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PERSPECTIVE



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PRINT & POD – THE REAL “SOCIAL” MEDIA

by Mark Penninga



I'm typing these words on my laptop, in a not-so-comfortable seat of an airplane, somewhere between Vancouver and my hometown in northern BC. But I'm guessing that you are reading these words in ink and paper, seated in a comfortable chair, ready to relax.

If I'm right, congratulations. You made a good choice! You could have been staring at a screen, filling your time with content that's more likely than not to leave you feeling empty. Instead, you are engaging with a publication that, I am confident, by the last page will leave you feeling like you finished a nourishing and tasty meal.

I'm on my way back from *Reformed Perspective's* annual in-person board meetings, where we took a good hard look at why this organization exists, and what's most important for us to focus on. We concluded that *RP* exists not just to apply God's truth to the issues of our day, but also to celebrate His truth. And we concluded that our time and resources are best spent producing content that goes *deep* (rooted in God's Word) and goes *wide* (for all His people).

In particular, we want to invest even more in "print and pod" – this magazine and our *Real Talk* podcast. These two mediums allow us to deliver solid con-

tent directly to you, without it being watered down, or interrupted by big-tech and government gate-keepers, or getting lost in a sea of other messages.

CAN WE EVEN BE DEEP ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

This world has no shortage of shallow content competing for our attention. We're all becoming more aware of the negative consequences that social media in particular can have on hearts and minds, literally re-wiring our brains and making us feel like we are alone in a scary world. Yet, like an addiction, we keep going back for our fix. And this

... what if *RP* could facilitate reconnection on a deeper level?

isn't just a struggle for youth and young adults. Many adults and seniors are no less attached to their devices. The irony of "social" media is that we have never been lonelier and more fragmented.

RP publishes on Instagram, Facebook, and X (Twitter), and has also used smaller outlets like MeWe and Gab. In the past we could justify this quite easily – it drove people to good content on our website and reached people who would never have seen this content otherwise. It even allowed for some discussion. It has been encouraging to see *RP*'s resources seen by hundreds of thousands of people online.

But things have changed.

Today, people rarely share posts and links, or engage with what is shared. And platforms like Instagram make it difficult to connect our followers to our website. That means most posts there are limited to the few hundred words that Instagram allows, so our posts are necessarily simpler and shallower than you'll find in this magazine.

Also, people who "like" or "follow" us often don't see our content in their feed, even if they want it. And if they do, we are one message among thousands, including a lot of ads. We can't compete with the flashy eye-candy that fills these feeds. Even if we invested tens of thousands of dollars to compete, would even that get us seen? In fact, a good argument could be made that by being on all sorts of social media platforms, *RP* is encouraging others to spend their time there too.

And when we consider that there are no shortage of dangers lurking – users are just a couple clicks away from pornography – is that something we want to encourage?

BRINGING "SOCIAL" BACK TO MEDIA

Now the supposed benefit of social media is the "social" – the many family members, friends, and past acquaintances that we can reconnect with. But how deep

does that reconnection go?

So what if *RP* could facilitate reconnection on a deeper level?

Because we are a charity that provides the magazine (and podcast) at no cost, not only does it go to you, it also goes to thousands of others, including those who sit next to you in the pew. You have no idea what they are scrolling through on their phone, but you do know that they received a copy of *RP* and had an opportunity to read these very words.

Why does that matter? If we have something in common, it can provide us with an opportunity to talk about an issue that needs attention. In recent years it has become common for church members to shape their opinions on cultural matters by following personalities that they respect or admire. Social media companies notice what we've clicked on, and then serve more content that aligns with what we already like, making us all-the-more convinced. At the same time, other Christian brothers and sisters have been carried in a different direction.

And then we wonder why there is such division!

We sure don't claim to have figured out all the topics we write about or speak on. Far from it. We have a lot to learn. Sometimes we are wrong. But mediums like this can start a discussion with brothers and sisters in the LORD so that we can sharpen each other in our walk with the LORD. If you know that others have access to the same content, it makes a discussion all the easier.

So, could it be, then, that print could be the basis of a new, actually *social* media? We believe so.

SEEKING YOUR ADVICE

So what should we do about the digital sort of social media? Is it time to flick the switch, cold turkey?

There's good reason to at least consider that option. The small choices we make in the moment become habits which shape our character and lives. Few of us spend hours straight scrolling

through our feed. But we do spend 10 minutes here, and then another 5 there, again and again and again. It adds up. And it is time taken away from our family, our friends, and from the worship of our God, doing the tasks He has set before us. So if your life ended today, how might you be described in your obituary? How would your children and friends describe your life? As grounded in God's Word, relationships, and nurtured by resources with substance? Or addicted to whatever was sent to your device?

As you can read in the ED update at the end of this magazine, we are investing in print and pod by making this magazine available to even more churches (beyond the nine or so denominations who get it today) and increasing the collaboration with the podcast.

We haven't yet decided what to do with *RP*'s social media presence. Just because it doesn't have the same advantages as print and pod doesn't mean it has no value. Knowing that there is wisdom in the counsel of many advisers (Prov. 15:22), we respectfully ask that you weigh in. If you have a few moments, please share your thoughts with us.

HOW TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Here are three ways you can help:

1. Write a letter for publication at editor@reformedperspective.ca.
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NEWS

IN PERSPECTIVE

TWO MONTHS LATER, POILIEVRE'S APPLE MOMENT KEEPS ROLLING

BY JON DYKSTRA

Back in October, Canada's Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre went viral with a video clip that's been characterized as a "masterclass" for dealing with hostile media. Poilievre was visiting an Okanagan orchard, and the editor of the local paper, the *Times Chronicle*, tried to get Poilievre to answer questions about how he was a rightwing "populist....taking a page out of the Donald Trump" playbook. In response, the Conservative leader – munching contently on a huge apple – batted away each loaded question by asking his own. He wanted Urquhart to define his terms. And Urquhart couldn't.

When Poilievre posted the clip to Twitter on Oct. 14, it garnered more than 1.5 million views, and national coverage by the likes of the *Vancouver Sun*, *National Post*, and *Globe and Mail*. His performance was so

dominant the *Winnipeg Free Press's* Charles Adler tried to recast the exchange as the Conservative leader "squashing" and "devouring" the poor

reporter. Poilievre's apple moment made a splash in the US too, and the rest of the English-speaking world (prompting an Australian *Sky News* anchor to wonder if "perhaps there is hope for Canada yet"). And two months later the clip was still making the rounds. Joe Rogan, possibly the world's most popular podcaster (this is *not* a recommendation of his show), shared the clip with his tens of millions of listeners on a Dec. 7 episode.

Christian apologist Tim Barnett highlighted the seven questions Poilievre posed as a "brilliant" example of "using good questions in tough conversations." Poilievre went viral because he was effective and because he was confident in the face of an arrogant, unfair attack – asking the reporter to explain his insults dismantled them, and Poilievre's casual apple munching was the perfect optic. Barnett believes God's children can be that effective and that confident in our own confrontations with a hostile world if we employ this same tactic. In attacking our God, the world is attacking the very Author of reason and reality, which leaves them open to the same sort of dismantling if only we are brave enough to ask them to explain themselves.

And the apple? Well, that's optional.





THE MOST POPULAR GIRLFRIENDS ARE AI

BY MARK PENNINGA

Satan's efforts to corrupt God's design for marriage and sex have evolved yet again, spurred on by the advance of Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI technology now allows people to create their own virtual girlfriend. For a fee, you can design not just their looks, but also their personality, and then have a "relationship" with them.

"Create a girlfriend who is judgement-free! Who lets you hang out with your buddies without drama! Who laughs at all your jokes!" reported British freelance writer Freya India in her article "We Can't Compete with AI Girlfriends."

According to a recent Breakpoint article, "since 2008, the share of [American] men under 30 reporting no sex at all has nearly tripled." With more young men being single and lonely, the appeal of these apps is no surprise.

Their popularity has already led some "real" social media influencers to

adapt the technology for their own profit. India gave the example of Caryn Margorie, a young woman who has a large following on the social media platform Snapchat, who worked with an AI company to make an AI version of herself. She charges users \$1 a minute to chat with this AI self. She is bragging about the thousands of boyfriends that she has and reportedly makes over \$100,000 in a single week.

This is the latest step in a trend towards increasing isolation and individualism, made popular for years already through the Internet. Instead of embracing the joys and challenges of living with the families and neighbors that God has given us, it is easier to retreat to communities of like-minded people online. And with AI, these are not even real people any more but technology that has been made to

figure out exactly what we want and like. It is a retreat into our own selves.

The first human, Adam, started his life alone. But God said "it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:18). As with so many other steps being taken by mankind today, AI girlfriends is a choice to ignore God's good design for humanity. Although it may satisfy desires for a time, it will never fill empty hearts and souls.

As our world quickly changes, the church can be a beacon of light and hope simply by living the "ordinary" calling God has given us. Getting married, and having children, is becoming extraordinary. Thankfully, it is also the means through which Christ grows His covenant community. And no technology will ever be able to stop this.

CLIMATE CONFERENCE HYPOCRISY CONTINUES TO BE INSTRUCTIVE

BY JON DYKSTRA



COP28, this year's edition of the annual United Nations climate conference, has come and gone, setting a record for accredited participants, with more than 70,000. That's a sizable increase over the previous year's 49,000, and there were estimates of 400,000 others in the trade and technology expo around the conference. Canada sent more than 700.

The Nov. 30 to Dec. 12 event took place in the United Arab Emirates,

one of the planet's leading fossil fuel producers. There's an irony there, but more pointed is the hypocrisy. These are the same politicians who are deliberately making fossil fuels more expensive to discourage your and my usage. It needed to be done, we're told, because we face an "existential crisis." Whatever it takes, *because there is no Planet B!*

But what's up with the 70,000 plane tickets? What's the CO₂ count for that? Why doesn't *that* matter? If we're really at a crisis point, wouldn't drastic measures be warranted at the highest levels too? How painful is it, really, to hold their conference via Zoom?

But no, we're not at *that* level of crisis yet.

The hypocrisy is aggravating, but more importantly it is instructive. Whatever our leaders might be *saying* about a crisis, their *actions* tell us what they really think (1 John 3:18, Tit. 1:16a, James

1:22) and what we should think too.

In a Dec. 6 post, the folks at the Climate Discussion Nexus made a plea for world leaders to demonstrate good faith by showing they can actually do what they propose.

"To all the people gathering at COP28if you're so sure this energy transition can work, and be fun exciting cheap easy and great, stop with the grand pontificating and finger-pointing, and show us a demonstration project. Show us just one large or even medium-sized jurisdiction that can run its economy on 'green' energy."

We need to move off of fossil fuels? Before you propose it for the entire world, show us it can work in a small town somewhere. Show us how it can be done reliably and affordably. But until you can do that for a town, what reason would we have to think you could ever do it for the world?

WILL CANADA START KILLING THEIR MENTALLY ILL THIS MARCH?

BY MELISSA SNIPPE



There are only a few more months until Bill C-7 could become law in Canada. This bill would allow doctors to euthanize some of Canada's most vulnerable – those who are told they have an irremediable mental health condition. This past March 2023, the government tried to finalize this law, but by God's grace, they were delayed a year. Bill C-7 would already be law today if it were not for so many Canadians who pushed back, wrote MPs, and made their voices heard.

On November 24, 2023, I attended a meeting where Members of Parliament Dr. Leslyn Lewis, Ed Fast, Michael Cooper, Tako Van Popta, and Dr. Stephen Ellis spoke about doctor-assisted suicide, and the acceleration of our government's agenda to create a culture of death. It was encouraging to hear this group of MPs passionate about a culture of life and empathy.

MP Dr. Stephen Ellis was a long-practicing family physician before becoming an MP and he has been trying to stop euthanasia from gaining momentum. He stated some facts about euthanasia that he gleaned from his medical practice and research.

- 15,000 people per year are currently accessing euthanasia in Canada.
- Rates of doctor-assisted suicide are increasing by 30 per cent, annually.
- There is already a framework for a bill to suggest doctor-assisted suicide for those with opioid addictions.
- A Senate committee is also currently working on a framework for children to obtain euthanasia without parental consent.
- Health Canada is not keeping track of physicians' non-compliance with safeguards. Thus, the public has no idea of the abuses taking place because there is no accountability for granting or coercing medically assisted deaths.

Last March, Bill C-7 was delayed when many Canadians united to voice their anger. A letter was also produced by 17 chairs of psychiatry from Canadian medical schools urging the government to stop the bill. The government scrambled and produced Bill C-39 which created the

one-year delay in offering suicide to the mentally ill.

During that time, MP Ed Fast created a Private Member's Bill, C-314, which stated that a mental disorder is not a grievous and irremediable medical condition for which a person could receive euthanasia. The supporters of Bill C-314 were able to persuade *all* NDP MPs and 8 Liberal MPs to vote in favor of this reversal of Bill C-7. Fifteen liberal MPs who agreed to support the bill changed their minds after Trudeau invited suicide activists into the House to convince his caucus. Still, Ed Fast's Private Member's Bill C-314 failed by only a very narrow margin in the House. And the battle is far from over.

MP Ed Fast and MP Michael Cooper are on the special committee of medical experts, MPs, and Senate members whose job is to investigate the ethics of Bill C-7 and form a conclusion before the year allotted by Bill C-39 is over (March, 2024). The expert panel has concluded that it is impossible to determine whether a mental illness can cause an irreversible state of decline. No research has changed in the past year that would support Bill C-7. The government will very soon make their choice to either follow their expert panel's advice or proceed while ignoring their advice.

As Christians, we obviously do not agree with doctors murdering their patients, period. However, the inclusion of mental illness as a qualifier for doctor-assisted suicide makes this program just that much more damaging to our country. In the next few months, we have an opportunity to hold our government accountable for its decisions. We can pray for the MPs who are fighting Bill C-7, and we can again contact our MPs to voice our concern. We can also sign petitions to stop Bill C-7. According to this expert panel of MPs who spoke in November, all these actions really do make a difference.

BEN SHAPIRO, DAILY WIRE, LAUNCH A NEW KIDS' TV NETWORK

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

What kind of TV shows or videos do you want your children or grandchildren to watch? What choices are off limits because of objectionable content, or worldviews antithetical to the Christian life?

Thankfully we now have one more option to choose from. In 2022, The Daily Wire announced that it would compete with Disney and other studios, by launching a kids' entertainment division. If you aren't acquainted with The Daily Wire, you may still have seen YouTube clips from some of their commentators, including Jordan Peterson, Roman Catholics Michael Knowles and Matt Walsh (who made the *What is a Woman?* documentary), and Ben Shapiro and Dennis Prager (both observant Jews).

Their entertainment service has now

gone live under the brand name "Bentkey" (Bentkey.com) with a handful of original series aimed at kids, and around a dozen series produced by others but vetted by the brand as "safe" viewing for children.

Parents and professional reviewers have given thumbs up to the new service, with even left-leaning commenters seeming to appreciate the lack of an agenda in the streaming shows. Christian parents will still need discernment to judge if Bentkey is acceptable for their family's viewing, but may appreciate this additional choice.

Currently, Canadians can access the kids' network only through a web browser, while those in the U.S. are able to download an app to their Smart TV or tablet.

And if you're looking for more entertainment options, last year *RP*

published a whole issue on "Movies that King David might watch," full of 200+ recommendations of worthwhile films for the Christian family. You can find those recommendations at ReformedPerspective.ca/200.

Picture by Wirestock Creators/Shutterstock



TRUDEAU BAN ON SINGLE-USE PLASTIC OVERTURNED

BY MARK PENNINGA

AFederal Court has ruled that the Liberals' decision to designate plastic as "toxic," so they could ban single-use plastics, overstepped the federal government's authority. Since 2022, six types of single-use plastic have been banned, including bags, cutlery, and straws. Canadians have been slurping on soggy paper straws since, being told that this is for the good of the earth.

Christians *are* called to be stewards of creation. But



stewardship is connected to our God-given mandate to "have dominion over the earth" (Gen. 1:26) and is based on reality, not simply intentions. So, was the government's plastics ban actually a good step forward for Canadians and the planet?

As the Fraser Institute explained in response to the court ruling, 99 percent of plastic waste in Canada is safely disposed. More striking, the federal government's own analysis concluded that the ban will increase waste rather than decrease it: removing 1.5 million tonnes of plastic over a ten-year period while adding almost double the amount of other kinds of waste. Some of this other waste will be paper products, which break down more quickly than plastics, but these plastic substitutes will result in higher greenhouse gases and lower air quality.

And the government's plastic ban comes with a cost that goes beyond the inconvenience of carrying your groceries out the store in your arms and then proceeding to buy garbage bags rather than reusing the ones that used to carry our groceries. The \$616 million in forecasted benefits over ten years are outweighed three to one by over \$2 billion in additional costs from the new substitute products.

In spite of the court ruling, the government may not be willing to change course. Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault has said that the government is "strongly considering an appeal."

WHAT DOES PIERRE POILIEVRE THINK ABOUT THE UNBORN?

BY JON DYKSTRA

In a Dec. 11 profile published by *le journal de québec*, the wife of Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre talked about the couple's attitude toward the unborn. Anaida Poilievre told the newspaper (in French):

"...we are pro-choice. We decided on this. I am a woman from Quebec, I grew up here. And it's part of my values."

But one of Canada's most prominent abortion defenders, Joyce Arthur, doesn't think Poilievre is really on her side. She argued back in the summer of 2022 that while Poilievre had declared himself both "pro-choice" and "pro-choix" at the French-language leadership debate earlier that year, his voting record indicated he was "anti-choice."

So which is it? Is Poilievre somehow against the slaughter of the unborn, even as he verbally defends a mother's right to murder her child?

The voting record that Arthur points to shows Poilievre voted for a number

of bills which did seek to protect the unborn. But these were protections that pro-choicers should have supported too... if they were, in fact, pro-choice and not simply pro-abortion. Poilievre voted for bills that would have made it a crime to kill or harm an unborn child *that the mother wanted to keep*. He also supported penalizing attempts to coerce a woman into having an abortion she didn't want. Even if we were, for the sake of argument, to adopt the pro-choice notion that a mother's decision is what makes an unborn baby valuable, then one could be entirely pro-choice (or "pro-choix") and still support these bills. That same voting record also shows that Poilievre voted against a pro-life bill that would have banned sex-selective abortions. So, Arthur doesn't make a compelling case for Poilievre to be anything other than what he, and his wife, say he is.

That said, Poilievre's Conservatives still welcome pro-life MPs – the only party in Parliament to do so – and he himself has voted for some of the private members' bills the party's pro-life MPs have offered that would have pro-



tected at least some unborn children. As leader he is courting the pro-choice vote, but he is still looking for the pro-life vote too. So any interaction pro-life voters have with him will need to be done with our eyes wide open.

STUDY CONNECTS BIRTH CONTROL PILL TO FEAR AND ANXIETY

BY MARK PENNINGA

A new Canadian study has found that oral birth control use is impacting women's brains, and that may include how they regulate fear and anxiety.

The peer-reviewed study, published in the *Frontiers of Endocrinology* journal, included comparisons of women who were using the pill with those who had never used it. Use of the oral contraceptives resulted in differences in thickness of parts of the brain, including a thinner ventromedial prefrontal cortex. As Alexandra Brouillard, one of the authors of the study, explained:

"This part of the prefrontal cortex is thought to sustain emotion regulation, such as decreasing fear signals in the context of a safe situation.... Our result may represent a mechanism by which combined (hormone) oral contraceptives could impair emotion regulation in women."



While this is a new finding, and thus still needs to be verified, another harmful impact from the pill has been known about for years. Hormones from the pill make the endometrium (the wall of the womb) thinner, so that a newly-formed baby may not be able to implant, and therefore dies. For more information on the abortifacient actions of the pill, read "Investigating the Birth Control Pill" at www.ReformedPerspective.ca.

GOD'S HUMOR ON DISPLAY IN EDUCATION SECRETARY'S MISQUOTE

BY JON DYKSTRA

US Education Secretary Miguel Cardona is the man at the top of the US public education system. He is, consequently, the most visible representative of the government's efforts to take over the educational task God has assigned to parents and not to them (Deut. 11:18-19, Eph. 6:1-4, Prov. 3, etc.). In late November, while announcing yet another government initiative to improve education, Cardona referenced Ronald Reagan as a justification:

"I think it was President Reagan who said, 'We are from the government, and we are here to help.'"

But he got the quote entirely backward. What Reagan actually said was:

"I think you all know that I've always felt the nine most terrifying words in the English language are: *I'm from the Government, and I'm here to help.*"

That this educated public education man managed to reference a warning against government intrusions even as he was seeking to expand them is all the funnier when we remember that God caused this to happen. In Cardona's role, he personifies his government's overreach. And in getting the



quote exactly backwards, that arrogance was exposed. It is funnier still when we consider God's patience in the delivery. He started telling this joke back on Aug. 12, 1986, and delivered the punchline 37 years later!

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FULLY COMMITTED

Dordt University's mission is to equip students, alumni, and the broader community to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life.

Dordt's founders envisioned that Christian education would go beyond devotional work—"in the larger and deeper sense that all the class work, that all of the students' intellectual, emotional, and imaginative activities shall be permeated with the spirit and teaching of Christianity." Thanks in part to that bold vision and clear mission, we have continued to stand firm in our Reformed Christian perspective and to provide students with a unique, faith-infused educational experience.

Like Dordt, Reformed Perspective magazine seeks to "promote a Biblically Reformed perspective in all spheres of life." Praise God for the good work that Reformed Perspective is doing; our organizations are a close fit in that we both are enthusiastic about God not just on Sundays when we gather to worship, but every day of the week in the roles we have been called to serve."

There's a reason employers seek out Dordt graduates in engineering, business, nursing, education, agriculture, social work, and more. In addition

to training our students to ensure they are well-prepared for all the technical challenges they'll face in their careers, we make sure they differentiate themselves with their non-technical acumen in areas like writing, public speaking, interpersonal communication, and teamwork. Dordt's curriculum helps students to faithfully live as effective kingdom citizens and ready themselves for lives of faithful service in every area of life.

When I meet up with our graduates several years after their time at Dordt, it's clear to me that they benefit from the breadth of a Dordt education that prepares them to live a life of productive and thankful service in all facets of life. Yes, they often progress rapidly in their fields, but they also have a depth that truly allows them to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength—and love their neighbors as themselves.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Dr. Erik Hoekstra

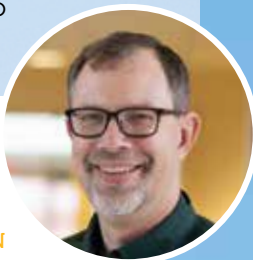
PRESIDENT OF DORDT UNIVERSITY



"When I was a Dordt engineering student, every engineering class I had emphasized the authority of God. And my professors lived it: when I struggled in classes, they cared and took the time to help me understand. That left an impression on me. Now we get to see this happening with our children, who are studying at Dordt. My son is an engineering major, and although it's a heavy load, he is persevering and really learning what it means to be a Christian engineer."

Michael Vande Voort ('92)

ENGINEER, LYNDEN, WASHINGTON



"My Dordt education ingrained in me the idea that Christ is found in all things. I now run a collection of 25 short-term rentals in South Dakota, and it's important to me that my business isn't separate from my everyday life and my walk with Christ. I have strong relationships with our cleaners and inspectors. I know that how I treat them matters. I also want to show the love of Christ with our guests so they feel welcomed and appreciated."

Kayla Huizing ('16)

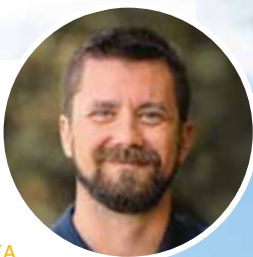
BUSINESS OWNER, SODAK STAYS,
SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA



"While studying at Dordt, I learned about how we can see our work as worship—how God calls us to use our gifts to make a contribution to his kingdom. That concept burst to life for me, and it has influenced my faith and work ever since."

Rev. Dr. Justin Carruthers ('10)

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A day in the life of a pro-life intern

A summer internship gives young people the opportunity to build friendships and grow in courage as they speak up for the unborn

by Devorah Gilman

It's 5:30 AM. My alarm clock goes off. Groggily, I turn it off and roll out of bed. It's time to get up, go out, and start working to save babies.

An hour later finds me driving to today's postcarding location. I chat with Kim – one of our summer interns – about each other's weekends. It crosses my mind how if it wasn't for this awful issue of abortion, I probably never would have met Kim.

I hate abortion – but I'm glad I know Kim.

GETTING THE TRUTH OUT

We get out of the car, grab stacks of postcards, and set out. I walk up to the mailbox of the first house and put the postcard in. Back to the street and then up a second driveway. Up and down, back and forth, spreading the truth. It's a bloody, gory, awful truth, but it's truth nonetheless, and that's why we spread it. People need to know. Babies' lives depend on it.

It's a bloody, gory, awful truth, but it's truth nonetheless, and that's why we spread it.

As we enter one neighborhood, children start coming out of their homes. Boys and girls, sleepy-eyed and yawning, lugging backpacks that seem almost as big as they are. I watch them trudge to the bus stop, the number of them growing.

We're here because there should be more of them, I think to myself. *For every three children walking to the bus stop, there should be one more.* I imagine a fourth child for every three and am struck by how those children did exist – they were just killed before they had a chance to wait for the bus on a sleepy weekday morning.

Several hundred houses later and we meet up with the rest of our team. Next on the schedule is a "Choice" Chain; here, we hold signs showing abortion and engage pedestrians in conversation. Afterward, we debrief as a team, sharing conversations that culminated in changed hearts and minds. It's always encouraging getting to talk to a culture and to watch people shift

their views on abortion. It's encouraging to be with so many young people who are a part of making that change.

At the end of the day, we pack up our supplies and everyone heads off to their own homes. I'm about to go home myself when I hear something. Back in the room where we keep our supplies, on the floor amidst scattered postcards, I see Kim, crying. I sit down, put my arm around her, and stay. She keeps crying.

"Whose idea was this?" she sobs. Now I'm crying too. "Whose idea was it to *kill babies*?"


We sit. We cry. We look at the postcards around us and think of all the babies who died today. Just two girls, surrounded by so much evil, so much death. Afterward, I can't remember exactly what else we said to each other, just that there was brokenness, and grief, and longing for a better day.

ANGER AND COURAGE

Later, I reflect on the supply room, the postcards on the floor, and crying with Kim. I think of a quote by Augustine: "Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

As I pack lunch and pick out clothes for the following morning, I pray and I plan for courage. Courage to face another day filled with the tragedy of abortion; courage fuelled by the hope we have as we see the results of our efforts in our country day after day; courage as we lean on each other, cry together, and work together.

I hate abortion.

I'm glad I know Kim. 

The Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform is a dynamic pro-life group working to end the ongoing slaughter of 300 unborn Canadian children that happens every day in our country. They are offering a unique summer job opportunity to come help them in this fight. You can learn more about this paid position at EndTheKilling.ca/internships. **Deadline to apply is March 18th.** Devorah Gilman worked for the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform from 2013-2019 (Pictures courtesy of CCBR).

COMPLAINING: our national pastime

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Long ago, people were taught not to complain. In addition, being selfless, giving, and kind, was applauded as the way that a person should live.

I'm not certain when the tide changed, but there is generally an attitude now of "me first" that is promoted, approved, and endorsed. And we Christians even fall prey to this worldly behavior at times. It is so prevalent that we don't even recognize it for the sin it is.

JUST A HALF TWIST ON THE TRUTH

I remember noticing self-centeredness when it became popular to say, "Charity begins at home, so I need to give to myself first." The original saying, "Charity begins at home," meant that learning to love others and put others first is an action that needs to be learned within the family unit.

Then I noticed that "Love your brother as you love yourself" (Matt. 22:39) started being used in a way that disregarded Ephesians 5:29 which tells us "...no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it." Instead, some people started saying, "See, before we can love anyone else we first have to learn to love ourselves right."

Add to this the magazines that encourage women in particular to look out for themselves first (and even the crazy commercials where family members shout, "Leggo my Eggo" as they grab each other's breakfast treat) and we have a society that thinks this is the correct way to think.

ROOT OF COMPLAINING

When we place ourselves first, this entitlement can have us thinking that nothing should ever go wrong in our lives. Appliances and cars shouldn't break down, kids shouldn't argue, milk shouldn't be spilled,



traffic should never be jammed, and other drivers should never drive "wrong." Our health should always be perfect, and our boss should give us praise and a raise, and our family and friends should consistently lavish loving attention on us (unless, wait, maybe they are putting themselves first also! Hmmm).

But here we are in the real world, where things don't always go the ideal way that we would prefer.

And so we hold a complaint-a-thon: "Let me tell you all the things that I didn't like in my last few hours (or days, or weeks)." Then we launch into how everything stinks. Often our recounting causes us to monopolize the conversation, believing that it's interesting to the hearers. Our hearers, often enough, are patiently waiting to give their own account of their sufferings until the entire circle of friends is comparing or one-upping levels of discomfort. It's quite the popular thing to do.

When we complain, we are talking only about our own reactions to the world around us. It's self-focused and self-

centered, and generally expresses a lack of gratitude to and trust in the Sovereign God who brought those circumstances to us.

DON'T DO IT

The crux of the matter is that God very clearly commands (not suggests!) us not to complain. The apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:14-15:

"Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."

The root cause of complaining is a lack of trust in God's providential care for us. Complaining means that we, His sheep, are essentially saying, "Hey, Shepherd, I don't like the trial that you sent to me today." Proverbs 3:5-6 teaches us,

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own under-

standing. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

We will not always understand why we face circumstances that we do not like. But when we pray about them, the Lord will assure us that He has everything under control – His path just looks different than ours did.

WHAT WE THINK COMPLAINING DOES FOR US

Dave Stuart Jr., in *The Case Against Complaining*, suggests that we complain because we think venting is therapeutic and will make us feel better. We might even think that it builds the “fellowship of the offended” because we are all in this together.

We need to carefully consider what our deceitful hearts tell us to do, as it may not actually be helpful to us or to others who have to listen to us. There are better, more positive ways to build camaraderie, because “complaining wastes time and warps our heart, making us feel powerless.”

Will Bowen has an excellent TED Talk entitled “A World Without Complaining.” In it, he states five reasons why people complain so much:

1. To get attention: complaining seems to help them to feel connected to other people. It’s ego reinforcement.
2. To remove responsibility: complaining may get them out of doing a task that they don’t want to do.
3. To inspire envy (or brag): the purpose of their complaining is to impress other people with their superiority in how much more they have suffered.
4. To make themselves more powerful: they gain support by complaining to people with similar opinions.
5. To excuse poor performance: people complain instead of taking blame for not completing an assigned task. “It’s not my fault, because someone else...” They complain to avoid accountability.

RESULTS OF COMPLAINING

Research from Stanford University has shown that complaining negatively affects your brain and your body!

Complaining actually rewires your brain for negativity...

According to Dr. Travis Bradberry, Ph.D. and author of *Emotional Intelligence*:

1. Complaining actually rewires your brain for negativity, or in other words, what you practice, you perfect:

“When you repeat a behavior, your neurons branch out to each other to ease the flow of information... So your neurons grow closer together and the connections between them become more permanent. Scientists like to describe this process as ‘Neurons that fire together, wire together.’ Repeated complaining rewires your brain to make future complaining more likely. Over time, you find it’s easier to be negative than to be positive, regardless of what’s happening.”

Complaining becomes an entrenched habit!

2. Complaining actually shrinks the hippocampus – the area of the brain critical to problem solving and intelligent thought. Keep in mind that the hippocampus is one of the primary brain areas destroyed by Alzheimer’s.
3. Complaining causes your body to release the stress hormone cortisol, which shifts you into fight-or-flight mode. It raises your blood pressure and blood sugar, impairing your immune system and making you more susceptible to depression, digestive problems, sleep issues, physical/mental exhaustion, and heart disease.

None of this should be a surprise to Christians. Prov. 17:22 states, “A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” And what did Paul say are the fruit of the Holy Spirit within us?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,

faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Gal. 5:22-23)

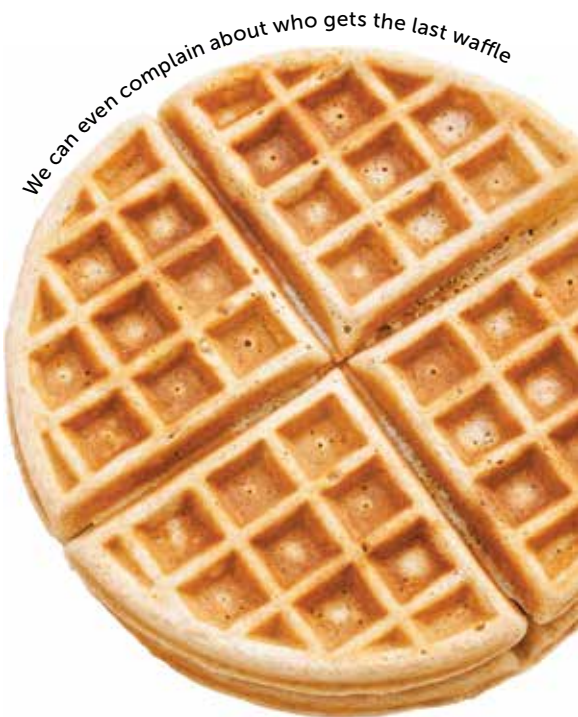
If we go back a couple of verses in Galatians 5, we might place complaining under “the desires of the flesh [which] are against the Spirit.” Perhaps our complaints might stem from enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, or divisions.

THE SOLUTION TO COMPLAINING

So how do we counter a complaining spirit, especially if that’s become our habit?

Develop an attitude of gratitude. Ps. 106 says, “O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.” The apostle Paul tells us in Phil. 4:6: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

You can add to this numerous other verses and Heidelberg Catechism sections as well!



WHEN IS CONSTRUCTIVE COMPLAINING OKAY?

Not all complaining is wrong, of course. How can we improve if we won't acknowledge that something isn't the way it should be, or could be?

However, we should only engage in solution-oriented constructive complaining. And this should only be done when you truly have something to complain about.

Constructive complaining also means raising the concern with the *appropriate* person and asking for help with finding a solution. For example, if your son keeps leaving his shoes in the middle of the foyer, what good does it do to complain about it to all your friends? Sit down and work out a solution with your son. Your bank made an error on your account? Go talk to your banker. Feeling achy and tired for the past two days? Talk to your doctor or take the steps you already know will help you (specific exercises, sleep, vitamins, etc.).

When there is an offense between Christians, we are to take the complaint directly to the offender (as scary as that may seem – God can give you the courage!). We read in Matt. 18:15-17:

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

If there is no resolution, then the complaint can be escalated to take another person or two – possibly an elder – with you to plead your case. Note that this does not include telling everyone else you know about the problem!

GOOD COMPLAINTS CAN BEGIN WITH GRATITUDE

When you make an appropriate complaint, start it with something positive first. For instance, if your bank makes an error, say, “I have been happily banking here for 15 years, and wish to continue, but recently there was a problem.”

To your son you might say, “Son, I really appreciate that you always hang up your coat and backpack on the hooks. But yesterday I nearly tripped over your shoes that were in the middle of the foyer.”

Be specific. Don't dredge up everything that has ever happened in your experience with a person. If an employee was rude to you, describe specifically what the employee did that was rude. End on a positive note, such as, “I'd like to work this out together.”

Please note: if you complain to anyone else, you are likely aiming to get attention, remove responsibility, brag, gain power, or excuse your poor performance.

DEALING WITH OTHER PEOPLE WHO COMPLAIN

Dr. Bradberry states:

“Since human beings are inherently social, our brains naturally and unconsciously mimic the moods of those around us, particularly people we spend a great deal of time with. This process is called *neuronal mirroring*, and it's the basis for our ability to feel empathy... You need to be cautious about spending time with people who complain about everything. Complainers want people to join their pity party so that they can feel better about themselves.”

This is likely too rash of a solution, because we must spend time with our family, friends, and brothers and sisters in the Lord. But you can see how it's easy to fall into the trap of complaining when others are doing it.

Instead, be thoughtful and brave! Think about the direction that a conversation is going, and then redirect it to something more positive. Start talking about specifically how God has blessed you lately, or what you heard in the sermon that really helped you.

Dr. Bradberry suggests that once you have worked on your own habit of complaining, you can help others to improve their negative focus. That seems more sensible advice, akin to taking the log out of your own eyes before trying to get the speck in someone else's (Matt.


7:3-5). Then do for them as you would want done for you: listen for the need that is being expressed – perhaps the person complains because he feels unheard. Then don't try to solve his problem. Instead, offer only a few words of sympathy and some encouragement. You might reframe the situation, share information that might be helpful, ask for solutions, or call it out as what it is: grumbling. Then redirect the conversation, talking about positive things.

The apostle Paul tells us to:

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Col. 3:12-13)

If someone has a legitimate complaint against us, we must apologize. If we have a complaint against them, we must be ready to forgive. If the complaint is misdirected to us, we should encourage them to go to the appropriate party and solve the problem, not just gossip about it.

LEARN TO SHINE

If we justify complaining, instead of confessing it as sin, we will reach a point where it is our default setting. It will feel natural to do it. But we are not stuck! We have the Holy Spirit within us, whose power we can call upon when the temptation strikes us – daily – to complain. We can ask for forgiveness and start noticing our complaints or ask our family members to do so (light-heartedly, perhaps). We can ask our omnipotent Lord to help us to stop it so that we will be “the children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.” 

Sharon L. Bratcher is the author of a collection of 45 RP articles entitled: “Soup and Buns: Nourishment from God's Word for Your Daily Struggles.” To purchase this book, contact her at sharoncopy1@gmail.com.

RP T-SHIRT CONTEST!

"FASHION FOR A REASON"



Picture courtesy of FunFaithFashion [Etsy.com/shop/funfaithfashion](https://etsy.com/shop/funfaithfashion)

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 **before Feb. 29, 2024**





TINY HOME CONT

by Mark Penninga

As dusk was settling in on a foggy November day in BC's Bulkley Valley, I parked my car on the driveway next to the home of Matt and Montana Slaa. String lights were glowing around their home, which overlooked a rolling field, and also came equipped with a stunning view of two mountain ranges. It wasn't hard to find the entrance, as there was only one door. Matt and Montana, along with their daughter Gabriella, welcomed me into their tiny home.

I had to be careful where to put my shoes, as there was no boot room or entryway, and I had a hard time reaching the hanger for my coat as it was about 8' high. But it only took a few seconds to

feel an overwhelming sense of coziness and tranquility, radiated by the character of both the home and my hosts.

In an age where it has become a momentous challenge for young men and women to get into the housing market, I visited with Matt and Montana to discover whether their outside-the-box solution of living in a tiny home with children is a practical solution that others may want to consider, or more of a romantic notion than a practical one.

WHEN DREAMS AND PRACTICALITY UNITE

With marriage, God joins two people into one. For Matt and Montana, that

happened in the summer of 2020. Montana grew up in Smithers, the daughter of a school teacher and an artist. Matt's family moved into the area as his father is a pastor who accepted a call to serve in a local Reformed church.

"I always wanted to live in a cabin," shared Montana. "It was right from when I was young. That was my dream."

Matt was in university while they were dating, preparing to become a teacher. They wanted to get married, but how were they going to afford that? "I felt like I had to come with a financial plan for Montana and her dad," Matt explained. The problem was that he still had to do more studies to get his education degree

MENT



to become a teacher. That itself would come with a big cost, as they were planning to move away and study for a year in PEI.

They proceeded to estimate the cost of building a tiny home, using the money they had saved. They had a year and a half to plan the project, using software from SketchUp to design it around the materials they collected.

“We did it very cheaply,” explained Matt. “Wood and windows we collected from someone who was getting rid of them for free.”

At this point in the conversation, Montana kindly offered me a cup of tea. Since a coffee table doesn’t fit in

the room, she pulled out a tall block of wood, which they use not only as a coffee table but also a dinner table (when it is laid down on its side), and a stool for their daughter to stand on when helping with the dishes.

I learned that the Slaas didn’t experience tiny home living prior to jumping in with both feet. Most of their inspiration came from online research and books, but they “just learned along the way.” At one point they decided “we’ve seen what we want to see. So we stopped looking at ideas, and worked with what we had liked, to come up with our own plan.”

They purchased a 20’ trailer to go under the home for about \$5,000, and

built the home 22’ long and 10.5’ wide. That is about the maximum width to still be road legal if it was ever to be moved. Since both Matt and Montana are tall, they didn’t bother with a loft but kept the ceiling vaulted, with a curved ceiling over their bed. Their bed is raised, with a lot of storage underneath, and space too for Gabriella to enjoy some quiet time. Windows dominate two of the walls, to take in the views of fields and mountains.

FREEDOM FROM DEBT AND MATERIALISM

Spending more time outside was part of the appeal for the couple. The small quarters force them to get outside for





more space. A highlight of each morning involves Montana taking Gabriella out to the chickens, which currently live in a greenhouse for the winter, to collect the eggs.

I asked them what else inspired them about tiny house living. For Matt, a big motivation was the freedom that comes from building his own place and living mortgage-free. “That is what came first.” But he was quick to see that it provided so much more, including spending a lot of time together.

“So many people, when we talk about tiny homes are like, ‘we can never live that close.’ But we love it.”

The couple acknowledged that they aren’t naturally bent towards a minimalist lifestyle. But this home forces them to do with less. “We always say you fill the space that you have,” Matt said. “So every few months, we have to do a purge through all our storage space.”

“There’s so many things that you don’t really need because you [already] have something that works,” added Montana. “Just the other night we were talking about how we don’t have an electric mixer, even a handheld one. It’s going to be another thing that we have to put somewhere. I have one whisk and I use it for everything. We make whipping cream all the time.”

They originally didn’t think they

needed a toaster either, but decided that toasting their bread over the fire wasn’t a sustainable option.

“We just learned to really love the idea that we can do it with less,” said Matt. “And then there’s the financial benefit of that too. We started to save a lot of money.”

Matt contrasted this with the year they spent in PEI, where they lived in a larger home that was 600 or 800 square feet.

“We saw an espresso machine for sale, it’s like, ‘oh, you should get that.’ And we loved it. But there were so many things that were like, ‘oh, we should get that’ or ‘we should do that.’ Just because it was possible. Before you know it, we had spent quite a lot of money doing all these things. And we had to sell a lot of it when we left, so that we can fit back into this.”

BUILDING FROM SCRATCH

Tiny homes have become popular, and it isn’t hard to buy them new or used throughout the world. I asked Matt if he had experience building homes before tackling this project. He always loved creating things as he grew up, and did some woodworking. But for the most part, he figured it out as he went and

thinks most people can do the same. “I’m convinced that given enough time, and commitment to learning, you can do it.” That even included the wiring, though not without getting shocked once.

Northern BC gets cold over the winter, and the Slaas’ walls are framed only with 2x4 lumber. Yet the home stays plenty warm thanks to a tiny wood stove. The stove requires very small pieces of wood, so they use less than a cord of wood each year. (A cord is 4’ wide by 4’ tall by 8’ long – equivalent to a pickup truck load piled high.) This is about 20 percent of what most homes in the area use. And the stove plays an important role in keeping the home dry, which can be a challenge for a small space with a few people breathing, cooking, and showering in it.

Because the fire burns out after about four hours, the Slaas sometimes wake up to a cool home (about 12 °C). But it warms up quickly again when a new fire is lit in the morning.

Matt showed me their bathroom, complete with a compostable toilet. A small bin of wood shavings sits next to the toilet, to assist with the composting. I don’t notice any smell (an improvement over many bathrooms with flush toilets). They also have an on-demand hot water system for their shower, but the water has to be collected in a bucket so the showers aren’t long.

Their total cost to build the home was about \$15,000. That includes the trailer under it, the wood stove, and the propane water heater, which were the more expensive components.

PRIORITIZING FAMILY

With another baby due in the new year, the couple has started building a second unit, with about the same dimensions, next to this home. The plan is to connect the two dwellings with an indoor walkway – a four-foot wide hallway which will also be their new main entrance/boot room. The added space will make it much easier to put the children to bed without worrying about waking them up, and Matt and Montana are also looking forward to an eating area. The new quarters won’t be built on

a trailer, but this new unit can still be loaded onto a trailer if it needs to move in the future.

The Slaas are realistic that this setup is not going to be too long-term, because they hope to have a big family, the Lord willing. That is why they are building the addition as a separate structure. “The idea is that, very easily, we can pull it apart. And it will be its own tiny home unit,” Matt explained. “We could sell it, or Airbnb it, or rent,” added Montana.

“But we are determined to make it work as long as we literally possibly can. And even after that, we are quite keen to explore other options,” shared Matt. “I’ve looked at yurts that are almost 1,000 square feet. And they’re \$40,000 to \$50,000. Why not?”

I asked Montana what it is like to be a mom in a tiny home.

“There’s definitely things that you just do differently,” she explained.

“Like sometimes I think, oh, it’d be really nice if I could get up more easily without [Gabriella] waking up in the morning. So most of the time, I would just stay in bed with her until she wakes up because I don’t want to disturb her. [If] I get up, I sneak out of bed and then sit here, in the dark, so that she can keep sleeping, and I quietly just read and do really quiet things....

“As soon as you have kids, it is not about you. It’s a sacrifice that you make. And it’s a really good one....

“But then we just do our morning routine and eat breakfast together and then we try to get out of the house and go outside and do the chickens in the morning and that breaks up the morning for Gabriella. And she does get a little bit cranky in the morning. I think sometimes she just gets kind of bored.”

Gabriella doesn’t get the boatload of toys that many other children experience, even in homes with less means. She plays with kitchen utensils and the kindling for the fires, in much the same way that kids play when their parents are camping.

“So we’ve been really trying to teach



her that it’s okay to play or read a book by herself.”

Gabriella also ends up doing a lot with Montana. “She’ll stand at the counter on the stool with me while I make dinner or do the dishes, she loves to help with the dishes. She wants to do what I’m doing. And I think that it’s a big difference to having a house with more rooms.”

Montana admits that some things just don’t work in the tiny home, including her passion for painting. That’s hard to do with a little one in close quarters, so Gabriella will often go up to her oma’s house for an afternoon, which is on the same property.

Hospitality can also be a challenge.

“Generally, if we have people over, it’s for coffee. Maybe a cup of tea and chat for a couple hours,” explained Matt. It doesn’t work well to have people over for a meal unless they can eat outside, which is seasonal and weather-dependent.

SAVING TO BUY DIRT

They are also transparent that this is not meant to be an alternative to getting into the real estate market, but a step towards it. “This allows us to dream of and hope for a future in buying real estate, because we do hope to have our own property, hopefully with a good bit of land, that we can farm and garden and have lots of animals,” Matt shared.

Because they live on someone else's property, tiny home living allows them to save a lot of money. Some time ago they put a note on Church Social (a congregational app) to see if anyone would be up for having them park their home on their property, and were amazed that four or five families were willing.

Their monthly costs for utilities total about \$100, so they are able to save \$20,000-\$30,000 a year towards buying their own land, which they hope to do in about five years.

"This lifestyle allowed us to go to PEI to go to school for an entire year, not even working, and to be loan free and to come out so much further ahead than we could have," shared Matt. "So financially, it's a no-brainer."

"If we had a \$400,000 home we'd be struggling to buy groceries. That doesn't sound at all better than where we're at now." Matt later added that because of this arrangement "we've never had any financial stress whatsoever."

This is far less expensive than renting. Most Canadian communities, including Smithers, have seen rental rates skyrocket to between \$1000 and \$2000 per month for a modest unit with one or two bedrooms.

Matt noted the contrast: "If you live in your tiny house for a year and a half, it's paid off."

He also respectfully disagrees with those who challenge them that a tiny home won't increase in value. "If you build it yourself, you can almost always sell it for what you spent on it if you're smart with it. And likely more. And you have an option of renting it out."

Matt emphasized the importance of keeping the costs down by working with what is available rather than insisting on a particular design. "We're not set on what's on our walls or whatever we're going to put on our ceiling. Something might come up that will work good for us."

"The fact that we built it ourselves makes a big difference too. We built it while we were engaged and it's kind of part of our marriage story, our love story. I think if you just bought a tiny

house for \$100,000 you wouldn't be that attached to it or invested in wanting to stay in it."

Matt explained that because tiny homes are built on a trailer, they aren't subject to the rules that governments have about building structures on a property. It is similar to an RV being parked on a property.

CONTENTMENT PERSONIFIED

As I left their home and drove to mine, one word was impressed on me: contentment. In 1 Timothy 6: 6-8 we read that:

"godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the

world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content."

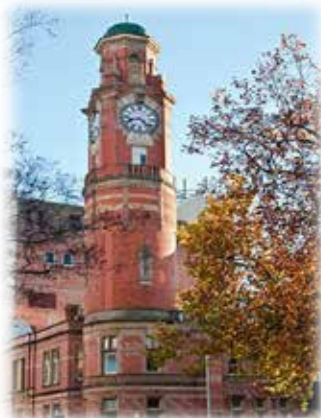
I also can't help but be convicted at how much effort we put into pursuing possessions, caring for them, storing them, and then getting rid of them. Instead of giving us contentment, they so often choke us like thorns among the wheat (Matt. 13:22).

"In a sense, we feel very wealthy," Matt reflected. "We have so much more than what so many people have. And we're so thankful for how the Lord has directed us along this path and taught us to love it." RP

Pictures are thanks to the Slaas.



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Outward Appearance Over Against the Heart

by Christine Farenhorst

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?
You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

— I COR. 6:19-20

*When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it.
And she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out of the window.*

— 2 KINGS 9:30



Over the centuries, there have been people who died selflessly for things they held dear – country, love, honor, faith – just to mention a few. Martyrs such as Polycarp, Latimer, and Stephen died for their faith. The American patriot Nathan Hale, who famously cried out prior to his death: “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country,” died for his homeland.

There is also another category of those who died, but by unintentionally putting their lives at risk for love of self, for vanity, and for pride.

GOOD QUEEN BESS

Queen Elizabeth I, who ruled England from 1558 to 1603, became ill with what was first assumed to be a fever. It was not. It was the dreaded smallpox. At the time of this fever, this young daughter of Henry VIII was twenty-nine years old and she had been queen for only four short years. Adored by the British public, she was known to have a good-natured smile and a trim figure. Seen wearing intricate lace collars beneath a smooth, ivory complexion, the youthful monarch considered her looks somewhat of a status symbol. Her fiery red hair was usually dotted with expensive jewels – the jewels representing her chastity. While in bed with the fever, it was feared in the court and in the country that she would die.

At the onset of her illness, Elizabeth refused to believe that she had contracted the dreaded disease. A Dr. Burcott was asked to diagnose and when he came up with the word “smallpox,” the word “fool” escaped Elizabeth’s lips. A repeat visit from the man, who was quite courageous in returning to her side a second time, having been called a fool the first time, again identified the illness with these words: “Tis the

pox,” whereupon Elizabeth, it is said, moaned: “God’s pestilence! Which is better? To have the pox in the hand or in the face or in the heart and kill the whole body?”

No such angry words came from the lips of Mary Sidney, Elizabeth’s lady-in-waiting and friend, a loyal girl who selflessly nursed her sovereign for hours throughout the illness. Mary had caught the disease from her mistress for whom she was caring and, as a result of her devotion, the girl became very disfigured. Mary Sidney’s husband, Sir Henry Sidney, wrote of his wife:

“When I went to Newhaven [Le Havre] I lefte her a full faire Ladye, in myne eye at least the fayerest, and when I retorned I found her as fowle a ladie as the smale pox could make her...”

Mary, though scarred, through her sacrificial devotion, was beautiful in the eyes of God.

When Elizabeth gazed into her looking-glass after recovering her health, she was devastated to notice that the pox had left some visible scar tissue on her face. Having been celebrated by the populace for her looks, so she thought – the elaborate gowns, her lace kerchiefs and her white skin – she now felt a certain degree of insecurity. Seeking to regain her physical loveliness in the eyes of the public, she hunted about for an answer. She began using Venetian ceruse.

Venetian ceruse was a cosmetic used as a skin whitener and it was a lead-based cosmetic. Sometimes mixed with manure for traction or with vinegar to thin out the consistency, it was popular among the rich. Because its main ingredient was lead, however, it was a potential killer. Because of her vanity and insecurity, Elizabeth began covering her facial pockmarks with this heavy, white makeup. She did not know that symptoms of lead poisoning could include abdominal pain, aggressive behavior, constipation, sleep problems, headaches, irritability, loss of appetite, loss of teeth, fatigue and high blood pressure. Some scholars believe that Elizabeth’s eventual death was due to

blood poisoning from lead.

Having access to the Bible, and having read it, the young queen should have known that security was to be sought in God, not in cosmetics. Although Elizabeth’s sad lack of knowledge about the danger of Venetian ceruse is to be decried, it was a far worse matter that Elizabeth put her trust and confidence in her outward appearance.

ROUGED AND POISONED

There is another story.

A century and a bit after Elizabeth I’s reign of forty-five years, in 1733 to be exact, a young girl was born in Cambridgeshire, East England. The girl’s name was Maria Gunning and she was the eldest child of six. Her father was from Castle Coote, County Roscommon in Ireland and her mother, Bridget Bourke, was the daughter of Theobald Bourke, 6th Viscount Mayo.

The Gunnings were not wealthy. On the contrary, they lived in relative poverty on father Gunning’s home of Castle Coote. Considering the fact that there were six children to support, mother Bridget decided to become enterprising. When her two oldest girls were barely teens, she decreed they should take up acting. Maria and Elizabeth were both extraordinarily pretty and acting, although not a respectable occupation, could open the doors to wealthy patronage. Actually, the word “pretty” for the two daughters was mild. They were very beautiful. So, shuttled off by their mother, they traveled down to Dublin and joined the theater.

In Dublin, the sisters soon became well-known – well-known for their handsomeness. When they were but in their early teens, they were both present at a ball in Dublin Castle wearing gowns borrowed from their theater group. At this ball, Maria was introduced to the Earl of Harrington, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The man was so impressed with the shapely girl, that he granted mother Bridget a pension. With ready money in hand, Bridget immediately took her two daughters to England. Attending parties and dances in Maria’s birthplace of Cambridgeshire, the sisters soon

became acclaimed personages. Invited to attend the court of St. James, the official royal court of the king of England, they charmed him. Followed by celebrity-seeking crowds wherever they went, their popularity rose to the point where Maria was mobbed one night in Hyde Park. King George II, consequently, gave Maria a guard to protect her and, from then on, she walked in the park with two sergeants of the guard before her and twelve soldiers following her. The girls had achieved fame and notoriety. Within the small space of two years both girls were married – Elizabeth to a duke, and Maria to an earl, thus achieving the rank of Countess.

Maria’s earl, the 6th Earl of Coventry, took his bride to Paris for a honeymoon. Feeling pressured to preserve the beauty which she felt sure had brought her this far up the social ladder, Maria began using rouge. Rouge was the rage at the French court, and Madame Pompadour, mistress to King Louis XV, had set a fashion of pale white skin with red rouged cheeks. The base ingredient of this makeup, as of Venetian ceruse, was lead. Although her husband did not approve of makeup, even wiping it off her face publicly with his handkerchief, Maria continued to apply thick layers onto her skin.

But the end of the matter was this – at the tender age of 27, having borne four children, Maria was diagnosed with consumption. It is reported that she retreated to a darkened bedroom in the weeks prior to her death, refusing to receive any visitors. It is also said that her early death was a “death by vanity,” because lead poisoning from her excessive use of makeup probably contributed to her demise.

Maria Gunning, or Countess Maria of Coventry, was the owner of a 7-foot mirror and countless jars of rouge. The mirror caused her mental anguish when she gazed into it prior to her death. The rouge caused her physical discomfort and, in the long run, death. Maria had not the spiritual comfort of being beautiful and secure in the eyes of God. She had existed a decade of being feted and admired by the world. But what is that, compared to an eternity?!

NOT LIMITED TO THE PAST

We can travel further down in history.

In 1867, there was an advertisement placed in a local newspaper in Montreal. The ad praised Dr. Campbell's safe arsenic complexion wafers, as well as acclaiming Dr. Fould's medicated arsenic complexion soap. Both were touted to be wonderful for removing freckles, blackheads, pimples, vulgar redness, rough yellow or muddy skins and all other disfigurements whether on the face, neck, arms or body. The promotion went on to say that if you desired a transparent and clear complexion free from coarseness or blotches, these medications should be tried, by men as well as women, and could be mailed to your address or bought at your local pharmacist.

We know, without a doubt, that taking arsenic is bad. Although arsenic destroys red blood cells, which does lead to pale, desired skin, it will eventually kill you.

Today as well, harmful ingredients can hide in lipstick, mascara and rouge – ingredients which can wreak havoc with your body.

It is a fact that the chemical lead can poison. It hides in many industrial sources, foods, and spices, as well as in everyday cosmetics. Lead, it is said, makes cosmetic colors pop and helps products resist moisture. Many countries have developed strict controls of lead in cosmetics. Sixty-five countries have even banned it outright. But it is still an ingredient among cosmetics in many low- and middle-income countries.

There are other health matters which a Christian might keep in mind as he or she considers their appearance. For the woman, there is a shoe choice to be made every day. Granted, we are not all Imelda Marcos material (Imelda was the wife of the former Philippine dictator, Ferdinand Marcos Sr., and infamously owned 3,000 pairs of shoes), but we do choose our footwear each day. Some women choose very high heels. Wearing stiletto, or any kind of heels, can certainly cause unpleasant side effects – these side effects can include lower back pain, sore calf muscles, protruding veins and constricted blood vessels. All these side effects taken together can sooner or later result

in an ugly deformity of the foot called “hammer toe.”

Then there is the issue of tight clothing. Wearing close-fitting outfits, often chosen in a desire to be more attractive to the opposite sex, is not only morally unhealthy and not according to Scripture, but also physically unwise. Making a tight garment choice can lead to yeast infections, cause difficulty in breathing and bring on abdominal pain. Tight pants can cause tingling thigh syndrome and “low waist” tight jeans can cause digestive issues and will lead to back pain. It is judicious to wear apparel which keeps circulation flowing. Indeed, it is wise and pleasing in God's eyes to be modest and discreet in dress.

CONCLUSION

It is no sin for a woman to want to look pretty. It is no sin to dress attractively and it is no sin to rejoice in the body God has given you.


But to depend on physical appearance, to seek security in outward looks, to rely on your exterior for your relationship with others or for your assurance and self-esteem, is not what the Bible teaches. Neither are we to judge others on their outward appearance, but rather we are to evaluate people on their confession of faith and on the fruits of the Spirit they display. We are to be merciful in judgment and we are always to remember that God, and God only, sees the heart.

Being beautiful for God can actually cause pain. Living and humbling yourself before others, can cause hurt and hardship. So, indeed, our Lord and Savior found it to be. For it is said of Him in Isaiah 53 that:

“He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.”

Jesus did not eschew a marred countenance; He did not try to cover His wounds for the sake of resembling a more pleasing impression in the eyes of those beholding Him. In fact, His wounds are what make Him beautiful.

We do well to remember throughout our earthly life that Jesus “was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed” (Is. 53:5). Knowledge of this and faith in this, gives us beauty of countenance; knowledge of this and faith in this, gives us assurance in life; knowledge of this and faith in this, gives us a reason to live.

Have a blessed 2024! 



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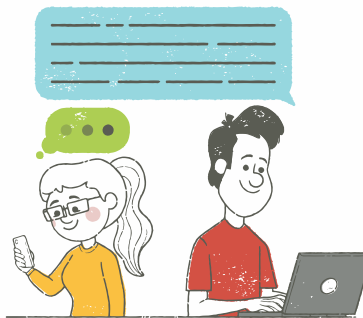
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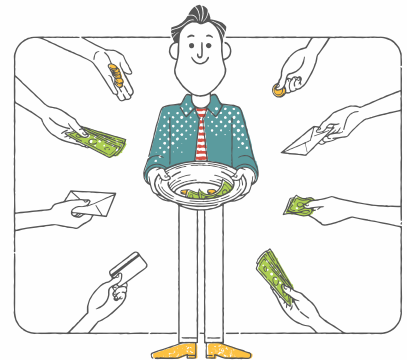
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{ IN A TIDBITS RELEVANT, AND NOT SO, TO CHRISTIAN LIFE NUTSHELL }

BY JON DYKSTRA

NATIONAL DEBT COSTS \$3 A DAY IN INTEREST PAYMENTS FOR EVERY MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD

In a Sept. 15 press conference, Christian Heritage Party leader Rod Taylor noted that:

“...Canada is deeply in debt. The federal government owes about \$1.2 trillion. A trillion is a thousand billion and a billion is a thousand million. Our current government is adding to that debt at the rate of \$109 million per day. And what is that debt costing? \$120 million every single day in *interest alone*.”

With a population of almost 39 million, that works out to an average of around \$100 a month or just over \$1,100 a year that the Canadian government will have to take from every man, woman, and child in Canada, just to service our interest payments. Of course, they aren't even managing that, which is why our debt continues to grow, increasing the burden for the next generation. That is not the sort of inheritance that the good man of Proverbs 13:22 is supposed to leave for his children's children.

TITLES WORTH THE PRICE OF THE BOOK

I've read my favorite writing book a few times now, but in recent years, when I'm battling a bout of writer's block, I don't need to read it. I can just pull it off the shelf, take a good long look at the title there on the cover, and that's enough: *If You Can Talk, You Can Write*. Here are a few other books with especially instructive titles.

- **Everyone's a Theologian** – R.C. Sproul knows theology – the study of God – isn't just for pastors, but for parishioners too.
- **Why It Might Be OK to Eat Your Neighbor: If atheism is right can anything be wrong?** – Sometimes a title can be too good. I haven't read this one, and feel like, after reading this fantastic title, I might have gotten enough of the gist that I don't need to.
- **Fire Someone Today** – This is a business book by a Christian businessman, Bob Pritchett, running a Christian company, and he found out that, while you want to do right by your employees, it is also good to recognize God does give out different talents, so sometimes firing an employee who can't measure up is actually freeing them up to find out what they really should be doing.
- **Amusing Ourselves to Death** – Neil Postman's oldie but goodie is still applicable in a time when social media contagions have folks amusing themselves right into cutting off healthy body parts.
- **Do Hard Things: A teenage rebellion against low expectations** – Two teens, brothers Alex and Brett Harris,

wrote a challenge to teens to pull up their socks... and make their beds... and clerk for Supreme Court Justices.

- **Oops! I forgot my wife** – How many wives suffer from neglect? This one's a humorous, fictional smack-down on the self-centered husband written by a counselor who wants to help them change.
- **Just Do Something** – Looking for God's will for your life, and stuck in neutral trying to figure out what it is? Kevin DeYoung has some help for you and it starts on the front cover!
- **Wolf in their Pockets** – Occasional *RP* contributor Chris Martin wrote a book on smartphones and social media that's well worth reading, but the title offers quite the refresher all on its own.

WHEN THE MASK COMES OFF

Laura Klassen's pro-life organization Choice42 regularly saves babies from abortion by helping out their moms. And when a baby is born, the thankful mom will often share a pic with Choice42, to encourage other moms to make the same choice. But a curious thing happens when Klassen posts one of these baby pictures. Folks from the other side blow a gasket. But why? As Klassen notes:

“Funny how whenever we post pics of babies saved from abortion, some people get triggered and feel the need to comment about #abortionrights or their general hate for babies. A simple ‘congrat’ will do. After all, these women chose their babies, and y'all are #prochoice, right?”

5 WAYS TO IMPROVE THAT REQUIRE NO TALENT

If your basketball team tryouts are tomorrow, it'd be great if you could shoot 40% from the 3-point line. The coaches would love that! But that's a skill that takes years to develop, so if you don't already know how to do it, there's not a lot you can do about it between now and tomorrow.

But there are things you can do right now that don't require any skill, but could get you noticed by a coach. These could make you a valuable member of the team instantly, and they go way beyond just sports. If it's tough to keep all five in mind, then focus on a couple, or three, for now.

1. **Really listen** – It's one thing to listen, and another to engage your brain and interact with what your coach is saying. How many of your teammates are thinking through *why* the coach has you running this particular drill? If you know the *why* behind the *what* you'll be able to make the most of your practice time, and your skills will grow. Listen with your brain!
2. **Be on time** – If you're just 5 minutes late, but 11 teammates and a coach are waiting for you, you've just blown an hour's worth of practice time (12 x 5 = 60 minutes). So respect your coach and teammates' time by showing up just a bit ahead of when you're supposed to.
3. **Outwork your opponent** – A mediocre player giving 100% may be able to shut down a much more skilled player who's giving just 80. The trick here is that we often think we're

giving it our all, when we actually have a lot more in the tank. So analyze your effort.

4. **Have a positive attitude** – There are professional athletes who make millions without ever getting on the court – they’re wanted just for their positive presence on the bench and in the locker room.
5. **Have good body language** – Show your positive attitude. Just as an athlete can show attitude toward his coach and teammates without saying a word, you can give them a boost by walking around with energy, whooping it up from the bench, and just keeping the energy flowing!

DAD JOKE REFRESHER

For the fathers out there needing some new material...

- I asked the beekeeper for a dozen bees, and he gave me thirteen – he said the last one was a freebee.
- The Texan I dated broke up with me; she said I was just too un-American. I should have seen it coming a kilometer away.
- Yesterday I was painting the house with my son. He said, “Dad, can’t you just use a paintbrush?”
- My wife asked me if I’d seen the fish bowl. I told her, “I never imagined he could.”
- My wife really knows nothing about sports. When I told her I’d gotten a hole in one, she went and got me a pair of socks.
- I hear some people pick their nose, but I never got consulted.
- How do flat-earthers travel? On a plane.
- My wife is into philosophy. On our last date night, when I got the chicken salad she picked the egg salad just to see whose order would come first.
- I can’t keep up with the abbreviations kids use these days and my daughters are no help. When I asked what “idk” stood for, they all pretended not to know.

GETTING OUT OF THE FRIEND ZONE

Commentator Aaron Renn has coined “The Kathy Keller Rule” for all of those out there stuck firmly in the dreaded “friend zone.” As he explained it in his newsletter some years back, getting stuck in the friend zone happens,

“...when one person wants more out of a friendship than the other person does.... one person wants to make the relationship romantic but the other person wants to remain friends.”

While it isn’t always so, the “wants more” is often the girl, while “just friends” is typically the guy. There can be some cluelessness to this; the fellow might not be stringing her along on purpose. But intentional or not, he’s enjoying some of the joys of a real relationship – the flattering, even ego-boosting, attention of the opposite sex, and the convenience of having someone who’ll drop most anything to go see the latest movie with you – without having to actually give her much of himself. This one-sided exchange is only possible because there is what Renn calls an “asymmetry of intent.” He gives as an example, a story Tim Keller tells in his book *The Meaning of Marriage*, about Keller’s relationship with his wife.

“Though we were best friends and kindred spirits, I was still hurting from a previous relationship that had ended badly. Kathy was patient and understanding up to a point, but the day came when she said, ‘Look, I can’t take this anymore. I have been expecting to be promoted from friend to girlfriend. I know you don’t mean to be saying this, but every day you don’t choose me to be more than a friend, it feels as if I’ve been weighed and found wanting – hoping that someday you’ll want me to be more than a friend. I’m not calling myself a pearl, and I’m not calling you a pig, but one of the reasons Jesus told his disciples not to cast pearls before swine was because a pig can’t recognize the value of a pearl. If you can’t see me as valuable to you, then I’m not going to keep throwing myself into your company, hoping and hoping. I can’t do it. The rejection that I perceive, whether you intend it or not, is just too painful.’ That’s exactly what she said. It got my attention. It sent me into a time of deep self-examination. A couple of weeks later, I made the choice.”

Renn then proposes “The Kathy Keller Rule”:

“Do not stay in a friendship where your desire for romance is persistently denied, but deliver an ultimatum (or ask the other person out on a date), exiting the friendship if the other person chooses not to reciprocate your desires.”

I think this is great advice. Really great advice even. But I’ll also add, this isn’t out of the Good Book, so take it for what it is – some common sense to consider, but not an 11th Commandment to be obeyed without question.

WEAR IT ON YOUR CHEST

While I’m not sure where the expression “wear it on your sleeve” ever came from, the folks at the Institute for Creation Research (ICR.org) show us it is possible to wear our love for the Lord on our chests. And they were happy to share pictures of two of their most popular shirts to serve as inspiration for anyone considering RP’s “Fashion for a reason” t-shirt design contest. This is what can be done with a good slogan and some creative font usage. Or a great picture of a T-Rex. So give it a go! And find all the contest details on page 21.





Apko Nap: *Storyteller*

by Marty VanDriel

Apko Nap tells stories with a purpose – weaving word pictures and descriptions with plots and subplots, often bristling with adventure – but not solely for entertainment. As an educator for many decades, Nap learned that students retain and learn much more readily when lessons can be incorporated into a memorable tale. If you ever run into one of Mr. Nap's former students (and there are many!), you can ask them to recall one of his stories, and there is a very good chance that this student, many years later, will be able to share one. More importantly, they possibly could even tell you what lesson they learned from this tale.

80+ YEARS YOUNG

Now in his late eighties, Nap has become even more passionate about listening to stories: after all, it is no good to tell a story if your audience does not listen! In today's busy world, with its many distractions and interruptions, perhaps

it has become even more important that Christians learn or re-learn to become good listeners, so that we can retain what our instructors teach us.

I met Mr. Nap for coffee near the Cloverdale, BC home where he and his wife Kathy have lived since 1978. Tall and dapper, with a ready smile, Nap is an enthusiastic conversationalist. When prompted, he is quick to teach me why storytelling is an important educational tool.

"If I say to my students, it is important to choose good friends," says Nap, with a twinkle in his eye, "then they will nod, and soon forget. But if I told you the tale of two good friends Kwasi and Kwaku playing in the forest in Ghana, how a lion stalked the two of them, and that Kwasi abandoned Kwaku, and told him he had to look out for himself, and how the lion nearly ate Kwaku, until Kwaku thought to play dead, while Kwasi looked on from safety way up high in a tree? Maybe you would remember this lesson more

vividly!"

"That's how we have been created," says Nap, "with intuition, with creativity, with emotions. And all these things... function in a story."

FRUIT OF HIS FATHER'S TRAINING

As a boy growing up in the town of Zuidlaren in the Netherlands, Nap grew to appreciate at a young age the power of public speaking: his father trained young Apko and his brothers in the art of public poetry reading (*declameren* in Dutch). The Nap brothers often claimed the first, second and third prizes in local poetry recital competitions! But these prizes did not come easily: Father Nap, who was a nurse in the local psychiatric hospital, was an exacting taskmaster, who believed that his sons needed at least six weeks of preparation and hard work to enter a contest. ("As we rehearsed our poems aloud, he might say 'I didn't hear that comma...'"") So began Apko's instruction in the art of oration, using expression,

vocal variances, and pauses for dramatic effect, all of which add to the delightful experience of hearing a poem recited, or a story told aloud.

Born in 1936, Nap grew up during the Second World War, but his hometown was not overly harmed by the effects of the war. In fact, since the family took in patients who had been removed from the local hospital, they were able to have extra rations, and did not often have to go hungry. Since there was not much local employment, especially after the war, Nap chose to enter teacher training at the Christian “Kweekschool” in Groningen, biking 17 kilometers every day to class. Thanks to his parents hosting regular “open houses” for nurses at the local hospital, Apko had met Kathy Dijkina in the meantime, and the two were married in 1959 (and are still together today, 64 years later!). After five years of post-secondary schooling, Nap was ready to begin teaching.

OFF TO BRAZIL

Here is where Nap’s journey took a very different turn. Just barely into his first year of teaching at Ommen, he read stories from Rev. D. Los in the *Nederlands Dagblad* (a daily Reformed newspaper). From Brazil, Los wrote about the need for a teacher at a school for the children of Dutch emigrants in Monte Alegre, in Paraná, in the south of the country. These Christian colonists, all members of the liberated (*Vrijgemaakt*) Reformed churches, had immigrated to operate dairy farms serving the needs of this remote town, which had been built around what was then the largest paper mill in South America.

Nap was convicted of the need, and made the decision to uproot his growing family, and move to Brazil, far away from the comforts of European civilization. Many adventures followed, as Nap taught younger students to read and write, but also kept a few steps ahead of the older children, as he taught them about fertilizers and best practices in agriculture, at the request of the school society members.

In 1964, the Brazilian military

overthrew the national government of President João Goulart, and conditions for the *kolonie* changed dramatically. The owners of the paper mill had appointed a General to run their factory, and soon after the revolution, they decided that the economic arrangement with the Dutch dairy farmers no longer made sense. The farmers asked 29-year-old Nap to represent them in negotiations with the General! The General treated the emigrants fairly, as the parties eventually came to a good agreement to wind down the dairy operations. This

As the only teacher in the Ebenezer school in Monte Alegre, Brazil, Apko taught all elementary grades and agriculture courses. Here Apko and daughter Dederique ring the Ebenezer school bell.



meant of course the end of the *kolonie* of about 25 families, and the end of the school.

The Naps were at a crossroads again, with six growing children in a foreign land, and a job that would soon disappear. But the Lord provided an opportunity for continued service in Brazil! The church at Assen (the Netherlands) had a mission project in Curitiba (also in the State of Paraná) with need for another worker. One of the project's missionaries made the trip to Monte Alegre "armed" with 77 prepared questions with which to interview young Mr. Nap for his suitability as a mission worker. Evidently, the interviewer was satisfied (despite Nap's lack of formal theological training): after a 6-month process of back and forth

with the consistory at Assen, Nap was appointed as a *missionario* in Curitiba (although the church made clear that this title was only valid in Brazil!).

At Curitiba, as a way to meet people and teach them about Christianity, Nap volunteered to teach at a high school for adults, where he was allowed to teach about the Bible, despite the school director's initial misgivings. In fact, Nap taught his very first class just two hours after meeting the director and convincing him that this would be a good idea! The missionaries decided that the book of Mark would be a good introduction for these students, and so the instruction began that very day.

One day, a girl from the class put a note in Mr. Nap's pocket which said "I would like to become a daughter in your church." She was one of the first to make profession of faith in the newly established church! More than fifty years later, Nap still keeps in touch with one of these students who joined the church there, which still exists today.

COUNTRY #3

After six years at Curitiba, Apko and Kathy decided that for the sake of their now seven children's education, it would be better to move back to the Netherlands. Nap had some misgivings about the move: he really enjoyed the mission work in Brazil, and the fields were ripe for harvest.

In time, Nap found that he was not at home in Holland anymore: the country had changed and so had he. When an advertisement for a fifth-grade teacher at William of Orange Christian School in Surrey, BC was published, he applied for the position. This time, the interviewer (Harry Moes of Langley, who was visiting his parents in the Netherlands) did not arrive with 77 questions, but still with quite a few. The Naps moved to Surrey in 1978, where they bought a home within a few blocks of the Cloverdale Canadian Reformed Church (and where they still live today).

The early years in Cloverdale were not the easiest: Apko had to learn Canadian history, and of course had to teach in English, not Portuguese or

20 years after retiring from his day job at the William of Orange Christian School, Apko, and his wife Kathy, are still keeping busy.





A good storyteller needs to be a good listener too! Here Apko gets some help from Kathy to get new batteries in his hearing aids because, as he puts it, "My wife always supported my fight for the importance of listening."

Dutch; Kathy had to make ends meet on a teacher's salary; and the children had to adjust to a new country and culture. One of the biggest positive differences was that the Canadian students were overall respectful and obedient, easier to deal with than his pupils in Holland. (Although Nap can still recall the admonition of one student who thought the teacher should have stricter standards for the class! Later this same student, who had been somewhat bold with expressing her opinions to her instructor, became a Member of Parliament.) From 1983 to 2002, Nap served as Principal of the school, and recalls these years very fondly, thanking the Lord for good harmony with the school board, with parents, and with his fellow teachers.

FRUITFUL RETIREMENT YEARS

In 2002, Mr. Nap retired from daily work at William of Orange Christian

School, but remained active and engaged in teaching about the art of storytelling, and teaching about improving listening skills. He developed a workshop on storytelling called "Ears Acquire Eyes When You Listen" that he led for different teachers' groups throughout BC, in Manitoba, and in Ontario. Even teachers who seemed least inclined to use storytelling in their courses appreciated these workshops and benefited from them.

Along with fellow educator Pieter Torenvliet, and writers such as Christine Farenhorst, Nap wrote a church history course in three volumes called *The Flame of the Word*. The authors wished to make Reformed Church history come alive for students by writing some of the fascinating anecdotes and thrilling narratives that make up the history of God's people in the 2,000 years since the time of Jesus Christ. These books have been used in many Christian schools in

the years since, and have been a valuable tool to help young people appreciate the working of the Lord in the preservation of His church through the centuries.

In later years, Nap became more interested in the art and discipline of listening. "I could talk for hours about this!" he says. "Listening is under siege... as modern communication (dominates) the lives of especially our young people, paying attention is a big challenge." Nap has worked on and off on articles and presentations addressing the challenge of "scant attention" among modern Christians, and hopes to write still more on the subject.

Still active in church life, Nap conducts Bible study with some new immigrants from China, and at age 89, is taking a course on the history of Christianity in Asia at Regent College. "The Lord has given me a rich life!" RP

Deb Menken's "thing" is she has no one thing

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman

Deb Menken and her husband Jim live in the town of Mono, Ontario, where she works in her own home studio.

"It is a very picturesque area on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment and has a vibrant arts community of which we both have surprisingly become members! I say surprisingly because it is not something that either of us had planned. God works in mysterious ways as they say!"

Through her work Deb hopes to glorify God and add beauty and joy to others' lives.

Deb is a curious artist. Her painting process is spontaneous and imaginative and flows intuitively from the one question she's always asking herself: "What happens if I do this...?" Deb has answered this question in many surprising and delightful ways but always in a way that reflects her love of color and texture.

Menken has had a passion for creative arts her whole life but it wasn't until 2015 that she decided to pursue the dream of learning to paint.

Deb then spent the next several years experimenting as she searched for her "thing" – that elusive style or subject matter which she could claim as her own. Instead she discovered "having one 'thing' is not my thing!" Deb continues to explore the possibilities of what she can make paint do. This means mixing interesting color combinations and then layering color, shape and line on a canvas or panel until it results in something she is happy with.

Deb is quick to point out "It's possible to fiddle with these kinds of pieces forever and end up losing the initial spontaneity!"


Her thing, if there is such a thing, is finding joy in the process of creating art, not the subject matter itself. While she considers herself an abstract artist, she also loves to paint florals and landscapes with varying degrees of abstraction.

Menken, who is now considered "mid-career," wants to move her work in the direction of being inspired by the landscape without portraying it in a representational way. "I want to learn how to immerse myself in a landscape, examine how I respond to it, how it makes me feel and how to capture that

feeling with expressive abstract artwork."

Menken's work has caught the attention of a local arts council. Earlier this year, the Dufferin Arts Council awarded Menken a bursary to help her develop her skills. In 2024 Deb plans to travel to Newfoundland, alone, to spend at least 2 weeks exploring the beauty of the "raw landscape" there. Her goal with this retreat is to learn how to capture the feeling of the rocky maritime landscape in an abstract way and then apply this approach to other landscapes and subjects.

True to form, Menken anticipates the painting done in Newfoundland will be mostly experimental in nature. It will be taken back to Deb's home studio where it will form the basis for the creation of a new body of work.

You can follow Deb and connect with her on Facebook and Instagram [**@debmenkenart**](#). You can view more of her work on her website [**www.debmenken.com**](http://www.debmenken.com). 

*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)*



▲ The artist in the Headwaters Gallery at the Alton Mill in Alton, ON. The painting beside her is "**Mossy Morning**".



▲ **A New Creation** gets its title from 2 Cor. 5:17. In it we see the new growth but behind the scenes is my return to more abstract work and a desire to reveal more of God and my faith in my work and art practice.



▲ **In the Shadow of the Moon** is an abstract piece that is a reflection of my love of blues, repetition of pattern, transparent paint and lines to connect it all.



▲ **Things Are Falling Into Place**




▲ I have titled this **Winter Rolls** In because I was seeing an overhead view of the escarpment with the fall colors and snow-filled clouds rolling in over top.



▲ **Lapping It Up** is my impression of the area around Dorset and Lake of Bays in the Muskokas. The title is a play on words combining the water lapping up on the rocks and the viewer lapping up the beautiful scenery to be found in that area.



come and
EXPLORE!



"One generation
shall praise thy
works to another,
and shall declare
thy mighty acts."

Psalms 145:4



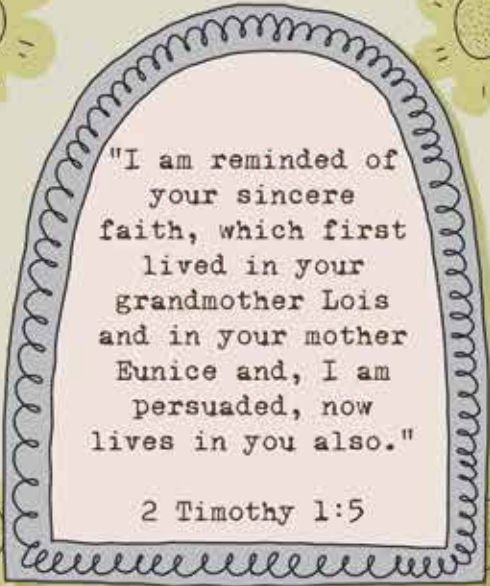
GRANDPARENTS*

God's role for grandparents is laid out very clearly in scripture. They are to teach their children and their children's children (grandchildren) the mighty and awesome deeds of the LORD! We're not just talking about the awesome deeds found in scripture, like the plagues of Egypt or the famous crossing of the Red Sea. Grandparents are instructed to tell their grandchildren even about the mighty deeds they have witnessed in their own lives! Testimonies of God's faithfulness and mercy, His forgiveness and help!

Grandparents are a gift from God! When was the last time you sat down and got to talk with your grandparent? Have you asked about how God has helped them in their lives? They have a duty to tell us the wonderful things of God. But we have a duty as well. We must listen - and not just with our ears - with our hearts, too! ...

* Any person with a bit of grey hair will do! Sometimes our grandparents are taken home by the Lord before we get time to spend with them. Cherish the older people in your congregation. Get to know an aunt or great uncle! They have wisdom to share! Cherish every moment you have with ones you love!

••• Take, for instance, the example of Lois in 2 Timothy. Lois was the grandmother of Timothy. It is plain to see in scripture that it was Lois who taught her daughter Eunice (Timothy's mom) and also Timothy about the wonderful and mighty works of God! And what a blessing Timothy was to the gospel! Praise the LORD for all the faithful grandparents who share with their grandchildren the blessings of faith!



"I am reminded of
your sincere
faith, which first
lived in your
grandmother Lois
and in your mother
Eunice and, I am
persuaded, now
lives in you also."

2 Timothy 1:5

"Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children- how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'"



Deuteronomy 4:9-10

- THINGS TO DO -
with your
GRANDPARENTS



draw a picture of each other



PLAY THE
GAME "32 Q"
FOUND ON
THE NEXT
PAGE

BAKE A YUMMY
AND HOPEFULLY
MESSY RECIPE
TOGETHER!



GIVE
THEM
A
BEAR
HUG



SHARE A
MILKSHAKE AT
YOUR
FAVOURITE
FAST
FOOD PLACE



SHARE YOUR
FAVOURITE
STORY BOOKS
FROM YOUR
CHILDHOODS

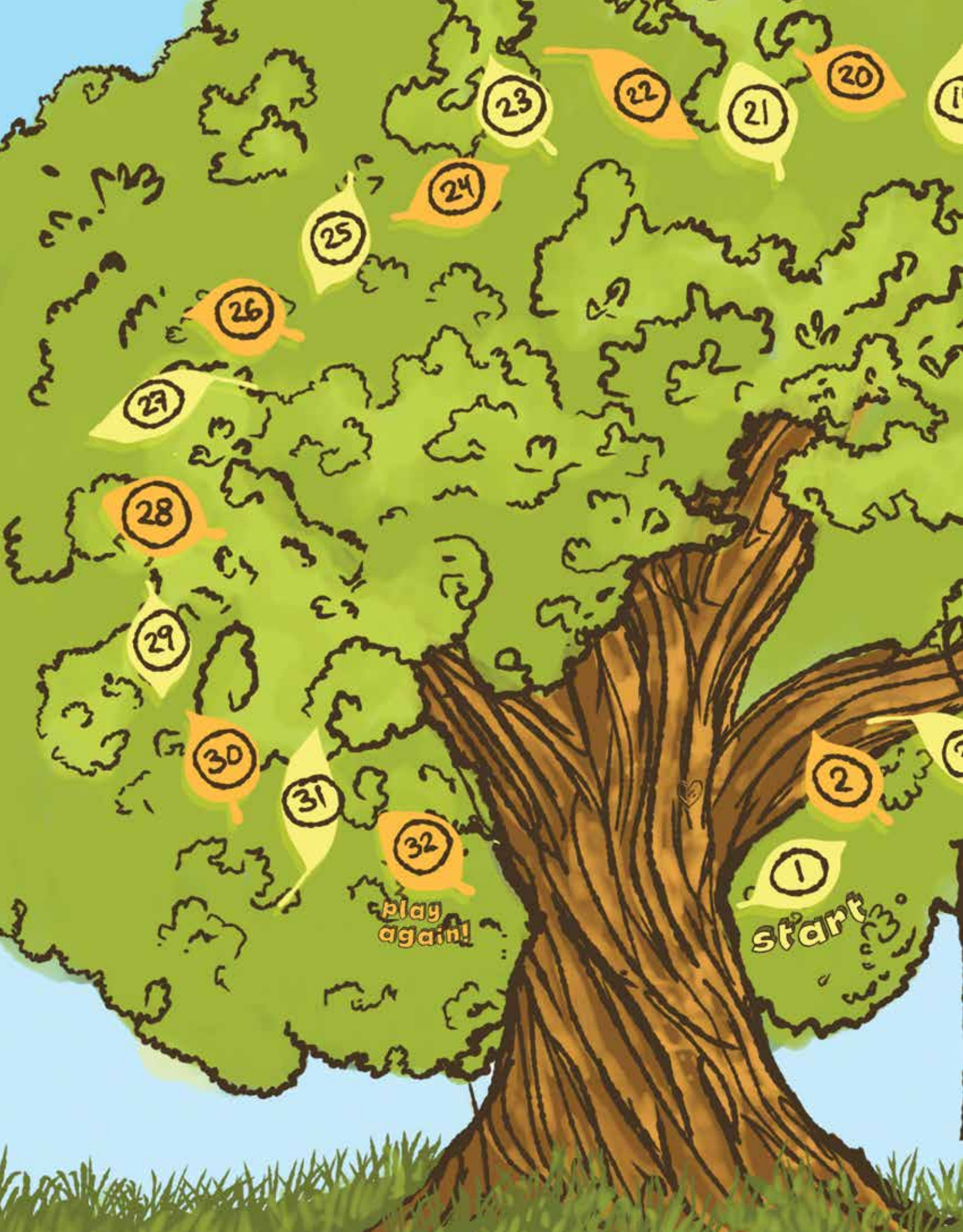


PLAY
EYE
SPY
OVER
A
CUP
OF
TEA
AND
CAKE

These pages were inspired by the many tea dates spent with my Oma who continues to teach me the wonderful ways of God.

Hi, Oma!

Created by Stephanie Vanderpol.



play
again!

start




32

questions

for grandparents and their
children and their
children's children

WHAT YOU NEED:

2 pawns (small coins or candies work well) 

32 question sheet (www.reformedperspective.com/kids)

1 die  [DOWNLOAD](#)

1 grandchild 

1 grandparent* 

* anyone with a bit of grey hair will do. Relation not required.

HOW TO PLAY:

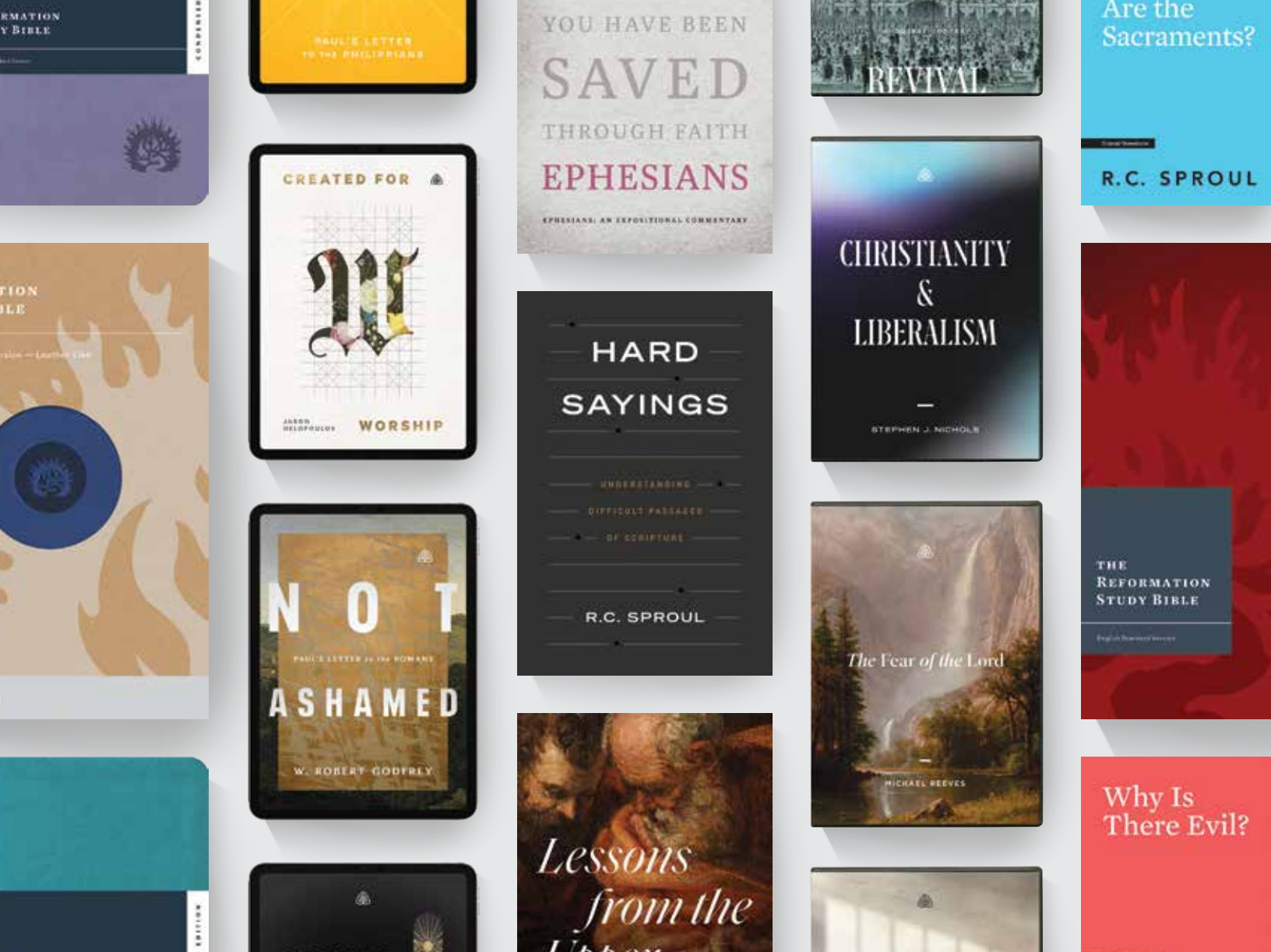
The person with the most grey hair starts.

Roll the die and move the appropriate number of spaces.

If your pawn lands on a yellow leaf, the question should be directed towards the grandchild.

If an orange leaf, the question should be directed towards the grandparent.

There's no winning or losing, since any moment spent with a grandparent is a WIN in itself!



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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2024

PUZZLE CLUES

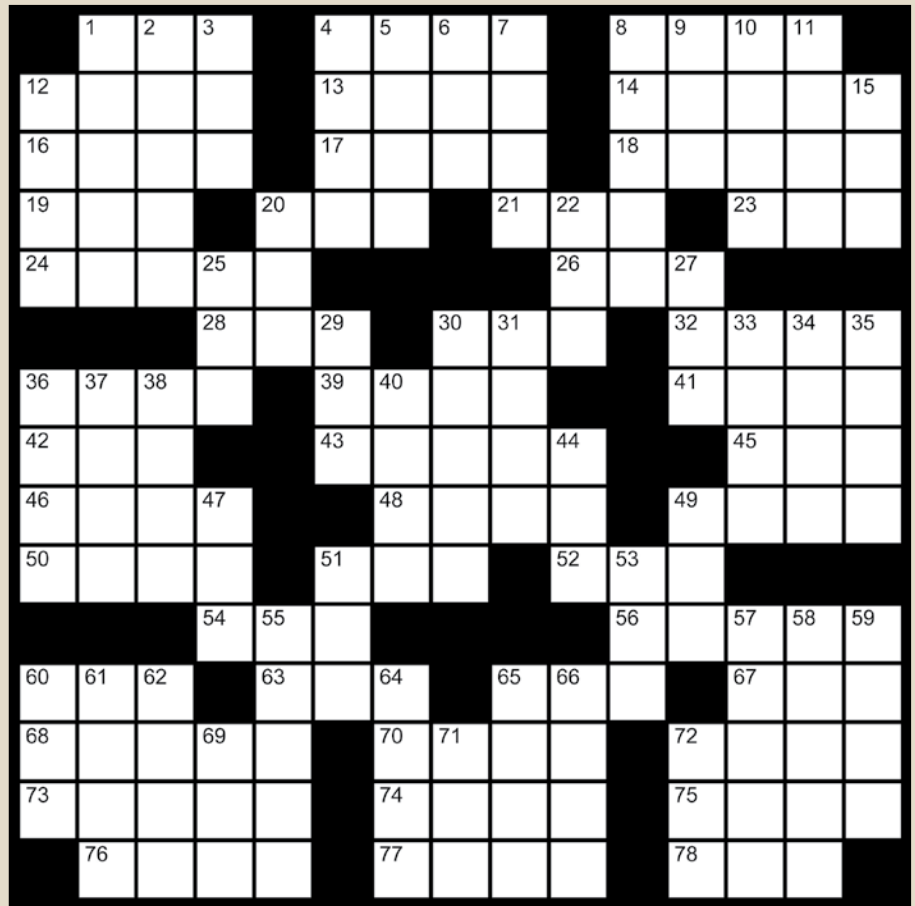
Find this issue's solution on page 2!

ACROSS

1. Supposed sixth sense
4. Hurricane name from August 2023
8. "a... ____ of 500 by 500 cubits" (Eze. 45)
12. It's wheely important for your car.
13. What 11 Down does, half the time
14. Fanatically furious (perhaps about being bit by a frothing dog)
16. "keep in ____ with the Spirit" (Gal. 5)
17. "took me by a ____ of my head" (Eze. 8)
18. Oxygen combined with another element
19. "We ____ not amused." (Queen Victoria?)
20. What you get when you even the score
21. "Four days ____, about this hour" (Acts 10)
23. Five times 20 Down
24. Papa wants some of this fruit?
26. Where the captain is not stern?
28. Weasel noise in a song
30. Vehicle in which you "Follow that car!"
32. How people like tea, but not windshields
36. Little Bo's last name
39. When is a door not a door? When it's ____.
41. Where to get grapes or auto parts
42. "The Lord ____ God... is one." (Mark 12)
43. Way to get to multiple stations
45. Almost the cat's meow
46. "Do not ____ me to leave..." (Ruth 1)
48. "____ near to God..." (James 4)
49. "O Lord, ____ my lips" (Ps. 51)
50. Device that's partly too large for dinner use
51. Stan or Bruce – each appeared in movies.
52. A sea eagle, or the adjective suffix you could add to North, East, West, and South.
54. ____ *Largo* (1948 Humphrey Bogart movie)
56. It sounds like Adam's are everywhere, now!
60. It eventually became part of the NBA.
63. "let your '____' be '____' and..." (James 5)
65. "Go to the ____, O sluggard..." (Prov. 6)
67. It's animal or vegetable, but not mineral.
68. Less dangerous
70. "...and the hour is now ____." (Mark 6)
72. Hair with big, big style
73. Infantry uniform color
74. Vera follows this herb closely.
75. Offender (short form)
76. Large knife (archaic)
77. "the wicked ____ the bow" (Ps. 11)
78. Do this again if you don't succeed.

DOWN

1. "And the ____ that remains" (Ex. 26)
2. "sank into a deep ____" (Acts 20)
3. ____ rally
4. Where you meet meat to eat on rye
5. It "sounds like a clarinet with a cold." (Borge)
6. Abbreviation for major Canadian lender
7. "May I ____ silly question?"
8. What you find in the pudding?
9. Too easygoing
10. Final notice, for short
11. "Time and ____ wait for no man." (Chaucer)
12. Pronto (abbreviation)
15. "cast into the ____ of lions" (Dan. 6)
20. "____ woes are still to come" (Rev. 9)
22. Gift supposedly given by the Blarney Stone
25. Happy, partly, with this on your phone?
27. Waste metal in the furnace (Eze. 22)
29. Below this is good in golf, but nowhere else.
30. Small group of specially trained people
31. Solo sung by (partly) Maria Callas?
33. To be in-tent on outdoor living
34. Heavy fencing sword
35. "I rise before ____ and cry..." (Ps. 119)
36. Push out (partly) the lower lip?
37. Current currency of Europe (partly)?
38. Therefore (Latin term in logical argument)
40. National stone of Japan
44. "____ no one... except to love" (Rom. 13)
47. Football player in Edmonton, Alberta
49. Province with two capitals (abbr.)
51. Harsh chemical that's part of soap
53. "Why, you dirty ____!" (not said by Cagney)
55. Home for 52 Across
57. "You shall ____ a male goat..." (Eze. 43)
58. "the dead neither ____ nor..." (Luke 20)
59. "Do not... ____ anywhere..." (Gen. 19)
60. "But let him ____ in faith..." (James 1)
61. Typical Scrooge exclamations
62. "Do you like this author?" "I'm not ____"
64. Kind of 3-inch-high rectangular cake
65. "Busy?" "Yep; I've got ____ of work to do!"
66. "The Lord has ____ of it." (Luke 19)
69. Scrape (out) a living
71. It's served in pints.
72. "To make an ____ answer..." (Prov. 15)



BOOKS

NON-FICTION FOR TEENS & YOUNG ADULTS

ReformedPerspective.ca/books

DAUGHTERS OF GOD: FINDING OUR IDENTITY IN HIM

BY CHRISTINA FEENSTRA
2022 / 198 PAGES



This workbook is “a course to help young women find their value and self-worth in God... instead of in the world.” Christina Feenstra is a grade five teacher in southern Ontario and has developed this for young teenage girls to find their way in the world. It is meant as a group study but can be used singly. Feenstra uses many Scriptural passages and the Three Forms of Unity for the girls to look up, to study, and apply to their own lives. This book teaches young girls how to love God, and to show thankfulness by loving their neighbor.

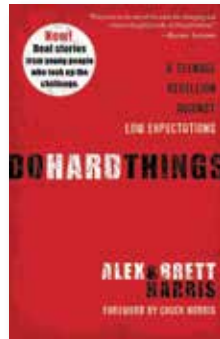
Each chapter begins with a Bible reading and a prayer, followed by questions and a study, and ends with things to focus on during the week. Feenstra makes good, practical suggestions such as keeping a journal to record devotions, and to record five things daily for which we are grateful. Because we are temples of the Holy Spirit, we need to take good care not only of our spiritual needs, but also of our physical needs by eating well, exercising and getting enough sleep.

I highly recommend this book for the young sisters in our churches, and even for the older sisters, especially the chapter on forming good habits.

– JOANNA VANDERPOL

DO HARD THINGS: A TEENAGE REBELLION AGAINST LOW EXPECTATIONS

BY ALEX AND BRETT HARRIS
2008 / 241 PAGES



Did you know that the term “teenager” has been around less than 100 years? It’s only a recent development that our culture has come to expect the teen years to be a mystical period of life completely disassociated from adulthood. We’ve come to expect so little of these years. Do you have this same view of the teenage years?

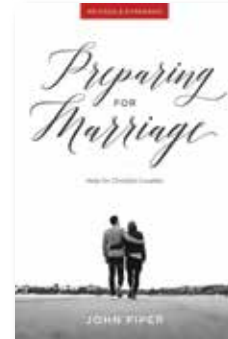
Alex and Brett Harris – just teenagers when they authored *Do Hard Things* – want to change this perception. Instead of a time of relaxation, they present the teenage years as an opportunity for strict training in order to set the direction of young people’s lives and build towards a rewarding future. The best way to train for adulthood, they maintain, is to do hard things during the teenage years. The brothers emphasize that in order to do truly hard things we must lean on God for strength and reject the Devil’s lie that God is not powerful enough to help us do what is outside our comfort zone.

I’d strongly encourage any teenager or young adult to give this book a shot. If it leaves you wanting more, take a look at *Start Here*, where Alex and Brett answer some frequently asked questions that arise during the process of doing hard things.

– AARON BOSSCHER

PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE: HELP FOR CHRISTIAN COUPLES

BY JOHN PIPER
2018 / 86 PAGES



John Piper packs a lot in this slim volume. In 6 chapters and 2 appendices, he covers headship and submission, hospitality, sex, making the most of our engagement, weddings that don’t break the bank, and how our spouse should be second, though only to God.

While the target audience is couples intending to marry, the first appendix includes 50+ questions that’d be of great use to a young man or woman still evaluating whether or not their beau is marriage material. Questions include:

- *What is the meaning of headship and submission in the Bible and in our marriage?*
- *What makes you angry?*
- *What are your views of daycare for our children?*
- *Will there be one checkbook or two?*
- *Should we have a television?*
- *Would we consider adoption?*
- *How will we distinguish between punishment and discipline?*

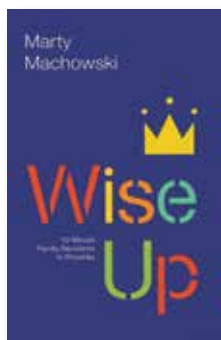
Those questions would make for great discussions for the recently married too. Overall, this would be a great one for engaged couples to read together and discuss. And you can find it for free at DesiringGod.org/books.

– JON DYKSTRA

WISE UP: TEN-MINUTE FAMILY DEVOTIONS IN PROVERBS

BY MARTY MACHOWSKI

2016 / 160 PAGES



This is a solid family devotional. Author Marty Machowski takes passages from Proverbs and makes them more concrete for children (and parents) to understand and relate to. The devotions are an appropriate length for kids (true to the 10 minutes as advertised), and there are creative activities that can be done weekly, as well as a weekly song.

I particularly enjoyed each devotion's "talk about it" section where questions move beyond simple fact-based ones (to check in for children listening) to engaging discussion points where parents are encouraged to give personal examples from their own lives. Each day also has a "pray about it" section that gives prayer suggestions and at times a Bible passage to pray through together.

This devotional is aimed at families with kids in grades 1-6 and I would agree that this is accurate. It is not a flashy book and has no pictures so preschoolers would be harder to engage.

If you like it, then you'll be interested to know Marty Machowski has another family devotional called *Listen Up*, which is based on the Parables.

- JESS WILDEBOER

RISK IS RIGHT: BETTER TO LOSE YOUR LIFE THAN TO WASTE IT

BY JOHN PIPER

2013 / 51 PAGES

How often do you take risks? If you're anything like me, it's not often. I like to maintain the status quo and to never feel that knot in my stomach when the outcome of a decision is in limbo. I like to feel safe. John Piper in his short book, *Risk is Right*, sets out to destroy this myth of safety.

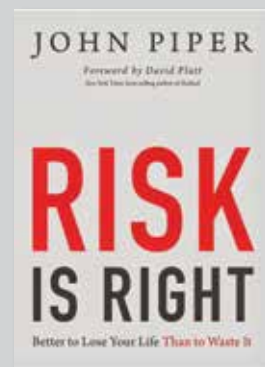
We live in a world full of uncertainty. No matter how hard we may try to eliminate risks from our lives, it is impossible. But as Christians, we need never be afraid of risk, for we have the ultimate security, salvation through Jesus Christ! This one thought should release the chains that hold us from risk: we have been freed to honor Christ in this life and in death.

That is not to say that safety is wrong. We don't need to be adrenaline junkies, looking for the next adventure to get our blood pumping. Rather, it's the safety that comes from cowardice that is wrong. Queen Esther risked it all when she approached King Ahasuerus without being called. Esther did not know the outcome but trusted that God was powerful enough to save both her and her people. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could have bowed down to Nebuchadnezzar's statue and guaranteed their safety. Instead, they refused, handing the outcome of their lives to God. It is right to risk for the cause of God, and refusing these risks because of cowardice is wrong.

I recommend this short book to everyone. We live in a culture that is so risk averse that "two weeks to stop the spread" became two years. We wanted safety so badly, that even as it became evident the government wasn't able to provide it, we settled for having at least a false sense of security. This book knocks away such crutches so we can live a life worth living, by finding our security in Christ.

A bonus: you can download it for free at DesiringGod.org/books.

- AARON BOSSCHER



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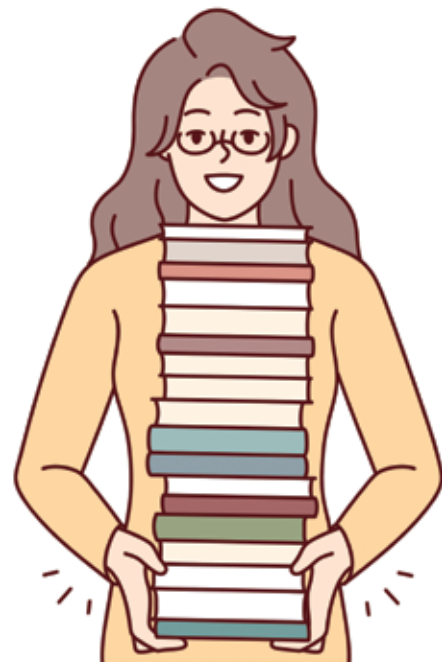
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Tips on reading (almost) 52 books in a year

by André Schutten



One year ago, as recorded in the pages of *Reformed Perspective*, I (nearly) completed a 52-book reading challenge – one book a week for a year – with two friends: *RP* editor Jon Dykstra and pastor Jim Witteveen, both of whom trounced me in the friendly competition. As another year begins, why not challenge yourself to read a few more books in 2024? Assuming you read wholesome stuff, I promise you won't regret it.

And to help you, here are a few tips from an amateur bibliophile:

Yes to good books means no to...

- **Cut back on social media**, or purge it altogether. This one was key for me. Social media not only eats up valuable downtime, it also negatively affects attention span making it harder to concentrate when reading a book.
- **Cut back on passive entertainment** (like watching TV or

scrolling through YouTube). Budget limited time for passive entertainment. Friday night is movie night in my house, and any rainy Saturday afternoon. Other than those times, we try to engage in active entertainment (board games, going to the park) which engages the mind and body, and has a positive impact on your ability to read. In fact, watching a screen just before bed will negatively impact your sleep, while reading a chapter from a book just before bed will improve your sleep.

- **Cut back on consuming news.** While reading long-form articles with deeper analysis is good for your mind and benefits you intellectually, there is not really much meat in short-form news articles.
- **Don't finish everything.** If you want to read more good books, don't try to slog through bad ones. If you're really struggling with getting through a book and you're still in the first 50 pages, put it down and try a different one.

A group exercise

- **Read aloud to your kids.** And read longer chapter books to them. It's do-able. Before starting each evening, ask them what happened in the previous night's reading. Some long classics were written as serials in newspapers, like *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. This means that the author had to write each chapter in a way that made the reader want to come back and order the next newspaper the following week. These longer novels are very engaging reads, even for younger readers.
- **Pick a few books to read with a friend.** Pick a friend who is willing to push you to finish. Tied with that, be a bit more public about your reading challenge to keep yourself accountable. Peer pressure is not always a bad thing.
- **Share with others what you're reading.** Books – whether fiction or non-fiction – can be great conversation topics with friends and family and can sometimes lead to other great suggestions.

Saying yes to reading means saying no to other things, like social media.



Mix it up

- **Mix up your reading categories.** Sometimes I'm just not in the mood for getting into something dense. But I could read something lighter. So I always try to have some fiction going as well as history/biography, Christian thought, and a book on a public policy issue or cultural issues.
- **Follow C.S. Lewis' advice:** "It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one until you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least read one old one to every three new ones.... Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the *same* mistakes."

Make use of your minutes

- **Carry the lighter read with you,** if possible, for unexpected downtime like waiting for the oil change, or for your doctor to see you. This is where an e-reader can be helpful for some people – a few of my lighter reads were free Kindle books, and I could read them on my phone when I had a few minutes to spare.
- **Use your transit time.** I used to take the bus to work each day, and I saw a small handful of people reading a book every time. What a great use of that time! (I couldn't employ this tactic because I get car sick, though using audiobooks could be one way to still use that time well.)
- **Take notes.** When reading a more complex book, have a pencil on hand to jot little notes in the margins or underline key arguments in the text. This will not only help you stay focused while reading, but also help to more quickly situate you in your read the next time you pick up the book.

Plan it out

- There are some good reading challenges out there that other Christians are doing too. Christian blogger Tim Challies puts one out nearly every year.
- Pick out a few books ahead of time, so you know what you want to read next.
- Particularly for books on Christian thought, pray before picking up the book, that you might profit from it, to learn more about God and His world.
- Pick times to read when your mind is sharpest and reserve mindless tasks of the day for when your mind is most dull.
- Be realistic in your goal and remember your season in life: if you serve the church as an office bearer or sit on a school board, for example, maybe set a more modest goal of 24 books a year (two a month), but then set your goal higher for the years when you're not serving in these capacities.
- Try to push yourself to read a little faster. Perhaps use a ruler or finger to speed along a little quicker than normal. With practice, you will learn to read faster, while still comprehending what you're reading. Your brain is like a muscle that improves and strengthens with exercise.
- Come to know the freedom of airplane mode. If you've budgeted time to read for an hour, switch your phone to airplane mode and enjoy the hour distraction free.
- Plan to read. Budget time to do it. Then do it.

So, there it is. A few tips from a guy who tried to read 52 books in a year and (almost) succeeded. I wish you success in whatever reading challenge you decide to undertake. RP

See the "52 in 2022 challenge" results at ReformedPerspective.ca/52.



Read longer chapter books to
your kids. It's do-able!

THE VERY BEST OF CALDECOTT

by Jon Dykstra

As a new parent, I sometimes had a hard time finding picture books to read to my girls. There were just so many stunningly boring books out there (*Amelia Bedelia*, I'm talking about you!) and while my kids might have enjoyed many of them, I started going a little balmy when they asked me to read the same one again and again.

I also started noticing the devil had a foothold even in our public library's picture book section. I thought the worst of it was simply books that celebrated brattiness. Then a daughter who loves to dance got me to check out a book with a ballerina on the cover that I only realized afterwards was titled *Princess Boy*. It was about a boy who wanted to be a girl. That wasn't the age I wanted to have to explain transgenderism to my little girl, but, well... now I had to.

That's why I wanted to create a list for parents that they could use to reserve great picture books from their local library. The overall goal was to provide enough recommendations that a parent wouldn't have to repetitively read any of them – there would be plenty of other books they could pull out of the collection they'd just checked out from the library.

AWARD WINNERS

What follows is based on the Caldecott Medal. This award has been given annually since 1938 to the previous year's "most distinguished American picture book for children," as determined by the American Library Association (ALA). The award is given to the artist, rather than the author, because the pictures are the focus, not the words. Each year the ALA has also highlighted anywhere from one to six runners-up or "Honorees," which gave me more than 350 books to sift through.

While the ALA is not Christian, their award gave me a place to start – here were their best of the best, and most of them were artistically impressive. And because they are "Caldecotts" you are quite likely to find many of these at your local library – availability was an important factor too.

NEED FOR SIFTING

However, their idea of good could differ quite sharply from mine, and was sometimes diametrically opposed to what God declares good. A 2015 Honoree, *This One Summer* (the first graphic novel to be honored), is about a couple of girls "discovering their sexuality" and has all sorts of F-bombs. While that sort of agenda is a more recent thing, there is some wackiness amongst the older entries too: 1974 Medal Winner *Duffy and the Demon* is, as the title suggests, about a demon, and 1971 Honoree *In the Night Kitchen* features a boy, often shown from the front, floating around in his birthday suit. So, sifting needed to be done!

WORTH READING...AND GIVING

The result is a list of 140+ Caldecott recommendations for you and your family to consider.

Now, if you aren't already familiar with your local library's reservation system it's worth getting acquainted with it. You can go online and check this list against what they have, and then click a button or two to get the librarian to set aside your picks for you to drop by and grab. Our family used to live in the library on Saturday afternoons, but these days, because the library has gotten weirder and our Saturdays busier, we don't want our kids lingering there anymore. But by reserving books, we can still get our literary fix by just walking in and walking out.

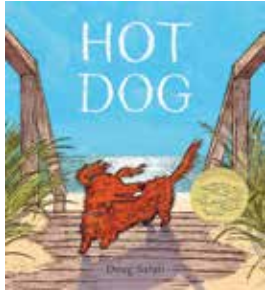
I also hope this list will be of use to Christian school librarians. There's sure to be a few gems here that you may not have run across before.

And grandma and gramps, are you looking for a good birthday gift or two? Have a hand in encouraging your grandkids, not simply to read, but to read *good* books. There are so many options to choose from below!

The print version of this article covers the last 20 years. For the full list go to ReformedPerspective.ca/Caldecott, or scan the QR code at the end of the article.

2023

WINNER



Hot Dog

BY DOUG SALATI
40 PAGES

Averaging just about 4 words a page, this simple story is about how a very long and very hot dog needs a break from the city, so his owner takes him to the seaside where he gets to run and dig and meet seals. Peaceful, quiet, colorful, and just nice.

HONOREE



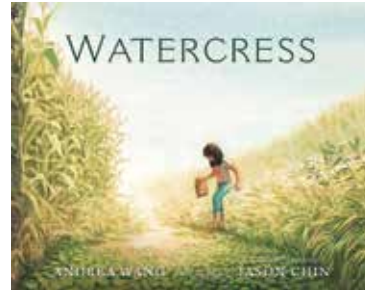
Knight Owl

BY CHRISTOPHER DENISE
44 PAGES

Absolutely gorgeous book with full-page pictures throughout. Little owl wants to grow up to be a knight, and while it seems unlikely, his prospects pick up when knights start going missing. He graduates, with honors of course, and gets assigned the night watch, which is really rather his jam. There's a clever bit when he asks "Whooooo is there?" and some more fun too, when he convinces a dragon to snack on something other than him. A happy end for all, including the dragon, makes this a nice gentle treat for children 3 through 9.

2022

WINNER

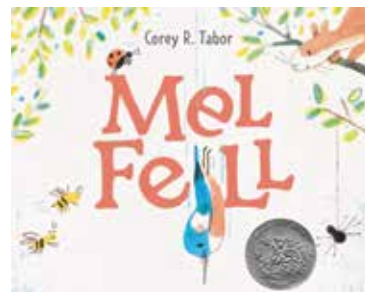


Watercress

BY ANDREA WANG AND JASON CHIN
32 PAGES

When her parents stop to harvest watercress from the ditch, a little girl is embarrassed. Free food from a ditch? Why can't they just get their meal from the grocery store? But then her mother shares just a little about what watercress meant to her family back in China. In the most poignant two-page spread on the left side we see a family of four around the table, and in the next picture it is a family of three, a little boy now missing, and mother explaining, "We ate anything we could find, but it was still not enough." The little girl hears, and learns. Next page she says, "...I am ashamed of being ashamed of my family." A beautifully drawn immigration story for children in Grades 1 and 2.

HONOREE



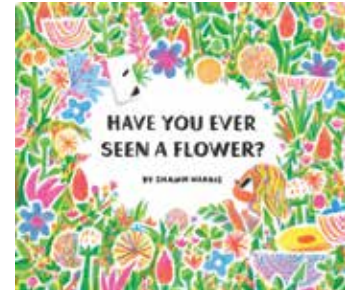
Mel Fell

BY COREY R. TABOR
40 PAGES

This is a book to be read sideways – the "top" of the book left side, and the bottom the right – so when a baby bird takes her first flight she has a long way

to fall: right across two pages! And as she falls the other tree critters try to save her, bees, a spider, even ants. But is she really falling... or just diving? Be sure to check out Corey Tabor's latest, *Simon and the Better Bone*, inspired by Aesop's "The Dog and His Reflection" and with a happier ending.

HONOREE



Have You Ever Seen a Flower?

BY SHAWN HARRIS
48 PAGES

It begins in black and white as a little girl is driven out of the drab city to go see brightly colorful fields of flowers. Thereafter the colors take over in this ode to the wonder of flowers, and to the wonder of life itself.

2021

HONOREE



Outside In

BY DEBORAH UNDERWOOD AND CINDY DERBY
44 PAGES

A poetic take (done in prose) about how we sometimes forget how wonderful the outside is. But, thankfully, outside manages to come inside after us. "Outside reminds us, with flashes at the window... Outside cuddles us in clothes, once puffs of cotton..."

2020

HONOREE



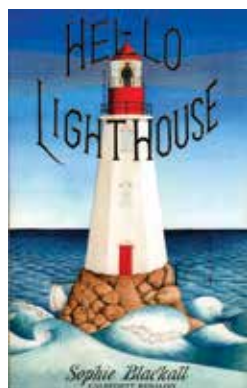
Bear Came Along

BY RICHARD T. MORRIS AND LEUYEN PHAM
34 PAGES

You know that old metaphor about the 4 blind men all feeling parts of an elephant and one thinking it was like a snake (he felt the trunk) and another thinking it was like a palm leaf (he felt the ear), and yet another thinking it was a spear (tusk). Well, together they had a pretty good picture of it. In this story an adventure is had on the river, and none of the animals are really ready for it, but when they all come together, they are. Parents could read this and talk about 1 Cor. 12:12-27's one body, many members.

2019

WINNER



Hello Lighthouse

BY SOPHIE BLACKALL
48 PAGES

A man lives out his years in a lighthouse, first by himself, then with a wife, and finally with the addition of a child. But then a letter arrives, telling the man

that the day of the manned lighthouse has come to an end. The story does end on a happy note, with the little family settled on the shore, still able to see their lighthouse. It concludes with two pages on the history of manned lighthouses. The story will appeal to girls, and the lighthouse cutout will catch boys' attention.

HONOREE



Thank You, Omu!

BY OGE MORA
36 PAGES

A grandma-ish lady makes a delicious pot of stew, and when the neighborhood smells it, they each come by, one at a time, to have a bowl. But when it is finally time for her own supper, there is none left for Omu! But grateful neighbors return her generosity in kind, each bringing a treat, and together creating a feast.

2018

WINNER



Wolf in the Snow

BY MATTHEW CORDELL
48 PAGES

A boy trudging through the snow, making his way home from school, comes across a lost wolf cub which he befriends and then helps find its pack back. The effort exhausts him but when he collapses in the snow the grateful

wolf pack then helps his parents find him. It's a fun story, and well drawn, but I do wonder whether, because the wolves are drawn so realistically, a little kid could read this and think it is passing on accurate information on the friendliness of wolves. (It's also featured in my "100 Wordless Wonders" article, at ReformedPerspective.ca/wordless.)

2017

HONOREE



They All Saw a Cat

BY BRENDAN WENZEL
38 PAGES

We get to see a cat through the eyes of a child, dog, fox, fish, mouse, bee, bird, flea, snake, skunk, worm, and bat. And as you might imagine, they all have quite a different take on what a cat is, with the opposite extremes taken up by the mouse, who sees the cat as a fierce monster, and the fox, who sees him as a tender morsel.

HONOREE



Du Iz Tak?

BY CARSON ELLIS
48 PAGES

An insect discovers a plant shoot and tells his friends about it in an invented insect language, that sounded to me, a little like my parents' Dutch. The bugs then gather to build homes on it. Lots of talking

in this book, and all of it made up. Lots of fun too, for kids who are up to trying to figure out what these bugs might be saying.

2016

WINNER

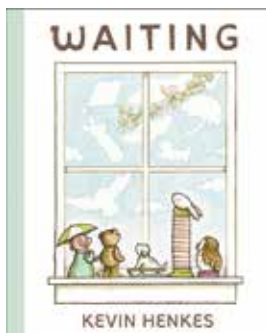


Finding Winnie

BY LINDSAY MATTICK
56 PAGES

Did you know Winnie the Pooh was named after a real bear who had his own adventures? This is his story and it begins with Harry Colebourn, a veterinarian traveling across Canada by train to go fight for his country in the First World War. At a stop on the way, he met a man with a baby bear, and ended up buying the little beast. To make a long story shorter, this bear – named Winnie after Harry’s hometown – ended up in the London Zoo where a boy named Christopher Robin, and his father A.A. Milne, came across him and were utterly entranced. It is a wonderful story, but what makes it remarkable is the charming way it’s told. There is quite a difference between A. A. Milne’s Winnie tales and this author’s truth, but the same gentle humor, the same whimsy, that same charm, is there throughout. This will be for all ages!

HONOREE



Waiting

BY KEVIN HENKES
34 PAGES

Five toys on a windowsill just love to peer outside and see what they can see. A quiet book, but with an upbeat spirit. A warning for sensitive little souls: on one page an elephant figurine visits and “leaves” never to come back, but we see him broken on the ground.

2015

HONOREE

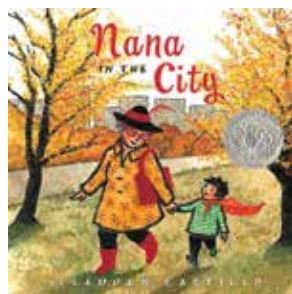


Sam & Dave Dig a Hole

BY MAC BARNETT AND JON KLASSEN
40 PAGES

Two boys dig a hole and they won’t stop digging until they find something spectacular. Some kids will really appreciate, and I suspect others will get increasingly frustrated, at the pair’s many near misses.

HONOREE



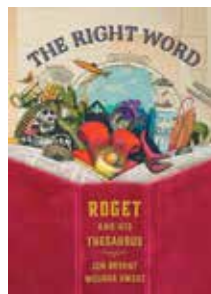
Nana in the City

BY LAUREN CASTILLO
40 PAGES

A boy goes to visit his Nana in the big city. He finds it a busy, loud, scary place, and thinks his Nana should move. But the next day his Nana shows him how the

city is a busy, loud, *extraordinary* place, just right for his Nana to live in... and for him to visit.

HONOREE



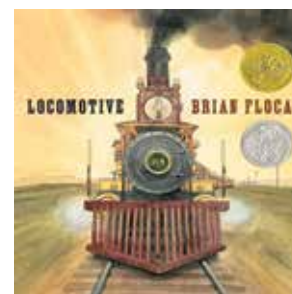
The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus

BY JEN BRYANT AND MELISSA SWEET
44 PAGES

The life and times of Peter Roget (1779-1869), whose popular thesaurus is still being published today. It includes lots of detailed word lists from Roget’s original thesaurus. That makes it colorful but also a bit much for Grade 1 and under. Could be fascinating to certain kids in Grade 2 and older.

2014

WINNER



Locomotive

BY BRIAN FLOCA
66 PAGES

A prose/poetry account of how the cross-America railway was built, and what it was like to ride on it. While it is an attractive book, it struck me as having too much text for a picture book, and as too picture-bookish for the Grade 3-5 readers this would be best suited for. So split the difference and it might be great for Grade 2 and 3.

HONOREE

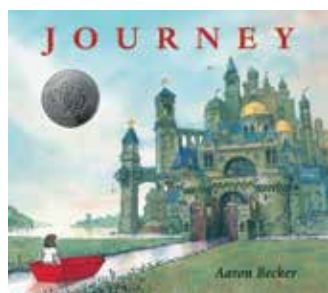


Flora and the Flamingo

BY MOLLY IDLE
44 PAGES

In this wordless wonder, Flora dances an elegant and energetic duet with a flamingo. My favorite of the “Flora’s feathered friends” series is the 2014 sequel, *Flora and the Penguin*, which sees her switch up dance partners, and *Flora and the Peacocks* (2016), which has her dancing with two others for even more fun. The only downside is that they include flaps and foldouts that might need reinforcement to hold up to school library use. But if you’re buying it for a child or grandchild who likes to dance, these will be inspirational. (Don’t confuse these with the two other “Flora books” – featuring an ostrich in one, and baby chicks in the other – which are board books intended for babies.)

HONOREE



Journey

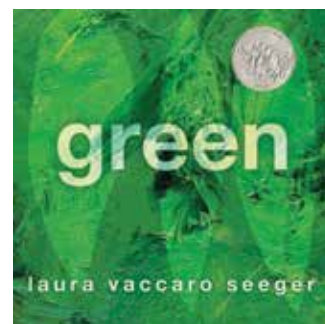
BY AARON BECKER
40 PAGES

If your children loved Crockett Johnson’s *Harold and the Purple Crayon* you’ll want to check this one out. While Johnson wrote her own sequels, Aaron Becker’s *Journey* might be the most worthy successor. There are some notable differences: Harold’s world is a blank page,

ready to be drawn on, while *Journey* has lavish full-color spreads; *Harold* is narrated, while *Journey* is a completely wordless book. But in both books, a child equipped with a large crayon and an even larger imagination sets out on an adventure of their own crafting. In *Journey*, a girl’s dad, mom, and sister are all too busy to play with her, but when she finds a large red crayon on her bedroom floor she discovers she can make her own fun. She uses the crayon to draw a door on her wall, which she can then open and walk through into a whole other world of wonder. A quickly drawn red boat allows her to float down a forest stream to a castle that has moats running all throughout it, and friendly guards who wave her through. Like Harold, she too, in a moment of quick thinking, conjures up a balloon to save herself from a big fall. The adventure continues into the clouds, where she comes upon a strange king, his stranger airship, and an imprisoned beautiful purple bird that looks almost as if someone – someone with a purple crayon – had drawn it! Of course, she has to free the bird, and of course it isn’t easy, leaving her requiring some rescuing herself. In the sequel, *Quest* (2014), red crayon girl, and the purple crayon boy she met at the end of the previous book meet an orange crayon king right before he is dragged away by soldiers. They set out to rescue him, using their own crayons and the orange crayon the king left behind. But to do that, they need to find three more crayons and, as the title indicates, have to go on a quest, and they’ll have draw the tools and the animal friends they’ll need along the way. The conclusion to this wordless trilogy is *Return* (2016), in which the girl’s dad discovers the red door in his daughter’s bedroom and enters this other world in search of her. While the girl rescues them both with a quickly drawn submarine (these crayons work even underwater!), it’s dad who devises and draws (Wait, he has a crayon too? Has he been here before?) the trap that catches the evil king. These are all great fun, and deserve a slow “read” and then “reread” as children will be sure to notice all sorts of details on a second run-through.

2013

HONOREE



Green

BY LAURA VACCARO SEEGER
34 PAGES

All about the different sorts of green. With just 33 words in 34 pages, this is not a heavy read. It is on heavy stock paper, though, which allows for cutouts on most pages, allowing the colors from the next and previous pages to peek through. It’s clever, and the paper is thick enough that it should survive library usage.

HONOREE



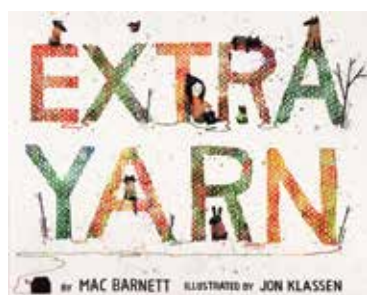
One Cool Friend

BY TONI BUZZCO AND DAVID SMALL
32 PAGES

When Elliot and his father visit the aquarium, the boy asks dear old dad for a penguin. Dad thinks he means a stuffed one, and says yes. But Elliot did not. The confusion continues as Elliot takes a smallish one home in his backpack and turns his room into an antarctic setting. Fun throughout, with a twist at the end just for parents (as I don’t know that kids will catch this last joke). This is one of David Small’s three Caldecott books (*The Gardener* and *So You Want to Be*

President? are the two others) and I'll just mention a couple of other favorites. In *Imogene's Antlers*, a girl is surprised to wake up one morning with a set of antlers on her head. It doesn't faze her though, as she runs with it, using them to dry laundry and hang donuts, and it is her optimistic outlook that makes this such fun. In the sequel, *Imogene Comes Back*, her antlers are gone, but now she has a giraffe neck, and the next day an elephant nose... and she's still as upbeat as ever!

HONOREE



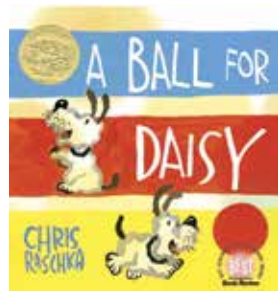
Extra Yarn

BY MAC BARNETT AND JON KLASSEN
40 PAGES

A girl in a cold little town of buildings blackened by soot, and streets whitened by snow, finds "a box filled with yarn of every color" with which she knits sweaters for everyone in town, and even for the animals and buildings, and still the box remains full of yarn. A goofy little story that might, perhaps, inspire a reader or two to take up knitting.

2012

WINNER

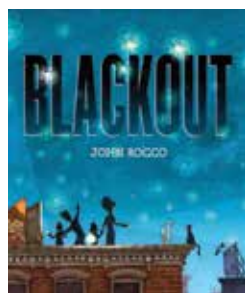


A Ball for Daisy

BY CHRIS RASCHKA
32 PAGES

Daisy is a cute little pup who loves her big red ball and plays with it everywhere. Things take a tragic turn when another dog, trying to get in on the fun, pops the ball! But don't worry, a happy ending is coming – after a few pages of Daisy being sad, the owner of the dog who popped the ball brings over a brand new one, and this time it is blue. A 2013 sequel, *Daisy Gets Lost*, has a half dozen more words than the wordless original but has the same quiet tension: Daisy chases her blue ball into the woods, then chases the squirrel she discovers, and gets lost for a dozen or so pages before being rescued and hugged by the little girl who owns her.

HONOREE



Blackout

BY JOHN ROCCO
40 PAGES

When the electricity goes out all over the city, one family discovers the wonders of not being off on their own phones, computers, and devices. Told in a comic-book style, this is an attractive, friendly book (even if big sister is a bit unfriendly at the beginning, telling her little sister to "Get out!").

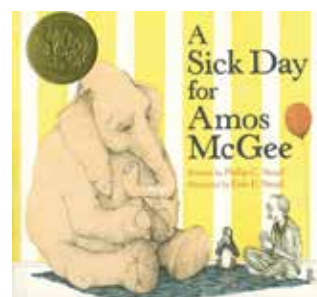
2011

WINNER

A Sick Day for Amos McGee

BY PHILIP C. STEAD AND ERIN E. STEAD
32 PAGES

First we get to see Amos in his routine: early rising, on to the bus to work, and then it's chess with the elephant, races with the tortoise, and stories with owl, and quiet time with the penguin. Amos, you see, is a zookeeper. But when he gets sick and has to stay home, his animals reverse his



routine, starting with hopping on the bus to visit sick Amos. Sweet and quiet – as my sister-in-law noted, a perfect going-to-bed book for ages 3-8.

HONOREE



Interrupting Chicken

BY DAVID EZRA STEIN
40 PAGES

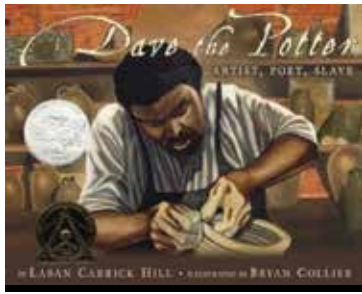
When Little Chicken's dad reads him some classic fairy tales, the young'un can't help but interrupt and warn Red Riding Hood not to talk to the Wolf, Hansel and Gretel not to go into the witch's house, and Chicken Little that it was just an acorn. I was worried this might be a rude book, but the little chicken is just exuberant. There are at least a couple of sequels, including *Interrupting Chicken: Cookies for Breakfast*, done with nursery rhymes this time, that was also very fun. Kids already familiar with the originals will love both. Recommended for ages 3-9.

HONOREE

Dave the Potter

BY LABAN CARRICK HILL AND BRYAN COLLIER
40 PAGES

Nearly 200 years ago an American slave made thousands of clay pots, some small and others enormous, signed his name on some, and on a select few, also included a couple of lines of poetry. Dave the Potter



was a master craftsman, but all we know of him is what he told us in these select few lines of poetry. This is a fascinating, beautifully illustrated book that shows what Dave might have had to do, to transform clay into his pots. The last 4 pages are just text, explaining what we know about Dave in a little more detail. Good for Grade 2 and up. There is a fold-out though, that might need reinforcing.

2010

WINNER



The Lion and the Mouse

BY JERRY PINKNEY
40 PAGES

When a tiny mouse disturbs the rest of the King of the Beasts, the King seems intent on having a quick snack. But instead, after some back and forth with the tiny petitioner, the lion lets the mouse go. Why? Readers already familiar with this Aesop's tale will remember that the mouse has pledged to help the king if ever he is in trouble. But in Pinkney's almost entirely wordless version – there are only a few squeaks, one owl screech, and a lion's roar – it isn't as clear. But no worries, we can follow along well enough. Then when hunters trap the mighty lion in a net, it is the mouse that comes to the rescue, chewing through the rope to set the lion free. The moral of the story? Even

the strongest will need help. I've recommended piles of other Pinkney gems at ReformedPerspective.ca/Pinkney.

HONOREE

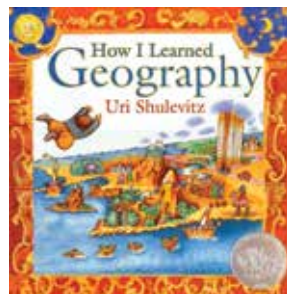
Red Sings from Treetops

BY JOYCE SIDMAN AND PAMELA ZAGARENSKI
32 PAGES

We are taken through the four seasons and shown how the colors yellow, blue, white, gray, purple, and black make their appearance in each one. The art – particularly the people – is both wonderful and a little weird, giving the book a strange charm.

2009

HONOREE



How I Learned Geography

BY URI SHULEVITZ
32 PAGES

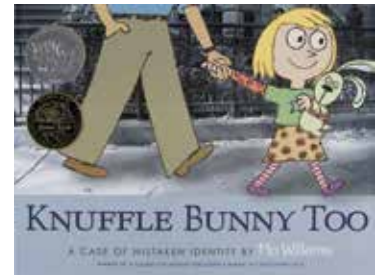
When his family has to flee to another country, and they have just a room to call their own, a boy gets angry with his father for buying a giant world map instead of food. But later he concludes his father was right – they went without food one night, but that map brought color to the whole room, and transported him in his imagination to all these far-off places. I'd also recommend Shulevitz's *The Secret Room*, about a man both clever and humble.

2008

HONOREE

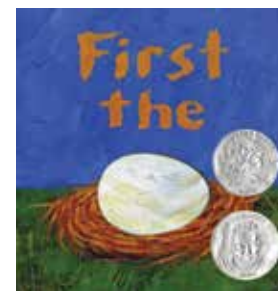
Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity

BY MO WILLEMS
48 PAGES



Trixie has grown up in this second knuffle bunny book (see further on for the first) and takes her bunny to school only to discover another girl has one too. And when they argue over how to say “knuffle” (is the “k” silent or not?) the teacher confiscates both bunnies, returning them only when they head for home. But what do both girls discover that night? They have the wrong bunny! But, they both have pretty special dads, who ride to the rescue. A great sequel to the original, and a third in the series, *Knuffle Bunny Free*, is every bit as good.

HONOREE

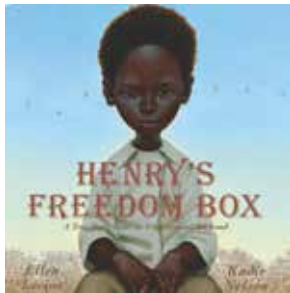


First the Egg

BY LAURA VACCARO SEEGER
28 PAGES

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? In this book we're told “First the egg” and then as the page turns, “then the chicken” but the real fun here is that the egg is actually just an egg-shaped hole in the page, and the white shell comes from the white feathers of the chicken on the next page. Sturdy paper stock means these cutouts on ever fourth page should survive library reading. After “First the tadpole... then the frog” and “First the seed... then the flower” we eventually get back to “First the chicken.... then the egg.” Simple fun for ages 3 to 8.

HONOREE



Henry's Freedom Box: A true story from the Underground Railroad

BY ELLEN LEVINE AND KADIR NELSON
40 PAGES

This is the true story of Henry “Box” Brown, an American slave whose wife and children were sold away from him. Afterwards he decided to mail himself in a large crate, special delivery to the North where he could be free. This is told in a careful, somewhat muted manner, but might be a bit much for Grade 1, so I’d recommend it for at least Grade 2 and up.

2006

WINNER

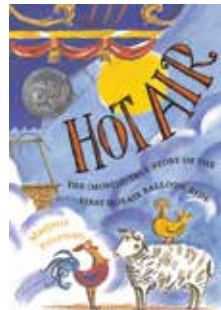


The Hello, Goodbye Window

BY NORTON JUSTER AND CHRIS RASCHKA
32 PAGES

This is a sweet story about a child who loves to visit her grandparents’ home, which only ranks somewhat low in my estimation because I don’t know if a kid will pick this up – too many words for an early reader, and pictures too childish for Grade 2 and up. However, I think grandparents might really enjoy reading this to a little one.

HONOREE

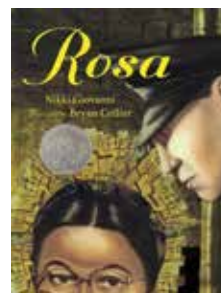


Hot Air: The (Mostly) True Story of the First Hot-Air Balloon Ride

BY MARJORIE PRICEMAN
40 PAGES

In 1783 a trio of flyers took to the sky. No, this wasn’t the first manned flight, but it might have been the first “animal” balloon flight – a rooster, a sheep, and a duck sailed off in this grand experiment. The story is introduced in detail, but the flight itself is told from the perspective of the three animals, and thus, wordless (though there are some baaaaahs and such). Very colorful balloon pictures make this a visual delight, and an explanation in the back of what may have actually happened, make this educational.

HONOREE



Rosa

BY NIKKI GIOVANNI AND BRYAN COLLIER
32 PAGES

Rosa Parks boarded a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 1, 1955, and took a seat somewhere in the middle. When the bus filled up, she was asked to give up her seat. Why? Because she was black, and someone white needed a seat – it was a rule that blacks had to make way for whites. But

Mrs. Parks said no, she would not get up. She was arrested, which sparked a protest – blacks in the city and white folk who supported them stopped using the buses. That was a tough way to protest – it’s not like they all had cars they could use instead. The protest lasted a year as Parks’ court case made its way to the US Supreme Court, where she eventually won. This is an intense book, well told, which serves as an example of how courts can be used to hold governments accountable. One caution is just that racism, civil disobedience, and one level of government (the courts) holding another accountable is, in my mind, a bit much for Grade 1 or 2. Yet picture books are seen as a bit childish by Grade 3 and up, so who is actually going to read this? It is both educational and interesting, so with some help from teachers or parents, who’d need to place this in older kids’ hands, this could be a much-appreciated book (my 6th-Grader thought it was “cool”). One practical concern is a two-page foldout that will need some reinforcing if this is bought for a school library.

HONOREE



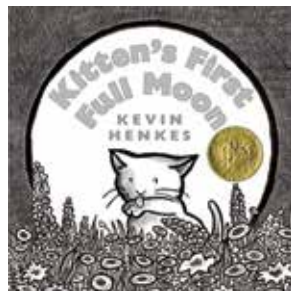
Song of the Water Boatman

BY JOYCE SIDMAN AND BECKIE PRANGE
32 PAGES

This is poetry paired with science and full-page art. Each two-page spread has a poem about some pond critter – plant, animal, or bug – and on the facing page we get a concise, under 100 words, briefing on what this creature is like. This is not a picture book most kids would pick up on their own, but I think its super creative way of educating us on pond life could make it a favorite among teachers, Grade 2 and up, for their science classes.

2005

WINNER



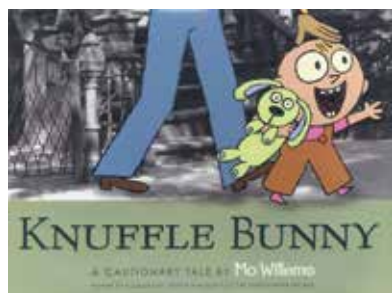
Kitten's First Full Moon

BY KEVIN HENKES

34 PAGES

Kitten sees a big bowl of milk in the sky – the full moon! But try as she might she just can't reach it, ending up soggy and defeated. But when she returns home she discovers a delicious ending to her night.

HONOREE



Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale

BY MO WILLEMS

36 PAGES

This is the original knuffle book – a little girl loses her little “knuffle” bunny at the laundromat, and has to figure out how to tell her dad. Except she doesn't know how to talk yet. This features a really attractive combination of cartoon art, and real photography.

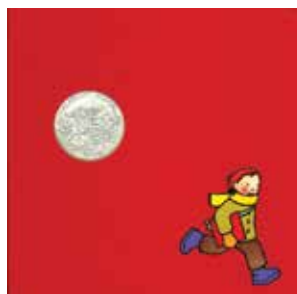
HONOREE

The Red Book

BY BARBARA LEHMAN

32 PAGES

This is a wordless story about a boy who discovers a red book in the sand, and a girl elsewhere who finds a red book in the snow. Each opens it to find themselves



looking at a picture of the other. The girl then buys a gazillion balloons and manages to sail into the sky to find the boy on the beach. Weird but wonderful. Kids who enjoy this mystery will enjoy the sequel *Red Again* (2017) which is more mysterious still. In fact, they should be bought as a set, with the ending of the one serving as an introduction to the next, and vice versa (or as my one daughter put it “They're a circle!”).

2004

HONOREE



Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

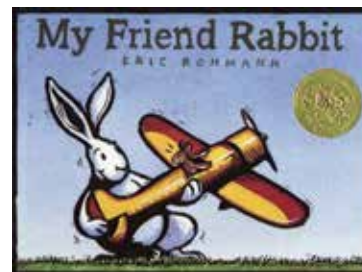
BY MO WILLEMS

40 PAGES

Pigeon really wants to drive the bus, but the bus driver is trusting us that we won't let him... no matter how much he begs. The fun in this book is that pigeon is very creative in his reasons, whines, and promises, to try and get us to change our mind – children will understand they sound like pigeon sometimes. And they get to take the parental role of saying no, no, and no! Parents can read this one with their child to create some shared vocabulary. In our house, at one time we could tell our kids “You sound a bit like pigeon right now.” And there are seven others in this series. And if you don't know about it already, you're going to love his Willems' fantastic 25-book *Elephant and Piggie* series!

2003

WINNER



My Friend Rabbit

BY ERIC ROHMANN

32 PAGES


When rabbit sails mouse's toy plane high into a tree, he has an inventive idea of how they can get it back – stacking animals, starting with an elephant, hippo and rhino. They all eventually go tumbling, but the plane is retrieved. Mouse loves rabbit, even if trouble follows him wherever he goes. Bright colors and sparse text make this a good one for early readers. Recommended for 3-7.

HONOREE

Hondo & Fabian

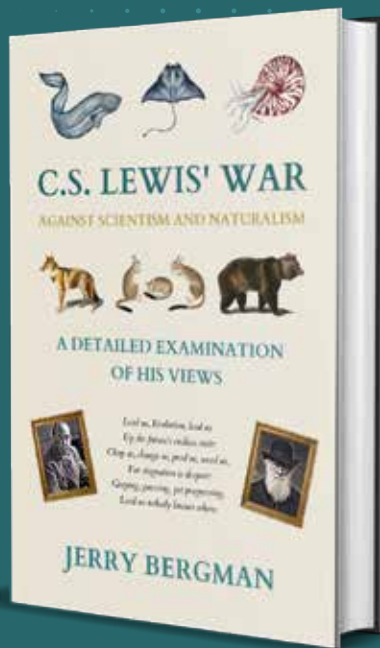
BY PETER MCCARTY

32 PAGES

A dog and cat start their day together, then go their separate ways as Hondo heads out to the beach to run around with another dog, and Fabian stays home, trying to escape the attentions of the baby. 

While it would have taken another dozen pages to share all my Caldecott recommendations, that full list can be had online. For 100+ more Caldecott picks that you'll love reading with your kids go to ReformedPerspective.ca/Caldecott or get there by scanning the QR code below.





C.S. Lewis' War Against Scientism and Naturalism

By: Jerry Bergman

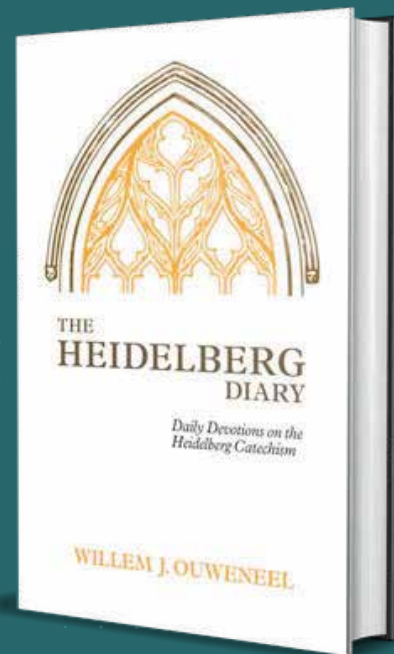
It is commonly assumed that C.S. Lewis was a theistic evolutionist, but contrary to popular opinion, Lewis was one of the most effective anti-evolutionists of the last century. He did not make his case against evolution from biology, but rather from logic, reason, and history. A book worth reading.

The Heidelberg Diary

Daily Devotions on the Heidelberg Catechism

By: Willem J. Ouweneel

Learn about how you inherited your sinful nature in Adam. The sins you commit are your own. But despite our sin, God has responded most graciously in Jesus Christ. For daily reading around the dinner table or for personal devotions, you will learn a lot.



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Training Citizens of Heaven to be Christ's Ambassadors in Ottawa

As followers of Christ, our mission is clear: we are called to be ambassadors of King Jesus, whether we are running around after children, sitting down with civic influencers, or standing up in the House of Commons in Ottawa.

Ottawa has increasingly become a significant hub for Christians who wish to serve both King Jesus and the citizens of Canada in key areas such as the government, the military, lobby groups, think tanks, and grassroots political organizations. However, for many Reformed Christian families, the presence of schools that provide Reformed Biblical education for their covenant children is a key factor when deciding where to make their homes and which professional opportunities to pursue. This education is a crucial foundation to ensuring that their kids are equipped to represent their King in every economy of life. Without such a school in Ottawa, many would forego the important opportunities to serve in the institutions that exist here.

Therefore, in 2011, members of Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church established Ambassadors Christian School (ACS) in Ottawa. ACS is currently the sole elementary school offering Reformed Biblical education in Canada's capital. Many covenant children from different backgrounds have been blessed by the education and spiritual community it offers.

However, the school is seeking to stabilize its operating budget due to the transient nature of the families it serves. These families make Ottawa their temporary home-away-from-home while serving in the various civic organizations present in the city.

We invite you to join us in prayer as the Holy Spirit continues to build a Reformed stronghold in Ottawa through families committed to this cause. When Reformed Biblical education is available to Christian families in Ottawa, Jesus' name is lifted high, the Kingdom of Heaven expands, and Canada is blessed.

www.AmbassadorsChristianSchool.ca



"Teach [God's words] to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."
- Deuteronomy 11:19

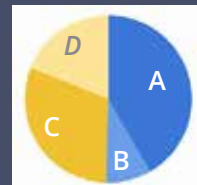
ACS is staffed by a dedicated team of both full-time and part-time educators, guiding 27 covenant-children from 13 Christian families. Since its inception in 2011, ACS has seen 15 students graduate from Grade 8 and go on to flourish in high school. By God's grace, many of ACS' alumni have also graduated high school and are now living as Ambassadors of Christ in various post-secondary education and professional pursuits.

ACS is seeking Kingdom Partners!

The Canadian Reformed School Society of Ottawa (a registered charity) operates ACS in a rented facility. Its 2023/24 annual budget is \$370,000. Approximately 50% of budgeted income comes Kingdom Partnerships whose financial support helps operate the school, and further establish a Reformed presence in the National Capital region. We are praying for new Kingdom Partners to help overcome a potential \$70,000 deficit this fiscal year.

2023/24 Outlook - \$370,000 Budget

- | | |
|--------|----------------------|
| A) 42% | Tuition Memberships |
| B) 9% | General Memberships |
| C) 31% | Kingdom Partnerships |
| D) 19% | Potential Deficit |



If supporting a Kingdom Project like ACS is on your heart, please visit our new website for more information or send us an email.

Fred Nieuwenhuis (Treasurer)
treasurer@ambassadorschristianschool.ca
Malcolm Wildeboer (Fundraising)
Malcolm@vwarchitects.ca



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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.

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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.

Learn More

Visit our Website to learn about our projects and subscribe to our free print magazine and digital newsletter.

Bonisa.org



“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

>> BEHIND THE SCENES:

The editorial cast and crew of RP

by Natalie Vandenberg

When my class did job shadowing for a couple of days, it wasn't hard for me to answer what I'm interested in. If you were to stop by my house almost anytime, you'd find me in my room, behind my laptop, working on a story. Fiction writing enthralled me when I was just four years old, and I've been writing ever since. So who did I want to follow around for two days to experience what it's like to work in their field? I quickly scribbled out writing/editing as the first thing on my paper.

I got the opportunity to learn about writing and editing at the office of Mark Penninga, the executive director of *RP* and also my uncle. I showed up that first morning eager to see what he would be able to show and tell me about his work.

Now if I'm not writing, I'm probably watching and analyzing films. I've seen over 45 hours of *The Hobbit* behind-the-scenes footage, which is why you won't be surprised when I compare *Reformed Perspective* to the behind-the-scenes of a movie.

So what really goes on behind the scenes at *Reformed Perspective*? Who are the editing cast and crew? During my job shadowing experience, I got to conduct some interviews and dig a little deeper into the answer to those questions.

IT ALL BEGAN IN 1982

Jon Dykstra is the editor of *RP*. The organization was started in 1982 as a monthly magazine and relied on subscriptions to stay afloat, printing about



1,500 copies of each issue. Much has changed since then but the mission remains the same: “to explore what God’s up to anywhere and everywhere,” explains Jon.

While others have been part of the crew for a year or two, Jon joined in 1999, back when the magazine sometimes still received hand-written submissions. Both easy-going and spirited, he is one of only two full-time workers at the magazine. He started out as a part-time editor, but his passion for the project and increased workload led him to where he is today.

While there’s lots of variety in his job, he mainly edits other people’s articles and often writes book reviews from his home office in Lynden, WA. For fifteen years he was the sole full-time magazine staff member (talk about tiring!) yet he enjoys his work, although maybe not the overflow of emails he deals with every day. “Words have such flavors,” he explains, “that when you’re writing someone and you’re not talking to them, there’s a lot of different ways they can misunderstand what you’re saying.”

Words *do* have flavor. Jon is a big fan of wearing shirts with interesting pictures or phrases on them, such as a saying to defend the unborn, to get the conversation going.

For over 23 years, he has been riding the *RP* roller-coaster of ups and downs, but the pressing need for articles written from a Reformed angle and the great opportunities with *RP* kept him motivated. Also, “It’s just fun ... God is powerful, He’s gracious, and He’s just fun,” says Jon.

His experience has led him to give this insightful advice for aspiring writers/editors: Appreciate getting beat up (find someone who is willing to critique you), be an observant listener, it’s about stealing (imitating) from the best, and finally, write, write, and write some more!

BIG CHANGES; SAME MISSION

Mark Penninga is the executive director of *Reformed Perspective*. He’s filled with dedication and passion for the mission of *RP*. He joined the organization when it was struggling financially, coming in with ideas on how to get the magazine back on its feet. Now, *RP* prints about 10,400

copies each issue and is available not only as a magazine, but as a website, podcasts, videos, and more. The concept of being online helps fulfil the idea of being a light to the world (Matt. 5:14).

He has plenty of thoughtful advice for those who are into writing and editing, such as: Writing is a tool, meant to fill a need and to serve a bigger purpose. As Christians, that purpose should be an expression of love for our neighbor and for God; we have “a message of love ... writing is a means to communicate that hope.” When motivated by a purpose, your writing will show more passion, conviction, and meaning. Don’t expect to get it right on the first try, rather, keep at it. “Try, try, and try again,” he says. Turn off your distractions and focus on writing.

A phenomenal amount of work goes into writing articles for *RP*. Some of the articles are submitted by people like you and me, while most are written by the crew. Imagine sitting behind a desk for hours, researching by means of the Internet, books, and phone calls, to create an accurate article from, as you can probably guess, a Reformed perspective. As I am writing this, my uncle is sitting in the room next to me, typing away. He’s in his cozy office in Smithers, BC, sipping a warm cup of tea from a large “Reformed Perspective” mug. Gentle strains of music float through the air, a mix of worship songs and background piano. Every once in a while he takes a break to gaze out of the large window at the snow-dusted peaks of Hudson Bay Mountain, enjoying the afternoon sunlight streaming through the glass.

IT TAKES A TEAM

But Mark and Jon aren’t the only ones breaking a sweat for the company. Marty Van Driel balances his full-time job as the CEO for a trucking business in Bellingham, WA, with being the assistant editor for *RP*. According to Marty, “the greatest joy is when it’s done.” I think most writers can testify to that.

Marty loves telling stories to his grandkids, and says he especially loves telling stories in a way that relates to how we can serve God as Reformed Christians.

To ambitious writers like myself, Marty

has two pieces of advice: Writers write. As he phrases it, don’t get “stuck in a brain fog.” Discipline is important. Set a goal to write every workday and then stick with that goal. His second piece of advice is this: Keep yourself grounded in God’s Word. There is nothing more important than the Bible and it’s crucial to keep this in mind.

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” (Col. 3: 23-24).


About a year ago, Jan Broersma from Langley, BC, joined the team at *RP*. Markings of red and blue cover her papers as she circles punctuation errors and notes details to doublecheck. She is the warm, friendly copy-editor for *RP*. Copy-editors focus on the technical, like tone, grammar, and factual correctness. Jan has always enjoyed writing, and decided to pursue a B.A. in English with some Creative Writing after high school, and then worked as a writer and editor before having a family. When her youngest child started Kindergarten, she had more time on her hands, spoke to Mark, and was able to get a job working part-time for *RP*. She loves the variety of the job.

Here is her advice to aspiring writers/editors: explore professional writing programs at college if you can, and if writing is what you love to do and is a talent God has given you, then it’s worth pursuing. Trust God will guide you.

CONCLUSION

After a peek “behind the scenes” of *Reformed Perspective*, I’ve realized it has come a long way since it first started. The only way that is possible is through generous donations and a hard-working group of people. The editorial team alone is composed of four dedicated individuals each using their unique, God-given talents to praise His name.

So open up that magazine on the coffee table and you can learn so much about God, His kingdom, and how we, as stewards, are to live.

And... cut! 

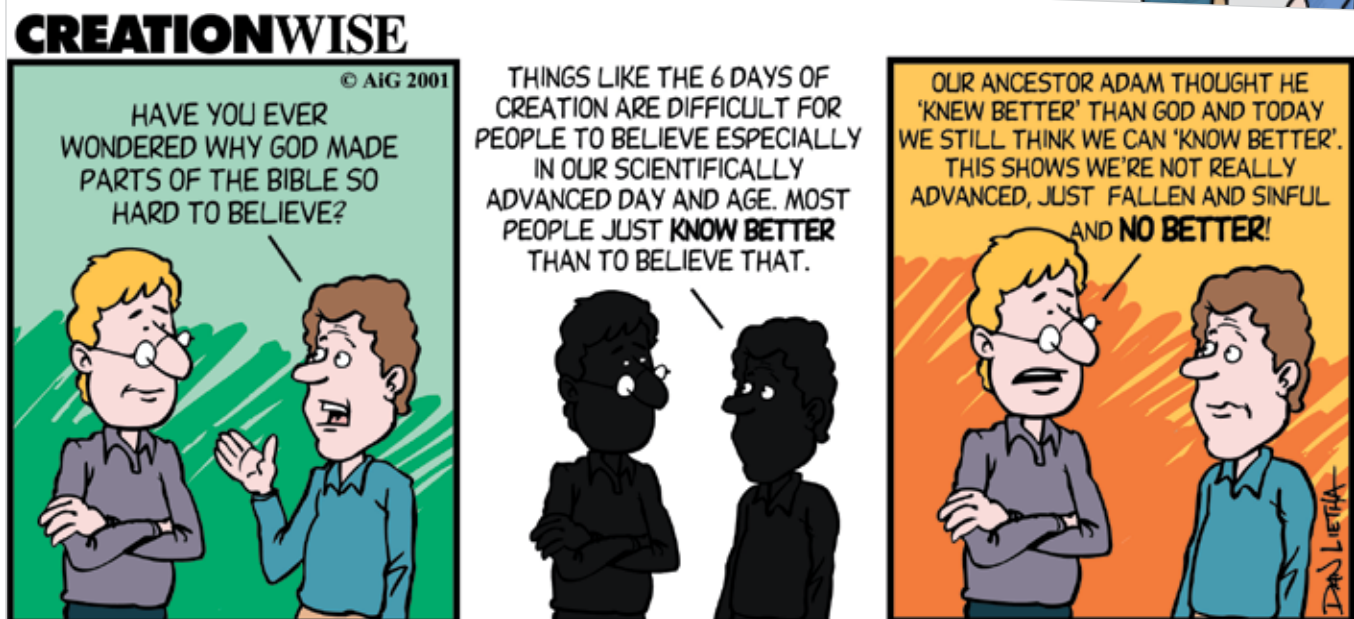
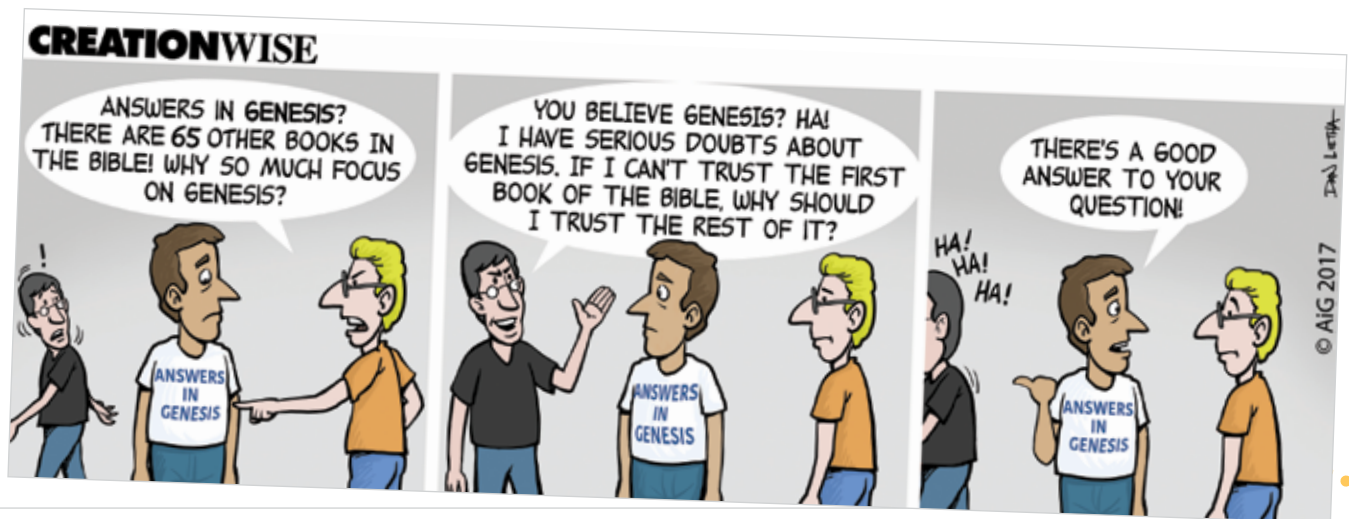
Defending 6 days in 5 panels or less

COMICS THAT CONTEND FOR CREATION

by Jon Dykstra

Before you dismiss these comics as kids' stuff, consider the depth packed into each one – these all could have been their own articles!

They are the work of cartoonist Dan Lietha, and are used here with the permission of the copyright holder, Answers in Genesis. If any of them spark your interest and you want to find out more on that topic, be sure to check out the thousands of free articles and videos available at AnswersInGenesis.org.



AFTER EDEN by Dan Lietha

I SEE NO PROBLEM WITH BELIEVING THE BIBLE AND IN MILLIONS OF YEARS OF EARTH HISTORY.

DO YOU BELIEVE THERE WILL BE DEATH, SUFFERING, PAIN, AND DISEASE IN HEAVEN?

Romans 8:20-21

NO! THE BIBLE SAYS ALL THOSE THINGS WILL BE NO MORE.

AND THAT'S BECAUSE CREATION WILL BE RESTORED TO BE MUCH AS IT WAS ORIGINALLY. NOW DO YOU SEE A PROBLEM WITH MILLIONS OF YEARS?

Rev. 21:4 1 Corinthians 15:25-26

Whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Acts 3:21

AFTER EDEN by Dan Lietha

Q. Which has science shown to take millions of years to form?

Diamonds

Oil

485

Stalactites and Stalagmites

Rock layers

A. None! However, scientists have observed each of these forming in minutes, days, or weeks. No millions of years are required.

God's perfect, eternal Word

Man's fallible, changing opinion

Holy Bible

Millions of Years of Earth History

Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Psalm 119:89

In this case, addition becomes subtraction.

CREATIONWISE DAN LIETHA © AIG 2004

THE BIBLE SAYS GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE IN 6 DAYS ...

6 DAYS? GOD IS INFINITE! HE COULD HAVE CREATED THE UNIVERSE IN MILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF YEARS.

YOU BELIEVE JESUS IS GOD, RIGHT?

YES.

AND YOU BELIEVE JESUS ROSE FROM THE GRAVE ON THE 3RD DAY AFTER HE WAS CRUCIFIED, RIGHT?

YES.

WHY JUST BELIEVE JESUS ROSE ON THE 3RD DAY? HE COULD HAVE STAYED IN THE GRAVE FOR MILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF YEARS!

BUT, THE BIBLE SAYS, '3 DAYS' ...

OH, I SEE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

IT STARTS WITH GENESIS

Isn't the most important part of the Bible the New Testament, where Jesus comes to Earth? So why all this attention about the first book of the Bible?

Well, if we skip over the first chapters of Genesis, then we skip, too, "In Adam's fall we sinned all." No fall into sin leaves us with no need for a Savior to pay the penalty for our sins. So then, why did He humble Himself? Without Genesis we have no answer.

WHY COULDN'T GOD HAVE USED MILLIONS OF YEARS?

Does it matter how long God took to create? In 2 Peter 3:8 we read that "...with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Why couldn't each "day" in Genesis have been a thousand years? Or a *billion*?

Maybe God could have done things differently, but what we have in Genesis 1 and 2 is an account of what He actually did. And fudging the numbers to make each day way longer – even a billion years longer – doesn't resolve any of the problems the secular world brings to this text. Their account differs not simply on the timescale, but on the order of creation. Their theory has stars existing before the Earth, insects before mammals, dinosaurs and reptiles came before birds, and thorns and thistles appeared before Man did. Genesis flips the order on every one of those points, and on one more besides: the world says death came before Man, and the Bible says death came because of Man.

Besides, 2 Peter 3:8 emphasizes God's patience; it doesn't teach that He can't tell time.

A WORLDWIDE FLOOD?

Fisher-Price, VeggieTales, and PlayMobil are just a few of the kids' toy companies that have sold cute toy Noah's Ark sets. They usually come with a couple giraffes, to poke their long necks through a window. Some of the boats can even float in the bathtub.

None of them come with a pair of T-Rexes, or juvenile sauropods. Generations have been taught to think of Noah's Ark as more of an overloaded rowboat than the mammoth ship it really was, nearly one-and-a-half football fields long.

If you want to get a better understanding of the sheer size of the real Ark, be sure to check out the life-size model the folks at Answers in Genesis have built down in Williamstown, Kentucky.

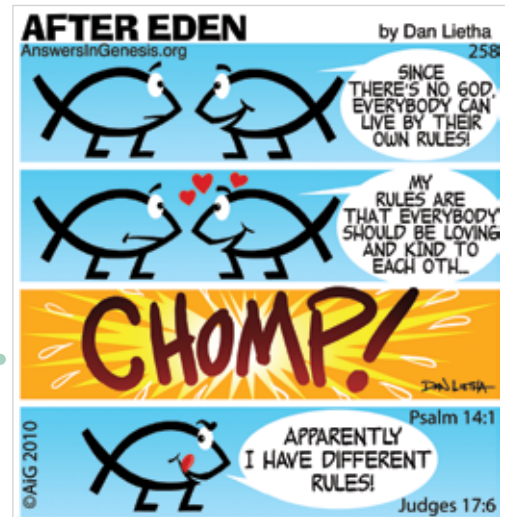


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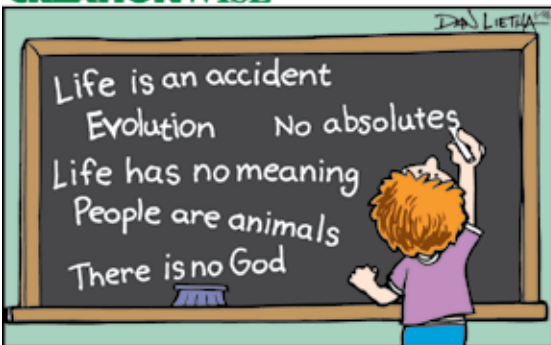
WRONG AND RIGHT DO EXIST

It'd be silly to get mad at a chemical for how it reacts with other chemicals; chemicals are going to do what chemicals are going to do. So if all we are is matter in motion – just sacks of chemical reactions – then where does wrong and right come from?

That we know wrong and right do exist – even the evolutionist might deny it, but will protest if you steal his wallet – shows that this universe isn't purposeless and indifferent. We all know that there is a Law Giver (Rom 2:15).



CREATIONWISE



If THIS is what Johnny can read and write...



then this news shows that Johnny really understands his lessons!

DEVOLVING DOESN'T EXPLAIN DESIGN

There are more dog breeds today than there were a couple hundred years ago, and evolutionists characterize these new species as "evolving" from the old ones.

But if that was all "evolution" meant, then creationists would be evolutionists too. God built variability into His creation, and it's that variability that allowed Noah to take just one set (or maybe it was a few different sets) of dogs onto the Ark, and from these few came the hundreds of dog breeds that we see today.

But that diversification of species *isn't* evolution as we normally talk about it. It could even be characterized as *devolution*. The resulting species are less complex than their ancestors. Both Saint Bernards and toy poodles likely had a common ancestor that had all the genetic information for both in its own genome. But today's Saint Bernard won't ever birth a toy poodle. That information has long since been bred out of it. And vice versa for toy poodles – there are no giant great, great grandpuppies in their future because the genetic information for size is long gone. And any process that *loses* information is no explanation at all for the massive amount of increased information that would be needed for a molecule to ever evolve into Man.



What's happening on the Hill: **FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO WATCH IN 2024**

by Daniel Zekveld

What came first: the chicken or the egg? While I'm convinced that God started by creating a chicken, the riddle points to two truths: that eggs come from chickens and chickens come from eggs.

We can ask a similar question in a different and more important area of life. What comes first: laws or culture? Again, the answer to this riddle is that both are true. And that's why a country's laws are so important. They not only shape our culture, but they are also symptoms of what our culture wants. Laws are not only signposts of where we are going, but conveyor belts pushing us in a particular direction.

So, where are our laws directing us to go? Well, here are some of the potential laws on a variety of issues that the House of Commons and the Senate will continue to study and debate throughout 2024. The bills that ARPA Canada is actively following can be categorized into bills relating to life, pornography and sexual exploitation, family, and human rights and justice.

Note: In Canada, bills need to go through eleven steps to become law. A bill needs to pass first reading, second reading, consideration in committee, report stage, and third reading in the House of Commons (or Senate) first

and then go through the same five steps in the Senate (or House of Commons). Finally, the Governor General must give Royal Assent to the legislation. We mention this so you can know how close the bills listed below are to becoming the law of the land.

LIFE

Euthanizing the mentally ill

The first one is actually not a bill, but an ongoing discussion. The Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying (consisting of both Senators and MPs) is meeting to discuss the expansion of euthanasia to people with mental illness as their sole underlying medical condition. The committee is officially reviewing "the level of preparedness in Canada" to euthanize people with mental illness.

But some MPs and committee witnesses believe Parliament must stop, or at least delay, the expansion of euthanasia to mental illness, which remains scheduled for March 17, 2024. The committee is expected to submit a final report to Parliament, with recommendations, by January 31, 2024.

Euthanizing the mentally incompetent

Another bill, S-248, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, seeks to expand euthanasia still further by permitting advance requests for euthanasia. This means that a person who is worried about losing the capacity to consent to euthanasia may consent weeks, months, or even years in advance. They would just need to pick a random day in the future to



*Do our laws shape our culture or does
our culture shape our laws?*

be euthanized or declare that they agree to be euthanized if they reach a stated level of decline and have lost capacity to consent by that point. The bill is awaiting further study at the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

PORNOGRAPHY AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Protecting young eyes

Bill S-210, the *Protecting Young Persons from Exposure to Pornography Act*, prohibits making pornography accessible to young people online and requires pornography companies to verify the age of potential viewers of pornography. Canadians rank 7th in the world for daily porn consumption, and children are exposed to it at increasingly younger ages. This bill is an important step in restricting pornography that is available for children and adolescents. Bill S-210 has successfully passed through the Senate and completed its first hour of debate in the House of Commons on November 23, 2023. It is currently awaiting further debate at second reading in the House of Commons.

Protecting young people

While Bill S-210 prohibits children from viewing pornography, another bill seeks to prohibit a person from making or distributing pornography without first ensuring that those depicted are at least 18 years of age and have consented to their image being depicted.

Online pornography often exploits young people, particularly girls. Bill C-270, the *Stopping Internet Sexual Exploitation Act*, would make such exploitation punishable by a fine of up to \$500,000 or up to two years in prison. Bill C-270 successfully passed through the Senate and, in December, also passed its second reading in the House of Commons, with all Conservative, NDP, and Bloc MP's, as well as several Liberal members, supporting it. It is currently awaiting further study by the National Safety and Public Security Committee.

Better terminology

Bill C-291, introduced by MP Mel

Arnold in June 2022, focuses on the issue of child pornography. The bill seeks to replace the term “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse and exploitation material.” While a simple terminology change does not directly combat child pornography, it does shift our society away from viewing child pornography as something that is potentially value-neutral to denouncing it for the abuse and exploitation that it is.

The bill has received widespread support so far, passing unanimously in the House of Commons and passing second reading in the Senate. It is awaiting further study at the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

Human trafficking

Finally, a set of bills focus generally on human trafficking. Bill S-263 and C-308 are identical bills in the Senate and House of Commons which would require the government to maintain, update, and report on the progress of its National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking. The current strategy ends in 2024 but Canada desperately needs to do more – not less – to combat human trafficking.

Both bills have passed first reading in their respective legislatures but have yet to proceed any further.

FAMILY

Spanking bans

Currently, parents in Canada are permitted to use force (e.g. spanking) to correct a child, as long as the force is reasonable under the circumstances. In the past 25 years, at least 14 bills have been introduced as attempts to ban corporal discipline, but none have passed. The government can never replace parents in the life of a child and must not try to do so by legislating how children ought to be raised.

A set of bills – Bill S-251 and Bill C-273 – are the most recent attempts to ban corporal discipline entirely. The Senate bill is currently awaiting further study at the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, while the House of Commons bill completed its first hour of debate at second reading on November 27, 2023.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND JUSTICE


Protecting personal political speech

MP Garnett Genuis introduced Bill C-257, *An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (protecting against discrimination based on political belief)*, in 2022. An identical bill, bill S-257, was also introduced in the Senate in 2022 by Senator Salma Ataullahjan. Both bills have passed first reading but are awaiting further debate in their respective legislatures. These bills would prohibit discrimination by federally regulated employees against a person because of their political belief or partisan activity, such as, for example, an air traffic controller being fired because he expressed support for a conservative policy on a radio talk show. These bills would help safeguard free participation of all people in public life.

Restorative justice

The Canadian justice system is the focus of Bill S-265, introduced in the Senate in May 2023. Some elements of the bill support pathways for restorative justice as an alternative to incarceration. It would require training for authorities in the justice system regarding restitution and restorative justice programs. The bill also focuses on helping victims of crime navigate the justice system and access information about various services and programs. The Senate has begun to debate the bill at second reading, but it is awaiting further debate.

CONCLUSION

All of these bills are private members' bills, meaning that they aren't given the same priority as government bills to be debated and voted on. And yet, these bills give our representatives in the House of Commons and the Senate the opportunity to focus on critically important issues that the government may be ignoring. Some of these bills would have a negative impact, while others would have a positive impact. Either way, each one has the potential to shape Canadian law. If you are interested in further analysis of any of these bills, please visit ARPACanada.ca for existing analysis or any updates as they develop. 

Daniel Zekveld is a policy analyst for ARPACanada.ca.

FILMS

by Jon Dykstra

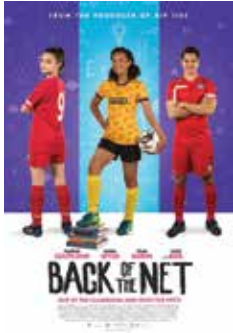
FOR A FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

ReformedPerspective.ca/movies

BACK OF THE NET

SPORTS

2019 / 86 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



Cory Bailey is an American teen science nerd whose next stop is a semester-long trip on a research ship departing from Sydney, Australia. But after arriving at the Sydney Airport, she boards the wrong school bus, and ends up on the wrong campus. Now instead of spending a term studying aquatic life, she's at a soccer academy. And she's never played before in her life.

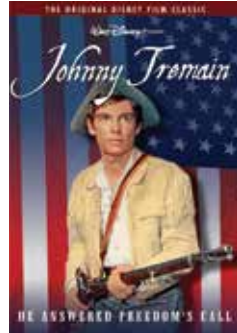
Adults are going to be able to predict where this is going right from the get-go, but no worries mate, because they aren't the target audience. And the pre-teens this is aimed at are going to enjoy Cory's fish-out-of-water experience.

The cautions here are mostly of the too-good-to-be-true nature of the story. Pre-teens might need a reminder that even as confidence can often be key, "believing in yourself" isn't some kind of miraculous guarantee of victory. Another concern is a budding romance and one peck on the lips exchanged. Parents may want to point out that these kids are too young to be thinking of marriage, so they don't need to (and shouldn't be trying to) contend with all the drama that comes with dating. There are also three instances of "Oh my gosh," and a beach scene in which two boys are shirtless (though in long shorts).

JOHNNY TREMAIN

HISTORICAL DRAMA

1957 / 80 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



The setting is 1773 Boston, shortly before the American Revolution, but our hero Johnny has his own concerns. The lad's master is getting older, and losing some of his skills. Then when Johnny tries to complete a complex job while his master is away at church, it goes badly for him, with molten silver burning one hand. And a one-handed apprentice isn't much use. With his options limited, Johnny falls in with the "Sons of Liberty," becoming a revolutionary not so much out of principle, as out of friendship: these are the only people willing to give him a job. But he gets won over to the cause and starts working as a secret courier.

The most notable caution would be the "fight for liberty" this movie celebrates. The Canadian in me says, "You rebelled over a tax?" – that hardly seems warrant enough for a Christian to take up arms! But some American brothers have explained/argued that it wasn't so much a rebellion against the King as against the British Parliament. Their imposition of a tax on the colonies was akin to Alberta imposing a tax on Manitoba: they didn't have the jurisdiction. What a viewer concludes about the rightness or wrongness of the American Revolution will greatly impact what they think about the film.

LONG WAY NORTH

ANIMATED / FAMILY

2015 / 81 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



It's the 1880s, the North Pole has yet to be reached, and a Russian explorer dreams of doing so. But when his expedition disappears, along with his unsinkable ice-breaking ship, the Russian Tsar offers a million rubles for anyone who can find them. No one does.

Two years later, the explorer's 15-year-old granddaughter, Sasha, discovers his notes and realizes that everyone has been searching in the wrong area. When she can't convince anyone to listen, Sasha steals away on her own to discover what really happened. With the lure of the Tsar's reward, Sasha manages to convince an ice-breaking ship to take her on board.

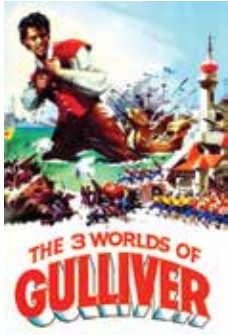
There is some "the kid knows best and adults just don't get it" here but fortunately it isn't pushed all that hard. There is also a brief scene with a frozen corpse, that might be sad for smaller children.

What makes this unique is the hand-drawn animation, and the starkly beautiful arctic landscapes done in lineless form that's very different from anything you've seen. While the first 15 minutes might test the patience of some younger viewers, this could be a wonderful family film for a quiet night when the snow is blowing up against your own front door. Free at Plex.tv (though with commercials).

THE 3 WORLDS OF GULLIVER

CHILDREN'S

1960 / 99 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



The film manages one upgrade on the book. In the original *Gulliver's Travels*, Dr. Lemuel Gulliver is all on his lonesome, but in this 1960s film version, he now has a love interest. And she's got spunk; when Gulliver decides to sail away to find his fortune, his fiancée Elizabeth stows away to go too! By the time she's discovered, the ship is already underway, and a storm ensures they can't just turn around. Still, Gulliver wants to send Elizabeth back to England, so the two go topside to argue it out. That's when a wave sweeps Gulliver right off the ship, and into his first adventure.

Most notable caution is a smidge of adult sexuality here. When Gulliver recovers his lost fiancée, he kisses her quite passionately. She interrupts, noting that "We aren't married yet," and runs off to her room and locks the door. To answer her objection, Gulliver arranges a lightening-quick marriage ceremony! Nothing untoward shown, but Gulliver's ardor did strike me as PG-ish. One more mild caution: Children under 8 might be frightened when Gulliver is unexpectedly grabbed by a giant squirrel.

Overall *The 3 Worlds of Gulliver* rates as a fun, fairly tame film for kids ten and under, and one that mom or dad might enjoy for the old-school effects.

THE LEGEND OF 5 MILE CAVE

WESTERN

2019 / 90 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**

The Legend of 5 Mile Cave begins with a bang, a fleeing cowboy being shot right off his horse by an eagle-eyed sheriff. And it begins with misdirection too: the sheriff looks kind of scary, his posse pretty mean, so are they the heroes? Or should we be rooting for the guy lying at their feet?

It doesn't get any clearer when we cut forward 20 years and see an escaping prisoner evade pursuing guards and their bloodhounds. Again, it seems like we're supposed to be siding with the bad guy. What's going on?

The main story is about a young farm boy, Tommy Tilwicky, and his widowed mother, Susan, who are taking in boarders to balance their budget. The first to arrive is the escaped prisoner, though now in a decent set of clothes. He can't pay much, but he's willing to help them break in their horses, to get them ready to sell. And he's also willing to tell stories of the West as it was to a boy who can't get enough of pulp-fiction Westerns. Those novels don't get the facts quite right, says the man. And he proceeds to tell Tommy, in bits and pieces, the true story of the infamous "Shooter Green," a gunslinger infamous for a \$200,000 stagecoach holdup from which the gold was never recovered.

Much of the movie is told in flashbacks, Tommy seizing every opportunity he can to hear more about Shooter. We cut back 20 years again to see Shooter Green doing trick shots to earn some money. We get to watch this boastful young man get his comeuppance when a beautiful young lady bets against him, and the flustered Shooter Green misses for the very first time. It's a cute scene, but had me wondering yet once more, is this film expecting us to root for the criminal?

I needn't have worried: *Legend* has us cheering for the right guy all along, and the mystery is how he could seem so bad at the beginning and be a hero at the end.

For a Western, there ain't much gunplay. Shooter Green does get shot off his horse in the opening scene, and when the stagecoach is held up, three men are quickly shot, however, with little blood seen. There is also a brief bit of gambling, as the trick-shot Shooter is making money off of people betting against him.

And that's about it. So this isn't an all-ages family film, but it could be good for everyone 12 and up. Stream it on Amazon.ca and elsewhere.





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A HUNGER FOR A CANADIAN AND REFORMED MAGAZINE



by Mark Penninga

A highlight of 2023 was having a table at the Ligonier conference held at Hamilton, Ontario's Redeemer University on November 10 and 11. Founded by R.C. Sproul, Ligonier Ministries is an American non-profit devoted to proclaiming the holiness of God. Since so many Canadians travel to Florida for Ligonier's annual conference, they decided some years ago to do a conference in Canada. The 1000+ seats were quickly sold out.

I have stood behind tables at other conferences in the past and often questioned the value of being there, as few people showed interest in anything beyond the give-aways. This time it was a very different experience. For two days straight, *RP's* board chair Bruce DeBoer and I had conversation after conversation with conference attendees. We handed out 350+ magazines and met dozens of people who are members of churches that don't have "Reformed" in their name but are hungering for Reformed teaching and theology. They were so excited to see that a distinctly Reformed, and Canadian, publication exists, with a focus on applying God's Word to the issues of our day.

As you may know, *RP* already made a big move in 2022 to expand the cir-


culuation of the print magazine to all NAPARC-affiliated churches (that stands for the "North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council," which is made up of about 8 denominations including the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed churches). Since then, more have requested it, so that the magazine now goes to about 175 churches.

Seeing the hunger from more churches and Christians, and finishing 2023 with healthy finances, one of our board's decisions in late 2023 was to not only maintain the circulation but also to steadily expand it. As long as it is financially feasible, we are willing to now provide 10 free copies of each issue to churches beyond NAPARC, and provide even more copies if they cover the cost.

You may have noticed a growing trend within many Christian churches in North America towards solid Reformed teaching and preaching in recent years. We see this in a wide variety of communities, including Baptist, Mennonite, and non-denominational. We praise God for this work and hope to be a means through which He fosters growing awareness of how His Word applies to all of life.

RP is grounded in God's Word, also as it is faithfully explained in the Three

Forms of Unity. We are intent on not straying from this basis, even if more and more of our readers come from other churches. In many respects, this is not new to us, as our resources have been shared online with hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world for seven years already.

We were able to take part in the Ligonier conference and offer copies to more churches thanks to many of you who came behind this work with a donation in 2023. If that includes you, we extend our sincere thanks. We will strive to be faithful with your support and we welcome your ongoing accountability. May the LORD be praised, from sea to sea! 

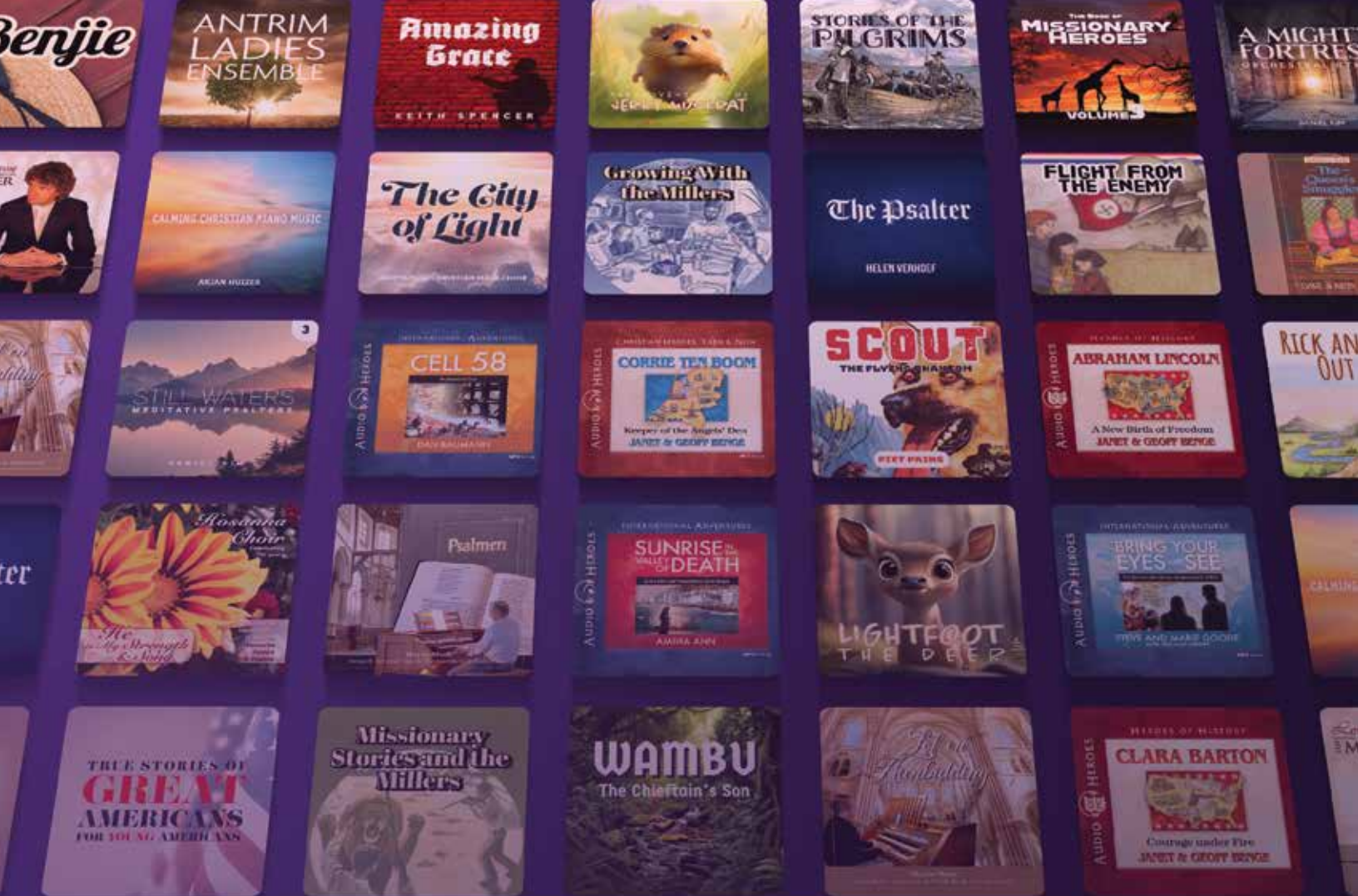


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