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Anxiety and the Triumph of Hope

Reformed **PERSPECTIVE**

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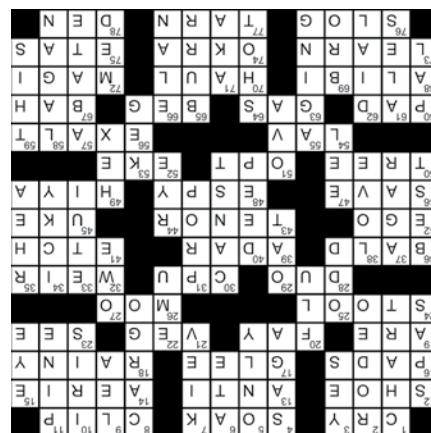
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READERS' RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR,

Re: Marty VanDriel's article in the last issue, "Home ownership for Christians," the Portuguese and Italian tradition is to have a wedding and everyone gives cash. This is expected. I'm not sure the amount now, but 15 - 20 years ago the amount was \$300 per person.

My Portuguese friend got married and invited 350 to the wedding. They each gave \$300 so they got \$115,000 on their wedding night. The purpose is so they can buy a house. That's what they did. They bought a house for \$45,000 and rented it out. They took \$60,000 and that became a 25% down payment on a house they bought for \$240,000. That home is now worth \$1.3 to \$1.5 million.

The catch is that every time they get invited to a wedding for the rest of their lives they must give \$300 each. And the cycle repeats and repeats. Most of us can do without \$300 from time to time, but a lump sum of \$115,000 is a game changer. It's likely much more now, given that was a while ago. Perhaps our church community could learn from this?

ANSON SIKKEMA
HAMILTON, ON



DEAR EDITOR,

Re: Marty VanDriel's article in the last issue, "Home ownership for Christians," the math in one paragraph was misleading:

"At the same time, the earning power of workers has grown exponentially. The average salary of a Canadian wage earner increased 2.45% each year the past 20 years... This is slightly lower than the 3.8% overall inflation rate in Canada over the same time period, but not outrageously different."

What is important is not earning power, but purchasing power. The statistics presented here indicate that wages have increased 62% over 20 years, while prices have increased 108%. The average worker today has just 77% of the purchasing power he had 20 years ago. This is significantly lower, not "slightly lower."

PETER ENGLEFIELD
EDMONTON, AB

DEAR EDITOR,

Generally speaking, I found Dr. John Byl's "Big Bang Christianity" (May/June 2023) article on cosmology very good. However, I do have a few comments regarding his use of the phrase "natural laws," which I think is a problematic term.

Why? Because the "natural" is commonly understood as that part of reality that is distinct from the supernatural. The "natural" is then understood to exist "in and of itself" whereas the supernatural in turn conveys its dependence upon God. And so we have in effect structured a *dualism* positing the "natural" over against the "supernatural" (commonly referred to as miracles). But miracles are no more supernatural than the laws of nature.

The point that needs to be emphasized is that *all* creational law, including what is commonly referred to as "natural law," is in reality an expression of God's will (Rev. 4:11). The fact that H₂O constitutes "water" is not a "natural law" but an expression of God's will. And God *wills* that union even although hydrogen and oxygen *also* exist separately. Our young people should come to realize this fact, that "miraculous" does not stand in opposition to "natural." Both are an expression of God's will. And God, although He is faithful to the laws of His creation, can change those laws to reflect the incursion of sin into His good creation. As one example of a foundational change think of the "coming into being" of *death*.

I think it would be very helpful, in order to come to a better understanding of created reality, if students in our Christian school system come to grips with the biblical idea of *law*. We must help them understand the relationship between what is called "natural law" and the "miraculous."

JOHN HULTINK
ST. CATHERINES, ONTARIO



YOU SPOKE AND WE LISTENED!

We asked for feedback on our crossword last issue, about what you thought about it difficulty-wise and whether we should keep it. Thankfully so many of you wrote, you made that decision easy. Our puzzle-master, Jeff Dykstra, also appreciated your feedback, and is very happy to continue creating. We learned that the puzzle was oftentimes a group activity, and sometimes across the generations. Readers shared:

- "...a good, put-the-phone-away activity on Sunday evening with my husband."
- "My 15-year-old granddaughter and I enjoy doing the crosswords."
- "I and my children enjoy it very much and would love to see it stay."
- "...it has sentimental value as I remember solving the crosswords with my dad on Sundays between services."
- "It's a fun activity to do as a couple and we find that between the two of us, we know just enough to answer all the clues and figure it out together."
- "I enjoy the crosswords in each edition and quite often will also include the family with finding answers!"
- "I love doing them with my daughters. My younger daughter loves to look up the texts and is able to answer the clues that way. My older daughter is able to answer many of the other clues."



LEARNING TO BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING

by Mark Penninga

"Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with
thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the
peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will
guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

- PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

When does care and concern cross a line and become a problem?

I found the answer to this question the hard way: a painful and confusing burn-out about six years ago, followed by years of learning, counseling, and slow change. My journey isn't over yet, but I now see how I could have prevented much pain if I had truly understood, and repented from, my misguided response to worries, fears, and anxieties prior to that burnout.

Knowing just how prevalent anxiety has become, also among Christians, I'm sharing my story here with the hope that it will help others in their walk with the LORD.

WORRY, CARE, AND CONCERN

In a two-part podcast on the topic, biblical counselor Dr. Greg Gifford explains that the Bible uses the same Greek word in three different ways to describe anxiety. One sort is warned against, but in the other two instances a form of anxiousness is encouraged.

So, first, in Matthew 6, we read Jesus warning us:

"...do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Then in 1 Corinthians 12:25, Paul explains that God composed the body with many different parts so that the members "may have the same *care* for one another." The word he uses here for "care" is the same that is translated as "anxious" in Matthew 6 – in other words we are being encouraged to be "anxious for one another."

In Philippians 2:20, Paul uses this word again, but in another context. Writing from prison, Paul shares with the Philippians that he will be sending Timothy to check in on them "for I have no one like him, who will be genuinely *concerned* for your welfare." It is clear from this passage and more like it, that there can also be a godly form of concern for others. This makes sense to our everyday experience as we walk alongside our loved ones through health concerns and other trials.

We see in these two passages that caring is important and concern can be appropriate. So, when does a line get crossed from the caring that is encouraged to the anxiety that should be avoided?

CONFUSED AND HUMBLED

They didn't teach me this line in school, and I was slow to learn it in the school of life.

Shortly after I was married, my responsibilities increased quickly. In a span of ten or twelve years, I went from looking after myself to being responsible for a family of eight. And I went from being a student, to starting and overseeing an organization with about fifteen staff, spread across the country. My interest and care for political developments in Canada turned into a responsibility to provide faithful leadership to the largest Christian political advocacy organization in the country. At the same time, my wife and I took up a host of extra-curricular roles in our church, school, and community, from serving on boards to teaching catechism. And we were also trying to turn a wild piece of land and its dilapidated house into a good family home and investment opportunity. I did these things because I cared, and I had concerns. Each facet on its own was well worth caring for, or being concerned about.

We held things together quite well until a family tragedy came unexpectedly. Amidst the grieving, my wife was expecting another child, and I had concerns about the delivery in light of how previous ones went. Through all of this, I felt great pressure to press on as a leader at work, in the home, and on various other files.

But as hard as I tried, as the days ticked closer to the delivery day, God humbled me by shutting down my body. My muscles tightened up to the point where I had a hard time walking the 30 steps to my office. I was nauseous every day, my body twitched, my eyes hurt, my vision declined, my face and head became numb, it hurt to stand and it hurt to sit. I got to the point where I couldn't face another day of work.

If you asked me at that time if I felt





An ungodly anxiety is like a cul-de-sac where traffic stops and stays – all my cares and concerns terminate on me. Dr. Gifford contrasts this with a thoroughfare. Instead of our cares and concerns terminating with us in the cul-de-sac, we take them to the LORD and trust Him with them.

anxious, I likely would have brushed it off. Anxiety wasn't really relevant to me, or so I thought. I figured that I had some inconvenient health issues. When my doctor had tests done and told me that I needed to take a break from stress, I was confused. And when I asked for a break from work, my board and colleagues seemed no less confused. It was humbling to go from being the leader, always looking out for others, to not being able to report for duty. And it was also humbling to not really understand what was happening, and what it would take to get back to "normal."

Although I was back at work relatively soon and did my best to carry on with all my regular duties, it took me more than five years, and plenty of stumbles, to begin to understand the problem from a physical, emotional, and spiritual perspective. The change has also been slow and will likely be a life-long jour-

ney. I'm very grateful for a loving family who walked this journey with me, giving regular encouragement, and grateful as well for a good Christian counselor.

Clearly a line had been crossed from godly caring and concern to something harmful. But I didn't understand it. Wasn't I supposed to care and be concerned?

THE CUL-DE-SAC OF UNGODLY ANXIETY

On his "Transformed" podcast Dr. Gifford explains that Scripture makes it plain that it is possible to care and be concerned in an ungodly way. We do that when we aren't truly entrusting our cares and concerns to the LORD, the only One who can truly do something about them.

He goes further and explains:

"this isn't a just a disorder. This isn't a physiological issue of my body. Anxiety

is connected to my trust and faith in the Lord. And Jesus clearly identifies anxiety as being wrong and sinful."

Here Dr. Gifford is referencing Matthew 6 where Jesus urges His people "do not worry about your life." He also references Philippians 4 where we are told to "be anxious for nothing."

I should note here that although Dr. Gifford calls this kind of anxiety sinful, other biblical counselors respectfully disagree. Edward T. Welch devotes an entire article to the topic, entitled, "Fear is not sin," explaining from Scripture that anxiety, like grief, isn't itself sinful. Although Jesus uses an imperative form in Matthew 6 – He tells us "do not be anxious" – it isn't meant to be a command. We do the same thing when we tell a child "don't be afraid," which is meant as an encouragement, not an order. Welch believes Jesus is offering comfort, similar to when He

says “do not weep.” So the fact that we struggle with anxiety itself isn’t a sin, according to Welch. Rather, what matters is what we do with it.

Although Welch makes a valid point, which can be comforting to Christians who struggle with chronic anxiety, the added nuance of definitions doesn’t take away from Dr. Gifford’s important explanation of where I, and many others, go wrong with our anxiety.

Gifford contrasts two kinds of roads: a cul-de-sac and a thoroughfare (a main road that passes on through a town or city).

An ungodly anxiety is like a cul-de-sac where traffic stops and stays – all my cares and concerns terminate on me. “How am I going to fix this? What am I going to do about it? Okay, I need to save more. I need to work harder. I need to get up earlier. I need to sleep less. I can do this.” Those that struggle with anxiety often also struggle with the desire to be in control. That is true for me too.

But how is this a faith issue? In answer, Dr. Gifford explains the difference between a formal confession and a functional confession.

“Formally we would say, ‘I know God is in control.’ Formally, I know that prayer is important in Scripture. But functionally, I’m in control. When I’m trying to discern the difference between a concern and anxiety, I have to be able to evaluate all of these cares and concerns terminating with me, and that’s why I’m worried.”

Not every type of anxiety is a faith issue or something to be repented of. God created us good, and that includes the functions of our bodies that make us aware of, and respond to, stress. There is a time for adrenaline to rule (like running away from a bear)! There are also physiological disorders that aren’t a result of choices being made. Anxiety can also result from experiencing trauma in the past. And there is a general brokenness in creation as a result of sin which makes it difficult for us humans to respond to challenges the way we want to (as Paul says in Romans 7 “for what I want to do

I do not do, but what I hate I do”). So I’m not suggesting that all those who struggle with anxiety ought to repent and have a change of heart.

However, I also believe that there are many more like me, who are guilty of trying to carry cares and concerns that God never intended us to carry.

THOROUGHFARE TO GOD

Dr. Gifford contrasts this cul-de-sac of ungodly anxiety with a thoroughfare. Instead of our cares and concerns terminating with us in the cul-de-sac, we take them to the LORD and trust Him with them. This is exemplified in 1 Peter 5:6-7:

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

If we compare our concerns and cares to a big stone that we are rolling, this passage calls us to roll that stone over to the LORD, realizing that we aren’t able to carry the weight ourselves. In contrast, He is the good, wise, and all-powerful God who can do this.

So the line between care, concern, and ungodly anxiety isn’t actually about caring too much or being concerned too much. Rather it is the difference between trusting ourselves to deal with the weight, or bringing it straight to the LORD, who alone is able to carry it. It isn’t enough to confess this. It has to be done daily.

If we aren’t quite convinced yet, take to heart these words from Dr. Gifford:

“When you have cares and concerns you bring them to the Lord, ultimately. But when you have anxiety, you *are* the Lord ultimately. You functionally take his place and become God. You become the Sustainer and you become the one that is providentially working all things according to your end. And it is an overwhelming task.

“No wonder why some of us are run through, because we are riddled with anxiety. That’s what it’s like when we try to do God’s job. We try to be God and we can’t, and we’re overwhelmed. You can actually have panic attacks

where it feels like you’re suffocating, because of too much anxiety in your life. It feels like you’re having a heart attack. What is that saying? It’s even your own body saying that you can’t be God. And it’s not always an exciting way for your body to tell you that. You can’t be God. If you’ve ever experienced severe anxiety, and you started to have chest pains, it’s a reminder that you’re finite, and God is infinite. You’re small, and God is big.”

I’m thankful that God literally stopped me in my tracks, not allowing me to live the way I was any longer. The physical symptoms hurt, and that stage was humbling, but it was what I needed to prompt lasting change.

OPPOSITE AND EQUALLY BAD

As with many challenges in life, it is easy to swing too far in opposite directions. In response to anxiety, Dr. Gifford identifies two extremes.

The first is to legitimize our anxiety, telling ourselves that our worries are valid because we really are the center of the universe, we really are God. “I have to do everything. If I don’t do it, no one else is going to do it for me. I have to grind in this season of life.”

In response to this we can take to heart God’s Word in 1 Corinthians 4, where we are reminded that everything we have is a gift from the LORD. There is nothing we have that we didn’t receive. So none of us can say that it is really up to me. God is the one who is in charge, and He is the one who blesses. If we believe this, our actions need to prove that we trust Him to care and provide.

The other extreme is to simply not care, or do what we can to numb the pain. When the pressure goes up, it is tempting to hide, escape, or distract ourselves. We do this with vacations, reading, TV, hobbies, shopping, playing video games, or maybe even substance abuse.

Yet we know from Scripture that the Christian life isn’t about being care-free and happy. Being a faithful spouse, sibling, parent, colleague, boss, employee, elder, deacon, church member, and citizen will expose us to some troubling

situations. We need to be present, to care, and to act. Going back to Dr. Gifford's analogy of the cul-de-sac and thoroughfare, many of us would prefer to not even be next to a road at all. We would rather be living off-grid, in the peaceful countryside, looking after ourselves and a few others that we are comfortable with. Yet this ignores the great command to love our neighbor as ourself.

So how do we care and be concerned without becoming a cul-de-sac?

SOME REMEDIES FOR ANXIETY

In the height of my burnout, the first help I received was very practical and simple. My doctor told me to take two Tylenol Arthritis pills every certain number of hours. Tylenol? It wasn't what I expected. Yet it did wonders for relaxing my muscles. And some progress in the right direction was a huge encouragement. Our bodies are complex, and self-diagnosing through the internet will likely cause more anxiety than help. I recommend starting with a visit to a trustworthy doctor.

The second stage of help came from a different kind of prescription – to the AnxietyCentre.com website. The wealth of information behind the paywall was incredibly helpful and also encouraging to me. I learned there that anxiety is something that is fully treatable. I also saw how the symptoms I had were all directly related to anxiety. This gave me hope that change was possible.

But learning alone isn't always enough to bring the change that is necessary. It was quite a long time later, after seeing recurrences of symptoms, that I knew I needed more help and signed up for counseling with a psychotherapist. It is hard to over-state the help that came from talking with someone who both understood anxiety and was willing to journey with me as I tried to overcome it.

In the following years, I grew in understanding through more books and resources. But I also slowly started to see the spiritual roots to my struggles with anxiety. As long as I was going to be in this world, it was evident that I would have to deal with stress. Although I went to my LORD through this journey, I

wasn't experiencing the relief that Jesus says is possible when transferring my burdens to Him. Why? With time, I began to see that I was taking myself far too seriously, and not taking God seriously enough. Time and again I was living as a cul-de-sac instead of a thoroughfare.

A FOUR-STEP APPROACH

Now, over six years after being humbled by burnout, I can testify to the truth and importance of Dr. Gifford's four-step remedy for anxiety. As helpful as medication, counseling, books, and breaks may be, I need to start with getting things right with God.

1. Repent

The first step, says Dr. Gifford, is to repent. That sounds harsh, but over time I recognized the truth of this in my own situation (though as I mentioned earlier, there are some forms of anxiety that are not sin issues and that need a different response). "This is a sin issue, not an illness, not a disease, not a personal tendency that I have." How often do we hear this, even in the church? It wasn't until quite recently in my journey that someone had the courage to gently rebuke me about how I was dealing with my cares and worries.

"I don't repent of an illness. I don't repent of the flu. I repent of sins in my life and so should you" shares Dr. Gifford. Although this may sound harsh, it actually brings great hope and encouragement. There is a remedy to sin – Jesus Christ has made full atonement.

"Step one is that I repent of anxiety, I go to the Lord and say something like, Lord, please forgive me for worrying when You are in complete control. Please forgive me for thinking that I can do Your job, and I can't, would You help me to exhibit greater trust in You?"

2. Remember the Nature of God

The next step, says Dr. Gifford, involves taking to heart the nature of God. In Matthew 6, Jesus doesn't stop after telling us not to be anxious or worry. He tells us

to look at the birds of the air. They don't sow or reap or gather in barns, yet our heavenly Father feeds them. He also tells us to look at the lilies in the field, and how they grow. "If God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

The point is that when we understand that God is all knowing and all powerful, our anxiety will slowly go away.

"There's a sense in which I don't try to take control of something when I know someone more competent than myself is in control. I know that they got it. And I'm actually thankful they got it. I don't have to worry about it."

Dr. Gifford drives the point home:

"When you understand the character of God, it crushes your anxiety, it suffocates it in the sense that you say, well, I know God's good. And I know God's in control. And I know God knows. He's omniscient. Well, then why in the world would I ever try to step in and take His place?"

3. Take Our Cares to God

Step three is to take our cares to God so that they don't become anxieties. In 1 Peter 5, we are told to cast all our anxieties on Him, for He cares for us. The simple truth is that when we have anxiety, it is because we are trying to do the carrying ourselves. It stops with us – like the cul-de-sac.

Taking our cares to God involves pinpointing what exactly we are anxious about. What is keeping us up at night? It will be different things for different people. Perhaps a loved one, or a biblical counselor, can help us put a finger on what it is. Then we can ask what it means to entrust this thing to the LORD, and what I need to hear from Him.

"Entrust it to the LORD" is something we hear all the time, but what does it look like? I regularly prayed about the things I was anxious about. But simply telling God about it isn't the same as entrusting our cares to Him. If I hire someone to

look after my yard maintenance, I can tell them what I'm hoping they will do. But then I also need to get out of their way and let them do the job. If I fire up my lawn mower as soon as the grass looks like it needs a trim, I'm not entrusting the work to the person I hired. And if I look out the window and inspect the grass every day, I'm not benefiting a whole lot from hiring someone else to do the job. I need to give the care over completely, and stop wasting my time and energy on it.

4. Be Faithful to Our Responsibilities

The final step is to be faithful to our responsibilities. This involves articulating what exactly is our responsibility, and what is the LORD's. For example, it is my responsibility to pay my mortgage payment. That means I should not spend money on a holiday if that results in not being able to make my mortgage payment.

The issue for many of us is that we don't acknowledge that there are many things we can't control and aren't responsible for. "I can't control the future of my health. I'm not that powerful. I can't control the spiritual walk of my children. I am not that powerful. I can't control the winds and the finances of my employer, I am not that powerful."

In contrast I can "be a good steward of my body to the best of my ability, I can be a positive spiritual influence in my children's lives. But I have to trust the Lord to be the one to do the work. I can be a hard worker at my job and attempt to be valuable to them, but I can't control if they want to keep me or want to jettison me."

STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

Taking these four steps to heart and changing our daily walk isn't easy, but neither is it complicated. For many of us, we have developed bad habits for dealing with our cares and concerns, and this occurred over many years. Changing it won't happen in an instant. But, unlike many things in life, moving away from anxiety is possible, in God's strength and by His grace.

I'll take this a step further. Not only is

it possible – in God's strength – to leave the cul-de-sac of ungodly anxiety behind, it is also a responsibility that we can help each other with. And we aren't going to make it any easier if we make anxiety our identity. Yes, some of us are more predisposed to worry, and yes it can definitely have consequences on our health. But if we take Jesus at His word, we will also acknowledge that there are some forms of anxiety that need to be repented of.

This doesn't mean that we should harshly rebuke someone struggling with ungodly anxiety. On the contrary, this calls for love and care. When God tells us over and over again to not worry, He does so as a loving father to a little child. Jesus knows what it is like to feel the weight of the world on His shoulders. He was in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, awaiting His death. But He also modeled faithfulness – taking His cares to His Father and walking the road that He was called to.

My journey isn't over. Every day I fall short, also when it comes to how I'm managing cares and concerns. From time to time, I still experience the physical symptoms that come from stress and anxiety. But instead of them causing me concern, I take them as a clear signal that I'm not managing things well. I'm straying and need to change course, entrusting things to the LORD and to others.

Yes, it is humbling to admit that I'm weak and don't have what it takes to solve most challenges in life, be it Covid policies, the spiritual walk of loved ones, or conflict. But it is also liberating. We have a Savior who has already made things right between us and God. The price has been paid. Our future is secure in His hands. Dear brother or sister, bring your anxieties to our LORD and experience His peace. ^{RP}

Go deeper: Dr. Greg Gifford's two-part series on anxiety is available at his podcast called "Transformed" but can also be heard on his website here:

1. [Transformed.org/podcast/biblical-clarity-on-anxiety-part-one/](https://transformed.org/podcast/biblical-clarity-on-anxiety-part-one/)
2. [Transformed.org/podcast/biblical-clarity-on-anxiety-part-two/](https://transformed.org/podcast/biblical-clarity-on-anxiety-part-two/)

WHAT'S INSIDE

We've done a deep dive into the topic of anxiety this issue, talking to a pastor, three counselors, and excerpting a chapter from Dr. David Murray's *Why Am I Feeling Like This?: A Teen's Guide to Freedom from Anxiety and Depression*. And in the editorial Mark Penninga shares his own struggle with anxiety, and what he learned from Dr. Greg Gifford. We round out the discussion with book recommendations where readers can go further.

A special thanks to Stephanie Vanderpol for her creative artwork on this theme of anxiety, on the cover and throughout this issue.

Finally, we'd like to make an introduction. You might recall that we were advertising for a Digital Media Editor, and our hope for this new position was to have someone take content we've already published and "translate" it to different social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We had a lot of great candidates apply, and although it was difficult to pick just one person, we hired Danyse Van Dam, a married mother of five from Smithville, Ontario. She is an experienced photographer and social media manager. She is already taking work off of the editor's plate, already expanding our reach on Facebook and Instagram. We're glad she was willing to share her talents with us! – JD



NEWS IN PERSPECTIVE

ALBERTA AND BC CHAMPION VERY DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO DRUG USE

BY MARK PENNINGA

Earlier this year, BC became the first province to decriminalize small amounts of illegal drugs.

The policy was the latest “harm reduction” effort from the province’s NDP government. The province boasted that “British Columbia is taking a critical step toward reducing the shame and fear associated with substance use.” This move was approved by Health Canada, which granted a three-year exemption from federal drug laws.

Only a few months later, the effects are being felt in towns and cities throughout the province. “BC’s drug decriminalization experiment is off to a disastrous start” shouted the headline from the national affairs columnist in the *Globe and Mail*. Gary Mason proceeded to describe the situation on the ground, including a report from Mike



Stolte, from Nelson, BC.

“I’m a pretty liberal person who has been involved in compassionate programs for hospices and other entities,” Mr. Stolte told the *Globe and Mail*. “So, I feel for anyone battling addictions. I was initially a fan of decriminalization but I think the longer we continue with this experiment, the more and more downtowns are going to cease to exist. Nobody will want to go near them.” Stolte now keeps a baseball bat and bear spray by his front door after experiencing four thefts in the last two months.

One province over, Alberta has refused to decriminalize drugs. Instead, they have been expanding the treat-

ment spaces and now have capacity to serve 29,000 people every year. They also got rid of the fee for treatment. Instead of making drugs more accessible, they are making treatment more accessible.

On the heels of their provincial election, the province’s UCP government took it a step further by announcing it would introduce the Compassionate Intervention Act, which would give the province the authority to require chronic drug addicts, who are believed to be at great risk to themselves or others, to get treatment. This too would be the first of its kind in Canada.

“There is virtually no addict that makes a change in their life without some measure of intervention,” shared Marshall Smith, the chief of staff to Alberta’s Premier. He knows this from experience, having gone from being a staffer in the BC legislature to living on the streets in Vancouver for four years, as a result of a cocaine and meth addiction. According to the *National Post*, he credits his recovery to the local police, who gave him the option of jail or a spot in a treatment center.

Although there are not yet statistics to compare the two approaches, BC overdose deaths have doubled since 2016, though there was a slight decrease of 1.5 percent last year. The drop was much larger in Alberta, at 12 percent last year.

BC’s approach rests on a belief that people should be free to pursue their desires, even if they are risky and dangerous. This is a similar strategy to that which was employed over the past half-century with the normalization of sex outside of heterosexual marriage, by focusing on “safe sex.” In contrast, Alberta’s approach recognizes that some activities need to be discouraged, even to the point of forcing people to change their lives. Although there is no explicit recognition of sin, nor an express desire to live in a way that respects our design as image bearers of God, Alberta’s approach is an encouraging step in the right direction. It will be important to compare the results of the two strategies in the coming year.

BRAIN SURGERY IN THE WOMB

BY HARMA-MAE SMIT



Look, it's not brain surgery" is a saying for a reason. Brain surgery is a delicate task that needs a lot of experience to do successfully. Which makes it even more amazing that doctors in Boston recently carried out brain surgery on a fetus – they did it on a baby while it was still in the womb.

To achieve this, doctors had to use ultrasound imaging to help them guide a needle into the mother's abdomen, through the uterus wall, and into the fetal brain. This might sound terrifying to a mother, but the risk was worth taking. The particular problem that this surgery was trying to solve was a malformed blood vessel in the child's brain, where a vein connected with an artery. Since arteries carry blood at higher pressure, blood coming directly from the heart, this blood can pool in the vein. The goal was to fix this malformation of the artery and vein before birth.

If you think this sounds complex and intricate, it certainly is! It was the first surgery of its kind ever performed, and proved this new technique is possible.

113 MPS SUPPORTED PREBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME BILL

BY MARK PENNINGA

Member of Parliament Cathay Wagantall's private member's Bill C-311 was defeated in the House of Commons on June 14, but not without 113 MPs voting in support. That is 37 more MPs than



when similar legislation was introduced in 2016.

If passed, the bill would have amended the Criminal Code so that when a judge is making a decision about sentencing, they would have to take into consideration if someone knowingly assaulted a pregnant woman.

In response to the We Need A Law's "1 Crime, 2 Victims" campaign, thousands of post cards and emails were sent to MPs, imploring them to recognize that there are two victims when a pregnant woman is attacked.

Quebec MP Rachel Bendayan was alarmed at the support for the bill, saying "Conservative MPs spoke of 'pre-born' children. They spoke of 'legal voids' caused by the 'lack of abortion laws in Canada.' When people tell you what they stand for, believe them." She also said We Need A Law's flyers "are everywhere." She proceeded to quote from Joyce Arthur, the director of the Abortion Rights Coalition.

"If the fetuses are recognized in [law]...it could bleed into people's consciousness and make people change their minds about abortion."

Amen. May we not tire in our efforts to advocate on behalf of Canada's most vulnerable and victimized group.

APPLE TO EXPAND ITS NUDITY BLURRING TO VIDEO TOO

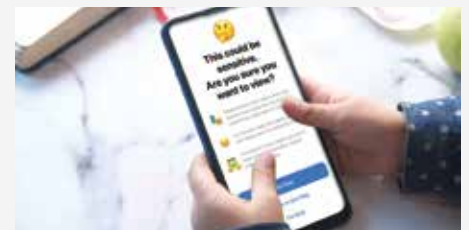
BY JON DYKSTRA

Apple's newest iOS 17 update, coming this fall, will expand on its ability to detect and blur nudity on iPhones and iPads. It'll now work not just with photos, but video content too. This feature will be turned on automatically for children 12 and under, while those 13 and up can opt-in.

While that's a nice feature, it seems to be simply a warning. The user is told: "This could be sensitive. Are you sure you want to view?" It also includes an explanation of why a child might not want to proceed: "It's not your fault, but naked photos and videos can be used to hurt you." But the child can choose to ignore the warning. MacRumors.com reported that, when the first version of this photo blurring tech was announced in 2021, Apple offered parents the option of knowing when their child chose to view the image. But Apple changed course, and didn't equip parents with that tool.

In other words, this tech is a useful protection for children and adults who want to use it. But parents need to understand that it offers no help at all for children who are curious or tempted. For more substantial help, they'll need to turn to apps offered by groups like CovenantEyes or Bark.

Got another such tool your family has used and appreciated? Please drop me a note about what it is, how much it costs a month, and why you liked it, at editor@ReformedPerspective.ca.



BC PAYING A STEEP PRICE FOR ITS HEALTHCARE POLICIES

BY MARK PENNINGA

BC plans to send about 4,800 patients to private health clinics in Washington state over the next two years for cancer treatment, in response to growing wait times and a health system that is increasingly unable to cope.

BC's Health Minister Adrian Dix blamed the situation on a growing and aging population and staffing shortages. According to coverage from the *Globe & Mail*, only 77 percent of cancer patients who require radiation are receiving care within 28 days, far lower than the national average of 97 percent. Not only is this travel a great inconvenience for cancer patients, it also comes at three times the cost for the same treatment in Canada.

The irony here is that the BC NDP government has been fighting hard to keep privately funded health care out

of the province. In fact, a 14-year court effort to challenge this by Dr. Brian Day was recently dismissed by the Supreme Court. The NDP got their way and killed any hope of private care, only to now have to pay substantially more so that the public can get much-needed care from private clinics in another country. At the same time, the province continues to reject doctors and other health professionals here in the province who are eager to help but are being prevented by government vaccination requirements that still exist for employees in health care settings.

This development also comes on



the heels of the NDP's budget, which devoted much fanfare to announcing \$119M of funding to provide free "contraception" to all residents, including pills, implants, and the abortion-inducing "morning-after pill." In addition to killing innocent life, this will only compound the problem of an aging population by diverting much-needed funds away from their urgent health care needs.

Picture by LIVINUS / Istockphoto.com

CANADA'S POPULATION CROSSES 40 MILLION

BY MARK PENNINGA

Canada's population passed the 40 million citizen mark, at least according to Statistics Canada's "population clock."

The country's population has been surging recently, with a growth rate at 2.7 percent, the highest since 1957, when Canada was in the midst of a baby boom. But there is a significant difference between the gains of 1957 and 2023. In 1957, our fertility rate was 3.8 children per woman. Today it is 1.48, far below the 2.1 required to replace a population.

This means that in 1957, our population was growing because Canadians were having babies. Now we are growing because people who have already been born are coming to Canada. Statistics Canada reported that last

year alone, Canada welcomed 437,180 immigrants and had an increase of 607,782 non-permanent residents. Both numbers are the highest on record.

Canada has looked to immigration as an answer to the country's aging population and decreasing birth rate. Although the numbers make this work in the short-term, the fertility rate in two-thirds of the world has dropped below replacement, and the United Nations is forecasting that the entire world's population will begin decreasing later this century.

No country that has had its fertility



rate drop below replacement has been able to reverse the trend, even though many are trying hard with generous incentives. If that is true of a country, it doesn't bode well for the world.

When our secular leaders encounter this problem, they are mystified by what can be done. But the solution isn't very complicated. As Psalm 127:3 acclaims "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD." It is time to accept this gift with open arms.

SOONERS SEE SPORTS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GLORIFY GOD

BY JON DYKSTRA



The Oklahoma Sooners won the Women's College World Series in early June, with their series-clinching victory also adding to their record-breaking win streak. The old record was 47, and at season's end the Sooners were at 53 and counting.

But what really makes this team special came out in a pre-series press conference, when ESPN's Alex Scarborough asked players about the streak.

"I know you guys talk about keeping the joy of the game, but it's a long season and you guys have had the target on your back the entire time, with the win streak, with being number one. How do you handle the unique pressure that comes with that? How do you keep the joy for so long when anxiety seems like a thing that could very easily set in?"

Shortstop Grace Lyons was the first to answer:

"The only way that you can have a joy that doesn't fade away is from the Lord. And any other type of joy is actually happiness that comes from

circumstances, and outcomes. I think coach has said this before but, joy from the Lord is really the only thing that can keep you motivated, and just in a good mindset, no matter the outcomes. Thankfully we've had a lot of success this year but if it was the other way around, joy from the Lord is the only thing that can keep you embracing those memories, moments, friendships, and all of that. So, really the only answer to that, because there's no other way that softball can bring you that because of how much failure comes in it and just how much of a roller coaster the game can be."

And if that wasn't amazing enough, utility player Jayda Coleman wanted to echo the point:

"One thousand percent agree with Grace Lyons. I went through that my freshman year. I've talked about this before, but I was just so happy that we won the College World Series but I didn't feel joy. I didn't know what to do the next day. I didn't know what to do for that following week. I didn't feel filled. And I had to find Christ in that. I think that is what makes our

team so strong: we're not afraid to lose because it's not the end of the world if we do lose. Yes, obviously we've worked our butts off to be here and we want to win. But it's not the end of the world because our life is in Christ and that's all that matters."

Next up was sophomore Alyssa Brito:

"We're really fixing our eyes on Christ. Like they were saying, you can't find fulfillment in an outcome, whether it's good or bad. I think that's why we're so steady in what we do... because we know this game is giving us the opportunity to glorify God. Once we figured that out, and that was our purpose and everyone was all in with that, it's really changed so much for us. Once I turned to Jesus and I realized how He had changed my outlook on life – not just softball but understanding how much I have to live for, living to exemplify the kingdom – I think that brings so much freedom. I'm sure everyone's story is similar: we all have those great testimonies that have really shown how awesome it is to play for something bigger. That's just what brings me so much joy, no matter the outcome, whether we get a trophy in the end or not. This isn't our home, and I think that's what's amazing. We have so much more; we have an eternity of joy with our Father and I'm so excited about that. Yes, I live in the moment, but I know this isn't my home and no matter what, my sisters in Christ will be there with me in the end when we're with our King."

The final word went to the coach after a follow-up question. The same reporter wanted to know how she could get these kids to keep going hard when they were winning so often. Wasn't it just human nature to slack off in the midst of so much success? How could they keep their focus?

Coach Patty Gasso replied: "I think that they just gave you that answer."

CANADA REPLACES THE CROSS WITH A SNOWFLAKE

BY MARK PENNINGA

COn the same day that the world's attention was fixed on the coronation of Charles III, Canada's federal government took the opportunity to show off its new design for our Canadian Royal Crown. As the "Canadian Crown" twitter account noted:

"The design replaces religious symbols (crosses & fleur-de-lis) with maple leaves & a snowflake."

This crown isn't a physical crown worn by an official or put on display. Rather, it is an emblem or design, featured at the top of Canada's Coat of Arms, as well as police and military badges, among other places.

Symbols matter, especially when they are meant to represent our leadership and nation. This change came from the top. Our Governor General's website explains that it was "approved in April 2023 by His Majesty The King on the advice of the Prime Minister of Canada."

The fleur-de-lis symbolizes a king's divinely-approved authority to rule. "For there is no authority except from God" (Romans 13). Likewise, the cross symbolizes the kingship of Jesus Christ, Lord over all creation. Together, they bear witness to the fact that humanity is not sovereign. God alone is. And He alone gives authority to office-bearers, including our civil governments.

It is no surprise that Justin Trudeau has no use for these public reminders of our sovereign Lord Jesus Christ. But in divorcing the civil government's authority from God, where does it get its authority from? The new symbols point to nature. How do the snow, leaves, and water give any authority to our government? They are pretty to view, and useful for living, but have no transcendent authority themselves. As snowflakes melt and leaves decay, we can expect the same for any government that finds its authority in itself. It is also ironic that, in an effort to undermine Christ as king, our government has to look to Christ's creation for new symbols.

Instead of anger or ridicule, decisions like this ought to move us to sadness. Justin Trudeau and most of Canada's leaders think that decisions like this are a move towards an enlightened and "progressive" future, characterized by secularism instead of "religion." Yet they are blind to the reality that they are no less religious than their forefathers. In many respects, they show even more zeal for their religion of humanism and paganism than many of our forefathers showed for our Lord.

Some years ago, I witnessed the leaders of Canada's political parties, including Justin Trudeau, each piously



reading a selection from Scripture at the National Prayer Breakfast. This included a reading from Psalm 2, reminding them who is King and Who they will one day have to give account to:

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.... Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear...."

JUNE 19: THE DAY YOU STARTED WORKING FOR YOUR FAMILY

BY JON DYKSTRA

Each year the Fraser Institute calculates a "Tax Freedom Day": if Canadians had to pay all their taxes up front (federal, provincial, and municipal), they'd have had to work the first 169 days of the year to send money to the government. Only on June 19th would they start earning money for their own households: the government is getting 46.1% of the average Canadian family's income.

Tax Freedom Day varies from year to year – in the last decade it's been as early as May 20 in 2020, and as late as June 20, in 2022 – and also varies from province to province. Quebecers have to wait until June 30, while folks in Manitoba are earning for themselves starting on June 6.

What this Tax Freedom Day doesn't account for is that our governments are spending more than they are taking, deferring some of that tax burden onto future generations. So what would Canadians' Tax Freedom Day be if we were taxed enough to cover all the spending? Eight days later, on June 27.



Salt & Light

**Tim Challies, W. Robert Godfrey, Steven Lawson,
Burk Parsons, Derek Thomas, Robert VanDoodewaard**



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JUSTICE DELAYED IS JUSTICE DENIED: SUPREME COURT JUSTICE RUSSELL BROWN RESIGNS

BY MARK PENNINGA



In the midst of a misconduct investigation, Justice Russell Brown has chosen to resign his post on Canada's top court.

The investigation was triggered by allegations of inappropriate conduct by Brown after an altercation in Arizona earlier this year. In a social setting, after a speaking engagement there, Brown was accused of making unwanted advances on a couple of women. In a public statement, Brown pointed to the slow misconduct investigation, the strain on him and his family, and the impact on the court's proceedings, as leading to his decision that it was "for the common good" to resign. Accompanying the statement, Brown also released evidence to affirm his innocence in the matter.

While we aren't in a position to judge Justice Brown's guilt or innocence, we can consider the process. Brown was put on leave Feb. 1 and resigned on June 12. In his public statement he noted:

"At this point, it is impossible to know how much longer this delay would continue.... Given the progress so far, it is not unreasonable to think that this process may continue well into 2024."

In Ecclesiastes 8:11, the Preacher

tells us that: "When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong." The *National Post's* Jamie Sarkonak echoed the thought: "The Supreme Court and the Canadian Judicial Council have shown troublemakers exactly what needs to be done to de-bench a judge."

Canadian news website *The Hub* (TheHub.ca) shared the reactions of other legal experts including Yuan Yi Zhu, an assistant professor of international relations and international law at Leiden University, who was very critical of the disciplinary process for Canadian judges.

"From Chief Justice Wagner's decision to place Brown on an immediate leave of absence without official explanation on the basis of a flimsy complaint filed by a man who had assaulted his colleague, to the Canadian Judicial Council's unbearably sluggish preliminary investigation which took the better part of half a year, to the numerous leaks from well-informed insiders to favoured journalists, the whole process has been designed to be as exhausting and wounding to Justice Brown as possible.

"There can be no better illustration of what American law professor Malcolm Feeley described as 'the process

is the punishment.' Even if Justice Brown had been fully exonerated at the end of the open-ended process, his reputation would still have suffered, not to mention the fact that he would have been barred from exercising his chosen profession for the duration of the investigation, which could have run into years."

The justice's resignation has also shaken the Christian and conservative legal community.

André Schutten, Director of Law and Policy for ARPA Canada, told *Reformed Perspective* that Justice Brown's resignation "is a major setback for our nation's legal culture." Schutten explained that Justice Brown was "faithful to the law, and respected and guarded the rule of law. He was a constitutionalist and believed ardently that the law must be something more than the ruler's whims. Where a majority of the Supreme Court pursued their own policy preferences and bent the law to reflect that, Justice Brown was loyal to the constitution, even when such loyalty was not in vogue."

Schutten is concerned by what this means for the highest court moving forward, saying that it doesn't bode well for religious freedom in Canada and is "another step toward judicial policy-making that is decidedly progressive."

Sean Speer, *The Hub's* editor-at-large, shared that conservatives sometimes overstate their lack of influence in Canada. However,

"the one area though where conservative despair has been justified is the judiciary. The 'living tree' view of the Constitution has been the dominant (even the sole) judicial philosophy at law schools and on the bench for more than a generation."

The "living tree doctrine" says that the Constitution's meaning wasn't determined by those who wrote it, but is created by the judges who read it, that like a tree it should change and grow with the times. Speer went on to explain that there has been a change in recent years,

with “a new generation of law students and scholars... capable of challenging the prevailing legal monoculture.” And he pointed to Brown as a key figure in this movement.

“His departure from the bench... represents a regrettable blow to these efforts. That future now feels farther away especially since he’ll predictably be replaced by another ‘living tree’ exponent.

“It’s important however, particularly for the young people involved in the legal movement that Brown came to personify, that it must ultimately be bigger than one person. While his resignation creates a significant void, it cannot bring an end to these efforts. Quite the contrary. It reinforces the need for more Russell Browns.”

Schutten came to a similar conclusion, noting that Brown’s resignation underlines again the importance of Christian engagement in the law. “For too long, Christians abandoned the field to secularists and we shouldn’t be surprised that the result is so few principled judges. The Christian community must recommit to serving their nation also in the courts of law, inspiring, encouraging, and assisting the next generation of Christian leaders to pursue law as a calling while ensuring those Christian lawyers think christianly about the law.”

The resignation paves the way for Trudeau to appoint a sixth judge to the nine-judge bench that already had the *National Post’s* Tristin Hopper deeming it “the most activist Supreme Court in the world.”

While that’s not an encouraging thought, Christians can remember that one day we will see perfect justice exacted by the Chief Justice of the world’s Supreme Court, before whom very knee will bow.

EUTHANASIA FOR THE POOR: 27% OF CANADIANS AGREE

BY HARMA-MAE SMIT



Is poverty itself reason enough to allow someone to opt for doctor-assisted suicide? The question seems ludicrous – poverty is a condition that can change over a lifetime, and is hardly comparable to terminal lung cancer (an example of the “reasonably foreseen” death that’s previously been used to justify euthanasia).

Yet a recent survey found 27% of Canadians agree with allowing doctor-assisted suicide in cases of poverty. This is one in four people you might meet!

The survey was done by Research Co. and the results were released on May 5. Almost immediately it began making headlines with 11% of respondents saying they “strongly agree” and 16% that they “moderately agree” poverty was reason enough to let people kill themselves.

We might be surprised, but the reality is, once suicide is an option and personal autonomy is valued, it’s not clear on what grounds someone would be prevented from asking for death because of poverty. After all, why shouldn’t the poor be able to make these kinds of decisions for themselves? If assisted dying is available to all Canadians, why should the poor be considered less able to choose?

Christians know we are commanded to have compassion for the poor, not seek to eliminate them.

But in a society where the government provides both social support services *and* medically-assisted dy-

ing, there is a financial incentive to reduce the cost of what gets provided to struggling people. This inevitably puts the poor in a vulnerable situation, a situation where they should receive the support and advocacy of their neighbors around them in a system that can be cold and impersonal. “The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern” (Prov. 29:7). Insisting that the poor have the full capacity to make a choice for euthanasia misses all the ways they might not feel like they have much of a choice.

This survey also demonstrates how far opponents of euthanasia have to go in influencing public opinion. Do people really understand what they’re saying when they answer a poll question like this? The most charitable interpretation is that the poll responders wanted to emphasize the personal autonomy of a poor individual. But a personal choice is never made in isolation.

Ultimately to declare poverty as reason enough to consider euthanasia is to devalue the worth of all the poor. To say poverty is enough reason for one person to consider no longer living is to say this kind of suffering decreases the value of that life.

This comes into starker contrast looking beyond our borders to take in the poor worldwide. Tell humans who are barely getting by that they don’t need to struggle anymore, tell them that they can decide their life has no value and they can quit it. What would they say about this attitude to the life they’re fighting tooth and nail to keep?

Suffering does not erase the meaning and value of being alive. But in a modern world where personal fulfillment and the individual’s choice matter above everything else, this message will be a challenge for Christians to drive home.

2023 WILDFIRES AN EXCEPTION TO THREE DECADES OF DECLINING FIRES

BY MARK PENNINGA

As millions of Canadians and Americans have been exposed to the smoke from Canadian forest fires already this year, along with a steady stream of media coverage, they would be forgiven for coming to a similar conclusion as Prime Minister Trudeau, who recently tweeted “We’re seeing more and more of these fires because of climate change.”

But as Dr. Ross McKittrick, professor of environmental economics at the University of Guelph, explained in the *Financial Post*, Trudeau’s statement is wrong twice over.

Pointing to publicly-available data from the Wildland Fire Information System, McKittrick said that wildfires have in fact been getting less frequent in Canada over the past 30 years.

“The annual number of fires grew from 1959 to 1990, peaking in 1989 at just over 12,000 that year, and has been trending down since. From 2017 to 2021 (the most recent interval available), there were about 5,500 fires per year, half the average from 1987 to 1991.”

The same is true for the amount of area burned, which also peaked 30 years ago at 7.6 million hectares, far above the current average of 2.4 million. McKittrick also pointed to global data which shows a similar decline in wildfires in recent decades.

One reason why fires are getting so much attention this year is because 5.29 million hectares have already burned in 2023, and we are still relatively early in the season.

Another reason why fires are getting more attention is because they seem to be getting more dangerous, spreading quickly and threatening entire towns. Is it due to global warming? McKittrick offers another explanation, quoting from forestry experts Stefan Doerr and Cristina Santin:

“[Very] aggressive fire suppression policies over much of the 20th century have removed fire from ecosystems where it has been a fundamental part of the landscape rejuvenation cycle... We cannot completely remove fire from the landscape... That is the misconception that led to the ‘100 per cent fire suppression’ policies in the U.S. and elsewhere that have made things worse in many cases.”

In the past government agencies, and even private land owners, have used “prescribed burns” – deliberately lit and managed fires – to burn away undergrowth. When done with some regularity these are lower temperature fires, clearing the ground but without burning the trees down. 100 per cent fire suppression policies do away



with these burns, and as McKittrick explained, “this has led to a buildup of fuel in the form of woody debris leading to the risk of more explosive and unstoppable fires.”

God has entrusted us with stewardship of His creation (Genesis 1:28) and part of stewardship requires an accurate understanding of this creation, including the importance of fires for healthy forests.

Picture is of fires near Hope, BC earlier this year (edb3_16 / Istockphoto.com).

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Mr. J. Kikkert, Principal
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331 German School Road, Paris, ON N3L 3E1
Via email: principal@hopercs.ca Phone: 519-448-9913
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BEAUTIFUL BRIANNA

An excerpt from David Murray's

WHY AM I FEELING LIKE THIS?: A Teen's Guide to Freedom from Anxiety and Depression

Dr. David Murray is a professor at the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and also a counselor. He has authored a set of books for parents to use along with their struggling son or daughter. The first, *Why Am I Feeling Like This?: A Teen's Guide to Freedom from Anxiety & Depression* is for teens to read on their own. It has 18 chapters, each one detailing a particular struggle with anxiety. All but one of these accounts is fictional – the author's despairing doubt is the exception – but all are relatable. "Circular Sarah" in chapter 1 is overwhelmed by her schoolwork and extra-curriculars, and starts having sleep problems, which leaves her even more exhausted, and even more overwhelmed. Chapter 4's "Imaginative Imogen" has a vivid imagination that might be a blessing in many circumstances, but has Imogen putting herself in the shoes of every victim she reads about in her social media feed. Whether it's a school shooting, or some other tragedy, she feels it, and it's leaving her fearful and depressed. In chapter 9 we meet "Negative Nicole" who can't help but see the bad side of everything. Even when she's having fun with her friends, she feels guilty about not working harder on her school work. These are personalities we've all met, and to some extent been, and Dr. Murray doesn't simply capture what's going wrong, but gives solid steps for how teens can redirect their thinking, learn to know God better, and otherwise start really addressing and contending with their anxiety.

The parallel text for parents, *Why Is My*

Teenager Feeling Like This?: A Guide for Helping Teens Through Anxiety & Depression, covers the same personalities chapter by chapter, but offers more depth, and is written to equip parents to talk to and help their anxious teens. There's some repeat from one book to the next, but not that much, so parents may even want to read both.

It is an amazing set, with counseling that takes the best secular insights and filters them through the lens of Scripture to keep what is true and dispose of the bunk – this is thoroughly grounded in Scripture. It is also immediately applicable, and I can imagine parents being so very encouraged. Battling anxiety might be a battle indeed, but in crafting this set, Dr. David Murray has given parents and teens an amazing tool they can both use together as a team.

To give you a taste of what's inside, the publisher has given us permission to share Chapter 11, about "Beautiful Brianna" from the teen book.

BEAUTIFUL BRIANNA

I spend a lot of time on my appearance. It's the first thing I think about when I wake up. I have a part-time job, but I'm struggling to save up for a car because I spend all my money on new clothes and makeup.

I'm always fighting with my mom because she says my jeans are too tight, my tops are too low, my shorts are too short,

and so on. It's so stressful.

My friends say I'm gorgeous, and I get a lot of attention from the boys, but I'm not happy with myself. I can put on a smile when I'm with people and act confidently, but deep down I don't think I'll ever be pretty enough.

—Brianna

THE KEY OF IDENTITY

What's the first word that comes to mind when you think about yourself? What do you answer when you ask yourself, "Who am I?" This can be difficult to answer in our teen years because these are often times of great change and confusion as we transition from childhood to adulthood. Like Brianna, we can end up adopting a false and harmful identity. Here are some common examples:

I am my body. Do you define yourself by your body, like Brianna did? Nine out of ten girls are unhappy with their body. "I'm fat... skinny... tall... small... ugly... beautiful..."

I am my grades. Do you get your sense of worth from your performance at school? If you get good grades, you feel good about yourself and look down on others. If you get bad grades, you are a failure, and are jealous of others.

I am my friends. Do you build your identity around having friends – online or real life? The more friends you have, the better you feel. Or is your life worthless unless you have a boyfriend or girlfriend?

I am my sin. Is there a sin in your life that dominates your thinking? You cannot think about yourself without thinking of that sin, that habit, that incident.

I am my sport. If you win, or your team wins, you feel great. If not, life's not worth living. Your mood depends on medals and trophies.

I am my anxiety/depression. Have you let your anxiety or depression define you? When you look at yourself, all you see is depression or anxiety.

I am my past. Maybe you've been the victim of abuse. I'm so sorry. It was not your fault. It should not have happened to you. It was wrong. But are you allowing that abuse to ruin the rest of your life by letting it dominate your thoughts and define who you are?

I am my sexual desires. God created us so that sexual desire, intimacy, and enjoyment would be part of human experience. Sin, however, has distorted this good gift, with the result that what God designed to be a part of us can become the whole of us. We're especially vulnerable to this in our teen years when we experience the awakening of sexual desire. This can become so powerful that we allow it to define us at times. However, it's a big mistake to let extreme, confusing, and temporary emotions define us for the rest of our lives.

What's so bad about all these identities? Some are simply false; they just aren't true. Others are based on factors that are constantly changing. Some of them give power to other people to define us. Others are given first place when they don't deserve even tenth place. And all of this creates a lot of mental and emotional distress.

So we're going to replace these false and shaky identities with a true and strong identity, one given to us by the God who made us and knows us best. We do this in four steps.

Step One:

I Am an Image Bearer of God

God made you to bear his image (Gen. 1:27), to show who he is to the rest of the world. That's your fundamental identity and purpose. Therefore, before you even answer "Who am I?," you need to find out who God is. Often we go wrong on the "Who am I?" question because we've got the wrong answer to the "Who is God?" question.

Step Two: *I Am a Sinner*

Although God originally made us to carry and show his image to the world, we are now sinners and our sin has distorted that image. That's why we need the Bible. It shows us who God is and who we are.

Step Three: *I Am a Christian*

To fully recover your God-given identity and replace all false identities, you need to become a Christian through faith in Christ. Faith in Christ gives you a new identity in Christ. Think of all that becomes true of you when you can truly

say, "I am a Christian."

I am loved by God. God has loved me from eternity past and will love me forever (Jeremiah 31:3). Therefore, whoever else loves me or doesn't love me matters much less.

I am a child of God. It doesn't matter who my natural family is if I am a child of God. As part of God's family, I need never be lonely because I have brothers and sisters all over the world (Romans 8:14–17).

I am accepted by God. Others may cast out and reject me, but God accepts me 100 percent (Romans 15:7).

I am forgiven by God. Yes, I am a sinner, and I have committed terrible sins, but Christ's blood washes and cleanses me from all sin and makes me clean in his sight. I am white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

I am the body of Christ. If my body is a member of Christ's body, what more can I ask for? It may not be the most attractive or desirable body to others, but Christ has shed his blood to make my body part of his body (1 Corinthians 6:15).

I am a joy to God. God doesn't just tolerate me; he enjoys me and sings songs over me and about me (Zephaniah 3:17).

None of these things ever change if you are a Christian. They don't depend on your feelings or on other people. You are not defined by your body, your grades, your friends, your enemies, your sin, your sports, your successes, your failures, or your sexuality. You are defined by God, and with this God-given identity in hand you can defy every other attempt to define or identify you. Let God's voice silence all the other voices.

If you are not a Christian yet, I hope you will read about this incredible identity and say, "I want that for myself."

Step Four: *I Am Unique*

Steps one through three are equally true of all God's children. However, that doesn't mean that God just turns out Christian clones, look-alikes in every respect. No, God has made each of us different with unique personalities, characters, gifts, graces, and callings.

We make a big mistake if we make our uniqueness the most important thing

about us. However, we also err if we ignore or downplay our God-given uniqueness. That's why we come to God and ask him—not our parents, our culture, or our friends—"Who do you want me to be?" If we answer this right, so much else will be right.

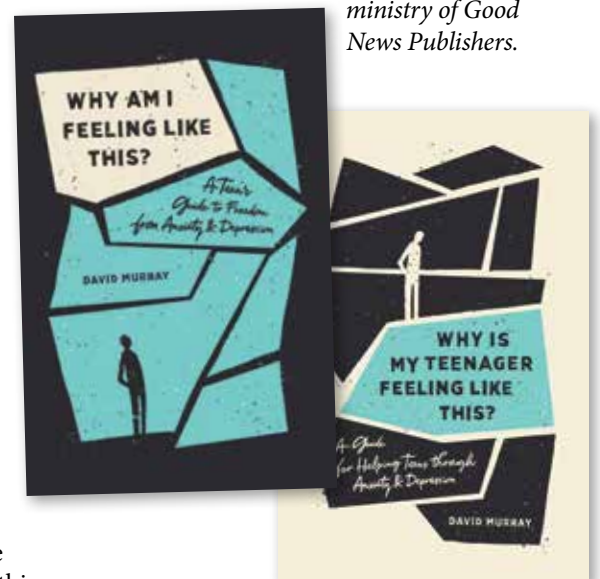
UPDATE FROM BRIANNA

I was definitely defining myself by my looks. My identity was tied up with my body. Through counseling, I came to see that this was causing me to be depressed. I could never be beautiful enough. There were always going to be lots of girls prettier than me.

Once my counselor introduced me to the four steps, I had a plan to recover my stolen identity and replace my false identity. I thought this would work quicker than it did, but it's taking time because I had embraced a false identity for so long. I do have more good days than bad days though, especially when I consciously work through the four steps.

The key thing has been to get my identity from God, not from my body, not from my looks, and not from other people. I don't think so much about how I look now, and I'm happier. I spend a lot less money on clothes and makeup. I might even save up enough money for a car by next summer. **RP**

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ANXIETY

AND THE TRIUMPH OF HOPE

3 biblical counselors explain anxiety

by Mark Penninga

As God's people wandered in the wilderness, they were sustained by bread from heaven – manna. Not only was it nutritional, it also came with a best-before date (just one day!). God warned them not to bother saving more than they needed for the day. But some paid no attention and took matters into their own hands, saving extra. The next morning they found that their manna reeked and was filled with maggots.

When I reached out to three biblical counselors for insight into anxiety, two of them referenced “the manna principle,” reminding me of the importance of relying on the LORD one day at a time. It wasn't a principle I was aware of, but it also didn't take long to see the connection. Our hope with this article, and this entire issue, is to instill confidence in the LORD's daily care for us, resisting the temptation to take matters into our own hands. When we trust Him, we will experience His provision as well as peace. We can move into the future with the confidence of lasting hope. When we don't, it won't take long and our blessings will be spoiled by our worries and anxieties.

We will begin by seeking insight from three counselors from the Reformed community in Canada who have experience with providing counsel about anxiety. What follows is an edited account of their answers.

Then in the following article in this issue we talk with a Reformed pastor to see how anxiety impacts churches and church leadership in particular. But this article is directed towards all God's people.

We hear a lot about anxiety. How would you explain it to a broader church community, some of whom may not understand why it is getting so much attention?

Heres Snijder: Anxiety is any degree of nervousness, worry, or concern that we all experience. There are innumerable reasons and causes for us to fret. Some of the most prevalent ones are fear of death and disease, fear of job loss, fear of self, fear of failure, the fear of not measuring up and not at all mattering, fear of the future, and fear of loss (particularly loss of health).

The common denominator that underpins these and other fears is the fear of man. Fear, anxiety, worry, disquiet: these are universal themes in the soul of man.

Rhonda Wiersma-Vandeburgt: Anxiety has both physical, cognitive, and spiritual aspects to it.

Anxiety is physical in the sense that it is both felt physically (racing heart, sweaty palms, hot or tight chest, digestive issues, intrusive thoughts, etc.) and interacts on a physical level (ex. adrenal glands that produce and regulate cortisol and adrenaline and the emotional part of the brain; and the amygdala that controls and regulates emotional responses).

On a cognitive level, anxiety interacts with our worldviews, past and current experiences, beliefs about God, self and others, desires and fears, that help form our thought responses (for example: “I'm always a failure”) and varying emotions that go with those thoughts (for example: “I'm a failure” often leads to the feelings of worthlessness).

And on a spiritual level, God speaks into all of this and His Word can and ought to inform our reality. He has the answers and the certainties that anxiety is looking for. As a counselor I seek to address all three areas.

Why is anxiety getting so much attention lately?

HS: Anxiety is getting so much attention as a result of man's preoccupation with himself. When there is no relationship with God who is Sovereign, All-Good, and our Provider, then man, by default must step up to the plate of providing for himself.

John Siebenga: The "pandemic" event drove home the insecurities of many people regarding sickness, health, the fragility of life. Why? So much depends upon the fact that society has written God out of their lives and taken it upon themselves to create order. We have once again eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and when God uses the "pandemic" to come knocking and asking, "Where are you?", we hide. We look to the government to give us security, but it is not found there. We look to "science" but "science" just lets us down. We look to the media and discover that they are in cahoots with the government and "science" so they cannot be trusted.

So what do we do, without a higher being to turn to? We cringe in fear and anxiety. We hide our fears and anxieties in escape behind the bushes of delusion and lies. Maybe all this will just pass away. And if not then we will just act as if it did. We smile and say we are fine, just fine when someone asks. We discover that within ourselves there is no antidote to the angst we are feeling. We play our music louder, pour a double of scotch, and for fifteen minutes we feel better. But then it starts all over again.

This calls for a return to a pre-Enlightenment worldview. A worldview that saw all of creation founded in the Creator God, Who asks, "Where are you?" and then comforts His broken, created image-bearers with the gospel. A gospel that lets our anxious hearts relax and allow Him to take care of this hurting world; that allows Him to address the anxieties of our heart, instead of government, science, or media.

Is this an issue that deserves more attention in the Reformed community? Would you say that the experience in the church is any different than in the broader public?

HS: I would not say that the experience of anxiety in the church is any different than outside of it. Not different, and no, not less frequent, nor less intense either. Individuals who are "churched" are not shielded in any special way against anxiety provoking or inducing situations, relationships or unhelpful/toxic thought patterns. Any human condition, occurrence, loss, or accident will lead us into



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Association of Clinical Counsellors. He counsels on work-related stress and burnout among professionals, parenting and family issues, alienation, isolation, bullying and rivalry, anxiety and depression, among other things. Heres treasures his growing family and enjoys making music, gardening, hiking, cycling, canoeing, playing chess and traveling. You can reach him at info@anchorcounsellor.ca or 778-680-4977.



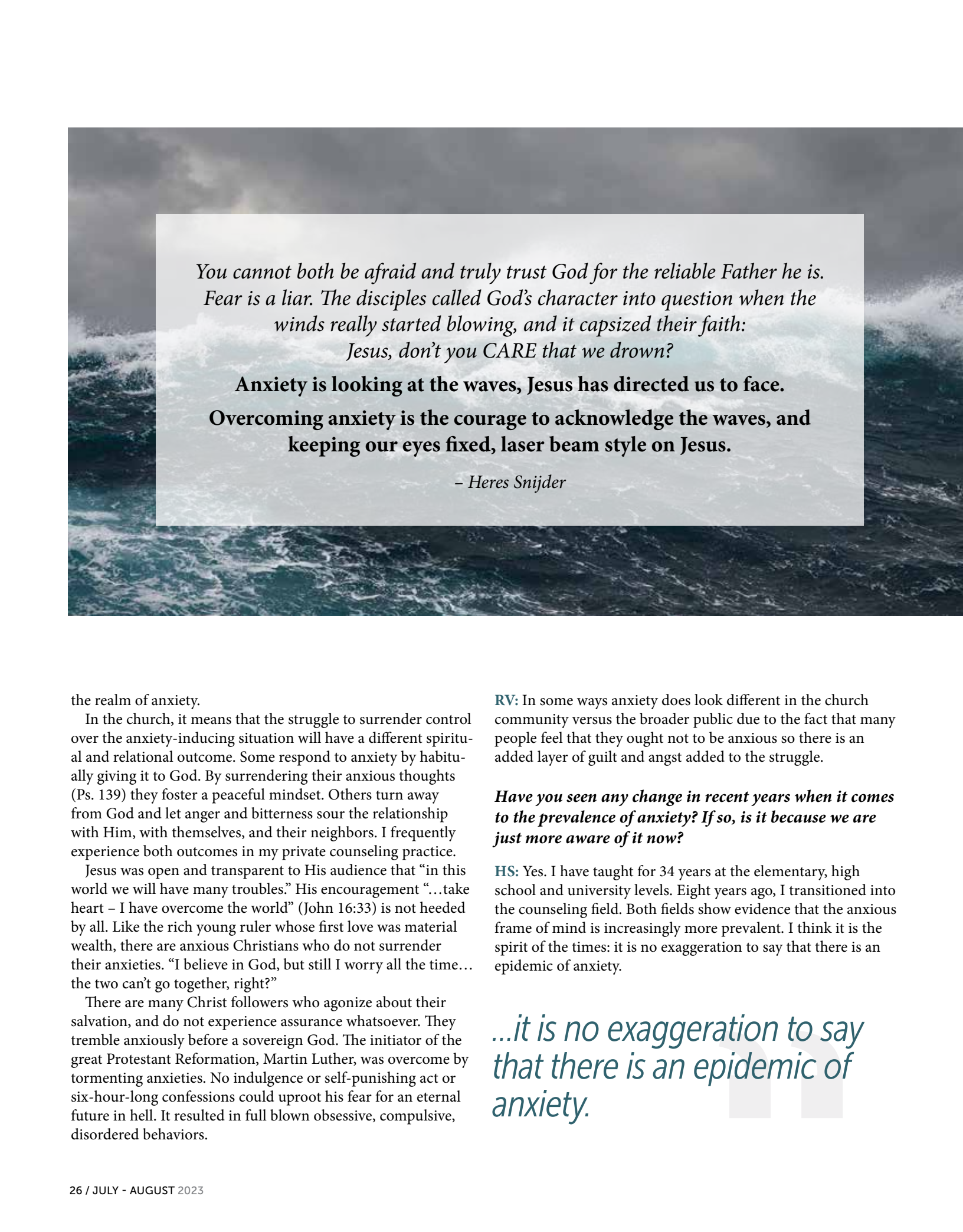
Rhonda Wiersma-Vandeburg graduated from Westminster Theological Seminary with an MA in Counselling in 2014 and completed a year-long internship with the Christian Counseling & Educational

Foundation (www.CCEF.org) in 2015. She works as a contract counsellor (virtually) through Insight Biblical Counselling in Ontario and has her own practice in Southern Manitoba. She happily lives on a small farm with her husband, whom she married in 2022. She enjoys cuddling her goat kids, is a voracious reader, bakes delicious gluten free goodies, and is slowly adjusting back to Prairie winters. You can reach her at valleyofvisioncounselling@gmail.com.



John Siebenga, from northern BC, is a licensed Christian counselor with a wide variety of life experiences. This includes working as a journeyman carpenter, a school teacher and principal, and serving with his wife in a

Reformed church plant in Prince George. He can be reached at jsiebenga@gmail.com.



*You cannot both be afraid and truly trust God for the reliable Father he is.
Fear is a liar. The disciples called God's character into question when the
winds really started blowing, and it capsized their faith:
Jesus, don't you CARE that we drown?*

**Anxiety is looking at the waves, Jesus has directed us to face.
Overcoming anxiety is the courage to acknowledge the waves, and
keeping our eyes fixed, laser beam style on Jesus.**

– Heres Snijder

the realm of anxiety.

In the church, it means that the struggle to surrender control over the anxiety-inducing situation will have a different spiritual and relational outcome. Some respond to anxiety by habitually giving it to God. By surrendering their anxious thoughts (Ps. 139) they foster a peaceful mindset. Others turn away from God and let anger and bitterness sour the relationship with Him, with themselves, and their neighbors. I frequently experience both outcomes in my private counseling practice.

Jesus was open and transparent to His audience that “in this world we will have many troubles.” His encouragement “...take heart – I have overcome the world” (John 16:33) is not heeded by all. Like the rich young ruler whose first love was material wealth, there are anxious Christians who do not surrender their anxieties. “I believe in God, but still I worry all the time... the two can't go together, right?”

There are many Christ followers who agonize about their salvation, and do not experience assurance whatsoever. They tremble anxiously before a sovereign God. The initiator of the great Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, was overcome by tormenting anxieties. No indulgence or self-punishing act or six-hour-long confessions could uproot his fear for an eternal future in hell. It resulted in full blown obsessive, compulsive, disordered behaviors.

RV: In some ways anxiety does look different in the church community versus the broader public due to the fact that many people feel that they ought not to be anxious so there is an added layer of guilt and angst added to the struggle.

Have you seen any change in recent years when it comes to the prevalence of anxiety? If so, is it because we are just more aware of it now?

HS: Yes. I have taught for 34 years at the elementary, high school and university levels. Eight years ago, I transitioned into the counseling field. Both fields show evidence that the anxious frame of mind is increasingly more prevalent. I think it is the spirit of the times: it is no exaggeration to say that there is an epidemic of anxiety.

*...it is no exaggeration to say
that there is an epidemic of
anxiety.*



RV: There seems to be a combination of both awareness and a number of different factors, such as:

- There are changes in our food's nutrition density and our struggles with a healthy diet (sugar anyone? Can't go without your daily dose of caffeine?);
- Influx of technology and 24/7 news leading to questions about where our responsibilities start and end;
- Breakdown of community and aspects of not "one-anothering" each other;
- We live in a society (either as a whole or in the church community) that does not easily accept weaknesses and human limitations;
- We live a comfortable and affluent lifestyle;
- Trauma;
- Our theology of suffering is not as robust as it could be;
- We live in a culture that encourages emotions to rule and dictate our thoughts and actions, instead of aligning our beliefs, thoughts, and actions according to God's will (we don't feel "authentic" if we are not true to how we feel in the moment as an example);
- We struggle with our identity and we don't understand our union with Christ as much as we could.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

To help readers dig deeper, our three counselors offered up some book recommendations. Two of these are devotionals, quite a few of them are by Ed Welch, and a couple were recommended by more than one counselor.

Heres Snijder

- *Prescription Without Pills* – Susan Heitler
- *When People are Big and God is Small* – Edward T. Welch
- *A Small Book for the Anxious Heart* (devotional) – Edward T. Welch
- *Caring For the Souls of Children* (Chapter 7 specifically) – Amy Baker
- *Generation Z Unfiltered* – Tim Elmore & Andrew McPeak
- *Descriptions and Prescriptions: A Biblical Perspective on Psychiatric Diagnoses and Medications* – Michael R. Emlet

Rhonda Wiersma-Vandeburgt

For children:

- *Buster Tries to Bail* – David & Nan Powlison
- *Zoe's Hiding Place* – David Powlison

For adults:

- *Laughing at the Days to Come* – Tessa Thompson
- *Anxiety: Knowing God's Peace* (devotional) – Paul Tautges
- *Created to Care: God's Truth for Anxious Moms* – Sara Wallace
- *Reset* – David Murray
- *Refresh* – Shona and David Murray

Mini booklets:

- *Helping Your Anxious Child* – Julie Lowe
- *Teens and Anxiety* – Eliza Huie
- *Living in a Dangerous World* – William P. Smith

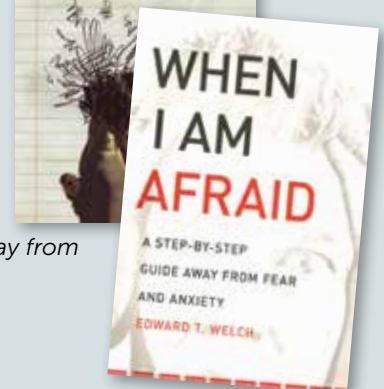
John Siebenga

- *Resilient: Restoring Your Weary Soul in These Turbulent Times* – John Eldredge



Heres Snijder and Rhonda Wiersma-Vandeburgt

- *Running Scared* – Edward T. Welch
- *When I Am Afraid: A Step-By-Step Guide Away from Fear and Anxiety* – Edward T. Welch



"I would say that overcoming anxiety ought not be a primary goal; use anxiety as an invitation or opportunity to draw nearer to God, that is the goal of life."

How does God go about relaxing our anxious hearts?

JS: One thing that Christians have a hard time with, and maybe it is even a harder issue for Reformed Christians to grasp, is that God is the "overflowing fountain of all good." We have fled from Him and hid in the Garden, but He still comes looking for us. Guido de Brès, in Belgic Confession Article 17, penned so eloquently and so beautifully how God "set out to seek man when he trembling fled from Him."

Anxiety at its worst is to be known by God with all the foibles and idiosyncrasies of our fallen humanity. That is man's greatest fear. Like Rich Mullins sings in another place, "we are weak and not as strong as we think we are." In our weakness, we can look to Him, but that means we have to admit that we just cannot do it on our own. We need to surrender. Surrender. Such a hard word to accept, embrace and see it as a sign of grace. My sister was wont to call this *dethroning God and putting oneself back on the throne*. She was right. But God's rich salvation is all over the Word that God has given us, His love, His mercy, His grace for His people, all the way from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. So, with John on the isle of Patmos, we can fall down and worship the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

For too long, much of our preaching has centered on the wrath, justice and the formidable requirements that God requires of us. So often we hear that we are bad, bad, bad and then a quiet addendum at the end of the sermon that says that it is by grace we are saved and so be thankful. The joy of salvation ought to ring from the beginning of the service to the end, and allow God's people to surrender into the Lord's loving arms. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" is the same truth today as it was when Isaiah wrote these words so many thousands of years ago.

How do we get that truth to dwell in our anxious hearts? Augustine said it so well in his *Confessions*: "The heart is restless until it rests in thee, O Lord." Sink back and relax in God's arms – revel in the joyous dance of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And even as inviting and tempting as that sounds, in our weak, feeble minds, we say, "It ain't easy." And you would be right. It is actually impossible, "unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God."

We need to look to Jesus who bore all our anxious thoughts in the Garden of Gethsemane and on to the Cross. Allow Him to strap you to His yoke because it is easy and His burden is light. Learn from Him, for He is gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

That is the promise of the gospel. And if God says so, it must be true. For a Christian, this does not alleviate anxiety; it gives us a place to turn in our anxious moments.

If someone reading this is really struggling with anxiety, what hope do they have of overcoming it?

HS: Lots of hope! First off, anxiety is not a mental illness. In fact, when handled properly, anxiety can lead you towards a thriving and flourishing life. It is like an emotion or a state of mind that signals that a proper response is required – comparable to the blinking light on a vehicle's dashboard; "check tire pressure." A proper response is exactly that: check the tire pressure: no need for an oil change just yet – and no need to replace the whole engine!

It is important to realize that anxiety presents itself on at least three different levels: moderate, mild and severe. A certain level of anxiety is often necessary and beneficial. If I am faced with, say, having to cross a busy street, or present a speech to a large audience, or write an important exam, or arrange for a difficult conversation, then to not experience any anxiety would actually be more troublesome.

On the other hand, if I have developed such a fear of anxiety that I cannot tolerate it, I may be led to believe that I cannot handle life without an external crutch, like a prescription drug. Even though leading pharmaceutical companies have a vested monetary interest in having me believe that, how about pressing the pause button here to look for some other responses first, prior to resorting to medication right away?

Do not take this to mean that to use medicines when anxiety persists should raise eyebrows. No, but it is also wise to ponder what Michael Emlet observes in his excellent book *Descriptions and Prescriptions*:

"...we live in a culture that doesn't tolerate any hint of 'rough seas' but yearns for the comfort of glass calm waters. This contributes to the overuse of psychoactive medication in some who only want a quick fix: they don't really want to taste the fruit that comes from persevering through choppy waters. Can taking medication actually assist in sanctification? Yes, in the same way that adequate sleep can assist in sanctification! It's not that you can buy holiness in a pill, but using medication in certain situations may help bodily conditions that allow for a greater spiritual flourishing."

RV: The Lord is near, that is your hope. Our anxieties and fears arouse the deep compassion of God for us. A child cries out

for mom or dad when they are scared. When you go to a new situation or event, it's easier to do so with someone you know. There is good reason that following "do not fear," God says "I am with you." We need a person in our struggle with anxiety and fear, and God is the Person to do it with.

Often, we look at the promises of God and we struggle to see how they map onto our life experiences. This is where lament comes in: "God, you say this, but do you see what is happening in my life?" The Psalms are beautiful places to land here, and in this way too we see God's provision for us by giving us words to come to Him. The Psalms so often wonderfully capture our inner struggles and anguish. I encourage my counselees to lament in the face of struggle, but also then to cling to God's character. Who is our God? For example, 2 Kings 6 is a passage I will use in counseling: God is a Warrior, He has fiery chariots and angels fighting for us. "Wow. I know you feel alone, but God assures He is with us always."

I also encourage counselees to "push into their fear." Fear and anxiety have a way of narrowing our worlds down because we don't want to do scary and hard things. When we push into our fears, we take God's hand and we "test and prove" that His promises, and who He is, are true. If we do not push outside of our comfort zone, we cannot experience God's grace and mercy for us in times of temptation and sorrow. I would say that overcoming anxiety ought not be a primary goal; use anxiety as an invitation or opportunity to draw nearer to God, that is the goal of life.

Are there practical things that you have found to be helpful as well (relating to physical health, media usage, diet, etc.)?

HS: Yes!

- *Physical exercise:* Adrenaline is the *stimulating* hormone: it plays an important role in your body's fight-or-flight response. Physical exercise is one very helpful way to restore the balance with a *grounding or resting* hormone, cortisol. Exercising outdoors offers additional benefits: no indoor air for a change, the changing scenery as you walk or jog...
- *Media usage:* No screen time for one to two hours prior to putting your head on the pillow. The mind needs time to prepare to enter into sleep.
- *Good night's sleep:* Embrace the fact that sleep is a gift of God. Today's society has devalued sleep to the level of an unwelcome interruption in the working routine. To receive sleep as a kind gift of God, what a difference it will make when we prepare the mind to receive it humbly and gratefully as such! (Ps. 127:2; Ps. 4:8).
- *Cut sugar out of your diet*
- *Connect meaningfully,* face to face, regularly with friends, family, neighbors.

QUOTES

"Pray, and let God worry."
– Martin Luther

"Beware of having so much to do that you really do nothing at all."
– C.H. Spurgeon

"Christ told his disciples not to be anxious about tomorrow, but he never said not to consider tomorrow. Intelligent problem solving demands careful consideration of the future effects of present solutions."
– R.C. Sproul

"Christ is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all."
– Hudson Taylor

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."
– Corrie Ten Boom

"Today is mine. Tomorrow is none of my business. If I peer anxiously into the fog of the future, I will strain my spiritual eyes so that I will not see clearly what is required of me now."
– Elizabeth Elliot

"A Christian's freedom from anxiety is not due to some guaranteed freedom from trouble, but to the folly of worry and especially to the confidence that God is our Father, that even permitted suffering is within the orbit of His care."
– John Stott

"Whether our fear is absolutely realistic, or out of proportion in our minds, our greatest refuge is Jesus Christ."
– Luci Swindoll

"Anxiety is not only a pain we must ask God to assuage, but also a weakness we must ask Him to pardon, for He has told us to take no care for the morrow."
– C.S. Lewis

- *Play board games.*
- *Make music:* Sing! Join a choir!

RV: [Further to what H.S. shared] Breathing deeply (umbrella breathing, choir breathing, diaphragm breathing, box breathing) is helpful because when we are afraid or anxious, our breathing typically becomes more rapid and shallow. When we breathe deeply, we increase oxygen into our bloodstream, which helps our brain function optimally, and shallow breathing typically is a physiological response that will increase anxiety.

Sleep is wonderful. However with anxiety sleep oftentimes is restless, broken, or simply impossible. Napping and resting physically are all helpful and listening to music to help with relaxation has been helpful for some of my counselees. I recommend soothing music like Scripture Lullabies or piano music with nature sounds. Another useful app that I found personally helpful was the Dwell App, which is a Scripture listening app that has different music to listen to while someone is reading Scripture out loud.

Screen time is often a contributor to anxiety. We all struggle to one degree or another with FOMO (fear of missing out), and an insatiable attitude for “one more” when it comes to shorts on YouTube, Instagram, or SnapChat. This leads to low-grade anxiety. Place extensive limits on social media and news outlets. In counseling I talk about the “manna principle” (shared by a professor at CCEF): God provided the Israelites with just enough manna for one day. They were not allowed to gather up or store extra manna for the next day (except the night before the Sabbath). In this way, God will give you just enough for what you need today. Where can you see God’s provision for you today?

Praying with another person through Scripture (see Donald Whitney’s resource *Praying Scripture*) is immensely helpful to not feel alone and also to know that there are words we can pray when we are feeling wordless (1 Peter 5:7). I encourage meditation on Scripture. For example, “Fear not, little flock, I have been pleased to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32) is a short phrase that we can sit and chew on for a while: “I am a sheep, God is my Shepherd. I am little but God is big and powerful. God is pleased to give to me; He is generous! He is pleased to give me His kingdom. What does it mean to be part of His kingdom? If I am part of His kingdom, that means I am a royal child, a citizen, that gives me identity”...and so forth.

What things should be avoided?

RV: I speak to a helper here: please do not assume that you understand what a person is going through even if you have struggled with anxiety. Ask good questions, seek to really know the person, and point to Jesus.

HS: A few things include:

- *Exposure to “news” media:* The incessant litany of catastrophe, discord, fights, protests, violence, and accidents –

without a split-second opportunity to actually process these events – leads to a persistent state of mind of “overwhelm,” resulting in elevated levels of anxiety.

- *Isolation*
- *Appreciate FOMO for what it is:* Ask yourself: have I led myself into FOMO – a Fear Of Missing Out – and do I now need to know what is going on in the lives of all my Facebook friends, etc.? As a result, have I developed a screen dependency in the process? As well: have you experienced the other side of the digital platform coin, JOMO? Have you ever participated in a fast from digital media, and discovered the Joy Of Missing Out (on unnecessary information, trivia, tales, gossip)?

Is there anything else you want to share with our readers on this topic?

HS: I believe that there is much to say in support of the notion that “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” Parents are more crucial in this regard than teachers, pastors, elders. When anxiety-related interventions need to be initiated by teachers or church leaders, it is typically “too little, too late.”

Generally, children must have two questions answered. The first one is: “Mom, dad – do you love me?”


The answer, in a multitude of different ways must be a resounding “Yes, child! You are loved, you are unique, you have gifts, you are safe and you are valuable!”

The second question is: “Can I get, and do, what I want?”

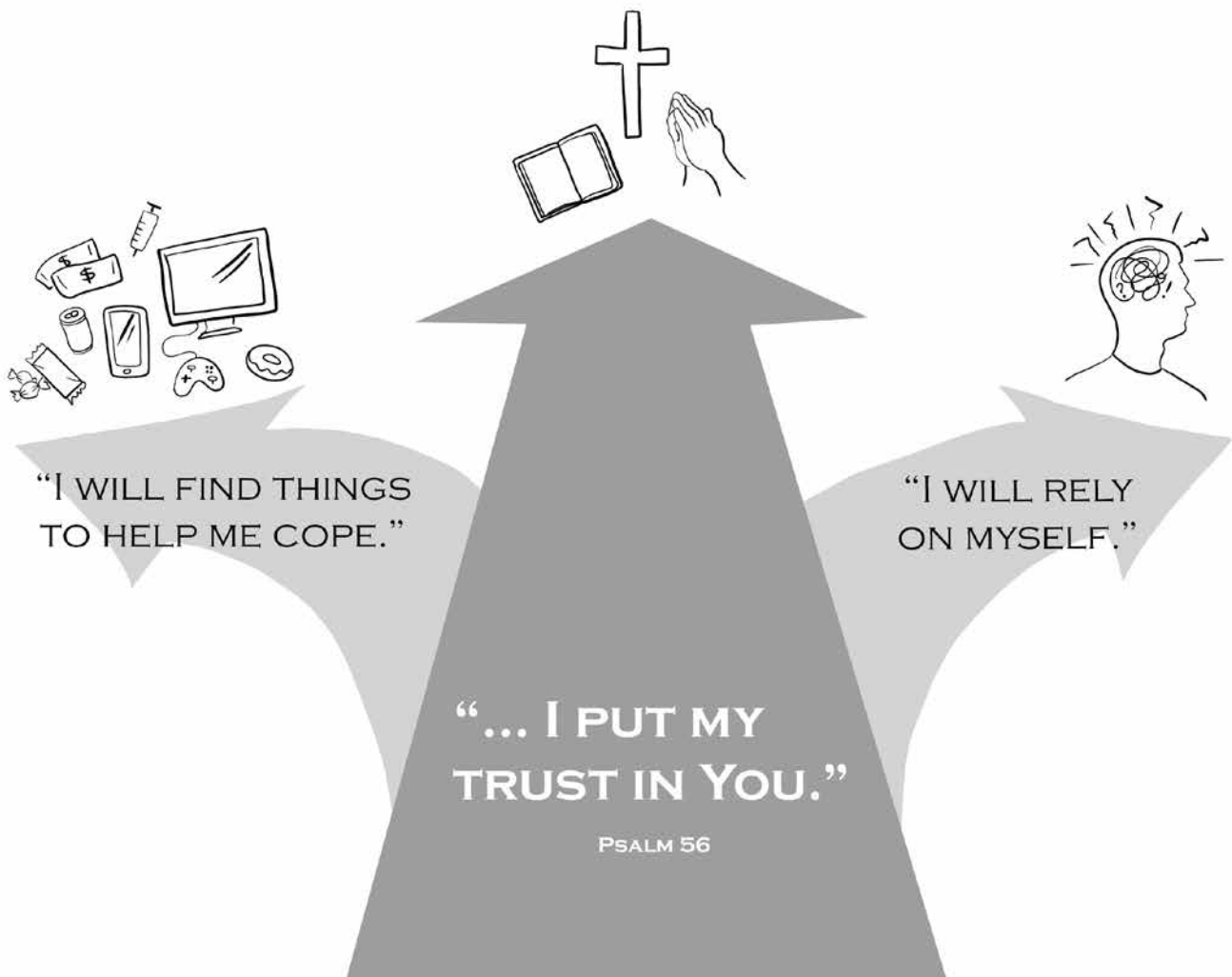
And the answer has to be a transparent “NO! We love you, and because we do, we will train you to become an individual, a character with a sturdy spine and a soft heart, because – life is difficult, and you are not in the driver’s seat of your life, and contrary to today’s society’s insistent mantra, you are not the center of the universe, and your life is not just about you.”

This sobering and limiting boundary-setting template, surprisingly, reduces a multitude of anxieties for children and teens.

RV: One topic that is under-conversed is the reality of postpartum anxiety some women can experience. Women have described feeling “crazy” and scared because of intrusive thoughts that involve thinking and even visualizing acts of harm towards themselves or their children. Women have been paralyzed by obsessively checking on their children while sleeping. Women have described a paralyzing fear of leaving the home after a child and being unable to sometimes get out of a vehicle if they have managed to drive somewhere.

You’re not alone and you’re not crazy if you can resonate with the above examples. Postpartum anxiety (and depression!) is real. It involves hormones so it is a biological struggle that is interacting with heart desires, past experiences, and worldview. Both counseling, being monitored by a general practitioner, and visiting a naturopath doctor are all recommendations that are available and that I would recommend. 

WHEN I AM AFRAID ...





A PASTOR ON ANXIETY

by Mark Penninga

Rev. Dirk Poppe is serving as the pastor of the Southern River Free Reformed Church, in Western Australia. Prior to this he served as pastor of churches in BC & Alberta. Dirk is married to Amanda, and the LORD has blessed them with six children. Shortly after I was married, my wife and I moved to Southern Alberta where we had the privilege of being shepherded by Rev. Poppe. His care for the hearts and well-being of the flock was very evident, and he was also one of the first to speak to me about the value of biblical counseling.

Knowing the critical connection between spiritual health and anxiety, I wanted to go beyond professional counselors and also ask a pastor for insight into anxiety. Pastor Poppe was at the top of my list, and I'm grateful for his insights. What follows is an abridged edit of our interview. – MP



Have you seen any changes when it comes to the prevalence of anxiety in the church community and how we are dealing with it?

Probably the biggest change that has led to an increase in the incidence of anxiety among the youth in the past 25 years is the introduction of phones and social media. It seems that there are several dynamics here. Some children are bullied online. Some children, especially girls, tend to compare themselves to others more which leads to certain insecurities and increased anxiety. But underneath of that I wonder if there is a more foundational issue. Some people who have spent time on the mission field have told me that the incidence of depression and anxiety is much lower on the mission field than in our culture. Some people in these cultures live much closer to family and friends and their lives are much more integrated

together. I have to wonder that with our wealth and increasing adoption of technology we are more isolated from others now than before. While social media, email and other forms of electronic communication give the semblance of relationship, it is a poor substitute for sitting around making memories with your friends or brothers and sisters in Christ. I also wonder if the algorithms in our social media lead us to a lot of distressing stories that lead to an increase in anxiety and depression.

Have we changed in the way that we are dealing with it? Yes and no. As more members and office bearers in our churches become aware of issues like trauma and its effects and various mental health issues, there is an increasing sensitivity to those who genuinely struggle with these matters. I am very thankful for that. I have witnessed numerous times where people in leadership positions have been able to provide good counsel in these situations. At the same time, I have also witnessed some who lack awareness about these issues take an approach that is quite damaging to those who struggle with anxiety. On the whole I think that I have seen more awareness and sensitivity to these issues now than earlier.

At the same time, as our culture has moved away from the acknowledgement of God in the past years, this has undermined a recognition of sin. You will rarely read a newspaper that acknowledges that a person is evil or has committed sin. Instead, our culture has adopted a therapeutic mindset. And so the problem is often identified as the mental health issues the person is struggling with. This trend has also impacted our members. It seems that some of our members are quicker to seek counseling or medical help for depression and anxiety now than in the past. I wonder if that is always justified. Could it be for some of our people that in some situations the problem is sin and the solution is not medication, but repentance?

What is the role of the church in response to those who struggle with anxiety? How does this intersect with professional help from counselors?

I think that the church can play a wonderful role to help some people who struggle with anxiety. One of the most healing things for someone who has experienced trauma, who has mental health issues or who is stressed out by life is to be surrounded by a community of people who love them. A counselor can be enormously helpful as they take the time to assist a person to understand what is going on in their mind or to deal with past traumas or specific marriage problems. A doctor or psychiatrist can be

THE BIBLE ON FEAR AND ANXIETY

God knows what we need to hear, and based on how often He says it – dozens and dozens of times – one of the things we most need to hear is “do not fear” (Gen. 15:1, 21:17, 26:24, Josh. 8:1, Judges 6:23, etc. and etc.). What follows are some more of God’s assurances and commands addressing fear and anxiety. – *JD*

Don’t go it alone

“Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.” – Prov. 19:20

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” – Phil. 4:6

God can be trusted with the future

“Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Sufficient for the day is its own troubles.” – Matt. 6:34

Why we feel blah...and hope

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.... For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves...groan inwardly...” – Rom. 8:18,22-23a

God is big

“The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” – Ps. 118:7

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” – Is. 41:10

Don’t worry about what your idols think

“Have no other gods before me.” – Ex. 20:3

“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” – Gal. 1:10

Repent

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” Prov. 28:13

It can be good to simplify

“Better a little with the fear of the Lord, than great wealth with turmoil.” – Prov. 15:16

very helpful in prescribing certain medications to get them through a tough time.

But at the same time, in order to heal, it's also very important for someone who is anxious to have some close friends and a community of people who love and support them. Those who heal from anxiety, distressing events and past traumas are often those who are surrounded by a number of people who love them deeply, care for them well and who offer them wise counsel.

The Bible calls some forms of anxiety a sin that needs to be repented of. I have heard it described as a mild form of atheism (not trusting God or going about things as if we are the one who has to figure it out on our own). How would you explain the difference between healthy care/concern, and the type of anxiety that Jesus warns us against?

Good question. It's beautiful to have a deep level of concern about those things that God has called us to care about. We can be deeply concerned about the future of our business, the well-being of our children or the direction of our church. And yet at times we can become anxious in our hearts about these things.

One of the ways in which I have dealt with this over the years is to understand that I am responsible for my contribution to a situation, but I am not responsible for the outcomes. The times we get stressed out is when we put ourselves in the place of God and we try to determine outcomes. We are not God. We do not have the power to determine outcomes. The LORD does. So instead of becoming stressed when things don't go the way that we think is best, it's important to humble ourselves before the LORD, do what we can to help, and then in faith rely on Him to work things out.

From a spiritual perspective, what would you say may be contributing to increased anxiety in the world and in the church?

At core the single biggest factor that leads to increased anxiety is a rejection of God. The LORD is the source of life and love. Those who know God and who walk intimately with Him learn what it looks like to be gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

As we know God, we learn what justice and righteousness looks like. We learn to love others from the heart as we have been loved. We learn to treat others rightly as we have been treated by God. If we know of God's faithfulness, then we learn to trust Him and to be faithful to our promises. As Christ lives in our hearts, the fruit of the Spirit is manifest within us. Our lives are characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In 1 John 4:18 we are told, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." As we experience the love of God and live out of that love, we are set free from all fear and anxiety.

Those who reject God do not have the Spirit. They don't


know of God's love and grace, His kindness and help, His justice and righteousness. As they live in sin and get caught under the grip of sin, they come into profound distress which often leads to anxiety. In Romans 1:18-32 and 2 Timothy 2:1-5, Paul spells out the sin that comes into the lives of those people who reject God. It's a brutal life that leads to much distress and anxiety. If we become apathetic and drift away from the LORD, it should be no surprise that we experience more deceit, slander, injustice, oppression, violence and evil. These things not only steal your joy. They also lead to much anxiety. So, I would say that one of the most important things is to know the LORD well, understand how rich you are in Christ and to walk closely with Him.

Are there any specific things that you would encourage God's children to do to help them and their children not be trapped in anxiety?

Love each other deeply. If you love your husband or wife deeply, if your marriage is characterized by kindness, gentleness, compassion and honesty, that creates a context of peace, safety and stability for you and your family. If mom loves and nurtures the little ones, if dinnertime with your teenagers drags out because you are having a great time sharing and laughing together, then most of the time anxiety kind of fades into the background. If you open your heart and home to each other and have an abundance of love for your brothers and sisters in the communion of the saints, then people thrive and anxiety disappears.

The most important thing to grow in love and empathy is to know the LORD. It's as you know how much God loves you and as you understand how rich you are in Christ, that you have a deep-down peace in your heart and anxiety melts away.

Get out into creation and get to know your LORD as He has revealed Himself in this world. Find the trails in your area and hike all of them. Go camping. Take along a canoe and spend some time on the water. Study some part of God's creation and become an expert in it. There are few things more delightful and invigorating than regularly spending time in God's beautiful creation and marveling at the glory and wisdom of the God who created it.

Also, take steps to limit the influence of those things that tend to isolate you from others. Ask Christ to help you have self-control over your use of media and technology. Get everyone in the family to monitor their screen time and write it on a chart on the fridge. And then pray over it. I would encourage parents to limit the time they and their children spend on social media, watching TV or playing video games. These things often suck the life out of us and steal our joy. Find a sport you love. Take up running. Make it a habit to go for a walk with a friend. Make sure that you get a good night of rest. Ask Christ to help you use the time and the gifts that you have to help and bless others. God often rescues us from anxiety as we focus our attention on Christ and all He has done for us and then seek to live a life of gratitude and service before Him. 



A BIBLICAL COUNSELOR'S ADVICE FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Earlier we shared insights from a few biblical counselors about anxiety. What follows is further insight from Heres Snijder, specifically directed to pastors, elders, and deacons. – MP

What advice do you have for church leadership as they minister to those who struggle with anxiety?

- a. **A posture of compassion:** Church leaders are soul shepherds. For preachers, elders and deacons, a posture of compassion is essential because Jesus was moved with compassion when He saw the exhausted and burdened crowds (Matthew 9:36). Anxiety is a heavy and exhausting burden for many. Paul instructed Galatian Christians to train themselves to carry their own burden of responsibility and to share each other's burden too heavy to carry on their own. Anxiety calls for an understanding, compassionate, encouraging response to the sufferer, and for ongoing training in how to best handle anxiety provoking situations.
- b. **A posture of patience and longsuffering:** Frequently there are several unhelpful thinking styles that have developed over time, and these need to be exposed, identified, and replaced with healthy thinking skills and thought patterns. Paul identified the reality that the evil one wants to establish footholds and strongholds in our minds (Eph. 4:27, 2 Cor. 10:4). When anxiety has become a stronghold in the mind it takes concerted efforts to conquer it.
- c. **A posture of prayer:** Anxiety is one of the many "cries of the soul," and it reveals our deepest questions about God. It is addressed in many psalms. The poets who wrote these knew about anxiety, personally, and up close. It is therefore indispensable for soul-shepherds to have an intimate knowledge of the content and anxious thoughts expressed in psalms like Psalm 22, 23, 27, 30, 34, 46, 51, 61, 103, and 121.
- d. **Training in emotional intelligence and relational wisdom:** The attitude of "forget about your emotions" is unhelpful in the extreme. *Empathy* is an essential skill for pastors, elders and deacons.
- e. **Encourage those who struggle to seek out counselors:** Fortunately, many pastors and elders have this mindset. As one pastor shared with me: "We are always looking for good Christian counselors as the need is great...but the counselors are few and the wait times are long."



In the Right Place to Serve:

Christians are leading the way in helping one city's homeless

by Marty VanDriel

By God's providence, Christians are often in exactly the right place at the right time to do the good works that He prepared for us! For nearly 100 years, the Lighthouse Mission has worked with the down and out on the streets of Bellingham, a university city near the Canadian border, preaching the Gospel while lending a material hand to those in need. As homelessness and despair due to drug addiction have grown in the last ten years, local government officials have begun to lean more and more on the work done by the Lighthouse – work that is helping pull people off the streets, and into productive lives through the power of God's Word.

Hans Erchinger-Davis is the Executive Director of the Mission. Hans grew up near Bellingham in a Christian home with loving parents who shared the Gospel wherever they went, including a memorable one-year trip through com-

munist eastern Europe when Hans was a boy. Erchinger-Davis studied at Regent College in Vancouver (where Professor J.I. Packer was among his teachers), but his first career was in technology, and later in film. On the cusp of a career as a documentary filmmaker, Hans was offered a job at the Lighthouse Mission in 2006, and his life, and the lives of thousands of others, was changed forever.



Executive Director Hans Erchinger-Davis has been working at the Mission since 2006.

HELP GIVEN IN THE NAME OF GOD

Erchinger-Davis estimates that there are between 800 and 1,000 homeless people in Whatcom county at any one time, with the majority living on the city streets of downtown Bellingham. Volunteers and employees of the Mission make regular contact with these struggling men and women, giving out coffee and clothing, and inviting them to “base camp” for a hot meal and shelter for the night. Already at “base camp,” counselors share the good news of Jesus Christ, and offer resources and referrals, letting the new arrivals know that there is a way out of the despair in which they find themselves.

Those who are willing to move up from “base camp” into a formal program of recovery must commit to being off drugs and alcohol before they are admitted to recovery houses that build on the foundation of drug-free, value-filled living, to

begin training towards a productive life. “The Christian message is always part of our teaching,” says Erchinger-Davis. “Ninety-nine percent of our graduates are Christians or become Christians.”

“We follow Jesus onto the streets and encampments in our community. The message of Jesus cannot be separated from the services we offer. It is in our DNA to carry out the mission of healing homelessness with Christ’s power and love,” said Erchinger-Davis. “It’s because of this that the Lighthouse Mission declines any offers of government funding for programs and services that might limit the ability for us to provide our homeless friend voluntary participation in prayer, worship, Bible studies and basic Christian discipleship.”

EAGER TO DO EVEN MORE

Now, in 2023, the Lighthouse Mission is in the middle of an ambitious construction project: the building out of which the Mission did its main work was in rough shape, and the Mission’s board decided that the most cost-effective solution was to tear it down and re-build a more suitable facility, with room for more training, more beds, more cooking facilities, and room for small retail businesses that those in the program can operate.

Whatcom County (in which Bellingham is located) has a fairly liberal governing “county council,” although there are believers among the county representatives. Officials have acknowledged publicly and privately that the Mission does invaluable work among the homeless that local government is not able to provide. As a result, both the city and county had committed to helping fund portions of the construction project that were centered on humanitarian aid (things like shelter, meals, and vocational training).

SETBACKS, BUT NO COMPROMISE

Recently however, one of the county council members made it her personal mission to deny any funding to the rebuilding project due to the Mission’s “discriminatory” hiring practices. (The Lighthouse Mission requires that all of its employees acknowledge the organiza-



The Mission provides hot meals, but they don’t stop with providing for the physical. It is always delivered in the context of the Gospel.



There are as many as 1,000 homeless people living in Whatcom County.



A portable shower unit travels around the city for homeless people who won’t come to the Mission... yet.



Mission volunteers reach out to homeless people who won't come to the mission. Sometimes that means strapping large coffee carafes to their backs and scooting around town to hand out hot coffee.

tion's Christian roots, including a Biblical understanding of human sexuality and the sinfulness of homosexual relationships.) The council member won a temporary victory, as the body decided not to provide funding for any of the Mission's rebuild (even the portions of the work that could be described as humanitarian aid).

Again, by the grace of the Lord, this temporary setback was overcome in God's providence. Just a few days after the council made its decision, a local donor contacted Hans to let him know that he and his family would be donating \$400,000 to help cover the shortfall. But that was just the beginning! Kathy Kershner, a Christian who serves on county council, lobbied the other members of council, reminding them of the valuable services that the Mission provides to Whatcom County. Kershner moved to rescind the motion denying funding, and a majority of council agreed.

HOPE FOR FUTURE RESTS IN THE LORD

Despite many victories and successes for the Mission, Erchinger-Davis' personal life has been visited with tragedy. His father, a faithful Christian, struggled with bi-polar disorder. His best friend from high school became a drug addict, and despite intervention attempts and help that was available so close by, died of

a drug overdose a couple of blocks from Hans' office. Erchinger-Davis' sister was a victim of domestic violence, and recently took her own life, leaving behind two young children.

While some might despair at these tragedies, Hans is able to rejoice in God's goodness, and to accept that God has a plan that he can't fully understand. "It's hard! My friend died, and I was not able to help him, but partly through my own work, the Mission has been able to help thousands who have escaped lives of brokenness through God's love." The Lord has put His people where they are needed to fulfill His gracious plan. Hans summarizes: "We aim for healing homelessness both in the present, the future, and for eternity with the tender love of Jesus Christ in Whatcom County." ^{RP}

Assistant Editor Marty VanDriel is a board member of the Lighthouse Mission Ministries Foundation, which provides long-term funding for the work of the Lighthouse Mission Ministry, and was asked by the editor to profile the organization. Pictures are frame captures, taken with permission, from the Lighthouse Mission Ministries Foundation's 5-part video series "Hope for Bellingham: Response to Homelessness," which you can find here: thelighthousemission.org/the-ministry/education



The Free Reformed School Association (Tas) Inc. invites applications for the following positions:

Teachers

Urgently require Secondary and Primary teachers for 2023/2024 Full-Time, Part-Time, 12-month or 6-month appointments accepted

At JCS, our vision is to be a *strongly connected* community of learners, *deeply committed* to our faith and to continual growth, nurturing individuals to be their best in the service of God and to His glory.

We are looking to add enthusiastic, committed teachers to our team for the 2023/24 school years. Due to growing class sizes we need additional, suitably qualified, teachers. Applications for full-time and part-time employment welcome, with 6-month or 12-month appointments considered.

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Applicants must be a member of the Free Reformed Church of Australia or any of her sister churches, be able to be registered to teach in Tasmania and be registered to work with vulnerable people.

Conditions and salary are based on the Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020.

Expressions of interest for future positions, full-time or part-time, are welcome.

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

Forward completed applications to the Business Manager:

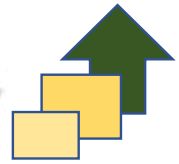
- E-mail: wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Address: PO Box 89, Launceston 7250, Tasmania, Australia.

For more information, contact the Principal, Mr Daniel Coote

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



Building for the future



53 Howick Street



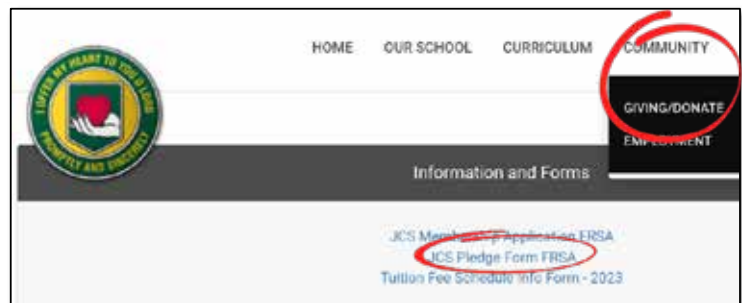
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The new facility allows us to plan for the future, as it provides space for expansive and specialised learning facilities and ample room for gardens, landscaping, and natural spaces. The spacious facility will reduce busyness and noise, with scope to provide improved student support services for enhanced teaching, learning and well-being.

The Free Reformed School Association (TAS) is a small, stand-alone community with 85 members. While we are trying to cover this debt with our own community, we are also calling on our interstate and international brothers and sisters who may be in a position to help us continue the important task of educating our children. Can you give a one-off donation or a pledge over 2-5 years?



Head to www.jcs.tas.edu.au for a pledge form,
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MAKING HOSPITALITY EASIER:

How Onion Dip Changed the World

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Everyone has likely tasted onion dip and millions of homemakers have made it. The recipe is incredibly simple: mix dried onion soup mix with 2 cups of sour cream – *voilà* you are done! Place it in a bowl and surround it with chips, crackers, celery and carrot sticks, and any other veggies you think your guests will enjoy. Be suave and call it *crudités*!

I still remember the first time I tasted it, at a Tupperware party in the early 80s (though it has been around since 1954!). I tentatively took a tiny beige blob and placed it on my plate. After tasting it with a ruffled potato chip, I eagerly returned for more.

I was fascinated to observe a display about homemaking through the decades in a museum that showed a 1950s type kitchen and mentioned onion dip (also known as French onion dip, and originally known as California dip, where an unknown homemaker first created it). Their interpretation was that this “California dip” totally changed hospitality throughout America and Canada. Previously, if one was going to entertain, a full dinner would be expected, perhaps with intricate *hors d’oeuvres* beforehand. Remember,

you couldn’t run into Costco or Walmart’s frozen section and grab mini quiche or ready-to-cook breaded shrimp back then.

After the recipe was printed in a newspaper, the Lipton Company got hold of it and began advertising it on the popular *Arthur Godfrey Show* on television. The California dip usage spread like wildfire and Lipton’s onion soup mix flew off the shelves. Pictures were shown of a host and hostess cheerfully serving chips and dip and veggies to their guests. This was so easy to prepare that people began inviting friends over more often, because the workload had lessened significantly. Not only did it become incredibly popular in the 50s, it has remained so ever since.

DON’T LET PRIDE GET IN THE WAY

Onion dip probably didn’t “change the world” in a big way, but by providing an easier way to entertain, it did promote friendship and fellowship. It was a step in the right direction.

How often have you heard someone say that they don’t have the time, energy, money, or nice enough house to provide hospitality to others? With an attitude that “We cannot do it unless we reach

a certain level of perfection,” we actually may fall into pride and ignore God’s Word that calls us to care for one another. Rosaria Butterfield in her book *The Gospel Comes With a House Key* says:

“God calls Christians to practice hospitality in order to build loving Christian communities, to build nightly table fellowship with fellow image bearers, to ease the pain of orphanhood, widowhood, and prison, to be qualified as elders in the church, and to be good and faithful stewards of what God has given to us in the person, work, example, obedience, and suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.... God calls us to practice hospitality as a daily way of life, not as an occasional activity when time and finance allow.... God promises to put the lonely in families (Ps 68:6) and he intends to use your house as living proof.”

If we only think about our own family and relatives and do not reach out to others, we miss the opportunity to build up one another in our churches. Instead, by inviting others to our imperfect home for some basic food and company, we make



time to listen to one another.

We learn that Joe just lost his job and we might have a connection that could help him. We find out that Sally is an expert seamstress, and maybe she can help us understand how to make the shirt we were confused about. We learn that Janet has a book group that meets monthly at her home and Jed can no longer cut his lawn because of his back trouble. Myrtle just found out she has cancer and she is frightened, and Darius is worried sick about his teenaged son. We pray together. We sing hymns or psalms together. We show love, and we rack our brains to think of what else we can do to help. We follow Hebrews 10:24-25:

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Or, alternatively, we say that we are tired or too poor, and we always stay home alone and watch television or plug ourselves into our phones or computers. Sports and movies and funny videos are way more interesting, and even easier than serving onion dip.

Some people say that they need all day Sunday to spend time with their immediate family because they work and have other activities on the other six days. Consider the fact that showing hospitality is a family activity that your kids will learn from. And if you only use two to three hours, you will still have time left over to interact as family.

The amount of hospitality shown will vary from family to family. But every adult should be exhibiting some, even if they just have a small apartment – they might invite two people over for coffee and discussion. It's the time together that counts far more than the fare that is served or the furniture and house that it's served in.


SIMPLIFY

Fellowship doesn't have to include a meal! Invite someone for chatting, singing, praying, and/or talking about what

God taught you in the sermon, and serve nothing, or only coffee and store-bought cookies or coffee cake. There's no need to one-up someone else.

As mentioned, onion dip, chips, and veggies have been one way that people can easily show hospitality to others. You could meet in a park on a beautiful day, as well. Other easy ways might include:

- Serve hors d'oeuvres from the frozen section, heated in your oven for a short while.
- Have a meal of soup and buns, as has been the tradition for years. If you cannot manage homemade soup, canned soup as is or “doctored up” (such as adding leftover chicken and carbs to the basic soup) is fine. Homemade bread or biscuits are great, but store-bought Italian bread (available for a low cost at Walmart) can suffice as well.
- Pre-made frozen meatballs, heated with marinara or sweet and sour sauce are always good. Buy the sauce or make an easy one by mixing one jar of chili sauce (found in the same grocery aisle as the ketchup) and one jar of grape jam/jelly; heat, thicken if necessary, and pour over the meatballs.
- Cookies, cake, pudding, ice cream, or pie, whether homemade or store bought are a good option.
- Fruit is a healthy choice. If you don't have time to make a fruit salad, just serve sliced watermelon, bunches of grapes, orange slices, or strawberries.

Make a practice of inviting people over regularly, perhaps once or twice a month to get started. Take an interest in them. And don't just invite the same family and friends – work your way through your church directory and invite people that you barely know. The point is to get to know them better so you can build one another up in the Lord. 

*Therefore encourage one another
and build one another up,
just as you are doing.
– 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

WORDS AND PHRASES QUIZ ANSWERS

(FROM PAGE 64)

1. barking up the wrong tree
2. get one's goat
3. called on the carpet
4. nest egg
5. a nine days' wonder
6. hobos
7. biscuit
8. salarium or salary
9. pouring oil on troubled waters
10. embarrassment
11. caught red-handed
12. getting the sack
13. not able to hold a candle (to)
14. You are not out of the woods yet
15. pretty penny
16. Mind your P's (that is *pieds*, feet) and Q's (that is *queues*, wigs)
17. dead as a doornail
18. beating around the bush
19. let the cat out of the bag
20. sweater
21. fire dogs
22. pansy
23. slapstick
24. Melba toast
25. poor as a church mouse
26. mad as a hatter
27. bigwigs
28. a red-letter day
29. Adam's apple
30. baker's dozen

PUPPY LOVE: IN PRAISE OF PETS

by Jan Broersma

I was lucky enough to share my growing-up years with a big red chow chow. After deferring my request to get a dog for some time, my parents finally gave me the go-ahead when I was twelve; by this time I was old enough to take responsibility for a dog, and my paper-route and babysitting money would be enough to cover dog food and vet check-ups. My dad built a sturdy doghouse, we visited a shelter or two, I scoured the pet section of the classified ads, and eventually Cody joined our family.

It had pretty much been love at first sight, and Cody was my faithful companion for the next thirteen years. He knew the sound of the school bus stopping a street away, and was always eagerly waiting for me when I got home. Our nightly walks were a calming and peaceful part of my day. Cody and I even won a pet/owner look-alike contest once (after an unfortunate hair experiment . . . the kit was *supposed* to turn my hair more blonde . . .)

Cody's been gone for many years now, but I've been thinking about him lately, and about the unique place that dogs and other pets can have in our lives. As humans, we've been created with a deep need for things like companionship, connection, and physical touch. And although pets can't (and shouldn't) replace human relationships, there's something beautiful and simple about the love they give us: it's unconditional and uncomplicated by the things that can add stress to human interactions. Dogs don't judge or hold a grudge or carry anxiety-inducing expectations.

I asked a few friends and family members about what their dogs meant to them, and quickly discovered that people love to talk about their furry companions, share photos and stories, and reminisce about past loved pets; "I could talk about our dogs all day!" commented one of my friends. And I loved hearing their stories.

COCOA

One of my sisters-in-law, for example, told me about an abandoned dog named Cocoa that stole her heart. My sister-in-law spent some time living up north in Fort Smith, NWT; a lifelong dog lover, she regularly volunteered at the local dog shelter there. One evening she noticed a new arrival, a beautiful black mixed breed with brown markings, but was saddened to see the sign outside his pen: "Be careful, aggressive dog; don't allow out with other dogs." This angry, wary dog was slated to be euthanized the next time the vet came around, as he was too difficult for the volunteers to handle, and unlikely to find a new home.

When she gently approached the dog, she found him scared and timid, but not vicious. Over time they formed a bond. The other volunteers noticed a change in Cocoa, and the plans to euthanize him were put on hold. Unfortunately, my sister-in-law's rental didn't allow pets, but she ended up moving just so she could adopt him.

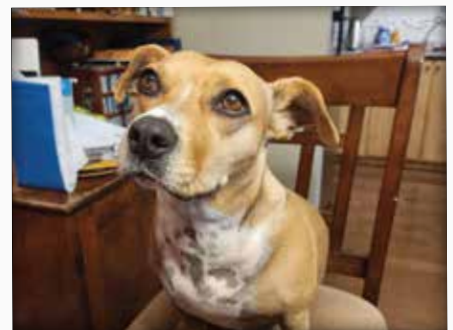
"He brought me companionship and



The inimitable Cody



Cocoa: a beautiful rescue



Luisa: takes good care of her owners

friendship while living in such a remote Northern little town," she remembers. "He brought me joy knowing he was happy and loved and able to live out the rest of his short life . . . knowing what being loved felt like."

It's that combination of giving and

receiving love that seems to be at the heart of the bond we have with our pets; they give us boundless affection, but they need us too. Both aspects are good for us.

LUISA

One of my brothers says that having his dog Luisa (a rescue dog that he and his wife adopted a few years ago) is like living with a toddler in many ways: “Her needs come first.” He feels that dog ownership can lead to a certain sense of purpose and a more selfless attitude to life. When I see devoted dog owners trudging through the rain with their dogs, or going through the undignified process of cleaning up after them, I’m inclined to agree. Do our pet interactions cultivate character traits in us that, ultimately, help us in other relationships and areas of life? I would suspect so.

Studies on the emotional, psychological, and even physical benefits of owning a dog or other pet have noted decreased stress and depression, and even lower blood pressure and better cardiovascular health. A truly objective study is almost impossible to design – what is cause, and what is simply correlation? – but the immediate benefits of positive pet interactions have been more definitely demonstrated. Simply petting a dog can reduce the stress hormone cortisol, and time spent with a loved pet raises levels of oxytocin, a feel-good hormone associated with bonding. And when stress goes down, other health markers tend to improve – with the reverse also true.

CYPRESS AND WINSTON

Another sister-in-law initially had mixed feelings about bringing a dog into their home, after several years without one. Her teenage kids are growing up and building lives of their own, and she felt like they were past the little-kids-and-a-puppy-in-the-backyard stage of family life. But Cypress, a gentle “Goldendoodle,” has been a blessing to all of them. When her seventeen-year-old son has something on his mind, he’ll find Cypress for some “dog love,” and my sister-in-law says she can just see her son’s tension drain away. She says when she’s feeling stressed, Cypress will seek her out. Getting outside for regular walks with Cypress has also

been beneficial. And coming home to a house that was getting to be a little too empty, but isn’t anymore, lifts her spirits.

Others I’ve talked to agree that dogs seem to have a “sixth sense” about their owners’ moods, and are quick to comfort and give affection. My brother says that Luisa can seem to tell when he’s had a more difficult day at work; when he walks in the door, he gets an extra dose of exuberant affection. One of my friends, reflecting on her “Westie,” Winston, puts it this way: “He is completely devoted to me, always attuned to my mood. He celebrates with me when I laugh and comforts me when I’m sad.”

Not surprisingly, the benefits of dogs or other pets is most noticeable among those who may be lonelier or struggling in some way. Pets provide companionship and that vital physical touch we all need; pets can also give a sense of purpose and structure, remind us that we’re needed, and take our minds off ourselves. A dog can be the catalyst that prompts a lonely senior to get up, get outside, and engage with life – all of which are good things that often lead to more good things.

PETS IN THEIR PLACE

Of course, pets replacing human relationships is problematic; the “pets instead of kids” phenomenon is disturbing, as is the astronomical amount of money that North Americans spend on their pets (Americans spend upwards of \$100 billion every year). But in their place, pets are a unique blessing. God as our loving Father knows what we need, and delights in giving us the good gifts of His creation. And surely the human-pet bond is one of those gifts.

As for me, I haven’t had a dog since Cody died. Family life is already busy and full. Do we really want to take on the time commitment and expense of a dog? Do I really want to vacuum that much? On the other hand, how can we argue with all



Cypress: a gentle and calming companion



The affectionate and exuberant Winston

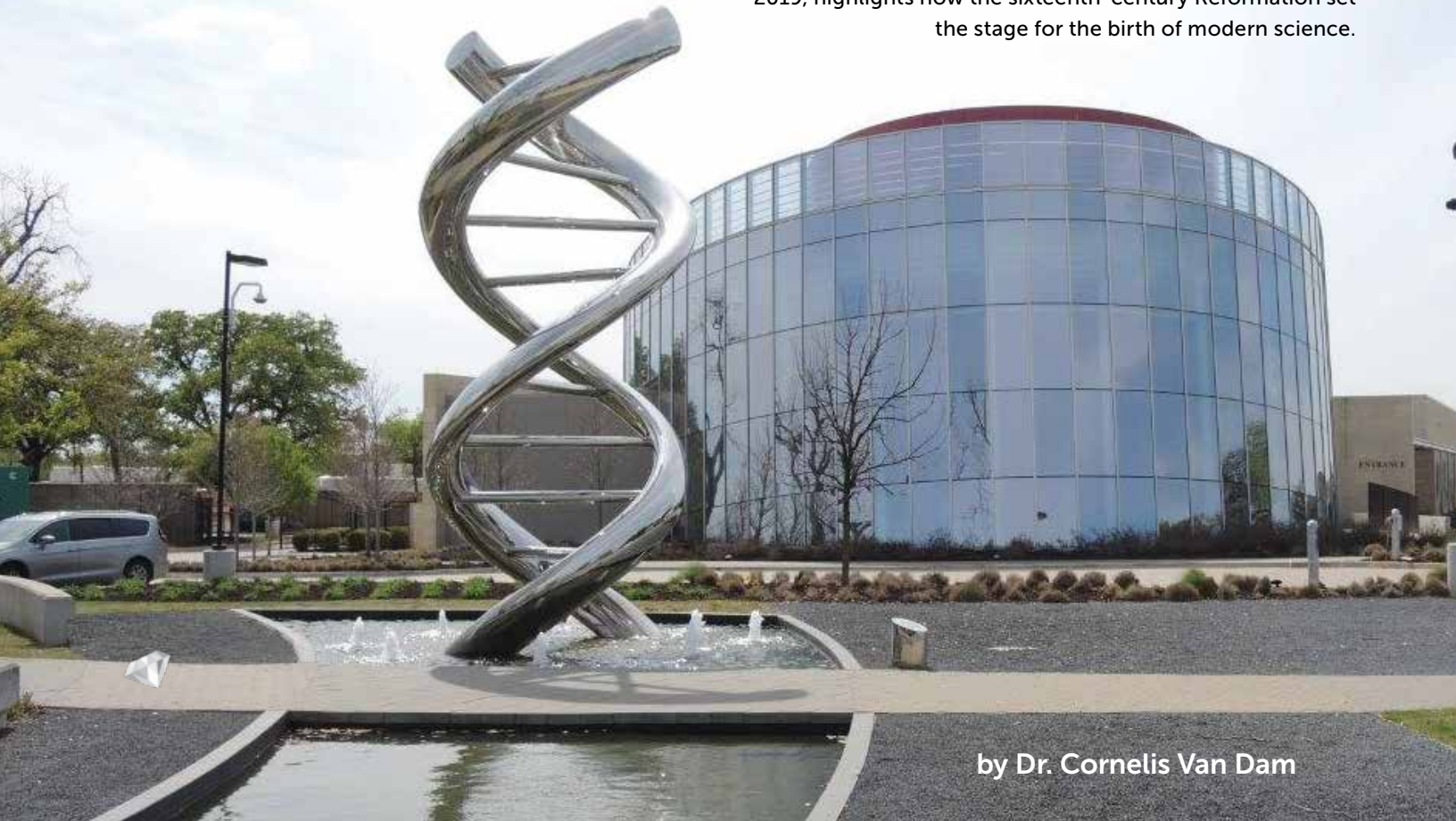


Sawyer (as in Tom), the newest pup in our extended family

those endorphins?

For now, we’ve gotten some guppies, and our nine-year-old daughter is campaigning for gerbils. A slippery slope? Time will tell whether there will be any four-legged friends in our future . . . but either way, I’ll always be grateful that there was one inimitable chow chow in my past. **RP**

The ICR's impressive Discovery Center, which opened in 2019, highlights how the sixteenth-century Reformation set the stage for the birth of modern science.



by Dr. Cornelis Van Dam

ICR'S IMPACTFUL HALF CENTURY

A look at the Institute for Creation Research (ICR), its work, and its resources

The Institute for Creation Research (ICR) in Dallas, Texas, was established in 1970 and has developed into an outstanding center of scientific research where well qualified scientists probe and seek to understand the mysteries of God's creation (www.icr.org). Their impressive Discovery Center which opened in 2019 highlights how the sixteenth-century Reformation set the stage for the birth of modern science and takes the visitor on an informative journey that includes key biblical events which are relevant for science, stunning displays, and some of the results of their research.

Regular shows in the planetarium offer awesome displays of the wonders of God's creation.

This past March, my wife and I had the opportunity to visit ICR. It all started with an email from a staff member of ICR, who had read my book, *In the Beginning: Listening to Genesis 1 and 2* (2021, 400 pages). After ongoing contact by email and even in person during a confer-

ence in Denver, we ended up visiting the Institute. It was a memorable experience to tour the facilities and get updates from the scientists working there on their research.

The purpose of this article is to introduce some of the work done in ICR since it is committed to honoring the Bible as God's infallible Word, also when doing scientific research. What the Bible states to be true is accepted as reliable infor-





mation also for a scientist. This laudable approach has enormous consequences since the scientists at ICR reject scientific theories that contradict the clear teachings of Scripture, such as evolution. Much of their research results in showing that the actual facts of science are more readily in agreement with the biblical account of creation and subsequent events like the world-wide flood in the days of Noah than with evolutionary theories of origin spanning billions of years. Their publications, some of which I will highlight in this article, are all very accessible and lavishly illustrated although they are also full of in-depth science.

BIOLOGICAL ISSUES

In 2005, Dr. Mary Schweitzer announced one of greatest paleontological discoveries in history, the finding of soft pliable organic tissue including blood vessels in a dinosaur bone. This discovery, followed by more of the same, has called into question the dating of millions of

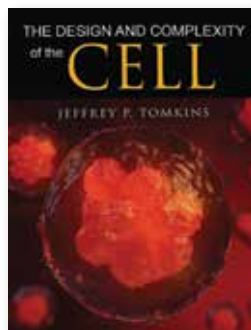
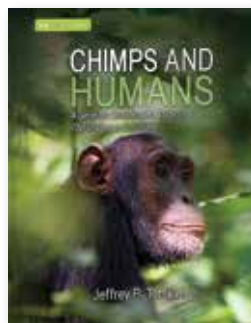
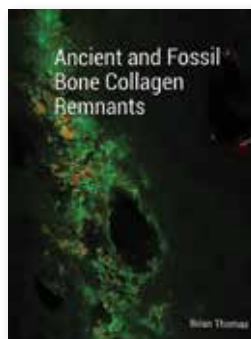
years usually assigned to such fossils since such tissue cannot last that long. ICR scientist Brian Thomas did his Ph.D. thesis in paleobiochemistry on this issue at the University of Liverpool. It has been published by ICR as ***Ancient and Fossil Bone Collagen Remnants*** (2019, 137 pages). His conclusions include the following:

“The pervasive presence of proteins in fossils combined with their short half-lives present a poor fit with deep time. Last, the prevalence of radiocarbon in fossils combined with its even shorter half-life would reasonably follow from a biblical origins scenario. If the Noachic Flood deposited those fossils only thousands of years ago, then it is no wonder they still have proteins including bone collagen and levels of radiocarbon well above AMS detection thresholds.”

Although Brian Thomas was raised as an evolutionist, his research made him question mainline evolutionary science since it showed evidence for evolution wanting, but much support for biblical creation.

A popular presentation about the unfossilized tissue focusing on the hard evidence and its implications for evolutionary thinking is a documentary hosted by David Rives, ***Echoes of the Jurassic: Discoveries of Dinosaur Soft Tissue*** (2012, 95 minutes) published by the Creation Research Society (CreationResearch.org), and available through ICR.

A common argument for evolution and common ancestry is that human beings



and chimps are said to have 98% similar DNA. However, when more accurate comparisons are made, the similarity of DNA is only 85%, not enough for humans and chimps to have a common origin. An ape is not a human being and a human being is not an ape. ICR geneticist Dr. Jeffrey P. Tomkins has published his research on this topic in his book ***Chimps and Humans: A Geneticist Discovers DNA Evidence That Challenges Evolution*** (2021, 192 pages). There he shares that his findings, along with those of:

“a wide variety of research reports have clearly shown a pattern of incredible irreducible genetic complexity that appears suddenly and fully integrated in humans but is distinctively different from chimpanzees.”

Tomkins also wrote ***The Design and Complexity of the Cell*** (2012, 132 pages), intending it as a scientific resource “to address the various evolutionary arguments that have dominated and shaped the academic environment.” He wanted to help especially college students, to counter the evolutionary arguments

that will come their way.

As he notes, science is not a morally neutral discipline, and will always look at the data through an interpretative lens. That’s why ICR is currently doing research on blind cave fish, which have long been cited as an example of Darwinian evolution. These fish, otherwise identical to their sighted cousins living outside in the light, are said to have lost their sight in a random act of adaptive evolution – a mutation caused a fish to lose its eyes, and because that made it better suited for the dark cave system, natural selection eventually led to the “fitter” blind fish

taking over.

But what if we viewed this through a lens that gives God His brilliant due? ICR researchers are proposing it wasn't so random after all, but that God has created these fish with the ability to adapt to completely different environments, namely, a dark cave and normal day-lit water. As Tomkins and his co-authors write in their article "Catching the Vision" (*Creation Research Society Quarterly* vol. 58, 2022):

"These rapid, repeatable, and complex organism-wide system adaptations make little sense in the context of Darwinian evolution involving mutation and natural selection."

EARTH HISTORY

Did apes walk on the face of the earth before humans? Evolution holds this to be so. However, in an elucidating video, *Adam or Apes* (2022, 36 minutes), Dr. Brian Thomas clearly showed that there is no basis for this in scientific fact. He demonstrated that the designation of certain fossils as "transitional," indicating a development from ape to human, is completely without any scientific basis, and that many mainstream scientists agree with this evaluation. It is essentially the result of wishful evolutionary thinking since the analysis of these fossils is deeply flawed by, for example, supplying bones and features that were not actually found, but were added according to scientists' evolutionary presuppositions.

DINOSAURS!

What about dinosaurs? How do they fit into biblical history? Dinosaur fossils testify of their existence. Only catastrophic conditions could have killed these powerful huge creatures and buried and fossilized them along with all sorts of other

creatures. The world-wide flood in Noah's days provided the conditions for such fossilisation. The ark likely held young dinosaurs and these eventually matured and multiplied. They were known, for example, as dragons. Pictures of dinosaurs resembling the fossil remains have survived and testify to their existence.

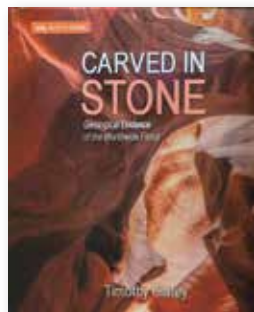


Eventually they became extinct. All this and more (including soft tissue in dinosaurs) is explained in a video presentation by Brian Thomas, *Discovering Dinosaurs* (2018, 50 minutes).

Speaking of the intriguing subject of dinosaurs, ICR geologist Timothy Clarey has written an in-depth scientific work, *Dinosaurs: Marvels of God's Design* (2015, 192 pages), to explain these creatures within a biblical context as part of God's creation. All sorts of issues are dealt with such as what the fossils tell us, why dinosaurs went extinct, and dinosaur behavior and more using the latest up-to-date research.

THE FLOOD

The notion of a world-wide flood is regularly dismissed as a biblical myth. It never happened according to evolutionary thinking. Dr. Timothy Clarey has, however, shown in his book *Carved in Stone: Geological Evidence for the Worldwide Flood* (2020, 496 pages) that the geological evidence for such an event is compelling.



Clarey has wide experience as an exploration geologist and has access to an enormous amount of data on geological core samples from around the world. Sedimentary (water-deposited) rocks cover 75% of the earth's land surface and contain fossils of marine and land creatures. So far Clarey has compiled data from three continents (North America, South America, and Africa). The "mega-

sequences" of these deposits on each continent show the same general pattern. Clarey notes that:

"this is what makes these data so compelling. It is not just one continent that shows this pattern but three, and three that show it simultaneously. This is the strongest evidence I have ever witnessed in my 35 years as a geologist that indicates a global flood has occurred. How can anyone look at these data, these maps, and not realize it is showing the exact same pattern and timing of global flooding? This is truly compelling evidence of worldwide activity."

These three continents studied comprise about half the earth's landmass. So the evidence is compelling for a global flood that occurred about 4,500 years ago. Clarey is continuing his studies on land not yet researched.

THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the hottest topics of our time is the issue of climate change. The me-



meticulous scientific study of ICR's Dr. Jake Hebert, *The Ice Age and Climate Change* (2021, 300 pages), is therefore most welcome to bring clear scientific thinking to this controversial subject. A refreshing

aspect of this work is the fact that Hebert integrates the biblical evidence for real climate change in the case of the Genesis flood and draws out the consequences for today's discussion. It was God's judgment that brought about the flood and the resulting change of climate. The cataclysmic events of the flood plausibly triggered the Ice Age to which the fossils of tropical plants in, for example, the Arctic bear witness. No longer would there be a temperate climate worldwide. But God assured Noah and all his descendants that there would be stability from here on in the sense that seasons would follow each

other in due order (Gen. 8:22).

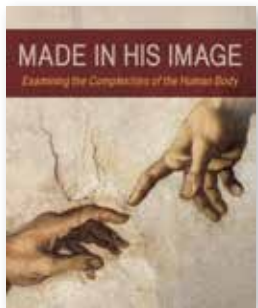
If such a catastrophic, never-to-be-repeated event was required to bring about such a dramatic climate change like the Ice Age, Hebert concluded that “we do not need to worry that noncatastrophic causes such as relatively slow increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide will result in a future climate catastrophe.” This conclusion is in part based on the fact that unbiased scientific evidence indicates that the earth’s climate is stable and self-regulating. The real issue in the debate on climate change is climate sensitivity. Climate change alarmists are convinced that our climate system is very sensitive to changes and that little is needed to effect catastrophic change, a thinking which Hebert challenges and convincingly refutes using scientific evidence and in some cases exposing fraudulent data.

Since the earth’s climate is stable, it self-adjusts to prevent out-of-control warming. Hebert strongly suspects that “global warming is *not* occurring now. This is partly because of the well-known warming pause that has been occurring for the last 20 years or so. But even if warming is occurring right now, it will not continue indefinitely, and it is not a reason to panic.” Draconian measures are not needed to forestall a climate catastrophe.

THE MARVEL OF THE HUMAN BODY

Dr. Randy J. Guliuzza is a retired flight surgeon as well as a professional engineer. With these qualifications he is well equipped to appreciate the biological engineering of the human body and its design features as well as the body’s incredible interconnecting systems that enable us to function

as humans. He wrote a popular-level book, *Made in His Image: Examining the Complexities of the Human Body* (2009, 63 pages). In it he unwraps the astounding marvel of God’s design which enables the body to move, have stable temperatures, and resist




microscopic invaders with an elaborate immune system. Guliuzza also explains the amazing properties of blood that help to make life possible in a mind-boggling way given the millions of chemical reactions that take place every second. Among other topics dealt with are the marvels of human reproduction, gestation, and birth which leaves one in awe of God’s handiwork and can only invoke praise to the Creator.

A DVD set by the same name, *Made in His Image* (2015, 88 minutes) focuses on the miracle of birth, the marvel of eyes, the uniqueness of human hands, and the beauty of human motion. An accompanying lavishly illustrated viewer guide with thought-provoking questions is very helpful in highlighting and reinforcing key information from the DVD.

IN CONCLUSION

There is no such thing as neutral thinking or research. Everyone is influenced by underlying assumptions and worldviews through which one views and seeks to understand reality. Also, scientific fields of endeavor probing the earth’s past history and using computer models to project into the future are not immune to underlying presuppositions. Whether one, for instance, uses an evolutionary lens through which to interpret scientific data or a biblical perspective can make all the difference.

It is a great blessing, then, when Christian scientists publish their work and counter unsubstantiated claims by mainstream science that deny biblical truth and also challenge, for example, the alarmist propaganda surrounding the issue of climate change. 

Dr. Cornelis Van Dam is the Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, and is the author of several books including “In the Beginning: Listening to Genesis 1 and 2.” Read this article on ReformedPerspective.ca to watch the video trailers.



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Julia Veenstra is expressing the world!

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman

According to Hamilton-based artist Julia Veenstra, we all have a moment in time that comforts and reassures us when remembered. “Perhaps it’s a smell that transports us back in time, stirring up emotions of all kinds,” Veenstra says. “I am attracted to those moments that create comfort, those scents that cause a rush of deep memories.”


Julia was an observant child who took detailed notice of the world around her, especially on walks through different neighborhoods. “These moments shaped my understanding of wholeness and peace, both real and imagined,” she says. Julia later expanded her neighborhood explorations to worldwide travels. She has spent time in New York, Virginia Beach, Tanzania and Kenya. Having lived in various countries throughout her life – including a spell spent as a missionary in Tanzania and Kenya – Julia incorporates diverse influences into her impressionistic and representational style.

Veenstra studied illustration at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario. In addition to illustration work, Julia freelanced as a fine art painter. After some time as a missionary in East Africa, where she illustrated educational materials and taught art at an international school, she came home to Hamilton. Upon her return to Hamilton, she began painting as an occupation in a rented studio space. Eventually she bought a building in the “artsy” James St. North area and ran a gallery there for 10 years!

Julia is currently opening a new gallery called *Crown and Press* – also in Hamilton. You can find Julia most often these days in her studio, a converted garage, at her home on Beach Boulevard in Hamilton.

Julia says “I create because I was made to! Expressing the world I see around me is a form of worship and a thing that draws me daily to my brush and canvas.” Julia’s artistic journey has now led her to focus on capturing the vivid landscapes of her native Canada, for which she has gained national recognition. Veenstra is renowned for her lively composition and vibrant use of color.

You can view more of Julia’s art and you can purchase originals, prints and a variety of art-inspired products at her website: juliaveenstra.com. You can also connect with the artist at [www.Instagram.com/jveenstraartist](https://www.instagram.com/jveenstraartist).

And if you have a suggestion for an artist you’d like to see profiled in *RP* please email Jason Bouwman at studio@jasonbouwman.com. 



▲ **Breakfast at Tiffany's** | 48" X 72" | Acrylic on Canvas
Tiffany Falls is a waterfall in Hamilton. Water has the power to change its path! With God so do we! AVAILABLE



▲ **Collaboration** | 30" X 40"
This was a special commission for a designer that I worked with to celebrate a project we did together!



▲ **Lyrical** | 48" X 60" | Acrylic on Canvas
The forest has a way of expressing itself that truly is musical to me!
SOLD



▲ **Centre Stage!** | 36" X 48"
Sometimes we just like to be Center Stage don't we!?
All eyes upon us! But always we know that we are viewed by God as special!



▲ **Cloud Watching** | 36" X 36" | Acrylic on Canvas
Muskoka islands are reminders of a day on the lake with friends!
Always amazed at creation! AVAILABLE



CHRISTIANS CAN'T INVEST IN CRYPTOCURRENCY

by Marty VanDriel

I hope this headline got your attention! I can hear some of the objections already:

- What do you mean, we can't invest in cryptocurrency; don't you know that it's the wave of the future?
- My friend bought \$2,000 worth of Bitcoin a few years ago, and now it's worth \$16,000!
- It is going to replace the dollar within a few years.
- And crypto is a means for us to resist the prying eyes of the government into our finances – we can shield our savings from the bureaucrats who may seek to punish us for our Christian beliefs by freezing our funds, or taking them from us!

We'll hope to respond to these thoughts below... so read on!

WHAT IS CRYPTO?

First off, what is cryptocurrency?

In brief, crypto is a digital currency, not backed by any government, bank, or physical standard, that is designed as a means to save, to buy, and to sell. There are different types of cryptos, some well-regarded like Bitcoin and Ethereum, and some that have failed spectacularly and are now worth little or nothing (such as OneCoin and SpaceBit). What they all have in common is that they are seeking to replace traditional currency like the Canadian or U.S. dollar with a modern way of doing business and commerce in the marketplace.

In our last issue, *RP* reprinted a beautiful perspective on investing written by Randy Alcorn called "Investing in Eternity – thinking 30 million years ahead." If you haven't read it yet, please go back

and peruse it! Alcorn has very thought-provoking and wise perspectives on what we do with the financial gifts the Lord has given us. He writes that "no matter how great an earthly treasure is, it is still worthless in the eyes of eternity." And Alcorn encourages Christians to think about how we in this lifetime support godly ministries that will have an eternal impact on the lives of lost souls.

Does this mean Christians shouldn't "invest" at all, and should instead give everything away? Perhaps it depends on one's definition of investing!

WHAT IS INVESTING?

Let's go back to the basics and consider what this means. Investing can be defined as *the commitment of resources to achieve later benefits*.

Often, this is understood primarily to be about finances, but that is not always

the case. Consider that a mom invests time and energy (the resource) into her children with the goal of raising productive, godly adults (the later benefit). A farmer invests money, labor, and seed (the resources) into a field to grow crops he can sell for others to eat (the later benefits being for both the farmer as he sells, and the buyer as he eats).

Often, there is an element of time that is necessary for an investment to have its intended effect. Kids don't become adults overnight; a builder might take a year or more to build a beautiful home. Obviously, in this broader sense of the word, Christians should not have any trouble investing, and we do so in our daily lives in myriads of ways.

In the more common sense of the word, investing relates to where we put our finances (the resource) in order to grow them for future use (the later benefit). One might become a partner in a retail store by putting up a percentage of the capital required to get the operation going. Before writing a check, you would want to look at your partners' business plan, and examine the location and the type of goods that will be sold; you might consider the experience that your partners have in the industry. You would probably make a list of the pros and cons of the business, and take a responsible risk to invest in the partnership, with the hope that it will generate a profit down the road.

In a similar way, one might buy publicly traded shares in a company that builds cars and trucks that perhaps is expanding into another part of the market. You would have access to a track record of financial performance. You might ask if the company has consistently paid out dividends. Has it managed its money well? Is the leadership of the company committed to its customers? Has the company made risky decisions that could endanger your investment? Are the cars and trucks that the company makes high quality and well received by consumers? These types of questions and this type of study helps an investor to take responsible risks in the hope of a return in the stock market.

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY ABOUT INVESTING?

The Lord Jesus taught two similar parables that are often quoted about investing. In Matthew 25 and in Luke 19, a wealthy man leaves town for a period of time, and entrusts some of his fortune to servants to manage. When he returns, the master praises those whose trading and commerce compounded the funds they were managing, and condemns the foolish servants who simply buried their coins in the ground. Jesus is teaching about far more than how to handle money in these parables, but it is striking that the master praises unreservedly those that managed well the resources entrusted to them.

The book of Proverbs is full of practical and beautiful counsel for living a godly life, and has much to say about wise and foolish behavior about investing. Solomon teaches us not to spend all our money today, forgetting about the needs that both we and our community will face tomorrow. Proverbs 21:17 and 20 say:

- “Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich...”
- “Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours it.”

Notice that Solomon does not condemn “keeping” treasure or resources for a rainy day in one's possession, but calls out as “foolish” the man who recklessly uses all his resources without a thought for the future.

So, the Bible is certainly not *anti*-investing.

OUR SAVINGS ARE NOT JUST FOR OURSELVES

But what sort of investing should it be? A Christian's goal in saving is not just for our own needs tomorrow, but also for the community in which we live, and for future generations of our families. Proverbs 11:24 tells us:

“One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he

should give, and only suffers want.”

Then in chapter 13, verse 22 we read:

“A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.”

We should never withhold from giving generously to the Lord, in our tithes and offerings, and also in our willingness to help our neighbors. Solomon stated this in Proverbs 3:27-28:

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go and come again, tomorrow I will give it’ – when you have it with you.”

WEALTH GAINED HASTILY...

Another theme that recurs frequently in Proverbs is the element of patience, or delayed gratification for the wise man.

- “Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.” – Prov. 13:11
- “Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense.” – Prov. 12:11
- “Whoever is slothful will not roast his game, but the diligent man will get precious wealth.” – Prov. 12:27.

The theme here and in many other passages is that “getting rich quickly” is often a dangerous pursuit – the person who only focuses on rapid accumulation of wealth may be on a foolish pathway that will not be blessed.

One who is focused only on enormous potential returns from an investment may skip the important steps of finding out how a return is being earned, how \$100 put into this company or stock will actually earn a profit for the investor. By racing to the potential conclusion (I'm going to make ten times what I put in!) without careful consideration of how one is “working the land,” a foolish investor may have only himself to blame when a scamster absconds with his treasure. Re-



If one exchanges currencies that are relatively stable (like the U.S. or Canadian dollar) with volatile currencies, that is not investing, but simply speculating – more like gambling than responsible stewardship.

member Solomon’s warning in Proverbs 14:23: “In all toil there is profit, but *mere talk leads only to poverty.*”

HOW ARE THESE WARNINGS CONNECTED TO CRYPTO?

Now that we have considered whether a Christian may invest, we can now ask: *Why not cryptocurrency?*

The answer is in the very term “currency” itself. Currency is a means of paying for a good or service – it does not on its own produce a good or service that can make or lose money for its owner. While Bitcoin may be a very secure, very stable platform that may become a common way for citizens to buy bread at the grocery store, and to receive our pay checks, it is not producing anything tangible from which to make a profit.

I would argue that Christians could exchange some of their assets into Bitcoin, or into another cryptocurrency, as a way to transact business, or to diversify risk with the Canadian dollar as measured against the U.S. dollar. One who would like to support a currency independent of any one government’s control, might also consider putting some of their savings into a cryptocurrency. The risk, of course, would be that the value of all cryptocurrency is very unstable, and difficult to pin down, but that could be a responsible risk for a citizen.

But doing so is definitively not an investment, because it is not of itself producing anything tangible.

A number of years ago, there was huge push for people to “invest” in the Iraqi dinar – the currency that is still in use in Iraq. Before the 1990 U.S. invasion of Kuwait, one dinar was worth three times more than a U.S. dollar (at least in theory). Over the next ten years, the currency collapsed, with a dinar becoming worth as little as 3 U.S. cents. Unscrupulous financial advisers urged people to exchange their savings for Iraqi dinars, to take advantage of the dinar’s “inevitable comeback.” The advisers made their money by collecting inflated purchase fees along the way, while the dinar has continued to be worth very little (today being valued at around 7 U.S. cents).

Like Bitcoin, the dinar is a unit of exchange, a way of transacting business. It is certainly possible that both currencies will be worth more in the future. However, it is also very possible that both will be worth far less in the future. If one exchanges currencies that are relatively stable (like the U.S. or Canadian dollar) with volatile currencies, that is not investing, but simply speculating – more like gambling than responsible stewardship.

Christian financial adviser David Bahnsen’ Bahnsen Group is a multi-billion-dollar investment firm. In a recent episode of his Dividend Cafe podcast he agreed that growth of cryptocurrency as a way of conducting business and making payments is likely to continue. But he warns:

“I’d be speculating (if I predicted what the price of a Bitcoin would be. It could be a hundred thousand, it could be ten thousand, and it could be both next month, and so that’s why it’s not investable for us.”


Bahnsen compares the enthusiasm around cryptocurrencies to other popular investing waves of the recent past that came and went, with the common man inevitably hurt along the way:

“The recent history of euphoric busts all share the same things in common: A casual willingness to ignore common sense in pursuit of a speculative return. From Chinese reverse merger UFOs in 2011 to solar SPACs in 2021 to crypto in 2022, they all possess the same four realities:

1. A willingness to suspend logic, analysis, or traditional wisdom.
2. A popularity that soothed the suspension and added emotional confidence to the speculation.
3. A period of looking like a genius while other “fools” joined the party.
4. A spectacular bust that left capital destruction in its wake.”

CONCLUSION

While I was hoping to get your attention with the headline of this article, I think it is true. I would argue that not just Christians, but no one can invest in cryptocurrencies, because one does not *invest* in a currency – it is not a business intended to make a profit.

The broader point that I hope has come through is that speculation in hope of spectacular gain often comes to heartache, enriching unscrupulous characters along the way. Christians can certainly carefully invest their savings in many ways, but always carefully and with the ultimate goal of serving the Lord through the gifts He entrusts to us, for the good of His kingdom here on earth, and for eternity. 

ON INVESTING, WITH WADE VAN BOSTELEN

Thoughts from an experienced financial advisor

For further perspectives on investing, *Reformed Perspective* interviewed Wade Van Bostelen, a Christian certified financial planner operating out of Burlington, Ontario. Wade works with IPC Investment Corporation, and is the investment advisor for the Retirement Assistance Fund of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Wade and his wife Leanne have two sons, and are frequent visitors to the west coast.

Marty VanDriel: *Are there Scriptural principles or texts that you use as guidance for how you advise clients to invest or in your own investing?*

Wade Van Bostelen: My guiding principle comes from Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”

When it comes to investing personally and with clients, I also return to a passage that speaks to it in Matthew 25:14-30. It speaks of the gifts of the Father and using those gifts, but it comes from an example that people would have understood even in Roman times. Christ uses the example of three servants who understood that their master had given them talents, had set them to work, and they’d invested these talents, with varying outcomes.

While the parable has a much deeper meaning than simply investing, the fact that our Lord uses this as an example indicates that this is a valid way to work in His kingdom – maybe even an expectation that this is a way to work in the kingdom.

MV: *What kind of things can Christians be on the lookout for as they look to be good stewards of what God has entrusted to them?*

WVB: I will sum it up with a few words – Prudence – Understanding – Self-control.

PRUDENCE: Several principles come into investing that help define prudence, but mainly, I am talking about diversifying what you are investing in to have some degree of protection or safety in what you are doing. You also want to ensure that you have the assets to invest without hindering your ability to take care of your responsibilities and personal needs. Christians can be caught up in the world’s obsession with generating wealth or freedom and forget that their obligation is first to serve the Lord. So Christian investors have first to ensure that they have given of their first fruits, then they need to provide for their household, and then they can invest. What I find difficult to understand are the extremes: Christians that have wealth but do not give and Christians that make a fine living but spend all they have and save virtually nothing. Both are not acting as effective stewards.

UNDERSTANDING: Christians can get caught up in the hype as quickly as others and invest in things they do not understand. Some may even make money doing this, but it does not make it a good practice. If you cannot explain what you are investing in, the types of companies, the kind of asset, the way a business works, how you will make a return on a real estate rental property, how you will be taxed on assets that you have, then you likely should not be investing in them...

SELF-CONTROL: It is known that most investors are driven by two basic emotions: fear and greed. Fear drives people out of their investments because of a lack of prudence and understanding. It also drives them into investing because they are missing out, or they have a fear of missing out (FOMO), also known as greed. Christians have to do better than that. Emotional investing is not stewardship.

MV: *What is your opinion on investing in the stock market? How does a Christian do so in an ethical manner, in alignment with God’s Word?*

WVB: I sense a bias in the question, so I will frame it differently before I answer it. Let’s ask the same question and substitute a different market - What is your opinion on investing in the real estate market? Rental income market? Commodity market? Livestock market? or any other market. There is a sense that I have in this question that the other markets may be more ethical, or more in alignment with God’s Word than the stock market. All of these markets are financial markets, and all of them come with risks and ethical questions.

Is it prudent for a young couple to stretch themselves to the limit of what they can afford payments for to purchase a house? What drives them to do so? Have they considered the ethical aspects of their decision – for example, will it keep them from contributing to kingdom work because they have stretched themselves so far? Have they considered the ramifications of their leverage? Have they been driven into the market by fear of missing out? What happens if their dual income becomes a single income? Will they still be able to make ends meet? As a farmer, are you effectively using the commodity markets to sell your crops or make decisions on the amount of livestock to purchase? Are there ethical questions that arise working in a quota system that does not allow competition? How do you justify these questions?

As a rental real estate investor, have you considered the ramifications of what would happen if your renter fails to pay and you need that rent to cover your debt payments? What if you fail to rent the 70% of your building you need to rent to make ends meet? How did you figure out

your math? Were you driven by principle or emotion when you invested?

So each market has its questions - the stock market is not at all different than other markets, and you need to exercise prudence, understanding and self-control. You need to be able to justify why you invest in the companies that you do, and be willing to walk away from others. You can engage in positive activism as a shareholder to change the way that companies do business. You need to be willing to exit positions in companies when their activities are unethical. If you are doing these things investing in the stock market is no different than investing in any other market, but more so, you need to think like an investor. In every market I have listed, you need to think long-term to invest successfully. In all markets, your greatest risk occurs right after you have invested - before you have made a return. The one thing that is different about the stock market compared to the other markets is that stocks are priced daily, so you can become obsessed with your short-term returns and not longer-term returns. Real estate investors, for instance, tend to think in 10-year periods or longer. Stock market participants should also think along those lines, and not look daily at their prices.

Could you imagine valuing your home every day? What is the price someone will pay today for my house? It seems ludicrous, but people will do that with their well-diversified portfolio and lose sleep or become euphoric based on the price change in a day, month or year. If you are investing for your retirement income - why are you worried about today?

MV: *What are your thoughts on “investing” in cryptocurrencies? Or companies that are in the crypto industry?*

WVB: As indicated before, you have to have prudence, understanding and self-control when investing. If anyone claims to understand cryptocurrency, I would like them to explain why it has value. There have been manias before in investment history. Our Dutch heritage has an exciting period referred to as “Tulipmania” in the 1630s - people were gripped by a speculative desire to own tulip bulbs.

Fortunes were made and lost on tulip bulbs.

The crypto space is unregulated. That is why people like it, because it falls outside government control. They have ascribed a value to things that previously had no value, and the value has increased because of limited supply.

This is not a realm of investment as I would define it because you have no expected future value based on anything that you can quantify. You have no definable present value because it produces nothing - there is no inventory, there is nothing that society needs that it offers, no product.


That being said, many crypto-related things may cause some change and are investible. The technology that runs it is called blockchain. It does facilitate immediate transactions. It allows you to move assets from one country to another instantaneously. It requires servers, microchips, technology development, internet service providers, electrical generation, etc. So, there are ways to legitimately invest in these things by investing around the hype, rather than speculating in the hype.

If you go into the crypto space now, you are speculating. I find it hard to define speculation as an investment; it is more akin to a gamble. You can make

money on speculation as you can with gambling, but don't call it an investment.

Unfortunately, because of a lack of regulation, the tax rules are not yet written...but they can be backwardly enforced. There are also opportunities for charlatans like Sam Bankman-Fried (SBF) to fraudulently gather assets for personal use because even astute investors, like Kevin O'Leary, can be taken in by fraudsters when they don't understand what they are buying.

MV: *What is your own favorite investment and why?*

WVB: My favorite investment is my own company. I had the advantage of working with another advisor who allowed me to start my own business while working with him. Eventually, I also bought his business from him when he was ready to retire and then consolidated two other companies into my own. I have been blessed to work with partners who have worked alongside me to help build my enterprise while I helped them in their enterprises. But more than anything, my business has allowed me to work with clients from all walks of life to help them develop their financial plans. This has been as enriching for me as for them - so that has to be my favorite investment! 



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

THOSE WILD AND CRAZY VIKINGS!

You may have learned in school that Vikings visited North America long before Christopher Columbus did, but I bet you never learned how they did it. Their marine tech wasn't anything close to what Columbus had, but what they lacked in equipment, they made up for in chutzpah. To get to North America, the Vikings had to "surf" the north edge of nasty storms. As Glenn Sunshine explains in his book *32 Christians Who Changed Their World*:

"We don't often appreciate the difficulties the Vikings faced sailing west across the Atlantic. Their ships had square sails, which means they could not tack into the wind; the wind had to be blowing from behind them for the sails to propel the ship. Since prevailing winds in the north Atlantic blow from west to east, to sail west the Vikings had to rely on storms. Severe storms turn cyclonic, that is, the winds circulate counterclockwise around the eye. This means that by riding the north edge of the storms, the Vikings could take advantage of westward blowing winds to propel them across the ocean."

GARY NORTH ON BREAKING YOUR TV HABIT

Gary North (1942-2022) was a Christian economist and such a prolific writer he must have followed the advice he offers here and entirely kicked his TV habit.

"Put a piggy bank next to the couch where you watch TV. Every time you watch a one-hour show, put \$2 into the piggy bank. If someone else watches, and you're a free rider, have that person put in \$2. Then break the piggy bank – or at least empty it – in the last week of December. Put the money in your bank account. Then write a check for this amount. Send it to a charity. In short, put a price on your time. Pay the price. Economics teaches: 'When the price rises, less is demanded.' You will cut your TV habit by 50%. If not, make it \$3."

SOURCE: Gary North's Tip of the Week, January 3, 2015

LEARN THE RIGHT LESSON

The trouble with learning from experience is the inbuilt tendency to overreact. If drunkenness has ruined someone close to us, we could conclude Christians should abstain. A child who tries out for a basketball team and gets cut might think they'll never be good at any sports. A young man mocked by the first girl he asks out will wonder whether he should bother with a second. That many a Hollywood movie is vile, has some convinced all movies must be. That 95 songs on the year's Top 100 list are vulgar, could lead parents to conclude that rock and rap

is purely the Devil's domain. And that dirty dancing is a thing, will have some thinking pure dancing is not.

But Mark Twain has a warning for us to consider:

"We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it, lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove-lid. She will not sit down on a hot stove-lid again – but also she will not sit down on a cold one either."

Experience is quite the tutor, but we can learn too much from the lesson. That's why we must test our experiences against the Bible. Then we can understand that despite the frequent abuse of wine, there remains a legitimate use (Isa. 25:6, 1 Tim. 5:23) and instead of banning it, we need to model right usage. Dancing might be dirty, but it can also be done to the Lord (2 Sam. 6:14). And the gun-shy young man can be assured that a good woman is worth risking rejection (Prov. 31:10-31).

THOSE GUYS ARE RIGHT TOO?

It's been a crazy few years, what with too many of yesterday's conspiracy theories turning into the next day's headlines. So when I heard that there was now irrefutable proof the earth was flat I didn't know if I could handle it. Could it be possible? Could *those* guys be right too?

Well, prepare for your mind to be blown! As you know, most of the world is water – 71% of the planet is covered with it. But what they never told you, what you probably never thought about before, is the fact that *none of it is carbonated*. Not even a single percent. Ergo, the world really is flat!

SOURCE: inspired by a Douglas Wilson quip

4 THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

- "I am much afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, and engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which means are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must be corrupt."
– Martin Luther, in his *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*
- "The surest way to keep a people down is to educate the men and neglect the women. If you educate a man you simply educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family."
– James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey (1875-1927)
- "The family is the main engine of education. If we use schooling to break children away from parents... we're going to continue to have the horror show we have right now."
– John Taylor Gatto (1935-2018), New York City's 3-time "Teacher of the Year"
- "Education is the process of selling someone on books."
– Douglas Wilson

THAT EXPLAINS A LOT

Who are smarter, men or women? A good test might be to ask this question in mixed company and see who's dumb enough to answer. A case for men could be made by pointing to the greater number of males who win top prizes, like the Nobel Prize in Chemistry (183 to 8) or the Abel Prize for mathematics (25 to 1). But the case for women could be made by pointing out how men take many more unnecessary risks, like driving while drunk, which leads to 3 times more men than women dying, according to US stats.

So which is it? Well, according to the late Walter Williams, economist and educator extraordinaire, both cases are correct.

“Male geniuses outnumber female geniuses 7-to-1. Female intelligence is packed much closer to the middle of the bell curve, whereas men's intelligence has far greater variability. That means that though there are many more male geniuses, there are also many more male idiots. The latter might partially explain why more men are in jail than women.”

SOURCE Walter Williams' "Are We Equal?" posted to WalterWilliams.com May 27, 2013 WalterWilliams.com/are-we-equal/

IF WE REALLY BELIEVED IN RECYCLING...

...why don't we stop charging tax on recycled goods? They've already been taxed once, when they were new, so the government has gotten their pound of flesh. Should a good be taxed twice, just because it has been refurbished or in some other way made useful again? We live in a throwaway culture, and what an incentive it would be if used goods could be sold tax-free.

30% OF GEN Z AMERICANS WOULD WELCOME GOV'T MONITORING INSIDE THEIR HOMES

Nearly a third of Americans under 30 would welcome a government surveillance device in their homes, in the name of reducing spousal and child abuse.

Clearly, they haven't been taught about the surveillance states of the past, like the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. And they must not know about China's current "social credit system," where citizens are constantly monitored and granted freedoms based on how obliging they've been to their government's every requirement. And they haven't read *1984* or any other dystopian fiction. That a third of American young people trust the government to watch their every move isn't an endorsement of our political leadership's trustworthiness, but is instead an indicator of how badly they are educating our youth in their public schools.

Now Christians might think that if we aren't doing anything wrong what does it matter if we are being watched? But do you spank your children? Might some government official somewhere want to recast as abuse what you know to be appropriate and measured? Do you teach your children that God made us male and female? Do you insist that marriage is between one man and one woman? What might the government think about that? To be constantly monitored is to be constantly assessed. And knowing, as we do, that our governments don't measure right and wrong by God's standards, we should fear the prospect.

GIRAFFE NECKS ARE NEAT

Did you know a giraffe doesn't need its neck muscles to hold its neck *up*, but rather to bend it *down*? As a ruminant (an animal that chews its cud) the giraffe has to be able to bring food back up its neck to chew again. It also has to have an enormous heart to create enough pressure to get the blood up to its head. And then it has to have shut-off valves of a sort, to relieve the pressure when it bends its head down to drink, otherwise the blood pressure would cause it to blow out its own brain. The brilliance of their design comes out more and more, the closer you look.



This is an excerpt from Jason Bouwman's unique devotional, *Still Thinking*, which Canadians can buy at StillThinkingBook.com

come and
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Luke woke up on the morning of his twelfth birthday excited for what the day would bring. His parents and sisters were already downstairs, the “shh, he’s coming” barely audible over the giggling. There was excitement brewing and Luke was ready! He rushed down the stairs where he found his dad holding a present. It was cylindrical in shape and about the length of a ruler, wrapped in paper that had sharks wearing birthday hats.

“Luke!”, his dad began in a deep but joyous tone, “It’s your twelfth birthday! I am so excited to give you this present! Guess what it is!”

“Uh, my first guess is a pack of Pringles?” Luke replied, half chuckling.

“Why don’t you open it and see?” said his dad.

Luke was so excited, his fingers fumbled with the wrapping paper. Out of the paper came a wooden tube with a small clasp on the front. He had never seen anything like it before. It looked old. His dad was grinning from ear to ear. “Go on,” he said, “open it up!”

Luke flipped open the clasp and lifted the top of the tube. Inside lay a rolled up piece of paper with a red ribbon. He unrolled the paper on the coffee table and could not believe his eyes.

It was a map. But not just any map, an old treasure map! A treasure map that was ragged and torn in places, dirty and stained. It had a brilliant red ‘X’ marking the spot. And in the lower right hand corner was written, in very old script,

“On the event of their twelfth birthday, for my son, grandsons, and their sons, and their sons..... Love, Grandfather Jacob.”

“Who is Grandfather Jacob?” Luke asked, confused, “Neither my opa or my grandpa’s name is Jacob.”

“Long, long ago, your great, great, great grandfather Jacob came and settled here in Canada. He made this map for his son’s twelfth birthday and it has been passed down ever since. See the X? What does it say beside it?”

Luke squinted, “The Ultima”

“Ultimate Treasure!” His dad took over. He had waited for this day since he was 12 years old! “It’s the ultimate treasure, my boy, and YOU get to go search for it!”

Luke was shocked, bewildered, and intrigued all at once, but then he exclaimed in excitement, “When do I get to start?!”

“After school,” his dad sighed.



All day at school, Luke was preoccupied with thoughts of the Ultimate Treasure. What could it be? Gold? Silver? A family heirloom worth millions? Could it be some other kind of treasure? What could be such a treasure that it was able to be passed down through the generations? It must be really valuable! He found it very hard to focus on his school work. The day passed slowly, but finally the time came to go home.

His dad was waiting for him at the kitchen table with the map. "Have a snack and something to drink before we go."

Luke chugged a glass of water and scarfed down two cookies. "Let's go!"

They drove down out of town to a spot near the forest. An old, tattered, broken log house stood near the trees.

"This," his dad said proudly, "was the homestead of your great-grandfather Jacob. And this is where the search begins. Here is the map, and a walkie-talkie. Follow the map, keep to the trails. If you need my help, just press this button on the walkie-talkie, and I will guide you through it. I know this land like the back of my hand."

"You're not coming with me, Dad?" Luke asked, a little nervous.

"No, no, it's all right. It's a good thing to do this by yourself. I'm only one call away. My dad didn't have walkie talkies when he took me when I turned twelve. I had to learn animal calls." He shook his head. "Ever heard a moose call? Well mine sounded like the moose was dying." Luke laughed and gave his dad a big hug and started off down the trail.

The trail was smooth and well kept. The ground was hard and rocky with some tree roots sticking up here and there. He tripped a few times, but kept to the path. He walked for quite a while until he came to a place where the trail ended abruptly. "Uh, dad," he called over the walkie-talkie, "we have a problem."

"What is it, Luke? Where are you at?"

"I was following the path, but now it just stopped, and I am definitely not where the X is on the map. There's just brush ahead of me."

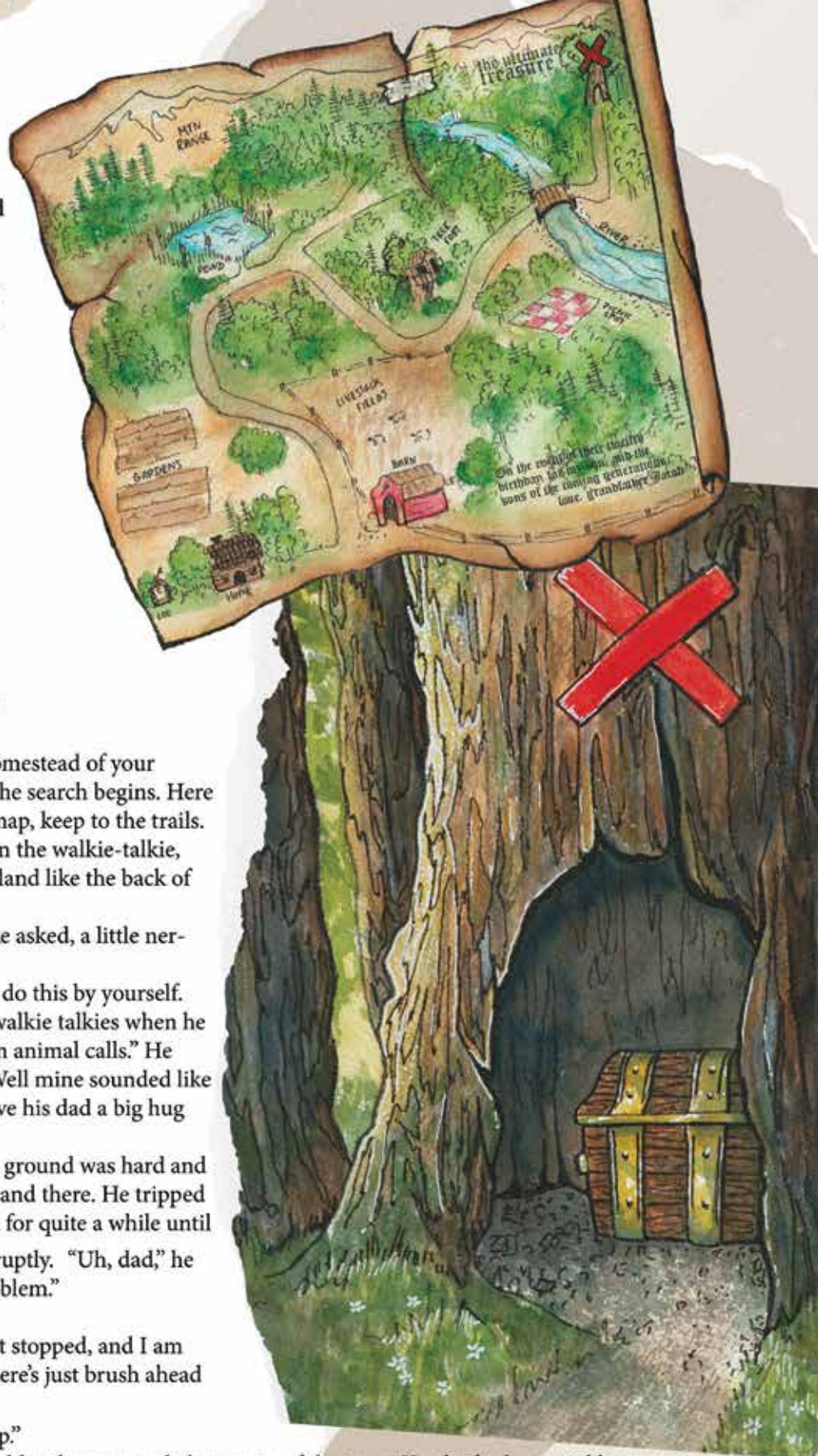
"Oh yeah, I remember that part. Look up."

"Look up?" Luke looked up and saw a ladder that was nailed into one of the trees. He climbed up until he came to a platform. From the platform, he could see that the trail continued just a way past the brush.

And he could see a bright red "X" - and it wasn't very far away.

Luke scrambled down the tree and bolted through the brush towards the end of the trail. Soon he was face-to-face with a very large, hollowed out tree that was painted with a bright red "X". He radioed to his dad,

"DAD! I found it! I found the treasure!"



“Go for it!” His dad radioed back.

His heart was thumping louder and faster than it ever had before. He crept into the tree, and there before his eyes was a very grand, antique treasure chest. There was no lock on the chest, so with hands that were shaking with excitement, he heaved the top of the chest up and revealed the treasure inside.

He slumped the lid back and sat down. *What?* He thought to himself, *That is the treasure?* He radioed his dad. “Dad, why would you go through all this effort and give me a generations old map and bring me to the treasure which is just an old Bible? I thought it would be something cool like gold or something!”

His dad paused. “I felt the same way, son. But take some time to sit there, and really think about it. Trust me.”

Luke sat on the floor of the tree beside the trunk, opening it periodically as he thought. *The Ultimate Treasure? This doesn't seem very ultimate. It's just an old Bible. We have three at home. Where's the actual treasure? I was hoping for something cool like Lego or money. I just don't get it.* He peered inside the chest again, but this time took hold of the Bible and sat with it in his lap. He noticed that poking out of the side of the pages were scraps of lined paper. He pulled one out.



“October 13, 1903, recently immigrated from Holland. First day in Canada - Psalm 139 : 7- 12”

He pulled another one out.

“June 2nd, 2015, birth of new baby girl, Sophie. - Psalm 127:3”

My sister, he thought.

He flipped open the pages and saw many marks and notings in different pens, styles and handwriting. The Bible was full of markings, evidence of different times and moments throughout the generations where the men of the family had received comfort, instruction, peace from the Word of God. He couldn't help but flip page by page as he marveled at all the many years and moments of his own history that were expressed through the pages - moments of joy, heartache, pain, trials, births, blessings. His heart warmed - he began to understand.

“Dad?” he radioed, “Dad? Do I get to keep this? Do I get to take it home with me and use it, and add to it?”

“Yes, Luke,” his dad replied, but not from the walkie-talkie. His dad, who had been following Luke at a distance, was standing behind him. “Yes. Let me show you something.” They sat together on the floor of the tree and he flipped to Proverbs 2.

“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding— indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God...”

“I know how excited you were to discover the Ultimate Treasure. I know the disappointment you felt when it was just ‘an old Bible’ lying on the bottom of the chest. I think we all feel that same way in the beginning. But I can tell you one thing, that since I was 12 and I got to have this Bible, I have realized that no amount of money or treasure could ever replace the amount of riches that is in God's word. As you grow up, go through high school, graduate, get married, have children of your own, you will see how much of a beautiful gift this truly is. All I ask right now is that you don't dismiss it. It's not just an old book, a relic, something to sit on the shelf and collect dust. This is a gift that should be opened every day, revealing new treasures as you read and ponder God's words. It is my greatest honour that I can pass this down to you. And one day,

God willing, you can pass it onto your son. I hope that you take every opportunity to make note of the moments in your life where you have seen God's hand and where his Word has given you direction and hope."

"The ultimate treasure," said Luke, "and we have three already in our own home! We must be very rich!"

"Very rich, indeed," said his dad, with a tight side hug, "I love you, kid. Let's go home and have some cake."

That night, Luke took his own piece of paper and a pen and added his first note in the Old Bible. "June 16th, 2023 - My twelfth birthday. Proverbs 2:4-5" Throughout the years, Luke discovered the wealth of the Ultimate Treasure laid up in the pages of that old Bible. It was his most treasured possession and became his compass as he wandered through the many trying and confusing years of adolescence and young adulthood. He added many notes into the Bible, including the birth of his first son. And then he, like his dad had, became very excited for that baby boy's twelfth birthday.

the end

Let's Dig Deep!

- What were you hoping the treasure would be?
- What is the significance of the treasure chest not having a lock on it?
- What was your immediate reaction when you discovered the treasure was a Bible?
- In what ways do you view God's Word as the Ultimate Treasure?
- Do you have a Bible at home? Have you taken time to mark down ways where you have received help from God's Word?

Treasured Moments

Step 1: Cut along the dotted lines
Step 2: Using a pen, fill in the jewel with a moment that you received help from God's word!

Step 3: Tuck it into your bible or keep in your own Treasured Moments Chest (see next page)

date:
event:
scripture:

date:
event:
scripture:

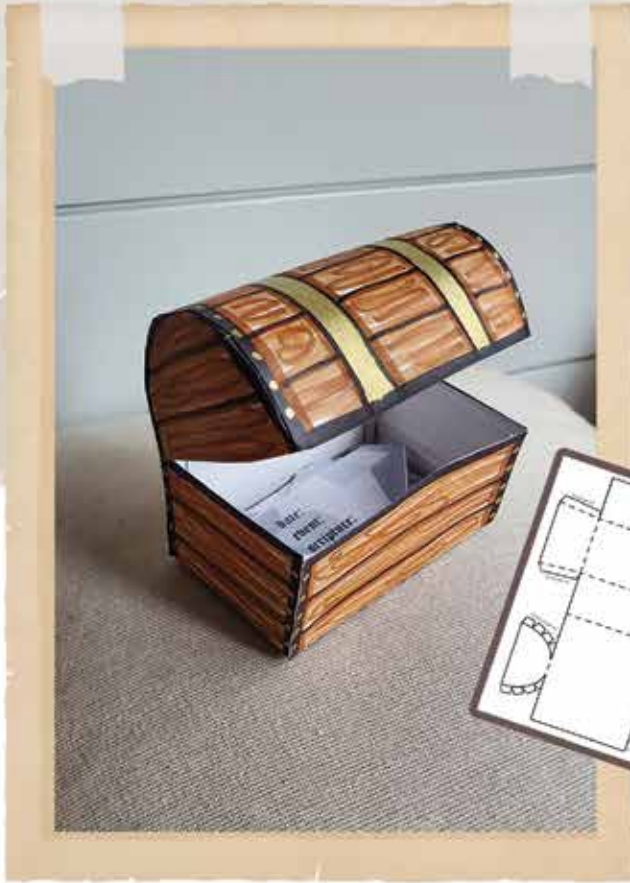
date:
event:
scripture:

Want more?

Visit reformedperspective.ca/kids
for a free download full of jewels!

Treasured Moments Chest Craft

Visit www.reformedperspective.ca/kids to download the template and create your own Treasured Moments Chest!



Come + Explore is created by Stephanie Vanderpol. Like Luke, she was not very excited about receiving a Bible for her birthday when she was younger, but has come to realize and treasure wholeheartedly the depths of the gift of God's Word in her moments of joys, trials and the day-to-day ongoings of being a mom, wife and artist.



Find the Jewel

Search the entire magazine for the hidden jewel! Make it a competition with your siblings!

Who can find it the FASTEST?

(It is not on any of the Come & Explore pages.)

GOING ON VACATION SOON?
Take along this copy of Travel Bingo!



Burger 	A dock 	2 cats 	Ukraine Flag 	BBQ 	Beaver 	2 Cranes
Golf Course 	Hitch-Hiker 	Yield Sign 	A duck 	Bakery 	Cross 	Big Clock
Deer 	DQ 	Carrot 	Garbage bag 	2 dogs 	4 boats 	Sheep
Goat 	2 pylons 	Chinese Food 	DRIVE BINGO 	3 barns 	A fish 	Coffee
Pool 	Balloon 	Nest 	Bowling Alley 	Pro-Life Sign 	Eagle 	Bed
Skies 	3 Lakes 	Chicken 	Purple Flowers 	Green House 	Apple 	Road Kill
Egg 	IceCream 	Mail Box 	3 soccer fields 	Bull 	Sold House 	Llama

submitted by Hannah P. Thank you, Hannah!

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

JULY-AUGUST 2023

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 2!

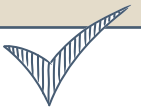
ACROSS

1. " ____ out to the LORD." (Joel 1)
4. Summer is time to ____ up the sun.
8. You do this to hair or coupons.
12. One is never enough.
13. Against
14. Where eagles dare
16. Where frogs find lilies
17. Emotion promoted by a singing club
18. "I Love a _____ Night," by Eddie Rabbitt
19. "You ____ the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5)
20. Elf or fairy
21. Loaf; laze around; take it easy – mindlessly
23. "young men shall ____ visions" (Joel 2)
24. Where you might find a toad?
26. Don't get cowed by this noise!
28. Batman and Robin were a dynamic one.
30. Central processing unit
32. Mike ____ (Canadian golfer)
36. *Night on ____ Mountain* (classical music)
39. Sixth month of Hebrew calendar
41. It's what you can do with A-Sketch.
42. Freud used this term, and a super variation.
43. Key of voice or saxophone
45. It can have a 43 Across key (short form).
46. "nor shall the mighty ____ his life" (Amos 2)
48. See; notice; spot (archaic word)
49. " ____ , fellow karate student!"
50. "the ____ bears its fruit" (Joel 2)
51. Choose; select
52. Can that team ____ out a win?
54. Bathroom (shortened British synonym)
56. "Christ did not ____ himself" (Heb. 5)
60. Singular form of 16 Across
63. Hydrogen is the lightest one.
65. What the illogical do to a question
67. First word of a Scrooge complaint
68. The guilty one wishes he had one.
70. "were not able to ____ it in" (John 21)
72. Another name for Matthew 2's "wise men"
73. "neither shall they ____ war" (Micah 4)
74. Green vegetable used in cooking
75. When the planes get there (abbreviation)
76. Work hard over a long period
77. Steep-banked mountain lake or pool
78. "cast into the ____ of lions" (Dan. 6)

DOWN

1. Eye ____; pie ____
2. "This ain't my first ____!"
3. "Let your ____ be ____" (James 5)
4. It's totally epic!
5. " ____ spare his life." (Job 2)
6. "he... neither ____ nor drank." (Acts 9)
7. Capital of Ukraine (former spelling)
8. It was thrown overboard before Jonah.
9. Meadow in the Alps
10. Name of girl or flower
11. Yearn for, it sounds like, fine wood
12. Place where you might 4 Across.
15. "if your ____ causes you to sin" (Mark 9)
20. Seasonal illness
22. Rhymes with 20 Down
25. Strange lack of even numbers
27. Part of IOU
29. Kind of non-dairy milk
30. "thou ____ not say I did it" (*Macbeth*)
31. Not the real thing, but it can hold things up
33. Sewing needle case
34. It's gross to have a fish tank like this?
35. Bird similar to 22 Down; also a girl's name
36. Better than better
37. It can feed bacteria or people.
38. God's is steadfast.
40. "the ____ surrounded me" (Jonah 2)
44. It's like 32 Down, and rhymes with 15 Down.
47. "As slippery as an ____" (dishonest; cunning)
49. Curse in witchcraft (in six different ways?)
51. Eggs (found in ovaries)
53. Measurement equal to a half-barrel
55. Getting older
57. Diminish; reduce in intensity
58. Metal cooking pan
59. " ____ Is Love" (Steve Bell song)
60. Friend; chum; buddy
61. They're served in pubs.
62. One way to tune your radio station
64. What a forward takes and a goalie saves
65. Aaron ____ - famous duelist of July, 1804
66. Spirited elegance; stylish enthusiasm
69. Sis's sibling
71. Abbreviation on a criminal record
72. "they ____ with the church" (Acts 11)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSES!



Last issue, we asked for your feedback on our crossword page, and dozens wrote in to let us know this was quite often a group effort, with the whole family chipping in. Thanks very much for your encouragements and suggestions – they've all been passed on to our puzzle master Jeff Dykstra. You made it clear we should sign him to a long-term contract (even if he is doing this as a volunteer).

WORDS AND PHRASES:

a little holiday or “at home” quiz

by Christine Farenhorst

When you travel out for your holidays this summer and are stuck in traffic with a carful of fidgety teenagers, or are snugly ensconced in your far-up-north cottage and it rains for two or three days, what will you do? Well, here's a little quiz that will well suit that cozy day or evening when thunder claps, and a hot tea cup is cradled in your hands, and the men are pacing and fretting about the fish which are getting away.

This is a good time to reflect, with all those with you in your get-away, how some particular words and phrases found their way into the English language. Words or phrases are almost like people, evoking images and scenes as we come across them. You will find some below in a trivial pursuit setting – hopefully of historical interest – which might make that rainy day or evening lots of fun. Give everyone (although you can pair people up as well) a piece of paper and a pen. Have a moderator read the small paragraphs below, stopping at the underlined section so that each person can fill in the phrase or word which is indicated.

The winner, the one who gets the most right answers, gets first dibs on the outhouse when it stops raining! And if you want to make this a shorter event, split it into two 15-question quizzes!

You can find all the answers on page 41.

1. A phrase meaning “to make a mistake” was coined in the time when colonial settlers in America began hunting raccoons. Often a raccoon, chased by dogs, would climb up a tree. The dog would stay under the tree until the hunters came to make the kill. There were times, however, when the raccoon would be able to jump into the next tree and thus make his escape. The dog would be left _____.



There used to be a raccoon in this tree. **See question 1.**

2. Race horses are high-strung. Trainers discovered long ago that a goat is a soothing companion for a race horse. After a horse becomes fond of a certain goat, he may become upset if it is taken away from his stall. Race-track gamblers sometimes stole thoroughbred stall-mates just before a race. This reduced the horse's chance of winning. From this dishonest method a phrase has come which means upsetting a person, or making him lose his temper. It is to _____.

3. American railroad tycoons were among the first to have plush offices with huge desks and rich carpets. Their employees, on the other hand, worked in bare surroundings. The only time a worker was called into the plush office was if he had made a mistake. Hence a term meaning to be given a stern lecture became known as being _____.

4. This phrase refers to some money laid by. The allusion is to the custom of placing an egg in a hen's nest to induce her to lay her eggs there. If a person has saved a little extra, it is often referred to as a _____.

5. There are some things that cause a sensation for a number of days, and then these things pass into limbo, into things forgotten. Cats and dogs have their eyes shut for about 9 days after they are born. It is an amazing thing that they can see after this. As much as to say, the eyes of the public can be blind in astonishment for a number of days, then they see. From this comes the saying _____.

6. Early after the Civil War there were many groups of migrant laborers. They had no homes and followed crops to find work. Most of their work involved hand labor with a hoe and so they became known as hoe boys. Often these migrant workers committed petty theft at the farms at which they worked. By 1891 these “kings” of the road, who seemed to dislike work, were known as _____.

7. The early wooden ships had no stoves, so bread from shore had to be taken along. This bread quickly became moldy. A baker discovered that by reheating thin cakes of unleavened bread he could take out the moisture and keep it for long voyages. Such bread was called “bis coctus” (Latin for “twice-cooked”). This is where we get the English word _____.

8. The Romans served out rations of salt and other necessities to soldiers and civil servants. These rations were called by the general name of salt (sal), and when money was substituted for these rations, the stipend went by the name of _____.

9. The Venerable Bede (672-735), in his *Ecclesiastical History*, tells the story of a young priest who was to set out by land, but return by water, to accompany a young maiden destined to be the bride of King Oswin of Northumbria. The priest was given a vial of oil to pour on the sea if it became stormy. A storm did arise and the priest poured oil on the waves and they became calm. From this story came a figure of speech meaning to soothe an anxious spirit. It is _____.

10. The use of iron bars in jails did not become common until the 1600s. The French expressed this way of being jailed as “embarrer.” The English abbreviated it to “embar.” Reforms reduced the number of crimes punishable by death and prisons began to take on a larger role. Although people would rather be locked up than killed, they were ashamed to be “embarred.” From this comes the English word for shame which is _____.

11. In medieval times one of the most common crimes was stealing and butchering another man’s animals. But possession of fresh meat did not always mean you had stolen. Only when a man was caught with the animal, with blood on his hands, could he be convicted. So a phrase meaning a person being surprised in a wrong act was coined – that phrase is _____.

12. At the beginning of the machine age it was customary for work people to have their own tools. These they carried in a bag and left on the job site for the sake of convenience. When employers fired a man they gave that man no notice. But at quitting time they would give him his pay along with his bag of tools. From this practice we get the expression which means losing one’s job or _____.



Would this be more or less cute if it were a pig rather than a cat? **See question 19.**

13. Before electricity gamblers would play their dice games by the light of a candle. As the candle interfered with the throw of the dice, the loser was generally ordered to hold the candle up. The other players made fun of him as he stood there and they would comment that he was not even capable of that one small task. By 1550 a phrase which meant complete inferiority was born – it is _____.

14. Don’t think you are safe until you are quite clear of threatened danger. When bandits were masters of the forests, no traveler was safe until clear of their hunting ground. This led to an admonition to be on the alert, to not be overly confident danger had passed. The warning was: _____.

15. In 1257 a gold cent was coined by Henry III of England. After he lost the crown, his successors stopped minting it. For several centuries after this, tradesmen occasionally saw these coins and prized them as good luck. They were shiny and nice looking. Even today when a person wishes to describe a valuable article he can speak of it as worth a _____.

16. In the reign of Louis XIV, when wigs of unwieldy size were worn, and bows were made with very great formality, two things were specially required in court dance etiquette: a “step” with the feet (“pieds” in French), and a low bow with the body. In the bow, the wig (“queue”) would be very apt to get disarranged, even fall off. The caution, therefore, of a French dancing master to his pupils was: _____.

17. Doorbells are a fairly recent invention. People used to have knockers on a small metal plate nailed to the door. The nails holding the knocker took a great deal of punishment. As a matter of fact, the life was soon pounded out of such nails. By 1350 a phrase meaning absolute lifelessness was born. It was _____.



A different sort of answer for **question 21**.

18. In medieval England noblemen liked to hunt boar. They drafted young men to beat for them – that is to say, young men had to work their way through underbrush and flush out the boar. Boar were dangerous. With one sweep of their razor-sharp tusks they could sever a man's body. Consequently, unarmed beaters frequently disobeyed orders and did not walk directly through thick brush. By the 16th century, evasion in general had come to be known as _____.

19. A common trick in medieval days was to substitute a cat for a sucking-pig in a bag and sell it to unsuspecting customers, who thought they were buying a good piece of meat. If anyone heedlessly bought a bag without examining the contents, he bought a “cat” instead of a “pig.” But if the buyer opened the sack and looked, the trick was exposed. He had _____.

20. Professional horsemen of the 19th century developed many practices for training racers. Among them was the use of a heavy blanket designed to induce free perspiration. A name was developed for this garment. It was called a _____.

21. Meat used to be eaten at every meal and it was roasted over an open fire. The job of turning the spit was long and tedious. A craftsman devised an open wheel cage by means of which a dog could be trained to walk to keep the roast turning. If the dog became tired, a live coal was placed in the cage to make him walk more rapidly. Hence andirons used to be called _____.
(This practice was abolished by law in the 1800s.)

22. A type of three-colored violet had a thoughtful expression on its face. Because of this French botanists called it “pensee” (thoughtful). Eventually, the French name was adapted to the English and the flower became _____.

23. In the middle of the 19th century someone invented a gadget designed to make an audience laugh. Made of two thin boards, it was hinged at one end and loose at the other. Comedians would paddle one another with it and it would produce a loud noise. A term associated with all broad comedy thus came into being – this term was _____.

24. Nellie Melba, the Australian prima donna, visited London. She was on a diet and ate very little. By mistake the cook put a very dry piece of toast on her plate. She loved it, crunched on it, and complimented the chef. Since that time, a particular dried bread has been called _____.

25. In a church there is no cupboard or pantry, where mice do congregate. Hence the expression _____.

26. Before the Industrial Revolution, hats for men were largely made of animal skins. Mercury was used by tanners. Hat-makers, who handled the fur many hours each day over the years, absorbed the mercury. They often began to suffer from the shakes when they were middle-aged and from mental disturbances when they were older. This frequently culminated into insanity. Hence mentally unbalanced people are sometimes described as _____.

27. In his middle age, Louis XIV began wearing long wigs. His nobles followed suit. England adopted the custom as well. Custom dictated, however, that nobles could wear the long wigs and the ordinary person could only wear short ones. Consequently, men of prominence are said to be _____.

28. In almanacs, saints' days and holidays are printed in red ink. Other days are printed in black ink. So a day to be recalled with delight came to be known as _____.

29. Easily seen in a person's throat, a little projection moves up and down. Folks explained it by saying a piece of fruit had stuck in Eve's husband's throat when he partook of it. The name stuck. The projection caused by thyroid cartilage is therefore known as the _____.

30. When heavy penalties were given for short weight, bakers used to give a surplus number of loaves, called the inbread, to ensure they wouldn't be at any risk of those fines. The thirteenth was the vantage loaf and this amount came to be known as a _____.

Find all the answers on page 41.

THE MISSING INGREDIENT

“Where can I go for decent news coverage?”

That’s a question I have heard many times. Perhaps you have asked the same. It’s no surprise. Canada’s government-subsidized mainstream media all seem to sing from the same book, producing a steady stream of woke “news” coverage. There are a few conservative media outlets online, but most seem more interested in furthering an agenda than covering the news.

What will it take to change this? We need a credible Christian media organization... but that’s only part of the equation. Just as a good law firm requires good lawyers, so too a good media outlet requires good journalists. And that takes training and a solid biblical worldview.

My search for faithful journalism led me south of the border to the World News Group (WNG), the producers of *WORLD Magazine*, *The World and Everything In It* podcast, and the World Watch video channel for youth. This group is faithful to God’s Word, uplifting, hard-working, and fun.

THE WORLD JOURNALISM INSTITUTE (WJI)

How does World News Group find good Christian journalists? The USA is blessed with some solid Christian universities and colleges with journalism programs. That’s a start. But WNG goes beyond that and has been running their own training program for more than two decades.

In May, *RP*’s editor Jon Dykstra and myself traveled to Sioux Center, Iowa, home of Dordt University, to meet some of the team from *WORLD* and take part in their World Journalism Institute (WJI). This particular version of WJI was geared towards university students from across the continent with a two-week intensive Christian journalism program.




We got to watch 32 bright and keen students learn how to produce God-honoring stories in video, audio, and print, all through the lens of God’s Word.

They have a similar program for mid-career adults too, later in the year and at their headquarters in North Carolina. My colleagues Jon Dykstra and Marty VanDriel both graduated from WJI in years past, and Marty still writes for *WORLD* magazine today.

HELP WITH THE FIRST STEP

If we want to see more Christian journalism, we need to start training. Reformed Perspective is still a very small organization, nowhere near the size of *WORLD*. Yet the need here in Canada is great.

Fortunately, we don’t have to do this on our own. We are developing a good relationship with the team at *WORLD*. So, whether or not WJI brings their program to Canada, there is no need to wait. If you have any interest in helping *RP* by producing God-honoring stories in Canada, be sure to check out WJI’s programs already happening south of the border at <https://wji.world> and apply to one that works for you.

RP has aspirations to produce more journalism in the years to come. We hope you have already seen a change in this direction in the past year. We are looking for writers, donors, and volunteers to help us grow. If this is a vision you are excited about, please get on board! I look forward to hearing from you. 

Mark Penninga is Reformed Perspective’s Executive Director and can be reached at Mark.Penninga@ReformedPerspective.ca.



Pass it on!

If you enjoyed this complimentary magazine, would you consider making a donation so that we can produce more like it and share it freely with the world?

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ReformedPerspective.ca/donate



RP's Summer Photo Contest!

A Different Perspective on God's World

Last year we invited you to show us how you were enjoying God that summer. This time we'd like to put a twist on the same idea. We're calling our theme "A Different Perspective on God's World." So please explore God's creation, His flowers and forests, the Heavens that declare His glory, and the people He has put here, and then put a unique spin on the presentation.

What will that look like? That's for you to decide. We hope this theme will inspire, but we're not trying to limit your creativity. So take your picture and then send it along with a caption highlighting how this is a different angle on God's world.

Now get out there and start clicking!

CATEGORIES:

- Children and youth (under 18)
- Adults (18+)

RULES:

- Maximum 3 entries per person
- Must be an original photo, taken this year
- Include a line to explain how the photo relates to the theme
- Provide permission to RP to be able to publish your photo online and/or in print if selected

PRIZES:

- The winner and runner-up for both categories will be printed in *Reformed Perspective* this fall;
- The winner of each category will receive a \$100 gift certificate to ChristianBooks.com and the runner-up will receive a \$75 gift certificate.

DETAILS:

- Send your photo (high-resolution) to admin@reformedperspective.ca **before August 15, 2023**;
- Include the name of the photographer, age, title, and brief explanation of how it connects to the theme (max 100 words). Also indicate whether you give permission to RP to publish it.

