ian. Thus there were various **grou**nds for charging him.

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#264 - WORD JUMBLE - "Grains and Veggies"

thawe	wheat	spagsaura	asparagus
stoa	oats	crobloic	broccoli
laebry	barley	fallowurice	cauliflower
noquia	quinoa	brucmuce	cucumber
tlimel	millet	shusaq	squash
plets	spelt	drahids	raddish
trorac	carrot	leeryc	celery
nipshac	spinach	chinzuci	zucchini
inono	onion	stebe	beets
dliw crie	wild rice	swon sape	snow peas
stewe nroe	sweet corn	reng snabe	green beans
rehryc mootat	cherry tomato	weest toopat	sweet potato
reneg preep	green pepper	begrice tulecet	iceberg lettuce
dre bagbace	red cabbage	narimoe clutete	romaine lettuce

WHITE TO MATE IN 3
(By making a royal start)

Descriptive Notation

1. Q-KB5 ch B-N5
2. Q-R7 ch B-R4
3. QxB/5 mate

or (if Q-KB5 ch is skipped)

1. Q-R7ch K-N5
2. B-Q7ch K-N4
3. B-B4 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Qc2-f5 + Bf3-g4
2. Qf5-h7 + Bg4-h5
3. Qh7xh5 ++

or (if Qc2-f5 + is skipped)

1. Qc2-h7 + Kh3-g4
2. Bc6-d7 + Kg4-g5
3. Bd6-f4 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 4

(By making a royal start)

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- P-N8=Q ch
 2. K-Q2 QxP ch
 3. K-Q1 R-R8 ch
 4. Q-N1 BxP mate
- [Not Q-Q1 since QxQ mate]
[Not K-Q3 since Q-Q5 mate]

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- g2-g1=Q +
 2. Kc1-d2 Qg1xf2 +
 3. Kd2-c1 Ra8-a1 +
 4. Qc2-b1 Bh8xb2 ++
- [Not Qc2-d1 since Qg1xd1 ++]
[Not Kd2-d3 since Qf2-d4 ++]

3 SIMPLE REASONS We Believe Misinformation



by Chris Martin

Last week I came across a great article in the *MIT Technology Review* called, “Why Generation Z Falls for Online Misinformation.” The article highlights a handful of reasons why the youngest, most savvy purveyors of internet culture become victims of misinformation themselves.

What makes the article such a good read is the sort of paradox it plumbs. The young people who make up Gen Z are supposed to be smarter about this kind of stuff than their Boomer parents or grandparents, right? How are these internet curators and trend-setters getting duped themselves?

In many of the same ways that we all can get tricked by news or other information we see online. Here are three simple ways we can all fall prey to misinformation:

1) In our whirlwind world, we inherently trust people like us.

This is highlighted in the MIT article I cite above. With faster, more pervasive communication and information transfer today than ever before in history, sifting through all of the data, news, commentary, and all the rest of the content we come into contact with on any given day can feel truly, and terrifyingly, overwhelming. It’s like we constantly exist within a hurricane of information, hot takes, and content somewhere in between. We aren’t meant to drink in all of the content we consume. As Neil Postman wrote in 1985, “How often does it occur that information provided you on morning radio or television... causes you to alter your plans for the day, or to take some action you would not otherwise have taken?”

When we become overwhelmed by the content glut to which we are helplessly addicted our discernment is fractured and we begin to rely on less-than-reliable rationales for trusting people on the internet.

Postman wrote in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, “The credibility of the teller is the ultimate test of truth of a proposition.” He was bemoaning this sad reality, not endorsing it, and it has perhaps never been more true (like so much of what Postman wrote in *Amusing*). As Jennifer Neda John wrote for *MIT Technology Review*:

As young people participate in more political discussions online, we can expect those who have successfully cultivated this identity-based credibility to become de facto community

leaders, attracting like-minded people and steering the conversation. While that has the potential to empower marginalized groups, it also exacerbates the threat of misinformation. People united by identity will find themselves vulnerable to misleading narratives that target precisely what brings them together.

When we have bound ourselves to constant content consumption we create a situation in which we are easily overwhelmed with information and opinions—this sense of overwhelm is scary and real and it reduces our standards of discernment and leaves us vulnerable to being led astray by people who look like us, live like us, or believe like us.

2) We consume content too quickly to fact-check sources.

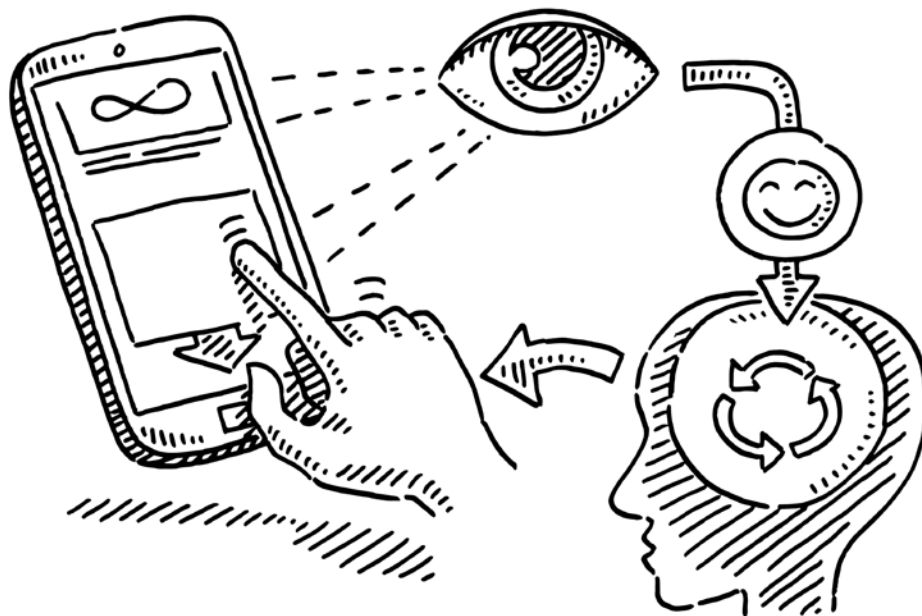
This idea is pretty straightforward, but it is perhaps the most common and endemic to social media. As Ms. John writes in that same MIT article:

[An] election rumor appeared among dozens of other posts in teenagers' TikTok feeds, leaving them with little time to think critically about each claim. Any efforts to challenge the rumor were relegated to the comments.

The whole idea of most social media platforms, especially quick-hit ones like TikTok or Instagram Stories, is to consume lots of short content for as long as possible. YouTube's strategy tends to be built around keeping you on the platform to watch longer-form, minutes-long content. TikTok and other platforms deliver you content that is largely less than a minute long as quick bites to be consumed in large quantities.

Let's explore a hypothetical scenario. My wife and I have just finished dinner, cleaned up the kitchen, and are scrolling our phones while watching Netflix like any other self-respecting 30-year-old couple. I come across a TikTok that, in 45 seconds, explains why the moon landing may have been faked. I am intrigued so I tap over to the user's profile and watch other videos he or she have created around other conspiracy

If our primary goal when using the Internet is to feel good, anything that clashes with that goal – like verifying the truth of a matter – will lose.



theories—one on how LBJ actually had JFK killed, one on aliens, one on people disappearing near caves around the U.S. I've just trained the TikTok algorithm that conspiratorial content is of interest to me, and now I'm likely to get more.

I flip back over to my For You Page. I see a funny video of a dog chasing a pet hamster around a living room obstacle course. I favorite a mac-and-cheese casserole recipe to try making next week. Then I see a video suggesting the American education system is designed to undermine rural children's education to encourage them to stay on the farm and not go to college. Interesting. I swipe up again to see a highlight from last night's Cubs game. I swipe again and hear a creepy voice explaining the secret family of Adolf Hitler, asking rhetorical questions designed to make one wonder about if Hitler's family still

has some sort of power today. Only three minutes have passed since I began scrolling.

The seemingly random smattering of content that I consume in fewer than 200 seconds has left me no real margin to investigate the weird ideas that wiggled their way into my feed unless I decide to do a deep dive into Wikipedia or Google and investigate those claims. "Nah," I think, "I'm scrolling to be entertained, not educated," and I'll always kinda wonder if Hitler's family is secretly running some multinational dark government. Not really, but this is a general idea of this concept: many of the most popular social media apps in the world are designed for mass consumption of micro content in a short period of time, and this inhibits our ability to discern what is true or real.

3) Our relationship with the internet is meant to be therapeutic at the cost of being realistic.

Though it often fails us in this regard, many of us come to the internet, and social media specifically, to *feel good*. We come to the internet to laugh at humorous content, cry at touching content, or otherwise be entertained and made to feel good. It should be noted that the most popular internet platforms in the world—Facebook, Instagram, Amazon, Google, Tiktok, etc.—*know* that our primary motivation to engage with the internet is to be made to feel good, even if maybe we don't recognize it or wouldn't admit it. Because these platforms know that we log on to the internet to feel good or otherwise have our needs fulfilled, they have designed their experiences to reinforce these feelings and make us feel good. When they make us feel good, we spend more time on their platforms.

Because our primary value when using the internet is to feel good, any value that clashes with this value will lose, and the clash will affect how we use the internet moving forward. If we use the internet to feel good, but our daily interactions with people on Facebook make us feel bad, then we will likely stop using Facebook. If we use the internet to feel good, but we can never find a show we want to watch on Hulu, we may unsubscribe from Hulu.

It follows, then, that if we use the internet to feel good, and the news we consume about the world makes us feel bad, we will either: a) stop consuming news altogether, or b) consume “news” or other facts that make us feel good whether or not they are real.

We use the internet as a therapeutic at the cost of truth.

Because of our therapeutic abuse of the internet, *that which makes us feel good* will always take precedence over *that which is true*.

Christians are as guilty of finding their joy and their comfort in the internet as anyone else. To think we as a community of faith are somehow “above” this particular kind of brokenness is foolish.

FALSE UNTIL PROVEN TRUE

Foundational to preventing ourselves from being tricked into believing and sharing that which is not true is not letting our engagement with the internet have the central role in our lives that it so often does. We should consume (and create) less internet content. We should not see the internet as a means of feeling better about our lives.

Let me share what has helped me as I have spent the last six months auditing my relationship with the internet. As I have worked to live a more offline life, the most effective tool for me has been setting time limits for my favorite apps and limiting the times of day I can engage with these apps. When I restrict the duration and times of day I engage with content on the internet, I spend a lot less time looking at my screens and a lot more time looking at the world around me.

This has helped me realize that the digital world is secondary to the physical world.

Likewise, and this may sound a bit negative, but I just have sort of come to assume anything I read on the internet needs to be confirmed by multiple, di-



MISSION IN MEXICO

operating in Querétaro, Mexico is prayerfully seeking a missionary to serve alongside a mission worker already working in the mission field. The mission in Querétaro is new with many opportunities. If you have a heart to spread the Word to those in need of the gospel, are an ordained minister of the Word, and of the Reformed faith, prayerfully consider our request.

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verse outlets before I consider it “true.” I think if we just go into our relationship with the internet with the understanding that much of what we see or hear or read is actually “false until proven true” then we may go a long way toward not being duped into believing untruths. RP

This originally appeared in Chris Martin's “terms of service” July 12, 2021 blog/newsletter and is reprinted with permission. “Terms of service” looks at the social internet from a Christian perspective and comes in both a free and paid subscription, either of which you can sign up for at www.termsofservice.social.

I just have sort of come to assume anything I read on the internet needs to be confirmed by multiple, diverse outlets before I consider it “true.”



THE WONDER OF THE WOMB

If you haven't seen any of the YouTube videos of Dr. Kristin Collier talking about the unborn, you've missed out. This Christian physician and University of Michigan Medical School faculty member has been speaking at universities around the USA, sharing scientific evidence about the interconnection between mothers and babies in the womb. Let me share a few of the highlights.

THE PLACENTA: A COOPERATIVE PROJECT

Many of Dr. Collier's presentations have focused on the amazing miracle of the placenta. Often referred to as the "after-birth," it is actually the vital organ inside of which a baby grows. Dr. Collier states,

"In a mother's womb following conception, God is building between mother and child an anatomic masterpiece, a relational organ. The placenta is therefore considered a fetomaternal organ because it is made by both the baby and mother (and Providence). The placenta is the only purposely transient organ in humans and is the only single organ that is created by two people in cooperation. Through the placenta,

mother and prenatal child interface. In one organ we see the function of what is usually performed by multiple organs and systems. The placenta provides the function normally assumed by one's lungs and kidneys and additionally has metabolic, thermo-regulatory, endocrine and immune function."

In other words, when the baby is merely 6-7 weeks old inside the mother, he or she is contributing by assisting the mother in building the placenta. This is an important proof that even at that very early gestational age, this is not just a blob of tissue, but a co-worker in the process of life.

MICROCHIMERISM: AN INTERCONNECTION

Dr. Collier has also shared how analysis of DNA, taken during prenatal screening tests, shows that there is another sort of profound interconnectedness between the prenatal child and the mother.

"We know that genetic material from the prenatal child crosses through the placenta and can be found in the mother's circulation. The interaction

at the level of genetic material between mother and prenatal child is illustrated in what is called 'microchimerism.'"

Microchimerism is the presence of a small population of genetically distinct and separately derived cells within an individual. Dr. Collier goes on to say:


"The growing baby sends some of her cells across the placenta into her mother in a way that we are only beginning to understand. These cells migrate to various sites of maternal tissue and integrate into them. They then assume the function of the surrounding tissue and begin to function as such. Microchimeric cells have been found in various maternal tissues and organs, such as the breast, bone marrow, skin, liver and brain.

"Early and late effects of these cells have been hypothesized. Some of these cells appear to target sites of injury and may help mother heal after delivery by integrating into a Cesarean section wound and helping to produce collagen. Fetal cells may be involved in the process of lactation by signaling the mother's body to make milk. Others

Cells of their children remain within women throughout their lives...

BABIES: A SUPERB DESIGN BY OUR CREATOR GOD

Psalm 139 rejoices in how God forms children within the womb. Learning how these babies participate in building their own placenta reinforces the truth that these are little people growing in there. And discovering the wonderful ways in which mothers and babies are, and stay connected gives us cause to rejoice in the superb designs of our Creator God. And this is why Dr. Collier is determined to share this knowledge throughout the world.

You can watch Dr. Collier give a wonderful 15-minute presentation on this topic on ReformedPerspective.ca. 

have been thought to help protect a mother against breast cancer later in life. This process likely involves negotiation and cooperation between mom and baby at the cellular level. Researchers are in the early stages of attempting to understand the full function of these cells, which may have important implications for the immune status of women.”


To summarize, cells of their children remain within women throughout their lives, helping the mother, and also

perhaps explaining the connection that mothers feel with their children - and their lost children.

“Human beings carry remnants of other humans in their bodies. These cells become integrated into maternal tissue and are active and working in ways that we are just beginning to understand. Think about mothers who have lost both prenatal and postnatal children, and how they have longed for their children still to be with them in some way. Now we see that in fact, they are.”

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE PARTY - CANADA

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Restore Traditional Marriage	✓	✗ ¹	✗	✗	✗	✗
Repeal Assisted Suicide	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Balance the Budget	✓	✓	✗ ²	✗	✗	✗ ⁴
Protect Free Speech	✓	✓	✗ ³	✗	✗	✓
Eliminate Carbon Taxes	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Defend Conscience Rights	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Enforce Border Protection	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗



Rod Taylor, CHP Leader

¹ Maxime Bernier marched in a pride parade; NO policy on abortion or gender ideology

³ Conservative leader does not allow free speech for his own MPs

² Conservatives added \$144 Billion to the national debt in 9 years

⁴ <https://ifsd.ca/en/blog/last-page-blog/green-2019-platform-2>

I agree with the following: There is one Creator God—the God of the Bible. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms acknowledges the Supremacy of God and the Rule of Law. All innocent human life must be protected by law from conception until natural death. Marriage is the exclusive union of one man and one woman. Parents are the primary authority for the care and education of their children. Canadian laws must reflect biblical moral standards.

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On the Regulative Principle of Worship, and elements vs. circumstances

by Wes Bredenhof

Many moons ago, in the days of Pine, Lynx and dial-up modems, there was an online discussion group known as Ref-net. I can't say I was among the first participants of this e-mail forum, but I'm quite sure I got in while it was still made up mostly of university students. We were exploring what it means to be Reformed Christians in cyberspace. All sorts of ideas were up for debate, including public worship.

RPW IN THE HC

Through the Ref-net I met a friend from South Africa who introduced me to the "Regulative Principle of Worship" (RPW). What is the RPW? While, you can find it the Three Forms of Unity – though I had never really noticed it before – and it is most clearly stated in Heidelberg Catechism Answer 96 where it declares:

"We are not to make an image of God in any way, nor to worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word."

Worshiping God *only as He has commanded*: this is one of the rudiments and distinctives of Reformed worship.

I became involved in a number of discussions about Reformed worship on the Ref-net. These ranged from general wrangling about the RPW as such, to specific polemics on applications of the RPW to questions like psalm-singing and "days of commemoration."

One of the objections I heard to the RPW in general was that it was impractical. If we're to worship God only as he has commanded, then where has God

commanded us to worship at 9:30 AM? Why do we sit in pews when God hasn't commanded that? In these and many other ways, no Reformed or Presbyterian church really follows the RPW. To the lurkers it must have appeared as if this objection had just detonated the RPW into oblivion.

...where has God commanded us to worship at 9:30 AM?

ELEMENTS VS. CIRCUMSTANCES

However, this *gotcha* moment didn't last very long. It was quickly noted that the RPW comes with an indispensable distinction. When it comes to public worship, Reformed theologians have often distinguished between *elements* and *circumstances*. Elements are the things God commanded in Scripture for public worship, things like preaching, singing, the reading of Scripture, prayers, etc. Elements are governed by the RPW.

Circumstances are the incidental things which surround the elements. Circumstances include things like the time of worship, whether one sits on pews or chairs, what temperature the room will be, and far more. Circumstances are not governed by commands from the Bible, but by wisdom and discretion informed by the Bible.

It's true that this distinction doesn't appear in the Heidelberg Catechism. Since

the Catechism was written for children, you shouldn't expect it to. But Zacharias Ursinus (its main author) *does use* this distinction in his theological commentary on the Catechism. It was also employed by Puritans such as John Owen and Jeremiah Burroughs.

Not surprisingly then, it becomes part of the Reformed confessional heritage in Westminster Confession 1.6, speaking of circumstances in worship "which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."

BUT IS IT BIBLICAL?

The historical pedigree of this distinction is sound, but the most important question is whether it's biblical. Certainly in the New Testament we see believers worshipping God in a variety of places – homes, synagogues, and even the temple. We see believers worshipping God at different times: evening, late evening, and morning. This sort of variability observed in Scripture is what undergirds this distinction. Outside of the elements commanded for worship, God grants liberty to his church to order the circumstances wisely.

DEBATE CONTINUES

This distinction doesn't instantly solve every question in Reformed worship. There are disagreements amongst Reformed and Presbyterian liturgists about what constitutes elements and circumstances. Probably the most well-known example has to do with musical instruments. Some, such as myself, would contend that musical accompaniment



Should a church use pews or chairs, or maybe have everyone stand? Those circumstances are not prescribed in Scripture, and so can be done as a church's elders think best.

(done judiciously) is circumstantial. Others would maintain it has the character of an element and, since it is not commanded in the New Testament, it cannot be justified by the RPW. Note: both sides fully affirm the RPW. However, they differ at the application of it, specifically when it comes to defining elements and circumstances. And no, it's not a matter of "strict" RPW versus "loose" RPW. You either hold to the RPW or you don't.

While those disagreements can be quite intense at times, we do well to note the broad consensus existing amongst confessionally Reformed churches. There's unanimous agreement that things like the time of the worship services and the type of seating are circumstantial. Whether you worship in a custom-built church building or use a school gymnasium – God-pleasing worship in Spirit and truth can happen regardless.

Conversely, we all agree that what matters are the God-commanded elements. Without elements like the reading and preaching of Scripture and prayer, you simply don't have Reformed worship. You have something less than authentic Christian worship. Because of our love for the Savior and what

he's done, we want to follow his Word carefully when it comes to the content of our worship. But we'll also be careful about imposing our own opinions where God has granted liberty to be different. ^{RP}

This first appeared on Dr. Bredenhof's blog Yinkahdinay under the title «We Distinguish: Elements/Circumstances,» and it is reprinted here with permission. For more on Reformed worship, be sure to check out Dr. Bredenhof's book "Aiming to Please: a Guide to Reformed Worship."



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RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS AND THE DEVASTATION OF STATE-PERPETRATED FAMILY BREAKUP

As homeschool and Christian school supporters who know that education is a God-given parental responsibility, how angry would we be if the State took our children away to educate them as they decided? And what would you think of anyone who tried to minimize what the State had done?

by Jonathon Van Maren

For the past several months, Canada has been convulsed by the heart-breaking rediscovery of hundreds – and likely thousands – of child graves outside residential schools where Indigenous children were placed (incarcerated is probably a better word) by the Canadian government to “kill the Indian in the child.” The history of residential schools is one of the blackest in Canadian history, and anyone who has read even portions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report (I did research on forced abortions in residential schools several years ago) must conclude that this was a systematic crime committed against entire peoples.

As Terry Glavin wrote in the *National Post*:

“Imprisoned in chronically underfunded institutions that were incubation chambers for epidemic diseases, the children died in droves. Enfeebled by homesickness, brutal and sadistic punishments and wholly inadequate nutrition, they died from tuberculosis, pneumonia, the Spanish influenza and measles, among any number of proximate causes. At the Old Sun boarding school in Alberta, there were years when children were dying at 10 times the rate of children in the settler population...

“The TRC report chronicles barbaric punishments, duly recorded by federal bureaucrats and officials with the churches that ran the schools. Students shackled to one another, placed in handcuffs and leg irons, beaten with sticks



Cree students at their desks at the All Saints Indian Residential School in Lac La Ronge, Saskatchewan, some time in March of 1945.

and chains, sent to solitary confinement cells for days on end — and schools that knowingly hired convicted “child molesters.” Only a few dozen individuals have ever been prosecuted and convicted for the abuse those children endured.”

In much of the debate over the nuances of these re-emerging stories, I think an opportunity for appropriate empathy is sometimes lost. Yes, it is true that

not *all* of the children were abused. Yes, it is true that healthcare standards during that time meant that diseases were far more deadly. Yes, some students remain ambivalent about their experiences to this day. But none of this changes the central fact of the matter: Children were forcibly removed by the state from their families for the express purpose of destroying their family bonds and eradicating their language and culture.

...social conservatives, of all people, should be able to understand the fallout from family breakup

IF THEY'D COME FOR OUR KIDS...

I hail from the Dutch diaspora in Canada, and like many immigrant groups in our multicultural patchwork, our communities have remained largely culturally homogenous. Imagine if the Canadian government had decided, at some point, that Dutch-Canadian (or Sikh or Ukrainian or Jewish) culture needed to be destroyed for the good of the children in those communities, who needed to be better assimilated. Then, imagine if the government forcibly removed children as young as three years old from the parental home – state-sanctioned kidnapping. At school, they were deprived of their grandparents, parents, siblings, language, and culture—and told that their homes were bad for them.

At the end of the experience, if the children survived disease, abuse, bullying, and loneliness, he or she would have been remade in the image of the state – and community bonds would have been severed and many relationships irrevocably destroyed. The children who died of disease were often buried on school grounds. That means many children were taken by the government – and their families *simply never saw them again*. Imagine, for just a moment, if that was *your* family. If *you* were removed from your family. If *your* children were removed from you. How might you feel about Canada if her government had, for generations, attempted to destroy everything precious to you? It is a question worth reflecting on.

Over the past decade, as religious liberty has been steadily eroded by Western governments, many Christians have wondered, fearfully, whether the authorities will eventually interfere with how they raise their children. Christian parents have been presented as a threat to their own children because of their “hateful” Christian values. When considering the residential schools, Christians should

realize that what happened to Indigenous people in Canada is *their own worst nightmare*. This happened to real children and real families within living memory. Those families have not yet recovered. That devastation cannot be undone – it can only be survived.

The intergenerational damage from these state-inflicted wounds ripples forward in time – and social conservatives, of all people, should be able to understand the fallout from family breakup. Except in this case, the families were *forcibly* broken up, against their will. As a father and member of large families, I cannot fathom the helplessness, despair, and rage that those who saw their family members stolen from them must have felt. Imagine losing your three-year-old son or daughter to the government, with *no recourse for getting your child back*. Imagine never seeing that child again. Hatred is absolutely never the answer. But I can certainly understand it.

WHY MINIMIZE THIS CRIME?

If it had been my child stolen from me, who then died from disease years later and was never returned, I can imagine how I would feel if the response from people was: “Well, *lots* of people died from disease.” Or: “Many of the educators tried their best.” Or: “It wasn’t feasible to send the bodies of the stolen children home.” I can imagine how I would feel if I heard that in response to raw pain and grief at state-perpetrated injustice. I would feel as if people weren’t listening; didn’t care; and were simply, once again, making excuses. There are times when injustice must be faced in the raw, and the intricacies of healthcare in the early part of the last century can be discussed some other time.

Over the past several weeks, residential school survivors have come forward anew to detail their experiences. Many of them struggled with substance abuse



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as a result of what they endured; many of the issues with alcohol and drugs on some Indigenous reserves today stem from the state-perpetrated breakup of their families. It is easy for those looking at reserves from the outside in to criticize without realizing the context for the state of many families, which would likely still be whole if the Canadian government had not intentionally destroyed them. This is not to say that people bear no responsibilities for their actions. It is to say that we should consider how we would think if the government had perpetrated this on our own communities.

CHRISTIANS KNOW HOW IMPORTANT FAMILIES ARE

For several generations, social conservative and Christian scholars have been warning that family breakup is at the root of many of our social ills. Largescale family breakup results in crime, risky behavior, substance abuse, mental illness, PTSD, and other traumas and anti-social behavior. Fatherlessness is one of the greatest disadvantages a boy can face. In the case of our society at large, family breakup was largely

facilitated by the Sexual Revolution (and in many communities, wealth has cushioned the blow and masked the damage). In Indigenous communities, family breakup was inflicted by the state, and the consequences they have suffered as a result have been devastating. Social conservatives should be able to intuitively understand this.

I've said many times that I believe the real "privilege" in our society is not primarily racial, as progressives claim – but the blessing of growing up in a two-parent home where a mother and father love their children. This is a tremendous social advantage, and it was denied to generations of Indigenous children by the government, who felt they would be better off without the love and influence of their parents and grandparents. In her recent book *Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics*, Mary Eberstadt explored how family breakup inhibits the passing down of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next. Again, this is a key part of the puzzle that social conservatives should instinctively recognize.

During university, I toured an aban-

doned residential school in British Columbia with several other students. Our guide was a survivor who told us about the children who had died there and the abuse they had suffered. I remember the cold, damp chill of a dark tunnel in the basement as he told us how he and others had been locked there in the blackness for using their own language. His voice was heavy with pain, and it struck me again that these things are not history – they are still memory. There are thousand of Indigenous Canadians still living with the effects of these government policies, and their anger is well-warranted. We should listen to them and remember once again the horrors that unfold when the government wields power over families for the so-called good of the children. **RP**

Jonathon Van Maren is an author and pro-life activist who blogs at TheBridgehead.ca from where this is reprinted with permission.

Photo is of "All Saints Indian Residential School, Cree students at their desks with their teacher in a classroom, Lac La Ronge, March 1945" and is cropped from the original in the Library and Archives Canada collection (www.bac-lac.gc.ca).

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RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS: ISN'T THE CHURCH TO BLAME?

Christians have to help our country learn the right lesson

by Jon Dykstra

We've seen at least ten Canadian churches burnt down and others damaged by fire since unmarked graves at two former residential schools became front page news in June. Many children who attended these schools did not live to return to their families, and it's not a leap to think the arsonists are blaming the churches for their deaths. That's the direction Prime Minister Trudeau took too, when he called on the Roman Catholic Church to apologize for their involvement.

However, it's important that we look beyond just the individuals and organizations who are to blame. To learn the right lesson here we need to find out what *worldview* was the root cause. Was the problem that people were acting like Christians, or that they were acting like agents of a secular State? Was this tragedy caused by too much Christianity or too little?

To answer, let's compare and contrast the worldviews that were involved: Christianity, and the secular worldview that has long been prevalent in government.

- **Secularism** is godless and consequently holds that the State is the highest authority, since it is the mightiest (if there is no God, then why wouldn't might make right?). The only limits on its power are self-imposed. The State gives rights and therefore can also take them away. Thus parents have only as much authority as the State grants them, and the State can take away that authority whenever it wishes. Under this worldview education is a State responsibility, if it so decides.
- **Christianity** acknowledges that God is the highest authority, and that He's allotted limited authority to not only the State, but also to parents. God is the source of our rights via His commandments so, for example, his prohibitions against stealing and murder give us our rights to property and life. While the State will often

violate those rights, it can never take them away. God has given parents the primary role in the education of their children (Deut. 4:9, 6:7, 11: 19, Josh. 24:15, Prov. 1:8, 3:1, 15:5, Eph. 6:6, Heb. 12:7-8, etc.).

When the Canadian government took these children away from their parents, it was acting as godless governments have always done, and in a manner consistent with secular

conviction: without restraint, and as if might makes right. However, when professed Christian individuals and groups aided in these abductions they were acting in *opposition* to the Truth they professed, against principles God spells out in His Word. We need to understand then that the horrors perpetuated at these residential schools were not caused by Christianity, but by its lack.

Today our government continues using schooling to indoctrinate children

against the values of their parents. In the State's public system the abduction is no longer physical, but still mental and spiritual, with children taught the government's secular perspective on God, the unborn, sexuality, rights, gender, and more.

As our country continues to look at what happened in these residential schools, God's people need to help their friends and neighbors unpack why it went so horribly wrong. It was wrong, but not according to the secular worldview – that the State disregarded parents is completely in keeping with our current Prime Minister's secular worldview. The only reason these abductions were wrong is because God is in fact King. They were wrong because He has granted parents the responsibility to care for and educate their children, and the State had no authority to take our children away. The lesson Canada needs to learn is to reject godless governance, and acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

Photo by Blake Elliot/Shutterstock.com.



THE DEVIL'S FOOTHOLD

Might these three be kin to Screwtape?

by Christine Farenhorst



Three demons perched on the edge of a big-city skyscraper. They often met at this particular pinnacle at the close of a day swapping stories and sharing experiences that they'd had during the last twenty-four hours. The sun was setting. It was twilight.

"I deceived a mother," one of them named Givin began. He had a sharp voice. It sliced through the faint cacophony of the traffic in the streets below, although the noise of vehicles had diminished somewhat during the Covid-19 pandemic. "I deceived a mother," Givin repeated, 'into thinking she ought to pick up her child whenever he cried.' Waiting for approbation, he eyed his compatriots expectantly as a soaring jet flew overhead.

"How did you deceive her?" the middle demon asked, mildly curious, "Did you put the fear of Covid into her mind, making her believe that crying might evolve into the pestiferous virus?" He guffawed at his own joke.

Smugly glancing sideways and grinning, Givin swung his thin legs against the cement ridge of the tall building. "No, I didn't need to use that ruse," he responded, "and she wasn't that difficult to persuade really. The woman was quite ready to be deceived. I passed doubt and fear through her rather self-absorbed mind, highlighting the exhausted state she would be in if she did not get the

child to quiet down. I called attention to the fact that she needed to get up at six the next morning to drop the child off at her mother-in-law's house before she went off to work."

A car honked in the distance far below the superstructure.

"Following this," Given went on, "I deluded her into thinking that if she did not give in to the crying, she would probably have a Children's Aid official call – someone who would question her ability as mother or care-giver."

The two other demons chortled.

"Admirable tactics," praised the third demon, whose name was Prevaricator, "and ones I have on occasion used myself."

There was a restful pause and then Givin dug his elbow into Tar Heap. "So what did you do today, Tar Heap?"

Tar Heap had a smooth voice, a voice that ran without interruption, an even, regular voice. "Well, I walked through a super-market."

Givin and Prevaricator said "ah" in such a way as to indicate that they knew exactly what he meant.

Tar Heap continued with a rather detached but even flow of words, lazily stretching his arm up to the sky. "It was crowded today with regular Saturday shoppers. You know, the harried parents who hadn't seen much of their children; those who were too busy to do grocer-

ies during the week because of work. Consequently, there were lots of little kids walking about or sitting in shopping carts demanding this and that and everything without being reprimanded."

A pigeon cooed nearby, settling in a corner of the roof. Tar Heap took a stone out of his pocket and flung it at the creature, but he missed. The bird flew off. He continued.

"There was one child, about five years old I think, although it's sometimes difficult to tell now because of the masks they are made to wear, who threw a wonderful tantrum. He stamped his feet, waved his arms about, and hollered loud enough to make the cashiers raise their eyebrows. The father and mother of the little stripling were tremendously embarrassed, so the little devil, if you'll pardon the expression, got his way. He wanted some special name-brand cereal. You know the kind, where the sugar content is sky-high, the kind which will probably send the nipper over the top again as soon as he eats it for breakfast. Other children were watching him and I could see little wheels turning in their heads."

"Well," Givin responded, "that's what we want, isn't it?"

"Yes," Tar Heap agreed, even as he pitched another stone at a bird, "and although on the one hand a scene like that makes me want to explode with satisfaction, on the other hand it irritates me

that parents are making our job so easy these days. I don't feel challenged any longer. Victory comes too easily."

"Quite true, and well-put." The gravel-voiced Prevaricator stuck in his oar: "Yes, quite, quite true. Even Christian folks are just not clamping down on rules that once seemed to be standard. They don't punish consistently. I've seen fathers condemn something one day and not blink an eye the next. And spanking," he rasped on, "spanking is rarely applied to backsides any more. Naturally I rub my hands in glee over that, but I can see where Tar Heap's coming from."

"As a result of years of our lobbying," Tar Heap added, as he lay back contemplating the evening clouds, "the law says that the use of any implement other than a bare hand is illegal, and hitting a child in anger or in retaliation for something a child does is not considered reasonable and is against the law."

Givin and Prevaricator nodded in agreement.

"Christian parents," Tar Heap went on, "are being influenced by that kind of talk. They're afraid of being charged by social welfare people."

"If you'll permit me," Givin said, glancing sideways at Tar Heap of whom he was in awe, "I'm not sure if I totally agree with that."

Tar Heap remained silent and, thus encouraged, Givin went on. "I'm sure that laziness, that vice of vices, has something to do with it as well. Mix laziness together with what people call 'reasoning' and the result is something that tastes like Dr. Spock."

"Ah, Dr. Spock," Prevaricator rubbed his sooty chin in sweet reflection, "the man was the salt of the earth."

Inspired, Givin now stood up, balancing precariously on the edge of the high-rise. In a falsetto voice he emulated a mother talking to her child. "Come on, son, you knew better than to cheat on your test. You don't have to get high marks, but I would just like you to try your best. If you will just promise me that it won't happen again, I won't even mention it to your father."

Tar Heap and Prevaricator clapped their feet with enthusiasm at this ex-

ample. Givin took a bow and sat down again but went on talking. "Most parents think a little 'reasoning' with a child, and I'm talking toddler as well as teenager, will result in correct choices."

Tar Heap dropped a pebble down multiple floors, boisterously yowling as he did so, "Sure, and if stones could fly, right?"

"Remember the fruit?!" Prevaricator added. After the rowdy laughter had died down, Prevaricator cracked his knuckles thoughtfully. "Beating around the bush, shilly-shallying," he said, "is my specialty, as you know. But lately I rarely have to resort to wiles to pervert the truth." He cracked his knuckles again. "The truth is," he went on, "and I use that word lightly, the truth is, many families don't read the Bible any more, let alone trust what it says."

"Life is a bore," Tar Heap yawned, "and I'd give anything for a good day's work in which I knew I'd personally brought

"People are degenerating wonderfully well without our help, and that's a fact," Givin concurred...

several people a few steps closer to damnation."

"People are degenerating wonderfully well without our help, and that's a fact," Givin concurred, "although today I did nudge a man, a church-goer mind you, towards not loving his neighbor by using the Covid fear factor."

His fellow wretches contemplated him quizzically.

"His next-door neighbor had lost the key to her house. She walked over to his place to ask if she could use the phone to call for help. After she rang the bell, he only opened the door a crack, asking her to step back as she spoke." Givin paused for a moment and then continued. "As he stood in the doorway, contemplating whether or not he should help his neighbor, I let him hear a cough in the shadows of his mind; I let him begin to feel feverish; and I let him detect the

onset of a headache. The woman was wearing a mask, but after listening to her problem, the fellow gave in to his fears. He shut the door in her face, refusing to let her use his phone."

"To quote old Solomon," Prevaricator declared, "there is nothing new under the sun, is there? Personally, I really get a kick out of the fact that so many people are hypocritical. You know, they say one thing and do something else. Love your neighbor with your mouth, but when it comes down to action, well..." He stopped short.

"I know what you mean," Givin accorded, "I really like it when I watch families sing hymns and psalms in unison. And then later in the car, or in the rec room, or wherever, they turn on the radio or a CD at full blast to music that would have made old Martin Luther blush."

"He didn't blush that easily," Tar Heap contributed, chuckling as he spoke.

"Well, you know what I mean," Givin replied.

"And I love it," Prevaricator added, "when parents tell their kids to keep the rules just for the rules' sake. I mean a son or daughter says, 'Why do I have to go to church?' And the father replies, 'Because I say so,' or he says, and I love this answer, 'Because there's a service,' and then the father sleeps through the service. Those situations make my job so much easier. It's so much simpler to entice progeny with parents like that away from all those horrid virtues. You guys know the virtues I'm referring to here – virtues like love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, patience, gentleness ..."

He stopped suddenly, his rough voice breaking. "Sorry, guys, I always have a hard time saying..." His voice broke again and Givin and Tar Heap shuddered simultaneously.

Tar Heap let out a long sigh and eyed Prevaricator with something akin to idolatry. "I understand," he soothed, "but look on the bright side. There's not many left, not many at all."

"Not many what, you dummy?!" Prevaricator retorted, unhappy that he had been caught in a moment of emotion.

"Not many competent parents," Tar Heap added, embarrassed that he had expressed himself inadequately. He looked away from Prevaricator to Givin, with whom he felt he was on equal footing, and went on. "I mean, most fathers and mothers, like the couple I watched today at the supermarket, lack the desire to take their kids to the woodshed. What I mean is," he went on rather philosophically, "is that they'd rather suffer flea bites than scratch for fleas."

"And all families," Givin grinned at Tar Heap, "are totally infested with fleas. And having fleas is not sin but a disease. Isn't that the way it's perceived?"

"The way what is perceived?" Prevaricator snorted.

"Fleas," Tar Heap and Givin answered in concert, slapping one another's bony shoulders.

"You're both crazy, and you're not making any sense!" Prevaricator's voice was dangerously prickly. Tar Heap and Givin eyed one another a trifle nervously. Prevaricator was, after all, more powerful and an echelon up on them.

Givin changed the subject. "Most people don't really believe in us anymore and yet here we are, sitting on top of the city."

"Yes, here we are," Tar Heap agreed, "and that lock-down is making our work so much easier. Churches are closed and it's hard for people to empathize, encourage and all that stuff."

"That is why this should be a good year," Givin went on, standing up as he spoke, shading his eyes from the glints of the setting sun. No one spoke for a minute and Givin felt it was time to end the conclave. He stood up. "Well, toadies, time's a-wasting. I'm off."

"Where are you going?" Tar Heap asked.

"To a nearby bar. I understand some youth group is sneaking out to have a

get-together spiced with beer. You doing anything special tonight, Tar Heap?" Givin was poised on the edge of the skyscraper as he quizzed, ready to leave.

"I'm helping a youngster get addicted to some internet game," Tar Heap answered, "not that exciting, but well worth the trouble."

They both glanced down at Prevaricator who was still seated. He responded to their unasked question. "I'm attending a board meeting where a teacher is on trial for suspending a student from class because he used bad language and because the student's computer was found to be riddled with porn. Most of the board is

leery about backing the teacher because the student is the son of one of the school's wealthier patrons."

"Ah!" Both Givin and Tar Heap feigned speechless admiration. He was after all, bigger and louder than they were.

"Meet you here tomorrow, guys?"

"You bet!"

And the sun set on the city. RP

Christine Farenhorst is the author of many books including "Katherina, Katherina," a novel in the time of Martin Luther.



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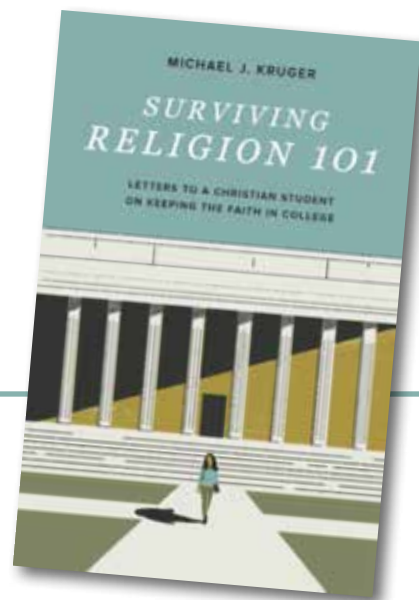


SOLID ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS

Reviewed by Wes Bredenhof

SURVIVING RELIGION 101: LETTERS TO A CHRISTIAN STUDENT ON KEEPING THE FAITH IN COLLEGE

BY MICHAEL J. KRUGER
2021 / 262 PAGES



From time to time I search online for “ex-Can RC.” I’m curious as to why people would leave the Canadian Reformed Churches. What makes people walk away from the church and sometimes the faith in which they were raised? What can I learn from that as a pastor?

Several individuals mention how they were told not to study philosophical or scientific questions, not to think too deeply about things, nor to read widely for themselves outside of the “approved CanRC authors.” Church leaders allegedly told them to check their brains at the door. Well, we all know what some people do when they’re told not to do something. They started reading and studying for themselves and soon discovered that they’d been brainwashed and hoodwinked by their church leaders. The exit came into view.

If we presume these stories are even a little accurate, what might lead pastors or elders to give those kinds of warnings to their flock? Perhaps it’s fear. Maybe they’re afraid that the arguments of unbelievers will persuade their members. Connected with that, possibly it is the worry that we don’t readily have solid counter-arguments so “You just have to believe.”

TRUTH HAS NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF

That kind of approach is counter-productive. We should actually encourage our members to think more deeply, to read more widely, to engage with the big questions posed by unbelieving philosophy and science. Why? Because we ought to have confidence that the truth of God is more powerful than every lie.

However, at the same time, we need

to equip our people with tools to be able to see how, where, and why this is so.

That’s where Michael Kruger’s *Surviving Religion 101* will be an invaluable resource. The author is not only a New Testament professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, but also a father to three children. While he’s written this for them, the book is particularly addressed to his oldest daughter Emma as she began studies at the University of North Carolina. It takes the form of 15 letters to her.

REFORMED ANSWERS TO BIG QUESTIONS

Through these letters, Kruger addresses questions that Christian university students are likely to face in and out of the classroom. Some of those questions:



- My professors are really smart – isn't it more likely that they're right and I'm wrong? (chapter 2)
- I have gay friends who are kind, wonderful, and happy – are we sure that homosexuality is really wrong? (chapter 5)
- There is so much suffering in the world – how could a good God allow such evil? (chapter 7)
- My professor keeps pointing out contradictions in the gospels – can I still trust them? (chapter 11)
- Some parts of the Bible seem morally troubling – how can a book be from God if it advocates oppression or genocide? (chapter 14)
- Sometimes it feels like my faith is slipping away – how do I handle doubts about what I believe? (chapter 15)

In answering all these questions, Kruger takes a Reformed approach. He presents the truth of what God's Word says and then he also explains how the alternative position is untenable.

A PEEK AT WHAT'S INSIDE

In chapter 3, Kruger deals with the question of whether it's legitimate to claim that Christianity is the only right religion. One of the connected counter-claims is that all religions are actually the same. Here's part of how Kruger answers that:

“...there are features about Christianity that make it genuinely distinct from the rest of the world's religions. And the fundamental difference is this: *Christianity is not just another religion about being a good person.* Needless to say, this flies in the face of what most people think about religion. Just consider the very popular television show *The Good Place*, starring Kristen Bell. As strange as it sounds, the show is a comedy about heaven (the good place) and hell (the bad place). On the show, the good place is where good people go, regardless of their

religious beliefs. Whether you're Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim, you go to the good place as long as your good deeds outweigh your bad.

“In contrast, Christianity says something stunning. Something counterintuitive. Something unique. It says that *bad people go to the good place.* Just let that sink in for a moment. Heaven is not for good people but for sinful people forgiven by grace...”

As you'll note, Kruger isn't writing here for scholars. He's done his homework and he's got the endnotes to prove it, but the book is written at a popular level.

CONCLUSION

So, even though it's written for Christian college/university students, *Surviving Religion 101* ought to be read far beyond that audience. Many Christian young people, university-bound or not, will find it accessible. In fact, starting this year, I'm going to make this the book our young people traditionally get when they make public profession of faith. And if it's going to be manageable for them, it should also be for many adults too.

Scripture says in 2 Corinthians 10:4, “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.” We can have that confidence in our Christian faith because the truth of it is established on God and therefore it's objectively true. We have *nothing* to fear from the arguments of unbelievers.

Books like Kruger's *Surviving Religion 101* help us see how Christianity isn't only spiritually comforting, but also well-grounded and eminently reasonable. So, read widely. Read non-Christian authors. Read philosophy and science. But know that the tough questions they raise have been adequately answered by Christian scholars like Michael Kruger. ^{RP}

Dr. Bredenhof has more book recommendations on his blog Yinkahdinay.WordPress.com.



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How and Why the Apostles' Creed came to be

by Chris deBoer

The Apostles' Creed, as we possess it today, was not the first formally adopted or crafted creed. That honor belongs to the Nicene Creed. However, versions or parts of the Apostles' Creed, serving as a baptismal confession, can be traced back to Irenaeus of Lyons (180), Tertullian of Carthage (200), Cyprian of Carthage (250), and Rufinus of Aquilegia (390) among others. The creed of Marcellus of Ancyra from 340 reads:

*I believe in God the Father Almighty
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our
Lord;
Who was born of the Holy Ghost of the
Virgin Mary;
Was crucified under Pontius Pilate and
was buried;
The third day he rose from the dead;
He ascended into heaven; and sitteth on
the right hand of the Father;
From thence he shall come to judge the
quick [living] and the dead.
And in the Holy Ghost;
The Holy Church;
The forgiveness of sins;
The resurrection of the body.*

Despite the various articulations of the rule or standard of faith, there was a lot of unity on the core tenets of Christianity. Eventually, these various forms were merged into the Apostles' Creed.

However, it took longer still for it to be universally adopted. In his *History of the Christian Church (Vol. 1)*, Philip Schaff suggests that:

“if we regard, then, the *present* text of the Apostles' Creed as a complete whole, we can hardly trace it beyond the sixth, and certainly not beyond the close of the fifth century, and its triumph over all the other forms in the Latin Church was not completed till the eighth century, or about the time when the bishops of Rome strenuously endeavored to conform the liturgies of the Western church to the Roman order.”

The Apostles' Creed has as its foundation Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” and the baptismal instruction in Matthew 28:19: “... bap-

tizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” While the Apostles' Creed is sometimes divided into “twelve articles of the Christian faith” (see the sidebar) it would be fair to suggest that there are three main divisions:

*God the Father and our creation
God the Son and our redemption
God the Holy Spirit and our
sanctification
(cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 8)*

A HEDGE AGAINST 3 HERESIES

The Apostles' Creed was articulated, not only as a baptismal confession, but also as a defense of orthodox Christianity. In the early church, Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Montanism were threats to the unity and purity of the church.

1. Gnosticism

In his book, *A History of Christianity (2 Volumes)*, historian Ken Latourette explains that:

“[Gnosticism] regarded pure spirit

as good, but thought of that spirit as having become imprisoned in corrupt matter. Salvation was the freeing of spirit from matter.”

They also had a view of God that is quite convoluted. Latourette notes that, in general, Gnostics “held that there exists a first Principle, the all-Father, unknowable, who is love and who alone can generate other beings” and since love demands companionship, the all-Father brought forth other beings into existence who collaborated to create this world. “The present world was ascribed to a subordinate being, the Demiurge, who was identified with the God of the Old Testament.”

2. Marcionism

Marcion, influenced by, but distinct from Gnostics, believed that the God of the Old Testament and of the Jews was an evil God. As Latourette his views this way: “Good men, he held, were those who yielded obedience to the law of the Demiurge, but they, too, were the creation of that evil God.”

He believed that there was a second God, one of love who, seeing the suffering of men in this evil world, sought to rescue them. His love was one of true grace because he owed these creatures nothing because they were not his, but belonged to the evil God. This God of Love revealed himself as Christ and could not have been born of flesh, born as a creature of the Demiurge, but only seemed to have a body; he only appeared as a man.

3. Montanism

Montanism was quite distinct from Gnosticism and Marcionism. While Gnosticism spoke about secret knowledge, Montanism suggested a new era of revelation. Montanus, sometime between 156 A.D. and 172 A.D., encouraged greater separation of the church from the culture of the age. While this could have been solid instruction, it was accompanied by his belief that he and his two prophetesses were speaking in tongues and prophesying in the name of the Spirit,

Marcion believed that there was a second God, one of love who, seeing the suffering of men in this evil world, sought to rescue them.

focusing on the early and imminent return of Christ. Bruce Shelley, in his book, *Church History in Plain Language*, notes:

“Montanus’ doctrine of the new age of the Spirit suggested that the Old Testament was past, and that the Christian period centering in Jesus has ended. The prophet claimed the right to push Christ and the apostolic message into the background. The fresh music of the Spirit could override important notes of the Christian gospel; Christ was no longer central. In the name of the Spirit, Montanus denied that God’s decisive and normative revelation had occurred in Jesus Christ.”

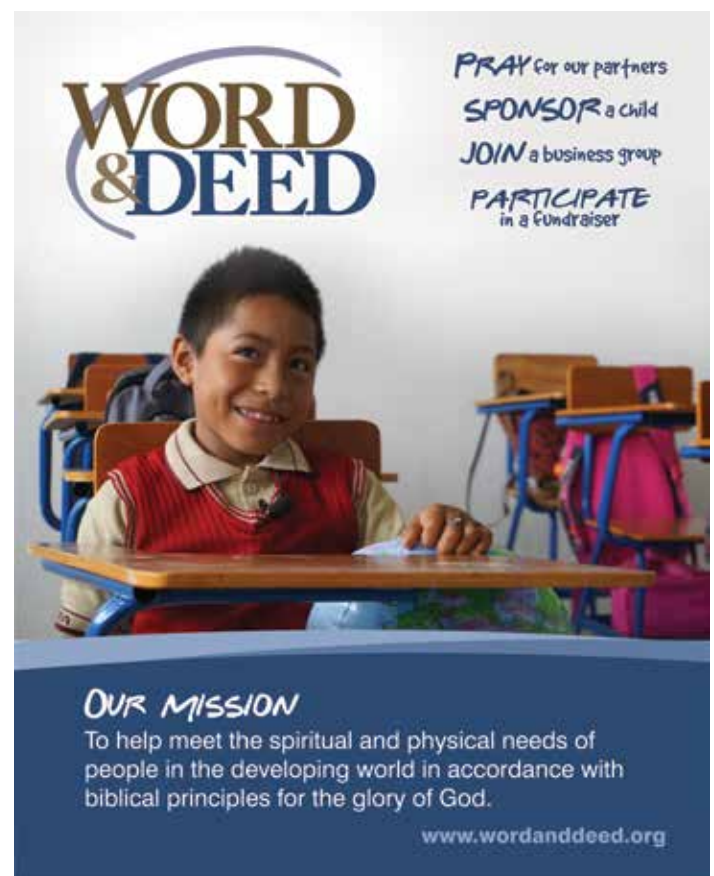
AFTER ERROR, CLARITY

These three early heresies helped the church to shape the growing articulation of orthodoxy. It also drove the church to work on discovering which bible books should be canonical. For example, the Montanists wanted nothing to do with the Old Testament, had very little good to say about New Testament books written

for Jews (e.g., Matthew, Hebrews), and really focused on Paul’s more substantial letters. Montanus’ canon would have been significantly smaller than what we have presently, to be sure.

When the church formulated and adopted the Apostles’ Creed, they confessed, contrary to the Gnostics and the Marcionites that God, the Father Almighty, is the same God who created all things, both physical and spiritual. They also confessed that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. In this, they again made it clear that there is nothing inherently evil in material things.

They also make it clear that there is no



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division between God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – they are not working at odds with each other. While the unity and diversity of the one God in Three Persons is implied in this creed, it is not explicitly expressed.


Schaff shares that the creed was:

“explained to catechumens at the last stage of their preparation, professed by them at their baptism, often repeated, with the Lord’s Prayer, for private devotion, and afterwards introduced into public service.”

As a means to make a profession of faith before baptism, Schaff also explains that some early versions of the creed were interrogative, that is, the three main sections were formed as questions. For example, “do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?” The response: “I believe” or in Latin, “*Credo*.”

THE CREED TODAY

The Apostles’ Creed remains an integral part of many Reformed catechisms as well. Working through the Apostles Creed today remains valuable for growing in knowledge and understanding of God’s holy Word. The confession that God is the Father Almighty speaks to His sovereign power, providence, and covenantal love. The creed’s commentary on Christ speaks to His nature as God and man, His victory over death and the grave, His ascension, His return, and His coming judgment. The creed speaks about the work of the Holy Spirit as He is at work in the Church, the Bride of Christ: those who live as a communion of saints whose sins are forgiven, who will be raised on the last day, and are promised eternal life!

The Church has been richly blessed by the formulation and the preservation of the Apostles Creed. Perhaps it makes sense to recite it daily during family devotions, or when you get up in the morning. Keeping this creed in our hearts and at the forefront of our minds may assist in equipping us for remembering that every day serves as an opportunity for serving the Lord! 

In Episode 15 of his Focal Point podcast, Dr. deBoer discusses some points about the most controversial phrase of the Apostles’ Creed, “He descended into hell.” You can find that episode at [YouTube.com/c/ReformedPerspective](https://www.youtube.com/c/ReformedPerspective).



When they thought the Apostles had written their creed...

– Chris de Boer

It is interesting to note that there has long been a belief that the Apostles’ Creed was written by the apostles of Christ on or around Pentecost with each making a specific contribution. That’s why it has also been known as the 12 Articles of the Christian Faith. While there is little evidence that the Apostles had any such role, in his *Divine Tragedy*, Longfellow includes an epilogue outlining each apostle’s traditional contribution to the creed. We include it here, just for interest’s sake.

Peter: I believe in God the Father Almighty;

John: Maker of Heaven and Earth;

James: And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;

Andrew: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;

Philip: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;

Thomas: And the third day he rose again from the dead;

Bartholomew: He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty;

Matthew: From thence he shall come to judge the quick [living] and the dead.

James, the son of Alphaeus: I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church

Simon [the Zealot]: The communion of Saints; the forgiveness of sins;

Jude: The resurrection of the body;

Matthias: And the Life Everlasting.

NEITHER POVERTY NOR RICHES?

Making God our priority in prayer

by Andrew J. Pol

People prefer to be rich rather than poor. It's therefore striking that the Bible gives us a record of this prayer in Prov. 30:8:

...give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that is needful for me.

Agur, the person expressing this, isn't asking for much: just an allotment of bread, a fixed portion. He leaves it up to the LORD God to establish that portion.

A HUMBLE PETITION

This Old Testament prayer is echoed in the petition that Jesus taught his disciples: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). Does this idea, especially seen against its more explicit setting in the Old Testament, make you feel uncomfortable? Do you find it difficult or easy to pray like this? Or don't you pray about your daily needs at all?

What's the further biblical context of this request? Although the LORD may give us earthly riches, he teaches us to focus not on them, but on his Kingdom. God is our Father, the King of his people. He lovingly directs our lives and calls us to respond to him by relying on him to provide for us while serving him gladly (Ps 100:2).

Pray confidently to our all-powerful and merciful Father for daily food! By praying in this way, you oppose the spirit of the world. You reject the idea that people are self-sufficient. People often think they can take care of themselves. They cherish the illusion that they are in full control of events. But God gives sunshine and rain. Without his blessings, crops will fail and ultimately all endeavours will amount to nothing that has eternal value.

It's a human inclination to want an abundance of good things. However, understanding our calling to live for God leads to a reorientation of our lives. Through Jesus Christ, God gives the means we need to live for him. We learn to pray for what we need to live for him in a fruitful way.

A BOLD PETITION

This is also the thrust of the prayer of Jabez in 1 Chr 4:9-10, a petition of a man whose name is linked to the pain of his mother at childbirth. Although Scripture describes such pain as one of the consequences of sin, this doesn't exclude the possibility of blessings. Jabez prayed to "the God of Israel," asking for the blessing of enlarged borders, meaning more territory.




Was this a greedy petition? No, it was in harmony with the LORD's promise of land for his people to provide for their needs. Jabez asked for more territory within the context of fellowship with the LORD, praying "that your hand might be with me." He also prayed, "keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain." This is at root not unlike the petition "deliver us from evil" (Mt 6:13) in the Lord's Prayer.

So, we pray for and look for opportunities to serve our God fruitfully with what he provides. The important thing is to leave it up to him how he will honour such petitions as we seek to use the gifts he gives us to glorify him.

A LIBERATING PETITION

The LORD determines the potential and the limits of our abilities. Knowing and acknowledging this can be a liberating experience. Don't take on too many responsibilities, trying to do more than you can actually oversee. Whatever you do, keep in mind what your motives are. Are you doing this to serve God, or just to get even further ahead financially?

There is more to life than economic gains. Do you have a family? You have more than just financial responsibilities toward them. We live in a world that is affected by man's fall into sin. That means there are spiritual challenges which we will have to face. Lay your motives and goals before the LORD God in prayer. That makes a big difference. It will lead to peace. The condition is, however, to trust in God and ask him for our daily bread. As long as he has a task for us in this life, he will provide us with what we need. 

Dr. Pol is a retired minister of the Carman West Canadian Reformed Church in Manitoba.

by Jon Dykstra

THE FIGHTING PRINCE OF DONEGAL

DRAMA / FAMILY
1966 / 110 MINUTES
RATING: 7/10



Halfway through *The Fighting Prince*, I figured out why I was enjoying this so much, and why it was also so familiar: this is Robin Hood, but with Irish accents!

Irish prince Hugh O'Donnell takes the Robin role as leader of a rebellious and yet righteous band, alpha males every one of them, but willing to unite under this one man. Like Robin, Hugh's dispute isn't so much with the English crown, as with those who have usurped the crown's power. As the newly installed Prince of Donegal, Hugh offers a treaty to the English Queen, but the local English representative, Captain Leeds – in a Prince John/Sheriff of Nottingham role – won't even pass it along. Instead, he imprisons Hugh. And when Hugh escapes (he's a clever one... just like a certain famous bowman) Leeds occupies the O'Donnell castle and holds Hugh's mother hostage. Holding a man's mom hostage? How low can you go? Of course, that only sets the scene for the hero to make his triumphant return.

The only flaw is a slow start, but give it ten minutes and everyone will enjoy it. Or at least, everyone 10 and up – though the fighting is bloodless, there are people getting hit by arrows and such, making this a bit much for the youngest children.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

ROMANCE/COMEDY
2003 / 104 MIN
RATING: 8/10



When a book is adapted for the screen, readers want it to be as close to the book as possible. So let's begin this review with a heads up: that did not happen here.

The central plot remains the same – these are women "in need of a husband" – but the setting has been updated to the modern-day USA, with five girlfriends all sharing a house just off-campus. Other departures include how the first love interest, Charles Bingley, came by his wealth: selling classical music CDs for dogs, and marketing them via late-night TV infomercials. And he drives a motor scooter. Oh, and Mr. Collins' proposal now has him make the compelling argument: "Elizabeth, we've been commanded to multiply and replenish the earth."

So if you aren't up for a light, silly treatment of your favorite book, this is not for you. That said, I do think it is for most everyone else. And if you've ever wished that someone today could write something like *Pride and Prejudice*, well, this is something like it indeed. This version also adds an element glaringly absent from the book and every film version: car chases!

There are so many *Pride and Prejudice* films that if you want to rent this online you should search for the title along with the year.

TIME CHANGER

DRAMA / SCI-FI / FAMILY
2002 / 99 MINUTES
RATING: 7/10



In the year 1890, seminary professor Russell Carlisle proposes teaching morality to the masses but without making mention of God. He reasons that even if people don't become Christians it would be a good thing if they were at least taught that stealing was wrong.

If that sounds familiar, that's the point. Director Rich Christiano, in his boldest and best film, is taking on the Christian trend of publicly defend God's Truth – about the unborn, marriage, sexuality, gender and more – but without mentioning God Himself. While we'll have to wait a decade or two to see how that approach plays out for us, Professor Carlisle gets his feedback right away – a colleague uses a time machine to send the professor one hundred years into the future. Upon arriving in present-day America, Carlisle sees that morals founded on anything but God have no foundation at all, and are just dismissed as opinion.

From simply an entertainment perspective, this gets a 7, but its deeper point means it is a cut above other Christian fare. There are a few too many philosophical discussions to keep the attention of younger kids, but for mid to older teens, it could be a fantastic one to watch and discuss with parents.

A BEAR NAMED WINNIE

DRAMA

2004 / 90 MINUTES

RATING: 7/10



This is the (mostly) true story of Winnie, the bear that inspired A.A. Milne's much-loved *Winnie the Pooh* books. While she lived most of her life in the London Zoo, many don't realize that Winnie was a Canadian bear. Her story began with a group of veterinarians enlisted in the Canadian army and riding the rails across the country on their way to the front lines of the First World War. Aside from the bear, the star of this piece is Harry Colebourn, and we're introduced to him just as he wins a sizeable pot of money from his fellow soldiers. He's not rich for long, as at the next stop, in White River, Ontario, he sees a cub chained up. Colebourn uses his money to buy the bear. His regiment adopts the cub and names her Winnipeg – Winnie for short – after Colebourn's hometown. From then on we get to see both Winnie's story and the story of this veterinarian regiment.

The only caution would be that this is *not* for little children. While it's tame by adult standards, a quirky veterinarian is killed, which would shock kids expecting a G-rated Pooh story. So this slice of history is only for mom, dad, and older kids.



MEET JOHN DOE

DRAMA 1941 / 122 MIN

RATING: 7/10

Set in the depression, the story revolves around a reporter, her editor, and a derelict, and the politician who is trying to take advantage of them all. When a round of layoffs at *The New Bulletin* leaves columnist Ann Mitchell out of a job, she decides to go out with a bang. For her last column, she submits a letter from an unemployed "John Doe" who is threatening to jump off the roof of City Hall on Christmas Eve to protest

society's degeneration.

The letter is actually a fake, concocted by Mitchell to express her own disgust, but it causes a sensation. Readers flood the newspaper with letters, some of them marriage proposals from concerned women, some job offers, but all wanting to know, "Who is John Doe?" When Mitchell's editor finds out the letter is a fraud, he hires her back to prevent the public from learning about the deception. Then he takes things one step further, hiring a derelict former baseball player (played by Gary Cooper) to take on the role of Doe.

What starts as a deception soon takes a positive turn. When the paper's new "John Doe" begins making public appearances his simple speeches encourage a helping spirit among his listeners. John Doe Societies spring up spontaneously to enable neighbors to help one another. Doe becomes the leader of a huge, helpful movement... that's built on the lie of his false identity. Things come to a climax when a conniving politician threatens to expose this lie, unless Doe endorses him.

Some have called this a Christian film, even though it came out of Hollywood. That claim is made because God's second greatest commandment, "To love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31) undergirds the whole movie. It's worth noting then, and sharing with any others in the family watching it with you, that the film largely divorces the Second Greatest Commandment from the First. We hardly hear about God, and the need to "love the Lord our God with all your heart, soul, and mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). That makes this more humanist than Christian – Man-focused, rather than God-focused – but there is one scene which shifts it in a Godward direction, at least in part. To avoid spoilers I'll share the words, but not tell you the speaker or context:

"You don't have to die to keep the John Doe idea alive. Somebody already died for that once, the first John Doe, and He's kept that idea alive for nearly 2000 years. It's He who kept it alive in them [the people of Earth]. And, He'll go on keeping it alive forever and always."

A powerful profession, but isn't it curious how Jesus is not actually mentioned by name? And this reference also doesn't talk about the real reason Jesus came, and what He accomplished. It presents Him more as an example to follow than as the One who suffered and died to take away the punishment for our sins. So... this is a near miss, but not really a Christian film.

That said, it is a film Christians can really enjoy, understanding the truth of what is said here, and being able to fill in for ourselves what was not.

At just over 2 hours long, the pacing is slower than us modern folk are used to. But just be sure to make a little extra popcorn: this is a classic for a reason. Watch it for free at ReformedPerspective.ca.

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