

# A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON GOD'S WORLD

14 pages of buds, bugs,  
beaches, birds, and  
a bounty of other  
entries from our  
summer photo  
contest!

Reformed

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# PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 40+ YEARS







# 2023 Summer Photo Contest Results:

A Different Perspective on God's World P. 18

- |       |   |       |   |       |  |
|-------|---|-------|---|-------|--|
| P. 4  | <b>Readers' Response</b>  | P. 38 | <b>The Emotional Communism of Sensitivity Training</b><br>- Kelsey Stout  | P. 56 | <b>COME &amp; EXPLORE: PRAYER</b><br>- Stephanie Vanderpol   |
| P. 6  | <b>FROM THE EDITOR</b><br>- Jon Dykstra   | P. 42 | <b>CROSSWORD PUZZLE</b><br>- Jeff Dykstra   | P. 60 | <b>Unless the Lord Builds the House</b><br>- Christine Farenhorst  |
| P. 8  | <b>NEWS IN PERSPECTIVE</b>  | P. 44 | <b>Real Talk Podcast overview: When It Comes to Evangelism, Do We Trust the Holy Spirit Will Show Up?</b><br>- Marty VanDriel | P. 62 | <b>FILM REVIEWS: The Best of 2023 So Far...</b><br>- Jon Dykstra   |
| P. 14 | <b>Churches' Food Drive Bears Fruit, and Births a Challenge</b><br>- Marty VanDriel | P. 48 | <b>Getting Old(er)</b><br>- Sharon L. Bratcher  | P. 65 | <b>Into The Light Documentary: A Free Teaching Documentary on Freedom From Pornography</b><br>- reviewed by Elliott Holtvluwer |
| P. 16 | <b>Pro-Life Flag Proposal Gets Town Talking About Worldviews</b><br>- Mark Penninga | P. 50 | <b>BOOK REVIEWS: History as Captured in the Comics</b><br>- Jon Dykstra   | P. 67 | <b>E.D. UPDATE: RP Press and The Study pass the torch to Providence Books &amp; Press</b><br>- Mark Penninga                   |
| P. 18 | <b>PHOTO CONTEST RESULTS: A Different Perspective on God's World</b>                | P. 53 | <b>Worship Matters</b><br>- reviewed by Reuben Bredenhof  |       |  |
| P. 32 | <b>What I Learned From My Oma</b><br>- Evelyn Kruis                                 | P. 54 | <b>Interview with an Artist: Jim Menken Transforms Tree Trunks!</b><br>- Jason Bouwman  |       |  |
| P. 34 | <b>IN A NUTSHELL</b><br>- Jon Dykstra   |       |   |       |  |
| P. 37 | <b>Whose Children Are They?</b><br>- Carman Bradley                                 |       |   |       |  |

# READERS' RESPONSE

We want to thank the many readers who offered appreciative comments on social media, or via short emails, for last issue's theme on anxiety. There was one longer response – quite a bit longer than we normally publish as a letter to the editor (normally 400 words or less) – but we thought it warranted an exception. To find the article and issue it is interacting with, go to [ReformedPerspective.ca/anxiety](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/anxiety)

– JD

## DEAR EDITOR,

I want to thank Mark Penninga for having the courage to share his personal struggles with anxiety and the lessons he learned in this process. In "Learning to be anxious for nothing" he explained that his experience and the conclusions he made are not the same for everyone dealing with anxiety.

Although his message would be very helpful to its intended audience I write because I am concerned it could be harmful to others with anxiety. My hope in this letter is to reach out to that audience. The connection between anxiety and sin could also be: 1) as a response to our own sin, 2) our response to someone else's sin or, 3) the effects the fall into sin has had on our mortal bodies.

### 1) Anxiety as a response to our sin

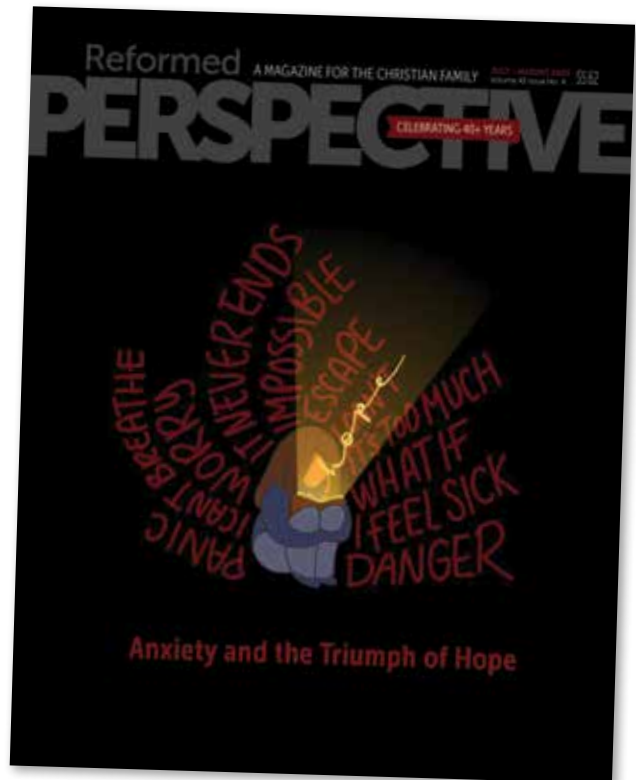
King David entered the cul-de-sac of worry when the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sin of Bathsheba. When he realized the depth of his sin he exclaimed "I have sinned against the Lord." He wrote about the anguishing thoughts he had over this in Psalm 51. He feared for his salvation and pleaded that he be returned to "the joy of Your salvation." He prayed that the Holy Spirit would not be taken from him; that he would not be cast out of God's presence. A cul-de-sac (in reference to Mark's article) is never built on the end of a one-way street. The way in is also the way out but you can only find the only way out by turning yourself around. In King David's case his anxious thoughts helped him to turn himself away from his sin and turn back to God.

### 2) Anxiety as a result of someone else's sin

When David repented from committing adultery with Bathsheba, murdering Uriah, and bringing shame to all of Israel, he did not report that he sinned against any of them. He instead said that he sinned against God. As can be seen in Psalm 51:4:

"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight . . ."

In other Psalms we read of psalmists calling to God for justice for sins others have committed against the Lord. If intentional murder of someone is not considered a sin against the victim or the victim's family but a sin against God, then so too are sins committed against us by others. There are several psalmists that cry out for justice against them. In Psalm 55 King David asks for justice on a friend who betrayed him. In verses 20 and 21 he writes:



"My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant. His speech is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords."

This is also an accurate depiction of most people that abuse their partners. This betrayal has made King David feel unsafe within the city. In verses 9-11 he writes about not feeling safe:

"... for I see violence and strife in the city. Day and night they prowl about on the walls; malice and abuse are within it. Destructive forces are at work in the city, threats and lies never leave its streets."

This too is how most victims of abuse feel within their own homes. The anguish they feel is not their sin, but a direct result of the sin of their partner. Like David's friend violated a covenant so too did their partner violate the covenant of marriage by not loving and cherishing them.

Having worked as a Mental Health Therapist for the past 14 years I have seen the long-standing effect abuse can have on someone emotionally and mentally. It can take a long time before a victim even feels safe enough to disclose past abuse. Oftentimes they blame themselves for the actions of their



abusers. Telling them that their thoughts and feelings are sinful would only hold them back from their road to recovery.

### 3) Sin and our mortal bodies

With the fall into sin came disease. In some cases, disease can impact brain functioning. Hypothyroidism can cause anxiety, fevers can cause hallucinations, UTI can cause delirium, postpartum can cause depression, to name just a few examples. Genetics can also impact cognitive functioning (e.g., Down Syndrome, Turner Syndrome, Autism, ADHD...). Environmental factors can also cause changes in brain functioning. The root cause of anxiety could be from one or more of these factors. These changes in functioning could require medication to treat them.

Just like our mind can be impacted by changes in our body, so too can our body be influenced by our mind. When we are stressed, we often feel it in our body. Dr. Gifford is wrong in suggesting that this is our body telling us we are sinning. In Psalm 6 King David was so worried about the number of his foes that he felt it in his bones. His stress was causing him issues with his vision. Jesus' body was not telling him that "he is not God" when Jesus told his disciples "my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Matt. 26:38-39), it was his body telling him of his stress. We need to listen to our bodies and find ways to address stressors at times. Telling ourselves it is just sin could cause us to ignore significant stressors and lead

us to burnout.

In conclusion, anxiety is very complex. The best way to support someone through it is by listening to them. I would strongly urge people to not tell someone dealing with anxiety that their anxiety is sin unless it is abundantly clear that this is the case. Anxiety often gets worse when the person experiencing it does not talk about it. Psalm 39:1-3 gives some insight into this:

"I said, 'I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth while in the presence of the wicked.' So I remained utterly silent, not even saying anything good. But my anguish increased; my heart grew hot within me. While I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue"

Talking can go a long way to addressing someone's anxiety. Telling them to repent is like putting a muzzle on their mouth. They need to be free to talk about their concerns otherwise they will meditate on them and a fire will burn within them. To those struggling with anxiety I pray you stay strong. I pray you can find peace for your weary soul. Know that God is with you; He will never leave you or forsake you.

JONATHAN SLOMP  
ALBERTA

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**Rachel VANDYK**  
Administrator  
Rachel@yourniagarahome.com

**Randy MULDER**  
sales representative  
905-359-9411

**Bill BROUWER**  
sales representative  
905-341-4400

**Ron MULDER**  
sales representative  
905-327-4564

**John MEERVELD**  
Broker  
905-531-0093

**Lisa VROLIJK**  
Administrator  
Lisa@yourniagarahome.com

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# How's that for a graduate profile?

Marcus Schroeder had 4 minutes to call his city to repentance. The 19-year-old was ready.

by Jon Dykstra

**A**s parents, teachers, and students, we put a lot of energy, prayer, money, and time into our Christian schools. So, after it's all done – after the 12 years are completed – what are we hoping our graduates will be equipped to do? What's our measure of success? Some schools have a "graduate profile" that highlights certain skills or attitudes it expects every student to leave with.

It's great to have that written down, but it's even better when those expectations are being modeled. And this past summer a 19-year-old down south offered up this different sort of graduate profile. Over the course of just a few days, Marcus Schroeder modeled what a young Christian can do when he's both well-educated and eager to take on whatever challenges come at him.

As Christian activist Jason Storms recounted the story on the Apologia Radio podcast, this teen was one of a couple hundred Christians who demonstrated against the Watertown, Wisconsin's second annual "Pride in the Park" festival. The July 29 event was billed as: "loads of family entertainment, including a Children's Dance Party, Drag Story Hour, 2 Drag shows." A typical drag show will have a guy in a campy dress and perhaps lingerie, gyrating on stage, pretending to be some bimbo-esque sort of woman. This one promised to be family-friendly, so perhaps the gyrating was kept to a minimum.

Now we've gotten so used to our upside-down world, we might not even

be shocked that the gyraters got protected and the protesters got arrested. We should be shocked. As God tells us, our rulers are supposed to pursue righteousness and punish evil (Prov. 16:10-12, Ps. 72). Instead, police moved in on Schroeder as he was standing on the sidewalk outside the event. They arrested him after he used a microphone and speaker to start reading Galatians 5 out loud. As Storms recounts it, the teen was charged with "unlawful use of amplification and resisting arrest." I don't know what the city's noise bylaws allow or ban, but as a viral video of the arrest shows, Schroeder's resistance amounted to tensing his arms for the first 10-20 seconds of the confrontation as the first officer tried to grab the mike from him. In arresting him, the authorities made a big deal out of what was at worst a minor infraction.

Their heavy hand didn't intimidate the young man. Just days later, Schroeder took the opportunity to address his city council. He didn't take a long time. What he said was remarkable:

"I just wanted to ask a simple question. A Nazi group showed up at the event Saturday, and people were talking about that, and I just wanted for all of us to really think about this: what's wrong with Nazism? Seriously, what's wrong with Nazism?"

"Because imagine for a moment, that there is no God above us, no hell below us, no heaven to live for, as John Lennon wanted to imagine. If we are

truly the result of evolved stardust, and our ancestors were fish, and we're the descendants of monkeys, then where do we find our value as human beings?"

"What's wrong with Nazism, unless you understand that the God of Scripture says that we are made in His Image, and so to murder innocent people is a violation to God's commands? As a Christian I can say that what the Nazis did in Nazi Germany was completely horrific and that they should have been resisted. In fact, the number one people group that resisted the Nazis were Christians. And the reason why was because they had a worldview that says that people are made in God's Image and that they have worth and value. That's why Nazism is wrong.

"But if we're going to reject the Christian worldview then we can't hold on to the fruit that comes from the Christian worldview, while denying the actual foundation.

"Intolerance is an interesting word – tolerance/intolerance, hatred/love, bigotry, things like that – because really every culture has something that it's intolerant towards and something that it's tolerant of. I mean there are things like murder and rape and stealing that we are intolerant towards as a society. And so, every society has something that it's intolerant towards. The question is just what is our object of intolerance, and what is our object of tolerance?"

"When I showed up Saturday all I

did was read from Scripture on the sidewalk. I read from the Bible, Galatians. And, by the way, I wasn't reading Romans 1. I wasn't reading any passage that spoke against homosexuality or anything like that. I was reading a passage from the Bible about love and I was arrested. No reason. Not given any warning. Not told anything about my amplification needing to be turning down. I was arrested and taken into custody simply for reading the Bible on the sidewalk.

"You see, as we become more and more tolerant of sexual immorality in our culture, we've become more and more intolerant towards Christian morality. And the more we become intolerant towards Christian morality the more we're going to see lawlessness in our streets. The more we become intolerant of Christian morality, the more we're going to see Nazis, the


more we're going to see people who don't hold to a Christian worldview, who think that everybody is a result of animals, and therefore if we are animals then why can't we just act like animals?

"We were called a hate group. We were told that we don't want to understand the other side. I just want to set the record straight. I am more than happy to have that conversation with the other side. I did speech and debate throughout high school and one of the things that we were taught in debate is that you can't make an argument for your side until you're able to make the argument for the other side. I've sat down and had hours of discussions with LGBTQ activists. I completely understand the other side; I want to understand the other side.

"But drag queens twerking on kids in lingerie is unacceptable and that's

something that we have to notice as a culture. We can have our disagreements but there comes a time when we have to understand that we are all going to stand before God one day and we're going to have to give an account for what we have done with the children in our society, the innocent minds and the children who deserve to be protected. Thank you."

Isn't this... glorious? Marcus Schroeder has been gifted by God with some exceptional talents.

It's just as clear that he's been gifted with an exceptional education. That's, then, the goal for our own graduate profile. We can pray that God will so equip us, that we can gift our own children with an education that'll allow them to take on the world with confidence. 





# NEWS

## IN PERSPECTIVE

### TURNING BIGGER GOVERNMENT CHEQUES INTO BIGGER KINGDOM SUPPORT

BY MARK PENNINGA

**F**amilies with children in Canada will notice that their monthly “Canada Child Benefit” jumped by 6.3 percent in July, reflecting increased costs from inflation this year. The federal government is already giving up to \$7,437 annually per child under age six, and \$6,275 for children between the ages of six and 17.

The tax-free amount is dependent on family income from the previous year.

Although many readers of RP have more children than the Canadian average and will welcome the extra help with meeting their monthly costs, we would also do well to consider



that the money didn't come out of thin air. This federal government has made no apologies about adding to its debt every year, increasing its debt by 50% and hundreds of billions in the past two years alone (from \$721 billion in 2020, to \$1.13 trillion in 2022, according to TradingEconomics.com).

So, we are effectively making both our neighbors and future generations shoulder the cost of the income we enjoy today. And there will be interest payments on top of that too.

Another factor to consider is our increasing dependency on the government to care for our children. Once we get used to such a large monthly installment of cash, it is easy to depend on it for essentials like our mortgage and groceries, and school payments. So what'll happen if the government starts to attach ideological strings to their support? They've already done something like this, in pulling the charitable status of pro-life groups.

And what happens if the government needs to cut the support to be more fiscally responsible? Would we vote to turn this tap off?

Although we have little say over whether this tap keeps pouring out the money, perhaps the most effective thing Christians can do in response, is to invest these funds into eternity, using them to support Kingdom causes. Funnel the support into pro-life centers, missions, Christian education, and people you know who need the help.

If the 10,400 families that received

this magazine had an average of two children (factoring in the many homes that have no children or whose children are older than 17), that would result in a staggering \$14,000 per home and \$145 million total (between all readers) going to God-honoring causes.

The government likes to redistribute wealth to align with

their values. We can do the same with the funds God gives us, also from the hand of the government. Imagine the impact we would have if we passed all of this government income along to causes that further our Lord's kingdom!



## 500 DAYS LATER: COUTTS PROTESTERS STILL LOCKED UP WITHOUT TRIAL OR BAIL

BY JON DYKSTRA & MARK PENNINGA

**A**lthough Covid and the truckers' convoy have been relegated to a part of our memories that many would prefer to keep locked up and left alone, there are unresolved issues. Few Canadians realize that there are four Canadians who are still locked up and being held without a trial and without bail on charges of "conspiracy to commit murder" in connection with protests at the Coutts border crossing in Alberta.

It has been well over 500 days since Chris Lysak, Chris Carbert, Anthony (Tony) Olienick, and Jerry Morin were arrested, yet no trial has taken place. The denial of bail to the four is particularly unusual.

"These are political prisoners, pure and simple" shared trucker Gord Magill in an opinion piece for *Newsweek*.

"They are being denied basic rights due to even the most violent of criminals because they are on the wrong side of the Trudeau government. They are being used as a fig leaf, the last shred of Trudeau's legitimacy for invoking The Emergencies Act and



for the massive overreach of freezing bank accounts and seizing assets that it incurred."

So how can Christians evaluate a situation like this? We might have our sympathies and opinions, but there is a lot here we just don't know and aren't really in a position to evaluate. For example, we don't know if Magill's claims are true. We also don't know if these four are guilty or innocent of the crimes they are charged with. But we can hear Solomon's warning in Ecclesiastes 8:11 that "when the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong." If these men are innocent, that they've spent more than a year in jail is outrageous. And if they are guilty, this delay in justice will only foster mischief.

## PRICEY RIDE: IN ONE YEAR THE AVERAGE COST OF A CAR HAS JUMPED MORE THAN \$10,000

BY MARK PENNINGA

**I**f it feels like vehicle prices are going up much more than inflation, that is because they are. The average price of a new vehicle jumped to \$66,288 in June, a staggering 21 percent increase in the past year, and 47 percent increase in just four years, according to the *Globe and Mail's* Petrina Gentile.

With prices this high, it isn't surprising that most of these purchases are not paid for with cash. The average amount of financing required for a new vehicle reached \$53,023 by the end of 2022. With interest rates around 7 percent for vehicles, this results in a hefty monthly bill. The average payment for a new



vehicle is now \$797 per month, a 38 percent increase from 2019.

God's Word has something to offer in even this situation. Proverbs 22:7 warns us that "The borrower is the slave of the lender." Driving an older vehicle may not feel as good for our self-image, but it can go a long way to keeping our lives free from the slavery of debt.

SOURCE Petrina Gentile's "Average price of new car tops \$66,000 as drivers wrestle with 'a very surprising reality'" posted to TheGlobeandMail.com on Aug 8, 2023

## COURT CASE TO CHALLENGE QUEBEC'S BAN ON "OVERT PRAYER" IN SCHOOL

BY MARK PENNINGA

**T**he Quebec Superior Court is set to hear a case that challenges the province's ban on "overt prayers." The province's Education Minister Bernard Drainville explained that the purpose of the new legislation is "to preserve the secular nature of public schools."

The Christian Legal Fellowship (CLF) has been granted intervenor standing in the case. In his recent *Globe and Mail* article, "Banning student-initiated prayer in school spaces is unconstitutional and unjust," CLF's Executive Director Derek Ross explained why they believe the law is not constitutional:

"True neutrality is achieved not by silencing prayer, but by accommodating students of all faiths, and none, to participate fully and equally in our public education system ... if students' prayers offend the state's vision of secularism, which of their expressions of faith might be restricted next?"

He also quoted a previous Supreme Court decision that explained that the Charter's freedom of religion protects the right to "declare religious beliefs openly and without fear of hindrance or reprisal."

Pointing to a different Quebec court decision that defended someone giving the middle finger as a "God-given, Charter-enshrined right," Ross concluded:

"If an adult has the right to express anger with outstretched fingers, surely students have the right to express love with folded hands, or bended knees. If any right is God-given, that one is."

## JOHN CALVIN: FLORIDA STATE ATTORNEY?

BY JON DYKSTRA

**J**ohn Calvin showed up at a press conference in Florida last month, as Governor Ron DeSantis introduced the state's newest state attorney, Andrew Bain. As Bain took his turn at the podium he began by thanking the governor and his legal mentors, before then transitioning to an explanation of why he was happy with his new role.

"For me, this is a place where John Calvin's second purpose of the law came to life. The second purpose for law is a restraint on evil. The law in and of itself cannot change the human heart. It can however, serve to protect the righteous from the unjust.... We are here to prosecute crimes, and to hold people accountable."

What he was referencing here was



what's known as Calvin's threefold purposes of the law. Calvin said that God's Law acts on us in three different ways:

- 1) It acts as a mirror, showing us our sins, and our desperate need for a Savior
- 2) As Bain noted, it restrains evil. In forbidding murder, theft, and more, and promising to punish those acts, it will, as Calvin put it, "curb those who, unless forced, have no regard for...justice."
- 3) Finally, it shows us how to live a life of thankfulness to God by telling us what pleases Him.

Now, Calvin was talking about God's

Law and not Florida's, and the latter has some major departures from the former. Most notably, while Florida offers more protections for the unborn than Canada, banning abortion six weeks after conception, the state still allows the unborn to be murdered without sanction before that point.

Still the second purpose *is* relevant in civil law, and Bain's reminder is timely as that purpose is being forgotten. That forgetfulness is perhaps more evident south of the border, where in recent years we've seen major US cities decide not to enforce laws already on the books involving both smaller matters like shoplifting, and more major ones like rioting.

From this distance, it's impossible to know what sort of state attorney Bain will be, but what's worth noting is his example here: a judicial official shamelessly talking from an explicitly Christian worldview, teaching the public about the benefit of the law in protecting the righteous from the unjust. That's worthy of celebration and imitation.



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## PEACE, PEACE? WILL THE CRC BE LULLED INTO LOSING THEIR WAY?

BY JON DYKSTRA

**I**s there a spiritual war going on behind the scenes in the Christian Reformed Church? Oh yes, says member Phil Reinders, in a June 5 column in the *Christian Courier*, published just before this year's synod.

"...the Church is being played. We are unaware of a larger battle going on, one not against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities. ...there is a spirit of the age that is binding and blinding the church..."

Those familiar with the CRC will recall that 2022's synod formally adopted a "Human Sexuality Report" reaffirming homosexuality as sinful. This year's synod has confirmed it yet again. However, after taking these two steps forward, the denomination's Calvin University took one big step back, granting every faculty member who filed a "gravamen" – a formal statement of disagreement – with Synod's decision, their approval for continued employment. Synod 2023 pushed to 2024 a decision that might have challenged the university's decision.

So Phil Reinders' warning might have us respond with a hearty "Amen," and "Preach it brother!" Can't the CRC leadership see that freeing erring university professors to continue influencing the next generation is a good way to turn this recent victory into a long-term defeat?

But sadly, Reinders isn't cautioning against a CRC slide into sexual lawlessness. Nope, he is worried about how making big of sexual orthodoxy might cause division in the church.

"Our best witness to the world won't be a particular stance on sexual ethics, whatever your position

might be. At any time, but certainly in this moment of fracture and antagonism, the church's best witness is a practiced unity in the body of Christ..."

He cites Scripture passages such as James 3:17-18 and Ephesians 4:3 which praise peace and peacemakers.

He's preaching unity. Above all.

What God has said about what is good and best for everyone when it comes to sexuality, and being created male and female, and husbands' and wives' roles in marriage, all of that doesn't matter. Not if it disrupts unity.

For those of us on the outside looking in, it's worth considering how an appeal for unity – which God Himself encourages us towards – can be used to oppose God. When anything – even the best of things like love, unity, and truth, are presented as the ultimate good, they become not a means to worship God, but a replacement for Him – this is unity as an idol.

Just consider what this sort of unity would look like. CRC members are being asked to tolerate those who differ and we know what it would look like on the one side: practicing homosexuals being elevated to positions as elders

and deacons and pastors, couples getting "married" in the church, and their relationships celebrated. Tolerance would mean homosexuals being loud and proud about their sexuality inside their local congregations. Anything else wouldn't respect who they are.

And what of those on the other side? What of those convinced that God condemns homosexuality, and that gay "marriages" are two people dangerously committing themselves to ongoing rebellion against their Maker for as long as they both shall live? Will the orthodox side be tolerated if they speak their piece during the "any objections" part of the ceremony? Will they be tolerated if they won't stop pleading for their homosexual friends to repent and turn back to the God Who knows what is the very best for them?

No. We know better. They'll be told to be respectful. Be loving. And be quiet.

Jeremiah warned against those who preached "peace, peace when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11). Sometimes battles are unavoidable. The unity on offer here is only a trick that will be used to silence God's truth about sexuality in the CRC... just as our culture most desperately needs to hear that truth from the church. And Phil Reinders is either preaching this impossible unity in ignorance, or, like he said, "the Church is being played."





## CANADA'S HIGHEST COURT DECLINES CHURCHES' APPEAL OVER COVID RESTRICTIONS

BY MARK PENNINGA

**T**he Supreme Court of Canada will not hear an appeal of how the BC government dealt with churches during Covid.

Although each provincial government dealt with religious gatherings differently, BC's response was particularly difficult, as the province ordered churches closed while it allowed bars, restaurants, gyms, businesses, art galleries, and schools to carry on. The indefinite order caused great stress as it clashed with God's calling to His people to gather for worship and to care for each other. And as the lower court judge admitted, it also violated the Constitution's protection for freedom of religion and assembly.

After the numerous efforts by churches to communicate with the provincial government fell on deaf ears, a respectful court challenge was initiated by three churches, two of them Reformed: Riverside Calvary Chapel in Langley, the Immanuel Covenant Reformed Church of Abbotsford, and the Free Reformed Church of Chilliwack. ARPA Canada was also granted written and oral arguments by the court.

These three churches invested a great deal of time, effort, and heartache into their court challenge, and into conducting it as far as was possible, even in the face of some criticism from other churches. Some brothers and sisters seemed to think that challenging the government in court was contrary to the call for submission to the governing authorities that we find in Romans 13.

But it is not. The courts are one of the three branches of government, and they offer a critical accountability to both the legislative branch (which makes the laws), and the executive (which enforces the laws). Bringing a case to the court doesn't show disrespect for the government. It shows utmost respect – using the process that God has given us and the system of government we have. That's why Paul could appeal to the court system of his day (Acts 25:10-11).

One lesson learned by those involved in these cases is that many of our secular leaders, including our judges, have little concept of what church and corporate worship means. As ARPA Canada detailed in their analysis of the original ruling which the churches were appealing, it was evident that the judge didn't understand how important worship is:

"we should also be gravely concerned that he does not seem to have an appreciation for how central gathered worship is to Christians. In the judgement, Chief Justice Hinkson suggests that because both secular and religious schools can gather, that the current restrictions do not disadvantage those with religious beliefs. But this fails to appreciate the centrality of gathered worship to Christian communities. It is small comfort for a child to be able to gather with other Christians for the purpose of learning at school, but not to gather for the purpose of worship at church."



It is important that churches, as legitimate authorities under God, now use times of peace and freedom to build relationships with our civic leaders so that they understand who we are and what God has called both us and them to.

That the Supreme Court declined to weigh in isn't unusual – most appeal requests are denied, and the highest court also doesn't give reasons for its decisions for not taking an appeal. Yet we can be thankful that the highest court of all, led by the Chief Justice of the universe, is seated on the throne and will judge all things and also make all things right.

### Hope Reformed Christian School

Hope Reformed Christian School is a Christian K-12 school in Paris, Ontario, serving the local Reformed Christian communities of southwestern Ontario. We offer a Christ-centered, Reformed education, nurturing and developing the students' God-given gifts, character, and Biblical faith for the glory of God and the building of His Kingdom.

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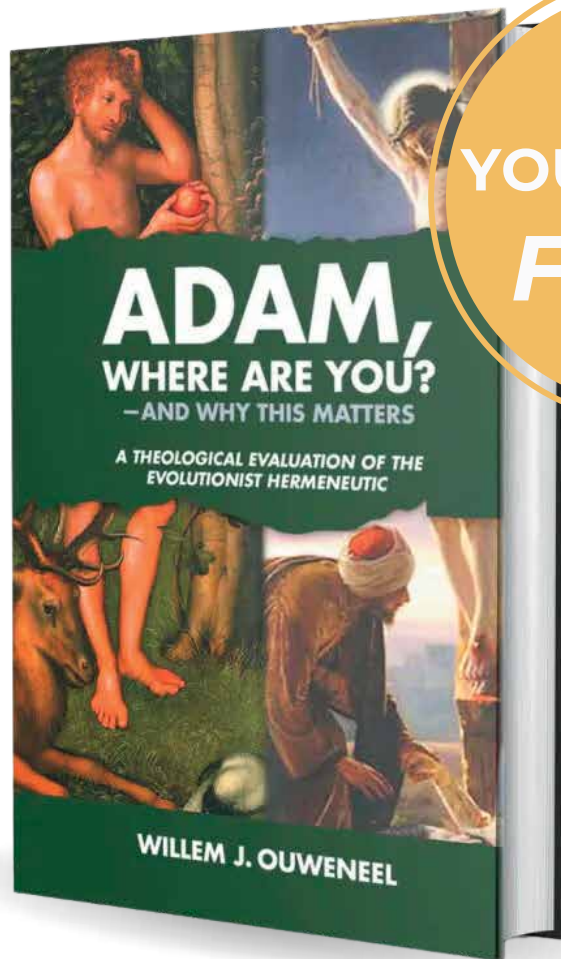
Please submit a resume with a statement of your philosophy of education, a statement of faith, and references, including one from your current pastor.

Inquiries and/or applications can be forwarded to:

**Mr. J. Kikkert, Principal**

Hope Reformed Christian School  
331 German School Road, Paris, ON N3L 3E1  
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## THEISTIC EVOLUTION HAS BECOME A **FAITH** ISSUE

"From out of this [evolutionary] process there emerges a population of *hominids*... when these hominids have *evolved* to the point of exhibiting moral capabilities - our creating God "elects" this population *as his covenant people*." - James K.A. Smith

"To account for *evolution* we must see at least Genesis 1 as *non-literal*... Sometimes [the writers] wants to be taken literally, sometimes they don't." - Timothy Keller

Whatever theistic evolution was in the past, it has grown into a virulent attack upon the foundations of Christianity. Ouweneel brings home the extent to which the authoritative account of creation is being brought into question at reformed educational institutions.

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by Marty VanDriel

# CHURCHES' FOOD DRIVE BEARS FRUIT, AND BIRTHS A CHALLENGE

Evangelism committees and home mission groups sometimes struggle with how can we show God's love to our neighbors. Members of five Reformed churches in Dunnville, Ontario gave a great example of God's love in action recently, when they organized their first annual "OneChurch Food Drive." They collected 8,900 pounds of donated groceries, along with over \$2,600 in cash and checks for their local Salvation Army food bank.

Bruce DeBoer, one of the drive's organizers, was inspired after meeting Mike Bosveld, who had helped organize food drives among churches in the greater Brantford area. Bruce and his

wife Helena jumped in with both feet, calling the home mission committees of other Reformed churches locally, who in turn organized volunteers from their membership. Food banks often experience lighter donations in the summer months, but there remains a need among many of our neighbors who have a hard time getting by without some supplemental groceries.

Members from Canadian Reformed Churches at Attercliffe, Dunnville East, and Dunnville West, and members from the Dunnville URC and the Dunnville CRC, knocked on almost every door in town – nearly 2,700 in total! – a week ahead of the drive. They were letting

families know that they would be back to collect any donations on the scheduled Saturday. If they couldn't speak to the residents, they left a flyer letting folks know about the drive, and what kind of items would be helpful to donate.

Word quickly spread about this initiative, helped by articles in the local newspaper. On the morning of the drive, 85 volunteers, including little ones and seniors, met to divide up the city section by section, and make their way out to collect from their neighbors. Volunteers were amazed at the generosity of the community: they gathered enough food and donations to supply the needs of the food bank for over two months!






The Food Bank's Facebook page effusively thanked the volunteers:

"We are speechless right now!... To our beautiful town and community, because of your generosity, the amazing volunteers and organizers of the First Annual OneChurch Food Drive, we now have 8,873 pounds of food and \$2,685 raised. This I believe has beat our old record! We are so blessed and so thankful for everyone who showed up today and those who organized this amazing event!"

Besides collecting food and funds, the Food Drive gave Christians an opportunity to interact with their neighbors and establish some relationships, while raising awareness about Reformed churches as a place where God's people are called to show love and mercy to one another and their neighbors. Door knockers were also able to find out where there were people who could use help down the road, perhaps with a meal at Thanksgiving, or with a friendly knock on the door to check up on them.

"This could be a very powerful way for our churches across the country to make an impact on their communities," said DeBoer, who hopes that this can become an annual event for Dunnville. He and Helena have volunteered to assist the first group in each province and state that would like to do a food drive. "We can host their inaugural meeting (virtual or in person), and work with them to make a successful drive in their community. We can share access to a 'do's and don'ts' handbook with examples of effective flyers, lists of what kinds of items to collect, and other best practices, to ensure a successful event. Our only ask in return is that anyone helped pays it forward by encouraging other communities around them to do likewise!"

Bruce DeBoer can be reached by email at [bruce@ontariometalproducts.com](mailto:bruce@ontariometalproducts.com) or by phone at (416) 660-3172. 



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# Pro-Life Flag Proposal Gets Town Talking About Worldviews

by Mark Penninga

A proposal by the Smithers Pro-Life Society for their community to fly a pro-life flag was unanimously rejected by their town council, but not without exposing their worldviews and getting the entire community talking about life and freedom and what to do when worldviews conflict.

## AN UNLIKELY CATALYST


Along with many other communities located towards BC's west coast, the town of Smithers has embraced a very secular ideology, which it understands to be "progressive." As a part of its recent "Pride" celebrations, the town welcomed a drag queen story reading for children at the public library.

Not impressed, over 800 members of the community signed a petition to express their concerns.

Jessica Vandergaag, a board member of Smithers Pro-Life, was in attendance when the town council responded to this petition.

"The councillors reiterated over and over how inclusive and diverse our community is and that the public square was for 'everyone.' Their words rang through my head all evening. A thought came to mind – why not ask for the pro-life flag now when we can hold them to their words of inclusion and diversity? While they still remember the words they said!"

Since the town flies rainbow flags on its main street, Smithers Pro-Life was planning to request next year that a pro-life flag be hung as well. But with the



Jessica Vandergaag, left, and Betty Bandstra on the right, holding up the pro-life flag Smithers Pro-Life was willing to donate.

"The local newspaper gave the story its front page, providing coverage that was surprisingly fair to Smithers Pro-Life."

town council's declaration that the public square is for everyone, now seemed the time to act.

In the same month Vandergaag, along with board member Betty Bandstra, stood before Smithers council, backed by a crowd of supporters in the gallery. They requested that the town hang the pro-life flag or paint it on a crosswalk in the same intersection as the rainbow crosswalk.

Vandergaag proceeded to give an impassioned speech to Council, explaining that "the pre-born remain the group that is most ignored, even though it has the highest death rate, 100,000 killed per year in Canada."

After quoting the mayor's and councillors' recent comments about welcoming different perspectives and worldviews, Vandergaag had the pro-life flag held up, and she made the case that the most vulnerable deserve public recognition "because it is through the awareness of human rights abuses that empathy is developed and public opinion is changed."



## A CONFUSED RESPONSE

What was the town council going to do? How could they turn down a request for a symbol that shows inclusiveness for vulnerable citizens, with so many in the community demonstrating their support? The local newspaper gave the story its front page, providing coverage that was surprisingly fair to Smithers Pro-Life.

Council put the request on their next meeting agenda, and the pro-life community showed up once again, filling the gallery to show their support for the initiative.

Each council member spoke, and their words exposed the impact this proposal had on their hearts and souls. They were emotional and passionate... and also confused.



One council member, Genevieve Patterson, who identified herself as both pro-choice and Christian, was in tears as she shared her story of multiple miscarriages. She explained how she had three pregnancies where the baby had died after the first trimester, requiring her to have a D&C procedure, to remove the baby. She went on to call the D&C her “abortion” and said that “I am grateful for my right to choose. It saved my life.” She added “As a Christian woman, and a leader in my community, I will never use my relationship with God to rationalize my political beliefs, as I believe my relationship with God is just that – my own.”

Although everyone should sympathize with her experience, it is a fallacy to compare what she went through with abortion, as an abortion involves purposeful action to end the life of a preborn child. The pro-life perspective would adamantly support her in her D&C. And although she professes to keep her faith separate from her political beliefs, her pro-choice stance made it very clear that her beliefs dictated her political decisions.

The one member of Council who is known as a Christian and a member of a local Reformed church also voted against the flag. He explained that the feedback he read about the proposal included the concern that:

“there will be women in our town, who might have had an abortion, not because they wanted to but because life circumstances forced them to such a decision. The presence of a pro-life flag or crosswalk could be very triggering.”

He could understand why they would conclude that. His other comments made it evident that his main concern was about how people from both sides of these issues talked about the other side.

Somewhat ironically, the only Council member who showed support for the proposal explained that he was an atheist, and had opposed the original rainbow crosswalk proposal on the grounds that it would raise one ideology or group over others. He sees this current proposal as proof that he was correct, and voted against it for the same reason as the rain-

bow crosswalk. He said he wanted to see a new proposal to not allow the town to make any more symbolic statements like the rainbow crosswalk, though he wouldn't remove that crosswalk now because he isn't in favor of removing symbols.

Gladys Atrill, the town's mayor, started her speech by reflecting that “residents of Smithers have challenged Council in the past two weeks with big issues: issues about who we are, what we believe, our worldviews, what is OK in public, what symbols we should consider.”

She proceeded to contrast the rainbow flag, and its alignment with the Canadian Human Rights Act, with the pro-life flag, which contradicts the reality that abortion is legal in Canada.

“As such, I'm not in favor of placing symbols in public places that relate to health procedures since there are many that are viewed as controversial.... Miss Vandergaag linked her strong faith in God to her pro-life belief. Others hold different views, that abortion is a medically-necessary procedure and that women have the right to self-determination.”

Mayor Atrill failed to recognize that the right to life is foundational to all other rights and is included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which the town is bound to uphold. She also failed to recognize that many things were legal and even celebrated in the past which we are ashamed of today (including how women were not recognized as persons under the law). The fact that something is recognized by law doesn't make it right. To add to this, the mayor had no issue imposing her worldview (the right to abortion), over Vandergaag's and others who are pro-life, within the same minute that she claimed that “The debate over abortion belongs at other tables than this one.”

## FROM TOWN HALL TO TOWN SQUARE


After the town's unanimous decision against the pro-life flag, the local media covered the story again. And this sparked a conversation that has carried on in the following weeks.

In July, a local radio station invited

Vandergaag and Bandstra, along with the drag queen story hour host, to an hour-long discussion about the pro-life flag proposal. Although Vandergaag was nervous about taking part, she reflected after that “the conversation went well and I really felt at the end that God gave me words and guided me through quite the monologue.” She added that the others who took part expressed thanks to her and Bandstra for the civil conversation and the councillor in particular seemed “quite moved” by it. “I really pray and believe that even if it is not aired, that God did some planting there between the six of us.”

Reflecting on the whole ordeal, she commented “while the result was not as we hoped, we do believe it to be a positive experience in the grand scheme.” She proceeded to give one example. “I was contacted by a former co-worker, whom I had no idea was pro-life, wondering what the result from Town Council was. Her family was visiting from Ireland and it was a topic of their conversation. I shared that it had been voted down and she expressed her sadness. I was touched that she contacted me and that conversations about it were still happening over a month later!”

Not only do these conversations bring attention to our preborn neighbours, they also break through the veneer of “inclusivity” and “equality” that our secular leaders often champion, without having to defend. It was rather obvious that the council members only welcomed some perspectives, and these were ones that aligned with their own worldviews. The antithesis is as real in 2023 as it was in the Garden of Eden.

Vandergaag “absolutely recommends” others to do this in their communities, both because of the conversation it creates and as a voice for the preborn who are otherwise not heard. But she also advised that it be done as a “delegation request” rather than simply a letter request. This is a request to address town council in person about a matter that is important to a citizen or group, before a decision is made. “Letters can get passed by but a delegation request gets you extra time to present your request and the town council has to act on it with a motion in the following meeting.” 



# A different perspective on God's world

## RP's summer photo contest results

We asked you to explore God's creation using your own creativity, so you could offer your fellow readers a unique look at the wonders big and small. Once again we got a fantastic response, with well over 150 entries!

There were just so many great pictures, we knew we'd have to give the contest a lot more space in the magazine. So we doubled it. And even that wasn't enough, so be sure to check out this article at [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca), where you'll be able to find dozens more. Our judges did not see the names of the photographers when selecting these pictures (which explains why some have more than one picture published).

What follows are the best of the best, broken up into two categories: **Adult (18 and up)** and **Youth (under 18)**, with the winner in each category getting a \$100 gift card, and the runner-up getting \$75. Take time to linger over your favorites and consider how each of these pictures offers glory to God, first in what's depicted, and then secondly, in the creativity of the photographer, who God created too.

**ADULT**

**WINNER**



**Faith at its Finest:** Consider the birds of the air, mixed with childlike faith

– Em Slaa

## A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON GOD'S WORLD



### RUNNER-UP

One day this summer we went to Singing Sands and were delighted by the beautiful reflections in the calm shallow waters. It was one of those smoggy days, however it only enhanced the simple beauty of my family enjoying the pleasures of God's creation. I was so glad I brought my camera to capture this neat perspective of God's world!

– Sarah Korvemaker

#### Other Worlds:

A different perspective on God's World is the gift he has given us to look up from this world and see the moon. And how over the centuries, it has inspired us to write music, poetry and even the science to land on it.

– Mark Williams





I took this photo in my pollinator garden in June 2023. It is a unique perspective of the underside of a Black Swallowtail caterpillar as he munches his way through my dill. Usually, we notice their bright colors on the top side of their bodies, but this guy was bending the stem as he neared the top of the plant. I enjoyed seeing his little legs cling to the stem.

– Carrie Jonker



**Flip Perspective:** The inverse image that the lens ball creates indeed offers a very different and unique perspective on God's world. Try flipping the image over!

– Kate Kingma





## A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON GOD'S WORLD



**Window in Heaven:** This picture feels like a window has been opened in heaven. It made me realize that no matter how hard life on earth is, God still shows us beauty everyday, and even a glimpse of His glory.

– Hannah Koert



A panorama of 210 flowers placed in a sunflower head (Fibonacci sequence) mosaic... They are ... mostly flowers, with two butterflies, one caterpillar, three bees, and in the center a blue jay. "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

– Bert Tenhage

**Fowl Weather:** Big and small, God made them all.

– Em Slaa



**Milky Way on the Bruce Peninsula:** In the middle of the dark night while the world sleeps, the majesty of the Milky Way quietly stretches across the sky. Billions of stars twinkling from light years away remind us of how small we are, and yet the Lord numbers the hairs on our heads. "Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing." – Isaiah 40:26

– Rachel Vander Deen



**In God's Hands:** All things, including creatures great and small are created by God. And all these things are bright and beautiful and I believe this picture encapsulates the power of His handiwork. He has created the bees and continues to uphold them everyday through the flowers that He has also designed by His hand. But He has also created the majestic mountains which stand in the background of this picture, showing His power to create both big and small, and uphold it all in His hands. Psalm 104 was brought to mind when taking this picture.

– Hannah Koert



## A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON GOD'S WORLD



### A Family Reflection in Watercolor:

We see reflections all the time, however we are often focused on the subject rather than their reflection. I captured this photo of a beautiful family of 9 as they were looking into their pond. I focused on their reflection and captured a nice photo. While editing, I flipped the photo around for fun and was pleasantly surprised by the beautiful "watercolor" family portrait created by nature. Truly a unique perspective on God's amazing creation!

– Sarah Korvemaker

**Complex Creatures:** The different perspective I see in nature is how creative God really is! Take this Northern Dog-day Cicada. It is very strange looking, almost prehistoric and it has become a standard summer sound with its high-pitch buzzing sound to attract a mate. Many people never see it, just hear it, but God knows exactly where it's at ☺

– Mark Williams



Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird — each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day. Genesis 1:20-23

It is always amazing to see how the birds of the air know how to take care of their young... to stay with them as the eggs, keeping them safe and warm until they hatch and then grow, knowing when it is time for them to leave the nest and then once they can fly, still feed them. Our God is an awesome God.

- Connie Kiers





**Windmill:** There is something magnificent about the beauty of the Dutch windmills. They are like living stones. Each one has a story to tell like the tabernacles of old. God is faithful and His story continues on from one generation to the next.

– John Verbinnen

A creature of the night captured during the day. Psalm 148 reminds us to praise the Lord for all the wild animals.

– Carla VanLaar



**Celestial Reflections:** After a heavy rainfall, a brilliant sunset closed the day, and puddles reflected the glorious colors painted into the sky by our Creator God – a symbolic reminder of our calling to bear His image. "...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." – Matthew 5:16

– Rachel Vander Deen



**Stars in the Night:**  
I love taking night shots of the sky. A camera can capture so many more stars than what one can see. Our God is an awesome God!  
– John Verbinnen



**The Hidden World:** Another mystery of God's creation is what goes on below our feet. The different perspective is that much of this unseen world is invisible to humans, unless we take the time to explore. It amazes me to know God still knows every living creature no matter how hidden. I thought at first this was just a small bit of fluff, no bigger than a pinhead, but under close inspection, I discovered this was a Planthopper Nymph.  
– Mark Williams

**Fanning Feathers:** While working on a trout farm in a nearby lake I freed a great blue heron from the fish netting. It was hoping for an easy meal but got snagged instead and nearly drowned. While it was resting and drying out before taking off once more.  
– Chris Van Dyken





# YOUTH

## WINNER

**The Circle of Life:** This might not be a photo everyone wants to look at because most people don't exactly like snakes. But, for me, when someone says they see an animal, I love to walk up close and see the unique detail in the animal. The reason why I am interested in seeing animals up close is because I find myself in awe seeing the many different animals with unique characteristics that God has given them. Yes, this photo might make you tense, but it's not every day you see a snake eating a frog in the angle it was taken in.

– Rachel G. Age 17



Gazing at God's beautiful sunset through the perspective of a dandelion.

– Jocelyn D

## RUNNER-UP



## A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON GOD'S WORLD



**Elephant Hawk Moth:** Isn't it amazing how God puts so much detail into such small animals like this hawk moth? Check out its fuzzy body, big eyes, and bright colors. It's so small that few humans might ever stop to look at it, yet God made it so beautiful!

– Josiah C, Age 11

**Infinite Love:** capturing the beauty of every small being: This strange symbolic picture highlights God's immeasurable love for animals big and small. I chose this photo because it takes a creative twist on the theme and has a great underlying message that we can also apply to our lives.

– Matthew P, Age 15



**A Fly at Rest:** Using macro photography, I was able to see a new perspective of God's sophisticated and amazing design over the small creatures of the earth.

– Seth B, Age 15





**Last Light:** As I was walking down a path in the woods, a ray of light illuminated a new tree growing in the forest. This reminded me of God being the light in a dark world, giving a new perspective on the shadows.

– Seth B, Age 15

**Looking Up a Spruce Cone:** I wanted to capture the perspective of God's creation that we don't normally take the time to enjoy. Also to get the intricacies that God has put into our world. For God created beauty for our and His enjoyment.

– Emily M, Age 15



This summer's highlight was a family reunion week of camping. Something we haven't been able to do as a complete family for 10 years. With cousins from other provinces it's hard to get to know each other and stay connected. Cellphones despite their challenges can have a positive effect for long distances. This shot was captured during the family photo session that happened the reunion week. So grateful for family ties and the technology that allows us to share and stay connected though far apart.

– Jacob L, Age 15



## A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON GOD'S WORLD

**A Rain Storm:** I love this photo, the cloud is so dark, big, and it reminds me of rolling waves. I can see God's power in these clouds.

– Damaris D, Age 13



**Letter N in Tree:** My Oma lives across the road and one night I found out the trees by her house are forming the letter N, and her name is Nellie!

– Abigail B, Age 11

**Black Oystercatcher:** It has such a small world. All they need is a little beach with some oysters to keep them alive and happy. God cares for every creature He makes, and gives to each all they need.

– Josiah C, Age 11







**God's Canvas: Beauty in the midst of a storm**

– Natalie S, Age 17

**Creation's Picture Frame: We are like this tree. We are broken, but can still tell people about God's goodness.**

The tree fell and died, but it frames a part of God's beautiful creation.

– Miriam S, Age 12



**A Beautiful Close-Up:**

We often see God's creation from a distance, not looking very closely. In these pictures we can see all the little details and the special characteristics God has put into every part of His creation. From the petals on a flower, to the clouds in the sky or the wings on a bee. Sometimes the little things are the most important and we need to take the time to appreciate them.

– Danielle L, Age 15



## A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON GOD'S WORLD



In and out of focus on some of God's small creatures. Bird's Hill Park, Manitoba

– Eliana J, Age 13

**Garter Snake:** Everyone thinks snakes are just a long rope with eyes and a mouth. If you look at a snake closely, you see the real beauty of God's world, like the fiery orange dots along the scales and the different shapes and sizes of the scales on its face.

– Josiah C, Age 11



**Black Dog Framed in a Black Tire:**

Toby the black dog looks good framed in a black tire!

You wouldn't guess that God's animals look good through tires!

– Caleb P, Age 10



# What I Learned From My Oma

by Evelyn Kruis



When Leny and Johan are dating in the year 1956

Solomon tells us the first step to learning wisdom is to pursue it (Prov. 4:7), so I recently sat down with my Oma and listened to her share her immigration story.

Leny Bosveld (nee Plug) was born Dec. 18, 1937 on the coast of Holland, the 4th child out of 8. Her father originally was a fisherman, but gave up his trade to sell coal and oil. He prospered in his new role of businessman and owned a three-story house that included a shower and toilets, which was a luxury in those days and not common to most households. Though prospering himself, Leny's father did not think there would be enough work in Holland for his sons, so in 1950 the family made plans to immigrate to Australia.

So it was, a mere 73 years ago, while Europe was still recovering from World War II, my Oma moved from a life of wealth to a life of poverty; her story is much like any pioneer or immigrant in history past.

## YEARS IN NOTHING BUT A TENT

After a four-week boat ride, the family landed in Albany, Western Australia, and for the next three months lived in their moving container, and slept in a large army tent which was shared with their oma and two uncles. You were only allowed to bring a certain amount of money along when you immigrated, and even though Leny's dad had his fishing boat, he did not know how to fish in Australia and was not able to make a steady income.

After 3 months, Leny's family moved to Fremantle, and set up the tent in the bush. Living in the tent was a hard life for Leny's mom, and at one time she said, "If the sea was not between Australia and Holland I would crawl back home."

There was no water and no electricity. To get water the children had to walk far and carry buckets of water uphill, so that by the time it got to their living area much of it had splashed out. Cooking was done with a kerosene cooker, and later with a stove over an open fire outside. Their refrigerator was a small cupboard that held a block of ice, which was changed twice a

week by an ice man. There was a big copper pot outside to boil the water in. There were containers and a board for washing laundry. The toilet was outside in a big bucket, and the boys had to dig a hole and bury everything every two days. Once a week the children took turns washing in a tub. This was normal life for the children and did not bother them, though my Oma does remember getting made fun of at school for their poor life.

After two years in Fremantle the tent seam broke, and a temporary house was made from timber and the remains of the tent. Eventually the family bought a house that included a proper outside toilet.

## MORE FAMILIES FOLLOWED

While Leny's family were the first Dutch immigrants to the Albany area, eventually more families came and the immigrants could meet for church together.

Leny and Johan met at church, though Leny was shy and avoided contact with him after her mother told her not to chase boys. But Johan liked Leny and asked her father to be her boyfriend. The pair dated for 4 years, seeing one another just once a week. Johan asked to marry Leny when she was only 20 and was told to wait until she was 21, so they got married on her 21st birthday! They had a simple wedding in a courthouse, then went to church for a blessing. Johan worked hard and as their 10 children came along they moved into bigger houses together and were not in want of the necessities of life.

## CONTENTMENT IN WEALTH AND POVERTY

My Oma mentioned how living with wealth, as we do today, can be harder than poverty. Having everything can be a curse when we buy and are not satisfied. She said they were satisfied when they got a handkerchief from a lady next door. Comfort became less important for her as it became less available, and trusting God to provide was taught to her at a young age.

Not only was my Oma poor, she was also a foreigner in a new land, learning English and navigating how to be in the world



but not of it. As our world becomes more hostile to Christians, as inflation and housing prices shift the kind of wealth the next generation may have, I was reminded not to fear or despair. Oma's life helped me reevaluate what is a need versus what is merely a want that I have elevated to a "need" status.

Oma also reminded me not to focus on what kind of life to have in comparison to others, or to worry over deciding what comforts to hold onto and how many children fit or do not fit into a certain plan. Children are a blessing, and I needed the reminder to self-examine what I am keeping "busy" with, and to instead be praying, "Your will be done." Home life does not need to be fancy; living simply and faithfully for God are what I am called to.

Older saints help us reconsider what does and does not matter. My Oma helped me see that the plague of ideas and expectations sprouting from our phones cannot overtake the faithful day of small things (Zec. 4:9-10). It is a lesson that I know I will need to be reminded of over and over again, and spending time with elderly saints is one way God continues to challenge me in that.

*Older saints help us reconsider what does and does not matter.*

### GROWING IN SANCTIFICATION

Even though this is a brief snapshot into my Oma's story, it testifies to God's covenant faithfulness being handed down from generation to generation. My Oma and Opa have 10 children, 50 grandchildren, and 57 and counting great-grandchildren.

Perhaps the greatest gift to learn from my Oma is her example of self-forgetfulness; she is not looking to be an Instagram image, but an Image Bearer who points away from herself to her God. The stories and examples of the elderly give us encouragement that we too are heading there in our sanctification, towards a deeper relationship with God where the need and drive for our own glory fades, as His glory more and more becomes the focal point of our thoughts and actions. <sup>RP</sup>



A makeshift house made from the remains of the tent (after it broke) along with whatever materials could be found.



The wedding of Leny and Johan in Dec. 1957



1972 family portrait with 8 children, with two more still to follow

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

## WHEN THEY CALL GOD "SHE"

Remaking God in their image, homosexual "pastors" are professing Him to be a "her." That's blasphemy by God's standards, of course, but is objectionable even by their own replacement rules. After all, as Tim Barnett recently noted, they aren't doing to others what they want others to do unto them (Matt. 7:12):

"God has chosen to reveal himself using singular masculine He/Him pronouns. Why won't they use God's preferred pronouns?"

## CHESTERTON ON DRINKING

"The sound rule in this matter would appear to be like many other sound rules – a paradox. Drink because you are happy, but never because you are miserable. Never drink when you are wretched without it, or you will be like the grey-faced gin-drinker in the slum; but drink when you would be happy without it, and you will be like the laughing peasant of Italy. Never drink because you need it, for this is rational drinking, and the way to death and hell. But drink because you do not need it, for this is irrational drinking, and the ancient health of the world."

## WONDERS TO BEHOLD

by John Hultink

Imagine living in a world where a pair of robins built their nest in a wreath attached to your front door. This spring and summer they lay their eggs *twice* – the first time three eggs and the next four. Yes, on two separate occasions.

Robins sit on their eggs for only a few weeks before they come to life. Then, for a few more weeks, it's a feeding frenzy. All day long. The newly hatched robins grow by leaps and bounds. And then, in just a few more weeks, these new creations hesitatingly abandon their nest, the one hatchling with more finesse than the other leading them off. And so, these new creations take their place in God's creation.

All this took place twice in a nest built in a wreath attached to our front door. It was as if God said: "Here, take a look at this." My wife and I had a "grandstand view" of the entire proceedings from one or the other side windows in which that door is set. And on occasion, when both parents were out hunting for food, we could open the door and carefully take a closer look at this new life. It was a wondrous development to behold.

We witnessed God's display of the origin of life played out day by day from start to finish, the entire process taking only weeks. Kind giving birth to kind, exactly as God had Moses describe it for us in the first chapter of Genesis.

Thank-you God for that eye-witness account of your creative power!

## FAMOUS FIRST WORDS

When Alexander Graham Bell first succeeded in getting his invention, the telephone to work, his first words were, "Mr. Watson – come here..."

When Thomas Edison invented the phonograph in 1877, one of the first devices capable of recording a sound and playing it back, he tested it by reciting "Mary had a little lamb."

In contrast, just a few decades earlier, when Samuel Morse sent out the first official message on his invention the telegraph he wrote, "What hath God wrought?" This is from Numbers 23:23, where Balaam is, to the frustration of Moab's King Balak, the man who hired him, prophesying how God is going to do such mighty things for Israel that it'll be said, "What hath God wrought!"

My daughter says that if she invents the next big whatever the first words she'll speak into it, to be recorded for all of history, are "Stop abortion and turn to God."

## IT STARTS WITH SALVATION

"Look, folks, the reason the Church today is having so little impact is too many Christians view their faith only in terms of a personal relationship with Jesus. But Christianity does not stop with salvation: That's only the beginning. We've got to learn how to present our worldview in a winsome way. And if we don't do this, it simply dooms our churches to isolation and irrelevance – just when our culture desperately needs the hope of the Gospel more than ever." – Chuck Colson (perhaps riffing off of Hebrews 5:11-14)





## MEDIA LIES OF OMISSION

Just ahead of June, American retailer Target began featuring a line of “Pride” wear. Some reports also said they were selling “tuck friendly” girls’ swimsuits for boys (with extra space for their male parts down below) and while that last point may or may not be true, it got people calling for a Target boycott.

Mid-June the *Washington Post* reported: “Target stores see more bomb threats over Pride merchandise.” Did this headline have you worried that some Pride opponent had lost his mind and threatened to get violent? If you clicked through and started reading the opening paragraphs you’d be left with the same impression:

“Target stores in at least five states were evacuated this weekend after receiving bomb threats. Though no explosives were discovered, the incidents tie into the backlash over the retail chain’s Pride Month merchandise.”

It’s only after you get eight paragraphs in that you’d find out who the real culprits are. The letter writers “...accused Target of betraying the LGBTQ+ community...”

What? Yes, the bad guys were *Pride sympathizers*. They were angry that in response to the boycott calls, Target had moved the Pride displays from the front of their stores to further back.

In my first-year journalism class, years ago, the prof explained that if a story “continued on page A6” you could count on losing 80 percent of the readership at that point. So biased reporters could bury any inconvenient facts in the back end of their story where hardly anyone would see them. The *Washington Post* pulled this same trick knowing that headline-readers and article-skimmers – the majority of media consumers these days? – would be left with an impression that was exactly opposite of what really happened.

In Proverbs 4, Solomon tells us wisdom is something to grab hold of – it can’t be had by flipping through your social media feed. It might mean reading the whole article. It might mean skipping the paper and diving into a great podcast, or book. So yes, the media lies to us... but many, like this one, can be easily spotted, if only we ingest with intent.

## CHRISTIANS GIVE MORE REVERENCE TO THE F-WORD

I sometimes get sent “screeners” for an upcoming Christian movie – a free online viewing before it hit theaters. This time it was a sports film, so I thought I would take a look. But three minutes in, one of the game’s announcers took God’s name in vain. I didn’t watch the rest of it, but I know no one ever used the F-word. Not a single time. That doesn’t happen in Christian films. Christian novels follow the same practice – never a single instance of the F-word but you will find about every second title taking God’s name in vain.

I emailed the movie publicist asking for answers. Why never the F-word – even though it’s such a common part of everyday speech – and yet God’s Holy Name is regularly abused? I didn’t hear back.

## AMAZING ANIMALS

- The blue whale is the largest animal that ever lived, larger even than any dinosaur. Its heart weighs 400 pounds and its tongue weighs more than two and a half tons, roughly the equivalent of two Volkswagen Beetles or one Tesla Model S.
- An elephant’s trunk has 40,000 muscles (we have 600 in total) and their nose’s abilities extend to being a hose, spade, spoon, and backhoe. It is strong enough to uproot a tree, and delicate enough to pick up a pin.
- While your backyard rooster doesn’t always crow this loud, at their loudest they can get up to 130 decibels, which is “about the same intensity as standing 15 meters from a jet taking off” according to Science.org’s Kimberly Hickok. One rooster even got up to 143 decibels! While the crowing only lasts a couple seconds, a rooster might do it several times, and cries out morning after morning, so how come they don’t deafen themselves? It turns out when the rooster opens its beak wide open, that closes a quarter of their ear canal – God gave them built-in ear plugs!

## IT AIN’T ENOUGH TO SHOW THEY ARE HYPOCRITES...

The folks at PragerU will often visit US campuses to challenge students who hold to the “latest thing” whether they can defend what they believe. In one of their latest videos, “If you can choose your gender can you choose your race?” they went to UCLA to set a trap of sorts. The interviewer first showed students some celebrities who’d used black make-up to caricature blacks. After the students all condemned this “blackface,” he then raised the term “womanface” to describe guys who say they identify as women. He argued it would be hypocritical to object to someone saying they are transracial, if you think transgenderism is valid.

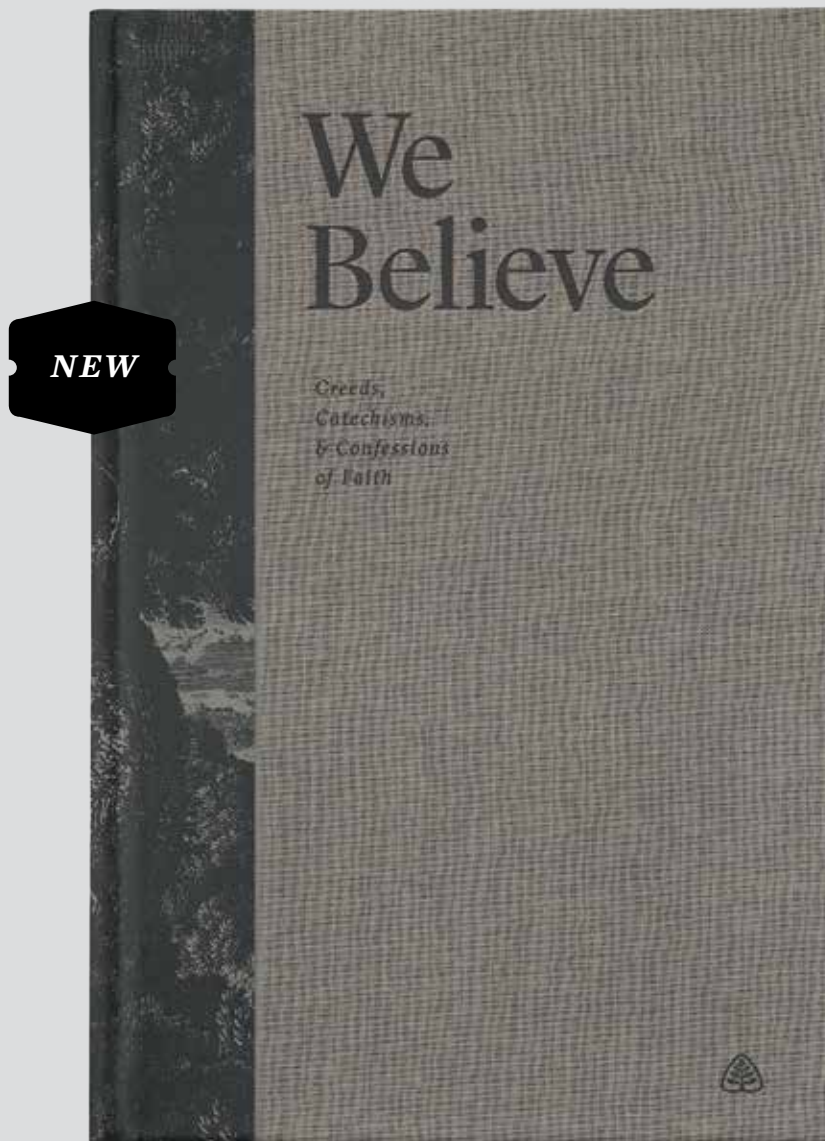
It’s a good point, and it is a fantastic video.

But it has a problem, and the same one that all secular “apologetics” have – the interviewer is attacking a lie without presenting the Truth. God made us male and female (Gen. 1:27) – that’s the corrective here. But when the interviewer just confronts students with their hypocrisy, they are left knowing they have made an error, but not knowing which way to head.

It’s like the old joke about a man who insisted to his family and anyone who’d listen that he was dead. They finally took him to a doctor, hoping he could help. The doctor thought he had just the thing, and asked the man, “Do dead men bleed?” to which the man replied, “No, of course dead men don’t bleed.” The doctor then pricked the man’s finger and, after the man saw the drop of blood forming, the patient shook his head, amazed, then stood up and gave the doctor a hug in appreciation. “I’m sorry doctor, I was totally wrong,” he said, “It turns out dead men do bleed.”

These students could also choose to resolve their hypocrisy the wrong way. They could decide: “I guess blackface – I guess transracialism – is okay.”

To be a light to the world, Christians have to go one step further. We should get inspired by videos like this so we can tear down the lie using our creativity to highlight the world’s silliness. But we need to do so while standing unashamedly on God’s Truth.



## TIMELESS STATEMENTS OF BIBLICAL TRUTH

When Christians know what they believe, they can declare God's truth with clarity and conviction in a confused world. The creeds, confessions, and catechisms written throughout church history are invaluable tools to keep us grounded in God's Word so that we may "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Collecting creeds, confessions, and catechisms from the early church to the post-Reformation era, this new book from Ligonier Ministries helps readers glean biblical wisdom from the past and guard it for future generations. **Available now.**







# Whose children are they?

by Carman Bradley

**M**any parents don't realize the radical and harmful governance shift in "parent-child-State" relationships taking place over the past decade.

Here in Alberta, for example, successive governments have declared they know better than parents what is in their children's sexuality and gender development best interest. Since 2015, Alberta Education has said its 733,000 students have the right to join so-called "Gay-Straight Alliance clubs," as well as declare a sexual orientation or gender identity starting at age five, independent of parental knowledge and consent.

## HARMFUL IMPACTS

In Tom Blackwell's January 5, 2023, *National Post* article "Some parents object as Canadian schools quietly aid students' gender transition," he showed where this can go:

"When a student in a Calgary Grade 6 class came out as transgender this year, the teacher made one thing clear to the other pupils: they mustn't let slip their classmate's new gender identity to her parents. The couple was not yet aware of the change...It's just one way the education system has become intimately involved in the transgender process, which affects an 'exponentially' growing number of young Canadians. Schools accept name and pronoun preferences, provide gender-neutral washrooms and teach from a young age about gender identity. In some cases,

they can even refer students directly to gender-treatment clinics."

Parents have the right to know *who* is influencing their children's sexual/gender development, *where* and *when* this is happening, and *what* their children are being told and doing while at school.

Parents should be alarmed that young children are encouraged by the State to make life-altering sexuality and gender "identity" decisions without the knowledge and consent of their parents. These children are at risk of jeopardizing their future by making declarations and associations they do not have the maturity to contemplate fully, nor understand the long-term ramifications.

## DISENFRACTISING PARENTS

In addition to secret Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) club membership, the Alberta governance assault on the traditional family (parents and children) has the following legal/policy characteristics:

- Students starting from age five can change their name at school and wear whatever gender-expressive clothes they wish without their parents' knowledge or approval
- All school staff is authorized to deceive parents regarding their son or daughter's involvement in a GSA club and their self-identification declarations, thus sending the message to students that parents shouldn't be trusted in sexuality and gender matters, the State knows best

- The GSA clubs are connected to an adult-run, unaccountable GSA Network which is further associated with activist agencies also not responsible to the State

Note that these laws have been affirmed by three successive governments: PC, NDP, and UCP.

## CONCLUSION

We know that God gave us families to raise children, and charged children in the Fifth Commandment to obey their parents. It is vital that the State doesn't undermine them. As Paul counsels in Ephesians 6:1-4:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and your mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may turn out well for you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

We need to be able to fulfil this call, so the State must be pushed back. <sup>RP</sup>

*Carman Bradley is the founder of [ParentalConsentAlberta.ca](http://ParentalConsentAlberta.ca) where our Alberta readers can find out more about what his group is trying to do – including a petition initiative – to protect children by empowering their parents.*

# THE EMOTIONAL COMMUNISM OF SENSITIVITY TRAINING

*or, the difference a Christian worldview brings to the HR world too*

by Kelsey Stout

“Kelsey, have you seen the Slack channel? Someone posted something that was kind of offensive.”

“Thanks so much for reaching out. I appreciate your concern – have you addressed this with the person who posted?”

*“Well I personally wasn’t offended, and I am well able to stand up for myself – I’m a pretty outspoken person – and I don’t think it was intentional, but there might be people who are less outspoken than me who were offended. If the company were to do more sensitivity training to help others be more aware I’d definitely be in favor of that.”*

\*\*\*\*\*

During my tenure in Human Resources (HR) I have received a number of messages to this effect. Not as many perhaps as some who work in a more compliance-driven environment (I have

been blessed to have generally avoided that world), but enough. It isn’t surprising – after all, sensitivity training is seen by the HR world as the solution to so many problems, and we have trained that into our employees as well. However, there is something deeply misguided with the above interaction. It is the kind of response that, if catered to, is cancer to company culture.

So let’s dig in.

## ISN’T IT HR’S JOB TO HANDLE CONFLICT?

First of all, I’d like to address the intent behind the employee reaching out. It is a *good* instinct to want to right a wrong. In every instance where an employee brought up a concern like this I am confident it came out of a desire to protect others and to create a better work environment for their coworkers. But if the goal is a better work environment, we need to ask ourselves does the solution presented *actually create* a better work environment?

You’ll note my response contains the question “have you talked to the person about it?” (Now to be clear – in this article we are talking solely about situations in which we have a reasonable confidence that there is no threat of violence and/or cause for concern in that area.)

Why would I ask this?

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.” – Matt. 18:15-16

Let’s first consider this verse from the point of view of the person who is the offender. Imagine you are someone who has unknowingly caused offense. Would you prefer to have this talked about behind your back and analyzed by those who were not part of the situation? Or



would you prefer someone come and talk to you about it first? No one likes being discussed behind their back. So don't do that to other people. (The golden rule still applies at work.)

One key assumption I want to point out here, is that in situations like this (where this is a first offense or where the offense has gone unaddressed in particular) you *must* assume the best of the person. This is a clear theme in Scripture as well. Take Proverbs 18:13, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him." If you walk into a confrontation having assumed answers to all the questions you have not asked, you set your neighbor, and yourself, up for failure from the start.

Going straight to a person gives you the best chance to hear directly from the source about their motivations, without giving HR or someone else the power to imagine and assign motives different to, or beyond the bounds of, that situation. In short, if Stacy was having a bad day because she was feeling behind on her projects and so she came across as grouchy you don't need HR to turn that into "Maybe Stacy really doesn't want other women to succeed and that is why she was grouchy to another employee." Maybe Stacy really does hate other women, but let's not start there.

This comes down to the fundamental principles of honor and respect – do we want to treat employees as adults? Or do we want to create a world where people are afraid that even innocent mistakes will jeopardize their job? Assuming we all want the former, that means giving people the opportunity to face their accuser.

However, even if this approach is better for the offender, couldn't it be argued that it prioritizes the needs of the accused over the person who was hurt?

Absolutely not.

As discussed above, bringing disagreements to someone else to handle creates a world in which motives are often incorrectly applied to the person accused. This very same issue also negatively affects the person who brings up the complaint. If you hand off a disagreement to HR you then give them

the opportunity to creatively muddy and misrepresent your complaint. HR can now make the issue bigger or smaller than the person initially intended, based on the lens they apply to the situation. Aren't we all too familiar with that? An issue taking on a life of its own and

## ISN'T IT GOOD TO BE SENSITIVE?

So let's talk about the response to the "have you talked to them about it" question. Each time it has been a "No" with a request for general sensitivity training to help people in the company be more aware about the ways in which they could potentially



becoming far bigger than was appropriate, or a big issue being downplayed to nothing? Treating employees with dignity and respect also means empowering employees who have been wronged to be able to express exactly what the issue is, no telephone game required.

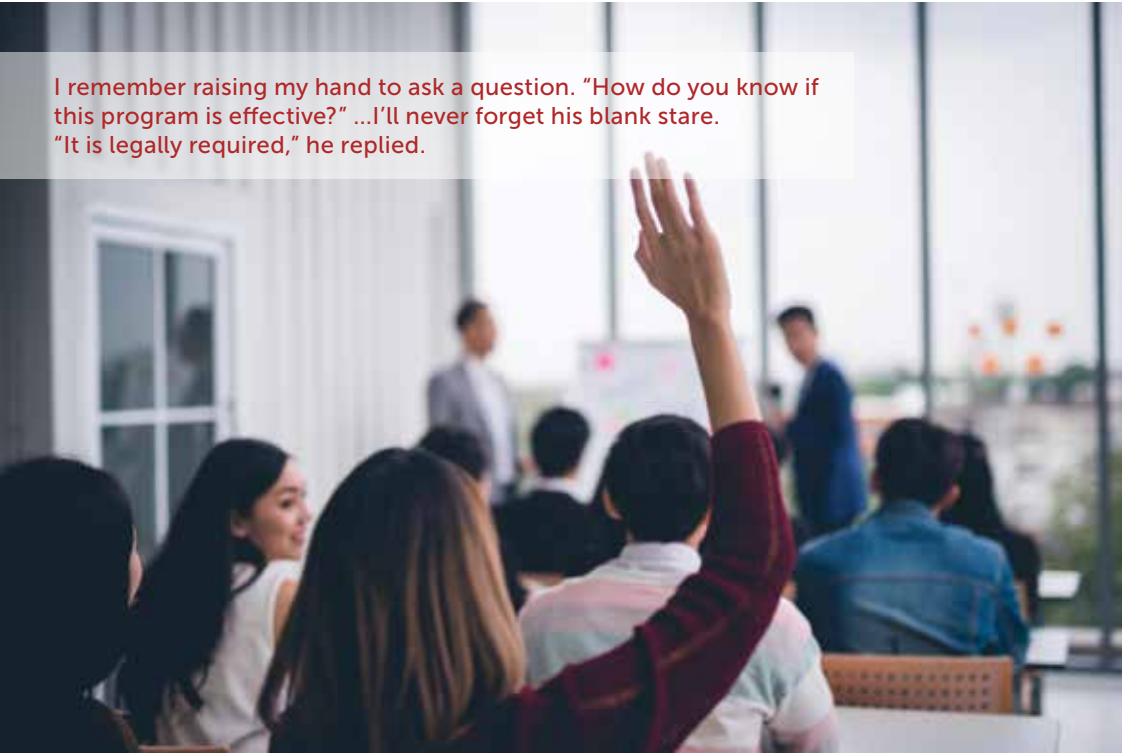
To answer the question asked in the heading then – no, it is not HR's job to handle conflict. Happy to provide support to you as you handle it, though.

offend someone.

Sounds innocent enough, right? And yet here I am, calling it emotional communism.

What is communism? It is the Marxist doctrine that eliminates private property and as stated by *Webster's Dictionary*, is a totalitarian system of government in which a single authoritarian party controls state-owned means of production.

Emotional communism, then, would



I remember raising my hand to ask a question. “How do you know if this program is effective?” ...I’ll never forget his blank stare. “It is legally required,” he replied.

sexual harassment is wrong. We want it to disappear from the workplace. So programs aimed at sexual harassment training should reduce that behavior, right?

I’ll never forget his blank stare. “It is legally required,” he replied. I tried again.

“Okay, let’s imagine for a moment a world in which it is *not* legally required. How would you be able to tell if your program is effective?” Again, a blank stare.

“Well, that’s not the case. It is legally required.”

That was the moment I realized: A) I never want to work in California, and B) HR’s real job in most organizations is to protect the company *from* employees, not *for* employees. And throughout my time in the HR world, that type of conversation became more and more frequent.

By relinquishing your right and ability to have difficult conversations with your coworkers to HR, you have given full authority to weigh the severity (or lack thereof) of your complaint to a group of people who are typically hired to protect the company *from you*.

On the whole, sensitivity training seeks to avoid conflict, because conflict can result in lawsuits. It trains people to be afraid of HR and, worse, each other; to walk on eggshells and to hesitate to speak up with an idea or any form of

eliminate private ownership of your need to address an issue, and would put the addressing of that issue in a single authoritarian party’s control.

And who runs that single authoritarian party? HR.

Enter the world of anonymous hotlines, and confidential HR backchannels. HR, instead of empowering you to directly address the offender, is now the one to address the issue and to roll out sensitivity training to the company as a whole. HR is now the one who determines the weight of your complaint, and the pathway forward.

Few of us with experience in the corporate world need to ask the question, “why is that a bad thing?” After all, HR’s bad reputation is no secret.

Remember when I said “every instance where an employee brought up a concern like this I am confident it came out of a desire to protect others”? Well, I have also had this concern brought up to me by fellow HR leaders. When I’ve discussed this philosophy with them around conflict management they have asked me “what about the people who do not feel comfortable speaking up?”

As much as I wish this were different, every single time someone in HR has raised this question it was *not* in the context of taking care of the employee, but rather came from a desire (at least in part) to avoid successful lawsuits against the company.

I remember once as a freshly minted HR manager I went to an HR conference where a senior vice president, Human Resources, gave a short speech to us all regarding how proud he was of the sexual harassment training he’d just implemented for his company, to applause and congratulations from the HR group. He had been in HR for about as long as I’d been alive. In fact, I was surrounded by tenured HR leaders.

I remember raising my hand to ask a question.

“How do you know if this program is effective?” After all we all know

*HR’s real job in most organizations is to protect the company **from** employees, not **for** employees.*



disagreement. “If I tell my manager that I think this project is going downhill, will she see that as sexism or honest feedback?” “If I tell my coworker that I think we should bring Jane onto the project, will he see this as subtle racism?” We all know the answer is usually no – but in a world driven by sensitivity training, we become more afraid it might be yes *and* that we won’t be given the opportunity to defend ourselves. After all, we have been trained that HR is generally more driven by the appearance of wrong, instead of what is true.

### WHAT CAN WE DO INSTEAD?

Jordan Peterson said, “It is far better to render beings in your care competent than to protect them.”

So how about instead of sensitivity training, we promote strength training – the kind of training that empowers people to have a voice, to be strong even in moments when they are offended or disagreed with, and does not penalize them for it. Let’s train people that you can care about each other *even when* you disagree with them. That is how we create work environments where we are able to work without fear of being fired for our beliefs, where we don’t need to feel like we have to pretend our religion is anything other than what it is. After all, wars are fought when we’re no longer able to sit down together to reason with each other.

(Of note, this also requires that you hire the *right* people, people who will respond in love and not anger when confronted with their own wrongdoing. If someone does react poorly to being confronted that *does* become an issue for the manager or HR. That topic requires an article of its own.)

We are so afraid of direct conflict that we go round and round in circles to avoid it, accidentally building the offense into something bigger and bigger until it gets far out of our control and someone has to get fired. And suddenly HR is getting paid a heck of a lot more because, well, employing them is cheaper than a lost lawsuit.

At the end of the day, it is imperative that we build a culture of dignity and

respect, where we understand that conflict is not in itself evil. As Max Lucado put it, “Conflict is inevitable, combat is optional.” People have different ideas, different opinions, and that is actually a good thing if we are daring enough to be uncomfortable.

This brings me to the true role of HR: to help people have a voice to speak up for themselves, *not* to take away their voice.

We worship a God who says “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience,” and “Take up your cross and follow me,” not a God who says “Live comfortably, avoid conflict, and don’t do hard things.” So let’s put in the work to help each other take ownership of the challenge of conflict, and be able to stand up for ourselves and for others, without needing to hide like a child behind his mother’s skirt.

### IS THIS WHAT YOUR WORKPLACE LOOKS LIKE?

So ask yourself: are you empowered to stand up for what you actually believe, even if it isn’t the popular mood of the day? Are you and your team encouraged to respect each other *even when* you disagree? If you work in HR, are your employees able to tackle issues without you? Or are they dependent on you to handle difficult conversations?

I promise you, facing that awkward conversation at the start is a lot less daunting than the behemoth it can grow into when introduced to the world of compliance and hurt feelings. Yes, this takes a lot of time and effort, and a willingness to be uncomfortable and to face your own shortcomings. But remember this: whatever product you are working on or service you are selling will be long gone in 100+ years. The people you are working with however? Their souls are eternal.

Wherever you work, whatever the policies, you can be a light to those around you, and face conflict head on in gentleness and humility, honoring the people you interact with. We can do better than emotional communism. Let’s give people their agency back. RP



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# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

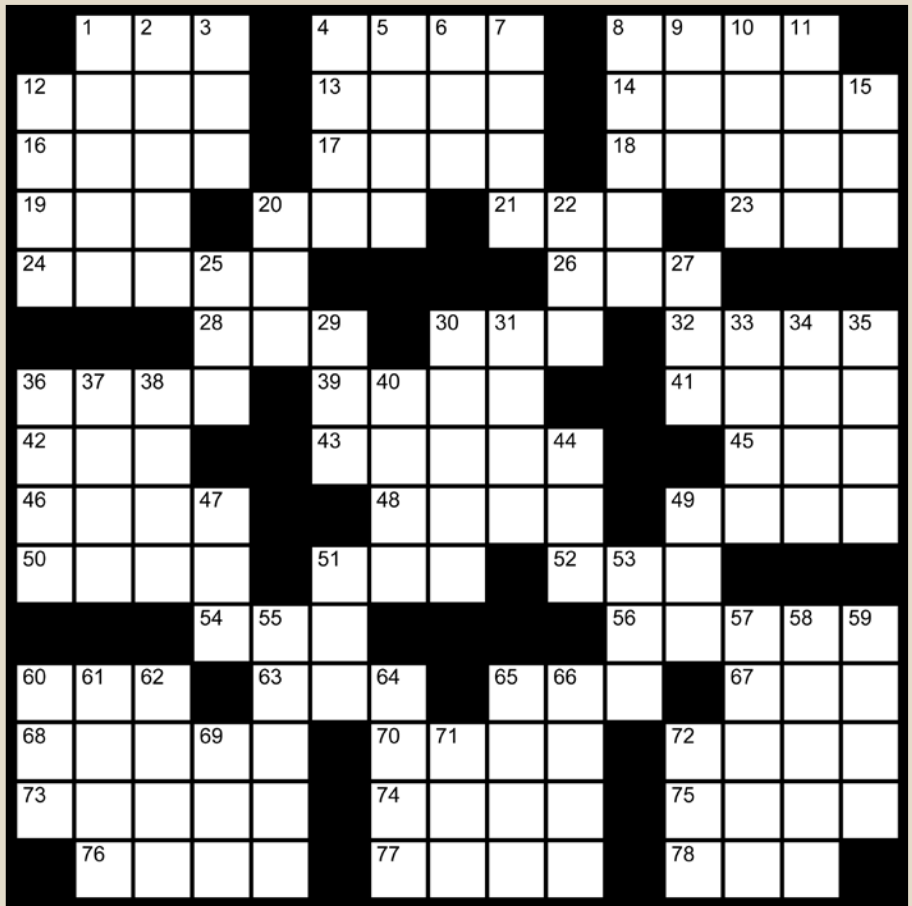
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2023

## PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 2!

### ACROSS

1. "Some \_\_\_\_!" (*Charlotte's Web*)
4. WWII British submachine gun
8. "Moses... did not \_\_\_\_ to look." (Acts 5)
12. "do not slacken the \_\_\_\_" (2 Kings 4)
13. Naut a bad boat for a Greek (or Torontonian) hero?
14. "you... a wild \_\_\_\_\_ shoot" (Rom. 11)
16. The U in CPU
17. It's a gas when you put this in a sign!
18. "Envy is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the soul." (Socrates)
19. Using this on this puzzle shows confidence.
20. \_\_\_\_ *Miserables* (Victor Hugo novel)
21. Opposite of flow
23. "the people gathered as \_\_\_\_ man" (Ezra 3)
24. Sounds like Al G. came to the pond?
26. "he... neither \_\_\_\_ nor drank" (Acts 9)
28. Sport utility vehicle
30. A 16 Across of speed in the US
32. "they were not \_\_\_\_ to rise" (Ps. 18)
36. Reaction to a successful mosquito
39. Controversial chemical of 1989
41. Stir up (a person or a pond)
42. Half of last two words of some old movies
43. Christ's seamless garment (John 19)
45. Emotion that is part fire, part resentment
46. "Penny \_\_\_\_" (Beatles song)
48. Singular of 24 Across
49. A style of dunk, or something you can do to a door
50. Advertising word about reduced content
51. "\_\_\_\_ wine... without money" (Is. 55)
52. Red dot command on TV or computer
54. Local Area Network (abbr.)
56. "into the \_\_\_\_\_ furnace" (Matt. 13)
60. "They still bear fruit in old \_\_\_\_" (Ps. 92)
63. "A little \_\_\_\_ 'll do ya" (1950s Brylcreem ad)
65. "So the men \_\_\_\_ down" (John 6)
67. The end of the alphabet in America?
68. Reasonable; acceptable; plausible; logical
70. "let justice \_\_\_\_ down like waters" (Amos 5)
72. "From morning \_\_\_\_\_ evening he..." (Acts 28)
73. Like relish, something to eat with, happily
74. "Jacob fled to the land of \_\_\_\_" (Hosea 12)
75. Cut; trim; edit – almost a snap!
76. Not fat
77. What's played at military funerals
78. A cat owner – maybe a teacher – has one.



### DOWN

1. Where you find breakers or discussion
2. The part of the cake that little kids eat
3. "rowed hard to \_\_\_\_ back to... land" (Jonah 1)
4. Of sound mind
5. "Comment allez-vous?" "\_\_\_\_ bien, merci!"
6. An inflated one can be dangerous.
7. "Yet \_\_\_\_\_ of you keeps the law." (John 7)
8. Misgivings; uncertainty
9. "in \_\_\_\_ this Job did not sin" (Job 1)
10. Puerto \_\_\_\_\_
11. "they \_\_\_\_ carried out the sick" (Acts 5)
12. In between larva and adult
15. Before (in archaic poetic language)
20. One 16 Across of Romanian currency (anagram of ULE)
22. Disgruntled sheep exclamation?
25. Type of tree, before or after the fire
27. "Does not the \_\_\_\_ test words..." (Job 13)
29. Large container, especially for wine
30. Sounds like John Manley is very masculine?
31. Prudish, self-righteous person
33. You can lance it, or bring water to it.
34. 16 Across of Turkish currency
35. "\_\_\_\_, my dear Watson!" (abbr.)
36. \_\_\_\_ *Never Work* (1990s kids' TV series)
37. Type of food from Southeast Asia
38. One hundredth of a dollar
40. Hawaiian party
44. Shortening of "horseless carriage"
47. Fish with poisonous blood
49. First syllable of word rhyming with hi-fi
51. \_\_\_\_ Act (start of Confederation)
53. Baby newt
55. Extra; bonus (two words)
57. Online publication
58. Started the torch again
59. How dogs review kennels?
60. It's mean (abbreviation).
61. Home of *Asterix and Obelix*
62. "salvation in no one \_\_\_\_\_" (Acts 4)
64. Badly behaved boy – he's the wurst!
65. Open-handed response – but not generous
66. "\_\_\_\_ for the poor!" (Disney's *Robin Hood*)
69. "Give \_\_\_\_ try; you might like it!"
71. "I'd rather have pizza \_\_\_\_ sandwich."
72. Use a \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_ to clean it? (abbr.)



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by Marty VanDriel



# When it comes to evangelism, do we trust the Holy Spirit will show up?



*This is an overview of a recent episode of Lucas Holtvlüwer and Tyler Vanderwoude's Real Talk podcast. Real Talk is a bi-weekly podcast of Reformed Perspective featuring great conversations on everything from propaganda to pornography. If you haven't checked it out, you really should. And you really can, at [www.RealTalkPodcast.ca](http://www.RealTalkPodcast.ca).*

Lucas Holtvlüwer recently interviewed Dr. Eric Watkins to learn more about evangelism and church planting from one with a lot of experience and wisdom. Dr. Watkins is the pastor at the Harvest Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in San Marcos, California and is also the director of the Center of Missions and Evangelism at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

Dr. Watkins wasn't raised in the church. Growing up in North Carolina, he was a troubled youth, particularly after his father left his mom when Eric was just twelve years old.

After college, Watkins was drifting around the country, following the band "The Grateful Dead," when his sister lent him her Bible: "you're going to be stuck for a few days on a bus, so take this..."

Eric recalls that through His Word,

"God confronted me by His spirit, and convicted me that I was a sinner... and that Jesus was the Savior and had done for me what I could not do myself... I got on the bus a long-haired stinking deadhead, and I got off the bus a week later, longer-haired and stinkier, but converted!"



Dr. Watkins then began a long journey of learning more about the Lord, going to seminary, becoming Reformed, and teaching Bible classes at the same church where he now ministers in California. Becoming a pastor, Watkins helped plant a “daughter” OPC congregation in Orlando; seven years later he and his family moved to St. Augustine, Florida to start a “parachute church” – meaning that there was not yet an established core group, and one needed to “start from scratch.” By God’s grace, these two churches are still thriving today.

### **CAPITAL “E” EVANGELISM AND LOWERCASE “E” EVANGELISM**

Watkins defines evangelism as:

“bringing the truth claims of the Gospel to bear upon the hearts of those that are outside the kingdom... where the objective content of the Gospel is made clear and people are called to faith and repentance in Christ.”

He further differentiates the general call of Christians to evangelize, from the specific calling by a church body for one to do the work of an (uppercase) Evangelist. “Like Paul says to Timothy, ‘Fulfill your ministry – do the work of an Evangelist,’ or when Paul says in Corinthians ‘Woe is me if I don’t preach the Gospel.’” In Watkins’ opinion, church planters in particular bear that warning to fulfill their duty to evangelize.

“Among the list of gifts that Christ gives to His Church in Ephesians 4 there’s a role for the gifting of the Spirit in the area of evangelism for people that are called to do particularly evangelistic ministry, and they literally live and sleep with that ‘woe is me if I don’t preach the Gospel.’ So that’s in a category of capital E Evangelism. “Lower case ‘e’ evangelism is what the whole Church does. So, like in Acts 8, when the church is scattered, it says not simply those who were ordained like the apostles but men and women who were dispersed went about proclaiming the Gospel. To me that’s lowercase ‘e’ evangelism.... Even lay people in

the Church in some fashion or another are called to walk wisely before the watching world, and even to engage them at times and opportunities that God will provide with the claims of the Gospel....

“There’s something important to be recognized in ministering not simply the Gospel to people, but also ministering the Gospel *through* people, and to help our members understand that they too have a role to play in the great commission, and the promotion of the life and the work of the Church. It may not be street corner preaching, or handing out tracts... but it is befriending the people that we have the opportunity to get to know that are outside the Church, wherever we’re able to meet them.”

### **ENOUGH TIME FOR MEMBERS OLD AND NEW?**

Holtvlüwer asked Dr. Watkins if there can be tension in the church when there is so much focus on reaching those outside the body, since there are also many needs among the current members. Watkins agreed that this can be difficult, and he advised that there should be clarity on what is required of the pastor and elders, best captured in written descriptions of their roles.

“For instance, it takes a certain number of hours a week to prepare a sermon; it takes a certain number of hours a week to visit the congregation, to do the bulletin, to meet with leaders, to disciple, and to do evangelism. So we have to decide what we think is important; we need to prioritize, and there needs to be not only transparency and accountability for the church planters, there also needs to be protectiveness for him and his family... It’s really important that you protect the time and space for the pastor to do evangelism... even after the church is up and running.”

Watkins continued:

“Visitation is very important in Reformed churches; I think regrettably evangelism isn’t, and we’ve created an

unintentional... paradigm in which we have so busied our pastors that there’s no room for evangelism... There’s a lot of guilt on the shoulders of our pastors that [know] that this work really is important, and should be done, but I’ve got a 60 plus hour work week, with two sermons, and a congregation, and Consistory and Council meetings.”

Holtvlüwer suggested, “This might mean that you need to get a second pastor if your church is of a certain size.”

### **DO WE EXPECT THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SHOW UP?**

Talking about Reformed churches and evangelism, Watkins reminded listeners that John Calvin wrote his most famous books like *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, as,

“...discipleship tools for new converts to the Reformation, and as a pastor he modeled and did evangelism. He housed orphans in his home, and what we could call seminary students whom he trained and taught the work of the ministry including evangelism.... Calvin is nicknamed the Theologian of the Spirit, and if you read his writings as they relate to evangelism, he wholeheartedly believed in it....

“Our problem at times is that we have too small a view of the Holy Spirit... We don’t expect (Him) to show up much, and to do great things in and through our church. Do we really expect God to convert people through the preaching of His word? Do we expect

*Do we really expect God to convert people through the preaching of His Word?*

God to convert people off the streets, out of depravity and drug abuse and all the different things that are out there, into the arms of the church? Do we expect to see baptisms not just of kids but adults in our church? I think our Trinitarian theology could be enhanced and brought into greater conformity with Calvin's view... that invigorated his ministry."

Holtvlüwer wondered how or if Reformed churches had strayed from Calvin's mission of being evangelistic in orientation. Watkins summarized that

"Part of the Church's temptation in history has always been to isolate itself from the world rather than to engage. And yet with the best of intentions: because we don't want our covenant kids to get swallowed up by the world. So what do we do? [We either] build high walls around them and insulate them from the world. The other [option] is to train and equip them to engage the world with the Gospel.... Do we simply teach kids to think about what's wrong with the way the world thinks, or do we also teach them how to engage the world, not simply apologetically, but evangelistically.... Do we disciple with a view towards raising up people that will be able to contend for their faith in a 1 Peter 3 way or Colossians 4 way?"

Watkins also identified the opportunity for the younger generation of Reformed Christians.

"The world has come to the back door of the Church, and the front door, and is on either side of our house – it's all around – the nations are all around us! What will we do with the... opportunities that God has placed before us in an increasingly diverse world. It's an exciting time (for spreading the Gospel!)"

## CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS AND OUR COVENANT YOUTH

Holtvlüwer mentioned that he is thankful for, and understanding of why our parents and grandparents spent so much energy and effort on establishing Chris-

# Do we disciple with a view towards raising up people that will be able to contend for their faith in a 1 Peter 3 way or Colossians 4 way?

tian schools, and that these institutions can still serve as a bulwark against the teachings of the world that are so prevalent all around us in social media and in the culture overall. But do we need to do more to prepare our kids to go out to the world with a strong apologetic viewpoint?

Watkins expressed thankfulness for Christian schools (his own children attend a Christian school in Escondido): "I'm not trying to change that paradigm at all!" At the same time:

"...social media has more access to our kids now than parents, pastors, and Sunday school teachers combined... the amount of time that kids are spending online in different media platforms (is huge)..."

What is the answer to all these potentially harmful influences? Watkins reminds listeners of the well-known Biblical verse,

"Train up a child in the way that he should go!" That is, not simply protect and shelter him from all the things you never want him to hear or learn about... Parents and pastors must be the teachers, not the world... There's a challenge to not simply reach the lost, there's a challenge to keep our kids! There are a lot of kids that are drifting away from the church, for different reasons... and while there's no silver bullet... I do believe in discipleship..."


Watkins continued: "An uncomfortable question we could ask would be,

'Could a covenant kid graduate high school without ever seeing a parent or church leader share the Gospel with a non-Christian?' ...if the answer is yes, then think about what life looks like for

them when they... go off somewhere else perhaps for college or a job. So we have to train our kids with not simply what's wrong with the way the world thinks, but (train them) to engage the world evangelistically, in the hope that in doing so (we might) actually insulate our covenant kids the right way."

Watkins wanted to emphasize that he appreciates the Reformed faith, and in no way wants to tear down the institutions that Reformed Christians have built.

"The Reformed faith is grand, as J. Gresham Machen said, and we have some of the most wonderful tools at our disposal... we do a great job in many ways raising our covenant kids. By God's grace we have a wonderful doctrine of the Church, and what the world needs most... is for the church to be the church! To continue to be committed to the ordinary means of grace... to be committed to family worship, and at the same time... to use the tools for evangelism that are part of the Reformed faith."

In the last part of their conversation, Holtvlüwer and Watkins discussed mentorship as a way for mature Christian men and women to provide leadership and guidance to younger people, both those new to the faith and those who have grown up in the church. Watkins ended his contributions with a call for "young men to consider a pastoral call in the ministry. We need pastors, we need church planters!" 

*The complete discussion between Holtvlüwer and Pastor Watkins can be found on all major podcast platforms – just search for "Real Talk Reformed Perspective," episode 63.*




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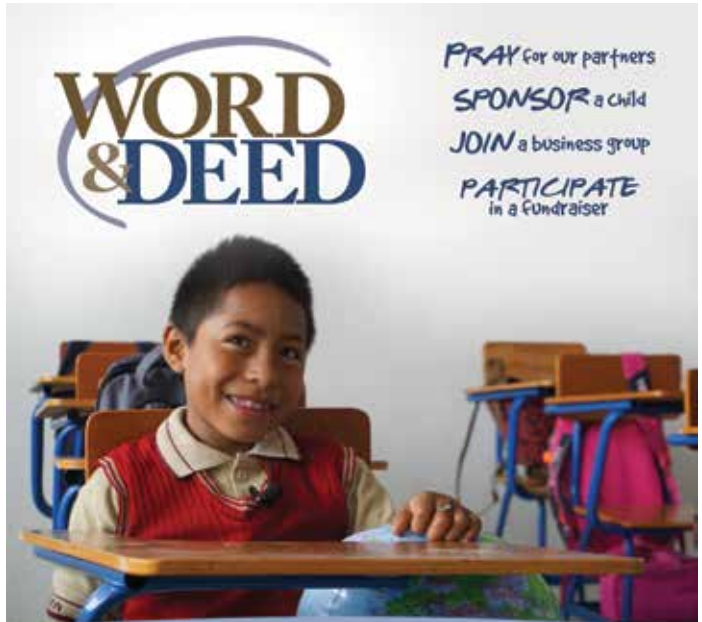
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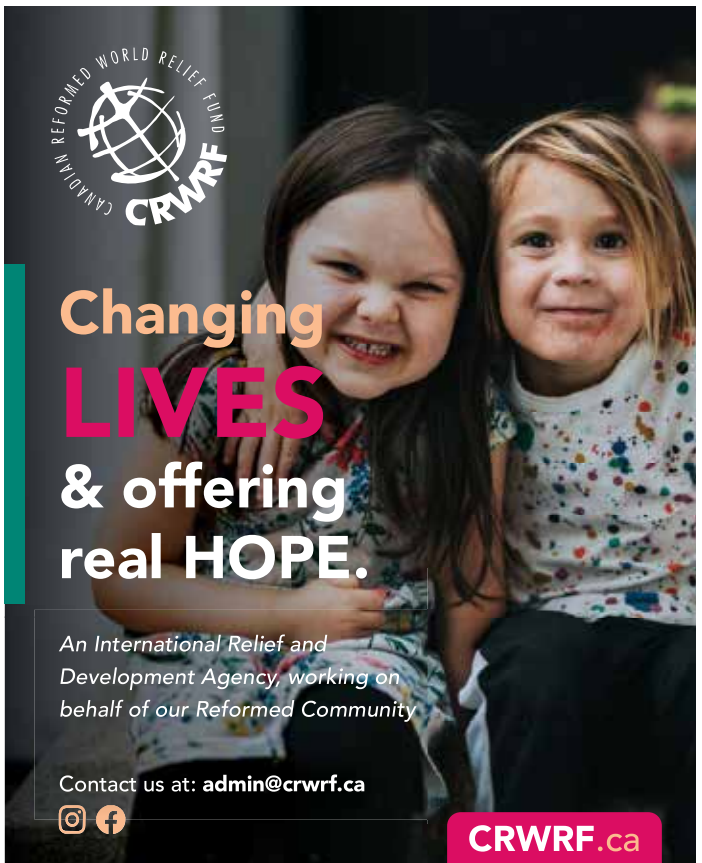
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# GETTING OLD(ER)

by Sharon L. Bratcher

*“Getting older is so tough – I get tired after just a small amount of work or fun.”*  
*“I lost 4 teeth right after I turned 60.”*  
*“I exercised to make my knees feel better and ended up messing up my back.”*  
*“My hip goes out more often than I do!”*  
*“Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be.’ Hah!”*

**A**t my Inter-City Christian High School reunion, we were all wide-eyed with wonder to even try and grasp the fact that it had been 50 years since some of us had seen one another. I was proud of myself for guessing the name of each person accurately, but it did take me a minute. Some of them looked older than I did. Some were in better physical shape. Some had gone through terrible difficulties, diseases, and operations that I wouldn’t even want to imagine.

Yet we all talked about how God has blessed us and brought us through trials throughout all five decades, and how our Christian schooling/Bible curriculum laid a foundation that enabled us to face all that we went through. We praised God

together! We thought about Psalm 37:25 that says:

“I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.”

But not everyone was there. My best friend Robin died at age 43 and three other classmates out of our class of 24 have also passed on.

I’ve said it, and so have many of my friends: we don’t like getting older. But someone always counters that sentiment with, “Well, what’s the other option?” We are ready to go to Heaven and live with our Lord. But we also love our spouses, kids, grandkids, and friends. Though we sing about the joy we will know in Heaven, whenever another body part fails us, we head for the doctor and pharmacy for another bottle of “Stay Here.”

## **GOD CONTINUES TO CARE FOR US AS WE AGE**

People fear death, and aging destroys our independent, strong self-image. Every ad promises that a product or experience

will make us “feel and look young again.” We are tempted to feel sorry for ourselves when we lose the abilities that we were previously blessed to have. We might even feel ashamed because we cannot carry the same load. It becomes difficult to drive at night, walk very far, get up the stairs, or move furniture. Our weeks fill with frequent medical appointments. We start to experience pain, and we forget names, items, and events. It hurts our pride, and we think or say, “You should have seen me when I was 25!”

There is a tendency to think that the “good old days” were somehow better than now. It seems like our Western world is more sinful – or is it just that the sins are more public now? In Ecclesiastes 7:10 we are reminded: “Say not, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.”

Those who do not know the Lord Jesus as their Savior must grieve the loss of their youth for they have no God to turn to for comfort, wisdom, or strength. They fear death.

But we need not act like them. While it’s not enjoyable to be in pain,

hospitalized, or extremely tired all the time, our Lord promises, “I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you” (Is. 46:4) and “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength” (Is. 40:29). We have a loving Good Shepherd who takes care of His sheep. We are not alone!

And if we are reading God’s Word and worshipping at a Biblical church, we will know the truth of 2 Corinthians 4:16 where the Apostle Paul encourages us:

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”

As our bodies become more and more “corrupt,” we are moving towards receiving our “incorruptible” bodies!

## HOW DOES GOD WANT US TO VIEW THE AGED?

In our Western culture, it isn’t popular to regard the aged with honor and respect. It’s no wonder that the elderly (sometimes even Christians) worry that they will become a burden to their families. God knew the sins that we would be prone to, and so He gives us commands to treat the aged with high regard:

- “Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.” – Job 12:12
- “You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.” – Lev. 19:32
- “Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.” – Prov. 23:22
- “Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.” – 1 Tim. 5:1-2

## HOW DOES GOD EXPECT THE AGED TO ACT?

If one reads the headlines on the magazines near the grocery store check-out counter, a consistent theme expressed is this: you worked hard raising kids

and working at your job and taking care of your family all those years – now it’s *your* turn. It’s time to sit back and relax, or travel, or do what you want and make yourself happy.

The sad news is that too often this call to self-centeredness has been adopted by aging Christian people as well. It’s not wrong to travel or to participate in favorite activities, especially when the daily tasks of parenthood have ended. It’s the attitude that isn’t right. What does God say that the aged (retirees?) should do?

- “They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green...” – Ps. 92:14
- “Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.” – Titus 2:2
- “Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.” – Titus 2:3-5
- “Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.” – Ps. 71:18

Rather than deciding that we have “done our bit,” we should do all that we are still capable of to glorify God and declare His power to the next generations.

## CONCLUSION

When we grow older, God is not finished with us, and we are not finished with our work here. As the Westminster Catechism states it, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” If our purpose in life is to glorify God, then there is *nothing* that can thwart our purpose in life! Even in difficulties and illness, even in progressively physically falling apart, we can and should glorify God. We can still pray, read or listen to God’s Word, encourage others by phone call or

*When we grow older, God is not finished with us, and we are not finished with our work here.*

letter/email, teach others, sing praise, give money, perhaps make a meal, or write edifying words. As the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10:

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

We don’t like being weak. But we who know the Lord need not fear! We can take comfort and draw strength from the Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 1 which begins by asking, “What is your only comfort in life and death?” The answer is certainly for the aging as well as the youth who memorize these awesome words:

“That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.” <sup>RP</sup>

*Sharon L. Bratcher has collected 45 of her RP articles into a book which is available by contacting her at [sharoncopy@gmail.com](mailto:sharoncopy@gmail.com).*

### FEVER YEAR: THE KILLER FLU OF 1918

BY DON BROWN  
2019 / 96 PAGES



Even as the First World War was winding down, a more deadly foe made its presence known. In the Spring of 1918 an army cook, in Camp Funston, Kansas, reported sick, and over the next month a thousand of his campmates would also fall ill. Before it was through, the Spanish Flu would travel around the world, and 50 million would die. Strangely, when doctors tried to figure out the means of transmission of this highly contagious virus, it was a mystery. Sick patients could cough right in the face of volunteers without infecting them.

The moral of Don Brown's story could be taken in very different directions, based on the particular bias of the reader. For example, he offers up evidence that could be used for, and then other evidences that could be used against, the efficacy of lockdowns. What's more certain are the heroes: doctors, nurses, family, and even neighbors who worked endless hours trying to aid the ever-growing numbers in need.

I'd recommend it as a great one for a high school library. Our recent history parallels much of what the world endured then, though theirs was the far deadlier plague. That a virus can infect a third of the world reminds everyone to "seek the Lord while He may be found" (Is. 55). That's a lesson we were reminded of in the last few years, and one everyone would do well not to forget.

### I SURVIVED THE NAZI INVASION, 1944

BY LAUREN TARSHIS  
2021 / 158 PAGES



Max and Zena are two Polish Jewish children living under Nazi rule. In the town of Esties, as happened elsewhere, Jews were forced to all move to the same small neighborhood, which was then walled off with barb wire, so the Jews could never leave.

With no employment, food was hard to come by, so when Max and Zena come across a raspberry bush just on the other side of the fence, Max decides to risk it. He slips through the wires to grab some berries. They both get caught. To save his sister, Max attacks the Nazi guard, whose gun goes off in the struggle, the bullet hitting the soldier in the knee. The children both take off into the woods.

When the two escapees stumble across a farmer they don't know if he will help or turn them in. Thankfully he is a friendly sort, and after misdirecting the Nazi searchers, the farmer introduces them to the Polish underground. These are Poles who have never stopped fighting the Nazis, and who have a safe place to hide in the woods.

As you might expect in a comic about war, there is some gore, with the most troubling, probably one frame depicting a just-killed Nazi soldier staring blankly upward. So I'd recommend this for 12 and up.

### TIANANMEN 1989: OUR SHATTERED HOPES

BY LUN ZHANG, ADRIEN GOMBEAUD, AND AMEZIANE  
2020 / 115 PAGES



I asked my 13-year-old and her friend whether they'd heard about China's Tiananmen Square and neither knew about it. I was surprised, but shouldn't have been: the massacre the square is known for – with the government's tanks rolling over protesting Chinese students, killing hundreds – happened 20 years before they were born.

The protests were a call for government reform that became a call for democracy. Here we get an inside look at the protest's 50 days, beginning on April 16, 1989. We learn that the tens and maybe hundreds of thousands of students arriving at Tiananmen Square was a spontaneous event, organized only after the fact. We hear students debate with each other about what a win would look like. We see hundreds of students decide to hunger strike en masse. And then we watch as the soldiers march in shooting.

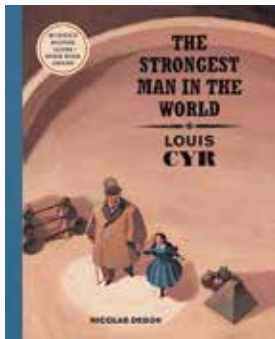
There is violence depicted, but with restraint – no high schooler would be shocked. Language concerns are limited to a couple uses of "bastard."

The more notable caution would be ideological. The god of this book is democracy. Young readers need to understand that democracy wouldn't have been the fix-all that the students thought it would be. Their communist state was founded on the sin of envy, and a turn to democracy wouldn't have done anything to excise the envy – it is every bit as destructive in democracies too.



## THE STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD: LOUIS CYR

BY NICOLAS DEBON  
2007 / 27 PAGES



This is a fun bit of Canadian history: Louis Cyr was a Quebec circus performer who, in the late 1800s, was known as the strongest man in the world. Even today, some of his lifting records remain unbroken. This is why he is also known by many as the strongest man who ever lived (but those folk are obviously forgetting about Samson).

This is beautiful – simple but impactful – and yet it is the sort of comic that all but the youngest children would love to read. It is 1900, and the doctor has just told Cyr he must retire. Cyr is going to listen... after one last performance. As he prepares for his grand finale, Cyr looks back on his life, telling his daughter how his career began, how he met and married her mother, and how he is able to walk away without regret.

Despite being a showman who had to toot his own horn to bring in the crowds, Cyr seemed like a humble man, which is what made this appealing for me. If I had to come up with a caution it might be that Cyr was also an eating champion, bragging that he could out glutton anyone, which, of course, isn't something to brag about. But that'd be it.

## AMERICAN HISTORY TO GET YOUR BLOOD PUMPING!

Even Canadians could do with knowing a little American history and there's no easier way to dive in than with a really good graphic novel.

### HARRIET TUBMAN: FIGHTER FOR FREEDOM!

BY JAMES BUCKLEY JR. AND IZEEK ESIDENE  
2020 / 94 PAGES

Harriet Tubman (1822-1913) was an American black woman born into slavery who escaped the South only to go back again and again to show other slaves the way to freedom. She also served in the American Civil War as both a guide for Northern forces, and as a nurse. Even during the war, she continued making trips to free slaves.



Secular book though it might be, it shares how Harriet repeatedly pleaded with, and thanked God. It was made obvious that she could be brave because she knew she was in God's hands.

And in a book in which God is being praised dozens of times, I don't think it a stretch to presume that the one time someone "interjects" God's Name that it is being done as a short prayer of thanks. I include the instance here for you to decide. Harriet's niece Kizzy is escaping and desperately looking for her aunt. On spotting Harriet ahead, Kizzy says to her husband: "I see her, John, oh Lord... I see her!"

Another caution concerns how the book presumes that the South's secession was a problem that needed to be solved by war. While estimates vary, at least 600,000 soldiers died in the war, or more than 2% of the country's population of the time. And that doesn't even include the uncounted number of civilian deaths. Southern slavery was wicked, but Great Britain ended slavery without a war, so it is worth considering if Abraham Lincoln did the right thing. The indivisibility of the country is also worth considering in our own time when up until just recently abortion was legalized nationwide for 50 years, leading to more than 60 million deaths. Might that number have been smaller had pro-life states had the ready option of leaving the union?

### THE MURDER OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY RICK GEARY  
2005 / 80 PAGES

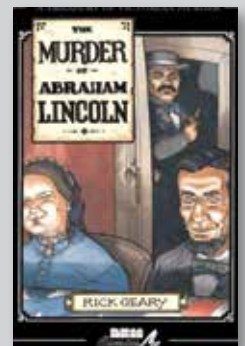
Author and illustrator Rick Geary has created a series of graphic novels about Victorian-era murders. While I don't think I'd be much interested in reading others in the series, I heartily recommend *The Murder of Abraham Lincoln*.

It starts with Lincoln presenting his second inaugural address. Geary gives a brief accounting of the end of the Civil War, and intersperses it with parts of Lincoln's speech – it is a great opening to a great book. We are then told a little of assassin John Wilkes Booth's background, and his motivations, and are introduced to the co-conspirators. The last third of the book takes place after Lincoln is killed, and shows us the man-hunt for Booth, as well as the country's reaction to the assassination.

Though just 80 pages, there is a lot of information packed into it.

The only concern I have is that it casts some suspicion on Secretary of War Edward M. Stanton. I have never heard Stanton's loyalty questioned before, so I wonder how legitimate the accusation might be. But Stanton is a relatively minor character in this story, so this is only a minor concern.

Great for anyone 12 and over.



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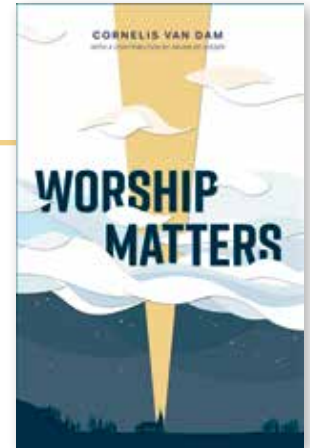
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# WORSHIP MATTERS

BY CORNELIS VAN DAM  
2021 / 327 PAGES

reviewed by Reuben Bredenhof



The deeper I got into this book, the more I appreciated its simple title, *Worship Matters*. In this volume, Dr. Cornelis Van Dam has collected about two dozen of his articles about the church's worship of our triune God. He addresses many worship-related topics: the meaning of the Lord's day, the importance of preaching, the place of the Ten Commandments, the gift of congregational singing, the function of the second service, and much more.

There are numerous "worship matters," but what becomes even more clear from this book is that worship *matters*. From the first page to the last, Van Dam impresses on us the immense privilege and responsibility that are ours when we meet with God in public worship. God has been so gracious to reveal Himself through His Word, to tell us about the way of salvation opened by the crucified and risen Christ, and to transform us by His Holy Spirit. In humility and reverence, we then respond to God with praise, drawing near to the holy Lord with a desire to give Him our very best. Such a spirit of worship must characterize our entire life, but in a special way we may honor God together as congregation on the Lord's day.

Van Dam does not attempt to treat every aspect of Reformed liturgy, but the ones that he does are clearly and helpfully

explained. For instance, he has excellent chapters on Psalm-singing, the public reading of Scripture, musical accompaniment, and the closing benediction. Time and again, his liturgical explorations demonstrate the truth of Article 7 of the Belgic Confession, where we confess the sufficiency of God's Word, and where we state, "The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in [Scripture] at length." Drawing on Old and New Testament alike, Van Dam shows the depths and riches of Reformed worship.

In his study of worship matters, Van Dam also doesn't shy away from some controversial topics. He evaluates the trend of removing the reading of the law from Reformed liturgy, or having people other than office bearers read Scripture in a worship service. He considers the question of whether we can still sing the so-called imprecatory Psalms, addresses the ever-sensitive topic of our Sunday clothing, and discusses the place of liturgical dance. I will leave these intriguing topics for you to read about and consider.

Dr. Arjan de Visser contributes a convincing and timely chapter on being "An Attractive Church." If we desire to be faithful in our prophetic task, we should think about what will truly (and enduringly) attract people to our churches. Should we be prepared to modify our liturgy and message to make them more accessible? Or does Scripture show that true attraction will be based on something else?


When a book is good, one can always wish it was a little longer. And so I arrived at the last page wishing that Van Dam had touched on a few more worship matters. His chapter on baptism would have been nicely complemented with a chapter on the Lord's Supper. A study of the

offering would be welcome too, especially in

a time when it seems that many of us "pass the bag" – perhaps it's because of the trend towards a cashless economy, or it's for some other reason. Just what is the Biblical importance of the offertory in public worship? But an author can't say everything in a book, of course, and the ground that Van Dam has chosen to cover is valuable.

This book would be useful for any church member to read and reflect on. It originates from the pen/keyboard of a professor of theology, but it is not a difficult or complicated book. Rather, its brief chapters are clearly written, carefully organized, and thoroughly Scriptural.

While helpful for any church member, this book would also be beneficial for consistories to study together, maybe taking time each meeting to consider a chapter or two. For a consistory, it is inevitable that questions concerning the worship services arise. This might happen through their own discussions, or when members suggest different approaches. Sometimes we feel threatened by any talk of liturgical change – or conversely, we're sure that such changes will remedy a range of our problems as church – but in any case, we should be ready to seek faithful and upbuilding practices for our liturgy. This book supplies us with solid Scriptural principles and directions for the worship of our great and holy God. It's worth a careful read, because worship matters!

Canadians can find *Worship Matters* at [ReformedChristianBooks.com](http://ReformedChristianBooks.com), [ProvidenceBooksPress.com](http://ProvidenceBooksPress.com), and elsewhere. 

*This book would be useful for any church member to read and reflect on.*





# Jim Menken transforms tree trunks!

## INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman

**W**hen you think of a sculptor, the image of a chainsaw does not immediately come to mind. But for Ontario sculptor and carver Jim Menken, the chainsaw is the tool of choice for creating his masterpieces large and small.

Menken has had a lifelong interest in art. But in 2003, while still working as a teacher, Jim saw a chainsaw carver at a local festival and became so enthralled with the process that upon arriving home later that day he carved a heron! And he literally has been carving ever since – transforming old trees, stumps and logs into beautiful works of art for a wide range of clients.

Jim took up this new passion full time in 2005. He now lives and carves in the town of Mono in beautiful Dufferin County (about 1 hour north west of Toronto) on a property that is perfect for a chainsaw carver; isolated, and with no neighbors within earshot. He has never advertised once and the phone calls and emails have never stopped since. Jim considers this a gift – an answer to prayer.

Jim is inspired by God's creation and uses his God-given talents, a chainsaw and a few other tools to depict animals, people, and select objects as realistically as possible. Jim's portfolio includes bears, beavers, birds of prey, critters and pets. Living close to the Bruce Trail and the breath-taking Hockley Valley, provides Jim with an endless stream of inspiration and interesting subjects to draw from.

Interestingly, Jim does not title his pieces! This is partly because Jim's work is almost 100% commissioned. He does not create pieces and then try to sell them. Rather, Menken enjoys the challenge of commissioned works where the client picks the subject.

Menken says his clients often have memories attached to their trees and will ask him to carve something to help preserve those memories. In this way Jim meets many different people from different backgrounds and his life and work intersect with many interesting stories.

In 2005 Jim was commissioned to carve the veteran for Gage Park in Brampton. It was an existing tree in the park. The legion is close by and veteran Bill Bettridge was used as a model. Unfortunately, the tree had a bit of a seam in it, so it began to decay over time. In 2013 a replacement carving was commissioned. Last year the city commissioned a bronze sculpture modeled after Jim's original carving which was returned to Jim who then passed it on to Bill's family.

Jim has never set foot back in the classroom but he is available for chainsaw carving demonstrations throughout the year. In the winter he demonstrates ice carving and sculpture. Perhaps he'll inspire the next budding sculptor to lay down the traditional tools and pick up a chainsaw instead. It appears you can take the teacher out of the classroom but you can't take the classroom out of the teacher.

Jim is married to artist Deb Menken, and has 3 grown children who are all artistic as well! He is a member of the Orangeville Canadian Reformed Church. Visit Jim's website, [JimMenken.com](http://JimMenken.com), to learn more about his work and you can also follow him on Facebook (@JimMenkenCarving) and Instagram (@jimmenken). <sup>RP</sup>

*If you have a suggestion for an artist you'd like to see profiled in RP please email Jason Bouwman at [studio@jasonbouwman.com](mailto:studio@jasonbouwman.com).*



This commission was of a grandfather, remembering his earlier lacrosse-playing days.



▼ An 8-foot-tall grizzly!



This one is for the main street in Orangeville, and stands 7 feet tall.



▲ Jim Menken with the original veteran statue... and the replacement.



come and  
**EXPLORE!**

# PRAYER


Out of all of God's creatures, humans are the only ones given the ability to pray to God. Elephants, monkeys, beavers, and even bees all communicate with each other and praise God with the things they do, but it is only humans, the pinnacle of God's creation, that are able to have an intimate relationship with their Creator. Nothing else in all of creation is able to bring before God their very hearts - their hopes, dreams, worries, fears, anxieties, needs, wants.



WHY DO WE HAVE  
TO TELL GOD THE BAD  
THINGS WE DID?



DO WE HAVE TO  
CLOSE OUR EYES AND  
FOLD OUR HANDS?



God has given you a most beautiful gift, His Holy Spirit to intercede for you when you don't know what to say. Sometimes we stumble in our prayers, but the Holy Spirit will bring them before God all fixed up.



DO MY PRAYERS  
HAVE TO BE AS LONG  
AS A MINISTER'S?



WHY DOES GOD SAY  
"NO" SOMETIMES?





# ISN'T GOD SO CREATIVE?

Bees use a type of dance called the waggle dance in order to communicate. Through this series of figure eights and body waggles, a bee communicates the distance, direction and how scrumptious the flower patch she discovered is!

Ever tried to communicate something through dance?

It's pretty silly - and fun! Why not try give your parent a dance message the next time you want a snack!

ONE OF THESE BEES IS UNLIKE THE OTHERS. CAN YOU FIGURE OUT WHICH ONE IT IS?



MATCH THE BEES TO FIND THE ANSWER TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PRAYER!



AM I ALLOWED TO ASK GOD FOR A NEW BIKE?

When we draw before God, we must be confident that God will always answer our prayer *according to His will*. Sometimes God will say "no" because in His infinite knowledge He recognises that whatever you are asking for will not benefit you as He has orchestrated.

IF GOD KNOWS ME INSIDE AND OUT, HOW COME I HAVE TO PRAY?

As long as we are praying from our hearts, the length of our prayer does not matter. Even a short "Please help me, Lord" when you are in need is sufficient. Sometimes you will have lots to bring before the Lord. Sometimes a little. In any case, He will be happy to hear from you!

WHAT IF I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY?

God promises to forgive us our sins when we confess them to Him. When we confess them, we are telling God we have done wrong and are sorry. At the same time, we are promising God that we will try not to do that sin again.

God is worthy of our full and undivided attention which is difficult to do if your eyes are open and can fall upon something distracting. Keeping your eyes closed and hands folded is a good way to keep your focus on the Lord.

God has commanded us to bring our hearts humbly before him. Through prayer we confess that we are fully dependant upon God for all our needs. It is the most important part of our thankfulness.

If you are confident that you desire a new bike in order to use it for His glory, of course you can ask! But remember that God isn't a magic genie and we should not use prayer just to get what we want.





# LEARN TO PRAY

*by using a prayer journal*

## P A U S E

REFLECTING OVER OUR DAY IS A GOOD WAY TO SORT OUT THE THINGS THAT WE WILL WANT TO BRING BEFORE GOD. CLOSE YOUR EYES FOR A MOMENT AND THINK OVER YOUR DAY. WRITE DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS.

Psalm 51:17 "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart. O God, you will not despise."

## R E S P E C T

BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO PRAY, TAKE A MOMENT TO SHOW RESPECT FOR THE LORD. CLOSE YOUR EYES, FOLD YOUR HANDS AND SIT RESPECTFULLY. REMEMBER THAT IT IS THE LORD YOU ARE APPROACHING IN PRAYER.

Revelation 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega", says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

## A D O R E

BEGIN YOUR PRAYER BY GIVING GOD PRAISE FOR WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE IN YOUR LIFE. IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY AND IN CREATION.

Hebrews 13:15 "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his Name."

## Y I E L D

TELL GOD OF YOUR SINS, WHETHER DELIBERATE OR NOT. LET GOD KNOW THAT YOU ARE SORRY AND NEED HIS HELP TO COMMIT TO DOING WHAT IS RIGHT.

1 John 1:10 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

## A X P R E S S

THANK GOD FOR HIS GOODNESS! WHAT HAS HE PROVIDED FOR YOU. HOW HAS HE HELPED YOU? THANK HIM FOR HIS SON, JESUS!

1 Thessalonians 5: 16- 18 "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

## R E Q U E S T

ASK GOD TO PROVIDE FOR YOUR NEEDS. PRAY FOR THE NEEDS OF OTHERS - FAMILY, NEIGHBOURS, THOSE IN AUTHORITY, ANYONE WHO COMES TO MIND.

Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

HOW TO USE THIS PRAYER JOURNAL:

FILL OUT EACH SECTION HONESTLY.  
ONCE FILLED OUT, PRAY USING THE  
LAYOUT TO STRUCTURE YOUR PRAYER.

# PRAYER JOURNAL

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A PRINTABLE PRAYER JOURNAL  
BOOKLET!

"REJOICE IN HOPE,  
BE PATIENT IN AFFLICTION,  
BE CONSTANT IN PRAYER."

ROMANS 12:12

HOW DO I FEEL?

WHAT HAPPENED TODAY THAT YOU WANT TO REPENT FOR?

WHO WILL HELP TO MOVE FORWARD AND WHAT DO YOU NEED?

PAUSE

DRAW AN EMOTICON IN THE CIRCLE  
TO EXPRESS HOW YOU FELT TODAY.



I WILL SHOW RESPECT BEFORE GOD BY...

I LOVE GOD BECAUSE HE...

THINGS I DID THAT WERE WRONG TODAY...

THREE THINGS I CAN THANK GOD FOR TODAY...

WAYS I OR OTHERS NEED GOD'S HELP ARE...



AFTER PRAYER, DRAW OVER THE  
CROSS, IN CONFIDENCE THAT  
YOUR SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN!

DON'T FORGET TO PRAISE GOD!



DID GOD ANSWER THIS  
PRAYER REQUEST? PUT A  
CHECK MARK IN THE  
CIRCLE AND PRAISE GOD!

in Jesus' name,

# AMEN

SAYING "AMEN" IS A CONFESSION OF  
YOUR CONFIDENCE THAT NOT ONLY  
DOES GOD HEAR YOUR PRAYERS BUT  
HE WILL ANSWER THEM.



# UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE

"...but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'"

– Matt. 19:14

by Christine Farenhorst



A baby was laid into my arms this last week – a little baby boy. His name was Bo Anthony. Bo means “to live” and Anthony means “precious one” or “priceless one.” The parents, my granddaughter Emma, and her husband Sam, told me they would teach Bo to live for the precious One, that is, for Jesus. They also told me that the name Anthony had been chosen in honor of his great-grandfather, Anco, my precious husband. Anco went to be with the Lord last December 2022. I cherish the name my grandchildren chose for their son. They are letting God build their house.

Bo lay in my arms. He was a warm, little bundle of soft, cuddly flesh. Full of his mother’s milk, he slept contentedly, totally oblivious to his great-grandmother. Trustingly he fit into the crook of my right arm.

Feeding a newborn is a full-time com-

mitment. Breast milk is ideal. Babies don’t need cereal, cookies, or steak. They need milk. All infants in Christ need milk, not solid food. Feeding on the basic nutrients of God’s Word, covenant children grow into maturity, grow up into salvation (1 Pet. 2:2). This is the way God builds houses.

Solomon was very aware of this. He composed and sang Psalm 127. Verses 1 and 2 of this Psalm drip with milk and read:

*Unless the LORD builds the house,  
those who build it labor in vain.  
Unless the LORD watches over the city,  
the watchman stays awake in vain.  
It is in vain that you rise up early  
and go late to rest,  
eating the bread of anxious toil;  
for he gives to his beloved sleep.*

## A WORLD IN NEED OF MILK

Bo’s birthdate in June of 2023, marks almost one quarter of the way through this twenty-first century. There are many, many people walking about on this century’s streets whose houses have not been built by God. They have never swallowed, or have even heard of, God’s milk. These folks hide behind cell phone technology, behind laptops and social media. They are, although not usually willing to admit it, unhappy, insecure, unsure, and generally afraid to engage in personal conversation about eternal life and eternal death. The economic outlook today is somber, marriage is on the decline, families are becoming a minority, and most children have no idea that they have been created in the image of Almighty God. Science is touted, Climate Change has morphed into a god, Wokeism is on the

rise and politics and the justice system appear to be infiltrated with bribery and power hunger. All of these are served up on the world's platter resulting in a woefully meager diet for the soul.

Worshipping self-reliance, the world has turned away from God. Their toil, their anxiety, and their daily striving is all in vain.

## TOUCH AND BEING TOUCHED

Baby Bo grasps my fingers with his tiny hand. His grip is solid and it is amazing to think that such a small hand, barely a week old, can clutch mine so firmly. God has endowed this chubby hand with sensitivity. The threshold of touch, that is to say, the amount of gram weight it takes for a person to sense that an object has come into contact with the skin, has been measured. Although the back of the forearm is triggered by 33 milligrams of pressure, the back of the hand is activated by 12 milligrams. But the fingertips, the fingertips are most sensitive and are stimulated by a mere 3 milligrams. Bo continues to squeeze my fingers.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists. J.C. Ryle calls faith the hand by which the soul lays hold on Christ and is united to Him and saved. Will little Bo's hand grow in strength? Will that strength be planted in his heart by the Holy Spirit? And how will those lilliputian fingers react to the daily things with which it will come into contact?

There are many things which will touch baby Bo. We can look back over our shoulder at history and note that bygone civilizations have totally disappeared – civilizations such as the Babylonian, the Egyptian, the Roman, as well as the empire of Alexander the Great. These powers have long been erased from the map of the world. But others have taken their place. Civilizations always come and go. In Bo's lifetime he will possibly behold the collapse of a number of regimes, as well as the demise of temporal millionaires – men such as Soros, Bezos, Gates and Musk. And he might perceive the dissolution of international godless

organizations such as the WEF and the WHO. These regimes, these men and organizations, are all building cities without God. They will all try to touch Bo. They will all try to shape his thoughts. And they will all try to align his values with theirs and position their principles as his.

Baby Bo snuggles into my arm. It is obvious that he is comfortable and feels safe with the embrace he experiences. Touch studies have been conducted with monkeys. In one such study eight baby monkeys were put into a large cage containing a terry cloth mother and a mother figure made out of wire mesh. Both surrogate mothers were fitted with milk flow. Four babies were taught to nurse from the terry cloth mother and four from the wire mesh mother. But all eight babies exhibited a strong need for the terry cloth mother. The four who had been taught to drink from the wire mesh mother went to her only for the feeding. They spent the remaining time hugging, grasping and stroking the terry cloth mother. Intimate soft body contact was essential. As a matter of fact, continued studies showed that many baby monkeys, deprived of warm touch, cowered in the corner of their cages and died.

Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancy, in their book *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* (Zondervan, 1980), record a remarkable truth. They chronicle:

“As late as 1920, the death rate among infants in some foundling hospitals in America approached 100 percent. Then Dr. Fritz Talbot of Boston brought from Germany an unscientific-sounding concept of ‘tender loving care.’ While visiting the Children's Clinic in Düsseldorf, he had noticed an old woman wandering through the hospital, always balancing a sickly baby on her hip. ‘That,’ said his guide, ‘is Old Anna. When we have done everything we can medically do for a baby and it still is not doing well, we turn it over to Old Anna, and she cures it.’

“When Talbot proposed this quaint idea to American institutions, administrators derided the notion that something as archaic as simple


touching could improve their care. Statistics soon convinced them. In Bellevue Hospital in New York, after a rule was established that ill babies must be picked up, carried around, and ‘mothered’ several times a day, the infant mortality rate dropped from 35 percent to less than 10 percent.”

## EXERCISING OUR MUSCLES

The church is the body of Christ. It is a house built by God. It is a house that should be touching and carrying the ill, lonely and feeble in prayer care. It has been constructed by God, and should be a visible manifestation of His commandments. Jesus often touched people when He healed. His touch radiated love, power and hope. The church, the body of Christ, is fearfully and wonderfully made.

As I hold baby Bo on my lap he stretches out his tiny arms above his head, giving me an unprompted smile. There are many sorrowful things going on in this world in which he has been placed by God. Jealousy, envy and fear are etched on the faces of countless members of society. Commandments, freely and lovingly given by God, are held up to be inaccurate. Truth is hidden and people are afraid to speak up for truth for fear of being called bigots or racists. The world has become a dark, dark place. It needs light.

Seventy separate muscles contribute to hand movements. Little Bo has no inkling as yet that God has endowed him with such a gift as seventy separate muscles in both his right and his left hand. But a muscle must be exercised for it to grow and to work. Will he exercise his hands under the management of his Lord and Savior? Before Bo was born, God planned this little child's life. He has given this baby God-fearing parents and He has placed milk in his crib via his mother's breast and God's Word. In this way He gives His beloved children sleep.

*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* So Proverbs 22:6 tells us. It is a sobering responsibility, and a wonderful promise. 



# FILMS

by Jon Dykstra

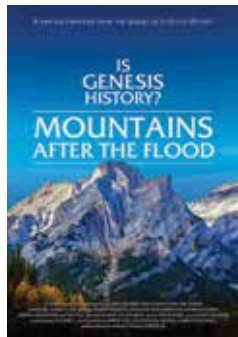
THE BEST OF 2023 SO FAR...

ReformedPerspective.ca/movies

## MOUNTAINS AFTER THE FLOOD

DOCUMENTARY

2023 / 100+ MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



The folks who brought us *Is Genesis History*, have crafted a sequel of sorts. Host Del Tackett is back, and just as inquisitive as ever. *Mountains after the Flood* looks at areas of the Grand Canyon, and exposed layers around the world, including in our mountains, to show how quickly they were formed. The conventional evolutionary thinking is they took thousands and million of years to form, but if so, how could there be folds in the rocks? Those folds would have cracked and fractured if they had been formed after the rock hardened.

But if, instead, we consider if these folds were formed in the cataclysmic aftermath of the flood, quickly, while the layers were still soft, then we can understand how they could have been bent over, without cracking.

This is more technical than the previous film, but has loads of information for anyone already interested in the subject. For them, this will be a fascinating film. This is not, however, a film I'd show kids to try to get them interested in the topic matter. If this isn't already available to rent online, it soon will be. You can find out more at [IsGenesisHistory.com](http://IsGenesisHistory.com), including where you may be able to stream the original for free.

## THE HIDING PLACE (2023)

DRAMA / STAGE PLAY

2023 / 153 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



I went in wondering, *did we really need a second film version* of Corrie Ten Boom's life, and left certain we did. The 1975 film stars Corrie as the hero, hiding Jews from the Nazis. In the 2023 version, it's her sister and father who most shine, while Corrie acts as a sometimes grudging accomplice. Another difference is this version's Nazi interrogator, who tries to use the Bible against Corrie. He references Romans 13, challenging her to submit to the "governing authorities" and quotes John 8:32, assuring Corrie that the "truth will set you free." But Corrie stands by the greater commandment to love her neighbor as herself (Matt. 22:35-40).

In this stage production, everything takes place in front of a live audience. While that makes it slightly less realistic, the quick cuts, close-ups, fantastic writing, and Oscar-worthy performances will draw you in.

Two times God's name was used in a manner that, were this any other film, I would have thought were abuse. But in a film in which God's Name is always on the lips of the main characters, when someone says, to the effect of "God only knows..." might they actually mean it? Watching this in the theater, I wasn't able to rewind it, so I am left wondering. I will say this film is clearly intended to honor God – the whole film is about praising Him.

## THE SUPER MARIO BROS. MOVIE

ANIMATED / FAMILY

2023 / 92 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



Mario is now Italian-American, a second-generation immigrant with no hint of an accent except in the TV commercial he and his brother Luigi made for their plumbing business. When a downtown water main breaks, the two brothers race down to see if they can help. But instead of getting the water to stop, they both get washed down a pipe into a strange, very colorful land.

Mario ends up in Mushroom Kingdom and meets Princess Peach, the only other human in this land of living, talking mushrooms. She's quite nice, but also part ninja. Luigi ends up in the land of the evil King Bowser, a very large, piano-playing, dog/turtle-like, flame-breathing creature set on conquering everything and also marrying Princess Peach. Booooo!

So Mario has to save his brother and everyone else from the evil Bowser, and he'll do it with a little help from his friends.

The biggest caution is the comic violence. There's a *lot* of chasing and fighting that could look pretty brutal to the littles. Also a super cute talking star shows up a couple of times and says dark, depressing things like "There is no sunshine, only darkness." The contrast between her adorable appearance and her prophecies of doom is supposed to be funny but just comes off as weird.

This is aimed at nostalgic parents and their kids, 10 and up. Be sure you rent this one and not the really terrible 1993 live-action version.

## THE ONE EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT



### SOUND OF FREEDOM

DRAMA

2023 / 131 MINUTES RATING: 8/10

Roberto Aguilar has two beautiful children. The charming woman at his door, Giselle, knows it too. In fact, she believes that his 11-year-old daughter Rocio, and his cute-as-a-button 4-year-old son Miguel, might have what it takes to be in the entertainment business. So when she invites Roberto to bring them both by for a photo shoot, the Honduran welder is willing to take the long bus ride into the city, to give his children this special opportunity. When he knocks on the apartment door, the children are invited in, and Roberto is told that parents aren't allowed to stay. He can come back at 7 pm to pick them up.

Except, when he returns, they are gone. The charming woman is no talent scout. Giselle has just kidnapped another dozen children for her sex trafficking business. That might have been the last time Roberto ever saw his children, but for Homeland Security agent Tim Ballard. He has the disturbing job of hunting down pedophiles, and in the course of his career he's busted 300 of them. But he's not been able to save even a single child, and for his own sanity, he needs to start *now*. "This job tears you to pieces," he tells his boss. "And this is my one chance to put those pieces back together." What follows is an undercover operation that has no sanction from the US government.

*Sound of Freedom* isn't an explicitly Christian film – Roman Catholic Jim Caviezel plays the part of Ballard, who in real life is a Mormon – but there's a reason it appeals to us. What drives Ballard, even still today, is that these children are made in the Image of God, and "God's children [should] not be for sale."

#### CAUTIONS

The real-life Ballard has been left scarred by what he's had to see. Thankfully, the filmmakers were very intentional about educating their audience without exposing us to the full depravity of what's going on. For example, the film's creepiest scene might be the initial photo shoot with Miguel, Rocio, and the others who have been left with Giselle. The children are told how to stand, how to purse their lips, tilt their head, and smile just so. What's disturbing isn't so much what we see, but rather what we know about how these pictures are going to be used to.

There is violence, with the most graphic fight scene a minute long, with two men equally intent on killing each other. Here, too, some "muting" is going on, as we watch the fight through the eyes of a child who has been told not to look.

That this is a true story means if you have a soft heart, this could break you. I also wouldn't suggest it for anyone under 16. It is gripping, it is well-acted, it is important, but it isn't really entertainment – this is a film you watch to have your eyes opened.

#### CONCLUSION

As the credits rolled, viewers will wonder, *Now that I know, what can I do?* The film doesn't offer an answer, so here's a few thoughts:

1. Put the danger in a context – Some of the real-life footage shown in *Sound of Freedom* involves drive-by abductions, but those are a rarity in the US, and likely Canada too. Parents should be more concerned with Giselle-types trying to create bonds, perhaps over social media, than random kidnappings.
2. Stop the sexualization of children – We might be able to shelter our own kids by sending them to Christian schools, but let's not forget about the children who are getting subjected to public school sex-ed, or who are borrowing the books our governments are putting in the teen section of the public library. Lots of fronts in this battle, but closest to home might begin with delaying when our own kids get phones and the access they bring to the dark side of sexuality. "Wait til Grade 8" is a good idea, but I sure wouldn't mind 9 or 10, though any later and parents risk sending their kid out the door at 18 with no guidance on how to use a phone responsibly.
3. Support Christian organizations like SA foundation (Servants Anonymous) that seek to "provide a way out for young women (and their children) that are able to escape the sex trade." Find out more at [SAFoundation.com](http://SAFoundation.com).





### THE ESSENTIAL CHURCH

DOCUMENTARY

2023 / 126 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**

*The Essential Church* was put out by the Californian congregation that refused to stay closed during the COVID lockdowns. It is their defense.

I was intrigued when I discovered that their pastor, John MacArthur, denounces the American Revolution as contrary to God's call in Romans 13 to be submissive to the authorities. How is it that in a country where *everyone* defends the American Revolution, the one pastor who thinks it was sinful is also one of the only pastors to lead his congregation in a revolt against his own government? What is going on here?

Here are a few of the points they present.

#### 1. THE KING DOESN'T RULE OVER ALL

The film opens with a picture of the three-legged stool that belonged to Scotswoman Jenny Geddes. She has been long admired for her strident stance against an English king's impositions on the Scottish church. The year was 1637, the English King was Charles 1, and his imposition was the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, which he required the Scottish churches to use. When an Anglican cleric climbed into the pulpit of the Scottish Cathedral of St. Giles and began to read out of the book, Geddes was having none of it, and threw her stool at him. She took her stand against a king who thought he could rule the Church.

#### 2. GOD DOES

Next, we jump forward to 2020. News clips show us the many who were getting sick, but we also hear stories about children who struggle with lockdown isolation and depression. A woman whose unbelieving father was diagnosed with cancer tells us how she just wanted to take him to church. We learn about seniors who died with no one to comfort them.

Grace Community's argument asks Christians to consider what it means that God rules over all. Then it isn't simply His command in Romans 13 that we have to consider, but all His commands. That includes His call to worship (Heb. 10:24-25), His command to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31), to honor our elders (Ex. 20:12), to love and protect our children (Ps. 103:13), and to proclaim His gospel (Acts 5:28-29). Yes, we are to obey the governing authorities, but, as Peter proclaims, there is a limit to that authority. When there is a conflict between God and government, then we must obey God, rather than Man.

#### 3. HYPOCRISY IS INFORMATIVE

Among the news clips were shots of politicians saying one thing and doing another. This section could have been expanded; that some politicians are hypocrites is not, in itself, a justification to disobey. However, their hypocrisy does help us make a risk assessment. We aren't all doctors, but the Church was always going to have to do its own evaluation of the danger. If, for example, our government tried to close churches to curtail the spread of the common cold, we'd likely all agree to disobey. If Ebola, with its 50% fatality rate, made an appearance, we'd all agree to closure.

So when our politicians said going to church might kill your grandmother so it wasn't worth the risk, but they joined Black Lives Matters marches because *those* were worth the risk to grandma and everyone else, then God's people, with our very different, but God-given, understanding of what really is important in this world, might be forced to come to a different risk assessment.

#### CONCLUSION

Halfway in we're introduced to some Canadian pastors who also defied government lockdown restrictions. The one I'd heard the most about was James Coates, pastor of GraceLife church in Edmonton, Alberta, in part because when a Mormon friend wanted to check out a church, this was the only one open for me to send him to.

The caution I'll offer is that there is just the one side here. They generally steer clear of caricaturing their opposition, but they are focused on making *their* case, not the opposition's. Lots to consider here though, and anyone 12 and up (with some parental guidance) could enjoy this. Rent it at [EssentialChurchMovie.com](https://www.essentialchurchmovie.com).



# Into The Light Documentary

Jeremy Pierre Jenny Solomon Heath Lambert Deepak Reju Ellen Dykas Garrett Kell

## A free teaching documentary on freedom from pornography

81 MINUTES • 2023 • RATING: 8/10

reviewed by Elliott Holtvlüwer

**A**re you someone who doesn't take quickly to reading? Are you looking for a more accessible resource for yourself or perhaps your study group? Look no further than *Into the Light!* This documentary was created for the very purpose of providing non-readers with a faithful and effective presentation of the Christian's struggle with pornography, and the work that God does to restore them.

An independent project by Jacob Valk and John-Michael Bout, this documentary is a valuable resource for Christians struggling against pornography and for those walking alongside them.

### GREAT GROUP RESOURCE

As the title suggests, this documentary aims to bring the conversation about pornography out into the open and highlight the fact that it is a very real struggle for many Christians, both men and women, young and old. The documentary is comprised of six short interviews, each with an expert in various aspects of the Bible's teaching about sexual purity and in the fight against pornography. The interviews cover the consequences of sin, God's design for sex, understanding our hearts, taking radical practical measures, learning to endure in the fight, and discovering true freedom in Christ. The presentations by each of the six interviewees are biblically based and provide great hope

for those who may feel lost or defeated in the struggle against sexual sin.

The interviews are spaced apart by five short segments that follow the story of Tim and Chelsea – a Christian couple who had their own struggle with pornography. Their story really helps to bring out the talking points that are covered in the interviews and shows how they are lived out by real Christians. They typify what is sadly very common among Christians, namely their initial misunderstanding of how destructive pornography really is and the pain that the struggle against it brings. Their story, however, is full of hope for through Christ they have found freedom from pornography and can live a new life in Him.

*Into the Light* is about an hour and twenty minutes long but for study purposes can be watched in episode form. Since this was an entirely crowd-funded endeavor, the creators of this documentary have made it freely available at [IntoTheLightDocumentary.com](http://IntoTheLightDocumentary.com). On the website, under the resources tab there is an excellent leader's guide for study groups as well as discussion questions for each of the six interviews. These two resources are of high quality as they thoroughly explore each subject and even provide sample answers and additional resources for those who want to learn more. With the aid of these helpful resources, bring-


ing the conversation about pornography into the light can begin to happen.

### CAUTION

While the documentary does an excellent job of not discussing unnecessary explicit details of sexual sin, some of the talking points do require a certain level of maturity. For teenagers and young adults this documentary is a great way to start the conversation about pornography but for those of pre-teen age it may need parental guidance.

### CONCLUSION

One thing that is missing from this documentary is a breakdown of just how pervasive pornography is amongst Christians. It would have been helpful to highlight the fact that this problem is only growing and that the Church needs to be equipped to deal with this.

The filmmakers of *Into the Light* are Reformed Baptists and the teaching and guidance that their documentary provides is scriptural and Christ-centered. To learn more about their story and purpose in making this documentary be sure to check out their appearance on the Real Talk podcast, Episode 50 ([www.RealTalk-Podcast.ca](http://www.RealTalk-Podcast.ca)). 

*Find the film, and the resources at: [IntoTheLightDocumentary.com](http://IntoTheLightDocumentary.com).*





# The WAY YOU ARE

The gender controversy in light  
of the image of God

## FIND A LOCATION NEAR YOU!

Ottawa, ON	Oct 16	Wyoming, ON	Nov 3
Cambridge, NS	Oct 17	Hamilton, ON	Nov 6
Desable, PEI	Oct 18	Burgessville, ON	Nov 7
St. Albert, AB	Oct 24	Toronto, ON	Nov 8
Barrhead, AB	Oct 25	Carman, MB	Nov 9
Ponoka, AB	Oct 26	Winnipeg, MB	Nov 10
Coaldale, AB	Oct 27	Langley, BC	Nov 13
Dunnville, ON	Oct 30	Vernon, BC	Nov 14
Beamsville, ON	Nov 1	Abbotsford, BC	Nov 15
Guelph, ON	Nov 2	Chilliwack, BC	Nov 16

For more details go to [arpacanada.ca/fall-tour-2023](https://arpacanada.ca/fall-tour-2023)

*RP Press and The Study pass the torch to*

# Providence Books & Press

by Mark Penninga

From John Calvin's classic commentaries to the latest bestseller by Carl Trueman, the Reformed heritage has a deep and well-respected history of publishing solid Christian books.

In recent years the Reformed Perspective Foundation took a page from this heritage by starting RP Press and also agreeing to take over the work of a small non-profit publisher in Canada called The Study (formerly known as the Inter-League Publication Board). We published some excellent new titles including *Worship Matters* by Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, *Man of the First Hour* by George Van Popta and the *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms Devotional and Study Resource* by Peter Holtvluwer. And we made a new website so that people from around the world could discover and purchase books and study guides from the massive selection that The Study had published through the years.

But when RP's Chris DeBoer went back to serving as a principal at a Christian school, we understood the need to find the right person to take over this work to ensure that these titles would reach many more people for years to come, with quality new titles added alongside them.

The LORD has graciously provided! Over the past year, the Reformed Perspective team and Chris DeBoer have been communicating with a young man from Neerlandia, Alberta. Andrew Schouten is the owner of Providence Books & Press, a small Christian bookstore with a big purpose: "nurturing and cultivating the love and growth of the gospel."

Schouten had started and run this store "on the side" of his full-time job, but his heart was to see it develop into something




Andrew and Esther Schouten have ambitions for their bookstore and publishing press. They've got all sorts of great books for all ages.

much bigger. He was encouraged by the growing appeal of Reformed literature in the broader Christian community south of the border, and sees similar potential in Canada too.

With time and more talks, it was clear to us that Schouten has the ability and willingness to carry this torch, and to see it light many more fires in hearts across this land. After a formal agreement was made in the spring, Schouten formed a new non-profit, which received the titles and inventory from RP Press and The Study, alongside the hundreds of books he already held.

We thank the LORD for the dedication and service that has been poured into the

many titles published by The Study and RP Press. This includes the authors, as well as the volunteers and workers who served with these organizations so that the resources could edify so many of us. A special thanks goes to Sherri Harsevoort and Chris DeBoer who carried this torch on behalf of RP in recent years. And we also praise God for raising up a new generation of willing servants to carry this torch.

If you are looking for books for your Bible study group, or to give as a gift, or even to sell in your own bookstore, please consider looking up Providence Books & Press at [ProvidenceBooksPress.com](http://ProvidenceBooksPress.com). You can also reach them at 780-294-9239. 





Youth  
Runner-up  
Jocelyn D.