

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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# PERSPECTIVE

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P. 74

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# Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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# IS CREATION WORTH FIGHTING ABOUT?



## Billions of years, or just six days, do we need to care?

by Jon Dykstra

**D**oes it matter? Of all the questions in the creation vs. theistic evolution debate, whether the debate even matters may be the biggest. It's more important than how long it took, what method God used, or how to understand the opening chapters of Genesis.

Christians understand we shouldn't bicker with our brothers and sisters over minor matters – Jesus told us: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9). God doesn't want us to make big out of little. He doesn't want us to be quarrelsome, nitpicking all sorts of fights.

However, God also warns against making little of big. There is a time and place for fighting, and we mustn't be like the watchman on the wall who saw the danger coming and stayed quiet (Ez. 33:6-8). It is a con to say “peace, peace” when war is at the door (Ez. 13:10-16, Jer. 6:14).

Now, in the creation vs. theistic evolution debate, there are a lot of Christians who aren't prepared to pick a side. They aren't loyal to 6 days or billions of years, perhaps believing they need a theology or science degree to be qualified to take a stand. They don't want to be forced to pick one team over the other. However,

when the question is “Does this matter?” then not picking a side is still picking a side. Refusing to choose is only legitimate if this is no big thing.

So is it really no big thing... or is it huge?

To answer that question, let's look at both sides.

### SIDE 1: WHO MATTERS MORE THAN HOW

Among the “can't we all get along” folks, the focus is on just how much agreement there is between 6-day creationists and theistic evolutionists. Both acknowledge the God of the Bible as our Creator. We all agree He made us, and that His creative genius is evident in the whole of the astonishing universe around us. Whether we're looking at the Sun that warms us from 150 million kilometers away, or the chubby toes of our newest grandbaby, we're all in awe of what He hath wrought. And isn't that basis enough for fellowship? The argument here is that *Who* did it matters much more than *how* He did it, or *how* long He took. *Who* matters more than *how*.

As long as Christians all give God the credit, then isn't everything else incidental?

### SIDE 2: HOW TELLS US ALL ABOUT WHO

On the other side there is a ready concession that *Who* does indeed matter more than *how*. After all, God matters more than His creation.

But *how* He started it all isn't incidental. It matters too, because *how* God chose to create reveals God's character. *How* He created tells us about Who God is. So yes, both sides agree it is the God of the Bible who created, but that isn't as significant as it might first seem.

Consider the Muslims, who also declare that the God of the Bible created. And they say their Allah has no Son. That means their biblical creator god, isn't actually God. Orthodox Jews worship the God Who created, but deny Jesus is God. Mormons worship a biblical god who created and even has a son...but he also has a wife. And his son is said to be the brother of Satan. Their creator god is not our Creator God either.

It is possible, then, to worship such a distorted image of the biblical Creator that you aren't actually worshipping God at all. This issue is *that* big. The argument here is that *how* God created is an

issue worth investigating because, in His chosen means, God is teaching us about Himself – God reveals Himself not only in His Word but also in His creation (Ps. 19:1-4). As Paul puts it in Romans 1:20:

“...His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.”

The *how* matters because it tells us all about *Who*.

## WHAT DO THE TWO CREATION ACCOUNTS TELL US ABOUT GOD?

What then, do the two different creation accounts teach us about God?

1. Creationists worship a God whose power was such that He spoke into existence something from nothing, and made a universe appear in just 6 days. Thus the famed chicken and egg dilemma is no dilemma at all for creationists, who know the chicken sprung into being fully formed on Day 5. And while pagans worship the Sun, God showed His great power by creating light (Day 1) before even creating a light source (the Sun on Day 4). Both marriage and the two sexes, male and female, were created in this 6-day period. God affirmed again and again that what He made was “good” and, upon completion on Day 6, even “very good.” What is *good*? The perfect sinless world was good. And it was good, not only as it was on Day 6, but even as it was being made through Days 1-5 – God found the process good too. Creationists know that death appeared as a result of Man’s disobedience – we broke the world. But there is hope; this enemy, death, has been conquered by Christ’s perfect obedience. And it is through Jesus that the world will be made good once again.
2. The god of theistic evolution took billions of years to form the universe. During that process neither the

chicken nor the egg was first: they were preceded by millions of years of incremental evolution that necessarily involved a red-in-tooth-and-claw, survival-of-the-fittest, where the weak were killed off and the strong went on to breed. Death didn’t simply precede Man’s fall into sin, it preceded Man by millions of years. And rather than being the enemy, death was a key tool in God’s creative work. Marriage and gender weren’t always so, but evolved at some point, and who knows but that they may be evolving still. And it is this eons-long process of constant change – with its refining diseases, innumerable mutations, repeated disasters, and, yes, death, death, and more death – that God was calling *good* and *very good* in the opening chapters of Genesis.

The implications extend to the present, where creationists can turn to Scripture for guidance on issues like homosexuality, marriage, and gender confusion. We can learn what is best for men and women by seeing how God made us at the beginning.

But if we evolved, and that process was *good*, why couldn’t we be evolving still? Our forebearers, when once they were single-celled, weren’t divvied into two genders – that only came later. So if we could go from none to two genders, why can’t we evolve new additions like *ze* and *zir*? And why would we presume that marriage has to be between just the first two genders? What answer does theistic evolution have to the craziness of our age?

## DOES THEISTIC EVOLUTION PRESENT A FALSE GOD?

Thus the god of theistic evolution bears little resemblance to the God of the Bible. But does that mean theistic evolutionists are without hope? Are they worshipping a false god?

Thankfully, it is not our brilliance that saves us, but God’s grace. And that’s why, even as some theistic evolutionists worship a god of their own invention, we can hope and pray and expect that many


... rather than being the enemy, death was a key tool in God’s creative work.

others still worship the true God, though in their inconsistency. They might say they believe in billions of years of death, but their faith is still in the God who declared death an enemy and conquered it. They may doubt the accuracy of some of Jesus’s words – how he spoke of a literal Adam and Eve created in the beginning (Mark 10:6, Matt. 19:4) – and yet cling to His promise that there are many rooms in His Father’s house (John 14:2). They may mangle the first few chapters of Genesis, but then take God at His Word for the whole of the rest of the Bible.

That doesn’t make this any less of a big deal. Over a lifetime people do work out their inconsistencies. Many theistic evolutionists will either come to acknowledge God’s Word as authoritative from beginning to end, or they’ll subject the rest of God’s Word to further review and revision by outside authorities. It’s no slippery slope fallacy to say that if you scratch a professing Christian who’s pro-choice or LGBT-affirming, underneath you’ll find an evolutionist.

## CONCLUSION

Like Allah, without a son, the god of theistic evolution offers no hope. In seeing billions of years of death as *good* and *very good*, what need would such a god even have to send his son to die for us? Thankfully, the one true God did send His Son, so we can have not only hope but an assurance that our sins are paid for, death is defeated, sickness will end, and all of creation will be redeemed.

The creation debate isn’t one any Christian can avoid – it is of the first importance, because it is about Who God is. 

# NEWS

## IN PERSPECTIVE

### SK PREMIER USES “NOTWITHSTANDING CLAUSE” TO UPHOLD PARENTAL AUTHORITY

BY MARK PENNINGA



**I**f a public school student under 16 wants to be referred to by his own “preferred pronouns,” does the school need to go to his parents? Does the school need to get parental consent? In Saskatchewan, the provincial government has said yes. But then, at the end of September, Regina judge Michael Megaw decided no. At the request of an LGBT lobby group, the judge granted an injunction – a stop-for-now order – against the govern-

ment’s parental consent policy.

Then, in a very rare move, Saskatchewan’s Premier Scott Moe recalled the province’s assembly in mid-October to use Section 33 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to override the judge’s ruling.

Section 33 is better known as the “notwithstanding clause,” which gives legislatures and Parliament the power to override sections of the Charter, though only for 5 years at a time. Any legislation invoking the clause has an automatic five-year expiration date, at which time the legislation will either lapse or have to be renewed again. The clause was included in the Charter to keep the judiciary from becoming too powerful, “interpreting” the Charter to fit their own preferences. It was included as a tool for reining in activist judges.

Premier Moe minced no words in

defending the move, even though it is extremely unusual.

“Our government is extremely dismayed by the judicial overreach of the court blocking implementation of the Parental Inclusion and Consent policy – a policy which has the strong support of a majority of Saskatchewan residents, in particular, Saskatchewan parents. The default position should never be to keep a child’s information from their parents.”

He went on to explain that “It is in the best interest of children to ensure parents are included in their children’s education, in their classrooms and in all important decisions involving their children.”

The announcement came a week after the “1 Million March 4 Children” rallies, held in towns and cities across Canada, to speak up for children in the face of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) curriculum and activism.

The move also comes after work by supporters of WeNeedA<sup>LAW</sup>.ca and the Saskatchewan Pro-Life Association to promote parental rights, albeit to a different end. Their efforts were in defense of the unborn, promoting a law that would require parental consent before minors can have an abortion. But have their years of effort borne fruit in this other direction?

Saskatchewan isn’t on its own in taking a stand. In June the New Brunswick government revised its educational policy to require parental consent for children under 16 before schools used their “preferred pronouns.”

Mainstream media bias and opposition were on full display in the coverage of the March, and the New Brunswick decision, making Moe’s decision all the more laudable. While we aren’t always happy with our elected leaders, we can be thankful for Section 33 of the Charter. Without it, a lone judge would be able to overturn the decisions of our legislatures and Parliament.

Photo is adapted from a Sept 22, 2023 photo by Alberta Newsroom (flickr.com) and used under a CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 DEED license.

## CLIMATE MANDATES WILL HIKE HOUSE PRICES, DO LITTLE FOR CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS

BY MARTY VANDRIEL



**T**he federal government's upcoming energy efficiency mandates will make new homes more expensive.

That's according to a recent Fraser Institute report, "Wrong move at the wrong time," which says mandates could increase the cost of new homes and commercial buildings by 8.3%, even as the mandates would have little effect on greenhouse gas emissions.

The Liberal Party's "2030 Emission Reductions Plan" requires that newly

built homes must use 65% less energy than houses built in 2019. The "Plan" also mandates a 59% reduction for new commercial construction. The result? The Fraser Institute report expects that housing prices will increase about \$72,000 in Ontario, \$78,000 in B.C., \$35,000 in Alberta, and \$27,000 in Manitoba.

This increased cost is projected to result in just a 1% drop in greenhouse gases emitted nationwide, while causing a loss of construction jobs, and a decline in national gross domestic production. When the cost to build new homes and business places increases on this scale, investors and consumers rethink their plans, perhaps deciding not to open a new restaurant location, or deciding not to develop a piece of property. That softens demand for new construction, and the

demand for the many industries that support builders.

Ross McKittrick, the report's author, suggests that if the free market were allowed to operate without government intervention, many individuals and businesses would choose to upgrade their new homes or buildings with energy-efficient appliances anyway, and add more insulation to their building envelope. For some the reduction in their long-term living or operating expenses would justify the initial costs, so they would make the upgrades themselves. But by making these energy-efficient systems mandatory, the government will be hampering economic growth for the nation, increasing costs for its citizens, all for very little benefit to the environment.

## POPULATION UP; BIRTHRATE WAY DOWN

BY MARK PENNINGA

**C**anada's population passed 40 million in June, and has grown by more than 1.1 million in the past year, according to a Sept. 27 Statistics Canada report. The 2.9% increase in our country's population is the highest rate of growth since 1957, which was the peak of the baby boom and also a year when Canada opened its doors to refugees from Hungary. Over the last 5 years, the population has increased by 5 million, and over the last year we were "likely among the top 20 fastest growing countries in the world."

So Canada is growing. But a closer look at that data shows that this growth masks a problem. Our current growth is dramatically different than it was in the '50s. An astounding 98 percent of the growth today is from international migration, whereas just 2 percent is from births – almost all our growth is coming from the outside. As the same report shares, in the course of just the last year, the fertility rate in Canada has plunged from 1.44 to 1.33 children per woman, far below the 2.1 required to keep a population stable.

Canadians and Americans are used to growing populations, and rely on immigration to keep our economies functioning. From a pragmatic perspective this works, but only as long as others are able and willing to come here. However, what few people seem to notice is that the fertility rate has been dropping fast in every continent, and it won't be long before the world's population begins to decline. The secular



organization [www.Pronatalist.org](http://www.Pronatalist.org) is concerned: "If we fail to address plummeting birth rates, humanity has a very real chance of experiencing an extinction event."

Christians can understand this coming demographic crisis as both a judgment and an opportunity. As the world has embraced abortion, and rejected the blessing of children, we can see here a fulfillment of Paul's warning to the Galatians: "...God is not mocked; for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). That's the judgment.

The opportunity comes if the Church, in obedience, remembers God's first words to us: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). What an antithesis it will be – what a bright and shining light it will be – when a world that has rejected babies sees laughing, crying, beautiful children, found in abundance still, among God's people.

## 1 MILLION MARCH 4 CHILDREN

BY ALEXANDRA ELLISON

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a transcript of Alexandra Ellison's RPTV.ca report on the September 20 "1 Million March 4 Children" on Parliament Hill.*

**I**n the midst of a swiftly shifting cultural landscape, a significant event has emerged that gathers people from diverse backgrounds under a common cause. The 1 Million March 4 Children, a Canada-wide demonstration, has drawn attention across Canada, uniting them in a shared mission: to protect our children from indoctrination and sexualization.

On September 20, thousands of people gathered outside Parliament Hill to protest against Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity policies within the education system. Wellington St. was shut down for hours as parents, educators and children gathered to have their voices heard.

Christians, Muslims, and people of various faith backgrounds attended the event.

The demonstration, titled "1 Million March 4 Children," expanded across Canada with protests happening in most provinces.

This protest came just months after Premier of New Brunswick, Blaine Higgs amended policy 713, making it so that LGBTQ-identifying students under 16 would have to inform parents before changing their name or pronouns within the classroom.

Since this policy amendment took place in June, the conversation about parental rights has only expanded across Canada.

Police were on the scene and LGBTQ activists also protested in opposition.

The 1 Million March 4 Children was started by a Muslim man, Kamel El-Cheikh, who started speaking out on social media after discovering what was being taught in the education system. On Parliament Hill, he told the crowd:



1 MILLION MARCH 4 CHILDREN  
within the education system. The 1 Million March 4 Children is a Canada-wide demonstration

"Canada's parents are the engineers, the restorators, they're the average blue-collar workers that care about their kids."

During the event, a father, Shannon Boschy, spoke out about how he got involved in the gender-critical movement after his daughter announced she would begin testosterone for gender transition after her 18th birthday.

"Unsafe means somebody might question them. A rational loving parent might say, 'Are you sure, sweetie? It's okay to be confused. We're going to get you some help that you need.' But no, this affirmation leads to the medicalization. These kids are ending up in the gender clinic."

Rod Taylor, the leader of the Christian Heritage Party, came all the way from Smithers, BC for the march. He told RP:

"We all have the responsibility as parents to raise our children. I think these parents, and Kamel El-Cheikh, who was the Muslim organizer of this event, he reached out to people of other faiths and said, 'Let's come together for something that we all agree on, something we all believe

in, for the freedom to raise our children according to our own beliefs.' And that's something we all can agree with."

Taylor hopes that people can find their identity in Christ, rather than their gender.

"Parents are the first educators of their children. They have the responsibility from God to be the educators and trainers, and to raise their children not only physically, but in a moral perspective so that their kids know who they are. And this whole thing about identity, yes, children need to know who they are in God. He's the one who made us, He made us male and female, created us in His image, and puts us here for a purpose. And so we want to see that purpose fulfilled."

As Christians, we are entrusted with the sacred duty to share God's truth and be vocal in the public sphere. Our faith calls us to stand firm in believing that every child is a precious creation, molded in His image. May this March serve as a testament to our unwavering commitment to God's intended design and our collective responsibility to ensure that truth prevails in the lives of future generations.



## “EARLY YEARS” MORNINGS HELP PRESCHOOLERS, AND THEIR PARENTS, BUILD CONNECTIONS

BY DANYSE VAN DAM

**T**he gym at Smithville’s John Calvin Christian School (JCCS) is regularly filled with the delightful sounds of kids having fun. Once a month, however, the voices heard come from a particularly younger set.

Through the initiative of the JCCS promotions committee, an Early Years morning for moms of preschool-age children has been running for over a year now. The idea was that often in the preschool years, parents and children never have the opportunity to actually visit the school. This means that when their children eventually do start kindergarten, it can be quite overwhelming and unfamiliar for them.

The preschool years are also a time when parents might feel disconnected from the larger community and the school and when it comes time to be making decisions about pre-tuition etc., they have no feelings of personal connection to the school. In an effort to close that gap the Early Years morning initiative was born, and it has turned out to provide so much more than an introduction to the school.

Once a month (on random days of the week so that the same class does not miss Phys Ed) the gym is set up into stations. Gym mats are laid out and at each station are different types of toys, like Thomas the Train sets, Paw Patrol figurines and trucks, a kitchen with dress-up clothes, and a craft and coloring table.

All moms, dads and grandparents with preschool-age children are invited to attend, including those who already have older children in school. For the first hour and a half the children play at all the different stations, meeting their future peers and burning off some energy. The parents or grandparents stay close by and chat with others while enjoying the coffee



and baking provided. A toonie donation per child covers the cost of some of the expenses that occur (new toys, snacks and craft items). When playtime is finished the toys are put back in buckets and set against the stage wall for Grade 6 to come and clean up later (thanks Grade 6!).

The children enjoy a snack while all the mats are pulled together. Then it’s time for circle time and *boy, is that energetic!* The children have a fun story read to them and sing songs – the animal freeze dance song is a crowd favorite. If the weather allows, everyone heads outside to the playground after circle time to enjoy the sunshine; and if the weather is cold or rainy, parents are invited to bring a clean bike or trike and the kids have some fun riding around in the gym.

The morning has been well received by all and is such a blessing for the community. Parents have reported that they love seeing their children interact with other kids. Kindergarten students have told their teacher with confidence that they know exactly where the gym is, as well as all the toys (and that very loud recess bell is not quite as scary anymore!). Relationships have been made as moms from different churches (we have five feeder churches at JCCS) enjoy conversation and fellowship. The Early Years mornings have created an opportunity to bring together the communion of saints and develop a love for our school, and what a blessing that is!

## ENGLAND BANNING PHONES IN SCHOOLS

BY MARK PENNINGA

**C**on October 2, England announced a plan to prevent children from using phones during the school day. “We know that mobile phones are a source of distraction and bullying in the classroom,”

Education Minister Gillian Keegan tweeted. “Yet, 40% of 14-year-olds report that their lessons were disrupted by phones. So today, we’re banning phones in schools.”

That sounds stronger than it is; schools will simply be given “guidance” to ban phones, and it remains up to the schools to enforce it. But the ban includes barring phone use during breaks and between classes.

According to coverage by TheMessenger.com, China and France have similar policies, and the Netherlands will be following too. In Canada, only Ontario has restrictions on cellphones in school, banning them during instructional time. The province reported that 97% of the parents, students, and



educators they consulted said there should be restrictions.

Phones aren’t only a distraction, they also are rewiring young and old minds alike, making it difficult to concentrate or listen.

One public school in BC has banned phones from the classroom and saw some very positive results after just five months. Chatelech Secondary School counselor Tulani Pierce reported:

“We are seeing improved mental health, we’re seeing decreased bullying, we’re seeing more engagement in class, we’re seeing more social interaction, kids are playing again instead of being on their phones and we’re seeing increased academic success.”

Children don’t have the ability to regulate their own media usage and need responsible adults to set boundaries. Like a fence around a swimming pool, these restrictions are not an imposition, but an act of love and care (Eph. 6:1-3).

SOURCE: Aysha Quamar’s “England’s banning phones in schools” posted to TheMessenger.com on Oct. 2, 2023; Nono Shen’s “Teachers say B.C. school teens showed improved grades and social skills after a ban on phones” posted to CBC.ca on May 6, 2023.



## A NEW TWIST ON BOOK-BANNING

BY JAN BROERSMA

**A**sha's Mums. *Jacob's New Dress*. Concerned Christian parents have often worked hard to keep controversial titles like these ones off school and public library shelves.

Others, however, have fought with equal determination to include them in library collections. As Richard Beaudry, former president of the Canadian School Libraries, has explained:

"I'm worried that book ban movements are shutting down important conversations, rather than encouraging diversity of thought and exposing kids to new experiences."

In Ontario, however, we've just seen a curious instance of anything but "diversity of thought." In Mississauga's Peel School District, most books published before 2008 were recently removed from school library shelves – unless they could be proven to be "accurate, relevant to the student population, inclusive, not harmful, and support[ing] the current curriculum." It's easy to imagine most older books failing the test, considering the worldview of those judging what is "accurate" and "relevant."

As Jonathon Van Maren has commented, "Progressive educators seem consistently stunned to discover that the writers of the past did not hold the values of the present" – and they often seem determined to shield their students from this reality.

SOURCES: Jonathon Van Maren's "Ontario school board eliminates all library books published before 2008. That's just a start." posted to thebridgehead.ca Sept 14, 2023; John Ivison's "Ontario's book-banning school-board sea lots have completely lost the plot," posted to NationalPost.com, Sept 13, 2023.

## 5 YEARS OF LEGAL MARIJUANA IS WREAKING HAVOC ON CHILDREN AND ADULTS

BY MARK PENNINGA

**I**n 2018, Canada's federal government legalized the recreational use of cannabis. Two of the three goals that they used to justify this abrupt change were to improve public health, and to reduce access by children. This October, the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) released a study, looking at the impact that legalized cannabis has had, pointing to a dismal failure in accomplishing either of these goals.

### KIDS HARMED MORE OFTEN

The CMAJ study found that, in addition to increased number of Canadians using cannabis, there has been a startling number of hospitalizations resulting from cannabis use. This includes a large increase in the number of poisonings for young children, who consumed edible forms of cannabis. *CBC* has reported that prior to legalization, there was an average of 2 hospitalizations per month for children under the age of 10 in Ontario, Alberta, and BC. That spiked to nearly 15 hospitalizations a month through 2020 and 2021, which is far higher than the 2.1 average for Quebec, where cannabis edibles are not legal.

### ADULT EPISODES ARE UP TOO

One study looked at the connection between cannabis and hospitalizations for adults in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, and BC, and found that there were a staggering 105,000 hospitalizations reported between 2015 and 2021, one third of which were for people aged 15 to 24. They broke the data up into three groups: pre-legalization, post-legalization with store restrictions, and post-legalization with commercialization. Although the rate of hospitalizations didn't change much when cannabis was legal but tightly controlled, it increased in the third stage, with commercialization.

Other studies found a

20 percent increase in emergency department visits among youth in Ontario and Alberta, and increased emergency department visits due to cannabis-induced psychosis, and a doubling of "acute episodes of pregnancy care in which cannabis was present."

The impact can be long-term, with cannabis users having a significantly increased risk of developing schizophrenia within three years.

### LOVE LAWS, JUST NOT GOD'S LAWS

With all this data contradicting the intended goals of the legislation, one would expect the federal government to admit a need to reconsider its course. But that isn't likely, unless this research is widely circulated and Canadians are willing to speak up to their elected representatives.

There is a glaring contradiction between our secular government's concern for health when it came to the COVID virus, and how it is responding to the many immoral activities and choices that come with their own devastating health consequences. With COVID, our leaders were willing to undermine fundamental freedoms to minimize hospitalizations. Not so with marijuana use. There are also health impacts from other sins like pornography, no-fault divorce, abortion (not only for the child, but the mother too), sex outside of heterosexual marriage, and, of course, euthanasia. When health could come as a result of obeying God's commandments (which are good for our heart, soul, mind, and body – Ps. 119) our government isn't all that interested in exploring what laws could help.



## BEING IN THE ROOM AT THE CONSERVATIVE CONVENTION

BY JANELLE OOSTERHOFF

**T**here's a line from the musical *Hamilton* that's been on repeat in my head: "I wanna be in the room where it happens." That's why I attended the Conservative Policy Convention this past September: I wanted to be where the decisions are made that change history.

Now, it turns out, Canadian history isn't changed in one room; it starts in 338 rooms across the country. Ridings, rather. In each of these ridings, there is a local Conservative board called the Electoral District Association, or EDA. Each EDA is made up of a group of about 15-30 locals. The EDA hosts local Conservative events and they represent the party to the riding. They also create policies and policy amendments that are voted on at the bi-annual Conservative Policy Convention. And last but not least, they send delegates to the Convention. In other words, the EDA is the voice of the Conservative Party to the riding and also the voice of the riding to the Party.

Attending the latest Convention as a delegate, I was struck by just how much impact you have when you're willing to show up. So here I am, typing.

Day one was speeches and mingling. On the second day, delegates split into three different breakout sessions: one on social issues, one on economic issues, and one on foreign policy. Here, delegates are deciding what policies will make it to final voting: only 10 out of 20 policies in each session will move forward.

Social issues were the last on the agenda for the plenary voting. The ten that had made it through were voted on by all the delegates. The "for" and "against" sides advocated back and forth until we were ready for a vote.

- A new friend had 30 seconds to advocate a policy against child pornography. We cheered so loud we never heard his finish.
- A 15-year-old girl spoke against men using women's spaces. We

clapped so emphatically my hands hurt.

- Finally, my trip was made worth it when we voted against expanding doctor-assisted suicide to youth and the mentally ill. That passed with flying colors.

Now, it's important to note that party leader Pierre Poilievre isn't bound to these party policies. Policy Conventions tell leaders what their EDA's and members care about, and they give principles for decisions made in Parliament – you know, that other important room. But just because policies aren't binding, doesn't mean they don't offer some form of accountability – it doesn't look great for a leader to ignore their grassroots.

Some of what happened was less encouraging.

A policy that would've removed the current abortion policy was short three EDA's votes in order to make it to convention. The policy it would've removed states, "*A Conservative government will not support legislation to regulate abortion.*"

Throughout the Convention, one name kept coming up: Gerrit Van Dorland was a Reformed Christian nominee seeking the Conservative candidacy in Oxford, ON. The former MP had stepped down and the seat was open. Van Dorland was disqualified by an EDA committee from the race, and a fly-in candidate (someone not from the riding) won the nomination.

Van Dorland appealed to National Council, and the majority wouldn't overturn his disqualification. Three members voted in favor of the appeal and 11 voted against.

Why? The party said that he failed to disclose something in his application. Nobody in the room will/is allowed to say exactly what.

Some people have speculated that



Van Dorland was disqualified on a technicality because some of the party leaders had a preferred candidate. Others take it further, saying that Van Dorland was disqualified for his Christian values – but we see other candidates who share those values remain in the party.

One policy voted down in the preliminaries was on the transparency of National Council – that policy would've made the whole situation... well, transparent.

Delegates from each province vote in members of National Council. This situation made me realize that National Council can have a big impact on disqualification. Funny enough, a familiar name – former *ARPA Canada Lighthouse News* anchor Al Siebring – was a name on the Alberta ballot. He lost by less than 30 votes.

In two years, at the next Convention, we will have a chance to vote again – a chance to bring new policies to the table, and to vote again on National Council. With just a few hundred delegates from each province, our votes have a loud voice. In B.C., there was a four-vote difference on two National Council members. In two years, we could also pass that policy on the transparency of council.

More than that, we may yet have the chance to give some anti-abortion policy a standing ovation.

What we're told is true – Poilievre doesn't call himself pro-life, and the Conservative party won't yet touch abortion. But when you are *in* the Conservative party, you have the opportunity to *shape* the Conservative party. What the party looks like in ten years is, in some ways, up to us.

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**Mr. J. Kikkert, Principal**

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# My 6 weeks at the CBC

by Alexandra Ellison

To finish my journalism degree, one of the last requirements was a 240-hour journalism internship in a live newsroom. During the winter semester, I worked closely with an advisor to secure a placement that would fulfill my learning outcomes, but the task seemed daunting. As a Reformed Christian, the chance of finding a news organization that would align with my political and spiritual beliefs was zero to none. I had prior experience writing for a Christian media outlet, but I wanted to challenge myself by stepping into the realm of mainstream media.

And so, I mustered my courage and applied to the internship program at Canada's largest government-funded media conglomerate, the *CBC*.

By the grace of God, I received the call that I had been selected. As part of the selection process, the *CBC* conducted a comprehensive background check, seemingly scouring the Internet for any traces of oppositional content. With a quick Google search of my name, it wouldn't have been difficult for them to uncover multiple articles I'd written on "controversial" issues, each articulating my unapologetic Christian perspective. Nevertheless, I was placed to work on their morning international and national news radio show.

### MISCONSTRUED IDEA OF OBJECTIVE TRUTH

Before diving headfirst into the bustling newsroom, I had to complete a week of training alongside a group of other interns. Part of this time was spent on invaluable software training, which was a big reason I had applied for this opportunity. Yet, it was what came next that left an indelible mark on me, as we delved into the *CBC's* "journalistic standards and practices."

Much of this training seemed to borrow heavily from the content universities and corporate organizations often copy and paste from critical theory academics. For someone who had completed a degree at a secular university, there was nothing particularly novel here. However, what stood out the most was the organization's unwavering commitment to fostering the illusion of impartiality, sometimes at the expense of genuine objectivity.

One of the guest speakers during the training emphatically stated that as an employee here, one could not take a stand on "controversial issues." But here's the twist: it was perfectly acceptable to take a stand on "objectively moral issues" such as Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ+ rights, climate change, or abortion. In essence, it became clear that the definition of impartiality used here often leaned heavily in one direction – a progressive one.

As part of one of the organization's social justice initiatives, they championed "inclusive journalism." This ostensibly noble goal, however, seemed to take a

rather curious twist. Rather than genuinely embracing diversity of thought, the focus was on manipulating the narrative by selecting sources that reinforced preconceived notions. The speaker casually mentioned that in the past, the organization would interview individuals with opposing views on climate change. But in light of what they perceived as a consensus "now that 99 per cent of scientists believe climate change is true," such interviews were no longer deemed necessary.

### MISUNDERSTANDING JUSTICE

The most jarring part of the training was the reduction of diversity to mere racial demographics. When the equity and inclusion speaker walked into the room, she gazed at the group of young intern journalists and remarked, "Wow, this is quite a diverse group." She assumed that diversity could be ascertained solely based on the color of everyone's skin.

What followed was a disconcerting discussion where she put an image on the screen of Justin Trudeau and all of the Canadian premiers. She then asked the question "What is wrong with the diversity of this photo?" Many interns raised their hands to assert that most of the politicians are just "straight, white, cis males."

I couldn't help but interject and spoke up challenging the assumption that skin color inherently dictated one's political, spiritual or religious beliefs. The program leader let me speak, but seemingly brushed off my statements and felt the need to continue to emphasize the importance of her definition of diversity.

As I reflect upon this experience, I am reminded of Proverbs 28:5, which states, "Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely." For those who don't share the Christian perspective, the notion of an objective moral reality can often seem foreign. Instead of relying on the moral code entrusted to us by God, non-Christians navigate the world based on emotions, making decisions that glorify the self. Deep down, many of these individuals may yearn for justice, but

their hearts remain blinded. Although we both have ambitions, to tell the truth, their worldview makes them incapable of recognizing what true justice means.

### MISDIRECTED FEAR

After completing a week of training, I was tasked with an early morning newsroom role starting at 3:30 AM. Preparations for the morning show involved collecting all of the news that happened overnight, from across the world. It was a very fast-paced environment where you needed to write scripts and pull audio from online international wires like the Associated Press or Thomson Reuters. The mandate was clear: gather, synthesize, and broadcast the news that unfolded overnight. Each moment was a race against time, as the world's stories flowed in like an unceasing torrent.

Yet, amid this whirlwind of activity, there was another constant – a constant stream of tragic news that weighed heavily on the hearts and minds of everyone in the newsroom. The stories that crossed our desks were often heart-wrenching, filled with tales of devastation, loss, and global chaos. I became intimately acquainted with the relentless tide of human suffering, from the scenes of devastating floods that submerged communities in despair, to the images of raging wildfires that devoured acres of precious forests. Harrowing accounts of mass murders and acts of violence left scars on our collective consciousness, a reminder of the darkness that sometimes engulfs humanity.

Amid this torrent of tragedy, I couldn't help but notice a prevailing sense of fear that gripped many of my

*I couldn't help but notice a prevailing sense of fear that gripped many of my colleagues...*

colleagues: fear that the world will end due to climate change, fear that “Christian Nationalists” will overtake our government, and overall fear of what tomorrow will bring.

However, for me, as a Christian, these moments of fear were opportunities to find solace and strength in my unwavering assurance that Christ is sovereign over all things. In global uncertainty and human suffering, I took comfort in the profound truth articulated in Colossians 1:16–17:

“For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

For believers, this biblical truth serves as a steadfast anchor in the tempestuous sea of worldly anxieties. It reminds us that no matter how dire the circumstances may appear, God’s providence reigns supreme.

As believers, we need not succumb to the paralyzing grip of fear that often pervades the world around us. Instead, in the goodness of the Lord, we find our refuge and our strength, a wellspring of joy that remains unshaken even in the face of the world’s uncertainties. This unwavering faith empowers us to navigate the tumultuous waters of life with a spirit of resilience, purpose, and abiding hope, knowing that we are held in the loving and sovereign hands of our Creator.

## MISINFORMED ON THE CHURCH

One day after finishing up my shift I briefly caught up with one of the other interns. Our conversation was small talk primarily focusing on what we were doing in our offices. At the end of our conversation, we exchanged social media. Once she looked at my page she asked, “Are you Christian?” Instantly, my eyes lit up; was I about to meet another Christian struggling with the conflicting ideas at play in this secular newsroom? I quickly responded “Yes I am! Are you?”

## *Whether it’s in a newsroom, an office, a classroom, or any other setting, we have the opportunity to live out our faith*

She proceeded to say that she was not, but she was raised in the Church and has a lot of respect for “church people” but she doesn’t believe in the Bible. She continued, saying “You’re a good person though, Christians are good people.” I wanted to continue the conversation, but she took off in a rush.

This encounter left me with mixed feelings, a blend of both discomfort and reflection. As I walked away from our brief conversation, her words echoed in my mind: “You’re a good person though, Christians are good people.” While her intention was undoubtedly kind, it almost felt uncomfortable to receive such praise solely based on my declaration of being a Christian.

As a Christian, I’ve been taught to approach life with humility, recognizing that none of us on Earth can truly claim to be inherently good. In the teachings of our faith, the only perfect and truly good person is Jesus Christ. The rest of us are, by nature, imperfect and prone to sin. However, through repentance and faith, we believe we can find redemption and the promise of eternal life.

This encounter served as a stark reminder of how some individuals may perceive Christianity without a deep understanding of its core beliefs. The intern’s statement about “good people” painted a simplified and somewhat stereotypical image of Christians. In reality, we vary in both our levels of devotion and our understanding, but are all united by our shared Savior.

What troubled me even more was the realization that this limited understanding of Christianity was not unique to the intern but seemed to be a recurring theme within the newsroom. During an early morning, I heard a reporter

questioning whether a church could be in a strip mall. There was a church housing refugees in their congregation’s basement, but the reporter didn’t know whether to call it a church or a strip mall. She was in disbelief that churches could happen outside of typical church buildings.

In the past, newsrooms used to assign reporters to specific “beats,” allowing them to specialize in particular topics and gain expertise in their respective fields. This approach ensured that issues, including religious matters, were covered with nuance and depth. However, the changing landscape of media, characterized by tight budgets and the constant pressure to churn out content quickly, has led to the disappearance of specialized “religion reporters.” Now, reporters with little or no context about the Church or Christian beliefs are tasked with covering Christian issues. This shift in journalistic approach has, in some cases, resulted in oversimplified or misinformed portrayals of Christians and their faith.

This experience left me with a renewed sense of responsibility. It highlighted the need for better education and understanding of Christianity within the newsroom, as well as the importance of Christians being open to talking about our God in a way that reflects His complexity and depth. It’s essential that we, as believers, continue to strive for humility and grace, recognizing our own imperfections while sharing the hope and transformative power of our Savior with those who don’t yet understand Who He is.

In doing so, we can contribute to a more informed and respectful discourse on matters of faith within the world of journalism and beyond.




## MISSION FOR ALL

As Christians, we are encouraged to be the light in the darkest of places (Matt. 5:14-16), to stand firm in our faith when the world challenges our beliefs (James 1:12), and to engage constructively in conversations that bridge the divide. This internship was, for me, an opportunity to heed that call.

Rather than retreating into the safety of homogeneous environments, we are called to venture into the unfamiliar, and engage with those whose perspectives diverge from our own. It is in these unfamiliar territories that our faith can truly shine, where our convictions can withstand scrutiny, and where our actions can reflect the love and grace of Christ. Navigating the secular newsroom, I realized that my presence as a Christian was a unique opportunity to challenge misconceptions and foster un-

derstanding. It was a chance to demonstrate that Christians are not defined by stereotypes but by our commitment to following Christ and His teachings and living out His love in our daily lives.

I made a conscious effort to engage in respectful conversations, to listen attentively to differing viewpoints, and to offer thoughtful perspectives grounded in my faith. Instead of shying away from discussions about Christianity, I welcomed them, recognizing that these conversations could help break down barriers and bridge the gap between secular colleagues and my Christian beliefs. While it wasn't always easy, this journey into the unknown territory of the secular newsroom allowed me to be a witness to the truth of the gospel. My faith became a source of strength, resilience, and hope amidst the challenges and uncertainties of the newsroom.

As Christians, we are called to be salt and light in the world. Whether it's in a newsroom, an office, a classroom, or any other setting, we have the opportunity to live out our faith authentically and demonstrate the transformative power of Christ's love. My journalism internship in a secular newsroom was a transformative experience that challenged my faith and encouraged me to embrace the call to engage with the world beyond the walls of the church. It reinforced the need for Christians to step into unknown territory, not to compromise our faith, but to be a beacon of hope and truth. 

*Alexandra Ellison is the feature reporter on Reformed Perspective's RPTV, which you can find at [RPTV.ca](http://RPTV.ca).*

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# Dear Mainstream Media: 4 strikes and you're out!

by Jonathon van Maren

**L**ike many of you, I grew up with the mainstream media being a part of our household. We got the *Globe and Mail* delivered daily; when they displayed too obvious a bias in favor of same-sex “marriage,” my dad switched to the *National Post*. We got *TIME* magazine weekly.

When I moved out on my own for the first time – from Chilliwack, BC to Calgary, Alberta – the first thing I did was get a subscription to a newspaper. But as the years went on, my “take it with a grain of salt” attitude to the mainstream media evolved into overt distrust. The feeble attempts at fairness largely disappeared, and brazen cheerleading for the movements destroying our society took its place.

## **STRIKE 1: HATING BABIES**

One of the first breakdowns of trust between Christians and the press came with the issue of abortion. Christians view abortion for precisely what it is: an act of violence that ends the life of a developing human being. With only a few notable exceptions, the mainstream media in North America backed the abortion rights movement and opposed the pro-life movement. Dehumanizing language was deliberately used when referring to pre-born children. The issue, in most cases, was presented as a political struggle between the “pro-choice” movement and the pro-life movement, with the main characters – the pre-born babies at the center of the struggle – left entirely out.

This bias has only grown exponentially, especially in the wake of *Roe v. Wade*'s overturn. The media deliberately misrepresents pro-lifers; it seeks to portray the movement in as negative a light as possible, and it actively ignores malfeasance on the pro-abortion side. I have read stories about people I know, in which I am quoted, that are obviously false.

To read a story in the mainstream press about abortion is to see journalists assert, with complete confidence, that the baby in the womb is not, in fact, a baby. It is to read “fact-checkers” debunk objectively true claims on behalf of the abortion industry, and to see the pro-life movement portrayed as misogynists, religious fanatics, and, frequently, white supremacists.

The mainstream media's rule is "if it bleeds, it leads" – except when it comes to abortion. In fact, when David Daleiden and the Center for Medical Progress released bombshell videos in 2015, proving that the abortion industry was trafficking in baby body parts, the media promptly launched a massive investigation...into the Center for Medical Progress. The reality is that when you read a story about abortion in the media, it is almost certainly packed with disinformation and outright lies.

### STRIKE 2: HYPING HEDONISM

It isn't just abortion, of course. On virtually every issue, the mainstream press takes the side of the sexual revolutionaries – and when churches are covered by the media, it is almost always a story about a conflict between Christianity and the sexual revolution. It is not news that Christian institutions generally adhere to a Biblical view of sexuality, for example, but Canada's state broadcaster and major newspapers treat us to an endless stream of breathless coverage reminding us of the fact.

You have probably never heard about the community service work done by staff and students at Redeemer University. You probably *have* heard the stunning revelation that, as one *CBC* headline put it, this "private Christian university says no sex outside heterosexual marriage."

Progressive politicians and their media allies have put a lot of elbow grease into stereotyping conservative Christians, and it has been effective. While Christians are condemned for opposing an increasingly radical LGBT agenda, the press – especially Canada's taxpayer-funded state broadcaster – has bent over backward to condemn parental rights, defend drag shows targeted at children, and justify a pornographic sex ed curriculum.

### STRIKE 3: DOUBLING DOWN ON DEATH

The same is true for the issue of euthanasia. With one exception – Andrew Coyne, who was then a columnist for the *National Post* and now writes for the *Globe and Mail* – the media was entirely

in favor of legalization, and treated dissent as unworthy of coverage. I remember tuning into the *CBC* for a debate on euthanasia, only to discover that the debate was not between someone who opposed it and someone who supported it – it was between an advocate of the incoming law and a fellow who didn't think it went far enough.

In short order, the media wasn't even calling it euthanasia or assisted suicide anymore – they'd switched the terminology to the sterile, soothing-sounding "medical aid in dying," conveniently shortened to "MAID." Only when the horror stories pro-lifers predicted began surfacing in rapid succession did some media outlets begin asking if we had perhaps "gone too far" – and none admitted that perhaps the pro-life advocates they'd ignored were correct.

### STRIKE 4: CELEBRATING CASTRATION

But the nail in the coffin of the media's credibility – not only amongst Christians, but in the broader public, as well – was their whole-hearted embrace of the transgender agenda. Prestigious media organizations with Pulitzer Prizes and foreign correspondents in a dozen countries began to publish articles with phrases such as "her penis" and "his breasts." Scores of "human interest" stories about "pregnant men" – I'm not making that up – were (and are) published with full photo essays. The claims of the transgender movement on everything from suicidal ideation to the acceptability of subjecting gender dysphoric minors to double mastectomies and castration were accepted at face value, regardless of how ludicrous they were or how much contradictory evidence existed.

Most damning were the countless stories about allegedly female criminals featuring photographs of ugly, snaggle-toothed men guilty of often horrifying violence against real women. Nearly all of them went viral, and the universality of the mockery was devastating for the media's credibility.

Trust in the press can survive mistakes – even catastrophic ones. But it is

...the mainstream press has revealed... it has abandoned reality entirely.

a different scenario entirely when the press consistently challenges its viewers and readers with obvious lies and asks them: "Who are you going to believe, us or your lying eyes?" I've even seen mainstream journalists such as Jonathan Kay (of *Quillette* and the *National Post*) make the observation on Twitter – the reason transgenderism is so toxic, he noted, is that


"[siding with transgender] isn't just destroying trust in the educational/political elites when it comes to gender. It's destroying trust, *full stop*. If elites...think waving a fairy wand turns boys into girls, what other crap do they believe?"

Precisely.

Over the past several decades, the mainstream press has revealed that it serves as the propaganda arm of the Sexual Revolution – and in the last ten years, it has abandoned reality entirely.

### YOU'RE OUTTA HERE

This is undoubtedly a serious issue, because in the vacuum left behind, many people merely hunt for sources that back their preferred narrative on a given issue and independent platforms deliberately cater to this. I agree with the mainstream journalists who worry that the collapse of trust in the Fifth Estate is a huge problem.

It just happens to be a problem of their own making. 

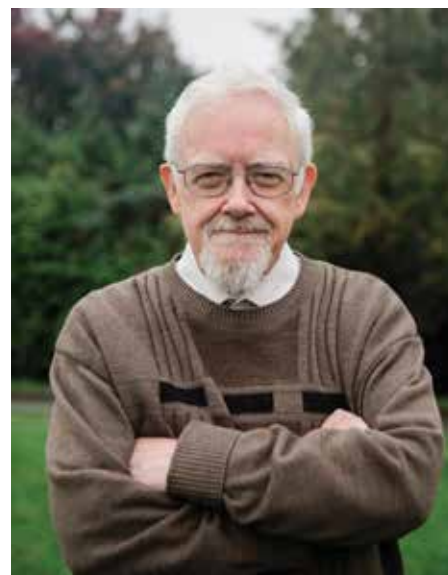
*Jonathon Van Maren has written for the National Post, National Review, First Things, LifeSiteNews, and many other publications. He blogs at TheBidgehead.ca.*



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by Marty VanDriel



If you've attended a conference at a Reformed church in the Fraser Valley some time in the last 15 years, you've probably enjoyed browsing a book table manned by a friendly, knowledgeable gentleman, eager to discuss good resources and to steer you towards wise godly literature. Albert van der Heide, owner of Vanderheide Publishing, loves discussing ideas, recommending authors, and introducing Christian readers to Christian authors.

Anyone who knows Albert learns quickly that he has an almost encyclopedic memory and a wide range of interests. He is one of those people who discovered his life's passions, and found a path to make a living doing what he loves. And he's enriched the lives of others along the way. There's much more to Albert than book tables!

## **LONGTIME FRIEND, FORMER BOSS**

When I was 13, my first job was working in the basement of Albert and Cobie van der Heide's residence, gluing mailing labels to thousands of *Windmill Herald* newspapers, and bundling them up for different towns and cities across North America. I can still smell the ink of the freshly printed papers, the musty canvas of the Canada Post mailing bags, and the sweet glue of the labeling machines. (I can still smell my first paycheck too – thanks Albert!)

In the years before the Internet, *The Windmill Herald* connected Dutch immigrants to news from the homeland, advertised sources for Dutch treats and events, and profiled what kind of lives these new Canadians and Americans were able to build in North America. But as a kid, I had little understanding of how Albert had come into this industry, how he had built this business, and what drove him to continue to work every day long after ceasing to publish the newspaper.

I sat down with Albert recently to learn more about his work and his life. We met in the back office of his Langley, B.C. warehouse and store, surrounded by books and filing cabinets. A couple of times, the bell rang as the front door opened, and Albert jumped up eagerly to help whoever had come in to browse, to buy, or just to chat. He relished the interactions!

While he was helping a visitor pick up some books that she needed, I saw on the wall a certificate that looked pretty official, and then I remembered – technically, I was interviewing a Knight! Albert had received the title from Queen Beatrix in 1993 in recognition of his work in the Dutch community in Canada. Van der Heide is officially a Knight in the Order of Oranje-Nassau, the Dutch royal house. When he returned, I reminded him: “Glad you could make time for me today, Sir Albert!” Albert grinned as he remembered what his dad had said after he received the title: “Where’s your horse?”

### ITCHY FEET AT AN EARLY AGE

Albert was born in 1945 in Zwolle, the Netherlands, and grew up on the small family farm. Already as a 4-year-old, Albert wanted to emigrate to Canada! A favorite uncle had moved to Canada in 1949, and his father had relatives in America.

At age 11, Albert had some health challenges, and could not be as active for a period of time as he recovered. What joy then when he developed an even greater love for reading! His mom would bring him armfuls of books from the library, and he devoured especially

the historical tomes. From then on, all of Albert’s pocket money went to books, particularly ones that described the adventures of emigrants and travelers.

### WISE COUNSEL

In 1964, at age 19, Albert joined a work experience program taking young farm workers to Canada. It was not expected to be a permanent move, but he still needed permission from both his father, and an uncle, his Oom Hein Vrugink, who was Albert’s additional guardian after the death of his natural mother. Oom Hein was a wise man whose counsel still echoes through the years all this time later. He said that sometimes a funeral is better than emigration, because at least at a funeral you know where the body is buried! But when someone emigrates, they can just disappear without a trace. In the extended family, there had been relatives who left Holland, left the Reformed faith, and were not heard from again.

But with these warnings, Oom Hein did give permission; he even said that if he were Albert’s age, he would go along!

But this was only allowed if his nephew could serve the Lord in a faithful church in the neighborhood where he would be moving. Albert was glad to report that there were Christian Reformed Churches in the Fraser Valley that he would be able to join, and the preparations began.

After six months of life in B.C., Albert was ready to make the move permanent. He loved the freedom Canadians enjoyed, the lack of bureaucracy, and the many opportunities for a young hard worker. Despite his relative lack of experience, he was managing a dairy farm with 70 cows, which was quite large compared to the average herd of a dozen or so back in Zwolle. Albert was delighted that his family back home had no major objections, and he made the move to Canada permanent.

### OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

After a farming accident resulted in an injury, Albert decided to find a different line of work. He began selling office supplies, and print orders for a Vancouver company, and this sales job brought him in contact with dozens of Dutch im-



A young Albert van der Heide ready for a day of sales in his Datsun 1200



Albert ran *The Windmill Herald* (and *Hollandia News*) for 42 years, from 1969 to 2012, when the *Herald* published its last issue.

migrants working all around the lower mainland. Albert found that he was good at sales! He loved meeting people and hearing their stories, and was not afraid to ask for a sale.

In 1969, Albert's business connections to Blom's Stores and Holland Shopping Centre helped him to purchase the bulletin these stores were publishing together for their customers. He eventually changed the publication to a bi-weekly newspaper, *The Windmill Herald*.

So began Albert's career as a publisher. For the next forty plus years, van der Heide was always under a deadline: choosing stories, writing editorials,

and covering local news events, always with an eye to the next newspaper issue. Although he did not have a university degree or post-secondary schooling, Albert showed an affinity for telling stories and digging into details that readers relished. The company began publishing a separate edition for the Ontario and eastern Canada market – that came about after the purchase of *Hollandia News*, another long running newspaper for the Dutch community. At their heights, *The Windmill Herald* and *Hollandia News* reached over 13,000 homes in Canada and the U.S.A. (and each one had to have an address label glued onto

it by a crew of hard-working youngsters and even some old timers, in the van der Heide basement!).

The same year he began publishing, Albert met Cobie Tanis on a trip back to the Netherlands. Albert and Cobie were married in 1971 shortly after Cobie moved to Canada. After losing their first child due to a collapsed lung, the couple was delighted to welcome daughter Karin in 1977. Karin married Art Louwerse, and the two have brought four grandchildren, and much joy, into Albert and Cobie's family.

Over the years, Albert published or helped publish books for the Reformed community, the broader Dutch community, and for a general audience. Some highlights include *To All Our Children* by Albert VanderMey on Dutch immigration to Canada, and *In the Shadow of the Sun* by Ronny Herman DeJong on life and death under the Japanese on the island of Java during the Second World War. Albert is also thankful to have been involved with the series *The Flame of the Word*, a church history curriculum authored by Apko Nap and Pieter Torenvliet.

## THE NEXT CHAPTER

In 2012, after a long run of deadlines and stories, Albert made the decision to cease publishing *The Windmill Herald*. While he still saw a market for a periodical for the community, Albert didn't believe that he and his crew were well positioned to make the transition away from a mostly Dutch language publication. "I enjoyed the work from day one! But once I made the decision to close the paper, I never regretted it."

Eleven years later, Albert is still actively involved in publishing and book distribution, but without the pressures of deadline day every two weeks. "I work every day, but I have no stress!" His passion for Biblical, Reformed literature is contagious (as anyone who has browsed his book table can attest!).

Customers who walk in to the storefront are often looking for Reformed Christian answers to a specific problem, and Albert is most often able to help them with a suggested title or author.


Other visitors are just curious about what the company sells, often leading to a conversation about the Gospel news of Jesus Christ. Albert is thankful that the company's biggest sellers are always Bibles.

## HISTORY OF A COMMUNITY

Over the years, Albert accumulated an enormous archive on the history of the Dutch community in Canada: books, newspaper articles, personal journals, self-published books, diaries, letters, pictures and memorabilia, altogether representing a rich treasure trove for future historians. There does not seem to be anything like these archives in Canada. "The Dutch are not controversial; we are an ethnic group that kind of flies under the radar," said van der Heide.

In time, no doubt there will be more interest in digging into the history of our community, but for now, it is a huge challenge to continue to catalog, store, and maintain all this material. For now, the archives remain a labor of love. Van der Heide would love to find an institution that would be willing to house and care for these archives.

## A REWARDING CALLING

It was wonderful interviewing Albert, because it's beautiful when a Christian finds a calling that is fulfilling and rewarding, where one's interests, abilities, and passions align. This doesn't mean that work is without stress or difficulty, because we live in a fallen world of weeds and sorrows. We obey the Bible's command to "pray and work," and leave the results in the Lord's hands. Right at the start of our interview, van der Heide made it clear that he was not looking for praise. "I want to be known as a sinner! I need the Lord, and He is the one that deserves all the glory." 

*Canadians can shop at Albert's online bookstore [ReformedChristianBooks.com](http://ReformedChristianBooks.com), while BC residents in the Fraser Valley can check out his brick-and-mortar location in Langley at Vanderheide Publishing Co. Ltd., #201 20381 62nd Ave (604-309-3924).*



## Albert's Advice for Young Entrepreneurs

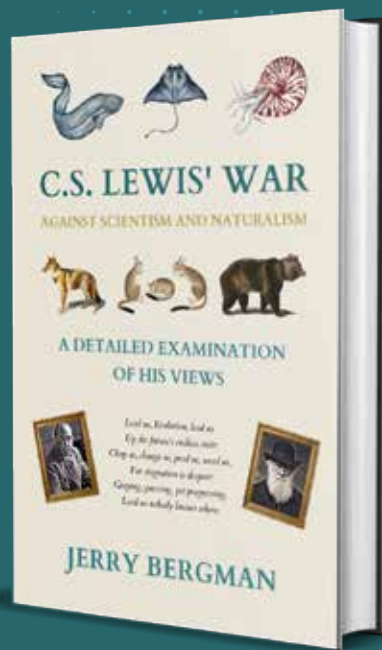
As one who leapt into a new business without much experience, Albert is thankful to the Lord that he was able to be self-employed all these years and to enjoy a long career. I asked him what advice he would give young entrepreneurs.

"Think about it not twice, but three times!" he quipped. "Be careful!" Be sure that you are able to take on the demands of the time required for a business, especially if you have a young family. "It's important that the family be in agreement, husband and wife in particular." Sometimes, a self-employed person has to give extra time on a Saturday night, or on a holiday. Vacations sometimes have to be done without. Are you as a couple able to live with that and not resent the business?

Albert believes strongly that one's vocation is a part of your calling of service to God. This doesn't mean that you have to be self-employed: for many it is better to work hard at a job that can support your family, and to find opportunities to exercise other gifts for God's Kingdom on the evenings and weekends! And of course, we are able to use our talents for God's glory every day in our service to Him and our fellow man, no matter what our jobs might be.

Albert always tried to run his business in a stewardly manner, being careful that expenditures never exceeded revenues, but says he was never overly concerned about the bottom line. "We worked hard, and the Lord blessed us."

– Marty Van Driel



## C.S. Lewis' War Against Scientism and Naturalism

By: Jerry Bergman

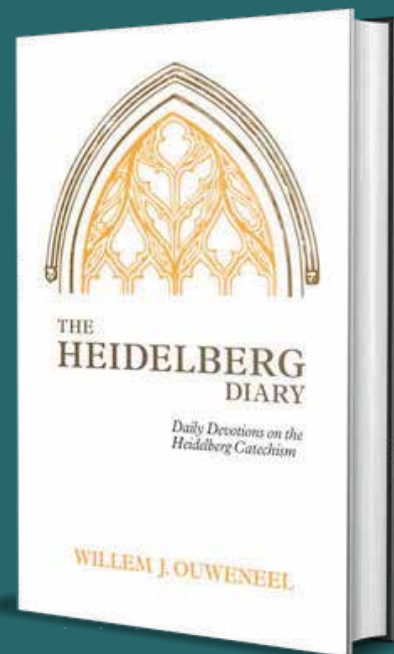
It is commonly assumed that C.S. Lewis was a theistic evolutionist, but contrary to popular opinion, Lewis was one of the most effective anti-evolutionists of the last century. He did not make his case against evolution from biology, but rather from logic, reason, and history. A book worth reading.

## The Heidelberg Diary

*Daily Devotions on the Heidelberg Catechism*

By: Willem J. Ouweneel

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# Keeping *Christ* in Christmas

12 ideas for honoring God  
in our Christmas festivities

by Sharon L. Bratcher



There's no more exciting time than Christmas. Reflecting on the birth of Christ, gifts, lights, decorations, music, special foods, and time spent with family and friends cause most Christians to anticipate some "good times ahead!"

Ah, but since it is supposed to be exciting, and everyone is kindly wishing us a very merry time, we have to be careful to manage our expectations. All the anticipation can raise expectations to unreachable levels – we may begin to think that we have a "right" to a perfect Christmas. Then we're setting ourselves up for disappointment over the gift or invitation we didn't receive, the people who didn't come over, the lack of enthusiasm over gifts we presented, or the lack of cooperation with all the cooking and cleanup! Poor us!

Instead, as God's chosen ones, let's take the time to meditate ahead of time on Colossians 3:12-17 and "get dressed" for the holiday season by putting on "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." Let us bear with and forgive one another, and put on love which leads to harmony. Let us "let the peace of Christ dwell in us" as we celebrate Him!

How? By immersing ourselves in God's Word and singing Psalms and hymns, meditating on His great gifts to us. Resist the temptation to overdo it. Don't exhaust yourself to the point of complaining. Let there be a balance so that you don't end up tired, angry, resentful or poor.

As you think about how you might spend the Christmas season honoring Jesus Christ *whose birth and very life we are celebrating*, consider including some of the following suggestions that I've gathered.

## SUGGESTIONS

**1. Emphasize giving instead of receiving.** As Acts 20:35 tells us, Jesus said that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Instead of asking "What do you want for Christmas?" ask "What are you going to give so and so?" Some activities are:

- Let young ones choose gifts for family members and teachers at the dollar store – even if some of their choices amuse you.
- Support a Christian ministry – let the kids earn money working at home or for others, and give it, so that they can feel the joy of donating as well.
- Collect food for the needy.
- Give of your time to help the sick or those who are overwhelmed with trials.
- Assist in a soup kitchen.
- Give a surprise gift of service to family members, neighbors, friends – and don't forget your pastor and his family.
- Have a craft or baking day, perhaps with friends, and give some of the delicious results to others.

**2. Be honest about Santa.** It's wrong to lie to your children, especially about an ageless, supernaturally powerful, unbelievably generous, and generally invisible being, who "knows when you've been good or bad." So let them know who is giving them the gifts. The kids will be thrilled that Mom, Dad, Oma, Opa and Aunt Susie showed their love by giving them something special.

**3. Consider opening gifts on a different day.** That might be Sinterklaas (December 5), or Epiphany (January 6); this could help to keep Christmas Day as a time to worship and glorify our Lord. But note, if you do open gifts on Christmas Day, one thing you don't want to do is to make the children sit through a devotional while in their little hearts they are eagerly staring at a pile of soon-to-be-unwrapped presents. There's a time for everything, and it's fine to let them cherish their anticipation and excitement rather than expecting them to obediently sit through a reading to which they are not even paying attention.

**4. Celebrate Advent.** Advent means “coming” and begins a specified number of days before Christmas Eve to build anticipation for the actual Christmas day. If you buy an Advent calendar, avoid the distracting ones with candy or cutesy Santas/TV cartoon characters on them. Plan a devotional reading and song for each of the days. Teach your children how to use a Bible dictionary/handbook or the Logos online Bible aids to dig out facts for themselves to present to the whole family at the next dinnertime. Topics might include:

- Angels – Learn what the Bible says about angels. Some suggested verses are: Matt. 4:11, 24:31, 26:53; Luke 2:10-12, 22:43; 1 Tim. 3:16; Acts 1:9-11; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 7; Ps. 91:11-12. There are useful books on the subject that could also be your guide.
- Who was Augustus Caesar? – Was he related to Julius Caesar? Make a chart of the rulers from the New Testament era. What is a census and why did Augustus want to do one? Make a family tree together – your own “census.”
- Where is Bethlehem? – Study maps of Palestine in the time of Christ together, and compare the map to a current one. Bethlehem still exists! Use Google maps to look up the distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem. If the weather is good, take a family hike and compare it to how far Joseph and Mary had to travel.
- Christmas carols – Learn the stories behind some of the carols and examine the words together to determine which are biblical and which are just sung for fun because they are a tradition (*Little Drummer Boy*, for instance – would a newborn want a kid to play a drum next to his little ears?).
- Learn some new-to-you Christmas carols – There are probably some in the *Book of Praise* or hymnbook that you do not know.
- Jesus as the “light of the world” (John 8:12) – If you’re putting up Christmas lights, then read/talk together about how Jesus is the light of the world. What does that mean? How can we be lights as well?
- Make a list of the names/titles of Jesus and talk about each one – Write down a dozen on good cardstock cards, put a number on the front of each, with the name inside and a verse to go with it.
- Talk about shepherds – What was it like to be a shepherd? Of all the people in the world, it was the shepherds who were told to go to Bethlehem and see the Christ child. Talk about how Jesus later said, “I am the good Shepherd [who] gives His life for the sheep” and “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish” (John 10:11; 27-28). Have a treasure hunt looking for hidden treats and then talk about how Jesus is the Good Shepherd who goes out searching for His sheep.
- *12 Days of Christmas* – Historians disagree about whether this song was put together to aid children in remembering catechism or aspects of the Christian faith. However, there is enough basis that you can choose to look up the details online and view the song this way if you so desire. The Twelve

Days of Christmas are supposed to start on Dec. 25 and end on the evening of Jan. 5th. It was traditionally celebrated that the Wise Men arrived with gifts on Jan. 6.

- What are frankincense and myrrh? – Research some ideas as to why these were given to Jesus along with gold.
- Christmas-related items – Include information that is interesting/possibly meaningful about items such as the possible Christian symbolism of the candy cane, the use of red and green (symbol of blood and everlasting life), and the circular Christmas wreath symbolizing the eternal nature of Christ and His endless love.

**5. Let each family member read a portion of the Christmas story** from Luke and Matthew. Take turns choosing carols or Psalms to sing.

**6. Host a party.** Invite family members but also consider inviting single folks, neighbors, or small families who have no relatives nearby. While large gatherings can be fun, smaller ones lend themselves to better conversations; why not have 2 or 3 small gatherings instead?

**7. Go caroling** at a hospital, assisted-living home, or to various shut-ins’ homes. Take a small gift of baking or fruit to give. Have the children prepare Christmas cards ahead of time to give out as well.

**8. Write a letter to a missionary family or two.** Include encouraging scriptures, and let each member of the family tell a little about themselves, whether they write it, or dictate it.

**9. Collect yearly memories** – Ask each person to write down something that they are thankful for, and something that they would like to see happen in the new year – collect these and pack them away with the Christmas decorations so you can read them when you get together next year.

**10. Watch a good Christian movie**, such as *War Room*, *Martin Luther*, *Woodlawn*, *Alleged*, *The Case for Christ*, *Beyond the Mask*, *Overcomer*, *Time Changer*, *Sabina*, *Courageous*, *The Song*, *I Can Only Imagine*, and *Calvinist* and talk about it.

**11. Read and write some poems** about the true Christmas story.

**12. Attend your church service**, whether on Christmas morning or Christmas Eve.

## HONORING CHRIST IN EVERY WAY

It’s pretty common to see signs that say “Keep Christ in Christmas.” By analyzing what we have done before and carefully choosing what we will do this year, we can accomplish that goal. RP

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



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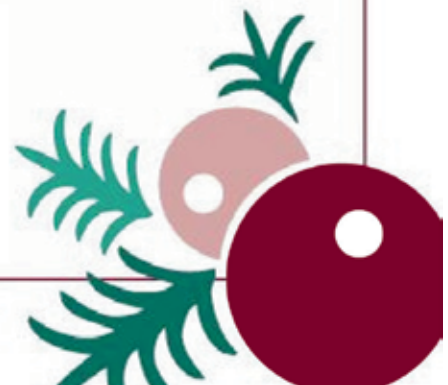
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This picture was originally published in *The Illustrated London News*, January 9, 1915, with a caption that read:

"British and German Soldiers Arm-in-Arm Exchanging Headgear: A Christmas Truce between Opposing Trenches....Saxons and Anglo-Saxons fraternising on the field of battle at the season of peace and goodwill: Officers and men from the German and British trenches meet and greet one another— A German officer photographing a group of foes and friends."

# CHRISTMAS TRUCE

by James Dykstra

There's a lot of things you think of when Christmas comes to mind. Christmas tree, Christmas pudding, Christmas presents, Christmas lights, Christmas services, Christmas carols. One of the words you don't tend to connect with Christmas is *truce*. What's a "Christmas truce"? It sounds like a feuding family that makes up for the holiday season.

Yet in 1914, the phrase *Christmas truce* had power, perhaps more so than any of the other phrases that you typically associate with Christmas.

### GROUND TO A HALT

The First World War had started a few months earlier, and after significant early victories by Germany that pushed France to the verge of defeat, the war had ground to a stalemate. The Allies and the Germans faced off over hundreds of miles of trenches that stretched from the Swiss border all the way to the English Channel.

The two sides faced off against each other with their respective trenches separated by a no man's land. If you raised your head above your trench just a bit too much, someone in the trenches opposite would probably shoot you. If you were ordered out of your trench to attack the other side, well, you were likely shot before you could make much progress across the area between the trenches. The no man's land was a forbidding area, littered with the corpses of soldiers.

This stalemate had gone on for months. Many of the men had signed up for a brief bit of adventure fighting the enemy, thinking everyone would be home for Christmas. It didn't quite work out that way.

### SOOTHING MUSIC

As Christmas approached, the war ground on, slow, deadly, and lacking the purpose and enthusiasm it had once had. Yet, Christmas Eve that year was different than what anyone might have expected. Gunfire, according to reports, ceased around noon that day.

Both sides of the conflict had received cards and small presents from home. For

*"What was seen up and down the line was Christmas lights, and small trees."*

English troops this included a present from Princess Mary, a tin with tobacco, cigarettes, or sweets, among other items.

The Allied troops on the Western Front heard Christmas carols floating across no man's land. The Germans sang *Silent Night*, in German, of course, and the Allies responded with *The First Noel*.

In one place, the English were alerted to the truce when a German voice called out in English, "English soldier, English soldier; a merry Christmas, a merry Christmas!" What was seen up and down the line was Christmas lights, and small trees. A man displaying Christmas lights on a small tree makes himself vulnerable because his enemy now has a clear target to aim at. Yet the English troops didn't take advantage of the German vulnerability, apparently because it was Christmas.

### A PRESENT EXCHANGE

Despite the objections of the officers, both sides emerged from their respective trenches, meeting in the middle. They shook hands, and exchanged some of the small presents they had received from home. Communication had its problems, but a number of the Germans had worked in London before the war started, and that helped things along.

There is even talk of at least one game of soccer starting up between the two sides, though this is hard to confirm. Though it's not known for sure if it happened, it's fascinating to imagine soldiers who had shot at each other only a few hours earlier now trying to score goals on each other.


### REASON FOR THE SEASON

As strange as all this is, what you really have to wonder is why. Why did this happen? There have been spontaneous truces in all kinds of wars, but those tended to be localized and were generally a chance to help the injured or recover bodies of fallen comrades.

This time was a bit different. At about the same time, more than a hundred thousand soldiers scattered over hundreds of miles put down their weapons and not only tolerated their enemies picking up their wounded from the battlefield, but actually went and celebrated with them, singing songs and giving gifts.

Some have suggested that the truce was due to war weariness, since this long, grinding war had been going on for months with little progress and little hope of ending. If that's all that was involved, surely there would have been more truces on the Christmases of 1915, 1916, and 1917 as the war seemed less and less hopeful and more and more soldiers grew weary of it.

The only explanation I can find that makes sense to me is that this was a different time, when Christmas meant more than good feelings, time off from work, a lot of food, and time spent with the family. This was a holy time that was about the celebration of the birth of a Savior who promised to alleviate our sufferings and reconcile us to God. Christmas Eve was a "night the angels sang," and so Pope Benedict XV urged that at least on this night, "the guns may fall silent."

Maybe some stopped shooting because the pope asked them to, but I suspect many more, this early in the war, simply couldn't ignore the incredible significance of Christmas. While it's hard to shoot someone at any time, it seemed impossible to shoot someone on the night when God Himself came to live among us. 

*James Dykstra is a sometimes history teacher, author, and podcaster. This article is taken from an episode of his History.icu podcast, "where history is never boring." Find it at History.icu, or on Spotify, Google podcasts, or wherever you find your podcasts.*

## THE PARABLE OF

by Christine Farenhorst

# Ryker and Samwell

“As water reflects the face, so one’s heart reflects the man.” – Prov. 27:19

**L**uke rightly says that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. That is to say, the heart is the core of one’s most basic beliefs, and words provide a glimpse into Man’s heart. It does not matter who a person is – butcher, baker or undertaker – words reveal his soul.

## CHAPTER 1 – A BABY AT LAST

My birthplace of Harston in East Lincolnshire did not have a large number of inhabitants – neither before or after I was born. Hidden in rolling hill country, it was even considered backwater by some. But we always reckoned our burg, with its one to two thousand residents, as a decent size.

This number did not even take into account the souls who lived in outlying areas, tenant farmers and scattered cottagers, all of whom had a certain predilection for country living. Our town proper boasted a doctor, a lawyer, a banker, teachers, and a preacher. Housewives, clerks, carpenters, grooms and saddlers either paced or ambled the packed-down dirt sidewalks and children visited the local park to feed the ducks. There was even a railway station on Station Road and a small but well-stocked library straight across from it. Mercer Street had textile shops, an inn, and a bakery.

Harston’s roads, although not paved, were well-traveled. Days prior to the bi-weekly market held just outside its east limits, were alive with bellowing and bleating during the summer months – audible signs of life as farmers drove their four-legged produce through the streets to the local butcher shop for slaughter. The day of the market itself was noisy as well, roads abuzz with clamant vendors and townsfolk eager to bargain for good deals.



Although certain protocols were associated with living in our community, such as the few wealthier families having calling cards, the truth was that most of the citizenry were just common folk. A number resided in plain brick houses along the main avenues of Crown Street and Rudwall Lane. The balance of Harston’s inhabitants, however, lived in modest thatched homes on lanes akin to alleyways, and they lived without the benefit of butlers, maids, or cooks. Households were a decent size, with four or five children in each home. The homes, mind you, were small, often only consisting of two or three rooms.

We, my father, mother, and myself, lived on Hillbrook Street, a middle-class street, considered neither rich nor poor, and we had a small garden in the back of our two-story house.

My father, who was a self-appointed teacher of sorts, greatly admired the

writings of the Anglican bishop, J.C. Ryle. Thus when I was born in 1889, I was named and baptized Ryle – Ryle Harrison to be exact. My mother later told me that I had cried lustily when the water dribbled down my forehead and that my father had been somewhat embarrassed by these wails. Nevertheless, she told me, her eyes growing soft as she spoke, he had cradled me in his arms with great tenderness and love during the ceremony. Hearing this as a young boy prone to admire Goliath figures, I was a trifle embarrassed, feeling quite keenly one should not use sappy words like “tenderness” and “love” with regard to men. But inside my heart I was warmed by the thought that my father, a rather stern but just man to be sure, felt more than a modicum of affection for me.

I was not a sturdy boy to look at. Rather skinny, fair-haired and prone to sniffles and coughs, there often rose within me a covetousness to be more strapping and



robust.

But I run ahead of myself. When my mother was expecting me, there was rejoicing in our home on Hillbrook Street – indeed, there was a very great thankfulness. A baby coming at last after my mother and father had hoped and prayed for years and years.

We were, as I said, middle class and had the faithful, domestic help of a woman who had known Mother since she was a child. Plump, good-natured Cora, born and raised in Harston, was both our cook and maid, and she confidentially passed on to me many interesting paragraphs out of my parents' diary – details of past events which had happened before I was born or when I had been but a little tacker.

"Master Ryle," she would say, often expressing an opinion in double negatives, "Your mother was quite sure she would rock no cradle, never. And seeing as to how she'd been married to your father for more than fifteen years, I was quite sure she was right. But then many's the time the stork's visited them thought to be barren. And isn't that the way of it?" Cora told me this while she was letting me lick out the bowl of pudding she had made for dessert that evening. With my mouth full of sweetness, it was difficult for me to respond. Not that Cora ever needed much of a response to what she was saying. She was as full of words as my mouth was of custard. My father often raised his eyebrows as she prattled on and I, ever trying to be like him even as I swallowed the pudding, raised mine.

"Yes, sir!" she went on, oblivious to my apparent surprise, "and your mother cried tears of happiness. It's a good thing I was here to see to things – to cook and clean proper, mind you, because she wasn't up to doing nothing."

"Yes, Cora," I mumbled, lowering my eyebrows again while I was licking the spoon clean, but she wasn't listening.

"And that was the time, strangely enough, that the Sparrows moved into town. Not into Harston proper, mind you, but into the farmstead down Furrow Lane, to the south of here."

I nodded again, scraping the bowl with the spoon for what was left.

"And wouldn't Providence have it, but that Sarah Sparrow was expecting too. And wouldn't Providence have it as well, but that she and Sam had also been praying and hoping for a little one for many, many years."

Here Cora stopped yattering, quite out of breath. I sighed, sorry that the pudding bowl was shining and clean.

"And that's how," Cora ended her communication, "there was a friendship begun between Sarah Sparrow and your mother, Master Ryle."

She lifted me off the counter where I had been sitting, patted my backside and shooed me out of the kitchen.

"Now off with you, young Sir," she called, "for I have work to do and surely you want dinner tonight."


It was true about the friendship between my parents and the Sparrows beginning at this time. Sam and Sarah Sparrow had freshly moved in from London during the time when both my mother and Sarah Sparrow were expecting their first baby.

Sam, a burly, big fellow, was a farming tenant of one of the wealthiest farmers in Harston – Ryker Bitter. Ryker Bitter was the owner of one of the largest estates on the outskirts of Harston. He had lots of money, but possessed neither capacity nor willingness to share. As a tenant farmer, Sam Sparrow was better off than many farm laborers who occupied the very small and dank cottages of their employers. Although Sam did have to sign off a significant portion of his proceeds to Bitter, if he managed the rented property well, he could become fairly affluent. Sam and Sarah lived in a good-sized farmhouse and I loved visiting them.

Sarah Sparrow was adept at weaving, spinning and quilting, and had come by Hillbrook Street one day to show Mother a comforter she had made. Sarah had heard from other townsfolk that Mother might be interested in purchasing one. As the two women interacted in the front room, they naturally began to speak of the coming births of their babies. A common bond was kindled because both had been forced to wait for more than a decade for their first child. Mother was due a month

before Sarah Sparrow was expected to give birth. They promised one another that they would visit back and forth. They laughed with one another as visible kicks poked bumps into their aprons, and they discussed myriad names for their unborn progeny.

## CHAPTER 2 – THE BIRTH OF SAMWELL

When Mother began labor it was a week or two before her time, so Cora told me, and it was a misty and rainy night... 

For 32 years it has been an annual tradition for *Reformed Perspective* to feature a longer, 10-15 page, Christine Farenhorst Christmas story. That was eagerly anticipated, but sometimes split up over two or three issues, to deal with the space constraints of the magazine. Of course, that would require some patience from readers, as the next chapters and conclusion would be a month or two away.

We didn't want to do that to you now, however, space constraints are still a concern. Thankfully our growing website has no such limits, and that opens up some possibilities. We're featuring this two-page tease in the magazine here to grab your attention, and including the QR code below which you can use with your phone to read the whole story online. Or, if you don't have a phone but do have a computer, you can get to the story by typing the following into your browser address bar:

[ReformedPerspective.ca/parable](https://ReformedPerspective.ca/parable)



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

## WISE TURK OVER A FOOLISH CHRISTIAN?

Of the many great quotes misattributed to Martin Luther, one is making the rounds now that a winsome young Hindu, Vivek Ramaswamy, is running for the US Republican presidential nomination. The misquote goes like this:

“I’d rather be ruled by a wise Turk than a foolish Christian.”  
– not actually Martin Luther

Ramaswamy is weak on abortion, and if he won’t be more than “personally pro-life” he’s far from wise. But what if he was wise; would the quote make some sense?

Maybe, but only if we recast it just a bit. As I heard a wise gentleman put it, I’d rather be ruled by a Turk who acted like a Christian, than a Christian who acted like a Turk. In history and today still, we can see that God’s ways are best, His Law shows His love, so countries that follow His commands closest (whether it is higher marriage rates, more intact families, less envious tax policy, submission to the Rule of Law, etc.) do better materially. That’s true even when they don’t worship the God that gifted them their prosperous culture.

But as Luther also didn’t say, “Better yet would be to be ruled by a wise Christian.”

## LEST WE FORGET

Each year when Remembrance Day comes around, we recall the great cost in blood that had to be spent to stop the monstrous Nazis. It is worth remembering, too, how unwilling the West was to help German Jews beforehand.

Shortly before World War II, in July of 1938, 32 nations met in Evian, France, to discuss what could be done about the hundreds of thousands of Jews who wanted to escape Nazi Germany. That was the whole agenda. And yet, over the course of nine days, much was said, but little was accomplished. The tiny nation of the Dominican Republic offered to accept up to 100,000 Jews though it ended up helping “only” hundreds, because they were too far away to be a practical option for many of these penniless refugees. Australia said it would take 15,000 over a period of three years. But for the rest, no one was willing to help. As an article on the online US Holocaust Memorial Museum notes:

“Responding to Evian, the German government was able to state with great pleasure how ‘astounding’ it was that foreign countries criticized Germany for their treatment of the Jews, but none of them wanted to open the doors to them when ‘the opportunity offer[ed].’”

## LEARNING HOW TO DEBATE IS LEARNING HOW TO THINK

Debate can be an effective way of figuring out the truth. God tells us that the first to present his case is going to seem right until someone else comes along to question him (Prov. 18:17). So, if your teens are taking an argumentative turn, use the questions below to help them channel that contentiousness in a positive direction. Randomly assign two family members to adopt opposite positions. Give them both 30 seconds or so to jot down some ideas, then they can take a minute each to make their case. Open it up to questions from the rest of the family. Then, for extra fun, have the two opponents reverse sides and go again!

1. Our family should get up half an hour earlier every morning to have a calm breakfast.
2. To save money and promote exercise, we should buy a push mower, and all take turns.
3. To cut down on emails and texts, senders should have to pay 5 cents. Unlike postage stamps, the money would go to the recipient.
4. The government shouldn’t be allowed to run a deficit in peacetime.
5. Dogs are funner, but cats make the better family pet because they need less care.
6. Vegetables are better than fruits.
7. Every player should have to ref a game at least once a year.



8. No one should be allowed to vote if they haven't got their own written-down budget.
9. Your high school English mark should be based solely on how many great books you've read that year.
10. Ballroom dance should be a compulsory unit in PhysEd.
11. Penguins should be introduced into Canada.
12. Kids should never be allowed to watch TV alone.

## PRO-LIFE, THE PRO-LIFE CANDIDATE

Marvin Richardson first appeared in the pages of *RP* back in 2008 after the then 67-year-old had made the decision to:

- 1) run for United States senator
- 2) change his full name to "Pro-Life" so it would appear that way on election ballots

He'd already changed his *middle name* to "Pro-Life" back in 2004, but when he ran for Idaho governor in 2006 he was listed only as "Marvin P. Richardson" – they wouldn't put his middle name on the ballot. He wasn't done with this gambit though, changing his name again, ditching Marvin Richardson to make "Pro-Life" his full legal name. Election officials still weren't kind, as they next listed him as "Marvin Richardson."

Finally, when he ran for US senator in 2008, he got his wish... in part. Responding to complaints that some might confuse him for a position rather than a candidate, a qualifier was added. On

the ballot it read "Pro-Life (A person, formerly known as Marvin Richardson)."

The now 82-year-old is still at it, last running in 2022. For almost 20 years, he's been putting his new name on the ballot every two years for senator, governor, congressman, and more. Not all pro-lifers have been thrilled, however, with some concerned that his name on the ballot could cause some unborn-loving voters to pick him over more winnable pro-life candidates. But, says Pro-Life, "I think it's just and I think it's proper to have Pro-Life on the ballot. If I save one baby's life, it's worth it."

## "YOU BETTER WATCH OUT!"

It's nearing that time of year again, when you might hear the chorus of a familiar Bing Crosby hit. I always thought it sounds a bit like he was talking about God (he's not). But a friend who is very aware of how tech companies are building up profiles on every one of us, had his thinking go in a completely different direction, and he wrote his own ending...

He knows when you've been sleeping,  
He knows when you're awake;  
He knows if you've been bad or good,  
We're in a surveillance state!

## MATERIALISM CAN'T ACCOUNT FOR MEANING OR REASON

Sam Harris, one of "the four horsemen" of atheism, wrote a book about how man had no free will. His argument made some sense, if there is no supernatural and no God. Then all we are is just the matter that we're made of, which will interact as it will with the environment around it.

However, after writing his book, Harris went on a book tour to promote it – to try to *convince* people to buy it. During the presentations he also encouraged people to treat prisoners more kindly because, since they lacked free will, they couldn't help what they did. As his "no free will" position argued, their misdeeds weren't the result of choices they'd made but just the chemistry that they amounted to.

Harris' audiences didn't recognize that his clemency request rebutted his presentation. He was asking us to *choose* to be nicer to the prisoners, because *choices* don't exist? Harris should have read more Chesterton and Lewis.

"If the materialist view is true, our minds must in reality be merely chance arrangements of atoms in skulls. We never think a thought because it is true, only because blind Nature forces us to think it. We never do an act because it is right, only because blind Nature forces us to do it." – C.S. Lewis

"The great human dogma, then, is that the wind moves the trees. The great human heresy is that the trees move the wind. When people begin to say that the material circumstances have alone created the moral circumstances, then they have prevented all possibility of serious change. For if my circumstances have made me wholly stupid, how can I be certain even that I am right in altering those circumstances?" – G.K. Chesterton





# HOW TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE:

*Knowing, and participating in, the greatest (true) story*

*I had always felt life first as a story: and if there is a story there is a story-teller.*

- G.K. CHESTERTON

by Mark Slomp

There's a phrase in popular culture – "I'm living my best life." It captures the human desire to experience a fulfilling life. Advertising companies, film industry executives, recording artists, and popular culture teach us that the best life is one with white teeth, exciting vacations, the newest car, and living a life true to oneself. They are pitching a vision and story of how the best life can be obtained and are inviting us – enticing us – to run after the storylines they present.

But there is a remarkable verse in the Bible – one that speaks about "living our best life." It is a countercultural verse that offers a doorway into understanding how to truly flourish.

John 10:10 tells us that Jesus Christ

came "that we may have life and have it to the full." Life to the full – our best life – we are told, is found in Jesus Christ. The "best life" that Jesus promises is a reality for followers of Jesus Christ through the eternal life He promises, and we can begin to experience it already in this life too.

How can we begin to live, already now, the "life to the full" that Jesus promises? When we know, and step into, the only real and true story – the glorious story that fits with reality – that God Himself is writing. When we say that we want to "live our best life" we are saying that we want our lives to be a beautiful story filled with adventure, love, purpose, meaning, connection, and joy. What God tells us in John 10:10 is that the

only story that will fulfill all those longings is our participation in the story He is writing.

What is the story that God is writing? It can be divided into four broad "chapters," with each chapter providing insights vital to the well-lived, flourishing life. The four broad chapters are:

1. Creation
2. Fall
3. Redemption
4. Restoration

The following will explore each of these chapters, and their implications for the flourishing life.

# How can we begin to live, already now, the “life to the full” that Jesus promises?

in water, but they die quickly when they are out of their element. This is similar for human beings. We only thrive when we live according to how we have been designed.

Thankfully, God’s opening creation “chapter” answers many of the biggest questions of life, such as: Who are we? Why are we here? And for what purposes have we been designed? It is in understanding the God-given answers to these foundational questions that we flourish.

The Bible teaches us that living in certain ways leads to death and living in other ways leads to life. As we read in Jeremiah, “For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water” (2:13). Elsewhere we read: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Prov. 16:25). Some paths to the “best life” are empty vessels, but others are fountains of living waters. The path to life involves, in part, living according to our design.

So what are we told in the creation story about our identity, design, and purpose?

We are told that we are created in God’s image with dignity and worth, and we are designed to walk with God, to pursue holiness, and to seek His honor and glory above all. We are created male and female and to live within these identities as they have been assigned to us individually by God. We are created to live in community and to seek the welfare of others. We are designed to form and fill the earth and to continue the creative work of the Ultimate Creator.

The creation “chapter” tells us that God created the world beautiful and good, and He created you and me in His

image and with a glorious purpose. We thrive when we live according to God’s design for us and pursue the truth, beauty, and goodness found in Him.

## 2. FALL

The next chapter, on Man’s fall into sin, also answers some of the big questions of life. It explains why the world is not as it could be, or should be, and where the solutions to this reality are found. Unless your head is buried in the sand it is hard to miss the brokenness of this world. As Malcolm Muggeridge once noted, the depravity of man is the most empirically verifiable reality (and ironically, also one of the most intellectually resisted facts). And this brokenness is found both within and outside of us.

To consider the extent of the brokenness within, reflect on how hard it is to forgive. God tells us that He forgives us so completely that He “removes our sins as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12) and yet how often do we not hold tightly to grudges.

As for the brokenness outside of us, consider that historians generally agree that there has not been a single year in human history that did not contain war (which they describe as a conflict causing more than a thousand deaths). Not one solitary year in the thousands of years of human existence has been filled with universal peace. How can a person flourish when there is so much misery in the world? Simply put, the beauty of the gospel story is that it helps us understand the brokenness and put it into the context of a larger story.

The Fall “chapter” gives us context because it rightly describes the problem so that we can apply the right solution. In my work as a psychologist, I have routinely observed the need to explore, in detail, the nature of the problems and issues people present to me because

## 1. CREATION

Last summer I caught a beautiful cutthroat trout while flyfishing. Knowing others would never believe I caught such a large fish without photographic proof (I’m known to be slightly enthusiastic about things), I spent a few moments taking pictures of the fish. When I put it back in the water to release it, it floated upside down and drifted deep into a large pool of water. I felt a tinge of sorrow that the fish was seemingly dying, and I felt more than a tinge of dread that I would have to wade armpit deep into the cold water to try retrieve and revive it. Thankfully, the fish spared me the frigid inconvenience when it caught a second wind, and with a flash of its tail, was gone. Fish thrive

it is only when the precise nature of the problem is understood that an effective remedy can be applied. And this is true of any work. My son is a commercial refrigeration mechanic and the favorite aspect of the job for him is problem-solving customers' issues – fully exploring why their refrigeration equipment is not functioning properly so that he can ensure that the solution he applies will, in fact, address the heart of the issue. In a similar way, to have the best chance of flourishing, you must understand the nature of the problems you face in your life (in your relationships, workplace, church, or family, etc.) so that you can gain proper perspective and apply appropriate solutions.

The Fall chapter illustrates how sin has destroyed the shalom that God provided in the creation chapter. Sin in our hearts, and in the hearts of others, does not surprise us (and when it is a surprise it often produces traumatic effects) but it directs us to the only comfort and solution as found in Jesus Christ.

We need to humble ourselves before God (and others) and seek the solutions to our brokenness (and to the brokenness around us) in Him and in His revealed Word. Only God can redeem our suffering and pain. At the same time, we can live in the hope that the brokenness in and around us is not the enduring reality of the world, and neither is the resulting pain. Goodness, beauty, and truth are the ultimate reality.

### 3. REDEMPTION

Recently, I was talking with another psychologist about the topic of flourishing, and he said something striking to me – “flourishing is knowing that you are always okay.” I’ve thought a lot about his comment since then and even though I do not know whether he is a practicing Christian or not, there is a great deal of truth in this statement. There is an unshakeable peace in your soul when you know that, despite your feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, uncertainty, sin, and suffering you are ultimately always okay. Without such bedrock assurance human beings

are prone to anxiety, depression, and insecurity. But the redemption chapter tells us that, in Jesus Christ, you are always okay, and you are always, completely, loved.

Research in psychology has demonstrated that children can only thrive when they have a secure base of attachment (called attachment theory). If children feel safe and loved, they present as calm and curious and willing to take risks and explore the world around them. But if children feel unsafe and unloved, they present as anxious, hostile, and withdrawn. Human beings need a secure attachment to flourish. The redemption “chapter” describes the rock, the foundation, the refuge, the secure attachment of our lives. In Christ we are completely safe and deeply loved. In *Stumbling Towards Eternity*, Josh White writes,

“My Christian life did not begin to open up until I truly believed in the depth of my being that on my worst day, Jesus is crazy about me. It’s not just Jesus but the triune God who loves and who is love.”

Or as Tim Keller wrote in *The Meaning of Marriage*:

“The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”

As Os Guinness has rightly noted, “the ultimate reality behind the universe is love” – a God that loves so deeply that He died for your sins, dear reader, and mine. When we let that reality sink deep into our hearts and minds, peace and joy enter our souls. And peace and joy are foundational to flourishing.

The redemption “chapter” tells us that in Jesus Christ, we are deeply loved – and nothing can separate us from that love – “neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation”

(Romans 8:38-39). Flourishing comes from embracing this reality, loving others as we have been loved, and living a life of thankfulness and gratitude – two practices secular psychologists have overwhelmingly demonstrated to correlate with the flourishing life.

### 4. RESTORATION

Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, and eminent psychologist, once famously wrote that “Those who have a ‘why’ to live, can bear with almost any ‘how.’” But an even bigger truth is that those who know the end of the story



can bear with any what. My wife is a big reader. But she has a reading habit that I have never understood. She reads the final pages of a book before she begins reading the first pages. She likes to know how things work out in the end before she immerses herself in the drama of the story. There is great comfort in knowing the end of a story during the ups and downs of the narrative.

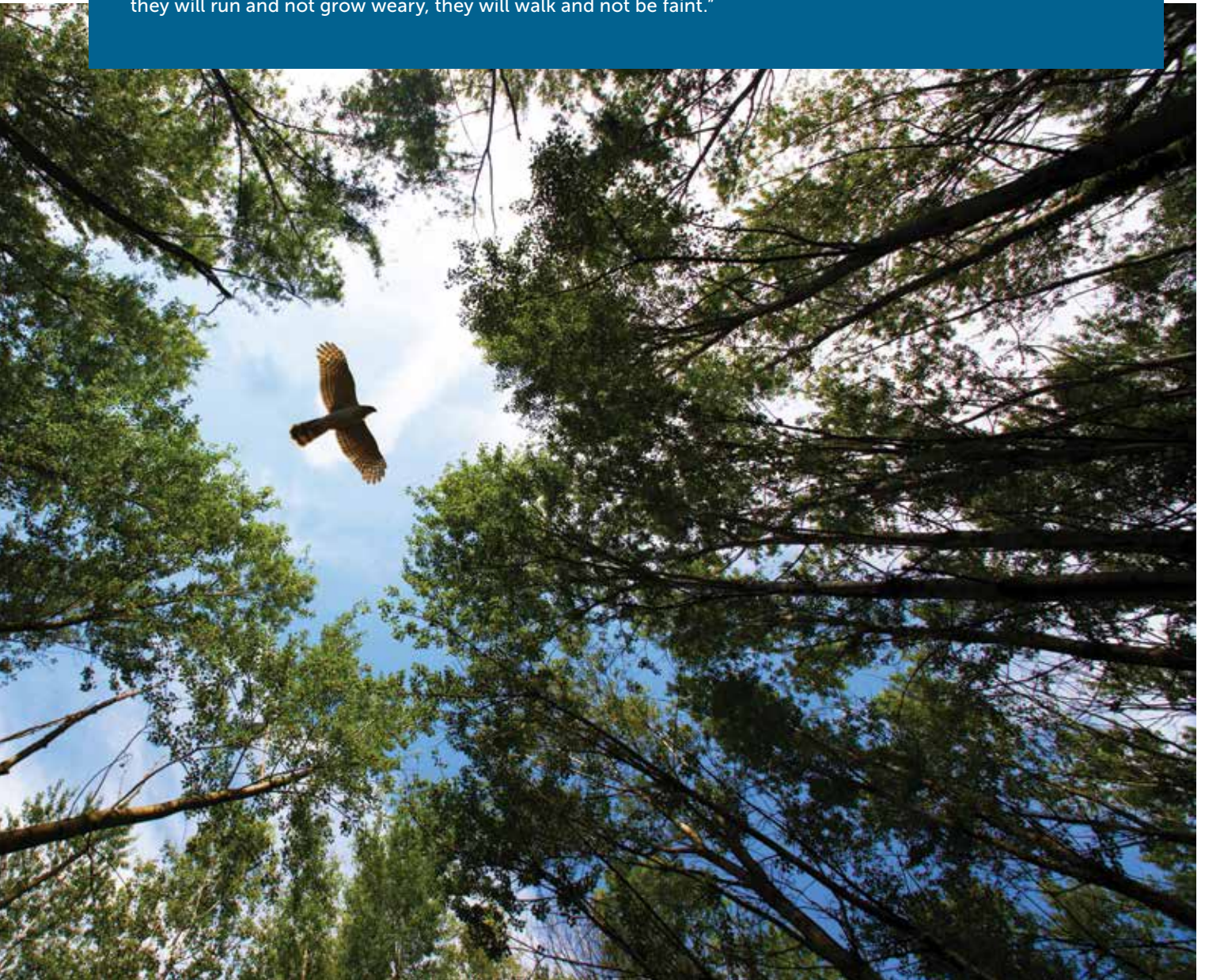
The same is infinitely truer of our own life stories. Not long ago, several

people were killed in a Christian school in Nashville, Tennessee by a deranged shooter. One of the children was the daughter of a local pastor, Chad Scruggs. Just weeks before his daughter was murdered, he preached a sermon on John 11, and he focussed on the assurance found in that passage that “the middle of a hard story looks different when you know how the story ends.” That perspective must have provided him with incredible comfort in the wake

of the personal tragedy he experienced. That is the beauty of the gospel. Despite what we may suffer in our lives because of the brokenness both within us, and outside of us, we know how the story ends and we do not “grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). By God’s grace, we already know the end of the story that God is writing – God is “working to make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

The title of Daniel Nayeri’s beautiful

God assures us that: “those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”



(and funny) book, *Everything Sad is Untrue*, could be an alternative title to the restoration “chapter” as it conveys the power of Revelation 21:5 in supplying hope, courage, joy, and peace to our lives – even amid the most difficult circumstances. In his book, Daniel tells an account of his families’ experience of persecution in Iran, and the hardships they faced, due to his mother’s conversion to Christianity. Daniel marvels at the strength his mother displayed despite the hardships she faced, and he writes,

“I don’t know how my mom was so unstoppable despite all that stuff happening. I dunno. Maybe it’s anticipation. Hope. The anticipation that the God who listens in love will one day speak justice. The hope that some final fantasy will come to pass that will make everything sad untrue. Unpainful. That across rivers of sewage and blood will be a field of yellow flowers blooming. You can get lost there and still be unafraid. No one will chase you off of it. It’s yours. A father who loves you planted it for you. A mother who loves you watered it. And maybe there are other people there, but they are all kind. Or better than that, they are right with each other. They treat each other right. If you have that, maybe you keep moving forward.”

Knowing that “everything sad will one day be untrue,” that across the “rivers of sewage and blood will be a field of yellow flowers blooming,” that one day all injustices will be made right, every disability will evaporate, every hurt will be removed, and every tear will be wiped away (Rev. 21:4), provides a hope that will not fail.

Without hope, people perish. The psychologist referenced earlier, Victor Frankl, observed that this was the case in the horror of the death camps of WWII as well. Those without hope died much sooner than those with hope.

God did not leave us without the kind of hope that sustains and strengthens even in the darkest circumstances. God assures us that:

“those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Is. 40:31)

As J.C. Ryle has said about hope, “I am more convinced as I grow older, that to keep our eyes fixed on the second coming of Christ is the secret of Christian peace.” The flourishing life is internalizing, amid the hurts and pain we experience in this life, what we are promised in 1 Cor. 2:9: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” – “a field of yellow flowers blooming.”

God is making all things new and He will restore the shalom of paradise. Even more, He invites us to participate in His beautiful work of restoration by being reconcilers and by being agents of His justice, mercy, love, truth, and goodness in all the roles and circumstances in which He places us. In Chuck Colson’s eloquent words,

“In every action we take, we are doing one of two things: we are either helping to create hell on earth or helping to bring down a foretaste of heaven. We are either contributing to the broken condition of the world or participating with God in transforming the world to reflect his righteousness.” (*How Now Shall We Live?*)

Participating in God’s work brings life to the world around you, but it also brings life to your own heart, soul, and mind.


## SOME FINAL WORDS

To summarize, I want to share one last important thought about finding the flourishing life in Jesus Christ.

I recently listened to a woman, Gianna Jessen, who survived an abortion attempt in 1977 tell her story. She described how doctors used a saline solution to try to end her mother’s pregnancy – and her life. She endured

this saline “bath” for 18 hours in the womb. But miraculously, she survived. However, because of the method of abortion used, she was born with cerebral palsy due to lack of oxygen. She made the point that often children with disabilities or deformities are aborted due to the justification that they will not have a high quality of life (or any form of the “best life”). But then she also said something that served to fundamentally enrich my understanding of the flourishing life. She said (a rough paraphrase of her words):

“Do you know what it is like to live with cerebral palsy every day and struggle with every movement? It means that you must depend upon God at every moment. And do you know what it means when you must depend upon God at every moment and for every movement? It means that you become a friend of God. And do you know what it means when you are a friend of God? It means that you have the highest quality of life.”

God, in His grace, has invited us to be a part of the greatest story ever told. Knowledge of, and participation in this Great Story of truth, goodness, and beauty, is the “fountain of living water” and the “life to the full.” Accept no substitutes. Instead, know this story deeply. Let it permeate your heart and mind and participate in it with all your being. Even amid brokenness, you will be able to say that you are “living your best life.” 

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## What About You?

While our Triune God continues to open doors in the midst of a very "closed door" political climate, He calls us to serve prayerfully. We need your help. Consider partnering with Bonisa to promote the Lord's cause in this vast nation.



## About Us

Bonisa Mission is an interdenominational organization seeking to bring a compassionate Christian witness in the nation of China, grounded in the historic Reformed and experiential tradition so faithfully summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards.

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"But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me." Matthew 14:16b-18



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by Marty VanDriel



# WORLD GONE WOKE



*This is an overview of “World Gone Woke,” Episode #75 from Lucas Holtvlüwer and Tyler Vanderwoude’s Real Talk podcast. Real Talk is a bi-weekly podcast of Reformed Perspective featuring great conversations on everything from propaganda to pornography. If you haven’t checked it out, you really should. And you really can, at [www.RealTalkPodcast.ca](http://www.RealTalkPodcast.ca).*

What does it mean to be “woke”? What challenges does the “woke” world present to the Church, and especially for the younger members of the body? *Real Talk*’s Lucas Holtvlüwer recently sat down with Pastor Greg Bylsma to talk about the “world gone woke,” and other challenges for Christians today.

Rev. Bylsma developed a passion for

evangelism as a teenager already, studying missions at Redeemer College, before becoming a theological student at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. He has served Living Water URC in Brantford, Ontario for the past thirteen years.

## **BEING WOKE SOUNDS GOOD**

In broad terms, Rev. Bylsma defined woke culture as the idea of becom-

ing *awakened* to all the prejudices and discriminations that exist in the world, and newly alerted to the effects of these prejudices on the downtrodden. “When you become ‘woke,’ you begin to see all the aggressions and ‘micro aggressions’ (against minority groups, non-traditional sexual identities, or different viewpoints)”

And when you are woke, you will

dedicate yourself to fighting this oppression, which exists whether or not others around you are woke enough to see it. The woke movement talks about “systemic racism” – prejudice against other beliefs and races that permeates all of our societal and governmental structures. The more woke one is, the more devoted one becomes to tearing down these structures and rebuilding a new world without prejudice or oppression.

Holtvlüwer noted that on the surface, this can sound good, and Rev. Bylsma agreed: of course we as Christians want to fight oppression and prejudice, and we must be opposed to all racism.

But the devil is in the details: when Satan and the world use what seems to be a righteous cause, to tear down the Judeo-Christian foundations of a society, the result is chaos where “everyone does what is right in his own eyes.”

## HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH THE WOKE MOVEMENT IN THE CHURCH?

Rev. Bylsma recommended that Christians be very careful to examine what the underlying meanings are of slogans used by the woke movement: “‘Love is love’ is not a statement we can stand behind because of what it has come to mean.” It means that all types of sexual love are acceptable and must be allowed, which of course is in contrast with Biblical teaching.

“We can’t fly the gay pride flag, because it symbolizes acceptance of homosexuality as not sinful,” he noted. One of the tools Rev. Bylsma recommended was the “New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality” written by Rev. Chris Gordon, which cuts through a lot of the confusion around sexuality and gender, using clear Biblical instruction. (The Catechism is available in RP’s June-Aug 2022 issue, at [ReformedPerspective.ca/magazine](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/magazine).)

At the same time, we want to recognize that all sinners are called to repentance, and people who are living a homosexual lifestyle are sinners that we should want to see saved to renewal in Christ. “We should be welcoming to LGBTQ people, we should want to preach the Gospel to them... But we can’t pretend that sin is OK,” the pastor explained.

*Holtvlüwer noted that on the surface, [woke] can sound good, and Rev. Bylsma agreed*



Bylsma continued, “The Bible differentiates between one who is a sinner who is not a believer, and one who is a believer but continues in sin.” He referenced especially 1 Corinthians 5 where Paul differentiates between the sexually immoral, the greedy, and the swindlers who are of the world, from those continuing in sin who claim to be Christians – those who bear the name of brother.

“We are not to associate with those who claim to be Christians who also persist in sin and say that this is OK. We can and should walk away from those who persist in sin and claim to be Christ’s.”

Rev. Bylsma also noted that Paul puts sexual immorality on the same plane as greed and swindling – so it’s not *the* great sin; it’s just like greed, just like swindling. It is a sin like other sins.

But Christians who insist that being a practicing homosexual is OK, or that changing genders is acceptable, can’t be treated the same as one who is ignorant of the Bible.

“[If you’re] dealing with someone in your friend group, and they’re claiming to be gay, or a girl claiming to be a boy, and they say they’re a Christian, and there’s nothing wrong with what they’re doing... the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 5 that we should have nothing to do with that person. First, we follow the rule of Matthew 18, but if they refuse to accept admonition,

refuse to accept that this is sin, then we no longer have a relationship with that person.”

This is different from someone who is questioning their sexuality, or questioning their gender.

“If they’re wrestling with these things, and they’re a friend, then we continue to talk with them. [We should steer] them towards good advice (a pastor, a parent, a Christian counselor)... Don’t shun them; keep them in your connections. Be a friend! You don’t have to be a Christian counselor. Especially young people should not think they need to be the counselor themselves...”

Let’s recognize that we all have areas in which we struggle with sin, especially sexual temptation. We should not excuse our own sinful tendencies. We all need Christ; we all need the same Savior.

## WHAT’S COMING, AND HOW TO BE PREPARED

Holtvlüwer wondered what might be coming next in terms of the woke movement, and how we can prepare for it.

“I don’t know what’s coming,” replied Rev. Bylsma.

“But Canada is moving ahead very fast with woke ideology. Faster than Europe for example. Friends from Holland recently said ‘We can’t believe how woke Canada is!’ In the U.S., there is strong pushback against the woke agenda (but that push) is not here in Canada.

“We may go into a greater time of persecution, where we can see the Church sanctified and purified. The Church will be tempted to compromise on what is called ‘non-essentials.’ The Church cannot do so, we must hold to God’s Word. If it means being shut down, going to meet underground, worshipping out in the fields, we must do so. We may see the Church split based on her stand for scriptural truth. Businesses may lose work, jobs, income, because they won’t support LGBTQ agendas, won’t put the gay flags out. On the other hand, we

could see a counter swing as people see what is coming and how far it's gone (for example drag queens reading to children).”

God may give persecution, or a temporary stay – but either way, the Church's response must be uncompromised allegiance to the gospel, and diligence and vigilance in making Christ known, and calling the nations to follow Him.

### REAL LIFE RELATIONSHIPS

Rev. Bylsma is worried that so many people, in particular the young, are heavily influenced by social media and “electronic friends” as opposed to real, in-the-flesh friendships.

“The gospel deals with real people, real neighbors; gospel ministry is real people, getting to know your neighbors, speaking to people, hearing where they're at. This whole Internet world destroys those connections. We need to teach our kids to have real relationships with real people. Away from artificial intelligence, away from virtual relationships, or following remote YouTube teachers.”

Holtvliwer pointed out that many young people who are struggling with sexual identity are also spending time alone, researching things online, spending a lot of time under the influence of non-Christians. Positive, real-life friendships with fellow believers can go a long way in keeping one grounded in the foundations we have been taught at church, school and home.

### SOME CONCLUSIONS

Holtvliwer and Bylsma touched on other topics as well, including whether or not the Church should withdraw from the world in response to the anti-Christian culture around us. And they also addressed finding joy in suffering for the Name.

Ultimately, Rev. Bylsma finds the answers to the woke movement, and to an increasingly hostile world, to be the same as they always have been for Christians:

*... many young people who are struggling with sexual identity are also spending time alone ...*

”


“The answers may be more basic, and more difficult, than we might assume. How do we prepare for what's coming? Love the Lord, love His Word, love His Church, love the lost. No matter what guise the devil takes, the answers are always Christ.

“...How do we get through this? Reflect on 2 Timothy 3: ‘All of scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable, is edifying, to thoroughly equip the man of God for every good work’ – including today! Love the Word of God, study it honestly, take time to be with the Lord, take time to be in prayer, bring your kids to God in prayer, bring

your lost neighbors to God in prayer, strive to be faithful in allowing the Spirit to talk to your heart and convict you of where you're falling into sin. Pray the prayer of David (from Psalm 139): ‘Search me, oh God, and know my heart, try me and know my anxious thoughts, see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’”

Bylsma concluded:

“Christ is always the Victor, He is always the King, He will never lose a sheep from His hand. Draw near to Him, love Him, love His Word. You don't have to listen to a thousand podcasts, you don't have to read a thousand books. Dig into the Scriptures, tackle this honestly, ask questions... Iron will sharpen iron, and the Lord will bless.

“[Satan] is a scary monster, but Christ has got His foot over (the devil's) neck, and He's about to stamp. Remember Romans 16: the Lord will soon crush the devil under your feet. Be humble, prayerful, and courageous, and bold as a lion, because the devil flees when we resist him... Stick to the basics and press on!” 



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# Joanne Stoffels is on a treasure hunt

## INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman



Smithers, BC artist Joanne Stoffels believes life is a treasure hunt for beauty. And she finds an endless source of inspiration right outside her window in ever-changing mountains, dramatic cloudscapes, tiny blue forget-me-not blooming in her garden, and in the fragile, fleeting beauty of the cherry blossom. Scanning for compositions and framing scenes through windows has become a way of life for Joanne: “My six children, all grown now, and my patient husband humor me as they are called once again to observe the magnificence and share the joy.”

Stoffels “sees” paintings while singing the Psalms, or reading Scripture. She often feels as though a painting is just “waiting to burst forth from the edges of my imagination – abstract colors and shapes moving across the page.” The term *gloryscope* (something she picked up from pastor and author Paul Tripp) resonates deeply with Joanne

and she hopes that her artistic creations will draw others closer to the wonders of the true Creator.

Stoffels started to paint about 10 years ago, sticking mostly to subjects which she has personally experienced. Mountains, forests and the alpine feature prominently. “Many of my paintings are of places that hold a special memory. Some work is more representational, some leans more to ‘abstract landscape.’”

Stoffels is curious about other artists’ experiences too. Especially in her first years of art, she explored the work of Emily Carr and the Group of Seven. “The writings of Emily Carr gave me a feeling of kinship, ‘trying to get that joyous worshipping into the woods and mountains, the works of the Lord.’” She admires the way the Group of Seven in particular have captured our immense, glorious country in a “bold and raw new kind of art.”

Currently Joanne works when she can in her dining room/studio whenever inspiration strikes.

“Our home has quite a creative, relaxed vibe to it. An easel might be up and the table littered with supplies for several weeks before we tidy it all up again, scrape paint from the table, and use it for guests or family dinner.”

She sells her work privately and through a thriving artisan shop in Smithers, called *Out of Hand*. You can follow Joanne on Instagram [@paintingsbyjoannestoffels](#). You can also connect with the artist by email at [pinescape@gmail.com](mailto:pinescape@gmail.com). Also, some of her work has been transformed into stickers, available on her daughter Montana’s [blueskyartshop.square.site store](#). 



### ◀ Late Summer

12" x 36" | Acrylic on canvas

This bright piece captures a late summer sunset from our driveway. In the evening the world melts into blocks of color.

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

**Alpine Lakes Hyland**

24" x 48" | Acrylic on canvas

The use of palette knife in this piece captures the raw, rugged landscape. The vibrant colours really can feel that bright.



▲ **Music on the Mountain** | 24" x 30" | 2017

Acrylic on canvas

This painting captures a moment. The reference photo includes a small group hiking back from the mountain alpine carrying violins and a cello. A piano had been placed up there for the summer and we had just enjoyed a time of Music on the Mountain. A rich, beautiful memory from the height of alpine flower season.



▲ **Hyland Pass** | 36" x 48" | 2016 | Acrylic on canvas

This is the destination of a favorite hike in the Babine Mountains. It's a bright, stylized and, to me, representational painting. It captures the clear air and the chill of the mountain lake. My ambitious daughter has turned this piece into my most popular sticker.



**Kleanza Creek** | 18" x 36"

Acrylic on canvas

Clear, cool, shade and light; Kleanza Creek near Terrace, BC is a spectacular stop along the highway. The lighting in this scene challenged me.



▲ **Isaiah 61** | 24" x 48" | 2023

Acrylic on canvas

The Spirit pouring down; the Christ task to bind up, free, release, comfort and provide for. The gift of a crown of beauty. Many of these words are etched in this painting under multiple layers. It poured out of a favorite text.



# GIFTS

A gift isn't only bought with money or taken down from the shelf; It's also something within you already, that you can give to someone else:

A smile to a stranger who's walking on the street;



A meal for the homeless who have nothing good to eat.



Some cookies to the mother who just had baby number five,





ITEM Search

How many of each of the following items can you find on the Come + Explore pages?

- ICEBLOCKS
- SCARVES
- CLOUDS
- BOWTIES
- TOQUES
- HATS

A card for the man in church who just lost his beloved wife.



A playdate for the kid at school who's always sitting by himself,




A helping hand for the lady who's struggling to reach the shelf.



memory work:

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."  
1 Peter 4 : 10



Some hot cocoa for the neighbor  
who always looks a little sad,



A listening ear and attentive eyes  
when you talk to mom and dad.



A picture for your Oma  
to show her that you care,



What do you call a cold  
penguin?  
- a brrrr-d.

A visit to your grandad  
with some silly jokes to share.



An encouraging word to others  
to help them to succeed;



A helping hand around the house  
whenever you see a need.

DON'T EAT YELLOW SNOW!  
But you can eat this instead....

Blend together 1 anise cube  
and 1 cup of sugar.  
Sprinkle on top of buttered toast!  
YUMMY!



Sometimes we get so focused  
on ourselves and our desires,  
We forget to think of others  
and fail to do what God requires.

To love our neighbor as ourself  
reflects Christ's love for us.  
Remember that God's greatest gift  
was given on the cross!

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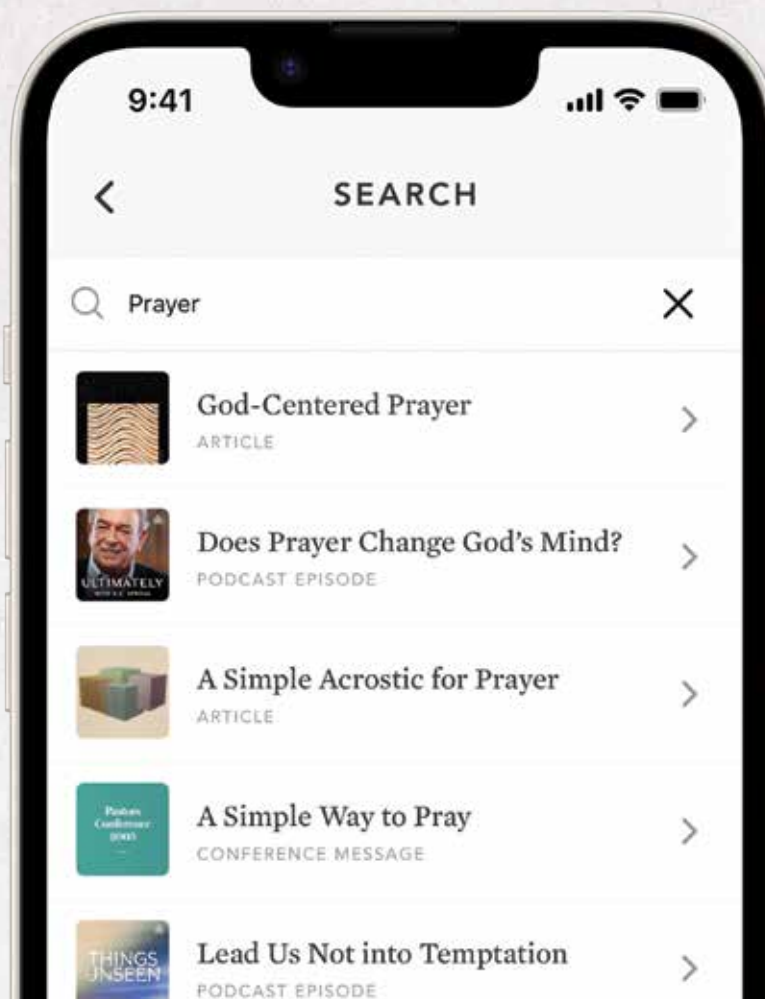
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# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

## PUZZLE CLUES

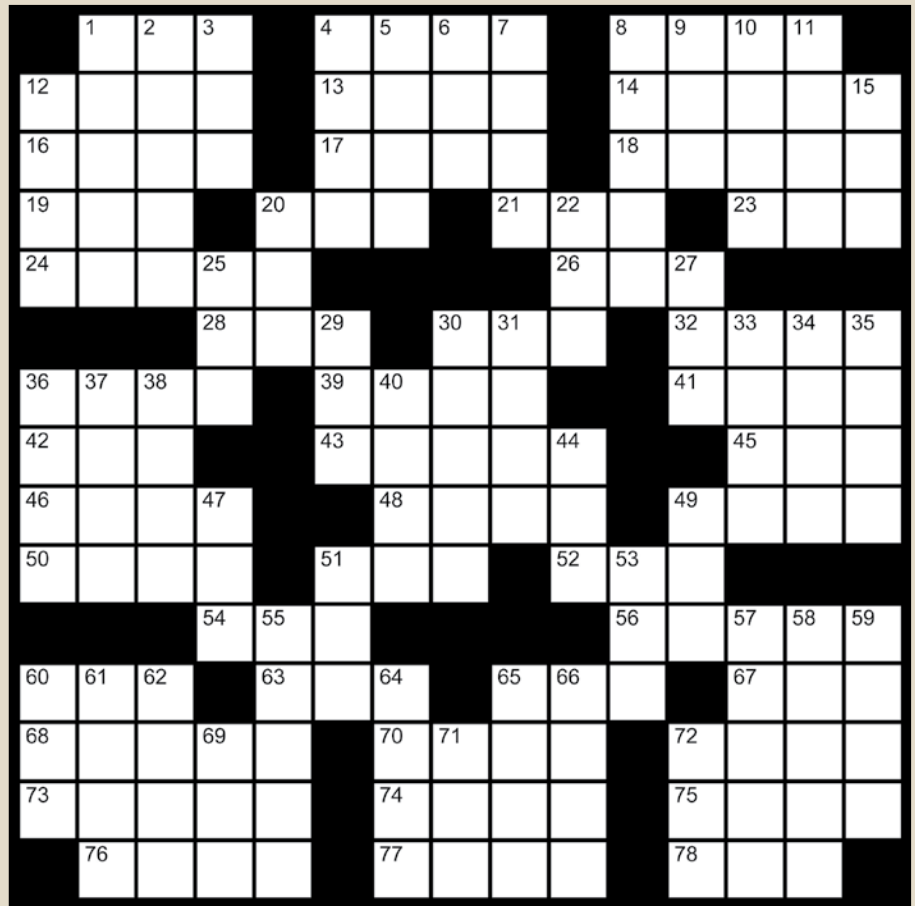
Find this issue's solution on page 2!

### ACROSS

1. Vietnamese soup
4. He was overthrown by the Bolsheviks.
8. Deep singer
12. Toothed wheel
13. Native American in Arizona
14. Happen
16. Opposite (or synonym?) of 64 Down
17. King David took care of them. (Ps. 78)
18. Hollow mineral body found in another rock
19. "So he \_\_\_ on ahead" (Luke 19)
20. "the lying \_\_\_ of the scribes" (Jer. 8)
21. The Great \_\_\_ War of 1932 (a real thing!)
23. Recipe abbreviation
24. Project \_\_\_\_\_ - WWII Allied codebreakers
26. Stinging caterpillar - but also a snake
28. "writing... an \_\_\_ commandment" (1 John)
30. Bite that's only a little worse than the bark
32. "\_\_\_\_, I am a widow..." (2 Sam. 14)
36. Lively joy; great delight
39. Russian composer \_\_\_ Stravinsky (or Dr. Frankenstein's assistant)
41. Title of Julie Andrews and Helen Mirren
42. What you need to have a row
43. "Wake Up, Little \_\_\_\_\_" (1957 song)
45. "not more than eight or \_\_\_ days" (Acts 25)
46. "the \_\_\_ was burning, yet..." (Ex. 3)
48. Flat-topped hill: Attractive? It's a butte!
49. "I wonder where the yellow \_\_\_\_\_" (1948 ad)
50. "This \_\_\_\_\_ pleased Haman" (Esther 5)
51. One of the sci. courses, so we say
52. Note before 54 Across
54. Note before "a drop of golden sun"
56. "telling the truth... not \_\_\_\_\_" (1 Tim. 2)
60. "We \_\_\_\_\_" (Kari Jobe song)
63. "I will cut off... the \_\_\_\_\_ horse" (Zech. 9)
65. Mary's relationship to Jesus
67. Girl's name meaning "ewe"
68. Type of wave or bore
70. "\_\_\_\_\_ the demons believe" (James 2)
72. A doubloon is nailed to it in *Moby Dick*.
73. \_\_\_\_\_ Zola - author of *J'Accuse*
74. "This is I, Hamlet the \_\_\_\_\_!" (Shakespeare)
75. When the planes are supposed to arrive
76. Proofreading word meaning "let it stand"
77. "It's your birthday! The tickets are \_\_\_ \_\_\_!"
78. Abbreviation on an application form

### DOWN

1. Relating to punishment of criminals
2. "I wish I \_\_\_\_\_ cried so much," cried Alice."
3. Spanish gold
4. "How do I love \_\_\_\_\_?" (famed poem opening)
5. "\_\_\_\_\_ much, and harvested little." (Hag. 1)
6. Mimic (to monkey around with someone?)
7. "After three days, I will \_\_\_\_\_." (Matt. 27)
8. Fake; totally unreal, man!
9. Tennis pro, who may be able to hit one
10. Resident of a "land" named after him?
11. "\_\_\_\_\_ in the Bucket" (country song)
12. Expert
15. Do many of this to get a good one.
20. Friend; food for man's best friend?
22. GPS, retro style
25. Half of a court case overturned in 2022
27. You put a mouse or a note on it.
29. Put down; insult (slang)
30. Too interested in others' business
31. Girl in the flower of youth in her own eye?
33. "in vain you... go \_\_\_\_\_ to rest" (Ps. 127)
34. Last word of a minister
35. "they \_\_\_\_\_ Peter and John" (Acts 8)
36. Cold Asian desert - partly good, partly big
37. *Praise* the Anglican Archbishop William \_\_\_\_\_?
38. Celtic language of Scotland and Ireland
40. You can flap them or brush them.
44. "who \_\_\_\_\_ the flesh of my people" (Mic. 3)
47. Opposite of 2 Down
49. "Consider... their \_\_\_\_\_ of life" (Heb. 13)
51. It's bean served by those who carrot all.
53. Slippery tree
55. Type of moth or baby bird
57. "\_\_\_\_\_ that angry man as very \_\_\_\_\_!"
58. Literal meaning of 30 Down?
59. Receives, or understands
60. "I \_\_\_\_\_ no delicacies" (Dan. 10)
61. Basketball hoops; glasses' frames
62. Suggest changes and corrections
64. Opposite (or synonym?) of 16 Across
65. It has choice eating choices.
66. They're no longer in Canadian cash drawers.
69. Drink containing ginger
71. Soccer mom's favorite ride



### URCHIN OF THE RIDING STARS

BY M.I. MCALLISTER  
2021 / 299 PAGES



Hedgehogs, otters, moles, and squirrels all live together in the same island kingdom under the good King Brushen. But all is not well in the kingdom of Mistmantle – there are “cullings” being done to the newborn handicapped children.

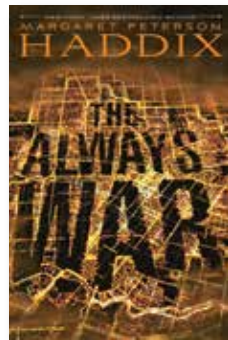
The young Urchin is very much opposed, but his heroes, Captains Crispin and Padra, don’t seem to be doing anything to stop it, and the third captain, Husk, seems to be enjoying it! So who are the good guys then? Who can Urchin turn to for help to save these children? It turns out some of the good guys are indeed good, but, on the other hand, some turn out to be really, really bad.

The evil in this book parallels that of abortion and euthanasia (which has me thinking the author is Christian), and it may be a bit disturbing for some pre-teen readers. But the story gets to be quite the rollicking adventure soon enough, full of courtly intrigue, conspiracies, and heroes being heroic.

The God of this story is referred to as “the Heart.” This spiritual element isn’t huge, but it is persistent, and doesn’t stray into anything weird or wacky. The only caution would be that an otherwise entertaining second book in the series has an agenda-pushing, albeit passing, mention of a female priest. The first book stands well enough on its own, so in our house, I think we’re going to start and stop with number one.

### THE ALWAYS WAR

BY MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX  
2011 / 197 PAGES



*The Always War* is set in a world that has been in a constant war for the last 75 years. We meet Tessa at a celebration for a young war hero named Gideon that doesn’t go as expected; instead of accepting his award, Gideon runs off. But why? As Tessa begins to discover, Gideon doesn’t think he’s a hero because he did his aerial combat from behind a computer – he was flying a drone. And he’s discovered that instead of hitting a legitimate military target, he seems to have hit a civilian marketplace.

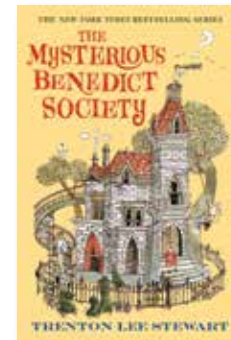
Distraught, Gideon is determined to fly down to the marketplace to offer his repentance, for whatever that’s worth. But when he arrives, nothing is as he expected. Where are the grieving crowds? What’s going on? What’s actually real?

The one caution relates to how God is not a part of this world. One of the themes is about discerning reality from what authorities *tell* us is real, and that the characters rely on their own wherewithal to figure it out makes a bit too much of Man. But that’s the biggest problem.

A good read for 12 and up so long as they have the patience to work through a mystery bit by bit – they will need to have a little patience to let the story unfold.

### THE MYSTERIOUS BENEDICT SOCIETY

BY TRENTON LEE STEWART  
2008 / 512 PAGES

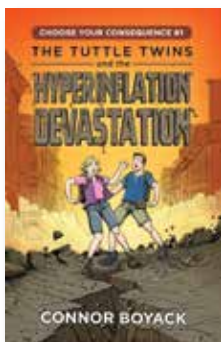


Reynie Muldoon is an 11-year-old orphan who might get a scholarship if he passes a special test. It might seem just a multiple-choice exam, but there’s more to it. I don’t want to give too much away, so I’ll share just one example. The children are told to take one pencil, and one pencil only; not any less or any more. Simple enough, except that the girl in front of Reynie manages to drop her pencil down a sewer grating. The exam is just about to begin, and she has no pencil. Reynie doesn’t have an extra pencil, so what can he do anyway? That’s when Reynie takes out his pencil and breaks it in half. Problem solved. All it took was some creative thinking by a kind soul. This book, and the series, are full of puzzles that involve not only clever thinking, but often thoughtfulness.

This first book is one of the most inventive I’ve read – dad will enjoy it right along with his kids. The series has 6 books in all, and I’d recommend the first two and last two, and give the middle couple a miss. In 3 and 4, one of the characters develops mind-reading abilities, which seems quite a cheat – how hard is it to outwit your enemies when you can read their minds? For more on the series, check out the longer version of this review at [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca).

## THE HYPERINFLATION DEVASTATION

BY CONNOR BOYACK  
2019 / 400 PAGES



Remember those “Choose Your Own Adventure” books back in the 1980s? Connor Boyack has taken that concept and created his “Choose Your Consequence” adventures to teach teens lessons about economics.

When 15-year-old twins Emily and Ethan Tuttle arrive in a small South American country, they see warnings about an impending earthquake, and it's here that readers face their first choice. Are the Tuttle twins going to have an incredibly short adventure and head back on the very next plane? Of course not, so onward and forward the adventure continues.

The author's economic outlook is a small government, libertarian one, which comes out in the lessons the twins learn. So, for example, in one story branch, they encounter some not-so-warm-hearted help – entrepreneurial sorts who will do them good...for a price. The twins sometimes get entirely altruistic help, but the point is, they also get help from people who wouldn't otherwise be helpful, except that it is in their own self-interest to do so.

Thankfully, Boyack doesn't beat readers over the head with the lessons he's trying to teach.

The one caution deals with the author, not this book. As a Mormon, he writes from a generally Judeo-Christian, libertarian perspective. Often times, those two perspectives match up quite nicely since both recognize that the government shouldn't try to be God. But in Boyack's other books, his libertarian perspective can override his Judeo-Christian perspective. But that's not a big concern here. Recommended for 10 to 15.

## THE DARK FAITH

BY JEREMIAH W. MONTGOMERY  
2012 / 368 PAGES



I gave *The Dark Faith* to my oldest daughter, knowing only that it was by an OPC minister. The cover looked a bit dark and ominous, but I figured *It's by a Reformed pastor, so how freaky can it be?* I hadn't gotten to it yet because, well, I'd also figured *It's an epic fantasy novel by a Reformed pastor, so how good could it really be?*

I was wrong on both counts. This was really good, and quite freaky. My daughter was only a few chapters in when she gave me this update:

*“Dad, the main girl has just fallen into a well of blood!”*

*“Real blood?”*

*“Yeah, real blood!”*

*“Hmmm... maybe this isn't a good one to keep reading.”*

*“No Dad, it's okay. I can keep reading.”*

An OPC pastor writing about wells of blood? A couple of days later, and another update from my daughter: “They're going to skin this nun alive!” And then, “Oh Dad, there's something even worse!”

A story this freaky, that my squeamish daughter still wouldn't put down? I had to start reading it too... and it was so good I didn't stop until I was through the two sequels, *The Scarlet Bishop*, and *The Threefold Cord*.

Montgomery's *Dark Harvest* trilogy is set on a Great Britain-like island empire called Aeld Gowan, and the time is very pre-Reformation. The Church here isn't quite the bed of hypocrisy that got Luther going, but it attracts both the devout and the power-hungry eager to use its influence.

Our hero is a monk named Morumus, who turned to the Church for another reason: knowledge. When still a boy, Morumus saw his father, Raudron Red-Fist, and all his soldiers, slain by nightmarish creatures whose song rendered the men unable to raise their swords in defense. Now, as a grown man, Morumus thinks that whatever they were, these creatures likely followed the “Dark Faith” that once ruled the island. So Morumus wants to learn more, to prepare the Church for what might be coming.

What his learning has done, however, is make him an expert in languages, and now his archbishop wants him to translate Holy Writ into the language of peoples who might still follow the Dark Faith. His love for the Lord, and his obsession with solving the mystery of his father's murder seem to be converging!

There's just so much more, but space doesn't permit: palace intrigue, a compromised Church, cunning enemies, and unexpected friends. It's also very relevant for our own time, that has its own intrigue, compromise, and cunning.

The cautions concern the gore, especially a monastery scene in which slaughtered monks are found with their innards piled up on the plates in front of them (that's the scene my daughter was warning me about). So why did the author include that? I think to show the evil to be evil. And he is not glorying in the gore, as some writers do. That's why my 14-year-old could read it without getting too bothered, though this was a book she wouldn't read at night. These scenes are, however, why this might be better for 16 and up.

I'll also note how struck I was by how well-written it is – this would make for a great read-out-loud if only I could find an audience brave enough to listen. Epic, excellent, and insightful, telling an old tale that has lessons for our modern age. Two thumbs way up!

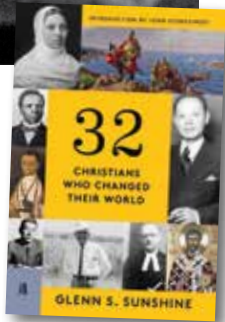


# Chiune Sugihara

*A Japanese bureaucrat who saved Jews*

by Glenn S. Sunshine

This is a chapter from Dr. Glenn Sunshine's "32 Christians Who Changed Their World" and is reprinted here with permission of the publisher.



In the mid- to late-1800s, Japan ended its long centuries of isolationism and opened to the outside world. Knowing the de facto loss of sovereignty in China to Western nations in the aftermath of the Opium Wars, Japan decided not to give the industrial powers an excuse to do the same to their country. They rapidly industrialized and patterned their government on superficially Western lines while preserving the existing power structure.

Then they started building their own empire, starting with taking Chinese cities following the model of the Western powers, and then moving on to take Korea and Manchuria (northeast China). After World War I, the Japanese continued to build their empire in China as well as setting their sights on other areas in the Pacific. Given that Britain, France, and the Netherlands all had interests in the western Pacific, the Japanese allied with Hitler on the principle that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Although the Japanese had a culture of obedience to superiors and especially to the emperor, at least one man and his wife gave their first allegiance to God over the empire. His name was Chiune Sugihara.

Sugihara was born into a middle-class family in Gifu Prefecture in Japan. His father, who was a physician, intended Chiune to go to medical school. Chiune had other plans, however: he intentionally failed his entrance exams by writing only his name on the tests. Instead of medical schools, he entered Waseda University in 1918, where he majored in English. While there, he joined *Yuai Gakusha*, a Christian fraternity.

In 1919, he passed the Foreign Ministry Scholarship exam and was soon sent to Harbin, a city in Manchuria, China, to study German and Russian. He graduated in 1924 with honors and was promptly hired by the Foreign Ministry as deputy foreign minister in Manchuria.

During this period, Sugihara joined the Russian Orthodox church and was baptized as Pavlo Sergeivich Sugihara. He married Klaudia Semionova Apollonova, a Russian woman, though they divorced in 1935 before his return to Japan.

While in Harbin, Sugihara was involved in negotiations with the Soviet Union over the Northern Manchuria Railway. Manchuria was under the control of Japan at this time, and Sugihara was disturbed by the poor treatment of the Chinese. He resigned in protest and returned to Japan.

Back home, Sugihara married Yukiko Kikuchi. The two would have four children. He was sent as a translator for the Japanese legation in Helsinki, Finland, in 1938. In March 1939, he was appointed vice-consul of the Japanese Consulate in Kaunas, Lithuania, where he was expected

to report on Soviet troop movements. What he actually did there, however, was far more important.

Kaunas was full of Polish Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis. One day, Sugihara was in a gourmet food shop. An eleven-year-old boy named Solly Ganor, the nephew of the shop's owner, was also there. His parents were Russian Jewish *menshevik* refugees. Solly was concerned about the fate of Polish Jews and had given all of his money and Hanukah *gelt* (money given as gifts during Hanukah) to aid them. But then he heard that a new Laurel and Hardy movie was showing in town, and so he went to visit his aunt Anushka in hopes of getting a *lit* (Lithuanian dollar) to go to the movie.

Sugihara overheard Solly and offered the boy money. Solly, who had never seen an Asian before, did not know what to make of this offer, so he mumbled that he couldn't accept money from strangers. Sugihara said that he should consider him his uncle for the holiday, and since that made him family, it would be alright to accept the money. Solly looked into the stranger's kind eyes and impulsively said that if he was his uncle, he should come to the family's celebration of the first night of Hanukah, 1939.

Sugihara and his wife were delighted to accept, and so they attended their first Jewish Hanukah celebration. They were warmly welcomed and long remembered the cakes, cookies, and desserts they had at the party.

Most of the evening was a warm celebration of the holiday. But Solly's family was housing a Polish refugee named Mr.



## *From July 31 to September 4, Sugihara began writing visas by hand at a rate of 300 per day. He did not even stop for meals...*

Rosenblatt. As the evening wore on, he talked about the slaughter of the Jews in Poland under the Nazis. He tearfully told of the bombing of his house, which killed his wife and children. His story had a tremendous impact on everyone, especially the Sugiharas.

The next day, Solly and his father visited Sugihara at the consulate. They found him phoning the Russians asking for visas to allow Jews to cross the border.

In summer 1940, the Soviets formally annexed Lithuania. The Jews were desperate to get exit visas to leave the country, and in July Sugihara was awakened by a crowd of hundreds of Jewish refugees standing outside the consulate. Sugihara wired Japan three times asking for permission to issue transit visas for the Jews. (A transit visa would allow the Jews to travel through Japan on their way to somewhere else.) Three times he was told not to issue visas unless they also had visas to go to another country.

Sugihara was in a difficult situation: if he issued the visas, he could be fired and disgraced; if he didn't, the Jews would die. He and Yukiko agreed that they needed to follow their consciences even though they knew it would cost him his position, and the two went to work.

From July 31 to September 4, Sugihara began writing visas by hand at a rate of 300 per day. He did not even stop for meals – he ate sandwiches that Yukiko left for him by his desk. He even made arrangements for the Soviets to transport the Jewish refugees via the Trans-Siberian Railroad (albeit at five times the normal price).

The refugees began to arrive by the thousands begging for visas. When some began to scale the walls of the consulate, Sugihara came out and promised them he would not abandon them.

And he didn't. When he was forced to leave Kaunas before the consulate was closed, Sugihara spent the entire night before writing visas. Eyewitnesses said that he continued to write them on the train, tossing them out of the windows as

he completed them. In the end, he simply signed and sealed blank visas to be filled in later.

As he was on the verge of departing, he said, "Please forgive me. I cannot write any more. I wish you the best." He bowed deeply to the crowds, and someone called, "Sugihara, we'll never forget you. I'll surely see you again."

No one knows exactly how many visas Sugihara wrote. Not all were used; some people waited until it was too late to leave. Others were for heads of households, so several people would travel under a single visa. The most commonly accepted number is that 6,000-10,000 Jews escaped the Holocaust because of Sugihara's actions. Today, somewhere between 40,000 and 80,000 people are descendants of the Jews saved by Sugihara.

Many of the refugees joined the Russian Jewish community in Kobe, Japan; others got transit visas organized by the Polish ambassador in Tokyo to a wide range of third countries, including to a Jewish community in Shanghai, China.

The Nazis wanted the Japanese to kill or send back the Jews, but the Japanese ignored their allies. Ironically, Nazi propaganda worked against them here: the Japanese had heard from the Nazis that the Jews were very good with business and finance, and so they thought that having them would be an asset to Japan. The Jews for their part also played up Nazi racism against Asians, which also made the Japanese less inclined to listen to Germany about exterminating the Jews.

Sugihara paid a price for his actions. He was posted to a variety of Eastern European posts during the war and was captured and imprisoned with his family by the Russians for eighteen months. They were released in 1946 and returned to Japan via the Trans-Siberian Railroad. In 1947, the Foreign Ministry asked for his resignation, ostensibly because of post-war downsizing, though some sources have claimed that the Foreign Ministry told them he was forced out because of "that incident"


in Lithuania. He lost his youngest son that same year.

Sugihara took a number of menial jobs to support his family. He even resorted to selling light bulbs door to door. Eventually, he was able to use his command of Russian to land a position as an export manager for a Japanese firm in Moscow. He lived there sixteen years, only visiting his family in Japan once or twice a year during that period. He eventually retired to his home in Japan.

After the war, many of the "Sugihara Survivors" tried to locate him, but no one in the Japanese government or the Foreign Ministry seemed to remember him. Finally, in 1968, Joshua Nishri, economic attaché from Israel to Japan and one of the survivors, managed to track him down. All this time Sugihara had no idea whether his actions had saved anyone, and he was surprised and gratified to discover that they had: he felt that if he had saved even one life all his sacrifices would have been worth it.

The following year, he and his family were invited to Israel, and in 1985, Israel named Sugihara one of the Righteous Among the Nations, the highest honor Israel can grant. Sugihara was too ill to attend the ceremony, so Yukiko and their sons accepted the award on his behalf. The family was granted perpetual Israeli citizenship, and one of the sons would eventually graduate from Hebrew University, speaking Hebrew fluently.

Sugihara died the following year. The people of his community in Japan had no idea of what he had done until a delegation from Israel arrived for his funeral.

Sugihara's actions were clearly inspired by his faith. As he told his wife, it was more important for him to obey God than his government. His decision to aid the refugees was particularly influenced by his reading of the book of Lamentations in the Bible. He was a man of remarkable compassion, humility, courage, and faithfulness in carrying out the work that God had uniquely placed him to do. 



"He watched the figure slowly parade across the desk, offering plate in one hand, shotgun in the other..."

# The saving message

by Joe Bayly

The page was blank except for some doodles, doodles that had no relation to a sermon outline. Circles completely filled in with ink. Plain circles. And the unending stovepipe that he learned to draw years ago in grade school, with "arm movement."

"Push and pull, push and pull, move from the elbow, push and pull."

Good old push and pull. Those were the days, when push and pull meant an exercise of the lower arm. Under the black and white doodles he neatly lettered the words Push and Pull.

Come to think of it, life was pretty much push and pull. Some people being pushed around, others with pull.

Take the colored.

Probably pushed around all his life. And pushed around when he died. Maybe he was guilty — maybe not. One sure thing, there was no way of telling now since the case would never come up in court.

And the men who took him from jail. All that testimony in court, and their confessions to abducting the colored. And what they did to him in the woods beyond the town line before merciful death took over.

In bold script he lettered the word Dachau.

Pushing his chair back from the desk, he stood up and stepped over to the window. Wisteria and red clay and sunlight contained no suggestion of vio-

lence or death. About time he stopped thinking about the lynching and started on tomorrow's sermon.

A passing car stirred up clouds of red dust. "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust." Funny thing, how black dust and white dust finally became red dust. And someday part of that red dust would become glorified dust.

As he turned away from the window, a bus lumbered past. A smile touched his face for a moment as he imagined a bus in heaven with a sign inside the door: "Law of the State of Glory — White Passengers Will Seat from the Front, Black Passengers from the Back."

When he was again sitting at the desk, his thoughts returned to the sermon outline for tomorrow. Sometimes a man could think of a dozen things to preach about, other times there didn't seem to be a thing. Today there didn't seem to be a thing. And the barrel was empty.

What had old Prof. Forbes suggested in homiletics class at seminary?

"Before preparing a sermon, imagine that your people are walking across your desk, single file. As you watch each one parade by, consider his problems, his suffering, his sin. Then go to the Word for God's message to your people. That is the secret of true preaching."

Well, let the parade start.

He was surprised to see who led the procession, for it wasn't a member of his congregation. Past the orderly row of books, in front of the calendar and fluorescent light, over the Bible walked the colored. His body was grotesque with all the marks of violence at the hands of the lynching party.

After the colored had stepped off the far side of the desk, a familiar figure stepped from behind the row of books. Yesterday he had seen that face in the courtroom laughing heartily after the jury returned its verdict in the trial of the lynching party: "Not guilty."

Of the eleven men involved, this was the only one from his congregation. Tomorrow morning he would be ushering at the worship service.

He watched the figure slowly parade across the desk, offering plate in one hand, shotgun in the other.

Leafing through the Bible, he temporarily halted the imaginary procession. At Exodus 20 he stopped, and his lips moved as he read the words, "Thou shalt not kill."

Immediately, another verse came to his mind, and without turning to it he repeated, "He hath made of one blood all nations of men."

What repercussions there would be if he coupled these verses for tomorrow's sermon! The fire would be kindled at eleven thirty a.m. and spread from church through the whole town shortly after noon.

*"A sermon against lynching! Why doesn't he stick to the gospel?"*

*"That poor usher. I never felt so sorry for anyone in my whole life!"*

*"A preacher should be positive — not negative."*

*"Why doesn't he take a colored charge? Or go up North?"*

*"I never expected to hear our minister preach the social gospel."*

*"He's probably a Communist."*

*"About time we had a change of pastors."*

He dropped his head to the desk between his hands. If he were the only one who would be affected. But there were his wife and the two children to consider.

He drew a solid line of push and pull across the bottom of the page. Push... yes, where was he being pushed? And where was the church being pushed? From proclaiming the Word of God to appeasing the prejudice of men?

Washing the outside of the cup and leaving the inside filthy. Money to send missionaries to Africa. Africa on the other side of the world, not Africa on the other side of town.

Still, why should he be the first one to stick his neck out? There was his reputation for true, evangelical preaching to think about. Certainly a doubt — and a big one — would be planted in people's minds. It would affect his whole future

## Money to send missionaries to Africa. Africa on the other side of the world, not Africa on the other side of town.

in the ministry.

Besides, he understood that other forces were already at work to solve this problem. Why not leave this matter to the Catholics, who were pouring millions of dollars into the South to win the colored? And the Federal Council modernist crowd?

His business was to preach the gospel.

He interrupted a final push, and crushed the doodled paper in his hand. Unwrinkling it, he tore it into tiny pieces and dropped them in the wastebasket.

Then he reached into the drawer and removed a clean sheet. Placing it upon the desk, he wrote his sermon text in a neat hand without hesitation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." RP

*This is excerpted from "The Gospel Blimp (And Other Parables)" by the late Joe Bayly (1920-1986), and you can find our review at [Reformed-Perspective.ca](http://Reformed-Perspective.ca).*

*It is reprinted*

*with the permission of his son, Rev.*

*Tim Bayly. The word "colored" is used here instead of the N-word as it was in the original (which denoted the lack of respect that this fictional 1920s pastor had for blacks).*



# WHY DEFEND FREE SPEECH?

by John Sikkema and Levi Minderhoud



**Why should Christians defend the freedom  
for others to say things we wouldn't?**

Some years ago, an American diplomat was having a drink with his Russian counterpart in Moscow, capital of the Soviet Union. He was trying to explain to the communist what free speech means.

“In America, any citizen can just stroll around downtown Washington with a sign that says ‘Down with President Reagan’ and not get arrested. That’s what it means to have freedom of speech.”

“So what?” his Russian friend replied. “I can do the very same thing and not get in any trouble – I could march right into the Kremlin, right into Secretary Gorbachev’s office and yell ‘Down with Reagan’ and I wouldn’t get arrested.”

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This was one of many jokes President Reagan loved to tell to contrast Western freedom with Soviet repression. And the joke hints at an important litmus test for free speech, which is whether you are free to criticize your own government, laws, and society – in private or public.

### THE HUMBLE SHOULD WANT TO BE SECOND-GUESSED (PROV. 18:17)

But why should a society, particularly a democratic one like Canada, allow its prevailing norms, beliefs, or behaviors to be questioned and criticized?

Because, we believe societies and governments – like any fallible person or group of persons – can be wrong. They often are. Truth exists. And truth trumps majority opinion, personal feelings, and political power. On that score, there are many examples of men speaking truth to those in positions of political power. They are recorded for us in the Bible and through Church history.

You might think of Nathan calling out David for his adultery with Bathsheba. Or you might think of how Samuel and Jonathan speak the truth to King Saul.

### THE PROUD MAKE SPEECH COSTLY

Many other prophets dared to speak the truth to other kings of Israel and Judah. Jesus condemned Jewish authorities for killing these prophets. In Matthew 23, Jesus even points to a specific



example recorded in Scripture, namely that of Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24:20:

Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, “This is what God says: ‘Why do you disobey the Lord’s commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.’” But they plotted against him, and by order of the king [Joash], they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the Lord’s temple.

Or, consider the example of the Apostle Paul. In Acts 17 we read about how Paul went about his work. In the first part of Acts 17 he’s in Thessalonica. We read:

And Paul, as was his custom, went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul.

Let’s contrast that with the conduct of

those who don’t like what Paul is saying:

[Others] formed a mob and started a riot in the city [...] [and] they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.”

These guys seem pretty politically savvy. Whip up a mob. Cause a riot. Blame your opponents’ message for your behavior. Get officials to silence them.

### THE WISE WILL CHALLENGE SPEECH

Then Paul goes on to Berea, where we read that the Jews were “noble” and that they “eagerly examined the Scriptures to see if Paul’s teachings were true.” Then we go on to read about Paul in Athens later in the chapter:

[Paul] reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. And a group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. [...] And they took Paul and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean” (Acts 17:17-20).

The response to Paul by those interested in the truth is to investigate, discuss, and debate. The response of those interested in preserving their power rather than pursuing truth is to silence Paul by force. But the truth of Christ is more powerful than the force of rulers.

In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul uses a military metaphor to explain gospel ministry:

Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the

... early Christians advocated for freedom to preach and practice the gospel, arguing that religion is a matter of the heart and cannot be coerced.

weapons of the world. On the contrary, our weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Demolishing strongholds and taking captives – not with the sword, but the truth of God’s Word. Now, of course, Paul and the Apostles spoke the truth, as we must, regardless of whether the law protects our freedom to do so. It is good to defend the freedom to share the truth. Paul defended himself using his rights as a citizen, for example, with the goal of bearing witness to Christ.

### GOD HATES COMPELLED SPEECH

Other early Christians advocated for freedom to preach and practice the gospel, arguing that religion is a matter of the heart and cannot be coerced.

In A.D. 197, Tertullian wrote his *Apology* as a defense of persecuted Christians. He addressed it to the Roman authorities. Tertullian says it is “a privilege inherent in human nature that every person should be able to worship according to his own convictions.” Coercion in religion, he argues, only fosters irreligion and hypocrisy. Tertullian contends that “heretics and philosophers study the same themes as believers: what is the origin of evil, and why? The origin of humans, and why?” He also appeals to the image of God in man, with an emphasis on man’s reasoning and decision-making capacity.

### GOD HAS USED SPEECH

The ability to disseminate views increased dramatically with the invention of Gutenberg’s printing press in the mid-1400s. It made books and pamphlet printing far faster and cheaper, making

written materials widely accessible. A few decades later, the Catholic Church did not like much of what it saw coming off the press, so in 1487 the Pope issued a papal bull calling for regulation of the press. That did not accomplish much. So, the next Pope – Leo X – issued a stronger papal bull in 1515 forbidding publishing without prior authorization from the Church.

Leo X did so just in time for Luther. By 1521, the Pope’s envoy in Germany wrote to the Pope to bemoan the “daily downpour of Lutheran tracts in German and Latin. Nothing is sold here except the tracts of Luther.” Luther called the printing press “God’s highest and extreme act of grace whereby the gospel is driven forward.” The data backs Luther up. The Reformation spread faster in towns that had printing presses. And in turn literacy grew fastest in places where the Reformation took hold, as it did firmly in the Netherlands. Between 1600 and 1800 no one read or printed more than the Dutch. Their literacy and rate of literary consumption by the late 1600s quadrupled that of France or Italy.

### SPEECH CAN BE MISUSED

Now there’s also no denying that the printing press and the explosion of religious pamphlets allowed some strange flowers to bloom. Radical Anabaptists had very odd and heretical teachings and were early victims of persecution. Luther said of this persecution, “I am deeply troubled that the poor Anabaptists are pitifully put to death. Let everyone believe what he likes. If he is wrong he will have punishment enough in hell. Unless there is sedition, one should oppose the Anabaptists with God’s Word.”

Luther was not always consistent with this principle. He supported censorship of certain Anabaptist writings as well as Zwinglian pamphlets. Calvinists

exercised censorship too – for example, when the Presbyterians controlled the Parliament of 17th century England and forbade publishing books or tracts without prior license from Parliament. But the Presbyterians were opposed by various Puritans including an important Reformed political thinker named John Milton. You may know him as the author of the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, but he was also a very important political thinker and advocate.

### JOHN MILTON, ON IRON SHARPENING IRON

In 1644, during the first English Civil War between Parliament and the Crown, John Milton published an unlicensed pamphlet attacking an Order of Parliament from the year before that prohibited publishing anything unless it had first received a license from the censors appointed by Parliament. Milton titled his great free speech pamphlet *Areopagitica* – in reference to the Areopagus in Athens and likely to Paul’s visit there recorded in Acts 17. Milton’s unlicensed pamphlet would prove very influential in later English and American and Canadian history. So let’s follow its argument.

Milton was concerned about how we, as human beings made in God’s image, promote the truth. Option number one is through reading widely, considering different opinions, and thinking critically. Iron sharpens iron, as the proverb goes. Option one has an optimistic view of the truth, that the Truth with a capital T will ultimately triumph. The only way this can happen, though, is if citizens have the freedom of expression needed to discover the truth by considering God’s revelation for themselves.

But Milton anticipated a common objection: won’t the freedom of expression allow bad ideas to spread? That leads us

to option number two to promote the truth: through force. Underlying this second belief is the presumption that the Truth will lose out, unless we force others to adopt it. In their eyes, truth will ultimately lose in a fair fight. The only way to maintain the truth – if they even believe in objective truth – is to allow some people to decide what truth is and enforce it upon everyone else.

So those who wish to restrict the freedom of expression have little confidence in the power of the Truth. Or, alternatively, they might even think Truth is powerful, but they hate it and wish to suppress it.

Milton uses the example of the Bible. If you want to stomp out heresy and inappropriate content, then you might consider banning the Bible too. We all know churches or people who have twisted the Bible to promote their own opinions. The Bible also has graphic descriptions of sin (ex. the final chapters of Judges) and even suggestive descriptions of goodness (ex. the Song of Solomon). That's why the Roman Catholic Church did not allow the Bible to be printed in the common language: because they did not trust common people to interpret it.

But truth doesn't come from the Pope or from the King. It is found in God's revelation of Himself, a revelation that He has given to all mankind.

### SOME SPEECH NEEDS TO BE POLICED

Now, just because we believe in freedom of expression doesn't mean that the government may never regulate any type speech. The Bible speaks of many sins of the tongue. The government does have a role in regulating some speech, such as outlawing perjury, which is bearing false witness in court. Some forms of speech constitute injustices against others in themselves, such as libel, threats, or fraud.

But it is not the responsibility of the government to police *all* the sins of the tongue. Some of these judgements are reserved for other spheres of authority: elders in the church combat heresy,

parents in the home police unkind words, bosses in the workplace punish false advertising, and even individuals in their own minds need to guard against ungodly thoughts.

### ...BUT THE BIGGER PROBLEM IS TRUTH BEING RESTRICTED

However, the problem today isn't so much that governments in Canada are trying to combat sins of the tongue that are outside of its responsibility. Instead, the main problem today is that they are more and more punishing speech that proclaims the truth and is glorifying to God or, relatedly, speech that challenges the prevailing ideologies and idols of our day.

We can think of Canada's conversion therapy ban, which makes it illegal to promote a biblical view of gender and sexuality in some settings. We have bubble zone laws that prevent proliferators from talking about abortion in any way around hospitals and abortion clinics in some provinces. One Ontario MPP proposed another type of bubble zone that outlaws the proclamation of God's design for human gender and sexuality in certain areas. A growing number of municipalities and, again, another Ontario MPP are proposing to ban pro-life literature.

This onslaught against free speech is what Christians need to stand up to. We may very well disagree with the manner that it is presented in. Perhaps such speech was spoken in anger or with inappropriate exaggeration. We might even disagree with the truth of the speech itself. We might think that what our neighbor is saying runs contrary to some biblical principles. But if we neglect to defend free speech, we are essentially saying that we don't think that the Truth will triumph but that lies will always overcome the Truth unless put down by the force of law.

But we have every confidence that the Truth will prevail. So let us defend the right of our neighbors to speak what they think is true so that every obstacle to the preaching of the gospel may be removed for us as well. **RP**



Professional Computer Management (PCM) celebrates 30 years of excellence in 2023! Our talented team of computer professionals is our strongest asset and success. We are proud of our employee retention and have many staff members who have been with us for years. We are looking for talented individuals to join our dedicated team as we continue to grow.



*For more details visit:*

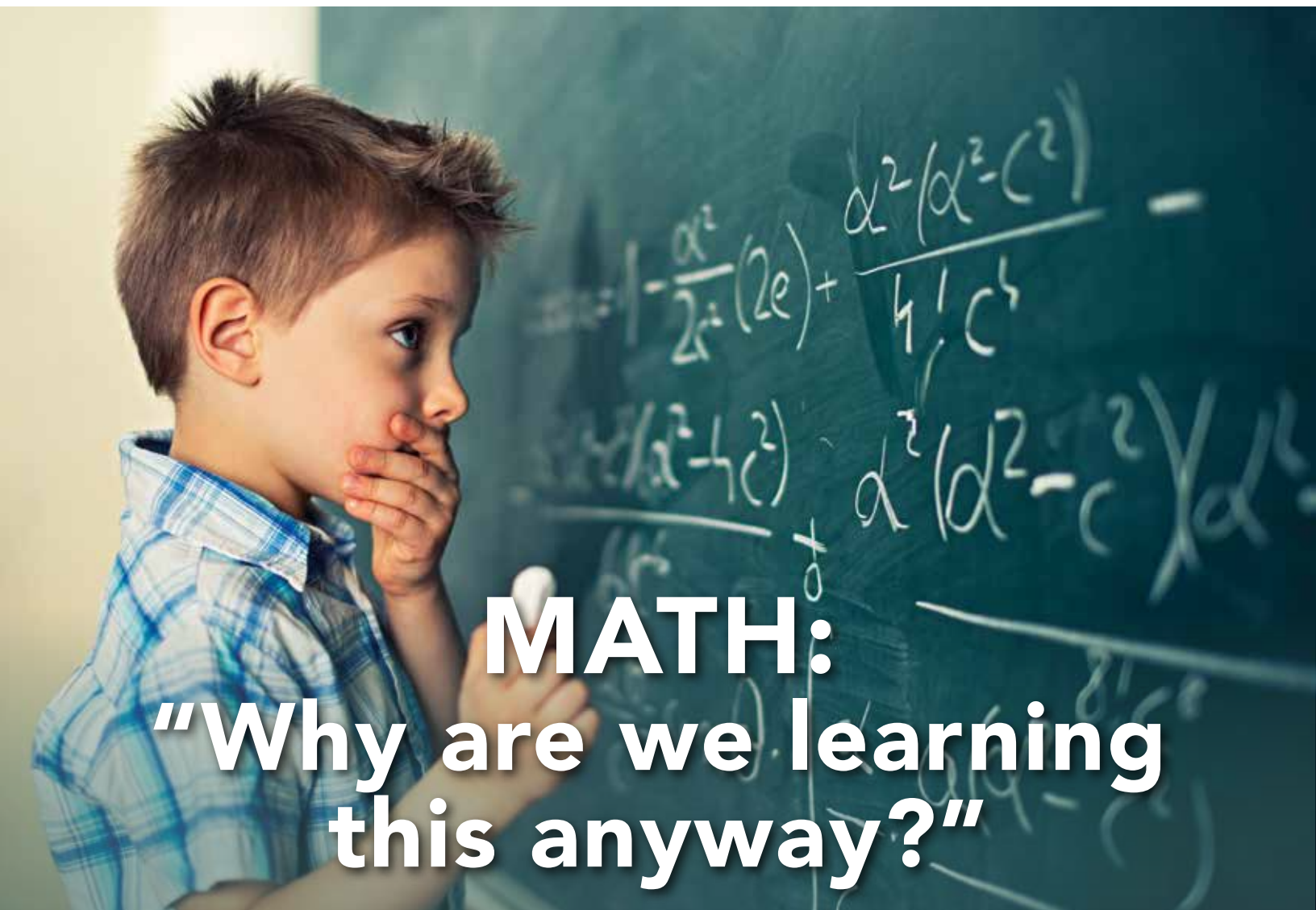
**[pcm.ca/careers](http://pcm.ca/careers)**

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- Work as a team to support technology in small and medium businesses across the greater Hamilton & Toronto area

*Core Values: Integrity, Respect, Quality, Professionalism, Teamwork*



# MATH: “Why are we learning this anyway?”

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by David Shuster

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*Back in 2021, math teacher David Shuster gave this presentation to the parents of his students at Trinity Classical School in Bellingham, WA*

**H**ow can you and I best work together to help your children learn mathematics?

Actually, I don't really want to talk about that.

I think, in pursuit of the “how,” we sometimes lose sight of the “why,” which is something often especially elusive in mathematics. As I'm teaching my students in their proofs for geometry,

*we need to always work with the goal in mind.* If you don't know where you're headed, how are you going to get there?

My hope is that talking about the “why” of math will naturally illuminate the “how” of math. So that will be the main part of my talk, and then maybe we'll briefly revisit the “how” towards the end.

So, *why* should we, as Christians, learn math? If there is no good answer to this question, then the student who says “Uggh, I'm never going to use this anyway” is making a good point. Life is short; *memento mori!*<sup>1</sup> Don't waste your

life staring at numbers.

Now of course the why of everything is to become more Christ-like. Yet if we look at Christ's life, it doesn't seem like there's that much math in it. “If you have 5 loaves of bread and 2 pieces of fish, and divide that among 5000 people, then the remainder is 12 basketfuls...” The Bible is full of theology and history and philosophy and language and even music. But it seems like the most math you get is those seemingly skim-worthy census counts or tabernacle dimensions in Exodus, etc.



# ...the language of math forms our ability to think abstractly and recognize patterns.

Chesterton said that:

“Imagination does not breed insanity. Exactly what does breed insanity is reason. Poets do not go mad; but chess-players do. Mathematicians go mad, and cashiers; but creative artists very seldom.... Poetry is sane because it floats easily in an infinite sea; reason seeks to cross the infinite sea, and so make it finite....”

What Chesterton just described as math and reason is its form in the fallen world divorced from its Creator. But when math and reason are contextualized by the liberal arts and, most importantly, grounded in a relationship with Christ, they take on a different tone.

To return to Chesterton again, children have a natural sense of wonder when they see patterns in nature. Why does the sun always rise? Why do apples not cease to fall from trees? There is something miraculous about regularity, even in mathematics. We often take “ $1+1=2$ ” for granted. Yet the patterns and consistencies of reality do not exist fully *ex-nihilo*. Rather, each of these consistencies reflects the faithfulness of God. The order and the logic behind the universe must be understood as a creative act of God, as a constant outpouring of His nature. And when we see reason as a creative outpouring of God’s nature, math’s true beauty becomes visible. Rather than having an either/or relationship with imagination, reason joins forces with imagination.

And so, because math is God’s creative act, poetry is built into the language of mathematics. Out of His nature, God spoke nature into order, and mathematics is the patterned language that we speak back to Him to echo His faithfulness.

## MATH POINTS TO THE MAGIC UNDERGIRDING IT ALL

Thus in a fundamental way, math is myth. I don’t mean that it’s false, but I mean that it orients us around the regularities that we can behold but cannot grasp. Therefore we must strive

## IT IS IN THERE, FOR ETERNITY

Raise your hand if you know what the Ten Commandments are. If you know who Moses is. If you know what the Tabernacle is. If you know who Bezalel is. Well, God was telling Moses about Bezalel and God said, “I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge, etc.” Now go read Exodus and notice that much of that Spirit-filled ability, intelligence, and knowledge was very mathematical and quantitative. Bezalel spearheaded the building of the Tabernacle which serves, inscribed in the everlasting Word of God, as a reminder that God dwells among His people. Bezalel used math to eternally preach the beauty of the Incarnation of Christ.

We may use buzzwords like “financial stewardship,” but we forget the potential significance of practicality. We often forget that the real core of the Christian battle is fought on the ground in the most mundane moments of life. And, as with the behind-the-scenes character who helped build the Tabernacle, those mundane material moments are etched into eternity.

## MATH FOSTERS LOGIC

Ok, but what if I don’t want to be a Tabernacle-designer? Ah, ya got me. Let me tell you about the second reason we should study math. It develops principled thinking. Are you glad you can figure out what  $2+5$  is? What’s the use of learning it? You can just use a calculator. But the language of math forms our ability to think abstractly and recognize patterns.

In fact, let’s look at what happens when the mathematical way of thinking is missing. Among the majors in college some odd ones tend to score very low in tests of mathematical and statistical skill:

public administration and journalism. Now look where that got us.

*I’m not insulting anyone.*

I am saying that we desperately need godly journalists and public administrators who can logically pursue objective truth. In fact, whoever you are, you need quantitative discernment now to even read the news with wisdom. Studying math builds a deep intuition for the objectivity of truth.

## MATH ECHOES OUR FAITHFUL GOD

I sometimes like to watch grappling matches. And now and then I’ll see a wrestler who is about to get choked, and he just looks so incredibly calm. Calm wrestling. That’s what we do in math class. Uh, except no chokeholds. So often, that calmness allows us to notice openings and turn the tables instead of struggling in a futile and unproductive way. We learn to wrestle calmly even when uncertainty hangs over our heads. Because we know that our reality is upheld by a firm foundation, we know we can learn to love the pursuit of pure truth without fearing that our ground will give way.

These characteristics of math are largely due to the structure deeply built into the content of math, which is reflected in its highly structured language. In philosophy, literature, and theology, the grammatical/ linguistic/ literary structures, and the argument constructions, rely on consistent ways of moving symbols around to create meaning and to move from truth to truth. And math does a particularly good job of honing in on that skillset because the rigid language develops a keenly patterned way of thinking. Studying mathematics trains a principled pursuit of truth.

But does the structure of mathematics become a circular cage? G. K.



Whenever possible, ask your kids to help you compute budgets or sketch out geometry behind building projects...

to see poetry in the logical, and logic in the poetical. As we draw connections between different areas of mathematics, we see how the fabric of mathematics is skillfully woven by God to help us behold what is beyond us. For the Christian, reason is that fragile little vessel which allows us to chase the horizon on the infinite sea of poetry. The structure, pattern, the consistency of the mathematical language, this is the rigidity of that little wooden boat we're in. And this little wooden boat is the interface of the infinite. And as we learn to see God's order and infinitude reflected in every horizon, mathematics is transformed. For the Christian, math is patterned praise, a cosmic liturgy.

And so when all this comes back

around to the practical, we can find reason to praise God when calculating our taxes. No, I'm serious: in an ashy wasteland, even the littlest green sprout of God's truth can be greeted with thanksgiving.

So, to reiterate:


- Math is practical – it has eternal implications.
- Math is principled – it trains a drive for truth.
- And math is poetic – it is our way of cherishing and proclaiming the creative consistency that God perpetually speaks into reality.

## CONCLUSION

*Therefore*, and this is the part to take notes, please make sure your kids get

enough sleep. Make sure they have a quiet space because math is a little bit meditative.

Whenever possible, ask them to help compute budgets or sketch out geometry behind fencing projects. Play games, think about riddles. Do regular things with math eyes on.

Also consider your own attitude, as a parent, about math. If you've had a bad experience with math in school, try to take on the Christian vision of mathematics as something beautiful. Many things in life, attitudes included, can be inherited. 

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Remember death"

# THANK YOU!

## YOUR SUPPORT MAKES **RP** POSSIBLE

For a full year now, over 10,000 families and 172 churches have been receiving this magazine for free. This has been made possible by about 700 families, individuals, and businesses who graciously made a donation to the Reformed Perspective Foundation. If you are one of these donors, on behalf of all all of our readers, listeners, viewers, as well as our board and staff, we say a very big thanks. We could not do this without you.

If you have been appreciating these magazines, would you be willing to take a few minutes to learn more about why this is being done, and what it takes to get it in your hands?

### **NOURISHING HEARTS AND MINDS**

A diet of junk food won't do much to build bones and muscles – it'll just leave us feeling sick. That's why most of us are careful about what food we buy, and how much we eat.

That should also be true when it comes to what we "feed" our hearts and minds. Unfortunately, so much of what is

available to our families about current events and culture is spiritually and emotionally toxic.

Way back in 1982, a small group of Reformed Christians recognized this challenge and were motivated to start *Reformed Perspective* magazine (RP). Their goal was to "closely examine the social-political events in this world in the light of God's Word."



Thank You!



In their first issue they shared their heart:

"This desire is born out of repeated requests by concerned Christians, among whom many parents, who are daily faced with the un-Biblical and humanistic approach to life of the media and secular institutions of learning. But the difficulties in realizing the publication of such a periodical always seemed to be greater than our conviction to go ahead. No longer is this so.

The tremendous influence of the daily events and of secular thought on young and old urges us to proceed now. We must be prepared to take our stand over against the deluge of misguided information which threatens to weaken the moral fibre of our Christian families and to erode our Christian identity."

That was true over 40 years ago, and the need is even more pressing today.

Canadian culture is experiencing the ill-effects of ingesting poisonous ideas about gender, sex, the environment, debt, whether to have children, the role of government, and the purpose of life.

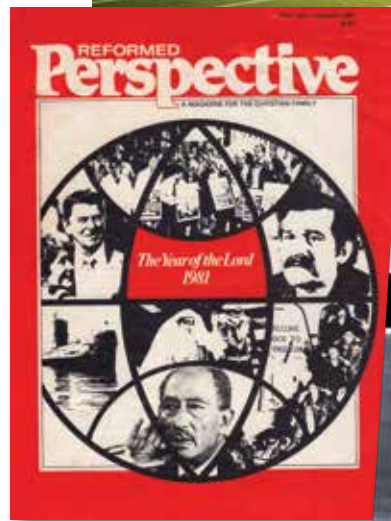
And it isn't just a problem "out there." Our families, and the Church, are being impacted, especially through the steady barrage of secular media that's so hard to shut off. Back in 1982, families had far more control over what was coming into a home. Today we live in a digital age, where music, videos, and pictures are streamed through the airwaves, making it is far more difficult for parents to know what is being ingested.

While Satan loves to make this spiritual junk food look sweet and savory, we kid ourselves if we think we can feast on it, without it doing something to our innards.

The "news" has become a place where Canadians are told what to think, with the government funding and influencing mainstream media with hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. Even the few conservative options tend to be sensationalist, lacking Gospel-centered hope and perspective.

**RP strives to serve up healthier fare that celebrates God's goodness and explores His will for our lives.** And we're trying to dish this out to young and old alike, from all walks of life.

And, in getting distributed to whole churches, we can be a unifier, sparking discussions common to everyone paging through the latest issue. When we're all reading at least some of the same media, then we have that in common, and we can counter the fragmentation that otherwise comes from everyone's unique social media feed.



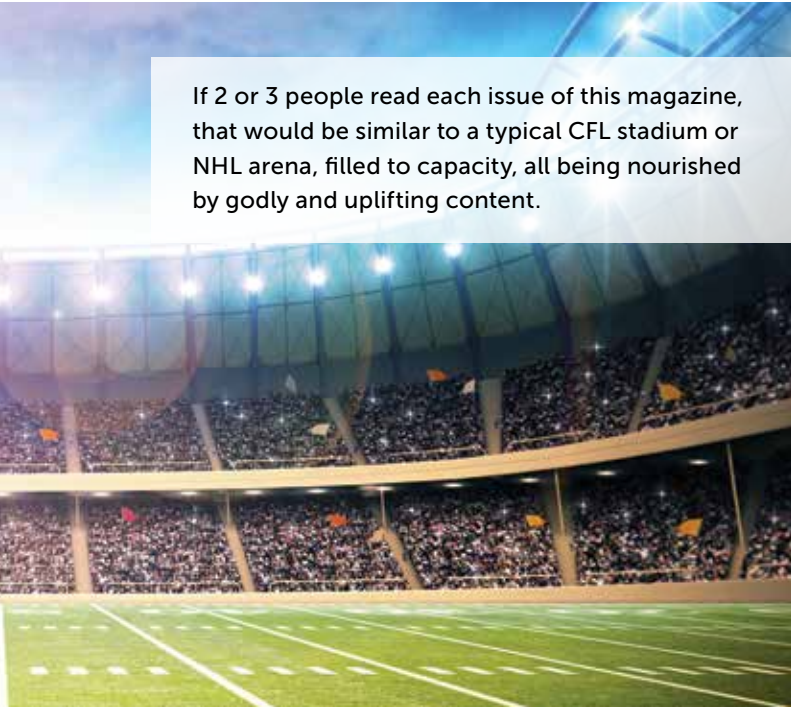
← 1982...



→ ...2022

**We want to be a means through which Christ's Church is built up in grace and truth. We do this with much weakness. But we also can report with gratitude that our LORD has graciously been with us and assisted us in this privileged calling.**

If 2 or 3 people read each issue of this magazine, that would be similar to a typical CFL stadium or NHL arena, filled to capacity, all being nourished by godly and uplifting content.



## SHARING RP WITH THE WORLD

By God's grace, more than 400 issues have been published since 1982. The magazine went to about 1,500-2,000 in the beginning, whose subscriptions covered most of the costs. However, the organization often went into debt, and had to be bailed out by some very generous individuals/families. This subscription-based business plan clearly wasn't sustainable.

Ongoing financial pressures, and pressures, too, from all the information people could access for free online, brought *Reformed Perspective* to a crossroads in 2016. It had to make big changes, or close its doors.

The board took a step of faith by making the magazine free, and putting all the content online. It made so much sense – this wasn't a product we were trying to sell, but a mission that needed to grow. We wanted to take the bowl off the lamp and shine this Reformed perspective out on the world, for the world. Just as the technology of the printing press was critical to spreading God's Word to so many more people, our hope was to utilize the Internet to share God-honoring articles about current cultural and social issues.

Now, instead of relying on subscribers, we asked for donations. And God graciously provided through some of you! In the following years, RP was able to stay financially stable, and its resources started to be picked up throughout the world via a website, social media, and a weekly e-newsletter. We still regularly receive requests to translate our articles into other languages including French, Portuguese, and Australian ☺.

Last year, RP took another big step of faith by embracing an ambitious vision and plan.

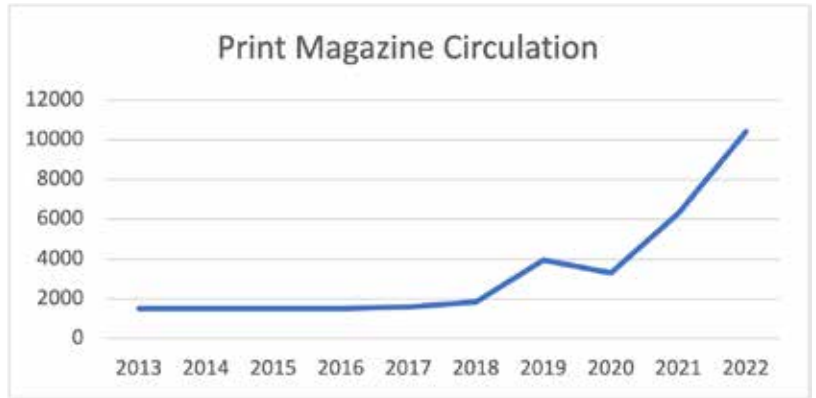
- ✓ We hired new team members: a full-time Executive Director, and part-time Assistant Editor, Copy Editor, and Administrator;
- ✓ We approached Christian businesses, individuals, and foundations, seeking their support. Thanks to their generosity, we went from having almost no funds to being financially-stable;
- ✓ With expanded support, we were able to reach far more people. The circulation of the print magazine exploded to 10,400 copies per issue (a five-fold increase from past years);
- ✓ We also expanded into 9 Reformed and Presbyterian denominations and are now distributed in 172 churches. Our hope is that RP can be a means through which Reformed churches can talk and work together;
- ✓ And we made big changes to our content including:
  - Expanding the size of each issue from 36 pages to 68 pages;
  - Adding a heavier cover to reflect the quality content, sending a clear message to the readers that this is something to keep and use long-term, similar to a book;
  - Expanding the journalism – original content from a Reformed and Canadian perspective on topics that need attention (from getting into the housing market, to the shortage of teachers, and what it means to love our Indigenous neighbors);
  - Reaching all ages and interests: The Come & Explore section for kids has been a hit, and we also added a new section to profile Christian artists;
  - Expansion of social media: hiring a social media editor to promote our work on Instagram and Facebook;
  - New daily devotional podcast: turning expired radio devotionals into a daily podcast, reaching tens of thousands already;
  - We also just started *RPTV.ca* – video coverage of Canadian news (see page 74);



All of this has been done with a willingness to tackle sensitive issues that need attention, but with grace and truth.

Our vision is to maintain and slowly build on the growth of this past year so that RP is trusted by many more Christians for faithful reporting and analysis, and also a means through which Christ's church is unified and built up in grace and truth.

We've been thrilled to learn about the impact that this work is having. We see high school teachers ordering class sets of the magazine to use as a regular part of their curriculum. We see people sharing a *Real Talk* podcast episode with their church community because it touches on an issue that is pressing and needs attention locally, we see church councils making use of the magazine on home visits, and Bible study groups using the magazine for application. We thank God for this privilege and opportunity.



## OUR REACH

By God's grace alone, our reach has grown from about 45,000 to about 1.2 million a year, with much of this coming far beyond our magazine.

These figures don't include our in-person presentations, the magazines distributed in Australia, and a growing audience on YouTube and Twitter.



### PRINT MAGAZINE

About 31,200 people per issue!  
(10,400 copies per issue reaching about 3 people each)



### WEBSITE

607,000 page views from  
192,000 users in the past year



### WEEKLY ROUNDUP NEWSLETTER

4,000+ subscribers receiving it  
about 50 times a year



### RP APP REACH

17,000+ users and  
over 124,000 opens  
in the past year



### RP SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook reach of 83,000  
and Instagram reach of  
10,700



### REAL TALK PODCAST

45,000 downloads  
plus 11,500  
YouTube views



### MANNA DAILY DEVOTIONAL PODCAST

Already 22,400 downloads  
since it launched less  
than a year ago

# OUR TEAM

## EDITORIAL TEAM



**Jon Dykstra, Editor:** Jon is the father of three, husband of one, and uncle to numbers that go far beyond the additive capacity of his fingers and toes. In the 25+ years he's been writing for *Reformed Perspective*, it's been Jon's delight to investigate God's thoughts on anything and everything, including the worldview of dogs, dystopian fiction, pronouns, the biblical case for global warming skepticism, spanking, 200 movies King David might watch, and the theology of dirty jokes. When he became editor in 1999, submissions sometimes came in hand-written or through the fax machine, and the magazine's unofficial assistant editor was his dear ol' dad (and his brother James was the webmaster). The magazine has grown some since then, and Jon's delight now is to work with a whole RP team to continue investigating what God has done and is doing in the wide wide world out there.



**Marty Vandriel, Assistant Editor:** Marty and his wife Faith have four children, and three grandchildren. Marty's writing roots go way back to the newspaper *The Windmill Herald!* He also contributes to *WORLD Magazine*, and is the CEO at a manufacturing company.



**Mark Penninga, Executive Director:** Mark and his family of eight make their home in BC's Bulkley Valley. Since 2022, he has been responsible for the leadership of the Reformed Perspective Foundation and also enjoys assisting with the production of *RP* magazine. Mark previously served as the founder and Executive Director of ARPA Canada from 2007-2022.

## SUPPORT TEAM



**Jan Broersma, Copy Editor:** Jan has worked as a writer and editor for several organizations, including School Specialty and Historica Canada. She loves good writing and making good writing better. Jan lives on the beautiful West Coast of BC with her husband and their three children.



**Danyse Van Dam, Social Media Editor:** Danyse is responsible for bringing *RP's* content to a broader digital audience, especially with social media. She is a married mother of five from the Niagara region of Ontario.



**Rachel VanDam:** The youngest member of our team, Rachel recently made the big move from high school in Carman, MB to an internship with ARPA in Ottawa. Rachel looks after

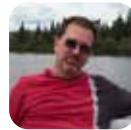
publishing the Nearer to God devotional on *RP's* website and App. This is *RP's* most popular resource.



**Joanne DeRuiter, Administrator and Controller:** Joanne grew up in Neerlandia, Alberta and in 2017 she moved with her husband and children to Smithers, BC. She worked for ARPA for four years and then took over the administration tasks for *Reformed Perspective*.



**Annelies Veurink, Graphic Designer:** Annelies and her husband live in sunny Southern Alberta and are members of the Coaldale Canadian Reformed Church. They have been blessed with 3 children. Annelies has been designing the *Reformed Perspective* magazine since 2015.



**Mark Coolen, Webmaster:** Mark loves learning and knows how computers think which, combined with his ability to pull a rabbit out of a computer, helps him to make the *RP* website into an efficient, well-oiled machine.

## REAL TALK PODCAST



**Lucas Holtvluwer, Co-Host:** Lucas and his wife Elle, along with their daughter Anneliese, live near Brantford, ON and are members at Living Water Reformed Church. Lucas's day job is managing the operations of Tykel Commercial Door Supply (which he co-owns with Tyler).



**Tyler Vanderwoude, Co-Host:** Tyler & his wife Keleigh have been blessed with 3 amazing kids and recently made a big move from Hamilton, Ontario to Calgary, Alberta and are now a part of the Canadian Reformed Church of Calgary.



**Mariah Tamminga, Podcast Manager:** Mariah is responsible for the show's scheduling, editing and marketing. She has worked in organizational ministry for the last three years. Originally from Hamilton, ON, Mariah now resides in Sanford, FL, where she is a full-time student at Reformation Bible College. She is pursuing her BA in Theology.

## RPTV

**Alexandra Ellison, Kyle Vasas, David Visser** – see page 74 and RPTV.ca for more on what the three newest members of our



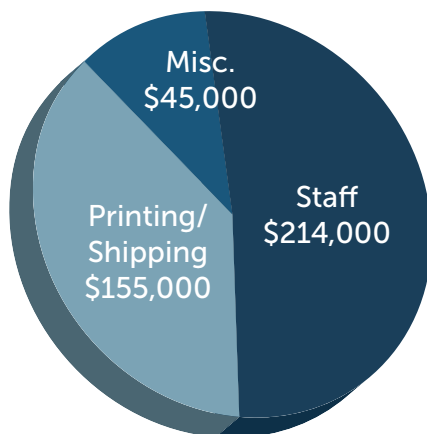
team are contributing.

# WHO PAYS FOR ALL THIS?

Over the past two years we have gone to great lengths to have the greatest impact for the least cost. Although we saw the cost for printing and shipping increase substantially with inflation and paper shortages (about \$24,000 per issue currently), we also switched most of our delivery from direct mailings through Canada Post to bulk mailings with UPS, saving us tens of thousands of dollars. And we worked with our printer (the excellent people at Premier Printing!) to make our printing as economical as possible.

Our projected expenses for this year are \$417,500. This covers:

- \$214,000 for 15 staff (2 full-time and 13 part-time staff and contractors) plus writers' fees
- \$155,000 for printing and shipping of the print magazine
- \$45,000 for software, websites, accounting, travel and other miscellaneous expenses



About 90% of these expenses are covered by donations (the remainder is from advertising).

About 33% of our support comes from committed monthly donors. If you are one of these, thank you very much.

**This means that we rely on ordinary folks like yourself to keep RP going.**

*Will you help us bring a Reformed Perspective to our families, future generations, and our land?*

And if the LORD has given you the means, are you able to cover the cost of one or more other readers, so that they can be exposed to a *Reformed Perspective* too?

RP is a registered charity, so at this point in time we can still give charitable tax receipts for any donations. Our work is overseen by a national board of directors, and our finances are reviewed by an experienced accountant.

There are a variety of ways to give:

- 1) Monthly withdrawal from your bank:** This is our preferred option because it comes with very little costs and brings the most stability to our work (providing a basis that we can budget from). Just fill in the PAD form at [www.ReformedPerspective.ca/donate](http://www.ReformedPerspective.ca/donate), along with a VOID cheque. Or take a picture of it and a VOID cheque and email it to [admin@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:admin@reformedperspective.ca)
- 2) Cheque:** Send it PO Box 3609, Smithers BC, V0J 2N0 or use the envelope included with this magazine.
- 3) E-transfer:** Send it to [admin@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:admin@reformedperspective.ca) and please include your name and address.
- 4) Credit card one-time or monthly:** This can be done at [www.ReformedPerspective.ca/donate](http://www.ReformedPerspective.ca/donate)



Scan to Donate

For questions about donations, or to make a donation over the phone via credit card, contact Joanne DeRuiter at [admin@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:admin@reformedperspective.ca) or 250-643-8114 (BC time).

For questions about *Reformed Perspective* generally, including funding, contact Mark Penninga at [mark.penninga@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:mark.penninga@reformedperspective.ca) or 778-210-0376.

*There are other ways to help us including:*

- Putting the magazine in your local church mailboxes, or helping the person who does this;
- Sending in your feedback on what is published, either as a letter to the editor or just informally;
- Sharing your copy with someone who you think will appreciate it;
- Writing articles for us;
- Giving us tips of news stories to cover from your area;
- Praying for this work.

Brothers and sisters, we are so grateful to the LORD for the privilege of sharing in His beautiful kingdom-building work. Thank you for your interest and support.

*To God alone be the glory!*



# Be Fruitful and Multiply

## Reformed Perspective's Mini-Tour Comes To Ontario

NOVEMBER 12 & 13

Families are having fewer babies and the world's population is expected to peak and then decline later this century. The world isn't prepared for the impact this is going to have. What may be the greatest challenge of this century can also be a huge opportunity for the church to shine. But that takes a willingness to have children, and to raise them faithfully. In these presentations, Reformed Perspective's Mark Penninga will unpack data, history, and God's Word to make the case for embracing the gift of children with open arms.

### WHO?

Ages 16-116, single or married, children or no children, these presentations are suitable for all mature Christians.

### WHEN AND WHERE?

Niagara: Sunday, Nov. 12 at 8:00 pm  
Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church

Orangeville: Monday, Nov. 13 at 7:30 pm  
Orangeville Canadian Reformed Church

# RP T-SHIRT CONTEST!

## "FASHION FOR A REASON"

Some years ago, a Lisa Klassen took the idea of wearing clothes to God's glory to a new level. When she was an ardent 16-year-old, she was suspended from school for wearing a sweatshirt which read, "ABORTION IS MEAN." On the back the shirt read: "You will not silence my message. You will not mock my God. You will stop killing my generation."

At a school where fellow students walked around wearing shirts promoting sex, alcohol and nihilistic rock bands, only Klassen's shirt was deemed offensive. Her actions, and subsequent suspension prompted almost 50 other students to wear similar shirts. Her bold, brazen fashion statement got the whole school in an uproar. What a gutsy gal!

RP wants to challenge our readers to create their own t-shirt designs, with slogans and designs that give God the glory. That can be through apologetic efforts that speak His truth about the unborn, or gender, or marriage, or whatever! Or it can be gorgeous pictures that celebrate His beauty. Or maybe it can be a combination thereof.

### RULES:

- Maximum 3 entries per person
- Must be an original design by you
- Please include a line to explain why and maybe how you created your design (max. 100 words)
- Provide permission to RP to publish your design online and/or in print if selected
- Include the name of the designer, and for the under-18 entries, the designer's age
- All submissions should be high resolution jpg (300 dpi, and at least 5 by 4 inches)

### PRIZES:

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

### DEADLINE:

- Send your designs (high-resolution) to [admin@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:admin@reformedperspective.ca) before **Mar. 31, 2024**





# RP IS NOW ON TV!

by Mark Penninga

If you read these ED updates in the past, you may know that *RP* has long-term ambitions to develop more Christian journalism in print and beyond. We hope you've appreciated some of the fruit of those efforts, as it's been found in the pages of this magazine over this past year.

The LORD allowed us to take another step forward towards these goals this Fall, when we were able to begin publishing, in video, something that we call *RPTV*.

It started with an email I received from Alexandra Ellison, a young woman who grew up in Victoria, BC, and recently graduated with a journalism degree from a university in Ontario. Alexandra had taken part in the WORLD Journalism Institute (WJI), a Christian program that *RP*'s editor, Jon Dykstra, and I had visited earlier this year (and which I wrote about in the July/August ED Update). Well, Alexandra heard about our visit from WJI staff and connections were made. There aren't many Reformed Canadians pursuing journalism, so I was excited to talk with her via Zoom soon after. That meeting made it clear that Alexandra had the skills, experience, and worldview that would be a great asset for *RP*'s mission.

Providentially, within days of that meeting I also had a call with Kyle Vasas

and David Visser, two young men from Lethbridge, Alberta. They'd started "Faith to Film" (FaithToFilm.ca), a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the Reformed faith through video. I was impressed with their entrepreneurial spirit and their humble dedication to honoring God with their skills and talents. David had even worked with a TV station in the past, helping produce their news program.

My mind quickly jumped to the exciting possibility of these two men working with Alexandra to produce news broadcasts for *RP*. I brought the idea to the *RP* editorial team, and then the *RP* board, and within a few weeks there was an agreement from everyone to give this a try. *RPTV* had now begun!

When Jon Dykstra and I saw the first video produced, we were impressed. It far exceeded our expectations. These three have talent!

My family has loved *WORLD Watch* (WorldWatch.news), a daily Christian news program for youth, produced by our friends at *WORLD News Group*. *RPTV* isn't close to being a daily news broadcast. But it is quality, it comes from a Christian perspective, and it is Canadian in focus.

There are very few options for Canadian news from a Christian perspective in video. Like print magazines, it is

expensive to produce professional video, and even if it is produced, it is difficult to be found amidst all the free (and often garbage) video content online. This has become even more difficult with the Liberal government's recent Bill C-11, which has resulted in social media companies banning Canadian news.

So far, we are only able to produce about one short video a week, and we don't know how long this will be possible. But a journey begins with a first step.

If you support this *RPTV* idea – Christian, Canadian, video journalism – you can help our efforts by sharing each video with your friends and acquaintances. Find *RPTV* at:

- [YouTube.com/@ReformedPerspective](https://www.youtube.com/@ReformedPerspective)
- [Facebook.com/ReformedPerspectiveMagazine](https://www.facebook.com/ReformedPerspectiveMagazine)
- [Instagram.com/ReformedPerspective](https://www.instagram.com/ReformedPerspective)
- and, of course, [ReformedPerspective.ca](https://www.ReformedPerspective.ca).

And if you are a parent or teacher, this could be a great resource to share with your classes or children.

We welcome your feedback on how to make *RPTV* better. And please share any stories you want us to cover.

You can reach me at [mark.penninga@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:mark.penninga@reformedperspective.ca).

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( not actually )  
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The cost to print and ship the issue in your hands is about \$24,000. This is being graciously covered by about 700 donors who want to see a Reformed Perspective shared freely with the world. If you are one of these people – thank you!

RP's expenses for 2023 will be close to \$420,000. This includes paying a team of 15 staff and contractors, two of whom are full-time. Although this is a lot of money, the impact is massive. Through our websites, social media, e-newsletter, RPTV, podcasts, and magazine, we are equipping hundreds of thousands of people around the world every year.

Unlike most media in Canada, RP doesn't benefit from government funding. We rely on donations from people like you.

Less than 10% of the readers of this magazine help with our costs. **If you have been appreciating this magazine, are you willing to help us continue with this work into a new year, and reach many others at the same time?**



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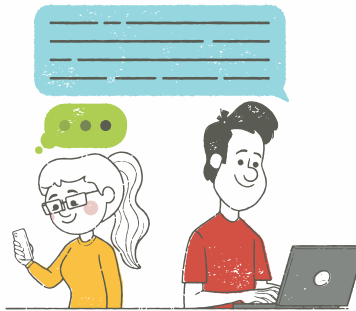
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