

**REFORMED**

# Perspective

A MAGAZINE  
FOR THE  
CHRISTIAN  
FAMILY

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# Twilight

## A horrible book that fathers should consider reading with their daughters

Editorial

Jon Dykstra

In 2005 Stephanie Meyer published *Twilight*, a novel for teens she described as a “suspense, romance, horror, comedy.” It tells the story of Bella, just starting grade eleven at a new school in rainy Washington state, and her love interest Edward, a ninety-something-year-old vampire. And to add to the oddness, the cover features a pair of pale hands offering up an enticing rosy red apple.

That’s just a three-line summary, but it should be enough to creep out Christian parents; we know romanticized vampires offering up forbidden fruit can’t amount to anything better than frothy trash, and might well be something worse. So we know this isn’t the sort of fiction we want our daughters reading.

It might turn out, though, that they have other thoughts.

This is *the* literary and celluloid big thing right now – *Twilight* has sold 17 million copies and spawned three sequels and two, going on three, films with the third due out this June. It’s an entirely female fan base, and as the books and movies keep coming the phenomenon is also making inroads into the Church. If you have daughters and you haven’t already seen these books lying around your house you soon could.

Of course if the series hasn’t made it to your house yet, why not keep it that way – tell your kids to steer clear. But if it’s already arrived, or if your older daughters are pressing to read it and asking you what’s so wrong with it, you might want to rethink a blanket ban and instead decide to read through the first book with them.

### Reading trash

Reading trash with your daughters isn’t an approach I’d normally advise, but there are a couple reasons it’s worth considering in this case.

The first is a matter of practical parenting. When our children are young we tell them what to do, what not to do, and shouldn’t feel obliged to always explain ourselves; our job is to protect them, their job is to listen. When they get older this “no questions asked” approach has to be replaced and explanations have to be offered so our children can learn to grow in discernment. Telling a seventeen-year-old they are forbidden from reading a particular book is treating them too much like a ten-year-old; we don’t want to be doing that unless we really have to. If our daughters want



to read these trashy novels that might be an indicator that Mom and Dad still have some important teaching to do, and reading the first book together is one good way to do it.

Secondly, if your daughter is a fan of these books, she’s being attracted to something that should concern parents. On the surface these seem silly, not-so-out-of-the-ordinary teen romances mixed with a bit of nonsense about vampires. The hero is a blood-sucking demon but he is at least a restrained sort who limits himself to animal blood. Because it is written by a good Mormon lass, there is no swearing, and no sex (or at least none in the first book). In fact, even though Bella desperately wants to become a vampire like her beloved Edward, he won’t consider nibbling on her neck until after they are married (no premarital sex and absolutely no premarital blood letting – there’s an abstinence message we can all appreciate).

### The master manipulator

But below this PG surface there is a much simpler, much more vile story being told about an abusive relationship. That’s not how young women are understanding it but any father will recognize what’s really going on. Edward is the boy fathers have nightmares about, and it has nothing to do with him being a vampire.

He is a self-confident, self-absorbed charmer preying on a vulnerable, lonely young woman. When Bella looks in the mirror she sees a “soft” unathletic girl with “pallid” skin who can’t figure out how to get along with anybody.

Edward is the boy who dazzles her. She describes him having an “absurdly handsome,” “perfect face”

complimented by “a crooked smile so beautiful that I could only stare at him like an idiot.” And from his “perfect, ultra-white teeth” and “flawless lips” proceeds a “musical voice.” He is, in short, gorgeous and Bella can’t figure out why he would ever be interested in someone like *her*.

We get pages and pages on his looks, long before we learn anything about what he’s like – Bella is obsessed before they even speak. And what do we learn when they do start talking? Edward is charming when he wants to be, but also prone to sudden and “unpredictable mood” swings – one moment he’s smiling, the next he is furious. In the space of ten pages he goes from being amused to bothered to charming to scowling to mischievous to fierce to smiling, and then fury. Pastor Douglas Wilson has been doing a chapter by chapter review of *Twilight* and in his posting on Chapter 10 describes the game Edward is playing:

“If you want a certain kind of female to do anything for you, and follow you anywhere, keep her off balance. Be moody and unpredictable. Be as erratic as you can be, and blame her for every change. Wobble down the highway, and every five minutes yell at the person in the passenger seat. The astonishing thing is that this really does work, but it only works if your daughters are the kind of girls you shouldn’t want them to be. It only works if they have the kind of parents who let them read *Twilight* like it was a Nancy Drew book from the fifties or something.”

Much has been made of the couple’s abstinence pledge, but Edward, it turns out, is the sort to push boundaries, to see just how far he can go without losing control. And Bella is a willing victim – she doesn’t care if he does lose control, even if it destroys her. Her only concern is that she wouldn’t want *him* to feel bad about it afterwards.

### Good girls and bad boys

If our daughters aren’t seeing through Edward, if they’re proceeding from the first book to the second and third and fourth, still caught up in the “romance” of it all, it’s clear Dad needs to step in and do some remedial teaching about the right sort of things young women should be looking for in young men.


But if this *Twilight* phenomenon goes beyond our household and our daughters and has spread amongst all the young

## What’s Inside

Scripture tells us that smart people seek out advice (Prov. 15:22) but that not all advice is worth listening to (Genesis 3:1-5, Psalm 1:1). So the merit of seeking advice depends on the caliber and character of the people you seek it from and governments face a huge dilemma every time they need scientific advice to help them formulate policy – they need experts’ input but how can they tell if they are asking the right people? That’s the problem outlined in Margaret Helder’s contribution this month called, **How scientific advisors impact government policy, for good or for ill.**

A recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation interviewed 2,000 American children between eight and eighteen and found that, on average, they **spent nine hours a day staring at a computer screen, smart phone or watching television.** According to the interviews, this extreme usage was driven by kids’ dread of being bored. This month Sharon Bratcher weighs in against video games, and even if you don’t agree with her conclusion, these statistics show her points are worth considering.

women of our churches it could be an indicator about a lack in our young men. Good girls are most attracted to bad boys when all the nice boys they know are of the spineless sort. Yes Edward is moody, selfish and above all dangerous, but he does offer a perverse, domineering form of male leadership. Young women in the world around are starved for real male headship so they’ll find even a sham “dazzling.” If our Christian young women are succumbing to this craze it could mean they are similarly deprived.

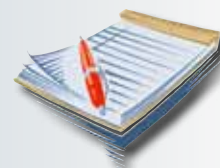
*Douglas Wilson’s chapter-by-chapter review of Twilight can be found at Credenda.org. Jon Dykstra’s copy of Twilight can be found underneath his coffee cup, infinitely improved in its new role as coaster.* 

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# READERS' RESPONSE



Dear Editor,

I have just finished reading your December 2009 issue with the articles on contraception by Dr. James W. Scott and Rev. Larry E. Wilson. I enjoyed both articles; I think they both have very good valid and scriptural points. I particularly appreciated Dr. Scott's scriptural proof against using contraceptives. I think that the word of God as well history gives us a clear enough view on this topic that we can make a general decision that contraceptives are a selfishly sinful human invention.

The point that I would like to make regarding these two articles is that there is a way that God has given us to be both "responsible" and obedient to His word. Natural family planning is a God given way of being responsible using the natural cycles that God has created in women as a way of planning our sexual intimacy with our wife. This natural family planning allows for responsibility, sexual intimacy without the intention of procreation, keeps everything in God's hands without our human intervention, and allows harmony with the word of God.



We need to exemplify in marriage the love that Christ has for His church, in that He gave Himself up for His church. As husbands loving our wives, I think that at times if the situation calls for it, (the well-being and health of our wives) we need to practice self control concerning our sexual desire putting aside our needs out of love for our wives, to put aside and control our desires is a far greater act of love to our wives than to selfishly put the "rubber" on just to fulfill our needs. Sex is a wonderful gift meant to be enjoyed by a married husband and wife not only for the means of procreation, but also for the benefit and building of love in the companionship of marriage.

I think natural family planning is a God given avenue for Christians to be responsible in raising their families as well as making responsible decisions in providing for their family. Natural family planning allows for sexual intimacy without the purpose of procreation, and most importantly we maintain our trust in God in both word and deed by not intervening with unnatural methods of family planning.

Trevor Penninga  
Ariss, Ontario

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# Nota Bene

## News worth noting



### Speed skating for all the right reasons

by Anna Nienhuis

Following in Catriona Le May Doan's grooves, Canada has another outspoken Christian speed skating powerhouse to be proud of. After failing to make an Olympic hockey team Cindy Klassen took up speed skating, and feels it was God at work in her life that brought her to where she is today. Though she did not medal at the Vancouver 2010 games, Klassen is a world champion and one of Canada's most decorated Olympians with 6 medals. She credits her lack of anxiety to the knowledge that God knows the outcome of each race before it even begins.

"I want to use the publicity I've gotten through my success for His glory," she says, and does that by speaking publicly about her faith in interviews and giving speeches at schools to inspire students. As she was inspired by Catriona LeMay Doan, perhaps she in turn will inspire young girls to follow in her footsteps for all the right reasons. Source: canadianchristianity.com Feb. 23, 2010

### Worst countries for persecution

by Anna Nienhuis

North Korea, Iran and Saudi Arabia make a grisly top three on an annual watch list of countries known for persecution of Christians. This is not the first time North Korea has topped the list, as evidence has indicated that arrested Christians have even been used in experiments testing biological and chemical weapons. In spite of this, Christianity continues to grow and we are reminded of the strength of the Word in penetrating such seemingly dark countries. Source: www.opendoorsusa.org



### Euthanasia increasing in the Netherlands. . .



by Anna Nienhuis and Jon Dykstra

Euthanasia is continuing to gain ground in the Netherlands, killing 200 more people in 2009 than 2008. The official number of people killed by euthanasia in 2009 was reported as 2,500, but DutchNews.nl reported that this official total probably accounts for only 80 per cent of all cases, as many go unreported. Concern

also swirls around the Groningen Protocol, which allows parents, with a doctor's consent, to choose euthanasia on behalf of their disabled child.

Instead of acknowledging everyone's intrinsic worth, and every life as a precious gift from God, the severely disabled are increasingly being portrayed as mistakes, their lives "not worth living."

Source: www.dutchnews.nl "More cases of euthanasia in 2009" Jan. 3, 2010; alexschadenberg.blogspot.com Jan 4, 2010 "Euthanasia in the Netherlands continues to rise."

### . . .and happening in Canada too?

by Jon Dykstra

The Quebec government heard in February that doctors in that province are already euthanizing their patients though there is some confusion whether these patients are actually being murdered by their doctors, or whether doctors simply misunderstand what is involved with "palliative sedation."

Gaétan Barrette, the president of the Federation of Quebec Medical Specialists (FMSQ) asked a government committee to be put policies in place that would allow doctors more liberty in the area of "palliative sedation" to protect them from being prosecuted.

Palliative sedation is an end of life treatment done to relieve a patient's pain. In some cases increasingly high-

er and higher doses of pain medication may be needed, but with the higher doses comes an increasing risk the dose may actually be too high and kill the patient. Because the patient is on their deathbed greater risks are taken than would be in other circumstances, so in some situations it does happen that a lethal dose is administered.

The FMSQ argued that this treatment amounts to euthanasia. They are wrong. Palliative sedation sometimes does involve a doctor killing their patient, but it *never involves a doctor setting out to kill their patient*. The intent is always pain relief – to help their patient live better, rather than die quicker – and that different intent makes all the difference in the world.

Source: lifesitenews.com Feb. 16, 2010



Illustration by Jason Bowman

## Oprah laughs at abstinence

by Anna Nienhuis

On her January 22 show, Oprah couldn't disguise her amusement at Bristol Palin's claim that she plans to wait till marriage to have sex again. Bristol is the daughter of Sarah Palin, the Republican vice-presidential nominee in the last US federal election. Bristol became big news during the campaign when it was revealed that she was pregnant out of wedlock. Shortly after the campaign ended Bristol gave birth to a son, Tripp, and she is now speaking out in support of abstinence, saying it is truly the only way to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Oprah scoffed at the idea, citing a survey claiming 1 out of 3 teenagers are having sex by age 18. She believes sex education – teaching children how to have sex using contraceptives – is the only way to deal with the issue, stating that teaching kids abstinence is “setting them up” for failure and unwanted consequences. Sadly, Oprah wields immense influence in our society, with many women taking parenting advice from this woman who has no children of her own.

Source: The Oprah Winfrey Show January 22, 2010

## Christian University under fire for believing in one Truth

by Anna Nienhuis

British Columbia's Trinity Western University (TWU) is being criticized for requiring professors to sign a statement affirming the Christian faith as a condition of employment. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) claims this violates academic freedom.

The University, however, says CAUT, under the guise of promoting academic freedom is actually pushing pluralism, the idea that there is no one truth. A release by TWU noted that a good education should not require a “quest for truth to the extent of assuming it is never knowable.” TWU believes that a pluralistic viewpoint, such as they are being pressured to embrace, “implies an absolute freedom from moral and religious responsibility to the community.” The University is making it very clear that no topic or discussion is off-limits in classrooms at TWU; rather, discussions have at their base the awareness of God and of our human nature.

The Catholic Civil Rights League has sided with TWU, seeing this accusation as simply a blatant attempt to further marginalize religion in academics.

Source: [lifesitenews.com](http://lifesitenews.com); Feb. 3, 2010

## Women kept in the dark about the pill

by Anna Nienhuis

In February the Slovak Parliament rejected a bill that would require doctors to inform women if their birth control pill could potentially cause abortion. While this information is given to doctors, it is kept off all package inserts provided to patients. Morning-after pills do not require a prescription in Slovakia and the majority of women are uninformed as to how they actually work.

Although the proposal was rejected, it has garnered media attention and resulted in increased public awareness. This could lead to the desired effect of patients asking questions and then opting for non-hormonal contraceptives that do not have the side effect of abortion. These same pills are sold in North America and it serves everyone to be well informed and able to ask their doctor appropriate questions.

Source: [lifesitenews.com](http://lifesitenews.com) Feb. 17, 2010

## “Everyone against abortion please raise your hand”

by Anna Nienhuis

A graphic pro-life television commercial was given the go-ahead by the local Global TV affiliate in the Kelowna, BC area, but at the last minute they decided not to run the ad. The 60-second commercial shows an adult hand holding up the perfectly formed hand of an aborted fetus, and begins with the lines “Everyone against abortion, please raise your hand.” It would have been the



first ad ever run showing a body part of an aborted foetus. Due to concerns over the response of viewers, Global TV decided against running the ad, despite it being approved by a TV board that reviews all potential ads.

ProlifeKelowna.com is now showing the ad on their website and have a

petition there to Global TV asking them to allow the ad. While the ad has some graphic images, Marlon Bartram, the director of Kelowna Right to Life, pointed out that the ad was no more graphic than the images pouring in from Haiti in the past months. The hope was that the pro-life ad would have a similar effect in terms of jolting people to attention and action in response to a difficult truth.

Source: [lifesitenews.com](http://lifesitenews.com) Feb. 1, 2010; Feb. 8, 2010





## Report from Australia

by Rene Vermeulen

# “I was in prison, and you visited me. . .”

This week we had a visit from a Malaysian friend who we had not seen for some years. I first met David Tan after having been asked to visit him in the Albany Regional Prison where he had been sent for committing a serious drug crime. But during his time at another prison he had been confronted by the gospel and that had led to him turning from the Buddhism he had been raised with to the Christian faith.

I met him when someone in Perth asked me to visit this young man while he was in the Albany Prison. In the course of the visit I found out that he had been given a ten-year prison sentence. The reason he had become involved in the drug world was because he was greedy for money and thought it would be a quick way to get rich.

But during his time in prison he had time to think about what he had done and realize it was wrong. He realized that he should serve the Lord and turn his back on his past. Today David thanks God that he was able to attend the Christian services in various prisons. There he found that the Christian faith was the true faith. And so he turned from Buddhism to Christianity.

I wasn't the first to visit him – already early in his incarceration he had come into contact with people who brought the gospel to prisoners. However during his time at our local prison I did become his teacher for five years and was able to show him how to serve the Lord and recognize his faults.

What always encouraged me was that even in prison he was able to show clearly that he had indeed changed. He thanked God for the faithful girlfriend who continued to visit him from Malaysia regularly through the years. He knows too that it is God who brought the two of us together and he gratefully honors Him for that. David recognizes this as God's blessing.

When David spoke to his girlfriend about how the Lord had changed him and how he had found the true meaning of life, God blessed his testimony and David won his girlfriend's heart for the Lord – eventually she also changed

from Buddhism to the Truth. After David left prison, one of our pastors, Rev. Huizinga, took it upon himself to instruct David in the catechism by correspondence. David returned to Malaysia 1993 and he and his girlfriend married and had a family. At this wedding two families from the Free Reformed Church in Australia attended.

Last night we had a visit from them. David and Stephanie or as they are known in Malaysia, Hung Tong and Mui Cheng, and their three sons Clarence, Calvin and Clement. They had also brought with them Mary their Filipino housekeeper who has worked for them for 16 years.

David would very much like to come to Australia but it seems that he cannot get a visa to live in Australia because their application for business migration has been rejected. But during the last couple of weeks they have been enjoying their stay in Australia and they intend to send their boys to study in Australia. Prior to visiting, as they thought of coming to Australia to live, they sold their business to a friend. This friend has kept them involved in the business by appointing Mui Cheng as Branch Manager and Hung Tong as Business Development Manager. It is David's intention to study so that he can become a preacher in the conservative church they belong to. David is very involved with his local church in Penang where he is a board member of its social ministry, the chief usher and also visits prison once a month.

David was able to tell me that his parents had also become Christians as well as a nephew and his family. David's father died three years ago while his aged mother is still with them.

As he left me after our interview he asked that we pray for him and his family.

*Rene first wrote about David in his December 2007 article, "Prison Evangelism."*





# How to fake romance (when your love is real)

Canadian Reformed author aims to help his fellow men

reviewed by Sarah Vandergugten

Martin VanWoudenberg has been married since 1995. He has a genuine interest in promoting strong and lasting marriages and that led him to write a book that he believes every man should have: *How to Fake Romance (When your Love is Real)*. The book combines humor, practical information and simple ways for a man to keep the spark in his marriage.

## How this book came to be

The idea for this book developed from a real-life situation the author experienced. His wife and her friend had been away for an out-of-town wedding. In anticipation of his wife's return, VanWoudenberg had ensured that the house was neat and tidy. He bought flowers for her on the day she was coming back, along with a card, "Welcome home, honey. Missed you." He strongly encouraged his friend to do the same, but the friend point blank refused. "What's the point of buying flowers? They'll be dead in a day or two." The author urged him a bit more, but met with flat-out refusal. His friend wouldn't budge.

VanWoudenberg began to wonder, "How can you turn someone like this into someone romantic?" There was no doubt his friend loved his wife. Was there a book that could help him? If there were, would he read it? Martin did some research and discovered there was nothing. All such books were for men who truly want to be romantic, not for men who really don't see the value or point of it. Most books were long, and spent too much time on background, history and value of romance in a marriage. In short, he himself would have to provide help.

VanWoudenberg set out to write a very manly, short, humorous and practical guide for men who want to show their love to their wives but have no intention of becoming warm, fuzzy, mushy romantics. It had to be cheap, easy to do, with short punchy instructions. The book took shape over a period of three years. He drew on things he'd done in the past, came up with new ideas, and gathered input from family and friends. In 2005, the book became reality: *How to Fake Romance (When your Love is Real)*.



## A how-to manual

*How to Fake Romance* is basically a how-to manual. And yes, it's written somewhat tongue-in-cheek. After all, how can fake-romance actually be romantic? Not to worry, says the author. When you get good at it, through lots of practice, you'll become more and more convincing. Your wife will believe it; her family and friends will believe it, and eventually you may even convince yourself.

The author suggests that a man should do something that could be called romantic at least one to three times a month. This book has ninety different ideas to try. If you try each idea three times, and you do something about twice a month, "you'll be set and looking like a romantic genius for the next ten and a half years."

The layout of the book is simple. Each two-page spread has one idea, which is explained in just enough detail to make sense, and not so much as to be boring. With each item there is a list of supplies you will need, suggestions for maximizing the impact, potential pitfalls, and other helpful information. Because a romantic gesture in and of itself will not necessarily sweep a wife off her feet, each idea is accompanied with Extras. For example, when one Idea suggests writing a note in your wife's day timer saying, "I Love



You" or something similar, the Extra suggests that, in acknowledgment of her busy schedule, a husband could also offer to drive one of the children somewhere or let her have the single vehicle for the day.

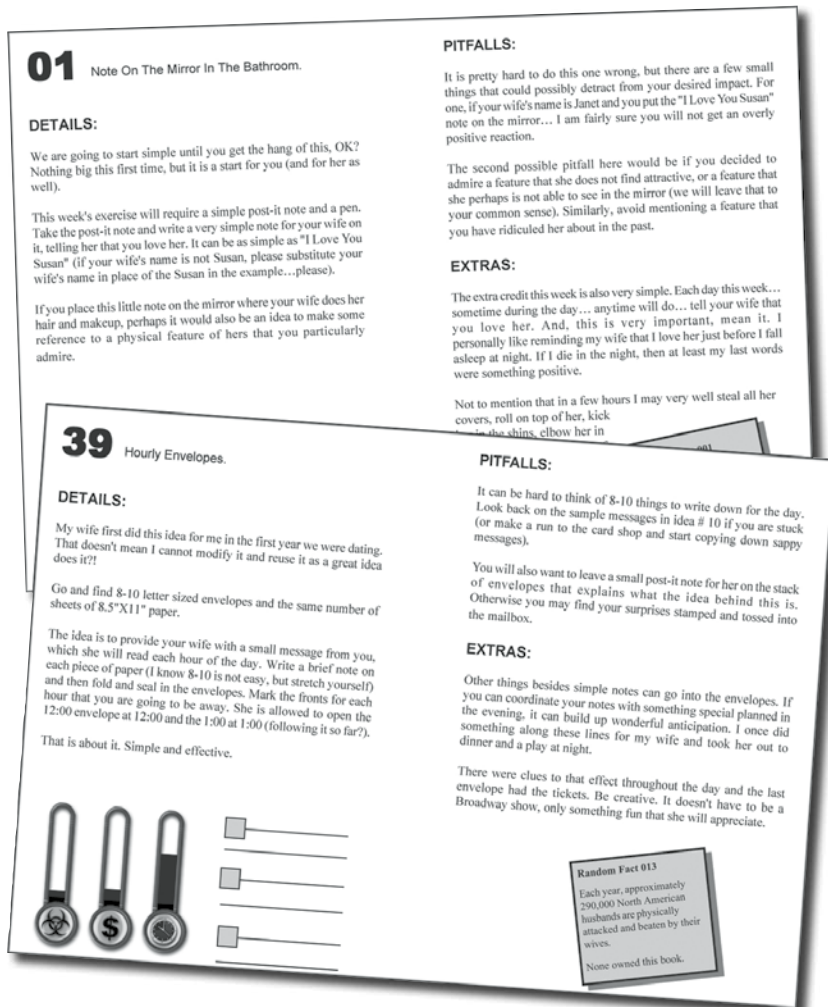
Each idea page includes a chart with three thermometers gauging disaster risk, financial cost and time required. There are also check boxes to record when this idea has been tried, with a couple of lines to note date and results. And simply for fun, each page contains a random factoid: e.g. Random Fact 019 – "When Scott Paper Company first started manufacturing toilet paper they did not put their name on the product because of embarrassment." Or Random Fact 066 – "It is not possible to tickle yourself. The cerebellum warns the rest of the brain that you are about to. Since your brain knows this,

it ignores the sensation." You just never know when such information might prove valuable.

### Who should buy it?

So who should buy this book? I think every man who loves his wife should have this book handy on the shelf—but maybe not where your wife can access it too easily. Read and put the plan into action immediately and consistently. Romance may be more important for women than men, but the benefits of being romantic will spill over into your relationship, and in the end I suspect there will be nothing fake about the romance.

So order your copy from [www.marnickpress.com](http://www.marnickpress.com), and be prepared to enjoy the happy results!



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin VanWoudenberg is currently teaching English, History and Law at Credo Christian High School in Langley, British Columbia. He also has a background in the high tech field having worked for almost fifteen years creating and designing websites for a variety of small to medium companies.

VanWoudenberg continues his involvement in researching, training and writing for and about the Internet. His technology articles have appeared on different web sites and in local publications. His upcoming book *www.TortoiseKiller.com* (to be released this summer) is the fruit of his many years of experience. It is a humorous easy-to-read "novel" which removes the mystery and tech-speak from the Internet, a valuable help to anyone attempting to design a web site or at minimum, trying to speak intelligently about such things.

It is not easy for authors to publish books. With that in view, VanWoudenberg established Marnick Press in 2005 as a way of publishing his own work but also that of others who may have little or no publishing and marketing experience. Further information about books, the author and publishing possibilities see [www.marnickpress.com](http://www.marnickpress.com).

# SIBLING RIVALRY

by Douglas Wilson



Rivalry between children is easy to see and lament, but the mainspring that makes the rivalry work is somewhat more difficult to identify. The sin that creates this rivalry is the sin of envy, but envy is the kind of sin that hides or camouflages itself quite effectively. It does worried parents no good to know that “envy is in there somewhere.”

Rene Girard has identified the mechanism of this rivalry very ably, and as parents use his insights to study what is going on they will have a better grasp of what makes their kids tick – not to mention everybody else they know. Simple desire is a function of wanting something for its own sake. A straightforward example would be a thirsty man who wants a drink of water. This desire is built-in by God, and no one has to teach it, or model it. Newborn babies want milk, crying for it, and when they are first born they are not competing with anyone for it. The competition comes later – and sooner than you might think.

## The stakes aren't so low

Triangular desire complicates things quickly. In triangular desire you have the subject who wants something, the object that is wanted, and a model who bestows desirability on the object by wanting it first. The subject wants the same object that the model wants, but what he really wants is to be like the model. This is the key to understanding all sibling rivalry. The older brother wants a bike, and so younger brother wants a bike too. But what the younger brother really wants is to be like his older brother, and the bike is just the necessary prop. The bike is just there to confuse the parents.

Some might think this is far too simplistic because, they say, “when we bought the younger brother a bike also, it didn't help. The conflict just got worse.” This is because the desire goes deep, well past bike level. What the younger brother really wants is what the older brother got, which was not simply a bike, but “a bike first, from dad, to his beloved

first born son.” And you can’t fix that by buying a second bike. The problem is underscored by the insulting fact of the second bike. It is not resolved at all.

Another way of putting this is that not all desires are for physical objects. Children who compete over objects are frequently doing so because of the symbolic value those objects have – they represent honor or love or status in the family. And this is why competition can turn vicious when the stakes are so low – because the stakes are not really the stakes.

### Value-added

This can even get more complicated. A model (I almost wrote model child, which is another complicating factor) can desire something in a lackluster fashion – if he were the only kid, he could take or leave the bike. But when his brother comes after him fiercely for it, he recognizes its deep value and clutches it far more tenaciously than he did before. In other words, a reciprocal triangular desire can develop. The younger child wants something because the older child wanted it first, and the older child starts to want it deeply because the younger child wanted it deeply first. They are jostling together, each of them deriving the strength of their desire from the strength of the other’s desire. And of course, if it were just the bike, one of them could resolve the conflict by just letting go.

But it is not just the bike. In the scenario sketched out above, the older brother has the bike as the first-born son, and the bike symbolizes that status – a placement which cannot be undone, and that is why the younger brother wants it so much. And if the older brother determined that he was going to be Joe Godly in the conflict and give up the bike for the sake of his brother, that is just the kind of thing that an older brother would do, and now the younger brother wants to be like that.

I have been using the example of older brother/younger brother because it is a very common problem for parents. But the dynamics involved in this can function in any number of situations. The same thing can happen (only nastier) when the younger brother has more confidence, more gifts, and is clearly enjoying God’s favor. The biblical examples of Joseph and David come to mind.

### Resolution

In order to do something about this, parents should recognize that the competition is really over the children’s relationship with them. And there are two aspects of the parents’ prayers: discipline, and instruction. The first is to discipline

for the outbursts of envy, and the second is to discipline in an undistracted way – not to be confused by “the bike,” of whatever the conflict was over.

In the context of this discipline, the instruction (and attitudinal example) coming from the parents has to show that their parental favor is given freely, and cannot be wrested away by competition.

This is not done by warning the kids that envious competition incurs a fundamental relational disfavor – that will just make things worse. Without repentance, the child knows that he is running a deficit, and he will do the only thing he knows how to do to get out of it. . . which is more competition. Any attention is better than no attention.

*This article is reprinted with permission from the 2008 Spring issue of Credenda Agenda (www.credenda.org).*



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# Tidbit relevant, and not so, to Christian life

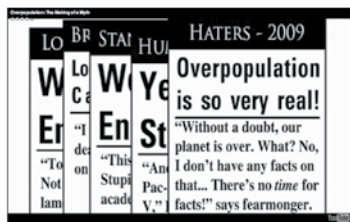
by Jon Dykstra

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## A brief history of hype

The website [www.OverPopulationIsAMyth.com](http://www.OverPopulationIsAMyth.com) should be of particular interest to anyone under 40. If you were born after 1970 then you missed the crescendo of hype that peaked in that decade and the next over our imminent doom due to overpopulation. In his 1968 book *The Population Bomb* Paul Ehrlich predicated that the increasing masses of people on our planet would lead to the starvation death of “hundreds of millions” in the 1970s and 80s due to overpopulation. A year after his book was published the UN created their United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) to promote population control programs in countries around the world. UNFPA continues its work today even though, as this website shows, overpopulation has been exposed as a myth. We aren’t facing a population bomb, but rather an implosion – we’ve stopped having children and will soon face a demographic crisis caused by a *declining* population.

Folks over 40 lived through the UN’s overpopulation hype and have lived long enough to see it exposed as fraud. Will the under 40 set see the same thing happen with the UN’s global warming warnings?



.....

## Lyric of the month

“The Call” by Matt Kenyon

Today was gonna be the day.  
He’d already wrote the note  
And parked that Chevrolet

At the end of that dead end road.  
Had his finger on the trigger;  
just about to end everything  
He was taking one last long breathe;  
when he heard his cell phone ring.  
And his best friend said, “man where  
you been?  
We’re headed down to the lake this  
weekend  
You better not miss it ‘cause buddy I  
swear  
It won’t be the same if you ain’t there  
“And I told that girl that you like so  
much  
“You were coming along, and her eyes  
lit up.  
“I better let you go. Man I really hope  
I didn’t catch you in the middle of  
anything.”  
He said you kinda did but I don’t mind  
at all  
I’m glad you called.

In another town down the road  
In the backseat of a car  
Two 18 year olds had let a kiss go too  
far.  
He said how we gonna have this child  
When we’re both headed off to school?  
He convinced her late one night,  
There’s only one thing to do.  
She was scared to death in that  
waiting room  
When the nurse asked, “How far along  
are you?”  
She said “5 weeks” and just about then  
her phone lit up  
And his call came in  
Saying “Baby I was wrong about  
everything.  
I’ve already bought you a diamond  
ring. We’re gonna start a life;  
“Would you be my wife?  
“Boy or girl; pink or blue; yeah either  
way.”

All she could say as she felt those  
teardrops fall  
Was I’m so glad you called.

If someone you know is weighing on  
your mind  
And needs a friend on the other end of  
the line  
Don’t hesitate. What you say may seem  
so small  
But who knows  
They might be glad you called.  
So make the call. . .  
Yeah make that call.

.....

## Power and the papacy

Lord Acton is best known today for his dictum: “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” But while this quote is famous, the context is forgotten. It turns out Lord Acton said it in response to the Roman Catholic Church’s proclamation, in 1870, of the doctrine of papal infallibility. Though a Roman Catholic himself, Acton had spoken against proclaiming papal infallibility, and in 1887, in a letter to Mandell Creighton, he made his reasons clear:

“I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men with a favorable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption, it is the other way, against the holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility has to make up for the want of legal responsibility. **Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.** Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or certainty of corruption by full authority. There is no worse heresy than the fact that the office sanctifies the holder of it.”



# Reading the Bible with my boys

by David Martin

Today is a great day. That's because today is the day I finished reading the whole Bible to my eldest son, Ben.

It was a long time ago when I ushered him into my office at home and said, "Let's start reading the Bible together." He was just five years old and it was his first day at kindergarten. But we started with Matthew chapter one, a hard start indeed. From there we made our way through Matthew in pretty quick time. We ticked that book off and moved onto another one in the New Testament. He usually chose the next book to read. For ten minutes each day we basically read one chapter, talked about it for a minute or two and then prayed about it. This has happened at least four mornings a week during school term (and a bit in the holidays). We did it usually in the same place and the same time each day. After finishing Matthew, we made a chart of the whole New Testament and stuck it on the back of my office door and every day Ben would tick off a chapter. When we hit some heavy chapters in Revelation, I cheated. I shipped him off to some friends with his Bible in tow, and the dad there had to read Revelation 13. When we progressed to the Old Testament, we just used a bookmark and would tick off the books in the Table of Contents.

And so we came to today. Zechariah chapters 13 and 14. (We have done two chapters for the last four days because Ben was so excited at the prospect of finishing that he couldn't bear to stretch it out another week.) We left Zechariah until last because it's so hard to understand. Two paragraphs from the finish, I was choking with emotion. Reading about cooking pots in the last paragraph was a bit of a blur, and I have no idea what it means. But

I did pick up a great statement in that last chapter – "The Lord will be King over the whole earth" (Zech 14:9). So we prayed about that. And today we ticked off Zechariah.

What a great day!

## The inspiration

We once had a boarder living with us who said she could not remember a day when she had gone to bed without her dad reading the Bible to her and praying with her. I was gobsmacked. As a young dad, that comment made an indelible impression on me. How could a man do that? I knew this was a great thing to do, so I set about the above

plan. I was convinced that I didn't want to read cut down Bible storybook versions but the real thing. We did the New Testament in the *Good News Version*, and with the Old Testament, we progressed to the *NIV*. I thought kids would miss things if they didn't read the real thing. They would miss the overwhelming sense of God's sovereignty over everything. They would miss the complete depravity of the human race. And they would miss his wrath and judgment against humanity.

I also wanted to develop a habit in myself and my boys. To be honest, this was partly out of a great sense of



failure on my part to regularly and systematically read the Scriptures. But, also, there seems to be an absence of this habit in Christians, a legacy that previous generations of believers had but that we have lost.

So I thought, “May as well start young.” The other thing in the back of my mind was that, as head of the family, this was a responsibility that I could not fob off onto my wife, Jan, especially since we have all boys.

When it came to incentives and milestones, I did something that will be very controversial and that no one would dare suggest: I paid him! When Ben finished Matthew, I was so pleased with his desire to read with me that I wanted to keep encouraging him. So I actually gave him \$5. He was preoccupied with money at the time so, for him, it was a great motivator. But I also cautioned him that he wouldn't get paid for every book he read.

After six or eight months, I hinted that I'd give him something special if he finished the New Testament. And I did – this time \$20. But, again, it was to say how proud I was that he was so diligent. That happened halfway through first grade when he was six and a half. I also said there would be no more money.

About a year ago, as finishing the whole Bible came in sight, I dropped hints that I'd get him something really special: his own Bible. As it got closer, I talked about that more and more. He even reminded me that I promised I would get him “this special Bible.” Well, today he got it – his own Teen

### A FEW TIPS THAT WORKED FOR ME

- Start immediately. You can do it today or tomorrow.
- Start out small. Just aim for one chapter a day. That's all we did.
- Set the goal before them: to read the whole Bible.
- Let them see their progress.
- Make it a routine activity. 'Reading the Bible with Dad' is on our boys' morning routine chart. They get to tick it off each day.
- Skip it on bad days. If there's tension between you and the kids, cut your losses. Just humbly lead them in prayer about the cause of tension.
- Don't stress if you miss a week. Work may take you away for a week, as it did me. But you've got six years. You could try to make it up in the holidays – but, again, don't stress.
- Give lots of verbal encouragement along the way. Lots and lots and lots.
- Celebrate milestones in a big way. e.g. first book, the New Testament, the Psalms, etc.
- Thank God every step of the way. Thank him for the delight that they take in it and for every single day you get to read the Bible to them.

Study Bible (NIV), and he was so excited. It even has a chart in the back to tick off each chapter.

I have many failings as a father, but this one thing I have done by the strength of God: I have read the whole Bible to my son. I have two more sons to go, and by God's strength, I will do it again. Jake is about one-third through the Old Testament and Daniel hasn't started. Of all the things we can do for our kids, surely this one is up there with the best: to leave them a legacy of God's word, the habit of reading it and the experience of delighting in it. That can't happen in ten minutes on one day, but it can happen in ten minutes a day over six of their formative years. And I trust it can be monitored and encouraged over the teenage years (though I speak from ignorance and do not know the difficulties that lie ahead).

Thanks be to God for all he has done.

### The letter I pasted in Ben's Bible

My dearest Ben,

It has been a great pleasure and joy to read the whole Bible with you. I have loved every chapter and every day. Thank you for being so keen to read it with me.

This gift is for you. Within it are the words of true LIGHT in this dark and evil world and words of true LIFE in this world of decay and death. Not just any words, but the words of God himself. Take them with you all the days of your life and believe on his Son, Jesus, of whom they speak, so that you may have real life and have it to the full, my son.

With all my love always, Dad

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# God-glorifying Grad parties

## “Kids will be kids” when parents refuse to be parents

by Jon Dykstra

They typically start off with anywhere from 50 to a hundred kids in a big open field late at night with nothing particular to do. The “kids” range in age from 15 to 20 which means around half of them are legal, so they can bring alcohol; the other half that aren’t legal. . . well, they don’t need to bring any because it’s already there. So they all drink with rare exception. After all there’s nothing else to do but get drunk and see if you can still stand up after your friends have all fallen down. Good kids or bad it doesn’t make a difference; they’re celebrating the end of 12 years of rules and deadlines and tests and homework. Now they want to let loose. Very few, however, have the experience to know where exactly the line between letting loose and losing control is.

Parental supervision is always a joke. With more than 50 kids spread out over a big dark field there’s almost nothing one set of parents can do. The parents usually end up confis-

cating everyone’s car keys when they realize they’ve lost the battle. That is, if they’ve even bothered to put up a fight in the first place; the grads are generally smart enough to try to hold their parties at the house of parents who believes that “kids will be kids” and “everyone gets drunk at least once.”

The next morning everyone is sufficiently sobered up so they drive on home. No one gets in an accident, no one gets arrested, no big incidents occur. The parents don’t ask their kids too many questions and the kids don’t volunteer any answers. Some rumors spread around about how so and so’s kid acted at the party but each set of parents is secure in the illusion that it wasn’t one of theirs. Nothing changes and it all happens again next year.

After attending six Christian grads, and talking to Christian friends all across the country I can tell you, that’s just how it is.



Photo courtesy Trina Vreugdenhil

But that's not how it has to be.

There was no drinking at my cousin's Edmonton Christian High School's graduation party. The school achieved this almost impossible feat by organizing a night and day of activities that were too busy to leave time for drinking and was already intoxicating enough to preclude the apparent need grads have for drinking.

The night started off with the normal graduation ceremony and dinner. Dinner ended at midnight but instead of heading off to the usual party, grads rushed home to change and grab a few extra clothes for the now annual whitewater rafting trip. They all met back at the school at 2 a.m., piled into a bunch of buses, and headed out for a seven hour drive

to the Rocky mountains. A quick breakfast at 9 a.m. and by ten they were at the rafting site. By 10:30 they were in the water and screaming their way through the rapids. Volleyball accompanied a brief steak lunch at noon, and then they were back in the water until around four. On the way home they stopped for supper at 7:00 and arrive home some time before 11 p.m. The grads had a memorable grad celebration that all of them actually remembered.

The total cost per graduate was somewhere around \$100 so it's obvious this is not an activity which can be planned a month before grad. The students at the Edmonton Christian High School had an organized grad committee and were already planning fund-raisers during the first few weeks of

## Blast from the Past

### Grad Parties article 14 years later

When this article was first published in 1996 it was the diagnosis that was controversial. Some parents dismissed the account as describing something happening elsewhere – this certainly wasn't happening at *their* school. But that just wasn't so. I wrote this article only a few years removed from my own high school graduation, and based it on not just my own experiences, but the grad party stories of friends from across Canada. In Canadian Reformed schools in the early and mid 90s, the drunken grad party wasn't rare or unusual; it was the norm. The diagnosis was entirely accurate.

I am now twenty years removed from high school and I don't have the same connections into the Canadian Reformed party scene that I once did. So I don't know whether this continues to be the norm or is the exception today. I do know, however, that it is still happening in some places, and that's why the article is being reprinted.

While I think the diagnosis is still applicable, looking back almost twenty years removed from my own grad I see now that there is something rather fundamental left out of the prescribed treatment. The solution to drunken

grad parties isn't simply to have bigger, more exciting non-drinking parties. That can be part of it, but on its own it is more of a bandage solution than a cure.

A true solution starts with parental involvement, with parents being parents, and asking all those questions we feel hesitant to ask. It's not being nosy when we're asking our own kids what they are up to. Jesus tells us in John 3:20, that those who want to do evil avoid the light. If our children are excluding us and keeping us in the dark about their grad night activities, let's not be naïve about why they want to do that.

This last year I attended my first grad party in almost two decades as an invited guest of the *parents* of the graduates. Parents were invited! Dozens of folks over 40 wandered about in, leaving the under 20s to their

own activities, but not on their own. Everyone had fun. . . and no one got drunk.

This same approach – parental involvement in one form or another – is the simple and available remedy to the drunken bush parties that we hear rumors about but which we are sometimes too afraid to ask our children about. We need to make pointed questions such an ordinary event that our children don't think anything of it: "Whose house are you going to? Will your friend's parents be there? Will there be alcohol?"

That doesn't mean our kids should only go over to friends' houses where parents will be around. This is the time of their lives where we need to be loosening the restraints, because soon enough they will move out and the only restraint they'll have is self-restraint; we need to give them opportunities to practice this self-restraint while they are still under our roof.

But if our children only go to houses where parents aren't around, or they only go to events that won't involve parental supervision, then there is a problem here – they are avoiding the light. And the only reason they will continually avoid the light is because they are doing something in the dark that they ought not be doing. When that happens, let's not be naïve; let's be parents.





October. Their particular grad committee was made up of two teachers and six students who met once every week during lunch. The regularity of these meetings ensured that things actually got done. Parental involvement played a big part in all of the fund-raisers so a parent or two often dropped by these meetings to keep current with what was being planned.

It's also obvious that not every school will be able to go whitewater rafting. That's fine because the actual activity is not important. One Christian school organized a very full night which included midnight watersliding and blackout bowling. The Edmonton Christian High School has experimented with horseback riding and mountain biking in the Rockies. The possibilities are only limited by where in the country you are and by the amount of time and effort parents and students are willing to put into fundraising.

There are, however, a few key points which must be remembered while organizing the night's activities. The first is that just getting rid of the alcohol is not enough. Occasionally a group of unusually mature graduates will institute an alcohol ban at their grad party. Unfortunately what usually happens is these mature graduates have a very dull party which is rapidly abandoned in favor of a drinking party that has sprung up nearby. Drinking always becomes a problem when there is nothing else to do. Taking away the alcohol without replacing it with something else is not good enough.

Secondly the students have to do something that will let them blow off a little steam and get wild. That's why whitewater rafting is almost perfect. The students are celebrating an end to twelve years of a very ordered and organized life. This is a big deal and a midnight volleyball game or a big bonfire just aren't good enough. If the activity isn't exciting the grads won't want to organize it and the usual drinking party will win out again by default.

Finally the activity has to last all night long with as little parental involvement as possible. A number of years back Edmonton Christian High School had a few difficulties when they left a space of three hours between the dinner and the departure of the buses. Some determined kids apparently thought three hours was just enough time to go and get thoroughly sauced. The school solved this by cutting the time back to two hours. Once the students were on the buses only a few supervisors were needed. The high school has sent as few as two adults along with almost fifty kids. Of course you won't ever be able to stop the kids if they're really determined to get drunk but policing them isn't as effective as offering them an exciting alternative which will last all night long.

The program at the Edmonton Christian High School was a huge success: the teachers liked it, the parents liked it, and the graduates loved it. But the program only became possible when grad night drinking was finally recognized as a problem.

This hasn't always happened in many of our Christian schools. Some parents don't think it's a problem unless someone drives home drunk. Confiscating keys will ensure

the safe grad these parents want but that shouldn't be good enough. Other parents simply won't believe that their son or daughter would ever get drunk. This second group should remember that if their kids are ever going to get drunk it will be on grad night when the peer pressure is at its worst, the alcohol is easily available and there's nothing else to do. Anybody's son or daughter might get drunk. That's just how it is.

That's not how it has to be.



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# BEST BOOKS: THREE GREAT INTRODUCTIONS TO THE LIFE OF JOHN CALVIN

reviewed by Jon Dykstra

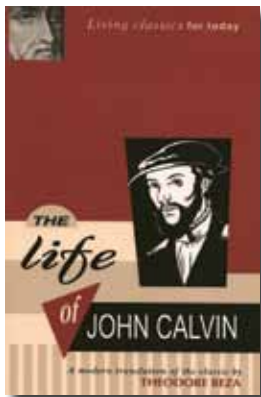
## THE LIFE OF JOHN CALVIN

by Theodore Beza

This biography has two strengths. First, it is short. Because it was originally written as an introduction to Calvin's last published work, his *Commentary on Joshua*, it weighs in at only 144 pages. That could also be considered a weakness – the small size means it doesn't have the detail or scope of most other Calvin biographies – but the slim size makes it more inviting than its 400 or 500 page rivals. This is a biography that can be read in a few days, rather than a few weeks.

Second, this is an eyewitness account. Theodore Beza was a friend and disciple of Calvin and wrote his account as a tribute. That too could be considered a weakness; Beza's admiration of Calvin made him incapable of seeing, or at least incapable of recording, any of his mentor's faults. But this same admiration made Beza the best chronicler of Calvin's gifts, the God-given talents that made the man a giant of the Reformation.

*The Life of John Calvin* is available in a number of different editions but, because the original is over 400 years old, some translations are dated and simply dreadful. Fortunately EP books have done "a modern translation of the classic" that can be found without too much digging on Amazon.ca.



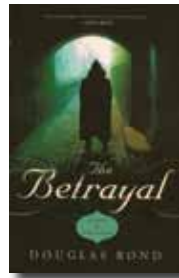
## THE BETRAYAL: A NOVEL ON JOHN CALVIN

by Douglas Bond

If you want to get an understanding of the times Calvin lived in, this novel is better than any biography. Douglas Bond immerses readers in the day-to-day details of living in France in the 1500s by telling Calvin's story through the eyes of a life-long, entirely fictional, companion named Jean-Louis.

Jean-Louis is born in the same village as Calvin, and for a time goes to the same school. But while Calvin's intellectual gifts set him apart early, Jean-Louis is an average fellow living an ordinary, though rather brutal existence. Like many in the 16th century, he loses his whole family and his livelihood to the Plague. Left without a home or money, he falls back on his one extraordinary ability: Jean-Louis can lie without shame or qualm of conscience. It is this "talent" that gets him close to Calvin again, securing a job serving the Reformer. And it is this trait that allows him to act as the role of loyal servant even as he vows to work against God's servant.

This is a fascinating read, but one that takes some effort. Though Bond is known as a teen fiction author, the weighty theological dialogues interspersed throughout *The Betrayal* make this a novel best suited for adult Calvin enthusiasts. It is available at [Christianbooks.com](http://Christianbooks.com) and has also been translated into Dutch as *Het verraad*.



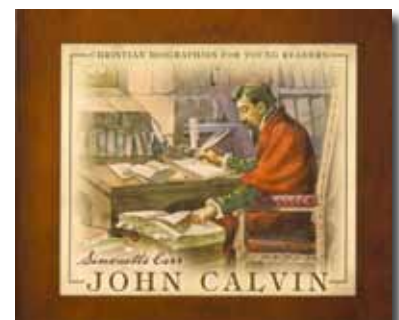
## JOHN CALVIN

by Simonetta Carr

Simonetta Carr has created an impressive educational resource that parents and teachers will absolutely love. . . and children will like.

Parents and teachers will love it because it has good pictures and strong writing that make it an excellent read-aloud book. Though in the format of a picture book, it might be better to think of it as a chapter book – it is divided into seven chapters and has more than 50 pages and over 4,000 words. That length gives Carr the space she needs to deliver a solid overview of Calvin's life and emphasize the importance of his work. It also allows her space to include more trivial but interesting tidbits, like the fact that some of Calvin's opponents named their dogs after him, and that Calvin would occasionally play a game similar to horseshoes with his friends. There is really no better book to introduce young children to this Hero of the Faith.

*John Calvin's* length and the serious subject matter do mean the book is unlikely to become one of your children's favorites. However, if mom or dad decide to pick this off the shelf and read aloud a chapter or two, it's also unlikely your children will mind at all. Recommended for 7-10 year-olds, it can be found online at [Christianbooks.com](http://Christianbooks.com).



# Work: about so much more than a paycheck

by Michael Wagner

For many people going to work day after day is a real drag. It can be disheartening to roll out of bed every morning to head to a job that is no fun at all. But we go each day because quitting isn't an option – we need the paycheck to eat, so that's reason enough to stick it out.

From a Biblical perspective, however, there is more to a job than earning a living. Earning a living is crucial, of course, but it's not the only important purpose for holding a job. Lester De Koster provides an interesting theological perspective on this issue in his book *Work: The Meaning of Your Life*.

The book proceeds from the premise that: “work is the form in which we make ourselves useful to others.” That may not be the way we normally think of work, but every job, whether in an office, a shop, a factory, a warehouse, or wherever, involves doing something for other people. It involves serving others in some sense.

## Serving God by serving others

Every job involves either producing a good or providing a service. Some people need the good or service, and are willing to pay for them; otherwise the job would not exist. So every job exists to provide something for someone else. Doing something for others is thus the key element of work.

This, of course, ties in with Biblical teaching because the Bible emphasizes the importance of doing things for others. We are to love others, and work (service) is an important way in which we demonstrate love on a regular basis. As De Koster emphasizes, “work gives meaning to life because work is the way in which we make ourselves useful to society.”

In fact, a major aspect of serving God is serving other people: “God Himself chooses to be served through the work that serves others, and therefore molds working into culture to provide workers with ever better means of service.”

## All honest work is service

De Koster has an interesting take on the account of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. This is where the nations are gathered together before Christ and He separates the sheep from the goats. The sheep, of course, inherit the kingdom and the goats are cast into eternal fire. Christ says to the sheep, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me” (Matthew 25:35-36, ESV). The sheep ask when they did these things for Christ and He replies, “Truly, I say to you, as you

did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

There is much that can be said about this passage, but De Koster focuses on the implications regarding employment. Christ says that feeding the hungry is service to him. What is necessary for the feeding of the hungry? Food must be grown, processed, and distributed. So farming, food processing and distribution are Biblical tasks that serve God. Farmers are serving the Lord by producing food. People who mill flour are serving the Lord. People who drive trucks hauling food to stores are serving the Lord, and so on. In this respect, all people involved in the food industry can probably be seen as serving the Lord in some sense.

.....  
***Work gives both temporal and eternal meaning to life!***  
.....

Christ says that providing drinks for the thirsty is service to Him. There is a lot of work involved in making sure that everyone has enough to drink. For example, municipal governments commonly have a department that takes care of cleaning water for human consumption and piping it to individual homes and businesses. People involved in this industry are providing drink for the thirsty and in that way they are fulfilling a Biblical task.

Christ said that He was clothed by the sheep. So those who produce textiles, sew clothing, and sell it in stores can be seen as serving the Lord.

## Conclusion

De Koster goes into greater detail with each of these points, noting that a great many jobs can be seen as helping to fulfill the tasks necessary to serve Christ in the various ways He states in the Matthew 25 passage. De Koster summarizes the point this way: “The gift of ourselves to others through work is the gift of ourselves to God – and this is why work gives both temporal and eternal meaning to life!”

To human eyes some jobs might seem rather lowly and unimportant. The people who perform them are not accorded a particularly high status in society. But in God's eyes things are viewed differently. Often people's basic needs are being met through those jobs, and in that way He is being served. Thus even jobs that aren't prestigious can still be very meaningful in their own right and not just as a source of a paycheck.



# A Touch of Grace

by Christine Farenhorst

All too frequently we read in the newspapers of the human frailty of covetous desire for power and wealth. When someone is thrown into the scrutiny of the public eye and public opinion, it seems that advantage for personal gain, usually monetary, is sought. A tragic accident occurs and someone sues whomever inadvertently might have been the cause; a mishap at the playground and a school is liable for some vast amount of money; a fly found in the bowl of soup at a local restaurant might open the door to a charge of trauma by a patron who tries for several thousands of dollars with the help of an unscrupulous lawyer. Few and far between are good deeds done by faithful citizens who do not desire either fame or fortune.

Or perhaps, because these citizens do not desire fame or fortune, we have little record of such events.

## **Keeper of the light**

In the early 1800s, off the coast of Northumberland (a county in Northeast England) lived a lighthouse keeper with his wife and children. They lived in relative isolation from the rest of the world and certainly had very little, if anything, in the way of recreation and company. But the children numbered nine in all, and nine children can easily enough provide their own recreation and company. Goods were brought by supply boat from time to time, there were some books, a dog and some birds, but on the whole, the family lived a very retiring but useful life.

William Darling, the lighthouse keeper, was the son of a gardener in Bamburgh, Northumberland. Not desiring to follow in his father's footsteps, William had chosen a different way of life. His wife Thomasin, was content with that choice and so they settled, first at the Brownsman Lighthouse on

one of the Farne Islands, where they were self-sufficient and able to keep their own livestock, later moving to the island of Longstone.

The island of Longstone, like its neighboring islands, was desolate and small. Steep and barren, there was almost no wildlife – only precipitous cliffs with squalling seagulls flying overhead. The sea flowed swiftly and dangerously between the islands. William and Thomasin kept a sharp eye on their children, but all nine of them quickly learned how to adapt to this rather dangerous environment. They needed to because the water was cruel and fast and would not give up what it swallowed.

Grace Darling, born in 1815, in her grandfather's cottage in Bamburgh, was the fourth daughter and the seventh child of the nine Darlings born to William and Thomasin. Grace's five brothers, in due time, were all sent to the free school at Bamburgh Castle on the mainland in Northumberland. The girls were not sent. They were home-schooled by both their parents. Father William was especially gifted in geography and he delighted in teaching all his children this particular subject. There were seven rooms in the lighthouse which had to be kept clean. There was cooking to be done each day. Grace was a sweet, shy child who was happy to help her mother with housework. She could read and write well. One of the youngest Darling children, she was content with the very ordinariness of life, and had no desire to leave either Longstone or her parents.

The lighthouse on Longstone was a necessity for the ships passing by. The spot was exceedingly dangerous and without the light flowing out from the tower, many vessels would have been dashed onto the rocks.





### On a lightless night

On the morning of September 6, 1838, when Grace Darling was twenty-two years old and her father fifty-two, a steamer left the city of Hull and began its journey towards Dundee. The steamer, called the SS Forfarshire, was about 150 tons and carried a cargo of cloth and hardware as well as passengers. The captain was a man by the name of John Humble. When Captain John Humble left Hull, he had been aware that his ship had a small leak. Although it had been patched up, the job had not been completed as thoroughly as it might have been, because the leak in the boilers broke out anew close to the Farne Islands. The leak made it difficult for the fires to keep the engines going. It was September and that evening an early chill dusk was settling. A strong north wind came up and the sea was filled with high white-capped waves. Gradually, the leak grew worse, and eventually the engines quit. The people on board numbered sixty-three – the captain, his wife, a crew of twenty plus forty-one passengers. When the engines stopped, a number of passengers began to ask questions. The waves grew more and more powerful and the captain gave orders for the sails to be unfurled. But the strong north wind swept the vessels southwards – southwards all night amid heavy rain, fog and swirling black water.

About 4 a.m. on September 7, the steamer struck Harker's rock on one of the Farne Islands. A number of crew members and one of the passengers abandoned ship on one of the lifeboats at this point; two others passengers attempted to throw themselves into the lifeboat and lost their lives in so doing. It was pandemonium on board, with the women wailing and beseeching Captain Humble to do something, to save them. He could not. There is no record of anyone beseeching God All Mighty, but that is not to say that none of them did so. A huge wave hit the ship, causing it to be lifted up from the rock on which it was lodged, be-



fore smashing it down again, breaking the vessel in two. The forepart of the boat remained on the rock, while the hinder part was carried off by a rapid current. In this miserable and sad condition, wind howling and waves pounding, those who were left alive awaited the day.

### In the early dawn light. . .

Grace Darling got up early that morning of September 7. It was a stormy morning and perhaps she'd had trouble sleeping with the wind howling and screeching all night long. She walked over to the window of her bedroom and peered out. She often did. It was a habit which had been instilled by her life as lighthouse keeper's daughter. Scanning the horizon, her eyes paused at Harker's rock. She could make out the indistinct shape of what was perhaps a ship, perhaps not. She dressed quickly and woke her father. He took out his glass and established that there was a shipwreck. The stormy weather of the night had not abated. If anything, things were growing worse. In the early morning hours, the people in nearby Bamburgh and North Sunderland had likewise seen the

broken Forfarshire helplessly and precariously balanced on Harker's rock. But boatmen at either place refused to attempt a rescue. William Darling, as well, was fearful of putting a boat into the churning waves. Grace and her mother took turns looking out through the spyglass and could make out the people on the wreck.

There was no doubt in Grace's mind that they must go out and help these people. None of her brothers were home but she was there. Surely God expected her and her father to go out. Was that not their job? She could not bear to do nothing. She pleaded with her father to attempt a rescue. At first he would not listen. He was brave but not foolhardy and looked doubtfully at the full-blown whitecaps. But gradually, William Darling's heart softened. He, as well as his wife and daughter, watched the people atop Harker's rock and a sorry sight it was. They were a doomed lot. He gradually yielded to his daughter's impassioned pleading. Putting on his rain slicker, he indicated that he would get the coble ready.

Thomasin Darling did not try to dissuade either her husband or her daughter. As a matter of fact, she helped

launch the coble, a small flat-bottomed fishing boat with one mast, into the rolling water. Both Grace and William held one oar. The distance between them and the Forfarshire was one mile – a long, black tempestuous mile. Before a minute had passed, both were wet. Waves rose up around them. The coble rose and sank, rose and sank with each stroke of the oars. But God watched over them and He blessed the heroic effort of the father and the daughter in the boat and He comforted the agonizing watching of the mother on the shore.

.....

***Fame and fortune were rather  
inconvenient intrusions  
into her life***

.....

Grace and her father were able to reach the shipwreck from the south in the lee of the storm. Nine people were still living. As her father jumped onto the rocks to assess the priority of the survivors, Grace rowed the boat back and forth, keeping it clear of the treacherous surrounding rocks. The coble could not carry all of the survivors back at once. Five people, four men and a woman, were helped into the lifeboat. The woman, a weaver's wife, had to be coaxed to let go of the two dead children in her arms. Grace and her father, once again rowed the mile back to the lighthouse. Then William and two of the rescued men returned to the wreck for the remaining four survivors. The survivors remained at Longstone for three days, the weather being too severe to attempt any passage to the mainland.

**Avoiding the spotlight**

About a week after the shipwreck, an inquest took place in Bamburgh. The jury, which included some of the survivors, came to the following conclusion: "Wrecked due to the imperfections of the boilers and the culpable negligence of Captain Humble." Both Captain Humble and his wife had died in the disaster. A few weeks later, when the body of a William Doughty, a fireman on the Forfarshire, was washed ashore, another inquest was held. This time some of the statements of the living crew members about the boilers being faulty and the passengers insistence that the Captain should put back to port, were contradicted and the final verdict was that the ship had come to grief purely because of the tempestuousness of the weather.

Later, the publicity that swept around Longstone lighthouse, specifically around Grace, was perhaps somewhat more severe than the weather had been. For a while the Darling name became a household word. Tourists came to the island to see the lighthouse and to have a peek at Grace. The Duke and Duchess of Northumberland invited Grace and her father to Alnwick Castle and presented Grace with a gold watch. Queen Victoria wrote Grace a letter praising her conduct and awarding 50 pounds of sterling for her actions.

The Darlings' courageous episode caused entrepreneurs to flourish – pictures of Grace began to appear on postcards, plates, bracelets, cups and other items, items which sold for a tidy sum. The poet William Wordsworth penned a long tribute. Grace's portrait was painted, reproduced and bought by many. A London theater manager offered Grace a large sum of money if she would only sit in a boat on stage for a minute or so, during the performance of a musical piece written for the occasion. Grace refused. She refused many large sums of money of public subscriptions raised in her honor.

Apart from the dramatic rescue which took place in September 1838, Grace Darling was actually an unremarkable, ordinary girl. Fame and fortune were rather inconvenient intrusions into her life. She did not welcome them. She only felt she had done what ought to be done and where was the heroism in that?

Within three years of the rescue, Grace's health began to decline. She had consumption – that is tuberculosis. Her parents arranged for her to move away from Longstone, to a place where the climate might be better for her. When there was no improvement, she was moved to Alnwick Castle where she was cared for by the Duchess of Northumberland's own doctor. But as all these measures did not prove to help, she moved back to Bamburgh where her sister cared for her until her death. Grace Darling died in her father's arms just four short years after the Forfarshire episode. She was only twenty-seven years old.



**Soup and Buns**

Nourishment from God's Word  
for our daily struggles

*By Sharon L. Bratcher*



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# Just Do It

by Gregory Koukl

A couple of days ago, someone asked me about how much initiative I took sharing my faith in public. Do I wait for the Holy Spirit to “lead” me – waiting until I feel like God wants me to talk to a particular person – or do I just jump in on my own without a special directive from the Lord?

I’ll tell you the truth. If I waited for the Holy Spirit to “lead” me in that sense, I’d never do anything. I rarely “feel impressed” to do anything God commands, including witnessing.

That’s one of the problems with this approach. It’s a mistake to think that being led by the Spirit is a subjective thing, as if you can feel the tugging of the Holy Spirit grabbing you by the ear or the heart and pulling you along. That isn’t what the leading of the Spirit means in the Scriptures.

In virtually every case where the phrase is used in the New Testament, it describes moral behavior, being obedient – e.g., putting out the desires of the flesh (Rom. 8:13-14), not carrying out the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16, 18). Being led by the Spirit does not mean getting personalized instructions through a still, small voice in your heart. Can God do that? Sure, but that’s not how Scripture uses the term “led by the Spirit.”

So that’s one aspect of my response to his question. I don’t see any scriptural instructions to wait for a special leading before I do anything. God tells us (in His Word) that we ought to be doing certain things in our lives, including witnessing. Why, then, do we wait to act until we get a special push from Him?

Some even think this ability to “hear God” is a higher level of spirituality. Think about it. If our conduct depends upon a prompt by the Holy Spirit instead of upon simple obedience, how is that admirable? If we won’t obey until we get pushed, then it’s already a failure for us.

Some have this same view with what they refer to as a “calling” of the Lord. When the push or nudge of the Spirit has to do not just with the immediate circumstance, but with a long-term plan, people say that God is “calling” them into the enterprise. This is especially true of decisions to go into ministry. I think dependence on such a thing is a mistake and a misunderstanding of Scripture.

One ordination board asked a seminary graduate to describe his calling. He had two questions. First, where in the Scripture was such a thing required? Second, what is this “calling” anyway? The board had no answer for the first question because a subjective calling is simply not required before a person can go into ministry. Also, there was no consensus on the second question because, according to the board, this subjective calling was very individual.

Finally the graduate quoted the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, then asked, “Why do I need anything more than this? Isn’t this passage ‘calling’ enough?”

Of course this attitude – that you have to be “led by the Spirit” in this sense before you can act – also includes the suggestion that if you “just do it,” if you simply step out without any special instructions, then you must be acting in the flesh. Personally, I think that’s hogwash.

Here’s how it works out for me. When I get on an airplane, I do not usually want to talk to anybody about the Lord. I want to work on my computer, I want to read, I want to watch the movie, I want to sleep. I don’t want to be bothered with conversation about spiritual things. Maybe that doesn’t sound very admirable, but that’s the way I feel.

Even though I feel that way, though, I know something different. I know, first of all, that I’m a Christian. I hold the information that can transform people’s lives and can secure their eternity. I have something valuable that every person needs. Proverbs says I ought not withhold something good from somebody when it’s within my power to do it (Prov. 3:27).

So when I get on a plane, I don’t feel like sharing my faith, but my attitude is to be obedient to whatever opportunity the Lord gives to me. My goal is to be available. I say, “Lord, I don’t want to talk to anyone today; I want to have an easy, conflict-free flight. That’s my desire. I don’t ‘feel led.’ But Lord, if you give me an opportunity to make a difference for the Kingdom in some way – to plant a seed, to give a word of encouragement, whatever – I’m available.”

Then, I just keep my eyes open. Generally, in the context of a conversation, I try to drop a word or two or a statement, that might open the door to spiritual things. I toss out some bait and see if I get a nibble. I don’t try to force the situation, but sometimes – to continue the fishing metaphor – I do throw some chum in the water to see if I can trigger a little appetite.

Sometimes I get that opportunity when people ask me what I do for a living. Since I’m a writer, an educator, a student, a seminar speaker, a talk show host, and a CEO, I can say a lot of different things. I try to choose that particular description of my work that I think would offer the best opportunity to introduce spiritual things with the particular person I’m talking to.

So my goal is to be available to the opportunities God sovereignly gives me to be obedient. I look for a chance to plant a seed somewhere. I don’t do it because I feel moved by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, prompted, nudged, pushed or anything like that. I do it because I want to be faithful, to be obe-



dient. My goal as a Christian is not to follow whatever I think my feelings are telling me, but to do those things I ought to be doing, and I don't need a personalized message for that.

Let me give you a specific example of how that worked out just recently. I was at the gym the other day doing my workout. I'm kind of new there, so I don't know a lot of people. I noticed a guy leaning against a post with his head down, obviously pretty tired from his workout. His body was propped up by the pole in such a way that it struck a kind of dismal, defeated pose, so I said something about contemplating the dark depths of life. That was the chum.

I just tossed it out to see what would happen. I said it in a joking way, so my comment could have been brushed off. But the phrase "the darkness of life" also suggested something more weighty he might respond to if weighty things had actually been on his mind. He might have ignored me, or simply smiled and grunted, and I would have left it at that – no nibble.

Instead, he looked up and said, "You know, it's scary when you think about that. Life is hard. It's dark. It's scary."

I had a choice at that point. I could shrug and said, "Yeah, life is weird," and left it at that. But I took one more step. I thought to myself, "Here's an opportunity to say something meaningful. The chum brought him in. Now I'm going to give him a piece of bait with a hook in it. If he picks it up, fine, and if he doesn't, that's fine, too. I'll move on."

Remember, my attitude here is that it's up to God to make things happen. I'm a fisher of men. I'm casting and reeling, waiting to see if I get any follows. That's where God's part comes in. It's my job to do the fishing. It's God's decision whether I do any catching or not. I'm not under any pressure. I can't fail here as long as I've tossed the bait in the water.

So I simply said, "The darkness isn't scary if you know the Author of light."

Now I realize that was pretty bold. That was pretty direct. You've got to know that I was uncomfortable saying it. Some people have this idea that because I run Stand to Reason and do a radio show, that when I get out there in the world where you guys have to live every day I'm a walking, talking, apologetics evangelism machine. Some think it's real easy for me to do this, but it's not. It took some nerve to make that remark.

I'm just like you, for the most part. I don't want to look foolish. I don't want other people sneering at me and saying, "Boy, are you lame. Get out of my face!" I may know a few things that you might not know, but I'm a human being, and I get uncomfortable in those kinds of situations just like you. I don't like that, but I'm willing to at least take a chance.

So, I just said it. I said, "The darkness isn't scary if you know the Author of light."

He didn't laugh. He didn't grunt. He didn't swear at me and walk away. He looked me right in the eye and asked, "Who's that?"

And I said, "Jesus Christ."

Well, now we're into it, right? The cat is out of the bag. I didn't know what was going to happen. Everything is out in the open and the ball is in his court. What he said next really surprised me.

"You're right," he said.



It turns out this gentleman – his name was Jack – was not a Christian, but he was very close. For the past four or five months he'd been meeting with a pastor in the South Bay who turned out to be a former friend of mine, someone I'd known 20 years ago before he was even a Christian.

Jack was in good hands. He explained to me a bit about his spiritual journey, that he was very close to acknowledging that the man Jesus is also fully God. He was not quite there yet. It's hard for him to make this last step because he's Jewish, but he's moving ahead little by little. I had an opportunity to encourage him in that journey.

This all happened because I took that step. I didn't know what the guy was going to say. You never know what's going on in the other person's mind. That's one of the lessons here.

Think about it from Jack's perspective. He'd been pondering the deepest things in life, weighing the claims of Christianity in his mind, and then a stranger comes up to him in the gym in the middle of his workout and makes a comment to him about the Author of light – Jesus. Do you think Jack had any sense of a divine appointment here? Do you think our "chance" meeting deepened his growing conviction that God was real and cared about him personally?

So take the step. Throw some chum into the water by tossing a thought into the discussion. You don't have to go the whole nine yards and lay out the complete gospel. Just go for the short gain. Raise the issue, and see what the Holy Spirit does.

And don't wait to be "led." If you do, you'll seldom get away from the dock. There aren't too many fish caught with the boat tied up on shore. Usually in a situation like this I do not have a "catching" mind set. I'm not out there to catch. I'm out there to fish. To use another metaphor, I'm not out there to harvest fruit. I'm out there to plant the seeds.

That takes a lot of pressure off me. It might have been that my comment about Jesus Christ as the Author of light would be the last one he ever heard from me. He could have shaken his head and walked away in disgust. Maybe the only seed planted in his mind would have been the confidence with which I spoke those words. But that's enough.

My encouragement for you is to "just do it." Go out there and do it: graciously, calmly, confidently. But do it. Just do it.

*This is a transcript of a commentary from the radio show "Stand to Reason," which can be heard online at [www.STR.org](http://www.STR.org). It is reprinted here with permission.*



# Theft, lies, and Warmergate

by James Wanliss

Mark Twain popularized the notion that there are shades of lying when he wrote about “lies, damned lies, and statistics.” Though Twain was clearly no follower of Christ he was undoubtedly a frank fellow, honest enough to recognize something of the wretched sinfulness and misery of our race. He had learned the important lesson that humans are eminently capable of deceiving themselves. Some scientists could learn a thing or two from Twain. I’m thinking mostly, of course, about the scientists involved in the Warmergate scandal.

## Errors and exaggerations

Late last year emails stolen from a British climate lab showed global warming scientists engaged in systematic manipulation of the scientific process, obfuscation, and sometimes outright lying. Several top scientists associated with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are implicated. Now that he and others have been caught red-handed the IPCC scientist at the centre of the Warmergate scandal, Dr. Phil Jones, admits not only that the world may have been much warmer in the past, but there has actually been no global warming for 15 years.

His admission is startling given that in its celebrated 2007 assessment the IPCC, in which Jones played a pivotal role, said the evidence that the world was and would continue warming was “unequivocal.” It may be too much to hope that skeptics of manmade overheating of the planet will no longer suffer ugly labels, such as flat-earthers or Nazi holocaust deniers. Warmergate somewhat vindicates the skeptics and deniers and reveals the best scientific names as conscious liars at worst, and bad scientists at best.

Then in January, the IPCC reluctantly admitted major errors in their report, for instance false claims that over half of the Netherlands lies below sea level. The hysterical IPCC claim that Himalayan glaciers could melt by 2035 relied on a discredited story fed to them by the World Wildlife Fund.

The credibility bubble of the IPCC has popped. “Trust me, I’m a PhD and I’ve worked for the UN,” just does not cut it anymore. In June 2009 one IPCC whistleblower, Dr. Kiminori Itoh, had this to say: “Warming fears are the worst scientific scandal in history. . . . When people come to know what the truth is, they will feel deceived by science and scientists.”

Well, now the truth is coming out. Unfortunately many politicians appear immune to mounting evidence. US Climate Czar Carol Browner, says, “I’m sticking with the 2,500 scientists. These people have been studying this issue for a very long time and agree this problem is real.”

## *Waste-incinerator* Global Warming

But much worse than the lies, are the problems with the data. Mark Twain’s withering wit reserved acid for statistical manipulation of data, branding it the ambulance chasing lawyer of the sciences. Regular lies are less noxious, he suggested, than manipulated statistics. “Figures,” wrote he, “often beguile me, particularly when I have the arranging of them myself.” Unfortunately, all the Warmergate evidence suggests that scientists are not free from these problems.

Global temperature averages drawn from surface thermometer records inspire no confidence in the diagnosis that our planet has a fever. The United States government arguably has the best “high quality” network of temperature stations. But recent discoveries show weather stations often located where heat-generating equipment distort their readings. My personal favorite is the weather station next to a waste incinerator. It is not likely to be better elsewhere. In fact, the weather station at the Rome airport catches the hot exhaust fumes emitted by taxiing jets.

What this means is that when scientists take averages from global thermometer data there are major problems with selection criteria. Of course they try to make corrections, but the statistical corrections still creates warming biases that have nothing to do with global warming and everything to do with thermometer location next to air-conditioning units, exhaust pipes, and the like.

Dr. John Christy, a professor of atmospheric science at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, a professing Christian, and a former lead author on the IPCC sums things up succinctly: “The temperature records cannot be relied on as indicators of global change.” Just this week representatives of Britain’s weather office, no longer able to sweep the problem under the rug, quietly suggested that the world’s climatologists start all over again to produce a new global temperature dataset from reliable stations. The credibility of climate science is severely damaged, perhaps irreparably.

### Disruption. . . or delusion?

What can Christians learn from this and current events? Unbelievers reject the Lordship of Jesus Christ, “because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie” (2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11). The Bible teaches that when people turn from seeking the true worship and glory of God they begin to suffer strong delusions as a consequence.

Christians recognize the basic sin nature of man, the tendency to evil. And undoubtedly lying is a great evil, reminiscent of the father of lies (John 8:44). Recognition of man’s true nature is one reason Christians ought to make good scientists. Those devoted to the worship and glory of God will naturally be wary of human nature, and careful to seek scrupulous honesty in their business. They will be careful of beguiling figures, and take every measure against the “the arranging of them myself.” Scripture warns Christians to even avoid the appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22). That is not to say that unbelievers are dupes. After all, Mark Twain was keenly aware of the persuasive power of numbers, and the danger of manipulation. And many scientists recognize the global warming hysteria for what it is – another incidence of cargo cult science.

Mark Twain lived in a culture that still largely accepted Christian positions and he, though an unbeliever, had grace to recognize the bad heart of man. Modern science is largely a product of that Christian worldview. Unfortunately, the present recession of that view will naturally find company with strong delusions. In other words, unless Christianity informs a nation we can expect increasing floods of unreasonable hysteria and bad decisions. Christians need to get to work.



What we called it in the 1970s



What we called it in the 1990s



What we're calling it in the 2000s



What we should have been calling it all along

The great reformer John Calvin said that when scientists willfully ignore the Lord they become dupes. Calvin recommended that we, “deride his stupidity in not recognizing God as the Lord and governor of nature, who, at his pleasure, makes all the elements subservient to his glory.” God has brought tremendous upheaval to this planet. Noah’s flood, for instance, disrupted natural cycles in a violent cataclysm. But that was the past, what about the future?

“I have been over into the future, and it works,” declared journalist Lincoln Steffens after touring the Soviet Union in 1919. In fact, nearly 100 million victims of Soviet-style socialism showed later that Steffens was entirely deluded. The IPCC, on the basis of flawed statistics and flawed computer programs, also claims to see the future, and it is awful. Global warming will cause oceans to rise, disrupt seasons, kill millions, cause billions to suffer, and waste the earth.

As the Soviet exercise and influence proves, humans are quite capable of murder on unthinkable scales. But can we disrupt seasons? Perhaps. But God declares a message that is more comforting and altogether trustworthy (Genesis 8:22): “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”

After God washed away the race of wicked men, he restored the world again. Since then history shows there are often times when the seasons are disturbed from complete uniformity. There have been droughts, floods, and famines. But God promises that whatever may come, as long as the earth lasts, and man on it, the seasons will roll on, IPCC or not.

*James Wanliss is an Associate Professor of Physics at Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina.*





# How scientific advisors impact government policy, for good or for ill

by Margaret Helder

Who should our leaders listen to? When it comes to complex scientific issues, that's a tougher question than it may seem. Sometimes democratic governments have to steer a difficult course between choosing policy that the experts advocate and policy that the public actually supports. The situation becomes even harder when, in many jurisdictions, not only is the public cynical and distrusting of government officials, but they distrust the scientific advisers of government even more.

There are various ways that governments can deal with this sort of dilemma. One method was discussed by Harry Collins in a January 2010 PLoS Biology book review of *The Paradox of Scientific Authority: the Role of Scientific Advice in Democracies*. The book focuses on the work of "Gezondheidsraad," an advisory body set up to provide scientific advice to the Dutch government. The paradox referred to in the book title is the fact that scientific advice-giving committees are typically called upon to provide advice to the government on issues where the scientific knowledge is least certain (if the science were obvious, after all, there would be no need for committees). That means governments are looking for clarity precisely where there may be none.

## What's in a name?

Governments are faced with so many issues today that require scientific advice and in many cases there are competing interests involved. Consider the H1N1 pandemic as an example. This virus appeared in human victims in Mexico and the United States during the spring of 2009. Aside from all the other issues involved in governments' response to this virus, even the very naming of the virus was controversial and had political implications.

The process happened this way. A sample of the virus was collected from a victim in the United States. As usual, in order to identify the virus, an analysis was made of its genetic content. Once this was completed, the virus was promptly labeled as swine flu. But what did this mean? Was this a responsible way to deal with an issue of considerable public concern?

Many believed the expert diagnosis and because it was a swine flu some of these jurisdictions reacted in a predictable way. Thus "this initially prompted several countries to

ban import of pigs and pig products or to destroy all their pig populations. . ." (correspondence *Nature* August 6/09 p. 683).

Further investigation revealed that the swine flu label was merely theoretical. Some people involved in the analysis declared that the swine flu name was entirely appropriate (*Nature* June 18/09 p. 889) – from the biochemical analysis, scientists found some elements that resembled Eurasian avian-like swine flu, found in pigs in Europe. But North American pigs were not similarly infected and in fact the new virus isolate is different from the European specimens. As an expert from the World Organization for Animal Health declared: "Although the human H1N1 virus contains gene sequences that have been identified in influenza viruses from swine, these are not present in exactly the same combination" (*Nature* August 6/09 p. 683).

It is evident that this H1N1 virus has never been found in pigs. There is a possibility that it might have been observed in pigs in one farm in Canada, but that is all. Nevertheless the virus experts declared that domestic pigs might be a "hypothetical 'mixing-vessel', mediating by reassortment the emergence of new influenza viruses with avian or avian-like genes into the human population" (*Nature* June 25/09 p. 1125). Still the experts have no idea about the immediate origin of the epidemic (p. 1122). This did not stop them labeling the virus as swine flu. An editorial in *Nature* applauded the initiative: "From a strictly scientific view, however, there is abundant genetic evidence that the name is appropriate" (June 18/09 p. 889).

But because it was labeled swine flu, pigs were being killed even though no actual link had been made to pigs. That's why agricultural interests fought to have the virus referred to as H1N1.

The naming of the virus obviously was an important issue of public policy when the title chosen adversely affected the livelihood of so many people. The resulting government responses such as banning of pork imports and slaughter of herds, in fact provided no benefits to either people or animals.

## So how do governments get their advice?

It is obvious then that scientific issues can have a huge effect on public policy. We have only to look at government programs concerning climate change to know that this is so.



However, as with the H1N1 pandemic, governments cannot afford to ignore scientific advice. So how should they deal with it? The Dutch response, as outlined in Collins' *PloS Biology* book review, is very illuminating.

Collins points out that "the outcome of a scientific deliberation is partly determined by how the Gezondheidsraad goes about selecting the people it will consult" (p. 2). Thus, the review continued "the Gezondheidsraad is the legitimator for what counts as a scientific deliberation." It is obvious that it is very important to the outcome of the deliberations who, in fact, takes part in

those discussions. The advice to governments concerning climate change, for example, might be quite different if a few skeptics were on the panel as well as the usual advocates of dramatic action.

#### **The less public involvement, the better?**

The sociologist authors of the book Collins reviews – *The Paradox of Scientific Authority* – firstly classify the kinds of scientific issues involved. The categories range from simple problems, to complex, to uncertain, and finally to ambiguous problems.

#### *Simple issues*

The first group of issues, then, are the simple ones. These involve issues where all the necessary evidence is, in principle, available. Committees dealing with these issues should be drawn exclusively from the technical experts within that discipline, the authors declare. That seems simple enough, but when it comes to government policy, the expert opinion proffered does not necessarily suit the government. The article cites the case which occurred in Great Britain in October 2009. An advisory council on the misuse of drugs there, had stated that the use of cannabis was relatively safe. The government however reclassified the drug as more dangerous, with heavier penalties than previously for possession and dealing. The chairman of the committee responded by criticizing the government action. The government reacted by removing the chairman from his post. The question then arises as to whether the government was obligated to follow the advice of their scientific committee. The scientists obviously thought that they were.

#### *Complex issues*

The second category is complex problems, which "depend on a larger range of unknowns and ill-defined issues" (p. 3). The case of genetically modified foods (GMOs) is a good example. There is plenty of controversy, much of it originating from scientists with various vested interests. Here the sociologists recommend that a broader range of experts be chosen for the committee. Besides biotechnologists, it could include ecologists, evolutionary specialists and health experts.

But for years now in Europe, the public has refused to listen to the advice of experts concerning the safety of GMOs. The experts say it is safe, but the public is still demanding government action on this food. What should a government's response be in such a situation?

Many scientists, for their part, are very skeptical of the ability of the public to make reasonable choices. An article in *Nature*, for example, discussed how the public responds to risk. The article addressed the question as to whether the general public can learn to evaluate risks or whether the authorities need to steer the public towards “correct” decisions. On this issue, it declared “many specialists in the field conclude from existing research that the public will never really be capable of making the best decision on the basis of the available scientific information.” The article quotes an American expert who insists that “risk-decision-making should be concentrated to an even greater extent in politically insulated expert agencies” (October 29, 2009 p. 1189). Interestingly, the Dutch authors are equally disparaging about the potential of non-scientists to make good choices.

#### *Uncertain issues*

The third category includes uncertain problems which involve aspects that cannot be easily resolved no matter how many experts are consulted. The issue of climate change comes to mind here. Since definitive answers are not possible, the authors declare that in the face of scientific uncertainty, the precautionary principle should be followed. This means that action should be taken in spite of uncertainty as to whether the conclusions are correct. However the authors do admit that given the unknowns, the people affected as well as experts should be included in the deliberations.

#### *Ambiguous/ethical issues*

The last category includes ambiguous problems or those that involve ethical issues such as socially sanctioned value judgments. This would include health related issues like embryonic stem cell research and the like. The authors suggest that in this case, the general public should be involved from the outset.

#### **But who are the experts?**

So when it comes to scientific issues the authors of *The Paradox of Scientific Authority* want the government to turn to experts more, and turn to public for input less. The authors declare that, “science will dissolve away under the assault of more and more lay participation in technological judgments.” Their objective, to keep the public out of the deliberations, will protect the idea of the expert, they say.

Of course it is sometimes far from clear who are the people qualified to be considered experts. Many proponents of climate change, for example, claim that skeptics are not qualified to comment on the issue. Thus the establishment group rejects the conclusions of people like statistician Bjorn Lomborg of Denmark. Yet John Holdren, a leading voice on the issue of climate change and chief adviser on science to President Obama, is actually a physicist. John Holdren is a particularly bitter opponent of Bjorn Lomborg who, he says, is unqualified to hold an opinion.

The authors of the report on the Gezondheidstraad, insist that the scientific deliberations of these committees, made up exclusively of “experts,” should never be revealed. These sociologists seem to think that conclusions only quali-

fy as science when they are unanimously promulgated by the “experts.” Thus the reviewer of their book, Collins, declares: “Everyone knows, or should know by now, that scientific consensus is born out of disagreement but science isn’t quite science while disagreement is going on” (p. 3-4). Therefore it is the view of these sociologists that the scientific advice to governments should come from select committees whose deliberations are private. That does not leave a lot of scope for input from groups who may disagree with the vested interests of the “experts.”


#### **Rather than leave the public out of it. . .**

In the real world, of course, there is often conflict between government and the citizens who are impacted by the policies of that level of government. One official from the City of Edmonton, for example, regularly deals with issues involving parks and natural stands of vegetation. Many citizens seem to distrust all bureaucrats. In responding to complaints about one policy or another, the official first tries to establish what objectives the citizens might hold in common with the city. Based on that common understanding, however slim, the official undertakes “dialogue” with the citizens. Usually by the end of the process, the citizens understand the reasons for the city’s policy and applaud it. One particularly irate citizen even ended up hugging this official! The point is that the opinions of the citizens are taken seriously with this approach.

The secretive and cliquish approach of the Dutch committees does not seem responsive to citizen concerns. There has to be a better way than the Dutch Gezondheidstraad, as described in the *PLoS Biology* article, to navigate the shoals of science policy.



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# Soup & Buns

## What about video games?

by Sharon L. Bratcher

God gives us work, but also time to rest and relax (Exodus 23:12). Some people relax by enjoying sports, reading, playing board games, watching movies, or gardening. Others choose video games. Is there any difference between video games and most other leisure activities?

For the purpose of this column, we will assume that we are not dealing with violent or sexual video games. Perhaps the games are even less offensive than some movies, television shows, or books.

We can also agree that *any* leisure activity that is indulged in excessively can produce negative consequences in our lives, especially when we deny the existence of those negative consequences.

What I would like to discuss then are three negative aspects to video games that set them apart from a typical game of Monopoly or hockey, or a book, or a sack of Hot Wheels cars.

### 1. Video game simulations can replace real life

The Internet allows “gamers” to play people from around the world. A Canadian can pair up with a player from France to explore a virtual world and live out their simulated lives. Because it is only a “fake” world there is a temptation to act as we would not in the real world – a feeling that we need not exhibit the fruits of the Spirit (read Gal 5:13-26) towards virtual friends. So these games offer a tempting escape from the difficulties of real life. But they are no solution and are a poor substitute to building genuine relationships with real people.

Erma Bombeck, in her autobiography entitled *A Marriage Made In Heaven, or Too Tired To Have An Affair*, depicted the arrival of television in the 1950s as a threatening influence on marriage. She described her husband Bill’s relationship with it thus:

*If he snored, it didn't matter. If he fell asleep in the middle of her conversation, she forgave him. If he demanded she light up in the middle of the night and entertain him, she was glad to do it. He could turn her on by pushing a button and dismiss her whenever he felt like it.*

Video games likewise lead us to a way of ease, without the real challenges of emotional growth through interactions with others, selfless giving, or even physical fitness (with some exceptions.)

### 2. Video games offer an intense feeling of accomplishment

We don’t need to accomplish much when we relax – the point of relaxation can be to accomplish nothing at all. But video games differ from other leisure activities in that some can offer a very strong feeling of accomplishment when a play-

er wins a level or completes a game or, in other words, they offer a sense of accomplishment when nothing of note has been done. This can lull a player into giving even more time to the game because this sense of accomplishment fools them into feeling they are actually doing something substantial.

### 3. Video games cry out for “more”

Video games are all-encompassing, engrossing, constant entertainment. They create a sense of urgency, challenge and necessity. Because some can’t be paused or stopped without losing, in players’ minds these games take on an equal importance to real life obligations.

They bring to mind the five things listed in Proverbs 30:15-16 that are never satisfied, that never say “Enough!” “The leech has two daughters, ‘Give! Give!’ they cry.” Video games are a time leech. They are built to require more, and more, and more time, and money. Satisfaction in winning is short-lived: there’s always another stage, or another game. “I have to finish this game.” “I have to knock off that boss.” “I have to buy the next game because after 30 hours of trying, I have finally conquered this one.” In this way they encourage covetousness and selfishness.

Video games are also a strong temptation to children in encouraging them to disobey their parents, neglect homework, and act rudely towards other children who crave turns. The games fascinate their minds and become their number one priority.

Video games even lead adults to spend inordinate amounts of time on them, neglecting duties and people. We parents fall prey to using them as babysitters because we know that our children will not require our attention or misbehave in a waiting room or car if they are plugged into their electronic pacifiers.

The addictive nature of video games is perhaps best demonstrated in the fact that in many homes the ultimate punishment exists in their removal.

\*\*\*\*\*

The wretched fact about addictive behaviors is that our joy in them makes us defensive and we rationalize that we are not doing anything wrong. Jeremiah 17:9 says “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” If an activity causes us to neglect our duties, our good manners, and our family and church members, we need to reconsider how we are spending our time.

*45 of Sharon Bratcher's articles are available in Soup and Buns: Nourishment from God's Word for Your Daily Struggles. \$10 (US)/ book plus shipping. Contact sharoncopy@gmail.com.*



# ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to Puzzle Page, 43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 OR [robleach@gmail.com](mailto:robleach@gmail.com)

## NEW PUZZLES

### Riddles for Punsters #164 – “Plans Gone Aflowl”

What did the poetic farmer say when he saw that the goose that he wanted to cook for supper was free and running around in the yard?

Find me a n\_\_\_\_\_ that I can \_\_\_\_\_ to snare  
the \_\_\_\_\_ that's running l\_\_\_\_\_.

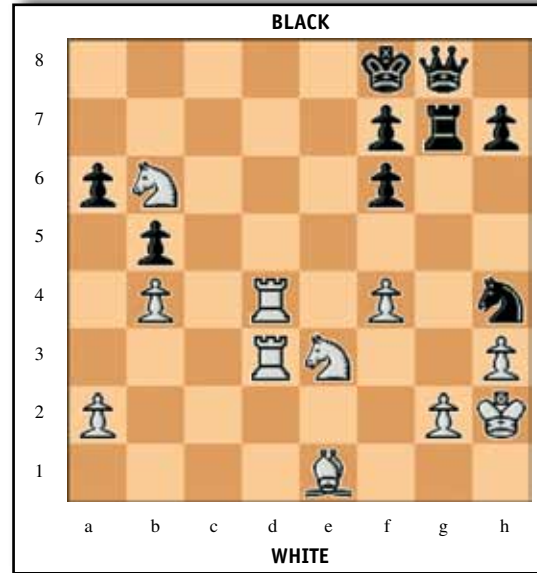
### Problem to Ponder #164 – “Verb FINDING”

Determine the described verb. All verbs end in “ing”. The number of letters is shown in brackets.

Example: voicing words in a musical pattern. (7) **singing**

1. travelling in a wind-driven sea vessel (7)
2. attempting to catch aquatic life-forms (7)
3. assembling physical structures or objects (8)
4. restoring health and well-being (7)
5. controlling a motor-powered vehicle's motion (7)
6. imparting knowledge and imparting learning (8)
7. experiencing cognitive (mental) processes (8)
8. using mathematical processes to determine an answer (11)
9. exceeding upper limits for the motion of a vehicle (8)
10. causing bewilderment (9)

### Chess Puzzle # 164



**White to Mate in 3**  
**Or, If it is BLACK's Move, BLACK to Mate in 3**

## SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 163



#### WHITE to Mate in 2

##### Descriptive Notation

1. R-R8 ch N-N1
  2. RxP mate
- Algebraic Notation
1. Ra1-a8 Nc6-b8
  2. Rc1xc7 ++

#### BLACK to Mate in 4

##### Descriptive Notation

1. \_\_\_\_\_ R-Q7ch
  2. **K-N1** N-B6 ch
  3. K-R1 RxRP ch
  4. BxR QxB mate
- or
1. \_\_\_\_\_ R-Q7ch
  2. **K-R1** RxRP ch
  3. K-N1 N-B6 ch
  4. K-B1 Q-R6 mate
- OR
- BLACK WINS in ONLY 3 moves IF:
1. \_\_\_\_\_ R-Q7ch

2. **K-B1** Q-R6 ch
  3. K-N1 Q-N7 mate
- or
3. K-K1 N-B6 mate

##### Algebraic Notation

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Rd8-d2 +
  2. **Kg2-g1** Ng5-f3 +
  3. Kg1-h1 Rd2xh2 +
  4. Bg3xh2 Qh6xh2 ++
- or
1. \_\_\_\_\_ Rd8-d2 +
  2. **Kg2-h1** Rd2xh2 +
  3. Kh1-g1 Ng5-f3 +
  4. Kg1-f1 Qh6-h3 ++
- OR

##### BLACK WINS in ONLY 3 moves IF:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Rd8-d2 +
  2. **Kg2-f1** Qh6-h3 +
  3. Kf1-g1 Qh3-g2 ++
- or
3. Kf1-e1 Ng5-f3 ++

## SOLUTIONS TO THE (FEBRUARY) PUZZLE PAGE

### Answer to Riddles for Punsters #163 – “Animal sounds”

What is a duck's favourite snack?

Cheese and **q u a c k e r s**.

What kind of house does a Scottish sparrow look for?

One that is **c h e a p**, **c h e a p**, **c h e a p**.

Why did the horse give so much help to horses living next door?

He wanted to be a good **n e i g h b o u r**.

What did the surprised cat say when other cats reported to her about the new events that had taken place?

That is all **m e w s** to me.

### Answer to Problem to Ponder #163 – “Speeding Up Going Down”

While training for a speed skiing competition, Andy's time for a downhill run was recorded. Starting from rest (so his initial speed was 0 m/s), it took him **20 seconds** to travel about half way down a straight hill and reach his maximum speed. (The remainder of the hill was used for slowing down.) It was calculated that his **average acceleration was 2.3 m/s per second** during those 20 seconds.

a) Determine Andy's **maximum speed** (in both m/s and km/h) reached about half way down the hill. b) Next calculate his **average speed** going down the hill in the first 20 seconds. c) Using that average speed, what **distance** (in metres and in kilometres) did Andy travel downhill to reach his maximum speed?

- a) final speed = initial speed + acceleration x time = 0 + 2.3(20) = **46 m/s or 46 x 3.6 = 165.6 km/h**. [NOTE: 1 km/h = 1000 m/3600 s = 1/3.6 m/s so to convert m/s to km/h one multiplies by 3.6]
- b) average speed = (initial speed + final speed)/2 = (0 + 46)/2 = **23 m/s or 23 x 3.6 = 82.8 km/h**.
- c) distance = average speed x time = 23 m/s x 20 s = **460 m or 0.46 km** [since 1 m = 0.001 km].

# Crossword Puzzle

Series 17 No 3

Last Month's solution  
Series 17 No 2

1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14							15				16			
17							18				19			
20				21		22		23		24		25		
			26				27		28		29			
30	31	32				33				34				
35					36				37					
38				39				40				41	42	43
			44				45				46			
47	48	49				50				51				
52					53		54		55					
56				57		58		59				60	61	62
63			64		65		66		67		68			
69					70				71					
72					73				74					

	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12	13											
	S	T	R	I	P	S		C	H	A	I	R	S												
12	C		13	I	N	D	I	A		14	H	A	I	T	I	15	A								
16	L	E	S	S	O	N	S		18	I	L	L	E	G	19	A	L								
20	U	L	A				21	C	H	I	L	I			22	H	G	T							
23	T	I	N			24	T	E	E		25	D	F	W	27	T	O	E							
28	C	H	E	D	E	R	S		30	R	A	E			31	E	R	R							
32	H	U	S	H	E	S			33	N	E	X	T		34	D	A	S							
							A			35	S				36	A									
37	A	D	38	D		40	E	S	O	P		42	P	I	X	44	E	L	46	S					
47	N	E	E			48	S	P	Y		49	M	O	R	E	L	L	O							
50	I	C	C			51	T	A	B		52	A	R	K		53	O	A	R						
54	M	A	I					55	R	E	I	N	K			56	P	M	E						
57	A	L	B	58	E	59	R	T	A		60	S	P	A	62	C	I	A	L						
	L			63	E	V	I	A	N		64	E	I	G	E	N			Y						
										65	P	L	E	O	N	S			66	S	E	N	E	G	A

**ACROSS:**

- 1. Summer garden sight
- 7. Tree
- 10. Group of poems
- 14. Burger topping
- 15. Sault Ste. Marie, informally
- 16. Ten (comb. Form)
- 17. To show clearly
- 18. Pure, in Paris
- 19. The same as previously mentioned
- 20. Child's game
- 21. Boat accessory
- 23. Energy
- 25. Boxer's name
- 26. Illegal fire
- 28. Election slip
- 30. Bread part
- 33. Garbage container
- 34. Consume uselessly
- 35. Chance
- 36. Slang for "all is good"
- 37. Church seat
- 38. American Indian member
- 39. Busy insect
- 40. Colour
- 41. Child's possession
- 44. Traveler's destination
- 45. Exclamation of discovery
- 46. Wee child
- 47. Informal vocabulary
- 50. Self-esteem
- 51. Spice
- 52. Large public entertainment
- 54. An extra charge
- 56. Ancient (abbr.)
- 57. Total
- 59. Atmosphere
- 60. Formerly known as Tokyo
- 63. Dole out
- 65. Something to chew on
- 67. Actors' speeches
- 69. Two of a kind
- 70. Third king of Judah
- 71. Makes even
- 72. Kind of whale
- 73. Agent
- 74. Austrian province, Graz is the capital

*Joyce*

**DOWN:**

- 1. Worry
- 2. Bulgarian coins
- 3. Few (comb. Form)
- 4. Come in first
- 5. Guide
- 6. Big birds
- 7. Snake
- 8. Hot appetizer
- 9. Biblical mountain
- 10. Electronic data interchange (abbr.)
- 11. Bike parts
- 12. Spotted leopard-like cat
- 13. Heavy silk fabric
- 22. Mechanical moving machine
- 24. Clawed with a dog's foot
- 26. Inquire
- 27. Persons from a certain group (suffix)
- 29. Written rules
- 30. French wine term
- 31. Ritardando (musical term, for short)
- 32. Employ
- 36. Ladies' name
- 37. Small veggie
- 39. Kind of cattle
- 40. Name of servant girl in Acts 12
- 41. Kind of hat
- 42. Japanese sash
- 43. Former Japanese coin
- 44. Business abbr.
- 45. Turkish general
- 46. Lunch staple
- 47. Norwegian lobster
- 48. Kind of map scale
- 49. Cold place
- 51. This piece of clothing used to be made of whalebone
- 53. Sweet addition
- 55. Old tv knobs
- 58. Meditate on
- 60. A city in the south of Judah (Josh. 15)
- 61. Food restaurant
- 62. Greek mountain
- 64. Time period
- 66. Flat rendition of the earth
- 68. Clinging plant