

Reformed CELEBRATING GOD'S TRUTH

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SINCE 1982

HOW TO GET MARRIED YOUNGER

HOW WELL ARE WE FULFILLING GOD'S ORIGINAL COMMAND? p. 28

RAISING A FAMILY TO HUNT p. 33

ISRAEL AT WAR p. 38



Reformed **PERSPECTIVE**

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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How I married your grandmother

Dating advice for a young man

by Jon Dykstra

As best as I can describe it, the letter below simply materialized on my desk – it wasn't there, and the next moment it was. Opening it only deepened the mystery: dated May 1, 2049, it is from a "Grampa Dykstra" to "Tim." I can only suppose that a quarter century from now, an elderly me was working on this for a grandson I don't yet have, and after placing the completed draft down on his (my?) desk, it somehow slipped back to the here and now through a crack in the time/space continuum. I'm sharing it with you because, really, how could I not?

Dear Tim,

When I first married, I expected to write a letter like this to one of my sons, to share with him hard-won lessons on how a young man might go about meeting a godly woman. But God, in His wisdom and humor, decided to give me a passel of girls instead. Me and the cat, we were the only testosterone in our household for the next couple of decades... and it was wonderful!

Then, one by one, my girls got married, bringing some fine young men into the family, and, soon after, some very fine little men too. And as those little men got bigger, I began thinking again to the letter I would have written a son, and concluded that, even if it skipped a generation, the letter was still worth writing. Some things are very different since I first courted your grandmother (including folks no longer using the word "court" – I'm not sure we even did back then). But to paraphrase the Preacher in Eccl. 3:15, the more things change, the more they stay the same, and I'm quite confident that you'll find benefit in hearing how I met and married your grandmother.

I think I should begin though, with the story of how I almost didn't marry your grandmother. 3 Ps stood in my way: priorities, pride, and poltroonery.

First off, I wasn't looking to marry. That impulse probably began way back when my friends were pairing off in highschool. There was pressure then to find someone, anyone, just to be paired off too. In my cousin's school it started earlier, with Grade 6 and 7 kids trying to deal with their teen-esteem issues by laying claim to a "cute boy" or a "hot girl." I wouldn't have put it in these words, but I realized even back then that dating should be done for a better purpose than fitting in.

But every good impulse can be taken too far. Or as Martin Luther may or may not have said, there's two sides to fall off a horse. And in my case, that equal and opposite error was to make a show of not needing anyone. In pride I declared (thankfully, only to myself) that I was the only one not acting desperate. When our Grade 12 grad came, it would have been a great excuse to ask someone out for a fun night, but I, as a matter of principle (so I told myself) went it alone. That was just dumb (though it did lead to one fond memory – while everyone else got a picture with their date under the balloon arch, I got one with my own very elegant grandmother). For quite some time after that, I kept falling off the horse in that direction. When others headed off to Young People's Study Weekends to see if they could meet someone, I wrote them off as "meat markets" and again, insisted I wasn't that desperate. I'd date... if I met the right girl. But how could I meet the right girl if I wasn't going where all sorts of right girls were congregating?

To add to prioritization and pride problems, there was also my poltroonery. I don't know if that's a word kids are still using these days – it might be a bit too 2030s – so I'll translate. I was a coward. I was too scared to risk asking anyone out. I did still date, but only because a few girls were willing to ask me. Now role reversal isn't always a bad thing. A Sadie Hawkins dance, where the girls ask the guys, could give the ladies an opportunity to ask out some clueless guy who might still have potential. But it's not me being old-fashioned to insist that, as a rule, the guys should do the asking. Why? I'll take you right to Ephesians 5:25:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."

When it comes to dating, someone has to stick their neck out and do the asking. And sticking your neck out comes with the risk of getting your head lopped off and handed back to you. Rejection hurts, and as it's our nature to avoid pain, many a guy simply won't risk it. But if marriage is worth pursuing – and it is – then some risks are worth taking. And if someone might get decapitated, shouldn't it be the guy? God says husbands have to give themselves up for their bride, and while you ain't a husband yet, that is the role you're auditioning for. That means if you want to impress the right sort of girl, you should start things the right sort of way, and take the risk so she doesn't have to. I'm going to lay it on thick here, because I've seen many a young man shut themselves down for fear of failure. So let's just imagine an absolute worst-case scenario. You stir up the courage to ask out the girl who's been sitting two pews up from you in church and who hasn't been far from your thoughts for months now. Her response is complete surprise, and she doesn't just say no, but your invite prompts a quick nervous giggle. She's not trying to be hurtful, but it's clear she has just never, ever, even *considered* you that way.

Pretty devastating.

But now see that same situation as God does. She might have laughed, but God is smiling. He saw you act the very man He made you to be. Yes, you got your head handed to you, but to the glory of your God because you did it His way! You can honor God in failure, and many times that's exactly what we're called to do.

You can't honor Him in cowardice.

Better to fail boldly than be a poltroon.

All this while, God was busy teaching, and I was slowly learning to get over those three Ps. (One hope with this letter is that you might be able to skip over them all together.) This, then, is how I met and married the love of my life.

First, I made the decision to move. I hadn't found the right someone where I was, so I headed a province over to BC, where there were all sorts of Reformed churches. I promised myself, introvert though I might be, that I would accept every invitation that came my way. And if, after a year, I hadn't found anyone, I planned to head down under and give Australia a go. I was going to *pursue* marriage.

Pursuit is not, of course, the same as success. But I was determined that, should I remain single, it was going to be because that was God's plan, and not because of any lack of effort on my part.

So I moved, headed to church, and met a lot of very welcoming people, especially my uncle and aunt who let me rent out their basement. And that brings me to the topic of "wingmen." Finding your match is rarely a solo activity – talk to any married couple and odds are they'll tell you a tale of some key friend, or two or three, who gave a needed assist. This is just one of the many reasons God gave us the blessing

of the communion of saints. That help can sometimes amount to a firm push, as was applied by all the guys in Grade 12, when our buddy was dithering about whether or not to ask out the girl who was obviously crazy about him. Other times it can amount to actually walking alongside – I doubled-dated with one friend, us two guys heading to a hockey game with two new girls. The one girl was also a wingman – neither of us were interested in each other, but we were making that first date easier for the other twosome. In my own case, God gave me a few different wingmen, including my aunt and uncle.

When they invited me to someone's 40th birthday party across the border in the US, I said yes, because that's what I'd pledged to do. But when I found out that they weren't even going, and that it'd just be me walking into a room of strangers, that was too much. So my uncle and aunt went too. Turns out, they'd been talking with a couple across the border about a certain someone it might be nice for me to meet. I knew the fix was in... and I was up for it. I got there, made the rounds shaking hands, and exchanged just a few words with a very beautiful young lass. She was a sister-in-law to the birthday boy, and helping out with the food, so she didn't have a lot of time to chat. Instead, I ended up talking for a good while with her mom. Not quite the way I'd imagined



things going, but your great-grandmother made me feel welcome.

After an hour or so, chit-chatting with one stranger after another, I needed a break and headed outside. There on the back patio sat a little boy, with a big dog, and the former was very happy to tell me all about the latter. God, in His providence had provided just the breather I needed: the beautiful night sky, a cool breeze, and a boy willing to share his dog. That was also the idyllic setting where I first had a chance to really talk to your grandmother. She was just popping out to get some more food from the outdoor freezer when she came upon a handsome young man showing kindness to her sweet nephew by taking an interest in his dog. So, another couple of wingmen had accomplished their work, one quite short, and the other four-footed. Your grandma came over, and we started chatting. I'd pledged also to make the first move, so I decided to ask her out. But I chickened out a bit, and made it a group thing rather than a date. I told her that a bunch of friends were heading down to an NBA basketball game in Seattle, and would she like to come too?

She said yes!

There was a problem though: when I got home that night I had to quickly organize this group event. Sure, I'd thought about getting a gang to head on down to the game, but I hadn't actually invited anyone to this point. And as the invitations went out, one "no" was followed by another. No one else could make it to my "group" event.

At this point, I decided to phone her up, come clean and actually ask her out on an official date. So I checked out when the next Vancouver Canucks game was, found out I could get a couple of cheap seats for \$50 each, and decided to invite this American lass to her first hockey game.

And she said yes!

But there was a problem. In the time it took to phone her, all the cheap seats got bought up. Now the only ones available were more than \$100 each. I was up for it, but I didn't want your grandma to think I was trying to impress her as a big spender, so I briefly debated whether to get some scalped seats, originally \$50, but now also going for more than \$100, and as far as she would know these would be the cheap seats still. I was, however, too much of a Dutchman not to get my money's worth, so I got the good ones. Getting ready for the big date I got some help from a female cousin – I didn't have any sisters to go to for fashion advice – and she got me decked out in a nice shirt, and what she assured me were a great pair of jeans. (I later learned that your grandmother agreed.) But in addition to being the most expensive pair of jeans I'd ever bought, they were the most uncomfortable and I spent a good portion of that first date wondering if they were going to fall off. I also spent a good portion of that date explaining the game of hockey to this lovely American lass, only to figure out at one point that she was getting excited about a play that was still developing. It was almost like she knew what was coming. And that's when I discovered this American beauty was a former Canadian.



And that wasn't the last surprise. One date led to another, and soon enough it was time to get to know your grandma's parents. That's when we both learned that her parents knew my parents... really well. I'd looked through my mom and dad's wedding album before, and seen the picture of them with their wedding party. The flower girl and maid of honor were two of my aunts, but there, beside my dad, stood a tall young fellow I didn't know. It turns out my dad's best man became my father-in-law! And some people think God doesn't have a sense of humor.

That, then, is how I was equipped, encouraged, aided and abetted, corrected, and even pushed to go out and meet your grandmother. And I'm so very grateful to God that she said yes.

My hope for you Tim, is you'll recognize sooner than I ever did that a godly spouse is worthy of pursuit. I'm praying that you'll be the godly man that a godly woman would find attractive, and praying too, that you'll be the sort of wingman you'd want your friends to be. I don't know whether God intends you to be married or single but I do know you can honor Him in both success or failure.

So don't be a poltroon.

Love ya kid,

Grampa Dykstra



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NEWS IN *Perspective*

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS FINALLY PLANNED FOR INDIGENOUS BRITISH COLUMBIANS

BY MARK PENNINGA

Few Canadians realize that the majority of Indigenous peoples in BC aren't allowed to own land like everyone else can. They are shackled by the federal Indian Act, first passed in 1876, which forbids private property ownership for Indigenous people living on

reserves. Instead on-reserve housing is provided, with the houses owned by the Crown and controlled by band councils.

That may be changing in British Columbia. On April 2, the province introduced Bill 13 to specify that First Nations who are recognized by the

federal government as Indian Act bands will finally have the legal ability to register and own land. This is a very different attempt at reconciliation than what the same government recently attempted with a plan to allow First Nations to co-manage all public lands in the province. If brought to fruition, such a change would effectively hand over veto power to First Nations for how most of the province is used.

But Bill 13 is fundamentally different. In their press release, the government lauded how the proposed changes "reduce discriminatory and racist barriers." They are right, though questions remain as to how it will apply to individual members of the many First Nations. It also remains a question how this legislation would align with the federal Indian Act.

Private property rights for all people, regardless of race, is both biblical and an important ingredient for human flourishing. As ARPA Canada shared in one of its first policy reports, on the broader topic of aboriginal affairs,

"property rights are essential for economic productivity and thereby have a direct impact on employment rates, which in turn impacts the living standards, housing conditions, health, and morale of an entire community."

God established private property as a right and codified it in the 8th commandment "you shall not steal."

Owning land is an important step for creating employment and wealth, while instilling responsibility and stewardship. Given that reserves are owned by the government, there is little surprise that the housing conditions are often deplorable. For far too long, Canada's federal and provincial governments have focused on handing out more money and more blame, rather than allowing Indigenous peoples the same opportunities and responsibilities as all other peoples.





DOMINION REPORT: A FREE AND SOLIDLY CHRISTIAN NEWS SOURCE FOR CANADIANS

BY JON DYKSTRA

The *Dominion Report* is a Canadian news website (DominionReport.ca) and newsletter that offers up a Christian perspective on the week's events. It delivers that perspective via two- to six-paragraph introductions to articles they link to from other media outlets. If you're familiar with *RP*'s weekly *Saturday Selections* column, it's a lot like that, but the *Dominion Report* goes a little longer and has more of a specifically news focus. As an example, a recent edition offered up:

- Canadians' beliefs on the Resurrection
- a conservative student forced out of a university election
- a Chinese military hacker who was allowed to become a Canadian permanent resident
- how Toronto auto thefts have doubled since 2021
- and a few more "quick hits"

They've been online since mid 2023, and their past 35+ weekly newsletters showcase what sort of Christian perspective they are offering. I don't know if it is specifically Reformed, but it is certainly a conservative sort of Christian, and strongly pro-life, with writers regularly turning to Scripture for guidance. Importantly, it doesn't seem to be over-torqued. *WORLD* magazine, one of the very best Christian publications, has as one of their slogans, "sensational facts, understated prose." We live in pretty outrageous times, so we don't need anyone to hype up the hysteria, and from what I've read, the *Dominion Report* presents the facts with a pretty level head.

Check them out at DominionReport.ca, and if you like what you see, be sure to sign up for their weekly newsletter.

LAWYER LEARNS SHE SHOULD DOUBLE-CHECK CHATGPT'S WORK

BY ALEXANDRA ELLISON

Last month, a BC lawyer was caught submitting an AI-generated legal application to a family court. Chong Ke was representing a father asking that his children travel to China so he could have parenting time with them there. Ke used ChatGPT, a text-based generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), to write the application, which cited two fake cases. ChatGPT does not provide links to its sources which makes its fabricated content hard to spot. To the AI's "success," the case was won, finding it was in the best interest of the client's children to visit their father. Although the fake cases were put into the application, they were never presented in the hearing, so the courts kept the initial ruling.

Shortly after the ruling, the lawyers for the mother tried to track down the cases referenced, even asking for copies from the opposition. After not receiving any copies the team hired a researcher to find the cases. This matter was then taken to court where Ke apologized for her actions.

"I acknowledge that I should have been aware of the dangers of relying on AI-generated resources, and been more diligent and careful in preparing the materials for this application. I wish to apologize again to the court and to opposing counsel for my error."

The process of preparing legal documents can be arduous, and although AI technology might be a tool to help with this, we should not be naive about its capabilities. Ke was ordered to pay the costs associated with the time and resources the other counsel used to discover the fake cases. In attempts to make court applications easier, the lawyer ended up doing the opposite, deceiving others in a scramble to seek truth in the application. In the court case against Ke, the judge reminds us that AI is not a replacement for humankind.

"As this case has unfortunately made clear, generative AI is still no substitute for the professional expertise that the justice system requires of lawyers."



MORE CANADIANS ARE "ALBERTA BOUND"

BY MARK PENNINGA

It's good to be *Alberta bound*" sang Canadian folk legend Gordon Lightfoot. Looking at Statistics Canada's Quarterly Demographic Estimates, many Canadians are taking this to heart. 45,194 moved in from other provinces in 2023 alone, more than to any other province.

The two factors being cited by the mainstream media are Alberta's "more favorable" tax environment and lower housing prices. These factors are very real, as Alberta doesn't have a provincial sales tax nor a land transfer tax. The average sale price of a home in Alberta has gone up in the past year, but is still well under \$500,000 (compared with \$957,000 in BC and \$853,000 in Ontario).

Albertans also make more money per week, on average, compared to all other provinces.

But Alberta has had lower home prices and lower taxes for many years. So, what accounts for the recent exodus from places like BC and Manitoba?

One clue may be found when we look at shifting population trends in the US, where Republican states (known as "red states") have seen a significant increase in population since Covid. The fastest growing states from 2022 to 2023 were South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Idaho, and North Carolina, all of which voted for Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020.

Although Canada is very different than the United States, Alberta has been led by the United Conservative Party government since 2019. Both their past Premier Jason Kenney and their current Premier Danielle Smith are known throughout Canada as being more supportive of freedom and smaller government compared to other Canadian provinces.

When people feel unable to change their political environment, a common outcome is to "vote with your feet" by leaving the environment and going to a location that is more desirable. In this respect, Canada may not be so different from the US after all.



HOW MUCH GOVERNMENT IS TOO MUCH GOVERNMENT?

BY JON DYKSTRA

In their recently released *The Size of Government in 2022* report, the Fraser Institute detailed the levels of government spending across the country as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP, or how much the country produced including both goods and services).

Canada overall – counting all three levels of government, municipal, provincial, and federal combined – spent just under 41% of the country's GDP. This is down from the 52% they spent during 2020, which was higher because of both the COVID spending that took place that year, as well as the 5.5% drop in GDP that occurred due to the lockdowns.

The Fraser Institute report also broke things down by province... and the range was enormous. In three of the maritime provinces, the three levels of government combined to spend more than half of GDP – Prince Edward Island (58%), Nova Scotia (63%), and New Brunswick (58%) – while on the other end, Alberta's spending was 6 percentage points lower than anyone else at 27% of GDP.

So what's the right size of government? The Fraser Institute suggests that the optimum level is somewhere between 26% and 35% of GDP, basing that on studies that say that gets you the most economic bang for the buck.

However, the prophet Samuel, in his "warning against kings" (1 Sam. 8:10-18), cautioned that the king might presume to demand the same percentage as God Himself required, 10%. Our governments presume much more, starting with more than double that.

Presumption is evidenced also when our government recognizes no boundaries on their involvement. Sometimes their overreach is enormous, as when they run education, a parental responsibility. And sometimes it is just ridiculous, as was on full display south of the border this last month, when the White House announced it was going to investigate the problem of "out of order" *soft serve ice cream machines*. Ironically, it might be a good thing for the government to look into this, as they may be the source of the problem. Government rules seem to be blocking anyone but the manufacturer from repairing the machines. When the government is involved in everything, then whenever there is a problem it's almost certain they are a part of it.

So whatever the right size of government might be, it's smaller, and less presumptuous, than what we currently have.

ELECTION DAY DELAY COULD COST TAXPAYERS MILLIONS

BY JON DYKSTRA

In March 20 the Liberal/NDP government proposed bumping the 2025 election date back a week because the election would otherwise be at the same time as Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. Critics have noted that moving election day back a week would also guarantee that any MPs first elected in 2019 would now be eligible for pensions that they wouldn't have gotten if they'd lost. An MP needs to serve 6 years to be eligible for a pension, and for those elected on Oct 21, 2019, the 2025 election date of Oct 20 would have left them a day short. If current polling numbers persist, the government could expect a lot of their MPs to lose, but this election day delay would give them a going-away pension bonus.

Among the other electoral changes being proposed are an expansion of 2 more days of advance polls, giving

voters seven days in total – six advance days and election day – to be able to vote in person. The government also wants to make it easier to vote by mail, and allow electors to vote anywhere in their electoral district. These changes are being done in the name of “encouraging participation in the electoral process.” However, that doesn't seem a pressing issue – over the last 30 years, electoral turnout has stayed consistently within 60%-70% of eligible voters.

Looking south of the border, we can see that what's more important is the perceived trustworthiness of the election. Canada has not had allegations of stolen elections, as is almost common-place in the US. That's because Canada's federal elections, as they have been run over the last many decades are the most verifiable in the world, with each voter checked off a list at



their poll, and every ballot evaluated by two Elections Canada agents as well as representatives from each major party. These competing interests provided the ultimate verification for each election. Mail-in balloting, and vote-anywhere initiatives might make it marginally easier to vote, but cause complications – last election 90,000 mail-in ballots arrived too late to be counted – and muddle the transparency. The more heated our politics become, the more important it is that our elections are not only trustworthy, but are obviously so.

HEALTH MINISTER WILL PROTECT KIDS FROM NICOTINE, BUT NOT CASTRATION?

BY ALEXANDRA ELLISON

In late March, the federal government announced that it will “explore legislation and regulatory options” to address the growing popularity of youth using certain “stop smoking” aids. Specifically, the government is focusing on restricting access to nicotine pouches, which are tobacco pouches placed between the gum and cheek, with the intent being to counteract nicotine cravings.

Zonnic is one of the popular brands approved in Canada, with Health Canada stating that the 4 mg per dose “is usually recommended for adults who smoke 25 or more cigarettes a day and want to quit smoking.” These pouches release the same addictive chemicals found in cigarettes, vape products, and chewing tobacco. In July 2023, Canada approved Zonnic as a natural health



product, allowing it to be sold at any store with no restrictions.

But these products have been marketed to teens with different candy-like flavors and colorful packaging. Federal Health Minister Mark Holland was having none of that: “To the tobacco companies that continue to look for ways to use loopholes to addict people to their products: Get away. Stay the hell away from our kids.” The BC government

already took action last month, ensuring this product can only be sold over the counter in pharmacies.

Yet, this same “keep away from our kids” minister, just the previous month, criticized the Alberta government for new policies that focused on protecting minors from gender transition hormones and procedures, banning males from female sports, and giving more parental control over sexual education curricula.

Holland stated that the policies are “deeply disturbing.”

Holland listens to the science regarding addictive drugs harming minors. Yet, when it comes to so-called “gender-affirming care” that does irreversible harm to children (more than nicotine products could do), he would rather align with an ideological stance that fails to affirm a child's God-given sex.

TAYLOR SWIFT'S EXPLICIT EVOLUTION

BY ALEXANDRA ELLISON



Last week, Taylor Swift released her 11th studio album, *The Tortured Poets Department*, comprised of 16 songs. Hours later, she dropped part two of the album consisting of another 15 songs called *The Anthology*, creating a double album. In this latest effort, Swift says the f-word more than her first ten albums combined – one Reddit user says, “If you extrapolate this data, five albums from now she will have to release an album that says [the f-bomb] roughly 24,000 times.”

Swift’s earlier music had been known for clean pop love songs, her country music devoid of explicit language and even incorporating biblical themes, such as in her 2007 song “Christmas Must Be Something More,” where she sings, “So here’s to Jesus Christ who saved our lives.” That made her a favorite of many parents. That said, even her 2006 self-titled debut album, with its focus on cheating boyfriends, and Taylor longing after another girl’s boyfriend, wasn’t kid-appropriate.

However, her latest album takes a darker turn, featuring explicit sexualized language and blasphemous

lyrics mocking Christ’s death and resurrection. In her song “Guilty as Sin,” she sings,

*What if I roll the stone away?
They’re gonna crucify me anyway
What if the way you hold me is
actually what’s holy?*

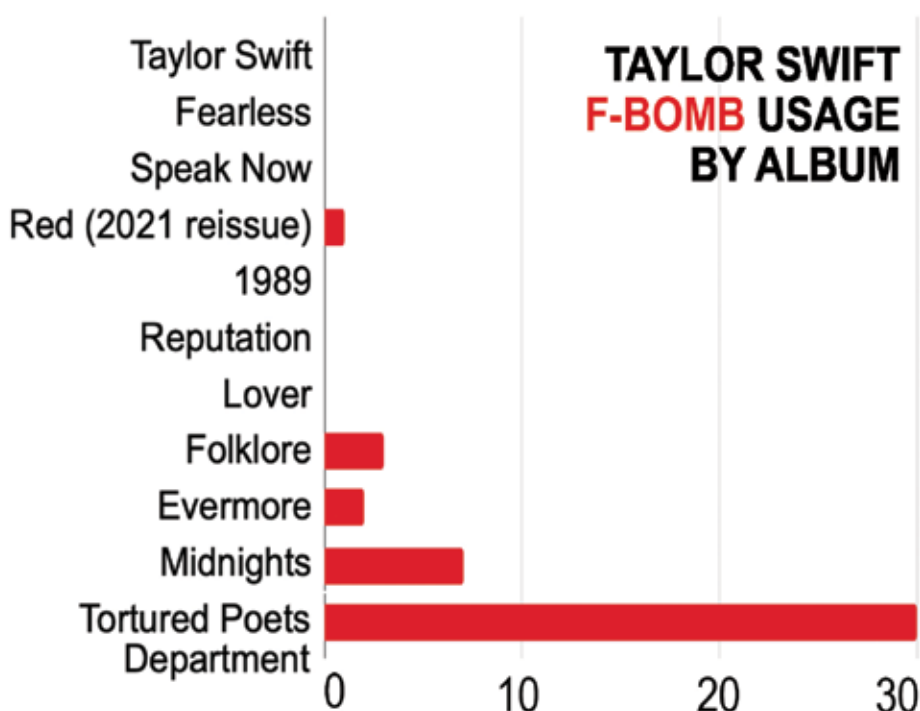
Another song, “But Daddy I Love Him” bashes Christians, calling them:

*...the most judgmental creeps
Who say they want what’s best for me
Sanctimoniously performing
soliloquies I’ll never see*

The rest of the material can be seen through a long X thread that asks “Is this the music you want your kids listening to?” Young people are impressionable, so it’s crucial to be mindful of the messages they’re exposed to.

Despite the album’s title, Swift is not a tortured poet; rather, she is praised by millions of fans worldwide. With a significant influence, especially on young girls, Swift’s dark turn is one parents need to know about. This is not the Taylor Swift of ten or fifteen years ago.

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).



ST CATHARINES CHALLENGED FOR CENSORING PRO-LIFE MESSAGES

BY MARK PENNINGA



RPA Canada is taking the city of St. Catharines to court. In September 2023, the city passed a bylaw that forbids delivering any image of a fetus to a private residence unless it is placed in a sealed envelope with a warning label on it.

In their application to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in late February, ARPA Canada (ARPACanada.ca) argued that the bylaw is a violation of the Charter-protected freedoms of conscience, religion, and expression, and is beyond the authority of a municipal government. They believe that “the bylaw’s true nature and purpose is to suppress pro-life or anti-abortion content,” because it doesn’t apply to any other gory images.

Such a bylaw could impact the Canadian Centre for Bio-ethical Reform (EndTheKilling.ca) which has long used abortion victim photography to show the public the gory reality of what abortion is. As the organization explains on its website:

“By studying effective social reform movements of the past – from the British Abolitionists, to the National Child Labour Committee, to the civil rights movement – we can see how they changed the unchangeable by exposing injustice using visual evidence, and confronting the culture with that evidence.”



ARPA Canada doesn’t use abortion victim photography, but does include ultrasound pictures of living unborn babies in its campaign materials, so they’d also be required to put a warning label on their envelopes. “The bylaw requires ARPA and its volunteers to mislead people about our message,” said John Sikkema, ARPA’s legal counsel. “Ultrasound photos are common and innocuous, not offensive or disturbing.”

St. Catharines is the latest Canadian city, along with London, Woodstock, and Calgary, that have passed bylaws in an effort to prevent the sharing of pro-life materials.

Photo is of ARPA Canada material that would require a warning label if delivered via the mail.

LEAKED DOCUMENTS SHOW “GENDER MEDICINE” IS NEITHER SCIENCE NOR MEDICINE

BY ALEXANDRA ELLISON



Leaked internal files from WPATH, the world’s leading transgender medical association, reveal doctors openly acknowledging patients’ regrets, painful complications, and life-threatening conditions resulting from the double mastectomies and genital amputations and mutilations involved in transgender “medicine.”

The World Professional Association of Transgender Health (WPATH) created standards for such “procedures” that have been adopted by doctors around the globe (including many in Canada). Significantly, WPATH is also a vocal advocate for “gender transitioning” of minors.

Mia Hughes is a women’s rights advocate who curated the recently released 250-page leaked report. She summarized some of the alarming findings:

“WPATH-affiliated health-care providers advocate for the destruction of healthy reproductive systems, the



amputation of healthy breasts and the surgical removal of healthy genitals as the first and only line of treatment for minors and mentally ill people with gender dysphoria, eschewing any attempt to reconcile the patient with his or her birth sex.”

The documents reveal that WPATH-affiliated healthcare providers endorse irreversible and damaging interventions, such as hormone treatments and surgeries, even in cases where minors may not fully comprehend the long-term implications. Videos from leaked Zoom calls show doctors openly admitting that children have little to no under-

standing of what they are consenting to. One doctor even stated that they are “explaining things to people who haven’t even taken biology in high school.”

Doctors within WPATH have also stated they are aware of severe complications, including cancer, resulting from these interventions. One doctor shared that a 16-year-old female patient had developed cancerous tumors with an oncologist and surgeon confirming this was a result of the prescribed hormones. Moreover, the documents reveal there is a disregard for the psychological and emotional struggles of patients, with clinicians dismissing concerns and proceeding with treatments despite serious mental health issues.

We are regularly urged to “trust the science,” but the gender debate shows how twisted the world’s “science” can become. But for those with eyes to see, reality aligns with God’s Word, that we are designed to be “male and female in His image.”



ADVICE FOR YOUNG WOMEN ... from A to Z

by Jan Broersma

The late teens and early twenties are an exciting time for young women, but with so many opportunities to be considered, and big decisions to be made, they can also be unsettling. How can young women live wisely now? How can they best prepare for their future when that future may feel very unknown?

As I discussed these questions with family members one Sunday afternoon, I was intrigued by my relatives' different thoughts and perspectives. And I wondered what kinds of responses I'd get if I extended the same questions to a wider

group of Reformed women.

So I asked for thoughts from the women in my own congregation, and also reached out to colleagues, friends, and extended family members near and far, some of whom then shared or discussed these questions with others. I asked things like, *If you could go back in time, what advice would you give your 20-year-old self? Are there things you're glad you did at that age, or wish you'd done differently?*

In the end I received responses from a broad cross-section of Reformed

women of different ages and life experiences – and on a wonderful variety of topics. What came through beautifully, again and again, was the reality of God's Fatherly hand in their lives – guiding, teaching, sustaining – and the wisdom they'd gleaned from lifetimes of studying and applying God's Word.

What follows is an A-to-Z collection of advice and encouragement that these women wanted to share with their young sisters in Christ, on everything from inner beauty to good habits, relationships to prayer.



ASPIRATIONS

“Choose your occupation with your heart in mind. A job may pay well but may not be what you are looking for. Family businesses are great, but may not be where you want to be.”

“Now I look back and wish I had thought more about what I would love to do as a job and getting paid for what I love to do.”

BEAUTY

“Measure your beauty not in pounds or compliments (which fluctuate, fade and are false) but through small acts like smiles and joyful eyes, through kind words and becoming humble and quiet in spirit. These are what make a woman beautiful, for beauty is found within.”

“A beautiful heart rooted in God is more beautiful and lasting than a beautiful body.”

COURAGE

“Have courage to do difficult things and to grow as an adult – such as moving away from your parents. It is incredible what growth awaits – and how much you realize the extent of love and care your parents provided!”

“Be open-minded. Go explore and travel and make friends instead of always doing what's easy or comfortable.”

“Needing to do things out of your comfort zone is a life-long reality, so start practicing now. At middle age, I still often need to take a deep breath before I make that phone call or strike up that conversation. Difficult things are often necessary and also worthwhile, so be brave!”

DATING

“When looking for a boyfriend/husband, keep doing the things you love to do and keep running the race for Jesus. As you are running this race, you will (hopefully) look beside you and see that someone is also running the same race and has the same priorities and goals.”

“I was once told about a father who said this to his children: ‘When entering the dating scene and seeking a life partner, find someone who loves Jesus more than he/she loves you.’ Very wise words for generations to come.”

“Romance is exciting but one cannot be hopelessly in love and also wise. So become wise first in knowing who you are through God's eyes, how He loves and cares for you, before you enter into any relationship. If you have a solid relationship with the Lord, a beautiful relationship can be nourished with another human being.”

“Be obedient to and focused on God first before 'looking for' a husband, and make sure the potential Mr. Right is doing the same.”

“It's far better to be single than to be with the wrong person (especially someone who isn't truly a spiritual 'soulmate'). Don't settle!”

“There is not a perfect age to get married. Don't set an age goal to be married by. Be content with God's timing. If you are waiting to meet that special person in your life, perhaps to settle down with and hopefully start a family together, remember that should not be your main goal in life. Some marry in their 30s, 40s, 50s and even for the first time in their 60s. Some missed the opportunity to have children because they married later in life; some were not blessed with children no matter what age they married at. But their marriages are still blessed with the love they have for each other and the time they can devote to extended family, church family, community and kingdom opportunities. Some never marry and are quite content with their single life which gives them other opportunities to serve. (Think of the Apostle Paul). Seek God's will for your life. Pray for God's guidance. Be content.”

EDUCATION

“Develop the talents that God has given – you have them for a reason. Getting some training now will give you options down the road. Whether it's an academic degree or practical training, if you have the opportunity, take it!”

“Some people love to learn and continue to do so. There are so many expectations around this now, though. If you find a job you love, it's not always about continuing your education. You can learn as you go! On the flip side, with the cost of living now, we highly encourage our girls to seek jobs that may allow them to work from home or have flexible hours as they may need to help support their family.”

“If you have college plans, try to avoid student debt! Apply for bursaries; work part-time (consider taking fewer courses per semester, even if it takes you an extra year to finish); and commit to living frugally. (That can be hard when all your friends are working and have money to go out, but think long-term!)”

“When I was heading into my twenties, part of the reason I chose the nursing program was that while I hoped to get married and have a family, I didn't actually know if and when that would happen, so I wanted to prepare for the possibility of being single for a long time or for life. It seemed like an interesting and worthwhile career, and I knew I would earn enough to support myself. Even though I didn't actually do that career for very long, I don't feel it was wasted

or have any regrets. The years I spent at university and the four years I spent as an RN were valuable ones for me, helping me grow in many ways. I was also able to be a blessing for numerous people in those years through that job. I think I would follow the same line of thinking if I had to do it again.”

“I didn't know if my degree (English and creative writing) would lead to a career, but I was prepared to do something else for my job and do my writing on the side if needed, so it still seemed worthwhile. I was able to live at home during college, work part-time, and avoid debt, which was also a factor; it wouldn't have felt responsible or stewardly to go deeply into debt for an uncertain outcome. You have to think all these things through, and find that right balance of being practical while still pursuing what's important to you. So be wise, but don't be too quick to dismiss a dream either!”

“Even if you are in a serious relationship, I would recommend still getting some education as you will never regret it. I never did finish my degree, and always wish I had as it's so much harder to do when you are older.”

“If at all possible, I'd encourage women to get a post-secondary education, whether that be a degree, diploma or a

trade. There may come a time you will need to supplement your husband's income or you may not get married or you may marry much later in life. An education often gives you an opportunity to work in a field that you love and enjoy before, after or during the child-rearing stage in life.”

FAMILY

“Maintain a good relationship with your parents, as they are the ones who love you, and want what is best for you. They have the wisdom of life experience. They are not 'old-fashioned.'”

“Spend time with your grandparents. Ask them questions about their younger lives.”

“If God blesses you with children, plan to make the job of nurturing and teaching your children a priority. From personal experience, I have no regrets being a stay-at-home mom. When we had our first child, we considered the cost of me going back to work (childcare, transportation, clothes, convenient meals) and concluded it really wasn't financially worth the added stress and busyness it would add to our lives. Plus, I wanted to be the main influencer in our children's upbringing.”

GOOD HABITS

“Eat breakfast!”

“Be at home by 10:30. Asleep by 11.”

“Cultivate the habits that will keep you healthy – physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally. Moving toward independence means you (not your parents) are responsible for you not skipping breakfast... or Bible study.”

HELP

“It is ok to not be ok. Seek help, accept offered help, and take it to the Lord in prayer.”



“‘Keeping up appearances’ – We’re all tempted to do it, and there’s even a British sitcom with that title! Be real! Be genuine! Be honest. Allow yourself to be vulnerable. Ask for help and guidance if you need it.”

“Life is hard. Accept this and work through the challenges. Ask for help when you need it (so many struggle in silence). And remember, God will carry you through.”

“What comes easy to one, may not to another. Help out where you can. It’s okay to say NO to things now and then, you don’t have to do everything.”

IDENTITY

“Consider your identity! First and foremost you are a child of God! Your identity is in Christ. So often we are introduced as so-and-so’s wife, the daughter of _____ & _____, or so-and-so’s mom. Growing spiritually and closer to God in every season of our life is key to all our other relationships. Focus on the vertical relationship with God first and then horizontally with all other relationships.”

JOY

“The world promises happiness and pleasure and excitement without God, but don’t be fooled. True joy comes in living with Him and for Him.”

KINDNESS

“Be thoughtful, be kind. Don’t just focus on yourself. Everyone you meet is struggling with something; everyone could use a smile or a kind word.”

LIVING WELL NOW

“Don’t wait for your life to ‘really start’ once you graduate, or start working, or get married, or have children. Those are all exciting prospects. But our God is sovereign and has a purpose for our lives exactly where He has placed us in



this moment. Consider how you can live as a daughter of God right here and now. Don’t put your life on pause until everything is perfect. It never will be until the New Creation. But God does great work with us, despite our imperfection and our imperfect circumstances. And in so doing, all the more glory goes to Him.”

“Pray continually for God to guide your steps and then do the work He has before you, in whatever capacity that is, whether you are busy developing a career, a relationship, or raising children. The Lord is shaping your heart, your character, and the talents you have. Honor Him by not continually looking at the future, but instead put your hand to the task at hand and trust that God will answer your prayer and guide and direct your life.”

“Work on your character, and daily habits. Continually seek God in prayer. He loves you, and you are very worthy to Him, and He will grant you all things you need.”

MONEY

“Give joyfully what is rightfully the Lord’s when it comes to tithing.”

“Make relationships, not stuff your priority. Don’t bemoan what you can’t afford; take pleasure and be content with what the Lord has blessed you with.”

“Save your money when you are young, and don’t waste it on frivolous things. Don’t focus on materialistic things, or things that don’t really matter.”

“Simply put, live within your means. Never look at the ‘minimum balance’ on a credit card; always pay it in full. If you can’t pay your credit card then you can’t afford what you put on there.”

“With finances, I used to make sure bills were paid before I would write my check for church (giving back to God), and there was always a shortfall. Only when the first fruits were given to the Lord, followed by bill payments, groceries, etc., it was then that there seemed to be a little extra at the end of the month.”

"Practice good stewardship with finances but also with your time, talents, possessions.... All belong to Him. It's good to re-evaluate how we are doing as stewards."

NOURISHING YOUR BODY, MIND & SOUL

"Be deliberate about the media (music, movies, books, online content) you ingest; these things affect you more than you realize. Choose options that are good for your mind and soul. Philipians 4:8: 'Whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.'"

"One thing I wished I had done differently was pursued sports or a hobby or done something more often with friends. After I married, my husband's job entailed many long hours, often leaving me at home to deal with children on my own for breakfast, lunch, dinner and bedtime. Even more time was spent away when he served as an elder. In hindsight, we should have discussed how we could have carved out some time for me to exercise and socialize."

OPPORTUNITIES

"Now is the time in your life when you have energy, you are generally not too 'tied down' by commitments – so take advantage of this time! It's a season with its own unique blessings from God, so accept and use these blessings to His glory. When you look back, you won't regret taking the chance to go on that mission trip, explore/develop a talent He's given you, or take opportunities to stretch yourself and grow!"

"I did not always have the job I loved. I would have put some more thought to it, now looking back. I did learn that eventually when I would be looking for work and all the ads would want experience, during interviews I would say that I would never get any experience if no employer would take a chance on me, and ask them to allow me to learn the job and guarantee them that I was eager, willing, trustworthy, and would rarely take a day off. You have to learn to communicate the attributes of your personality and strong will to learn to achieve the goal of getting the job. It has worked for me for getting a number of jobs over the years."

PRAYER

"Pray, pray, pray. I started praying in the car when driving and I found it remarkable how much I would be able to pray about in that 15-20 minute time of quiet in the car, just me and the Lord. I still do it!"

"After profession of faith, your faith will be tested. Be on your guard. Stand firm, read your Bible daily, make prayer your first point of action in the day, and your last at night. Go to Him in everything."

"Ask for the Holy Spirit to work in your heart, and to direct your steps. He will open and close doors throughout your young adult life, so don't be too distracted by non-stop outside entertainment, such as movies, scrolling on social media, etc."

"Do your devotions earlier in the day, even when you're busy. It's a way of trustingly giving God the 'first fruits' of your time. I struggle with this, especially when I have a lot to do, but it's a much better way to start my day."

QUESTIONS

"As you mature, you should be finding yourself asking fewer 'How can I get...' questions, and more 'How can I give/help/serve' ones."

"You don't have to have everything for your life figured out – you have more time than you think and things tend to fall into place."

RELATIONSHIPS

"Surround yourself with people who will hold you accountable and challenge you. There was a (thankfully very short) time in my life where my group of friends and I went to bars/clubs. It took a good friend to call me out on this, and I'm so thankful she did."

"When you are having a girls' night, challenge yourselves to not gossip."



Make a pact before the evening starts that no one will gossip, and call each other out if someone does.”

“Spend time alone, as well as with your friends/family, and talk about deep and meaningful things sometimes too, not only shallow talk, or gossip.”

“Your spouse (if you marry) should be your friend, but not your only friend. Christian friends, for both you and your spouse, are treasures along life’s journey. Some will be in your life for only a season; others may be lifelong friends. Take time to nurture friendships, whether you are single or in a romantic relationship.”

STRESS

“A super helpful thing for me during the middle of the day or during a stressful moment is to take three deep, slow breaths and thank God for something(s). It helps me relax, acknowledge I’m not alone in anything, and that while my ‘problem’ may be important it’s not the most important thing in the grand scheme of it all.”

“Don’t add stress by expecting perfection from yourself. Not everything has to be done absolutely perfectly every time. You are not God who alone makes all things perfect.”

“Give yourself grace as you would others.”

TRUST

“As I reflect at this age, I realize that in my journey with all of its highs and lows, God was leading me. My God sought to strengthen me in my faith and trust Him in all things, whether that be hardship, sorrow, happiness or joy.”

“Times of waiting and uncertainty are hard, but God can use them to build patience and trust. Don’t get discouraged!”

“We don’t always see the tougher roads on life’s journey as a lesson from the Lord until much later in life, as age brings with it reflection on one’s life. I wish I would have had the strong faith I now have as an 18-year-old. But then I think of how all the mountains and valleys traversed throughout my life strengthened my trust and faith in the Lord.”

“Be content and enjoy each stage that you are in! Doors open to new roles and opportunities throughout life! When I was at home with my young kiddos I was busy – with being a mom and volunteering for church/school. I enjoyed it (most days! ☺). I didn’t have much education so didn’t know what would come ‘next.’ I could never have predicted the wonderful new tasks that the Lord has opened up for me for the stage I am in now. Looking back I see that many of the skills I have now are from my role as a stay-at-home mom. I am now called to tasks that would not have been right for me years ago. Trust God and His calling, timing and leading in your life!”

“Above all, always trust the Lord. He has your life in His hands and will not lead you astray. You will be tested over and over on your life’s journey; the devil works overtime seeking the souls of those committed to God. Be wary of the pitfalls. Always ‘let go and let God.’”

“Our Oma would often say, ‘What the Lord does is good.’ She would say that in good times and hard times, and I still find myself saying it as well no matter the situation.”

“Be confident in the Lord. I went through a period in my dating years where I was just so unsure. I did pray a lot but didn’t quite trust the ways in which the Lord was leading me. It took a few years to be filled with that certainty. But those years, as well, ended up being so beneficial. Think of what the Lord wants for His children, who He is and how He wants to be served.

It can be easy to focus on ourselves so much that we forget the big picture.”

UNIQUENESS

“Base your self-esteem on your worth in God’s eyes. The world prizes certain traits over others, and sometimes we wish we were more outgoing or capable or attractive, but God didn’t make a mistake when He made unique you! He will use you and work for your good and the good of others, even through your weaknesses.”

VALUE

“Don’t undervalue the role of wife and mother! Society tells us that we should focus on personal fulfillment, and that children are a burden that stop us from doing more ‘important’ things, but God tells us the opposite.”

WALKING WITH GOD

“Spend time in the Word every day.”

“Think more eternally. Remember Who you belong to, and act with the promise and call of your baptism in mind.”

“Always continue to read and learn, especially your Bible, and be devoted to a close relationship with God, as He directs your life.”

“Pray always, sing praises all day long. Never be reserved about being a Christian and sharing the message of salvation.”

YOUTH

“As someone wiser than me has said, ‘Remember your Creator in the days of your youth!’”

ZEAL

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart.” ^{RP}



HOW TO GET MARRIED YOUNGER

by Alexandra Ellison

If your upbringing was filled with scenes of large families bustling into church, children in the pew ahead coloring over the church bulletin, and babies here and there serenading the sermon with their discontented cries, then, you probably see marriage as a very good thing. And if you've seen twenty-somethings making silly and sinful decisions because there are too few expectations on them and too little responsibility weighing them down, then you understand the problems that come with a prolonged adolescence and delaying marriage.

Of course, marriage isn't the fix for all things wrong in the world, and it does not encompass the entirety of life's pursuits. But marriage is a reflection of a most important truth. In Ephesians 5:25-27, we find a profound analogy where Christ,

embodying the ultimate Bridegroom, exhibits sacrificial and unconditional love toward His Bride, the Church, portraying marriage as a sacred covenant reflecting this divine union. Marriage is also an answer to God's command to be fruitful and multiply, as well as a means to grow His Church.

Getting married, then, is a worthy aspiration for God's people.

SO WHY THE DELAY?

However, the average age of marriage in Canada is now around 30 for both men and women, up from 25 for men and 22 for women back in the 1970s. Christians too, may be delaying marriage, perhaps due to economic challenges. Within urban churches it's quite common to see many working professionals aged 25 and above

who are unmarried. With inflation on the rise and the cost of living increasing, supporting oneself is a challenge, let alone supporting a whole family.

Kevin DeYoung's book, *Just Do Something*, highlights a very different reason for delay: society's struggle with an overabundance of choices. In past generations, it was common for individuals to remain in the same town, work the same job as their parents, and marry someone from their community. Their course was, in large part, set out for them.

Today, however, there is an overwhelming array of opportunities. Upon high school graduation, young people must decide whether to enter the workforce, attend college, or pursue other paths. They may choose to stay at home or move across the country. This plethora of choic-

es can lead to a fear of commitment and a reluctance to settle down, as individuals worry about making the wrong decision. As DeYoung notes, “In many ways, our preoccupation with the will of God is a Western, middle-class phenomenon of the last fifty years.” When it comes to discerning God’s will for our lives – whether in work, education, or marriage – DeYoung argues against “spiritualizing” our indecision. When you are looking for guidance on what job to pursue, whether to get an education, and who you should date, don’t just sit on your hands waiting on a sign from God. DeYoung instead advocates for committing to a local church community and relying on the discerning wisdom imparted by Christ to you and the wise family members, friends, elders, and pastors, He has put in place to shepherd you.

MARRIED WHILE IN SCHOOL

One reason I would like to get married some day is because of what I’ve witnessed with my parents, who married young and have celebrated 33 years together.

Peter and Jen Ellison crossed paths through a mutual friend while pursuing their studies at the University of Victoria. Despite a six-year age gap – my mom was 22 and my dad 28 when they walked down the aisle – they were relatively young compared to today’s norms. They were still completing their education, and not at all “established” when it came to their careers, which is why some family members suggested they wait longer. But they didn’t. As my mom explained:

“I loved getting married young because we really didn’t have much, but we were able to build everything together.”

She added that it definitely wasn’t easy but, “you need to go into marriage honestly and realistically, realizing that your union is of two sinners both in need of a perfect Savior.”

My mom thought that nowadays the value of marriage is seemingly taken lightly rather than seen as the making a covenant with God. She says that after 33 years of marriage:

“In hindsight the most difficult times of our marriage were when our personal

relationship with God was suffering. Rather than running from the relationship we needed to run to the cross of Jesus again and again and actively seek Him.”

FIGURING IT OUT TOGETHER

In the many conversations I’ve had with Dutch friends from more rural communities, I’ve noticed young marriages do continue to happen there. Within these close-knit rural settings, traditional values, economic considerations, and strong community support networks play pivotal roles in shaping the decisions of young individuals regarding marriage.

Gianna Vanderwoude’s story exemplifies this trend. She met her husband Devon in Carman, Manitoba where they had attended the same school and church. Over the years, their shared experiences fostered a strong friendship. They began dating at the age of 16, became engaged at 18, and ultimately married at 19. Vanderwoude reflects a prevailing sentiment among young couples in such settings – that there’s a unique excitement in marrying young and embarking on the journey of building a life together. She shared:

“I feel like that’s one of the benefits almost, because you can begin wherever you are, instead of having to meet in the middle. You just are where you are; you just go from there. And you make decisions based on what works for both of you. With regards to money, Manitoba is a little bit cheaper, but we both worked quite a bit during high school and we’re pretty smart in that sense, but it’s still challenging.”

Married for about a year now, they have already encountered challenges along the way, particularly with her husband undergoing a career change and enrolling in pilot training. However, the Vanderwoudes find that “it’s kind of fun to learn how to



Peter and Jen Ellison got married before either of them had established their careers.

navigate that together. We also recently moved away from our families to pursue this training. So, while it’s hard, it’s also really fulfilling to grow and learn together in new and different environments.”

When you graduate from high school, your schedule undergoes a significant shift, whether you choose to attend university or enter the workforce directly. You become accustomed to not seeing your friends every day, as you once did. Vanderwoude suggests that marrying young can serve as a remedy for the loneliness often experienced in one’s early twenties.

“I feel like your early twenties can be a little bit lonely because you go from being in high school and university and college and then all sudden, you’re off on your own. And if you move you’ve got to make new friends. So, it’s kind of nice to have someone there to grow with. Like a guaranteed best friend.”

Vanderwoude’s advice for young Christians is similar to what DeYoung

says in one of the final chapters of his book. She notes: “I think people can get super stressed about what God’s will is and who the one is for them. When, in reality, there are so many different people out there for you.” DeYoung agrees that, although it might sound unromantic, “Don’t think that there is only one person on the whole planet to whom you could be happily married.” The problem with this idea of “the one” is that it presupposes that affection alone sustains a marriage – you have to find that one special match, because it is that perfect match that will make your marriage work – whereas in reality, it is *your commitment to the marriage that preserves the affection*.

This underscores just how important it is to test everything against Scripture, especially when you’re in a relationship with ambitions for marriage. Vanderwoude emphasized that point:

“Just really test everything against God’s Word. And if you’re dating someone, make sure that they align with what God calls us to in His Word, as a partner. Don’t just think, ‘They

make me laugh.’ It’s important to ensure that there will be a good fit, especially for a woman seeking a husband, a strong spiritual leader who can guide your family.”

HOW ARE PEOPLE MEETING?

So how are people meeting today? I found out that singles are still getting set up by mutual friends, Christian conferences are a way to meet like-minded young people, and technology has created some new options.

1. Dating apps and websites

With the emergence of the internet, and online dating apps, the dating market has become astronomically larger, providing the unmarried with access to others singles from all around the world. That can be a good thing, but as DeYoung noted, that can also leave many overwhelmed by these choices, tempted to indecision in the fear of making anything less than the best pick.

While we all know someone who has found success through dating apps,

there are issues. These apps may allow a user to swipe through all sorts of potential candidates in short order, but these are people you don’t really know. In most cases all you’ll see is a few photos and a short description. Even as Christians, there is lots of room for temptation and lack of accountability here. Using these apps can lead to many uncomfortable dates, and even unsafe situations if you are not careful.

That being said, I don’t think that we need to avoid online dating sites altogether. *Reformed Perspective* has, for example, featured different online Reformed dating platforms like Sovereign Grace Singles or Tulip Singles. A feature of these websites is that there is an accountability factor. For example, on Tulip Singles, in their “About Us” section they specifically state that “We require our members to provide the name of their church and pastor,” further stating that, “We respect our member’s privacy and do NOT contact a member’s pastor unless they need to be held accountable for inappropriate behavior on the website.”

Speed dating night beats scrolling right

by Alexandra Ellison

Scrolling through profiles on dating apps and websites might be the newest, but it’s hardly the greatest, approach to the dating world, deciding who you’d like to date based on appearance and the briefest of descriptions. Sure, you can change your settings to show only singles who identify as “Christian,” but we all know living the Christian life is a lot more complex than just checking off a box on an app.

There, then, are some of the reasons corporate facilitator Kathrina Loeffler started up a Christian speed dating group. “The name is ‘Done With Online Dating.’ It’s because online dating is so cold in many ways. It’s so hard to really get a good picture of somebody online,” Loeffler explained. She says that she’s a “romantic at heart” and when she’d seen different speed dating shows on TV, she thought “Why not do something for Christians?”

“I think one of the roles of the church is actually to match-make. If you want to know the truth, I think that the church should be involved in bringing Christian couples together,

like really reinforcing Christian marriage so that we can have a strong Christian community.”

So far, Loeffler has hosted three events in Ottawa. Participants register beforehand, paying a fee to cover the costs of snacks and rental space. The events follow a structured format with strict rules and pre-screening. Participants then engage in five-minute conversations. There’s a list of questions and prompts to help, but participants can feel free to go beyond that. And many do.

“They’re Christians, they go right to the jugular almost, with the questions like, how many kids do you want? Or, why is it important that you meet a Christian partner? And it’s really interesting how that happens.”

After the five-minute date, participants have one minute between dates to decide on further interaction via an online survey. The whole event lasts two hours. So far, events have



Devon and Gianna Vanderwoude got married at 19, and have been excited to work through life's challenges together.

2. Wingmen still have a role, even online

And, even outside of niche Reformed Christian dating platforms, connections online can happen in the most unexpected of ways.

If you're connected to the online world of Reformed Twitter, you may have heard of Zoe Miller – she's a freelance journalist and is also the co-host of her own "Presbygirls" podcast. I met Zoe in the spring of 2022 in Sioux Center, Iowa while we were both attending the WORLD Journalism Institute, a two-and-a-half week intensive training program for Christian journalism students. During this time, Zoe was ecstatic to talk about a single PCA youth pastor she had recently connected with. After long nights of writing, and reporting all day in the small town of Sioux Center, we would come back to the dorms at Dordt University

and you could catch Zoe walking through the halls on the phone with her future husband.

I reconnected recently with Zoe, and her now-husband Seth, and asked her how they first met.

"I have this very niche little podcast called Presbygirls that I do with a pastor's wife who is a friend of mine and she and I hosted a show where Rosaria Butterfield was the guest. She was talking about human sexuality issues, which are really popular to talk about in the PCA, which is the denomination that our church is in. And Seth, all the way down in Texas, along with his PCA session, ended up listening to the podcast episode that we did with Rosaria Butterfield because it was relevant to the discussions that were going on."

During the episode – because they were talking about human sexuality and the theology of singleness – Butterfield asked Zoe if she was single. And Zoe replied "Yes." Seth had seen Zoe's posts on Twitter before and became curious about her after

been held for ages 25 to 35, 27 to 38, and 38 to 50.

One of the challenges for hosting these events has been trying to get men to come out to the events. For the last event, Loeffler changed the rules so that there was a wait-list for women.

"For the third one, we decided that we were going to only invite women to participate as we got male registrations. So we closed off all registrations to women and had only men register. Then as we got men, we would add a woman from our waiting list. Our waiting list for women is huge. It's big."

While Loeffler's events have been non-denominational, drawing participants from various Christian traditions, there's no reason her model couldn't inspire Reformed Christians to do something similar, though more theologically particular. In Ontario, the Fraser Valley, and wherever a number of sister churches exist side by side, this could provide an opportunity for believers to connect on a deeper level. A well-organized speed dating night could contribute to the enrichment of Christian communities and the cultivation of lasting relationships rooted in shared faith and values. RP



TOP: Organizers Christian Vulpe and Amanda Amin sharing some of the questions attendees could use.
BOTTOM: The hall is ready for ladies and gents to arrive.

listening to this episode. He also talked with one of his friends, a pastor named Mark, about Zoe. Shortly afterwards Mark attended the Gospel Reformation Network, a conference for confessional Presbyterians. Zoe happened to know many people at the conference because of her podcasting work. Zoe explained what happened next:

“During the conference, and some of the social times Mark was going around telling people ‘Oh, yeah, you know, we got this youth pastor down there at Redeemer in Texas that’s got a crush on one of the Presbygirls.’ So I got messages from people that I knew at the conference ‘Oh, there’s this youth pastor who has a crush on you.’”



Zoe and Seth Miller’s story is proof that there is no one way to find your match, and church connections are still vital, even in our digital age.

For more on how they met, check out Alexandra Ellison’s half-hour interview with the Millers, up now at [RPTV.ca](https://www.rptv.ca).

Zoe is part of an online group chat where they talk about “nerdy Presbyterian stuff.” She ended up mentioning how she was having people reach out to her about Seth. As church connections happen, one of the guys in this group chat said that he went to seminary with Seth and that they would have a lot of things in common. He then proceeded to send Zoe a bunch of YouTube videos of Seth preaching. As Zoe shared, it was love at first sight: “So I watched the YouTube videos, and I was like, oh, yeah, it’s over. It was pretty much over for me at that point.”

This mutual friend then set up a group chat on Discord with Seth and Zoe – she describes him as “a good wingman” because as soon as he saw Zoe and Seth getting along, he left the chat. This led to Zoe and Seth forming a friendship, and then came the phone calls – they were continually calling each other up. As June approached, both had plans to attend the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) General Assembly in Birmingham, Alabama. Prior to General Assembly, Zoe and Seth had a conversation asking “What are we doing here? What are we trying to accomplish?” Zoe said, “Well, I guess what I think we’re doing is eliciting marital compatibility.”

Then, the time had finally come in late June for Zoe and Seth to meet in-person. And as Seth shared, like any first date, there were some nerves.

“You hear all the horror stories about meeting somebody online, and as a real person, you don’t know what they’re really like, you only see some pictures. There was some fear and trembling before we actually met the first time because it’s like, ‘what is this person really like?’ So we actually met at the General Assembly of the PCA...”

During the weekend they were able to talk a lot, as well as have Zoe’s dad and the two pastors Seth was working with

“vet” them.

“From that point on,” Zoe said, “it wasn’t really awkward to try to figure out, ‘Where are we going to go from here?’ We got engaged in October of that year. And we got married in March of the next year.”

Zoe mentioned she used to find it frustrating when married couples were asked, “How did you know you were supposed to marry your spouse?” and they’d reply with, “When you know, you know.” She said:

“That’s not a real good answer. But at this point, they were 100% correct. It’s really difficult to convey that to somebody who doesn’t actually have that knowledge by experience, but I’m finding out that they were right.”

Zoe spoke about how, when she first went to college, she had visions of graduating and being a single young professional. But she had a perspective change in seeing many smart women in her church get married and start families young. “I kind of conceived of that as something you did if you didn’t have any other options, but... I learned that just getting married young is not a waste of time.”

When it comes to advice for young Christians who want to get married, Seth says to get really involved in the local church.

“These years in your early 20s are a great time to really cement your standing as a Christian, really grow a lot, and get involved in the life of the church. When you’re focusing on growing as a Christian, focusing on serving in the church, and being a part of the church, a lot of those things just kind of come together on their own.”

3. Wingmen in the offline world

While your church is often an ideal place to meet people, what if there aren’t many options within your local congregation? What if you’re searching for someone with specific theological interests but options are limited in your city or town?

Keith Davis, a pastor at Bethel United Reformed Church in Calgary, Alberta, is also the founder of Summit Reformed



Just some of the over four hundred 16 to 30-year-olds who attend each Summit Reformed Youth Conference. For more info be sure to check out SummitRefCon.ca.

not a camp; we're a conference." The summer conference runs from Monday to Friday, featuring speakers and worship sessions throughout the week. Attendees typically arrive on Monday, with many flying in from both the East and West. Some even travel from as far as Prince Edward Island. In addition to receiving scriptural messages that impart profound truths, attendees also have ample time for building relationships.

Davis observes that within the diverse age range of attendees, older individuals often emerge as leaders and mentors for the younger participants. This fostering of friendships among like-minded individuals also creates opportunities for potential marriages to develop.

"It's definitely about bringing like-minded Christians together in an environment where there's a sense of safety. They don't have to worry too much about whether the other person knows the Lord. There's usually a common commitment there," he said. "So, that might be one barrier that's removed. Ultimately, though, they still have to discover their own convictions, but we're bringing young people into proximity with each other. If it works out, it works out."

And it has been working. How often? Davis doesn't know.

"Every church I go to preach, there are those in attendance who tell me they met at Summit and they got married. They come up to me and say, 'Have you kept track?' I'm like, 'No, I don't ever want to keep track.' I want to protect us from pride because I think it's a natural thing to say, 'Oh, look what we've done.' I think that the Lord is pleased to use this conference to many ends; if that's one of them, Amen. The greatest end is that these young people will come to commit their lives to the Lord."

SOME PRACTICAL PASTORAL DATING ADVICE

Mike Chhangur, a pastor at the PCA's Christ Church Halifax, got married to his wife in his early twenties. They originally met through a youth ministry in Texas

heels in love already. But then I found out that she wrote everybody, and every man who received a letter fell in love with Laura. But I was the one, so we got married quite young."

Davis was 22, and his wife was 19.

"We love the Lord. We served Him, and what really brought us together was our faith. We had a lot in common; we had many conversations that flowed effortlessly. You know when you speak with someone, and it just feels natural, with no awkwardness? It's what is really needed."

After serving as a pastor for many years in various churches in the US, he then moved to Calgary and discovered that there were no nearby conferences for youth to attend. They had been attending a conference in Lynnwood, but it ended up costing the church a lot of money. After meeting with the elders of the church, Davis says he began making phone calls to see how he could start their own conference.

They launched the first conference in 2016 and have since hosted conferences almost every year. Their inaugural event attracted 150 young adults, but now they have so many interested individuals that they have to cap attendance at 450 people.

Davis is quick to emphasize that "we're



Pastor Keith and Laura Davis

Youth Conference (SummitRefCon.ca). This conference, held twice a year in February and August, caters to Reformed youth aged 16-30.

Originally from Michigan, Davis met his wife while serving at a summer ministry internship in Toronto. She was sending letters to people who were serving in the ministry away from home. Davis was grateful to get a letter.

"You know, as a young man receiving a letter from a young lady from church, you're like, 'Wow, you thought of me.' So, I wrote her back, and we established a bit of a relationship like that. When I got back, I thought she was head over

but reconnected a few years later through Facebook.

Chhangur shared some of the complexities that arose from getting married while not being “established.” His wife had just finished university, and he was still completing nursing school. Chhangur says they moved many times to find the cheapest rent, securing sublets to “save a couple of hundred bucks a month.” At one point, they even shared a two-bedroom apartment with another person.

“We’ve only ever had one income. When I was in school, Brittany was working more than me. And then when she got pregnant and had our first daughter, Annie, I started working full-time. There’s only ever been one person working, and so that’s been helpful for us in the sense that we’ve never bitten off more than we can chew in terms of mortgage or car loans or, whatever.”



Pastor Mike and Brittany Chhangur, and their smiling throng, have always gotten by on one salary

1. Make the most of opportunities to connect

When it comes to encouraging Christian singles to marriage, Chhangur says they need a point for connection. For him and his wife Brittany, Facebook provided that touchpoint for them to connect after losing touch. So, as a pastor, Chhangur says he wants to be able to help with those connections: “One practical way, as a pastor, I’m attempting to create connections among Christians is by hosting events...”

2. Date like a Christian

In addition to forming opportunities for connections, Chhangur emphasizes the need for Christians to date in a way that is God-honoring.

“I think I’ve just encountered over and over again, where people don’t know how to date Christianly. They have no idea what this looks like; they have grown up in an age of Tinder. A lot of people in our experience have started coming to our church while they were still living with a girlfriend or a boyfriend, and have had to figure out, ‘What does it mean to follow Christ in this particular area? What does the Bible have to say about dating and relationships?’”

He continued, “As a pastor, I’m teaching new stories of what it means to treat a younger woman as a sister with all purity. We don’t progress in the Christian life from treating somebody like our wife emotionally and physically, and then only later asking them to be our wife.”

3. Men, don’t make an idol out of your ego

Fear of rejection is a significant concern, particularly when there’s often an emphasis on men in the church to initiate romantic pursuits. Using a basketball analogy, Chhangur offers advice to young men who may fear rejection for asking a girl out to coffee. “Eventually you’re going to shoot your shot. If you live life avoiding pain, or avoiding rejection at all costs, you’re

going to have a pretty miserable life. Some of that is this understanding of who you are in Christ, and making that a priority more than being accepted by people. It’ll be sad if you airball the coffee, but that’s just life.”

4. Be the godly person a godly someone would want to date

Ultimately, if you are looking for a spouse who loves the Lord, Chhangur says you need to check yourself first.

“A couple of pieces of advice would be if you want a godly wife, someone who hears God and loves the Lord Jesus, you have to be a godly man. A godly woman is attracted to godly men, and vice versa. So I would make sure that your first love is Christ.”

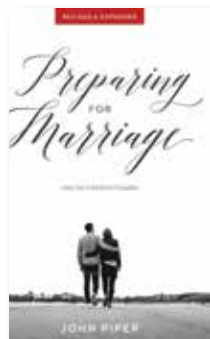
CONCLUSION

To close, I think some of the most practical guidance given to me was from a young woman who has been married for a couple of years and shared the following when I asked “What advice do you have for single Christian men and women who want to be married?”

1. Ensure your heart is in the right place in desiring marriage. It is a good thing, but even good things can become idols.
2. Prepare yourself. Don’t wait for someone to show up and then start getting your act together. Be prudent with the time given now to continue growing — in habits, in skills, and in discipline, all of which are beneficial to marriage. Be ready.
3. Surround yourself with those who have similar values as you. If you desire marriage, keep company with those who value it, whether already married or single.
4. Serve God where you are. You’re not in a holding room before getting to the real part of life. This is real life right now — live it all for Him!

Or to keep things simple, “Just Do Something.” **RP**

ReformedPerspective.ca/books



I was surprised in college, to learn the kind of questions my secular classmates would ask on a first date. They started off with the topics folks just don't normally talk about in public: abortion, politics, and religion. But it made sense: if you can't agree about the biggest issues, then why bother with a second date?

Good questions are why this slim volume, while written for couples, would be a great one for singles too. The first appendix has more than 50 good, get-to-the-heart-of-the-matter questions to help a person evaluate whether their date could be marriage material. Piper uses a lot of *we*'s, because he is talking to couples, so I've recast a few examples using *you* statements instead:

- What is your understanding of headship and submission in the Bible and in marriage?
- What makes you angry?
- Would there be one checkbook or two? Why?
- What expectations should we have about situations where one of us might be alone with someone of the opposite sex?
- Should we have a television?
- How many children would you like?
- Would you consider adoption?
- How will we distinguish between punishment and discipline?

And, as an added bonus, this book can be downloaded for free at **DesiringGod.org/books**.



2009 / 128 PAGES

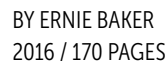
Kevin DeYoung didn't intend this as a dating book but for Christian young men and women who are waiting on God to point them to their perfect match, this could be just what you need.

Some Christians get themselves all tied up because they believe God has one ideal path for each of our lives, and it's our job to discover it. That really misunderstands what God expects of us. There isn't only one right thing we can do; we have options. We could, for example, decide to have tuna on rye for lunch, or a slice of pizza instead, and either option can be God-honoring.

Of course, where God does reveal His will, we need to listen. So daters must:

1. use Scripture to rule out some options (don't date pagans or fools)
2. use Scripture to establish proper priorities (don't let "pretty" rate higher than "godly")
3. turn to your parents (and others) for advice
4. pray to God for wisdom

Will that tell you whether to date godly option #1, tall Theresa, or godly option #2, bold Brenda? Maybe not. But you don't need to worry. DeYoung wants you to understand that if you're following what God tells us in His Word then you can proceed in confidence that you are honoring God with whomever you might date. God's secret will isn't ours to know, so we don't need to agonize over it.



2016 / 170 PAGES

I've read several dating books, and while some might be a bit funnier, or a quicker read, *Marry Wisely, Marry Well*, is the one I am most certain about. There are a lot of questions when it comes to dating, and Ernie Baker offers cautious answers – he's trying to not say more than God does – but his answers still provide enough direction to be helpful.

Marry Wisely is not intended for parents to just drop into their teen's hands – it's a book to be studied, and probably best studied in a group. I could imagine it being used as the basis of a young people's study weekend, or maybe by a pastor in some *pre pre-marital* class for teens. Baker wants to reach and teach young people *before* they start dating and have a whole mess of emotions clouding their thinking.

So what questions does Baker answer? Things like:

- What's God's purpose for marriage?
- How can I best use my single years?
- How do I know if I'm ready?
- How do I know if he's the one?

This isn't a hard or long read, and it offers a lot of valuable guidance to the young man or woman who wants it. But it is probably too meaty, and requires too much effort and study, to be the sort of thing you could spoon-feed teens who aren't already interested.

How well are we fulfilling God's original command?

by Levi Minderhoud

When God created the world, he gave man a foundational command commonly known as the creational mandate: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion” over it (Gen. 1:28). There are five imperatives in this creational mandate, but the first three – be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth – all have to do with reproduction. It is striking that the very first three commands given by God to His image-bearers have to do with having children.

So how well are we as humanity in general, as Canadians, and as Christians fulfilling this command? Well, not very well. And, compared to an earlier version of this article, we are getting even worse at fulfilling this calling.

HOW BADLY ARE WE DOING?

Although Christians and demographers might have some debate on when or if the earth is “full,” it is difficult to argue that Canada is “full.” Canada has one of the lowest population densities of any country on the planet, with an average of only 4 people per square kilometer. By comparison, the Netherlands, one of the most densely populated countries (excluding islands and city-states) has a population density 130 times that of Canada, or 518 people per square kilometer. Although much of Canada’s landmass is not suitable for human habitation, Canada still has the

third most arable land per person in the world, with 1.00 hectares (0.01 square kilometers) per person. That’s 17 times as much farmland per person than the Netherlands (0.06 hectares per person).

Relating to the command to be fruitful and multiply, Statistics Canada tracks the fertility rate of Canadians each year. It just published its data for 2022. Although the total fertility rate – the number of children that the average woman can be expected to have in her lifetime – has been declining for decades, the birth rate hit an all-time low of 1.33 in 2022.

What does this statistic mean? Well, the *fertility replacement* rate is 2.1, meaning that if the average woman in Canada had 2.1 children, Canada’s population would remain the same. This makes intuitive sense. Each woman would have to have two children to replace herself and her husband. Since not every child lives long enough to, or is able to, have children, the natural replacement rate needs to be just a little bit higher than two. So if the fertility rate exceeds 2.1, then Canada’s population would grow, and if fertility rates are below 2.1, the Canadian-born population will decline.

The current fertility rate of 1.33 means our Canadian-born population is guaranteed to decrease in the long-term as more Canadians will die each year than will be born.

This trend is not unique. The fertility rates across the G7 countries (a group of

Canada’s wealthy and democratic peers) are all below the replacement rate of 2.1 according to the Statistics Canada report.

WHY AREN’T WE FULFILLING THIS COMMAND?

Fertility rates have been falling across the developed world for a number of reasons. The Institute of Marriage and Family, which joined the Christian think tank Cardus in 2016, identified three main reasons in a past report on *Canada’s Shrinking Families*.

1. Children aren’t a top priority

First of all, a Cardus report conducted by researcher Lyman Stone entitled *She’s (Not) Having a Baby* reveals that having children aren’t on the top of the list of desires for women. Two of the most common reasons and strongest predictors for not desiring to have a child in the next two years was the desire to grow as a person and to focus on a career. Personal and professional growth is increasingly prioritized over familial growth.

That said, women do still desire children but because of these competing desires, most women aren’t having as many children as they ideally would desire. According to the Cardus survey, almost 60% of women would ideally like to have more children, and only 7% of women would ideally like to have fewer children.



What's a big family now, and back then?

Using the search term "large family" on RP's stock image provider's site brought up curious results: 95% of the photos had three kids or less, and probably 90% of them just two. The few that had more than three kids were either families with a "homespun" bent – maybe Amish? – or were very old pictures.



While the fertility rate (the likely number of children a woman will actually have) in Canada is currently at 1.33, women, when asked, express a desire to have closer to 2 children. Right now there is a "fertility gap" of women not having as many children as they would like.

2. Budgetary concerns

Second, economic factors are incentivizing smaller families. Raising children is becoming increasingly expensive, with the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada estimating that raising a child under the age of 18 costs \$10,000-\$15,000 in direct costs each year, plus the opportunity costs of lost wages. Given that the median after-tax income of Canadian families was \$66,800 in 2020, children take up a substantial portion of a family's budget.

Women have also increasingly decided to pursue a full-time or part-time career not only to find personal fulfillment but simply to make ends meet. The desire to save money or to spend more money on leisure were also common factors cited in the Cardus study about why women were unlikely to choose to have children. These changing preferences have led many women to decide not to have children or to have a smaller number of kids than their parents or grandparents did.

3. Broken families don't get big

Third, Canadian families are becoming less stable, prompting fewer couples to decide to have children. Cardus' Canadian Marriage Map demonstrates how, of the total number of families with children, the percentage of married couples has declined while the percentage of common-law couples and lone-parent families have increased. As of 2016, approximately one third of families with children lack a married couple at the helm. Almost half of all couples – common-law and married – do not have children.

4. Kids can be killed

Finally, the prevalence of contraception and abortion has enabled Canadians to choose when to have children and how many children to have. Contraceptive pills, approved in Canada in 1960, as well other forms of contraception have become widely used. When contraception fails, many Canadians turn to abortion. Although the number of

documented abortions has been declining over the past decades (87,595 abortions were reported in 2021), there is little data on the number of abortion pill prescriptions, which have become increasingly common in recent years. But if you consult Statistics Canada fertility data, the authorization to sell the contraceptive pill coincided with a dramatic decline in fertility rates in the 1960s.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT FULFILLING THIS COMMAND?

The major consequence of a low fertility rate is an aging and possibly declining population. Statistics Canada's 2021 census report documents how the Baby Boomer generation (the uncommonly large age-cohort born in the decades after the Second World War) is retiring from the workforce. In 2016, the number of people over the age of 65, the age traditionally associated with retirement, exceeded the number of people under the age of 15 for the first time in Canada. Five years later, approximately one fifth of the Canadian population (19.0%) is

over the age of 65 while 16.3% of the population is below the age of 15.

This trend is projected to continue, as the number of retirees grows faster than the number of children, for the foreseeable future. The number of people in the labor force compared to the number of retirees is also declining, meaning that there are increasingly fewer workers paying taxes to support our retirees each year.

The economic impact of an aging population is significant. In 2006, the Senate of Canada released a report on demographics forebodingly entitled *The Demographic Time Bomb: Mitigating the Effects of Demographic Change in Canada*, documenting how transfers to seniors and the health care costs of seniors would eat up an increasing percentage of government spending. This is a major consideration of whether federal or provincial finances are sustainable in the long-term (over the next 75 years). According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's 2023 *Fiscal Sustainability Report*, the federal government's finances, provincial governments' collective finances, and public pension plans are sustainable over the long-term. However, the "rising health care costs due to population ageing" are placing great strain on provincial health systems.

HOW MIGHT WE BETTER FULFILL THIS COMMAND?

One way to reverse this demographic decline and at least fill our corner of the earth is through an increase in immigration. And that is precisely what Canada has done. Despite having a fertility rate well below the replacement rate (meaning that Canada's population should shrink in the long-term) Canada's population continues to grow, primarily through immigration. In 2023, Canada welcomed more immigrants and non-permanent residents than any other year in its history – over 1.1 million. While the populations of other G7 countries declined (Japan and Italy) or grew slowly (Germany, France, United States, and the United Kingdom) in the past five years,

Canada's population grew relatively quickly at over 1% per year.

While immigration may help mitigate our aging demographics and help Canadians collectively fill their country, God's command to be fruitful and multiply applies to individuals too. Even Pope Francis pointed out this issue, arguing that too many people are choosing to have pets instead of children.

Changing the cultural conversation about children isn't primarily the task of the government. Given the economic, cultural, and technological factors that are encouraging Canadians to have fewer kids, the ultimate fix isn't a governmental policy but a renewed understanding of and appreciation for the goodness of children. Children are not primarily a financial burden, a drag on career aspirations, or an unwelcome source of work, but a joy and a heritage from the LORD (e.g. Ps. 127:3-5).

Nevertheless, government policies certainly can help raise the domestic fertility rate. Cash transfers to parents such as the Canada Child Benefit and generous parental leave policies alleviate some of the economic cost of children.

Reforming Canada's laws on marriage and divorce could help support stable marriages that are conducive to having children. Restricting abortion, both surgical abortions in hospitals and clinics and abortion pills taken at home, would increase the fertility rate as well.

CONCLUSION

Canada as a country, with a fertility rate of 1.33, is not fulfilling God's command to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" well. And it's getting worse. A growing prioritization of personal and career growth, economic factors, cultural attitudes towards marriage, contraception, and abortion are all pressuring or enabling Canadians to have fewer and fewer children. Canada's low fertility rate is leading to a rapid aging of our society, a trend that is only partially offset by increased immigration. Although changing cultural attitudes towards children is better led by the Church rather than the government, government policies can certainly also be reformed to encourage citizens to be fruitful and multiply. RP



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RAISING A FAMILY TO HUNT

What hunting can teach a family about life, death, and keeping things in their proper place

by Mark Penninga

I put my vehicle into four-wheel drive before attempting to climb the driveway to the home of Rick and Chelsey Ewald, perched on the side of Tyee Mountain, just outside of Smithers, BC. Their property is steep and treed, but they carved out a large enough area to build a home and establish a hobby farm. They're raising a small herd of goats with a new batch of kids set to be born any day.

With their own kids tucked in bed, the Ewalds seated me in their living room. A large shelf of flower seedlings was growing under lights next to the window, a clue to me that the plant's owners were eagerly anticipating spring. Looking up to the vaulted ceiling, my eyes were drawn to a mounted Canadian lynx that seemed almost alive, as well as a set of

moose antlers and a remarkable mountain goat mount.

Since moving back to this part of the province over ten years ago, I have been struck by how many homes display antlers and animal mounts of all kinds, a reminder of the important role that hunting has played here for generations.

Hunting was the reason I met with the Ewalds that evening. I knew that it was important to both Rick and Chelsey and I wanted to understand why they valued it and why they wanted to instill a similar love in their children.

But the interest wasn't just for myself. I'm aware that most Christians growing up in Canada today live in urban or suburban areas and associate guns and weapons with trouble, something to keep a healthy distance away from. In

an age where we can get plenty of food at Costco or Superstore, isn't it time that we moved beyond those old redneck ways?

Living back in the north and raising my own family here, I have seen many examples of individuals and families that I greatly respect who are hunters. I have also noticed that hunting has been making a comeback in popularity, even in the cities, thanks in part to YouTube channels like MeatEater, and an increased yearning to go back to the basics.

Similar to my story about living in a tiny home, my hope with this story (and hopefully more to come), is that the body of Christ seeks to understand why others choose to live as they are, even if it looks quite different than what we are used to.

FROM AN EARLY AGE

Although Rick hunted most of his life and even worked as a professional hunting guide for nine years, the couple agrees that Chelsey is the most committed hunter of the two. This started already as a little girl.

"We grew up on moose meat. That was our staple," shared Chelsey. "The importance of dad going out and hunting and getting a moose was huge for our family."

Chelsey said she was given many opportunities to hunt as a girl and would always jump on it. She met a lot of other hunters through her dad and her brothers. She was given a coonhound by one of these friends and invited to join them when they hunted bears and wild cats. "That's my lynx up there," she pointed to the beautiful cat that I noticed when I first sat down. "I cherish adventures. That's a part of who I am. And I think that plays into it. Those are such strong memories from our childhood, that were so positive and so exciting," she explained. "It could easily take over my life if I let it."

It was a similar story for Rick. "I started pretty much as soon as I could walk," he shared. He and his siblings would hop in the vehicle with their dad, or go for long walks in the wilderness, on the lookout for wild game.

"Starting out, we would just watch my dad and he'd be the one who would shoot the grouse. And then we got to help clean them and then eat them." Grouse are wild birds that are a little smaller than a chicken, and tend to be the easiest animal to hunt. It is common for boys in the area to grow up with a pellet gun (a type of air rifle that doesn't require a licence to buy or use) to hunt rabbits and grouse.

TRAINING REQUIRED

In BC, you have to be ten years old to hunt legally, and be accompanied by an adult. Around that age Chelsey learned how to shoot for sport. Since their family lived in town, her dad Willie Hofsink and his friend Joe Hamelink would take a bunch of kids into the bush where they would set up targets and practice

for hunting season. The adults would shoot their big guns, and set up some pop cans for the kids to practice on with theirs.

In addition to being old enough, in BC you also need to pass a Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Education (CORE) course, which involves rigorous study about the animals, outdoor ethics, government regulations, and the safe handling of a wide variety of firearms and ammunition. This requires an experienced teacher and usually takes a couple of weekends, followed by both a written and a practical test.

Chelsey's dad organized a CORE course for her and a bunch of other youth while they were still in elementary school, so that they wouldn't have to take it on Sundays. I took the same course and look back on the experience with very fond memories. Although I never really became a hunter myself (besides taking my kids out to look for grouse), I believe that everyone would benefit from the education. It further instilled a deep respect for God's creation and taught me the safe handling of a firearm, something that I would not have received training in otherwise.

To be able to purchase a gun or ammunition in BC, you also need a Possession and Authorization Licence (PAL), which is similar to the CORE course but involves more hands-on training with the firearms. Each province has different requirements for obtaining a permit to hunt and use a firearm.

Getting the right licences is just the start. To then hunt animals requires getting a permit for most species (called a tag). Depending on the animal, that can either be purchased for a nominal fee, or requires entry in a lottery system, to manage the number that are harvested.

And even when a tag is obtained, there are a host of requirements that a hunter needs to be aware of relating to the sex, age, location, and quantity of the animal. "You have to have the wisdom and the knowledge," explained Chelsey. "And then there's a lifetime of experience that you have to grow into," added Rick. That is why it is so important to find a mentor or "hunting

buddy," which can be the most challenging and rewarding part of becoming a successful hunter.

PROVIDING SUSTENANCE, FRESH AIR, AND LIFE EDUCATION

Talking with Rick and Chelsey, I was reminded that there are many different reasons why someone would want to hunt, and this also leads to different choices about what kind of animal to hunt.

For their family, a primary motivation is simply to feed their family. "Generally the animals that we hunt are the animals that we eat," said Chelsey. "One moose for our family will last us for a full year" and results in a freezer full of meat. "It's probably 80% of our yearly eating and usually five out of seven meals." This includes moose, bear, mountain goat, and grouse, which "is basically like our chicken."

They recognize that this doesn't save them money. Between the costs of hunting and the time it requires, they figure they probably come out even with those who buy all their meat from a store.

A deeper motivation is to get their family outdoors, "enjoying creation," explained Rick. "The different places and things we get to see, and we get to share it with our kids."

"And every time you go out it's different," added Chelsey. "It's just pretty out there."

Hunting provides a reason to get their family into creation. Their children join them on the drives, taking their toy binoculars to look for animals. "The experience of going to the Babine River when the fish are spawning, and the kids seeing the grizzly bears fishing is pretty awesome," noted Rick.

Rick was away when Chelsey shot their last moose, with all her children with her. Her youngest was just four months old at the time, and she carried him on her front in a pack. Thankfully, Chelsey's dad was with her, so he took care of cleaning the moose. Her children Milo and Cassie helped their grandpa, each holding one of the moose's legs while he dressed and cleaned the carcass and got ready to load it up and take it



It's one thing to bag a moose, but getting it home requires some serious effort, and snow chains, too.

home. This made quite the impact on the children. "It's great bonding," she reflected.

"Cassie and Milo still talk about how much fun they had with Grandpa and the moose. For us, it's definitely multigenerational for our family and we're praying and hoping that hunting continues for our family."

It isn't only the adults who reminisce. Even their three-year-old son Luke points excitedly down the road to where he and Grandpa go to see the grizzly bears, often recalling the experience. "He gets so excited about this one-on-one time," commented Chelsey.

The family is intentional about taking

a lot of pictures to preserve these memories, posting them on a large bulletin board that spans from their floor to their ceiling. They see their outings as adventures rather than just a hunting trip.

Their motivations for hunting go beyond their own family. Rick gave the example of wolf hunting. "Most hunters are pro shooting wolves because wolves have a high kill rate for moose," he explained. There have been more and more wolves, and they don't have any animals that prey on them. "So it's on us, if we want to help keep a balance, you do have to target the predators as well." For Rick, Chelsey, and many others, hunting wolves is considered a wildlife management strategy. "There's whole branches of the government that are supposed to

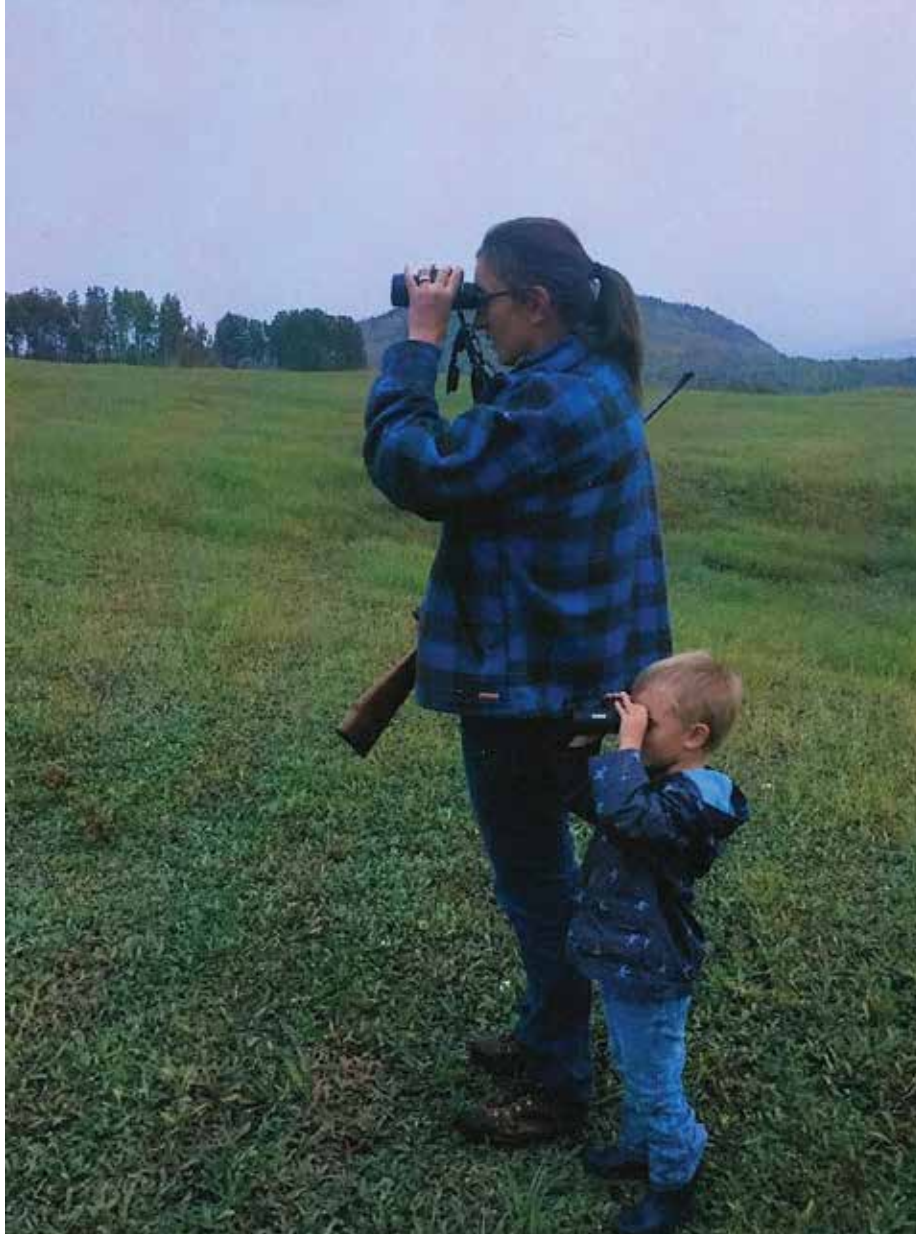
be doing that job," Rick explained. "And so then we try to work with that."

Wildlife management also dictates the numbers that hunters are allowed to harvest. The government then surveys hunters to see how many animals they actually harvested.

UNDERSTANDING LIFE AND DEATH

I asked Rick and Chelsey how they would respond to a reader who lives in a city like Toronto and finds the idea of owning a gun and killing an animal hard to understand or even repulsive.

"For us it is a lifestyle choice," acknowledged Chelsey. "You don't have to hunt." But she proceeded to explain why she believes it is okay for people to hunt, going back to creation and how



Milo helping his mom track down something for the freezer.

God made humanity different from the animals.

“And we were given the task to manage and use,” added Rick. When God was blessing Noah after the flood, He specifically gave the animals to mankind as their food (Gen. 9:2,3). Chelsey clarified that a biblical ethic also means that they are going to be careful not to wound an animal if at all possible. “It is part of doing a job well,” added Rick.

“Guns are a tool we use. And we have to take responsibility for storing them well and using them well,” noted Rick. “You follow the rules and keep them locked up where they need to be locked up. And as well we teach our kids

responsibility when they are around them.”

I didn’t expect the conversation to then take a turn into something much deeper.

“There are consequences,” explained Chelsey. “[Our children] understand death already... They know what life was and they know what death is from hunting.” This is something the children also learned from helping out on their hobby farm. “Their life is immersed in life and death and the full understanding of it. And I find that to be huge on our kids just to understand that it’s not something to take lightly. And it does hurt when things don’t go well.”

Chelsey shared that the first time their daughter Cassie saw a shot grouse, she cradled it and was walking around with it and wouldn’t let it go. “You’re allowed to,” she told Cassie. “But we are going to eat that. But if you feel the need to snuggle it for a little while, you’re allowed to do that.”

“That is a blessing of living in the country, on a farm and hunting,” added Rick. “The idea of life and death is a lot more real. In some ways, if you live in a city, there’s a lot of protective shields.” In contrast, “whether you’re hunting or just living in the country, you’re a lot more on your own. And you have to understand things a little bit more. There are less protected areas. And I think that is a blessing in some ways, but it is also in some ways more dangerous.”

Buying a box of frozen hamburgers or getting an order of chicken wings doesn’t evoke the same visceral reaction in the minds of most readers as the idea of killing an animal in the wild, even though the animals are killed for our consumption in both instances. The difference is simply that a few layers of separation exist between the person buying the meat from a supermarket.

To take this a step further, although it is easy for people to speak about being “environmentally conscious,” and to look down on hunters and those working in the forest industry, my experience from living in a rural community is that the hunters and forestry workers are some of the most environmentally conscious and caring people I know because there aren’t so many “protective shields” between them and nature. Eating a chicken burger and living in a wood-framed home requires that someone else is harvesting the animals and wood on your behalf.

PUTTING HUNTING IN ITS PROPER PLACE

As much as they care about the activity, the Ewalds have learned that for it to be a blessing, it needs to stay in its proper place, with firm boundaries to protect aspects of life that matter more.

Rick learned this lesson after serving as a hunting guide for nine years. “A big part of the reason why I quit guiding was that I didn’t have a good purpose in my life...It was all about hunting, and that was it.” This came to a head when he got married to Chelsey, as he didn’t appreciate the competition between hunting and his marriage and family. He also came to see that it was even competing with his faith, as he was working seven days a week through the hunting season.

Rick acknowledged that it wasn’t a healthy way to live, and he now sees that it is an issue that others struggle with too. He brought up the example of some avid fishers who fished so much that they got to the point where they had to quit it altogether. “If they would have figured out a way of regulating themselves properly, they would have enjoyed it way more and would have been able to continue.”

Chelsey added that they have seen examples where some men push aside their family life during hunting season, making hunting their identity during that time. “And that’s something that neither of us want to happen.” They hold each other accountable and keep the focus on their children and family.

“Taking our faith life seriously requires a certain amount of boundaries,” she added, pointing specifically to their firm rule to not hunt on Sundays. “God will provide for us one way or another, whether we get that animal or not. Trust really comes into play.”

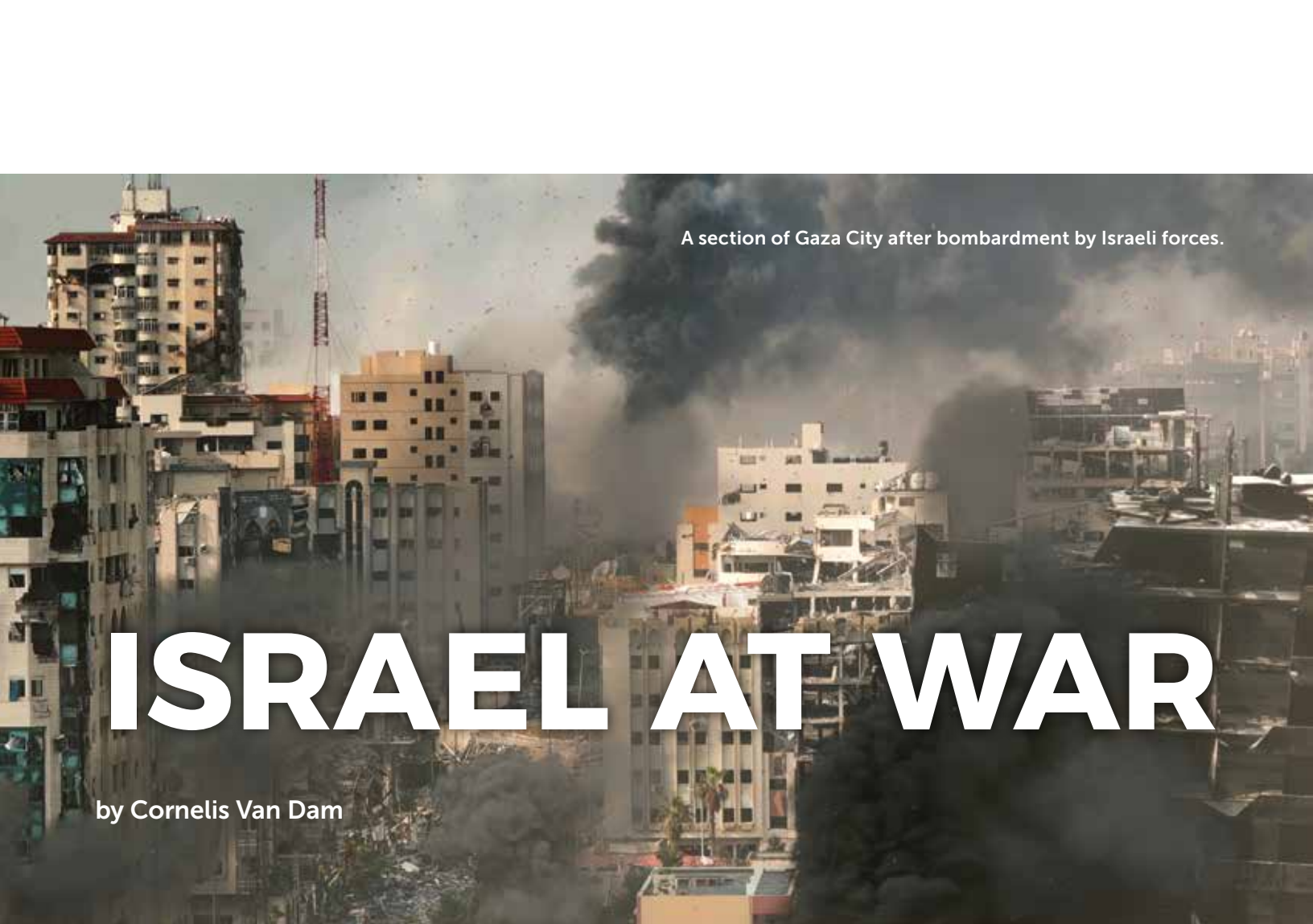
Rick proceeded to point out a very large sign on their wall with the verse from Joshua 24:15 “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”



“We use that as a reflection on ourselves to guide what we are going to do,” emphasized Rick. Chelsey explained that is why they made it so big and bold. “It has become a staple in our house... and really helped to focus us, especially in times where we seem to struggle.”

The hunting guides knew that they too needed to be guided. RP





A section of Gaza City after bombardment by Israeli forces.

ISRAEL AT WAR

by Cornelis Van Dam

Once again the Middle East is in flames. The incalculable human misery that is graphically portrayed in the media cannot leave one unaffected. The terrorists' abuse and massacre of unsuspecting Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023 was horrific and of unprecedented barbarity. When Israel responded, Palestinian families have seen their homes and possessions disappear in rubble and dust as bombs fell on Gaza.

The ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians seems intractable and without any solution. The war is also being fought through the media. Both true facts and lies are vying for a hearing. Winston Churchill is said to have once quipped: "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on." Well, that may be the case, but an effort should at least be made, even within the confines of an article, to separate some facts from fiction.

SOME KEY FACTS

Although present day Israel has no biblical right to the land (see "Is the State of Israel a fulfillment of biblical prophecy?" at ReformedPerspective.ca/Israel), yet Israel has every legal right to be there as a nation according to international law.

Here are some key facts. In 1947, the United Nations (UN) voted to partition Palestine into two states when the British Mandate authorized by the League of Nations would come to an end in the following year. One state was to be for the Jews and the other for the Palestinian Arabs. Jerusalem and Bethlehem were to be in an international zone.

When Britain withdrew, Israel declared its independence and occupied the land designated to it by the UN. However, rather than adopt the UN's plan of two states, Arab armies from all the surrounding nations attacked Israel, determined to exterminate it. They were not

successful. This was not the last time that the Arabs would try to rid the Middle East of Israel.

When Egypt, Syria, and Jordan were preparing to attack Israel again, Israel launched a pre-emptive strike in 1967. The war lasted six days and ended with Israel occupying the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. In 1973 Egypt and Syria once more attacked Israel, with Israel once again prevailing. Eventually, Egypt under Anwar Sadat recognized Israel in 1978, and for his trouble, he was assassinated by Arab extremists in 1981. King Hussein of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain have also made peace with Israel. Morocco has diplomatic relations with Israel. The refusal of other Arab nations to recognize the State of Israel has continued up to today. This refusal, especially as demonstrated by Hamas, has been the key obstacle to peace in the region.

ARAB GRIEVANCES

Many grievances fuel the hatred for Israel and the determination to wipe the country off the map. A common charge against Israel is that the Jews displaced Palestinians who had been living in the Holy Land for centuries. A little history lesson is needed to answer this accusation.

Prior to the massive immigration of European Jews to Palestine in the late 19th century, the land, which is now the land of Israel, was mostly barren and under-populated. An 1857 report from the British consul in Jerusalem reported that the country needed more people. As time went on, further reports noted that the area was becoming depopulated, villages were abandoned, and land was going out of cultivation. All this is credible information because living in that area at the time was extremely harsh. Infant mortality was high, life expectancy short, and water scarce. People were not moving in but out. When Jews started coming in, they bought land usually from absentee landowners, and over time dramatically improved the living conditions. By the mid-1890's the Jewish presence was important and by 1947 they formed a majority in the territory that became Israel. Because the Jews prospered, Arabs moved in to share in their prosperity and the improved health care.

It is a myth that European Jews displaced a large, stable, long-term Muslim Arab population that had lived in that part of the Middle East for centuries. There has never been a Palestinian people as a separate ethnic and national entity. Technically speaking there is no such thing as the Palestinian people since there has never been a Palestinian State, that is, an Arab state in what is now Israel. Many of the people who call themselves Palestinians today are descendants of the relatively recent economic immigrants mentioned above.

Because of the growing number of Jews who legally owned the land they lived on, the territory at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, historically known as the land of Canaan, became in essence a homeland for persecuted Jews.

This development eventually led to the formation of the State of Israel in 1948. Israel has the full political right to be a nation in the Middle East, occupying the land that their ancestors have lived in for thousands of years. Israelites and their descendants have been dwelling continuously in the land since the days of Moses.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jews had encouraged the Arabs to stay and build the country with them. However, the Palestinian Arabs were advised by the surrounding Arab nations to leave Palestine and that after the war (1948) and the anticipated defeat of the Jews, they could return. Israel, however, won the war and 700,000 Arabs who had left Israel were homeless. Here are the makings of the refugee problem.

Meanwhile, the Arabs who had stayed in Israel were relatively well off and shared in the general prosperity of Israel. They still have their own representatives in Parliament, and enjoy freedom of the press and religion. Arabic is also an officially recognized language. As a minority within a Jewish state, they undoubtedly have their own special difficulties and hardships. However, in the past wars, they have shown solidarity with the Israelis.¹

Another Arab grievance with more validity is that Israel continues to build settlements in the West Bank, which is not part of Israel according to the 1947 UN partition plan. Arabs living in the West Bank are understandably upset by the establishment of Jewish settlements in the region and the gradual encroachment of more and more settlements into what they regard as their territory. Israel is therefore accused of being an expansionary colonial power. Even prominent Israelis and some of the most ardent supporters of Israel like Alan Dershowitz oppose these settlements.

But, for context, a couple of things should also be noted. From Israel's government's point of view, their occupation of the West Bank is a result of their winning the 1967 war, a conflict with which Arabs had hoped to obliterate Israel. Wars have results, and who controls what changes with those results. Furthermore, Israel has shown that the

IS THERE A BIBLICAL, PROPHETIC BASIS FOR JEWS TO OWN PALESTINE?

"The nation of Israel has a special place in the hearts of many Christians. For one thing, the Savior once walked through the land that this nation now occupies. Furthermore, after the destruction of the Jewish state in the year 70 by the Romans, the reestablishment of the State of Israel on the same land after almost two thousand years can be considered to be nothing short of a miracle.

"So is the resurgence of Israel as a national entity a fulfillment of biblical prophecy? Many affirm this to be the case."

So writes Dr. Van Dam in his article "Is the State of Israel a fulfillment of biblical prophecy?" which will be featured in the next issue, but which you can find now online at **ReformedPerspective.ca/Israel** or by using your phone to scan the **QR code** here.



matter of settlements is not a barrier to peace if Arabs would be willing to recognize Israel. When Israel made peace with Egypt in 1979, Israel removed their Sinai settlements. In 2003, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon indicated that Israel would be willing to make "painful concessions" regarding the settlements in exchange for peace and give up some of them. Under his watch, Israel left everything they owned in Gaza when 21 settlements were dismantled in 2005. Polls have shown that the majority of those who live in these settlements are willing to abandon their homes if it means peace for Israel.²

The legality of Israel's occupation is currently before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The UN General Assembly had asked the court for a non-binding advisory opinion on Israel's policies in the occupied territories. The issue is incredibly complicated. It came before the court in February (2024) but the expectation is that it will take the judges months to issue an opinion.

THE REFUGEE PROBLEM

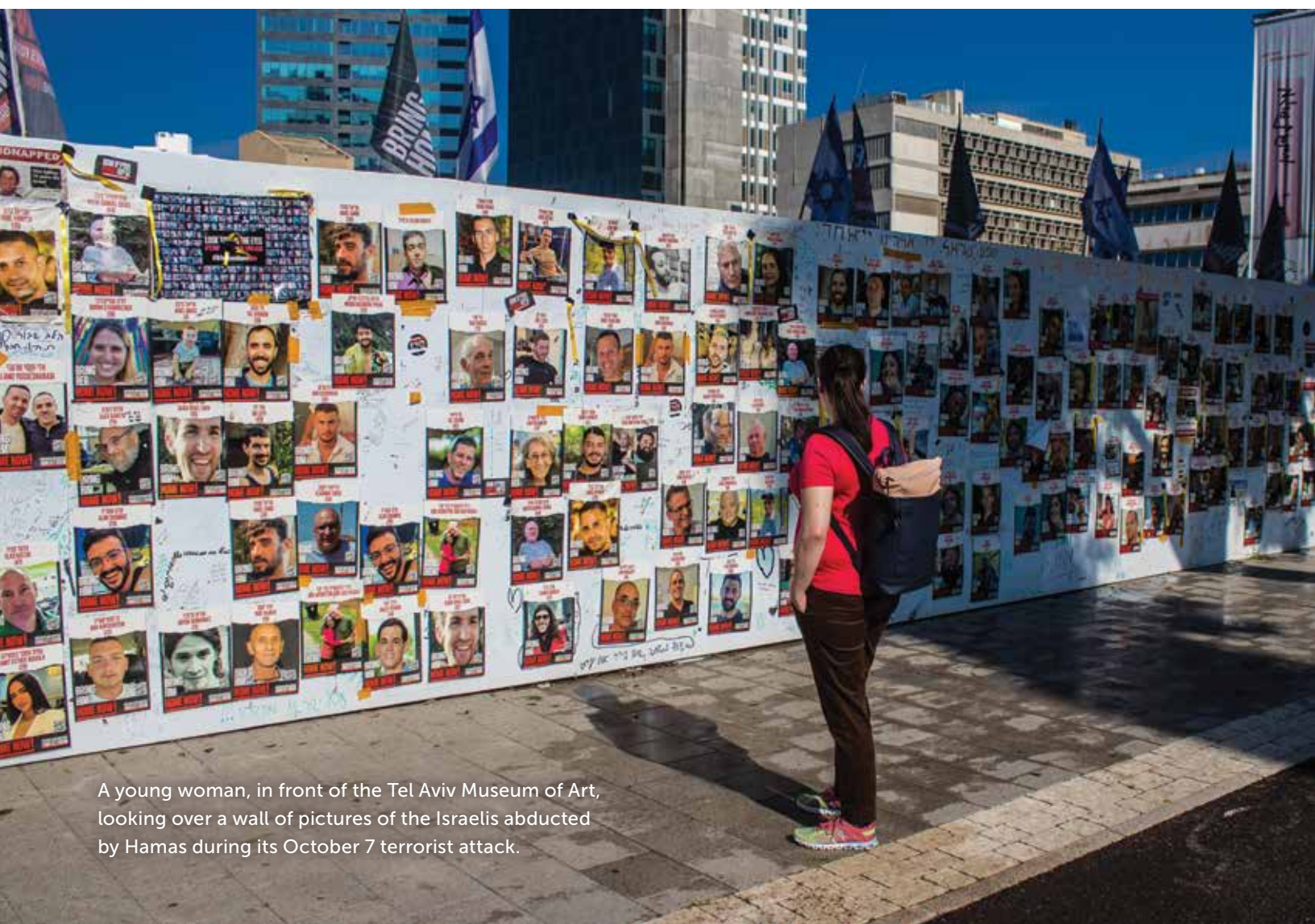
The media have informed us at length of the tragedy of the refugee camps where Arabs who fled from Israel now live and where new generations are being raised. What is not often made clear is that Arab countries do not want the

refugee problem to be solved. They want it to serve as a permanent pressure and weapon against Israel. The Arab leaders show that they do not care about the refugees by refusing to let them be permanently resettled in their own countries. Meanwhile the refugee camps continue to be breeding grounds for hate and terrorism. Here is a problem that could have been solved but the failure to do so is ultimately because Arabs refuse to recognize the legitimacy of Israel.

A resolution of the problem of the refugees has been further complicated by the emergence of The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, and more recently Hamas which is even more radical in its determination to

wipe Israel off the map. Hamas was founded in 1987 and took over from the PLO in about 2006, assuming control of the Gaza Strip shortly after that. It also launched the massacre of last year in southern Israel.

Because everything depends on recognizing Israel's right to exist, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is not seeking solutions for the resettlement of the refugees as would normally be the case. Instead it is simply maintaining these refugees in the camps. According to the UNRWA the total number of refugees was about 5.6 million Palestinians in 2019, of which 1.5 million lived in camps. The numbers



A young woman, in front of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, looking over a wall of pictures of the Israelis abducted by Hamas during its October 7 terrorist attack.

have continued to increase. Entire generations are being raised and educated to hate Israel.

THE REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL

Much could be solved if Arab leaders would have accepted a two-state solution of Israel and a Palestinian State in 1937 (the Peel Commission), 1948, and 2000. On all these occasions, Israel accepted a two-state solution, but to no avail. There was no Arab reciprocity because it would involve recognizing the legitimacy of the State of Israel. This was dramatically displayed with the Camp David peace negotiations in 2000-2001 (a result of the 1990's Oslo Peace Accords). To everyone's amazement and even shock, Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered the Palestinians virtually everything they had been demanding: a state with its capital in Jerusalem, control over the Temple Mount, a return of approximately 95 percent of the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip, and a \$30 billion compensation package for the 1948 refugees. Yet Yasser Arafat rejected that historic offer. Why? Because he would have had to acknowledge the legitimacy of the State of Israel. He preferred to go to war. Suicide bombings and terrorist attacks followed. When Israel responded with force, it was blamed for overreacting and not caring about the Palestinians. Arafat and his PLO, and now Hamas, did not and do not care about the fate of the Palestinians in their camps and in Gaza. Hamas continues to use civilians as shields in their war and then blame Israel for the casualties.

After the horrid and barbaric abuse and slaughter of civilians by Hamas on October 7, 2023, Israel has responded as they have the full right to do so in self-defence. They have, however, taken extraordinary measures to safeguard civilian life in Gaza – measures unprecedented in military history according to one expert.³ But if the enemy uses civilians as a shield what can one expect but civilian deaths? One must not forget that according to the polls taken after the attack, most of the Gazan population was in favor of Hamas and its barbaric ter-

rorism against civilians in the October 7 atrocities.⁴

There is also an important underlying religious dimension. Islamic fundamentalism will never recognize Israel as legitimate because according to them, territory once conquered by Islam, as the territory of Israel was once conquered, can never be relinquished. It must be retaken. The Hamas Charter (1988) states that “the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf [land that belongs to Allah] consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgment Day” (Art. 11). Hamas therefore “strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine” (Art. 6). Consequently, “there is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time” (Art. 13).

Not surprisingly when Hamas terrorized southern Israel last October, they did so crying: “Allahu Akbar!” that is, “Our god is the greatest!” The hatred of Jews and their perceived illegitimacy has a long history in Islam. They regard the Jews as being under God's curse⁵ and terrorists shouting “Allahu Akbar” undoubtedly think that to kill Jews is to do the will of Allah.

WHERE DOES THE SOLUTION LIE?

The root political problem is the refusal to recognize Israel. As long as that is the case, there is no solution. Combined with the underlying problem of nationalism and self-determination are also the conflicting claims of Judaism and Islam. Both Israel and Arab Muslims have a strong emotional attachment to Palestine. Arab Muslims assert that they are descendants of Abraham, through Ishmael. As Muslims, they claim Jerusalem as a holy site because according to Islam, Jerusalem was the last place Mohammed visited before he ascended into the heavens and talked to God. Neither side can appeal to the Bible and say on the basis of the Scriptures, “The land is mine!” Many experts think that a solution should be sought in having two viable and realistic states in the Middle East, one for Jews and one for the Arabs in the region. For that to hap-

FOR FURTHER READING

Helpful resources for information found in this article include:

- Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & sons, 2003), a defense by a Professor of Law, Emeritus, at Harvard University, of Israel's rights, supported by indisputable evidence. He is however not an uncritical supporter of Israel. Most recently he also wrote *War Against the Jews* (2023).
- Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1985), a classic compilation of the facts by a former White House consultant on the Middle East. Its publication was hailed as a historic event.

pen, however, Israel needs to be assured that such an Arab state would not have the desire to keep working on the long term goal of putting an end to the State of Israel. That trust is understandably completely lacking at the moment. **RP**

ENDNOTES

- ¹ See also Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & sons, 2003), 80–85.
- ² Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, 176–77.
- ³ Ruth Marks Eglash, “Urban Warfare Expert says Israeli Military Taking Unprecedented Steps to Protect Gaza Civilians” Fox News, 17 February 17 2024, accessible at Fox News website.
- ⁴ TOI Staff, “Poll Shows Soaring Palestinian Support for Hamas; 72% back October 7 Atrocities” 13 December 2023, accessible at the *Times of India* website.
- ⁵ See Haggai Ben-Shammai, “Jew-Hatred in the Islamic Tradition and the Koranic Exegesis,” in *Antisemitism Through the Ages*, ed. Shmuel Almog (Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1989), 164–66.

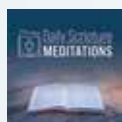
MORE More Than the Magazine

Everything you find in this magazine ends up online, but we can't possibly fit all our online content inside this magazine. So, if you're only reading us in print, then here's a look at some of what you might be missing. Scan the QR codes to take you right to it.

Best of *RP*

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

ReformedPerspective.ca hosts two daily devotionals, *Manna* in audio, and *Nearer to God* for those who prefer to read. You can access both on the front page of ReformedPerspective.ca or through the RP App, which you can download at ReformedPerspective.ca/App.



Manna daily audio devotional

For four decades, a Christian media outreach program called "Voice of the Church" teamed up with dozens of Reformed pastors to produce 7-15 minute meditations from Scripture that were aired weekly on radio stations in North America. This outreach concluded its work in 2022 and the collection of over 900 Bible meditations was entrusted to us. We've republished it as a daily audio podcast at www.MannaPodcast.ca.



Nearer to God devotional

One after another, different Reformed pastors take a month to share devotionals on a theme, whether that might be a book of the Bible, a particular point of doctrine, or as happened in April, one of the persons of the Trinity.

REAL TALK

Lucas Holtvluwer and Tyler Vanderwoude are closing in on one hundred episodes of their Real Talk podcast. So far they've dropped another 10 this year, including these few featured below. Find them all at www.RealTalkPodcast.ca or scan the QR code to watch them on YouTube.



#94 - Redeeming Entrepreneurship

In this very special episode, *Real Talk* goes on the road in front of a live audience to talk with three businessmen about Christian considerations in entrepreneurship.



#93 – Restoring the gender binary

Pastor Sam Andreades was an especially engaging guest in this episode riffing off his book *Across the Kitchen Table: Talking about Trans with Your Teen*.



#89 - Who should come to the table of the Lord?

This time Tyler reached out to PCA pastor and prof Dr. Guy Waters for a perspective that's very similar, but still outside our Dutch Reformed circles, to talk to him about the Lord's Supper, paedocommunion and more.



Best of the rest – *Saturday Selections*

Saturday Selections is a weekly column on ReformedPerspective.ca, and featured in our *RP Roundup* newsletter (sign up at ReformedPerspective.ca/Roundup), that shares links to great, but non-RP, articles of note. Those aren't generally by Reformed authors: it could be something from the mainstream news, other Christian outlets, or just a fun video or two. If an article does lack Reformed perspective, Jon Dykstra will try to offer that in a short introduction. Here are highlights from the last couple of months.



J.K. Rowling is ready to rumble

J.K. Rowling might be best known for popularizing witchcraft in her bestselling *Harry Potter* series and normalizing homosexuality by declaring a principal character, Dumbledore, gay. But this past week she made headlines for her stand against a new Scottish “hate law” that could be used as a weapon against anyone who says men aren’t women. So, Rowling did just that, on Twitter. And she promised:



“If they go after any woman for simply calling a man a man, I’ll repeat that woman’s words and they can charge us both at once.”

If \$50/hr. is a good minimum wage why not \$100?

Minimum wage proponents and transgenderism activists share one thing in common: both believe that wishing can make it so. But simply declaring everyone worth a certain wage doesn’t change reality. Older employees, still skilled but slower than they once might have been, and lower skilled or inexperienced workers aren’t going to be able to bring \$50/hr. in value to their employers. That’s true of every minimum wage, no matter how well intentioned – it declares a minimum value for labor, and anyone who can’t meet it, or can’t meet it yet, is legislated out of a job.



On the cost of business subsidies

We can’t agree on much in this country, but can we at least agree not to take money from some companies to prop up other companies? From 2007 to 2019, PEI, Quebec, and Manitoba spent all or nearly all of their corporate income tax revenue on business subsidies!



Monarchs are two butterflies in one

Did you know that Monarch butterflies have two entirely different lifespans? One generation lives just weeks, and the next will live months, long enough for them to make the journey from Canada to Mexico, a route they have never traveled before.



Pre-natal screening: should we do it?

Some prenatal testing – specifically the sort that is called “invasive” – comes with a risk for the unborn, and so Christians should question why we’d want to get such a test at such a cost. “Non-invasive” tests come with a different sort of “risk” for the unborn... though not when conducted by pro-life Christians.



Failing at failure?

This comic video could be a great way to bring up an important conversation with our kids. The fear of failure stops many children from trying new and hard things. God gave them talents, and if they are going to develop those skills (and not bury them – Matthew 25:14-30) our children will need to push their limits. That might mean running so hard they start tripping, stumbling, and even eating some dirt. They need to know there is such a thing as God-glorifying failure... but not God-glorifying cowardice.



Animal Farm redone

In this video single from his album *Lyrical Theology Part 3: Sociology*, Reformed rapper Shai Linne does an update on Orwell’s *Animal Farm*.



Sweden had the lowest mortality in Europe from 2020–2022

Sweden didn’t do the lockdowns like the rest of the world, and the “experts” said they were going to pay a high cost for it. But, Sweden didn’t.



Identifying misinformation

In an online world awash with misinformation, here are three simple ways to identify what’s not true.



We're all Christian Nationalists now

I prefer “Christian patriotism” to “Christian Nationalism” because of the confusion associated with the latter’s many conflicting definitions. But, as Larry Ball suggests here, if we run with the definition of Christian Nationalism that the secular media is increasingly using – as Christians who think our rights come, not from the State, but from God Himself – then we are all Christian Nationalists now.



Why did God create viruses and bacteria?

While we don’t understand all that bacteria and viruses might have done before the Fall into sin, some of their useful functions now gives us clues.



A PLACE FOR CHRISTIANS ON PARLIAMENT HILL:

Inside Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship

by Alexandra Ellison



Interns and others listen to Samir Javid from Pamir Ministries, which reaches out to Afghans.

While some of the 338 Members of Parliament are Christian, there are many more Christians working on Parliament Hill as office staff, or “staffers.” Way back in 1976, one exhausted Christian political staffer, who was working for a cabinet minister, approached long-time staffer Diane Scarf. As Scarf recalls, at that time,

“They work their staff day and night. So, he would come to work on Monday morning, and by Thursday, he might get to go home and change his clothes. When you’re tired, you can put your head on the desk, or lie down on the floor behind your desk.... He approached me and said, ‘I’m just falling apart, we need something, we need support for those who are Christians.’ And that was the beginning.”

This encounter prompted Scarf, and a group of other Christians, to start the “Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship.”

Nearly 50 years later, the group still exists, meeting every Friday in a room in the East Block on Parliament Hill. Each meeting starts with lunch, usually, hand-made sandwiches and baked goods from Scarf, and then a speaker will give a short message to the group. The email list has over 100 political staffers; a majority work for Conservative members, but the group is non-partisan, and members from other parties are welcome to attend. Due to the busy nature of staffers’ schedules, the group usually ranges from 20-30 people weekly.

Craig Dockstader, Director of Policy

Craig Docksteader (left), Director of Policy in the Office of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate with Senator Don Plett...



...and with former cabinet minister, Jack Murta.



in the Office of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, along with his wife Gail, are the current leadership/organizers of the group. Docksteader came to Parliament Hill in 2013 where he ran into a staffer who invited him to check out the group; Docksteader was shocked to find that there was a space for Christians to meet on the Hill. Shortly after attending for a bit, he and his wife had the opportunity to take on a leadership role for the group.

Docksteader says that he sees three primary purposes for Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship.

“One is a place to connect, a place for Christians to find each other. Secondly, it’s a place for Christians to be encouraged, edified, and get a little bit of prayer, and teaching from the Bible and hear testimonies. So, there’s some spiritual edification. But thirdly, I feel like it’s very important because it protects our right to gather on Parliament Hill.”

He noted, “A lot of people are surprised, quite surprised, especially if they’ve never been to Parliament Hill and they only see what’s on the news and stuff to come here and find out there is a group of Christians that meets every Friday, regularly, faithfully, and there’s lots of them.”

The group is ecumenical, encouraging Christians from a variety of different denominations and traditions to participate. To keep unity in the group while also acknowledging the different traditions,

Docksteader says they focus on the core of the gospel.

“We try to encourage that we gather around the centrality of Christ, the centrality of the gospel. So that’s the first thing, somebody on the team of four needs to know [the speaker] personally or professionally so that we know that the person coming in won’t be divisive.”

At the early start of the group, they faced criticism from other Christians on the Hill. Christians working in politics have been a topic of contention throughout the Church’s history. During the early stages of the Reformation, for example, various Christian denominations held differing perspectives on how involved Christians should be in public life. Anabaptists notably took a passive approach, while adherents of the Reformed tradition, influenced by Reformed political leaders such as Abraham Kuyper, recognized the concept of “sphere sovereignty.” This concept acknowledges God’s presence in all spheres of life, encouraging Christians to engage in all of those spheres faithfully, including the political sphere. Scarf recalled that it was due to these points of contention, that the start of Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship faced some pushback from other evangelicals working on the Hill.

“We started right away but had a lot of opposition from some evangelical Members of Parliament who felt that we would be a problem, that we would

be too aggressive, and that we would slight the name of the Lord and the Church.”

In more recent years, Docksteader says that he has seen an increase in Christians getting involved in working on Parliament Hill.

“The Church used to discourage Christians from being involved in politics and from working on Parliament Hill, whereas today, it’s the other way around. The Church in Canada recognizes the important pertinence of having Christians on Parliament Hill, both as staffers and as Members of Parliament.”

With Christian staffers coming from across the country, Docksteader emphasizes the importance of a space for Christians to meet.

“That’s where Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship comes in, even today because you have Christians on the Hill, they need to know how to find other Christians, they need to know how can I connect because when you get here, it can seem very large, you can feel very alone, you’re pretty sure there’s not a single other Christian on the Hill.... And so Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship, that’s one of the purposes of it, is to give Christians a place to connect with other Christians.” ^{RP}

WHEN “HELPING” KIDS HURTS THEM

Why the generation accessing the most mental therapy is the most mentally unhealthy

by John Stonestreet and Shane Morris

As the old saying goes, “to a hammer, everything looks like a nail.” Among the hammers today is psychotherapy, and too many wielding it are convinced that every human problem is a nail. However, the unprecedented rise of mental health problems in Generation Z suggests that the overuse of this tool has done as much harm as good.

In a bold new book, Abigail Shrier confronts the idea of psychology as an all-consuming ideology. In *Bad Therapy: Why the Kids Aren’t Growing Up*, Shrier argues that much of what is now taken for granted about psychological and emotional “trauma” is wrong and has left millions of young adults more “traumatized” than if they’d had no therapy at all.

SECULAR PSYCHOLOGY STARTS OFF ON THE WRONG FOOTING

Christians should be wary of secular psychology, as well as any Christian counseling that leans heavily on it, because the secular worldview understands people as simply minds and not also as souls. Because it rejects our Creator, secular psychology also rejects the Bible as any sort of Owner’s manual, so it doesn’t recognize Man’s true purpose and true identity, as created by God to glorify and enjoy Him forever. Secular psychology could have tips and tricks and drugs to modify our behavior and feelings, but because it misunderstands Man at the foundational level, it can’t offer any sort of corrective to patients who are confused about these most important matters.

This lack of a firm footing also leaves it liable to fall for the latest thing, as it has with the transgender agenda, pushing the impossible notion of “transitioning” on already troubled patients.

This thesis aligns with that of her previous book *Irreversible Damage*, which exposed the reckless push to medically transition gender-dysphoric kids, especially girls. This push has been driven by the mental health industry. In *Bad Therapy*, Shrier points out the many indications that the whole approach of our therapy-obsessed age is awry. Most obvious is that despite living in one of the most objectively prosperous and safe times in human history, our young people are, *en masse*, mentally sicker and emotionally sadder than ever. In fact, over 40% of young adults have a mental health diagnosis, twice the rate of the general population. So, the generation most treated for psychological wellbeing is doing the *worst* psychologically.

How did we get to this point? In a podcast with former *New York Times* columnist Bari Weiss, Shrier told the story of her grandmother, Bess, who grew up during the Great Depression. Bess was orphaned and so malnourished that her teeth grew in gray. She then contracted polio and spent a year in an iron lung. Yet, despite her suffering, she managed to recover, get married and have kids, go to law school, and become one of the first female judges in her state. She was also, as Shrier puts it, “One of the most optimistic and can-do women” she’s ever met.

Today, doctors, psychiatrists, counselors, and teachers would tell Bess, because of her “trauma,” to lower her expectations for what she could achieve. They’d constantly watch her, waiting for confirmation of her permanent damage. Eventually, Bess, like millions of children today, may have even believed them.

The central thesis of *Bad Therapy* is that the anti-adversity worldview that has been embraced by everyone from therapists to parents to self-appointed TikTok influencers hurts children. Therapy has become an ideology, an entire way of looking at life. Experiences that previous generations understood as a part of the human condition are diagnosed and



“treated” and, in the process, a generation has been robbed of resilience, responsibility, and character—things that, as Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang recently noted, only come from facing adversity and, at times, failing.

As she told Weiss, Shrier is “no more anti-psychotherapy than... anti-chemotherapy.” Interventions are necessary sometimes but, like chemotherapy, mental health treatments carry risks. Shrier believes we must begin taking these risks seriously, especially when it comes to the youngest patients who have neither the experience nor the authority to argue when adults tell them, “You’re sick.”

For Christians who understand that human beings are more than matter that can be molded and medicated, the need for a book like this is even more obvious. Divine revelation and millennia of insight suggest that much of what passes for “psychological trauma” today is spiritual brokenness. Spiritual healing can take the form of counseling and medication, but to put it simply, no amount of psychotherapy alleviates our need for a Savior.

In the meantime, Abigail Shrier has, once again, launched

a cultural conversation that is a vital corrective. Not only can it help curb the excesses of bad therapy and pop psychology and make us better, wiser parents, but a book like this can help us rethink the true complexities of who and what we are as human beings. For believers, it is a chance to show what it looks like to live redemptively amid the groaning of this fallen world while using all the tools at our disposal. **RP**

HAVE YOU HEARD OF BREAKPOINT?

This column was first published on March 20, 2024 to *Breakpoint.org*, and it is reprinted with their gracious permission. We’re sharing it because God’s people need to understand where and why secular counseling can fall so short.

If this article caught your interest, then you may want to sign up for free at **Breakpoint.org** to get their daily commentaries delivered right to your inbox.

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains

THAT I MAY DECLARE IT BOLDLY,

as I ought to speak. – Ephesians 6:13-20

by Christine Farenhorst

When I was a baby my mom dressed me, often in clothes which she herself had made. Gifted with creativity, she knitted sweaters, booties, skirts, jumpers (and you name it) – all for me. Later on, my oldest sister was given the task of helping me and I still remember sitting on the baby dresser, feet dangling over the edge, as she washed my face, chose my clothes and carefully decked me out like a precious doll before she took me down to breakfast. How blessed I was! Care, clothes and food – all provided for me before I even understood what great provisions these were. And later, after breakfast was finished, my Father would add to the list of benefits by awarding me with an unequaled present, the reading of the Bible.

As I grew older, I learned how to dress myself. And so I did. Putting on undershirts, underpants, socks, skirts, tops, dresses, etc., all grew into skilled appareling techniques which I mastered with growing ease. As my Father kept on reading the Bible to all of us gathered around the table, I was continually instructed in the wearing of an armor. Although there were no mail accoutrements hidden under

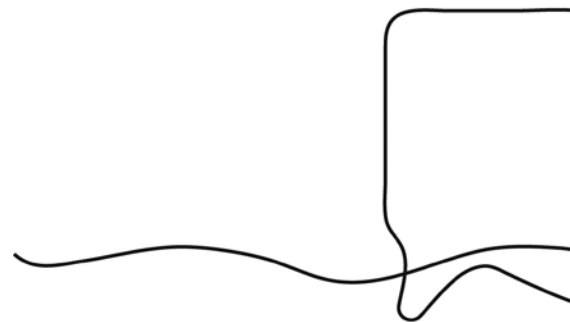
the dining room table, and no chainmail vests hanging in the hall closet, nevertheless, I slowly imbibed the knowledge that I needed to be girded by this protection.

80,000 CONVERSATIONS

Although it is somewhat of an impossible statistic, it has been calculated that the average person will meet approximately ten thousand persons in his lifetime. That is mind boggling! These people will not be intimate acquaintances. Rather, they will be people whom we meet once, perhaps twice, in our lifetime and then probably only in a casual way. Nevertheless, they will pass through our lives – in shops, at malls, on streets, on buses, in classrooms, at baseball games or in restaurants. Ten thousand folks, each with a beating heart and a living soul! Ten thousand people! Enough to populate a small town!

When I was first married, I had to walk through the downtown streets of Hamilton each day to get to my place of work. No matter what the weather had in mind, sunshine, snow, rain or wind, every morning I would pass a woman at approximately the same spot. She was a thin, middle-aged lady with dark hair tied back in a severe

bun. The woman always avoided my gaze and would never look at me directly. I began to say “hello” to her, but she never responded. I tried “good-morning” and “good day” and, after a few weeks, it began to be a sort of game for me. Will she react to me today? Will she smile back at me? What shall I do this morning to catch her attention? In the end, after about eight months, just before we moved from Hamilton to Guelph, she smiled back. And then, I never saw her again.



One piece of data I read posits the thought that if you have conversations with three new people each day for 73 years, an average life span, the number of conversations you would have during your lifetime would be 80,000. That's a lot of conversations! And this number of people are as many as would fill an Olympic stadium! Time to clear your throat, or rather, time to think about putting on the armor.

Once, many years ago, my husband and I stayed in a small motel in Whitney, Ontario, a town bordering Algonquin Park. We were there for a few days of holidays and enjoyed ourselves immensely. The three children we had at that point were being looked after by family and we reveled in sleeping late and in long nature hikes.

Next to our little motel was a small trading post with a lady proprietor. She was a very sociable woman and whenever we stopped in to make a purchase, she talked incessantly and enthusiastically about the beauty of the park and about the delight she took in the wildlife around her store. She also went out of her way to show us some of the unique artifacts displayed in her shop. Friendly, good-natured and personable, she made us feel special. On the morning we left to drive back home, we stopped in to say good-bye. After briefly chatting, another customer arrived and we slowly faded into the background

”
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towards the door. Behind us, the woman chattered away to the newcomer. And then she swore. Her voice had turned raucous, loud and exclamatory, puncturing the air. We went on our way. I distinctly remember that it was raining hard outside. My husband had the windshield wipers of the car going quickly. Back and forth they went, as if they were trying to wipe out the memory of that swear word. We never saw the woman again.

WHAT SORT OF LETTER ARE YOU?

We are letters. Paul tells us this in 2 Corinthians 3. We are letters which are read. When people are more intimately involved with us, they are more likely to read us more carefully (and between the lines), than those who know us only a little bit. Yet all the people who pass us, and that includes strangers who only see us for a moment or two, will scan us to some extent. And what will they read?

When I was in business college, there was a girl in my class. Her name was Ellie. She was a quiet girl with an appealing roundish face and glossy, bobbed, reddish-brown hair falling sleekly about her cheeks. Ellie gave the impression of vulnerability. Her large, brown eyes observed the world questioningly above a multitude of freckles.

During one of those first days of school, we both chanced to be going down the elevator at lunch hour and somehow ended up eating lunch together in a local park. Ellie boarded in the downtown Hamilton YWCA. She had a room there and invited me to see it. Her family lived on a farm, too far away for her to travel back and forth every night, she told me. I thought nothing of it until a few weeks later, when it became obvious to me, naive though I was, that Ellie was pregnant. It was difficult to broach the subject, but I did. Ellie cried and told me that she had been adopted and that her adoptive brother was the father. She

loved the baby growing within her, but her parents had told her that she could only come back home if she would give up the baby for adoption.

Both empathetic and horrified after her revelation, I promised to help her. I was a Christian, I told her, and Christians always help others. It was a Friday and I went home full of plans, immediately contacting two local pastors to ask if they could help me find a solution to Ellie's problem. Neither was particularly enthusiastic and, thinking back on it now, I cannot really blame them. Although my eagerness to help knew no bounds, the information I had was scanty. When I came back to school that following Monday, Ellie was not in class. Walking to the YWCA during lunch hour, I discovered that Ellie had disappeared. No one at the desk was willing to give me her address. I never saw her again.

If you go shopping, it is inevitable that you will pass a great many people whom you will never see again during your lifetime. It is unlikely that you will hold a conversation with each and every one of these people. But the sheer breadth and width of the scope of individual lives who intersect with you for only the space of a moment is mind-boggling. It can make you conceive of yourself as part of a huge multitude; it can make you conclude that you are immensely small; and it can make you regard God as incredible

beyond comprehension. For He knows the minds and hearts of all – every step, every thought, and every hair on their heads.

Go out into the world, He said.

We tend to hide behind devices now – we speak to a lot of people on these devices, without actually really speaking to them – and feel good because people respond to our trivial questions and remarks.

There is a need for people to belong – the need to build up a facade of relationships – the need to look as if we are not alone. The sad truth is that most people don't know how to belong any longer. If there is any sort of pandemic in the world which is in dire need of a vaccine, it is the pandemic of perceived friendships with inanimate cellphones. It is a deafness, an inability to interact, and a numbed knowledge of what real fellowship actually means. Detached and indifferent, many have lost the wisdom of how to live in community, of how to love your neighbor as yourself.

CATHOLIC CONVERSATION

A number of years ago, I accompanied my husband to Montreal where he had to attend several meetings. While he was participating in his conference, it was my privilege to wander through the streets of Montreal. It cost me five dollars to get into the Notre-Dame Basilica. And thinking about it, maybe the five dollars went to a wrong cause and I should have resisted the desire to see the insides of

this monumental structure. But I didn't. I handed my ten-dollar bill over to a man behind a dark desk, a man who was neither friendly nor gracious and, after receiving my change, I pushed open the heavy, creaking door to the Basilica's sanctuary.

An overwhelming smell of wax assailed me almost immediately upon entering. Electric light bulbs were hidden away high up on the ceiling or inside niches; and rows upon rows of flickering sweet-smelling candles were situated under every pillar. I made my way past these little flames with the wooden boxes in front of them, every one of them inviting poor, unsuspecting supplicants to put their dollars and dimes to bad use. Side aisles were flanked by stained glass windows. Haloed statues overshadowed these aisles every few steps. I strolled towards the front of the massive church. An English guide was stationed next to the first few pews, where she was giving a group of non-French tourists a brief history of the Basilica.

The friendly, short-haired guide motioned to me that I should sit down with the rest of the group in those first few pews. She asked us, "Did you know that the Notre-Dame used to be just a small chapel?"

The huge ceiling above our heads almost belied this fact, and we all stared up at the vast space above our heads because the guide made a sweeping upward motion with her arm. "Yes," she continued, "and by the way, my name is Gabrielle,

you know, like the angel.”

This evoked chuckles.

“Now we will just go around and everyone else can say their name and where they come from.” There were people sitting next to me from Norway, from BC, from Michigan and California.

“You know,” the little guide went on, “you are in a place where many famous people have been.” We did not respond but looked at her expectantly. We knew she would tell us who else had been there. And she did.

“In 1873, Sir George Cartier’s funeral was held here. And in the year 2000, Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s funeral took place here as well. And in 1994, Celine Dion was married in this very church. The truth is that one hundred or more marriages and approximately one hundred and twenty baptisms are celebrated here every year. We have a special chapel attached to the Basilica. It is the Sacré-Coeur (Sacred Heart) Chapel, also known as the wedding chapel.”

We took all this information in silently.

“And then, of course, in 1984, the Pope, that is, John Paul II, visited. He raised the status of Notre-Dame from church to basilica. He did this because of the church’s historic, architectural and artistic value. It is very beautiful, do you not think so?”

Heads nodded. Who could deny the architectural immensity of this place? A stooping figure hung on the cross straight overhead, surrounded by what I presumed to be the apostles. But above the cross was another representation – that of Mary being crowned by God. The guide was not long in pointing this out.

“Mary has first place here,” she said. “It is, after all, her church. That is why,” and she motioned upwards again with her arm, “the ceiling is blue. Blue is her color, you know.”

We all gazed up once more. It was true. The magnificent ceiling was a sky-blue. The guide continued to recite a litany of cultural events which regularly took place in the Basilica and how the Montreal Symphony Orchestra had performed there several times. Then, after telling us we were free to walk around and browse, she excused herself and left

us on our own. I never saw her nor any of that group again.

A KEY CONVERSATION

But then there is this story.

A long time ago, a traveler reached the fork of an old Roman road. It was about suppertime and he, being quite weary, sat down. In the west, he could see a mountain and to the north was the city which today is called Nablus. There was a well nearby. In the present time, that well is surrounded by the walls of a convent, but at that moment it was quite out in the open. It was a deep well, almost 100 feet deep. The traveler was thirsty and when a woman appeared, a stranger, carrying a water-pitcher on her shoulder, he spoke to her. She had walked some ten minutes from the nearby city to get to the well and she was alone.

“Give me a drink,” the stranger said.

His accent and pronunciation immediately told the woman that he was not native born to the area but that he was Jewish. And she was also quite aware that Jews were usually not of a kindly disposition towards people from her area. As a matter of fact, they wouldn’t even use the same cutlery or drink from the same vessels. She was therefore puzzled by his request.

“How is it that you,” she countered his question, “a Jew, ask a drink of me, a Samaritan?”

The stranger merely looked at her and then made use of her curiosity to further the conversation.

He said, “If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that said to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have been the one to ask Him, and He would have given you living water.”

She said to Him, “Sir, you have no rope-bucket, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Surely, you are not greater, are you, than our father Jacob who gave us this well and he himself drank from it, and so did his sons and his flocks.”

To the west of the woman, Gerizim, the mountain of blessing, stood. And to the northeast of Gerizim stood Ebal, the mountain of the curse.

And the stranger said to her, “Who-

ever drinks this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks the water that I shall give him will in no way be thirsty again forever, for that water which I shall give him will become in him a spring of water that keeps on bubbling up unto everlasting life.”

The woman, who had walked ten minutes in order to get to the well and who had to walk ten minutes down and back each day in order to satisfy her physical needs, immediately yearned for this water of which the stranger spoke.

“Sir, give me this water,” she pleaded, “that I may not get thirsty or have to keep on coming so far to draw water.”

The stranger responded, “Go, call your husband and come back here.”

Impressed by his friendliness, and by His interest in her life, the woman, who was usually avoided by the people of her town, responded. In offering the woman a few moments of His time, a moment which led to a taste of eternity, Jesus begins to quench her inner thirst. Spurgeon commented that Christ has different doors for entering into different people’s souls. Into some, He enters by the way of understanding; into many, by the way of the affections; to some, He comes by the way of fear; to others, by the way of hope; and to this woman He came by the way of her conscience.

ALL SORTS OF CONVERSATIONS TO BE HAD

After Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman, He told His disciples that the fields were white with harvest. He intimates that there are numerous multitudes ready for them to meet. He declares that there are countless people ready to be spoken to, ready to be brought into the kingdom of God.

By knowing Him and by wearing the “so very useful” armor He gives us to wear, we also are able to meet with, speak to and listen to at least some of the host of villagers, innkeepers, musicians, businessmen, housewives, gender-lost and value-lost people we will meet on our way.

Jesus never saw the Samaritan woman again. Or did He? **RP**

FRUGALSHIP:

37 ways to save a buck

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Frugal: *to be careful about spending money or using things when you do not need to; using money or supplies in a very careful way; not wasteful.*

Synonym: *thrifty*

One of my sons commented that while many people he knew would boast about how much they spent on an item, I would boast about the great bargains I scored. It comes from growing up in a family that, though we were not “poor,” had to carefully consider every purchase. If you had a jacket, you didn’t need another jacket. One can of tuna made six sandwiches. And thrift stores made it much easier for me to clothe six kids.

We also enjoy it when we can spend less than expected. It comes from wanting to stay within our means, and we believe that spending less today means that there will still be money left for tomorrow. Or if not, then at least we tried our best! We think of it as “good stewardship.”

We are certainly given examples in Scripture that we should prepare bread in summer and gather food in harvest (Prov. 6:6-8), provide for our relatives (1 Tim. 5:8) and plan our ventures carefully (Luke 14:28-29).

GOING TO SCRIPTURE

Besides being told to manage it well (Luke 12:42-43; Prov. 13:22, 21:20), the Bible also has this to say about money:

- Realize it is a gift from God (Lev. 27:30)
- Don’t steal it (Ex. 20:15)

- Be content with what we have (1 Tim. 6:7-8)
- Don’t put our trust in it (1 Tim. 6:17-19)
- Don’t worry about it (Matt. 6:25-34)
- Don’t love it or be covetous (Eccl. 5:10)
- Don’t hoard it (Matt. 6:19-21)
- Give it to others in need (Prov. 28:27)
- Give to the Lord (Mal. 3:10)

Even in our attempts to be “frugal” we need to keep an eye on our attitudes and motives. We get so used to planning for our own needs and desires, that it can come as a surprise when we read Ephesians 4:28:

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”

What does God say is the purpose of working? So that we can give to those in need, and so that we can give to the Lord. Being thrifty and getting a good deal ought to lead us to give more as well. As we read in Luke 12:15:

“And he said to them, ‘Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’”

That’s true even of the possessions earned through thrift!

EAT, DRINK, AND BE FRUGAL

Since many of us do appreciate being thrifty, below are some ideas for ways to spend less money in our households, and even when purchasing vehicles or homes.

1. **Eat and drink at home.** The most wonderful sandwich, burger, or steak at a restaurant can be duplicated at home for a fraction of the cost. It has become fashionable to buy coffee from vendors, but you’ll save a bundle by making it at home. You can pack an awesome sandwich, chips, dessert, and beverage for your lunch instead of eating out.
2. **Pre-shop the flyers.** Check the ads and purchase items that are on sale. Having the app for your local store can provide information as well as



Eating in, even when you get the really good burgers, is still going to be way cheaper than eating out.

coupons.

3. **Cook for several meals at once.**

You can save on energy and time by baking 8 chicken breasts or two large roasts, or frying 4 pounds of ground beef all at once. Then you will use them in varying ways the next 2-3 days or freeze the cooked meat. Bake enough potatoes or make enough rice or noodles for 2-3 meals. Google ideas for using “plan-over” food to make other meals.

4. **Check out the discount rack** for expiring food; use ripe bananas for banana bread, wrinkled apples for baking or applesauce, and day-old croissants to make ham and cheese sandwiches in the oven. Buy “seconds” for strawberries in season and freeze them in flattened bags. Use these to make jam throughout the year.

5. **Make your own dressing** by adding ingredients to the last of the mayonnaise in a jar and shaking it all together. Seek recipes or get creative. Use a rubber spatula to limit waste.

6. **Mix a buttery spread:** Mix 1 pound of butter, 1 pound of margarine, and 1 cup of water. Mix on high until well-blended to create a spread that tastes like butter.

7. **Leftover Surprise Soup is a winner.** Collect scraps of leftover meat or vegetables in a covered container in the freezer. When it's getting full, use it as the base for homemade soup.

8. **Bake your own hostess gifts.** Homemade bread, muffins, or candy make a wonderful hostess gift, and they are less expensive than wine.

9. **Create your own cleaning agents.** Wipe down counters with a home-made spray made of water, a bit of bleach, and a drop or two of dish soap instead of buying expensive cleaning agents.

10. **Shop later in the day** when meat and produce are being discounted. Freeze the meat immediately.

11. **Keep easy-meal items on hand.** On a tiring day, when you are nearly out of food, or when you get surprise company – always have the ingredients for a quick nourishing

meal. This will keep you from having to order out or run to the store.

Examples:

- Chicken alfredo: canned chicken breast/alfredo sauce/noodles/frozen peas.
- Tuna noodle salad: Canned tuna/macaroni/Miracle Whip/chopped veggies.
- Taco soup: ground beef, green beans, corn, creamed corn, diced tomatoes, sour cream, and a packet of taco seasoning.

NON-FOOD ITEMS

Of course, our expenses go beyond just food and drink...

12. **Consider assigning separate household budgets.** One can be used to plan for groceries, gifts, gas, and home décor. Another for hobbies or sports. By managing them well, there may be more money available to switch to another category as desired. No one likes surprise invoices or fluctuating amounts at the end of the month.

13. **Combine errands or carpool** when possible to save on gasoline.

14. **Keep your tires filled and your car serviced** to provide the best gas mileage and to make the vehicle last longer.

15. **Watch for sales and compare prices** for home goods, gardening, and home improvement.

16. **Scratch and dent.** Discover whether stores near you have “scratch and

dent” appliances that work as well as new ones. Purchase second hand if you know the items are from a reliable source.

17. **Make your own greeting cards,** perhaps with the kids’ or grandkids’ help. Or, you might locate stores that charge less for them, and keep a stack of birthday, get well, and sympathy cards on hand.

18. **Combine gift lists.** Go shopping once for 3 or 4 upcoming birthdays.

19. **Swap kid-sitting** with friends or family; staying home alone without your children with a great meal and a movie and no one to wake you up in the morning can be as refreshing as paying for a hotel and dinner out. And the kids will love being with their friends.

20. **Shop at thrift stores and yard sales.** With a good eye for quality, you can find amazing bargains for your house, your clothing, and sometimes even for gifts. Example: At a thrift store, I discovered an expensive glass vase with an eagle etched on it along with Isaiah 40:31; it was worth at least \$50, but it made a new bride very happy and I only spent \$12. Years ago I bought a new-looking sweatshirt and fabric painted a super hero logo on it, delighting a 4-year-boy for only \$3.

WHEN BUYING A VEHICLE

Sometimes we think about saving a dollar at the grocery store, or twenty-five cents per liter/gallon on gas, but we



Grandma is sure
to prefer the
home-made card



You don't have to go quite this old,
but a reliable used car can be
thousands cheaper.

may neglect the amount of money we might save on larger items such as cars or houses. Here are a few ideas to consider when you need to purchase a vehicle.

21. **Negotiate.** There is no set amount at a dealership, and negotiating is actually expected. If you aren't very good at negotiating, find a relative or friend to go with you to assist in making the deal.
22. **Purchase a one-year-old vehicle.** A nearly-new vehicle with 10,000-40,000 kilometers can still come with a warranty, but cost you thousands of dollars less, and still have that new car smell and security.
23. **Buy an older used car.** If possible, have your mechanic look it over first. Also, put in the research to learn whether that particular model has a good reputation.

SELLING A HOME

I spoke with Ashley Wright, a local realtor, who shared 7 essential tips for selling.

24. **Hire an agent whom you love and trust,** who is hard-working, and knowledgeable about *your area*. Interview several before you sign – don't just use a friend/relative's buddy whom you may end up clashing with.

25. **Price your home correctly.** The best price will keep your home from looking like a loser by sitting on the market for a long time.
26. **Sell at the peak of the market.** Even if it still needs some work, it's best to sell at peak time and lower the price a bit if necessary.
27. **Stage your home** so that it is uncluttered, spacious, totally clean, and generic so the buyers can imagine themselves living there. Store family photos and some of your furniture if necessary.
28. **Get professional photography and videography** so it will attract people.
29. **Bake cookies** before a showing to provide a winsome aroma. Leave bottled water and the fresh cookies on the counter for the "lookers."
30. **Close the deal as soon as possible.** Keep away from rent-back and contingent offers if you can.

BUYING A HOME

Wright had 7 tips for buying a home too.

31. **Hire an agent whom you love and trust,** who is hard-working, and knowledgeable about *your area*.
32. **Shop around for interest rates** for your mortgage. Having the highest credit score will lead you to the lowest


debt. Sometimes it's better to pay your debt to improve your score, but other times it's better to hold on to your cash and buy down your interest rate.

33. **Be pre-approved by a lender,** not just pre-qualified.
34. **Keep your options open.** Don't be too picky – there is almost always a good deal out there, even in a hot seller's market. An ugly home with poor pictures could provide you an excellent deal, and you can use the savings to improve it later.
35. **Offer less, and ask for a quick answer,** 1 day if possible, but include an escalation clause (for example: "I will pay \$1000 more than someone else's bid up to \$X amount").
36. **Close the deal as soon as possible,** which might be between 30 and 45 days.
37. **Move on if necessary:** if your agent isn't working hard for you, you can quit them and hire someone else, even if you have signed an agreement.

ON THE OTHER HAND

One last thought to remember is that the laborer is worthy of his hire. Therefore, if we are hiring a relative or a brother/sister in Christ to do work or service for us, or buying their goods, we should pay them a full amount and not expect a discount. They have families and bills as well, and though we do love our bargains, this might not be the most loving place to press for one. It's a good feeling when we can learn to be happy with our brother's or sister's gain and not just think about ourselves.

Let us always remember that "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully . . . for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

Save more so you can give more! 

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.



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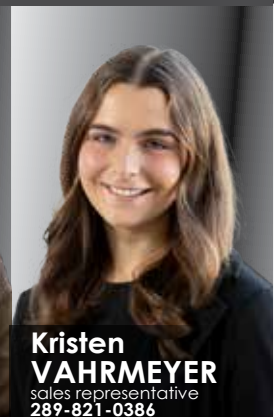
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{ IN A TIDBITS RELEVANT, AND NOT SO, TO CHRISTIAN LIFE NUTSHELL } }

BY JON DYKSTRA

3 ME JOKES

Me: I am soooo hungry!

Horse (nervously): How hungry are you?

Genie: You have 3 wishes.

Me: I'm not doing this. I know that whatever I wish for is just going to come back and bite me in some way.

Genie: It won't. If it does, I promise I'll give you infinite wishes.

Me: Okay, then I wish for a boomerang with teeth.

Genie: Well played sir, well played ...

Doctor: "It turns out, you have acute appendicitis."

Me (blushing): "Compared to who?"

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD?

- "In one sense, and that the eternal sense, the thing is plain. The answer to the question, 'What is Wrong?' is, or should be, 'I am wrong.' Until a man can give that answer his idealism is only a hobby."
– G.K. Chesterton (Aug 16, 1905 in a letter to the *Daily News*)
- "It's me. I'm the problem."
– Taylor Swift
- "We should not ask, 'What is wrong with the world?' for that diagnosis has already been given. Rather, we should ask, 'What happened to the salt and light?'"
– probably John R. Stott

BABY WHALE'S OUTBOARD MOTOR IS DELIVERED FIRST

Could whales have come about via a step-by-step evolutionary process? Or does their make-up evidence a Brilliant Designer, Who created them just so, from the get-go? Geoffrey Simmons weighs in:

"No one knows how blow holes came about, certainly not by small successive steps, or how the internal lungs became connected up to these holes in a way that prevents drowning. Or, how a massive communication center, found in their heads, came about. Or, how the ability to depressurize body segments during deep dives evolved. Calves are born tail first (they cannot go head first in case the process is too slow) and these newborns must rise to the surface immediately for air or else they will drown. The ability to swim must be present from the beginning. Trial and error would never have worked."

SOURCE: Geoffrey Simmons' "Inexplicable Species and the Theory of Evolution" posted to Evolution-News.org on Aug 8, 2018.

BENEFIT OF BOREDOM

There's a certain sort of belonging that comes out of boredom. One of my formative young experiences was spending four years in the Air Cadets, which I didn't really have any interest in joining, but a friend invited me and I had nothing better to do. Collective boredom is even better – a great family memory is the enormous sandcastles we've built, again, not because of anyone in particular wanting to, but just because there's only so long you can splash in the waves at the beach. As Ted Kluck wrote in his March 1 *WORLD* magazine column "An argument for being bored together," boredom can be magical. He's reviewing a movie, set in 1971, that he loved and I never saw because of its 35 f-bombs, so I'm not pitching the film. But I am also remembering the merits of boredom.

"The Holdovers ... is actually about the magic of being bored with other people, and the creativity and connection that comes as a result. You end up exploring campus buildings. You end up watching television together. You end up breaking bread together. Somebody gets hurt, and then cared for by the group. You hatch outlandish schemes together, and then carry them out. I daresay nobody will ever want to watch a movie about college (or boarding school) in 2024. What is there to be romantic about? 'We had a really nice class session on Microsoft Teams'? No thanks.

"In a modern context, of course, we don't have much of an opportunity to be bored together, in that we can carry our televisions, our stereos, our classrooms, and all of our conversations with us on our phones. We can curate and self-promote and move-make and side-hustle – all while standing in line at the supermarket. We never have to be bored.

"As a result, we are probably very productive. But we are also – if anecdotal evidence as well as everything written in the past decade is to be believed – very lonely. Perhaps we need more unmediated time together, because relating to one another takes time."

TRADITION, NOT SIMPLY FOR TRADITION'S SAKE

Tradition is often the received wisdom of the previous generations, and shouldn't be lightly discarded. But as Ronald Reagan pointed out in the anecdote below, it's also important we understand why we maintain these traditions.

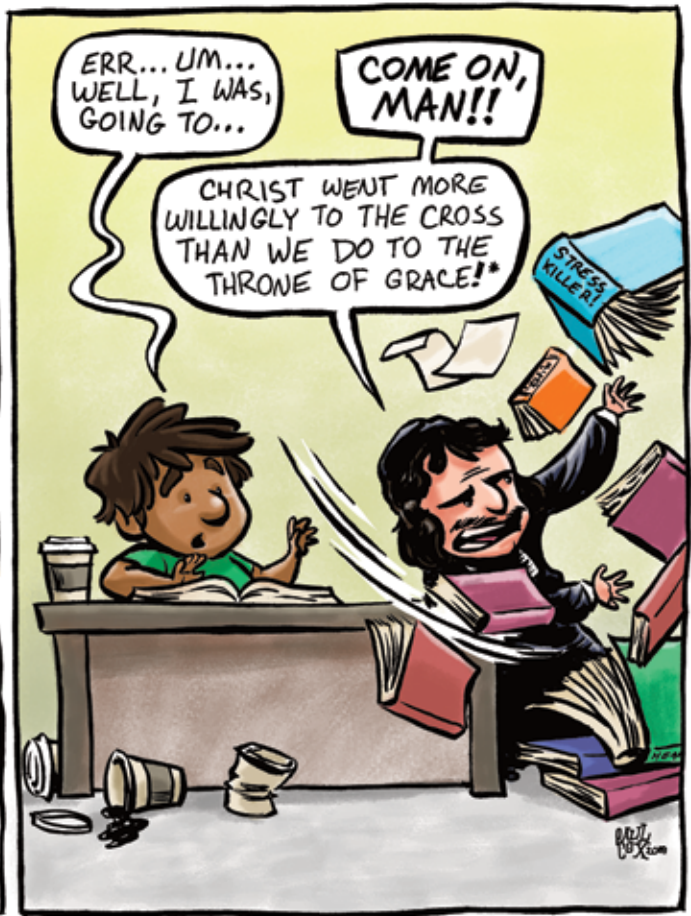
"We can't be like the fellow's wife who used to cut off both ends of the ham before she cooked it. When he asked her why she did that, she said because that was the way her mother always did it.

"One day, he got the chance to ask his mother-in-law why she cut off both ends of the ham before she cooked it. And she said because that's the way her mother did it.

"Came the holidays and Grandma was visiting and he told her about it and asked if that was true – why did she cut off both ends of the ham before she cooked it? She said, 'That's simple. I never had a pan big enough to get the whole ham in it.'"



Artwork copyright © Paul Cox www.reftoons.com



*THOMAS WATSON (1620-1686)

AWFULLY GOOD OXYMORONS

An oxymoron is a phrase that seem to be self-contradictory, but isn't. The most common examples are just two words, like *jumbo shrimp*, *plastic silverware*, *civil war*, and *unbiased opinion*.

But they can be larger too. "May I ask a question?" and "Less is more" are both complete sentences. The sardonic "Free advice is worth what you paid for it" shows how they can be employed for comic effect, as did baseball star Yogi Berra's many oxymoronic turns such as: "Nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded." Other classics include:

- "It's the little things in life that are colossal." – G.K. Chesterton
- "Always and never are two words you should always remember never to use." – probably Wendell Johnson
- "...the mercy of the wicked is cruel." – Prov. 12:10
- "Alas! Hegel was right when he said that we learn from history that men never learn anything from history." – George Bernard Shaw
- "I always advise people never to give advice." – P.G. Wodehouse
- "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive." – C.S. Lewis

OPPORTUNITY TO HONOR GOD'S NAME IN CHRISTIAN FILMS

I often get sent a "screener" link for upcoming Christian films. It's a chance for me to watch the film online before it comes out in theaters so I can let RP's readership know about a good one that's coming to theaters soon.


But more often than not, even in these Christian films, someone will stub a toe and let loose with an abuse of God's Name. Very often it happens just once, but even so in film after Christian film, there it is: God's Holy Name treated as an expletive. You know what you'll almost never find in a Christian film? Actual expletives. Because Christians won't stand for *that*.

When it happened again with the latest screener, I sent the promoter this note:

"Thanks for the follow up. I did get the screener link. It looked intriguing but pretty early on someone took God's Name in vain and that's our one big no no, so it isn't for us.

"I know that's an unusual position, but it's based on the holiness of God's Name, and the fact that taking it in vain is completely unneeded. Christian studios manage to never use the F-word, so this isn't a matter of realism. It's that the F-word is treated with more "reverence" than God's own Name.

"RP reviews movies that have violence, or some degrees of sexuality, or which delve into all sorts of dark topics (we reviewed *Sound of Freedom*, for example) but not movies that take God's Name in vain. And, that one stand eliminates about 99% of movies, including the vast majority of Christian films too, which only underscores that need for us all to make the holiness of God's Name more of an issue. Whereas folks might go to a movie *for* the sex or violence, no one goes to hear God's Name taken in vain, so it has no upside for the producer. So why does it happen? Because Christians have treated it as so unimportant that there's also no downside for the producer to do it."

I got a very polite reply, and she promised to send it on to the film's producers. There's a real opportunity for us to effect a change here, if we're willing to track down the production companies and send them a polite note. It might be as simple as googling the movie, and seeing if it has a website. If not, the production company probably will, and because these are mostly smaller companies, some will still have a contact option. These are Christian filmmakers, so this isn't due to any hatred of God; it's just ignorance. Even a few notes making the same point could go a long way, because they'll *want* to listen. 

CHURCH POTLUCK PANDEMONIUM

We (Alexandra Ellison and I) have made a MadLib for you, and wonder if you want to make a funny one too. If you do create one we'd love to see it. Send us your MadLib at admin@ReformedPerspective.ca

As _____
[female name] entered the _____
[type of building], she was greeted by a whirlwind of _____
[noun] s. _____
[piece of furniture] s overflowed with an assortment of dishes, each more _____
[adjective] than the last. From _____
[savory dish] to _____
[sweet treat] the church potluck promised to be a culinary adventure.

But as _____
[same name] made her way through the buffet line, she quickly wanted to _____
[verb]. The _____
[desserts], which had been meticulously arranged only moments before, now seemed to have vanished into thin air, leaving behind only a few lonely crumbs and empty plates.

Undeterred, _____
[same name] soldiered on, filling her _____
[type of container] with an assortment of _____
[adjective] entrees and making a mental note to save room for dessert, should any miraculously reappear.

As she searched for a place to sit, _____
[same name] stumbled upon a group of children putting on an impromptu _____
[entertainment event] in the corner of the room. From _____
[activity] to _____
[activity], the performances ranged from endearing to downright _____
[adjective]. Amidst the chaos, _____
[same name] couldn't help but laugh and shake her _____
[body part] in _____
[emotion].

Despite the mishaps and _____
[noun] s, there was a sense of _____
[emotion] and camaraderie that filled the room – a reminder that sometimes, it's the unexpected moments that make life truly _____
[adjective].

Leaving the potluck behind, _____
[same name] felt _____
[emotion] for the opportunity to share in fellowship with her church family, even if it did involve a few surprises along the way.

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Applications may be sent to
Chair of Personnel Committee, Pete Harthoorn
peter.harthoorn@mnp.ca



Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

HOW IT'S MADE

THIS MAGAZINE ISN'T JUST MADE OF PAPER AND INK. IT'S A COLLECTION OF THE GIFTS AND TALENTS OF MANY PEOPLE WHO WORK HARD TO GET IT INTO YOUR HANDS! COME AND EXPLORE THE PEOPLE AND THE TYPES OF GIFTS AND TALENTS THAT ARE USED IN THE MAGAZINE AND HOW IT BEGINS AS MERELY IDEAS AND ENDS UP AS WHAT YOU'RE HOLDING RIGHT NOW!

STEP ONE:

A FEW MONTHS BEFORE THE MAGAZINE LANDS IN YOUR HANDS, MARK, MARTY AND JON PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER TO DETERMINE WHAT THE ISSUE'S FOCUS WILL BE.



Hey guys, what do you think this issue should be about?



I don't know - have you checked the front cover?!



I like it. Let's do it.

MARK: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

An executive director is kind of like a school principal, except I don't have to get any kids in trouble. I work with the RP team to come up with a good plan for what to do each year, and then make sure we actually do it! It is also my job to raise about half a million dollars each year to pay for everything that RP does.

Favourite part of the job:

to work with the editors to plan each magazine, and write stories and articles to celebrate what God is doing in our world today.

2 Years with RP

Favourite hobby:

Fishing

An animal that suits the nature of your job:

A bald eagle: Keeping an eye on everything and swooping in to make the catch (and yes, also bald).

JON: EDITOR

Jon gets to investigate what God's up to in this big world of ours, and help other folks in their own investigations.

25 Years with RP

Favourite hobby:

Is eating pizza a hobby? I do like basketball, though I sure don't play it like I used to.

Reading - I still read like the wind!

An animal that suits the nature of your job:

Well, I would pick penguin, because I like penguins... and my office is really cold in the winter so that would match up well.

Least favourite subject in school:

Church History, though I like it now!

MARTY: ASSISTANT EDITOR

I get to ask lots of questions and tell lots of stories and provide some backup to Jon and Mark to see the focus come to life!

2 Years with RP

Favourite book:

Farewell to Shady Glade by Bill Peet

Favourite subject in school:

History, seconded closely by English

Least favourite subject in school:

Chemistry, though Mr. Koat made it interesting!

Favourite hobby:

Soccer tennis! The rules are sketchy, and my daughter always beats me, but it's great fun!



BACK IN 1999, CONTRIBUTIONS WERE SNAIL-MAILED TO THE EDITORS IN ORDER TO BE SUBMITTED. TODAY, IT'S AS SIMPLE AS AN EMAIL. CONTRIBUTIONS COME FROM MANY DIFFERENT WRITERS. HERE ARE SOME REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS:



CHRISTINE



Writer of fiction (historical and present-day) and of fact (historical and present-day). I'm learning lots and hopefully, pass on what I've learned.

30 Years with RP

Favourite hobby:

Must it be only one? Blueberry picking, gardening, cooking and reading

An animal that suits the nature of your job:
I would pick the cat because the cat tends to be purr-sonal

The other day a horse passed by on the road and I said to him: "Why the long face?"

JASON

I get to interview painters, sculptors, and other artists and share their work with RP readers.

Favourite hobby:

Painting en plein air (fancy [French] way of saying painting outdoors on location)

Favourite children's book:

Sidney and Norman, A tale of two pigs by Phil Vischer

Favourite subject in school:

Art

Why is it hard to talk to an abstract painter? Because they never go into detail.

Uh... I think I'm in the wrong spot! Can you follow the yellow line and figure out where I'm supposed to be? The others may need your help, too!



SHARON

I write articles on topics that I feel strongly about. Sometimes a sermon or a Bible verse gets me started. Sometimes I write about sins that I struggle to overcome. I always pray that other people will be challenged and blessed by what I write. Sometimes I go back and read my own articles to get challenged all over again! "Now, what was it that those Bible verses said, again?"

19 Years with RP

Favourite hobby:

Writing, watching historical movies

An animal that suits the nature of your job:
A parrot that spoke encouraging Bible verses

My grandkids were at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. Noticing the huge columns on the front of it, they joined hands and decided to act like "Samsung" and push the columns down. :)



ALEXANDRA

What could be better than getting paid to talk to people?! I do a mix of things at RP, but my primary role is to write, and produce videos telling stories that will interest a Christian audience. This could be anything from talking to MP's on Parliament Hill or speaking to regular people I come across on the street!

Favourite hobby:

Listening to podcasts, reading and playing basketball.

Least favourite subject in school:

Math

An animal that suits the nature of your job:

A monkey, because I read that sometimes they can use computers, and my job requires a lot of typing!



STEPHANIE

I have the best job of them all! I get to create fun pages (like this one!) for kids of all ages that will encourage them in their faith and teach them some fun things about God's incredible world!

2ish Years with RP

Favourite hobby:

Anything art related: sketching, acrylic painting, watercolour painting, painting the walls of the house... Definitely not sports.

Favourite children's book:

Moo! by David LaRochelle

Least favourite school subject:
Math (and PE if it was basketball)

STEP THREE.

AS THE SUBMISSIONS ARRIVE, OUR EDITORS, JAN AND JON READ THROUGH THE PAPERS LOOKING FOR ERRORS OF VARIOUS SORTS : GRAMMAR, THEOLOGY, SPELLING.....

JAN: COPY EDITOR

My job involves clutching a red pen while fixing errors and double-checking details. Bad grammar beware!

1.5 Years with RP

Favourite hobby:
Writing!

Favourite children's book:
Peter Pan

Least favourite school subject:
Geography



I'M HUNGRY LET'S EAT JON



QUICK!
CHANNEL YOUR
INNER EDITOR AND
USE GRAMMAR TO
SAVE ME FROM THE
HUNGRY BEAR!!!



STEP FOUR.

HOW DO ALL THE SUBMISSIONS BECOME THE PAPERS THAT YOU ARE PHYSICALLY HOLDING? OUR GRAPHIC DESIGN WIZARD, ANNEELIES, TAKES ALL THE SUBMISSIONS, PICTURES AND ADVERTISEMENTS AND PUTS THEM INTO A WELL ORGANIZED FILE, READY FOR PRINT!

ANNEELIES: GRAPHIC DESIGNER

I make the magazine look nice! My job is to take the articles written for RP and lay them out in a computer program called Adobe InDesign. It allows me to put the text in neat columns, add photos, titles, colour and more. It requires lots of creativity and attention to detail! I like to think of graphic design as art in the business world.

9 Years with RP

An animal that suits the nature of your job:
Maybe an owl? Because I have to pay attention to detail and work a lot of late nights on the magazine. Or maybe an octopus with many arms managing being a mom/household stuff/farm stuff/yardwork/ plus graphic design projects?

Favourite children's book:
The Little House on the Prairie Series

Favourite school subject:
Art and Social Studies



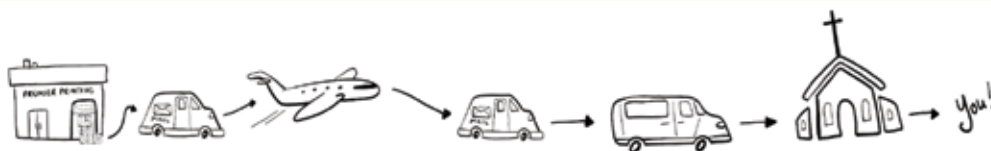


THE ENTIRE MAGAZINE IS PRINTED, ABOUT 11,000 COPIES, FULL COLOUR AT PREMIER PRINTING IN WINNIPEG, MANITOBA!

Test your geography!
Where is Winnipeg?



ONCE THE MAGAZINE IS PRINTED, IT IS SENT OFF THROUGH THE MAIL SYSTEM TO YOUR CHURCH REPRESENTATIVE WHO HAPPILY PUTS THEM INTO YOUR MAILBOXES AND TAKES ONE COPY TO LOOK THROUGH AT HOME BEFORE EVERYBODY ELSE GETS A CHANCE.



FINALLY THE MAGAZINE MAKES IT FROM JUST AN IDEA TO A PHYSICAL COPY RIGHT INTO YOUR HANDS! THE MAGAZINE IS ALSO UPLOADED TO OUR WEBSITE SO THAT THE ENTIRE WORLD IS ABLE TO GLEAN THE RICHES OF THE CONTENT!

Consider the different ways all these people offer their gifts through this magazine! What a blessing that God created such a variety of talents and gifts and how when brought together like this it can be a blessing to the whole community!

Write down some of the types of talents used for the magazine:

What are some of your gifts or talents? (If you don't know, ask your mom - moms tend to know these types of things).

Think of ways you can use yours to benefit your church community! If you can't think of any, go back to our December issue and take a look at the Penguins!



Hetty Veldkamp's landscapes began with a birthday

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman

Years ago, Hetty Veldkamp retired from a successful career in graphic design to raise her family. But then, two decades later, a birthday gift she created for her husband launched her second artistic career, this time as a landscape painter.

She'd always been drawn to art. When she was younger Hetty would often create pencil drawings, just for fun, based on photos from magazines or advertisements. Her high school art teacher saw potential in her work and encouraged Hetty to consider art as a career.

After studying illustration and graphic design at Sheridan College, Hetty accepted a job as a graphic designer/coordinator with the Alberta government's Public Affairs Bureau. She designed brochures, report covers, and logos for the various government departments. Then in the evenings Hetty would work on freelance projects or paint small watercolor paintings which she sold to friends and colleagues. "I was busy with everything art." But when she and her husband decided to have a family, Hetty took a break from art-making.

That break would last 25 years.

For as long as she can remember Hetty has also been drawn to nature. She grew up beside the sea, living in a quaint fishing village in the Netherlands. She later settled in the rural Niagara Region in southern Ontario after immigrating to Canada with her parents. In the years that followed, Hetty and her family explored the many different regions of Ontario's "cottage country" and Hetty became "hooked on the peace and beauty [she] found there."

"I have always enjoyed the great outdoors, hiking, camping, [canoeing] and cottaging. The vistas of Northern Ontario, Kilarney, Algonquin, and Killbear Provincial Parks; Georgian Bay and the landscapes of



northeastern Ontario are a real inspiration to me."

For her, they all brought the words of Psalm 8 to mind; "How majestic is your name in all the earth!"


It was those experiences and memories of those landscapes, previously painted by members of the famous Group of Seven, that inspired Hetty to pick up her brushes again. First she painted a painting as a gift to her husband for his birthday. She didn't stop

there. Many more paintings followed, some successful and some not so much. But Hetty persevered. She now has no problem selling everything she produces. Scenes of Ontario's north feature prominently in her vast portfolio on her website. Judging by the number of paintings that are labeled "SOLD," the scenes are popular with buyers too!

Hetty lives and works in Richmond Hill, Ontario. Working primarily in oil paint she works to capture her love of the outdoors and the peace she finds there.

"The lakes, trees, islands and rocks are beautiful; the ever-changing skies and water continue to inspire me."

I remember Hetty speaking at my high school for a career day – she was one of the people who inspired me to pursue illustration and design. I even studied at the same college as she did!

You can see more of Hetty's artwork at **ArtByHetty.com**, **Facebook.com/hettyveldkamp**, and **Instagram.com/artworksbyhetty** or email her at **hgveldkamp@gmail.com**. 

Jason Bouwman loves landscape painting too. Find his work at JasonBouwman.com and send him suggestions for artists to profile at studio@jasonbouwman.com.



Lily on a Summer Day ▲

"This one was inspired while kayaking near a friend's cottage. It was summer and so peaceful, the lilies just seem so calm and serene. Lilies are a popular subject, and I paint them often."



Granite Outcrop ▲

"In October I was on a short hike with one of my daughters near Georgian Bay to try and capture the fall colors. We came upon this beautiful view over a bay featuring a pink granite outcrop."

Georgian Bay Vista ▼

"Inspired by the rugged beauty of Georgian Bay while on a hike along the shore near Killbear Park. The colors are somewhat exaggerated, but there is a lot of pink granite in this area of the Canadian Shield."



The Point ▲

"At the end of a peninsula in Georgian Bay, the road ends and the locals call this place 'The Point.' It is a long smooth piece of pink granite that slowly eases into the waters of Georgian Bay. This piece was commissioned by someone as a gift to his wife as they have many fond memories of sitting on that bench and looking at the view."

Long Shadows in Winter ▼

"While I was snowshoeing last winter, the sun began to move very low in the sky as the day was ending, creating the long shadows. It was a beautiful scene in the forest that I wanted to try and capture."



Lighthouse at Snug Harbour ▼

"Taken last year when a friend gave us a boat ride to Snug Harbour, near Killbear Park. As we were entering the harbor, the sun was low and casting a warm glow on everything. It was such a beautiful moment and I tried to capture it in this painting."



Summer in the Rocky Mountains ▼

"My husband and I try to hike in the Rocky Mountains as often as we can. If there is one part of Canada that shows God's majesty to the fullest, it is the awe-inspiring mountains!"



RP T-SHIRT CONTEST WINNERS!

"FASHION FOR A REASON"

A few months back *RP* challenged readers to create t-shirt designs that give God the glory. We didn't want to put too many constraints on it beyond that. Shirts could have an apologetic bent, speaking His truth about the unborn, or about gender, marriage, and much more. Or the shirts could be gorgeous, celebrating God through beauty. Or it could be a combination thereof.

One reason we issued the challenge is because of the increasing need for Christians to out themselves. In the West there are now folks who not only have never read the Bible *but don't know anyone who has*. That presents such an opportunity. We want these people talking to us, and not simply seeking out random answers on the Internet. And a good Christian t-shirt can serve as a fantastic label: child of God here!

So we're pleased to share the best of *RP*'s T-shirt Contest entries. What follows is a winner and runner-up in both the Adult and Under-18 categories, and then a passel of honorable mentions. Thanks to everyone who entered, and may your efforts inspire many!



WINNER

"A few years ago I was reading through Revelation, and it dawned on me that the emerald rainbow could be the northern lights. Having seen the Northern Lights before, this idea made me feel a closer connection to God. I created this image using watercolor, and then scanned it in and my husband helped me with the digital editing process."

- Janette Ludwig



RUNNER-UP

"Being Reformed means a lot to my faith so I wanted to create a t-shirt where I could wear the pillars of the Reformation boldly. I created this by first sketching out custom font options for 'SOLA' in my sketchbook and then I used Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop to create the graphic and the mock-up."

- Logan Ludwig



"Our culture rejects the Bible from the very beginning. Their foundations have fallen apart, and this has led to the dissolution of sanity across the Western world."
– Sharon Wagner



"Despite the claims of the world that you can be whatever you feel like, true identity is rooted in Christ. John 1:12-13 tells us how we can adopt this identity and become children of God."
– Natalie Myers



"This design was inspired by the many Reformed ministers who quote this text, Isaiah 40:8, right before they begin preaching. I love the simplicity of the text, the imagery it brings and its meaning."
– Jaclyn Vanwoudenberg



"I got the idea from Matthew 5:16, where it talks about being a light in a dark world, and I wanted to make an interesting and somewhat humorous visual interpretation of the verse's meaning."
– Havilah Farenhorst



"Rainbows reflect God and his promises, but this symbol has been used to represent the pride community. I have taken the rainbow symbol, but used it to represent the Christian meaning. The rainbow is designed to reflect into a fish, which is a Christian symbol for Jesus Christ. Our walk of life needs to reflect Christ, and his ultimate sacrifice on the cross. Our identity is in Christ and His promises, we are to reflect His ways..."
– Jaclyn Vanwoudenberg



"I discovered this verse while listening to some encouraging Bible texts during my third pregnancy. I didn't believe this text was in the Bible at first, until I looked it up! Reading the whole verse from Isaiah 40:11 comforted me (the whole chapter does), but this verse stuck with me, as a mother of three young children, with many anxious and overwhelming days. As mothers (and everyone), we can put our trust in God, that as our Father, he guides, carries and leads us."
– Jaclyn Vanwoudenberg



RUNNER-UP

"I chose a pretty cursive for the emphasized words and used an all caps font for the other words. I found a pink heart graphic and put hearts around the words. I wanted this design to be simple but pretty and have a meaningful message. This design is made for women and girls."
– Leighton K. (age 13)



WINNER

"This design exalts God as Creator. In a world where evolution is such a big thing, I wanted to create a shirt that celebrates and recognizes the true Creator. 144 hours is six days, but instead of writing six days on the design, I wrote 144 hours to emphasize God's power in creating the world in six literal days."
– Jasmine V. (age 13)

Youth



"This text was in my Bible from my 7th birthday. It's my favorite text."
– Denver H. (age 7)



"I created this design to show that how God wants us to live is very different from what the world thinks is good."
– Addy T.



"I wanted to do a shirt about abortion. I chose the line, 'babies are people.' I found a picture of little baby footprints. I used a font that matched the cute style of the graphic. I put the footprints really big in the middle and the words in a line on the bottom. I did it all in black. I wanted it to be a nice and simple design that has a big meaning. This design is for everyone."
– Leighton K. (age 13)

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

MAY-JUNE 2024

PUZZLE CLUES

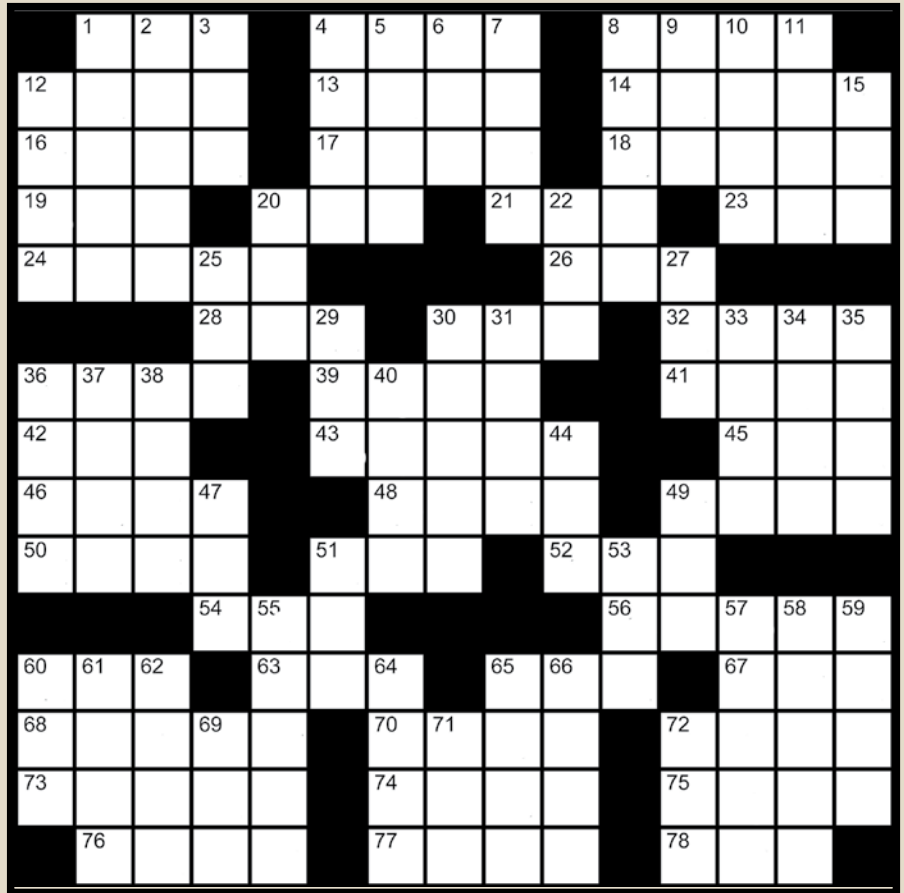
Find this issue's solution on page 2!

ACROSS

1. "he did not ____ the birds in half" (Gen. 15)
4. Hanging ballot punch in 2000 U.S. election
8. Respectful way to address a king
12. "grain for ____ in Egypt" (Gen. 42)
13. Circle of light
14. "pure gold, like _____ glass." (Rev. 21)
16. Organization that invented two team sports
17. ____ Ladd - star of 1953 movie *Shane*
18. "Bowlers are not the... _____." (Dan Quayle)
19. French reference to woman's maiden name
20. Likely to get an abbreviated apartment?
21. Second big sportscaster (abbreviation)
23. Arrest; seize; catch in the act
24. The late queen's favorite dog
26. Palindromic vim and vigor
28. Hardwood tree with umbrella-shaped crown
30. Description of cat, snake, dog, or fox
32. "your sons shall come from ____" (Is. 60)
36. "their ____ became known to Saul" (Acts 9)
39. Catch sight of (archaically speaking)
41. One of five of Reformed theology
42. Tombstone acronym
43. "He _____ is my rock" (Ps. 62)
45. Don't be up the creek without it!
46. "the ____ who hear the word" (Mark 4)
48. *Get name* (partially) of Italian volcano?
49. "in what ____ shall he sleep?" (Ex. 22)
50. Check this out at the restaurant!
51. One source of revenue for *RP*
52. Father in the line of Christ (Matt. 1)
54. Hair accessory suggestion? (Judges 16)
56. A likely story! (or not)
60. Jesus "____ himself from them" (John 12)
63. ____ *to Joy* (Beethoven's Ninth Symphony)
65. You can bank on it!
67. "the people gathered as ____ man" (Ezra 3)
68. You might eat one if you're wrong?
70. "____ le roi!" (2023 cheer for Charles)
72. Greek "goddess" of the rainbow
73. _____ Ingalls Wilder (pioneer storyteller)
74. "The defense ____ the puck on that play!"
75. Giving good sense without giving offense
76. Sign of something about to happen; portent
77. Loaned (in the 40 days before Easter)
78. It can change your t-shirt or your hair.

DOWN

1. Carved profile portrait
2. Stomach problem of a Type-A personality?
3. "Sip, sip, hooray! It's ____ time."
4. Bloke; lad
5. Order to stop
6. Pie ____ mode
7. "____' _ Worry Be Happy" (1988 hit song)
8. Area marked with tape after crime reported
9. "he was ____, near to death" (Philippians 2)
10. Giving a horse free ____ (letting it go)
11. "I'm so hungry, I could ____ _ horse!"
12. Get two devices to regularly share data
15. Yank's opponent in the U.S. Civil War
20. Suffer from too much French garlic?
22. "Go up and ____ out the land." (Joshua 7)
25. "rowed hard to _____ to dry land" (Jonah 1)
27. Faux ____: sign of foot in mouth disease?
29. "____ culpa." - Latin admission of guilt
30. What a fainting person sees
31. Loretta ____ - country singer born 1932
33. Insult deserving hell (Matt. 5)
34. "____, this people has sinned" (Ex. 32)
35. "like a most ____ jewel" (Rev. 21)
36. Formal high school dance
37. "a wall built with a plumb ____" (Amos 7)
38. "the prison doors were ____" (Acts 16)
40. Pro-life acronym (Size, Level of....) (Joel 1)
44. "Hear this.... give ____" (Joel 1)
47. Eat your last meal today, old-style?
49. *Make music* (partially) for flightless bird?
51. Frequent sentence opening in *KJV*
53. Anagram of 52 Across
55. Description of John Wayne
57. Sharp-toothed eel
58. "____! You served that ____!"
59. "Come... and ____ a while." (Mark 6)
60. Short form of *Harold*
61. International Civil Aviation Organization
62. It's a snare to catch the beat?
64. What Job turned away from (Job 1)
65. Beth-____ (near Bethel - Joshua 7)
66. "when he has stood the ____." (James 1)
69. You find metals in it, or... it sounds like it!
71. "He hurls down... crystals of ____" (Job 37)
72. "Can you help?" "____ be my pleasure!"





SCIENCE UPRISING

A revolutionary case for Intelligent Design

by Jon Dykstra

Mainstream science – the sort we read about in the newspapers and gets taught in our public schools and universities – says we’re only modified monkeys. However, there’s evidence aplenty to undermine this modified monkey theory. And while evolution preaches we are matter and nothing more, that turns out to be philosophy, not evidence-based.

Back in 2019, the Intelligent Design think tank, the Discovery Institute (Discovery.org) began producing a series of videos designed to, as their press release put it, “directly confront the false views

of science held by the growing number of science popularizers like Neil de-Grasse Tyson and Bill Nye.” Specifically, they wanted to rebut materialism, the idea that we, and the universe itself, are nothing more than the matter we’re made of.

The videos are fantastic, and at a fast-paced 6-11 minutes each, they are an easy watch with your older kids, or, if you are a teacher, with your high school students. The Discovery Institute isn’t a creationist organization, and some of the experts in the videos aren’t even Christian. What they do all agree on is that

the science shows:

- 1) more than materialism can account for
- 2) evidence of an Intelligent Designer

I wanted to share a brief review of each episode, in the hopes that you’ll scan the QR code, or go to **Reformed-Perspective.ca/Uprising** to check them out. This is as succinct and slick a presentation of the Intelligent Design argument as you will ever find. So, grab some popcorn, shut off your phone and, for the next hour or so, kick back and enjoy the show!

SEASON 1

A creationist could endorse everything presented in this, the first of two seasons. He would want to say more, however, because the Bible is never mentioned, and the Intelligent Designer the series argues for is never specifically named. That means, as compelling as its overall argument is – that creation points to a Creator – and as professional as the production values are, the project has a notable shortcoming. It ably tears down evolutionary arguments, but it never raises up God's Truth. If we share this material with non-Christian friends, we need to also point out everyone's need for the Redeemer, and share with our audience who this Savior is, the God-man Jesus.

1: *Materialism vs. reality*

The Bible says that the universe and all that is in it was created by Someone who is *more than it* and *beyond it*. But materialist science tells us, “the cosmos are all there is, all there was, and all there ever will be.”

So, is our universe matter and nothing more, and is it anti-science to believe that non-material things like *love* and *consciousness* are real? Dr. Jay Richards weighs in.

2: *No, you're not a robot made out of meat*

Who are we? The Bible says we are physical and spiritual beings – we have a body, but we are more than our body. If I lose an arm and leg, I may have lost 25% of my body, but I am still all there – there isn't 25% less of *me*.

And the evidence agrees. For example, it shows that our immaterial minds – our thoughts – can actually *change* our material brains.

3: *The Programmer*

The Bible says we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” by a Master Craftsman.

And what does mainstream science say? The materialist scientists reduce us to mere machines. And yet they have

to acknowledge that “our DNA code is more complex than any man-made software...” And as Stephen Meyer explains, our observations of the world show us “information always arises from an intelligent source.”

4: *You don't suck*

The Bible declares that Man is something special, created in the very image of God (Gen. 1:26-28). Materialist science has a very different perspective. As Bill Nye puts it,

“I am a speck on a speck, a whirling speck, among still other specks in the middle of specklessness....I suck!”

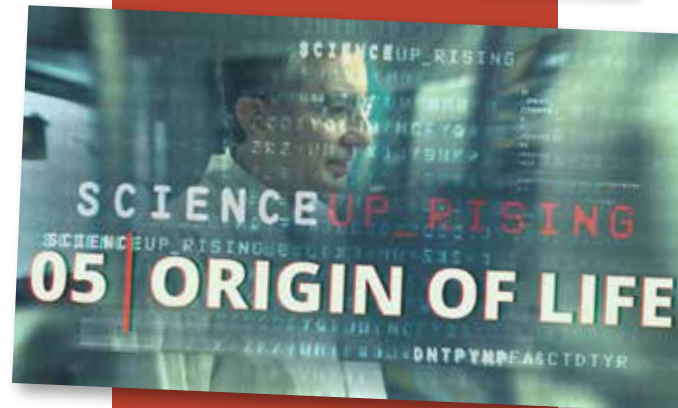
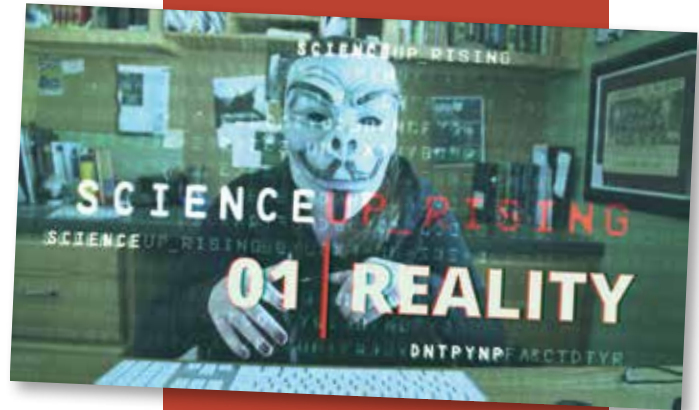
At the same time, scientists are discovering that this supposedly purposeless universe seems to be especially and improbably fine-tuned to not just *support* life but to enable us to *thrive*.

How do the materialists explain that? By proposing this is just one of millions or billions or trillions of universes out there, and this is the one where everything came out just right. One problem: as physicist Frank Tipler explains there's exactly as much evidence for this “multi-universe theory” as there is for the existence of unicorns and leprechauns.

5: *The origins of life*

The Bible says that life was designed, and came about by an extraordinary supernatural act of God. In contrast, materialist science says that life came about by simple, random, unguided chemical interactions.

But if life really could come about by *sheer unintended luck*, then why haven't the world's most brilliant scientists – with their billions of dollars in equipment, awesome computing power, refined chemicals, and ready blueprints all around them – ever been able to create life *on purpose*?



You might wonder at the strange Guy Fawkes mask with the monkey nose that shows up again and again. It's one of those cultural references that may not have aged well because that's a question a lot of people ask. The original Guy Fawkes was a Catholic who tried to blow up the English King James I. Not really a great role model. But a 2005 film, *V for Vendetta* (which I am not recommending) featured a rebel wearing a Guy Fawkes mask and the popularity of the film led to demonstrators around the world adopting the mask. And it's that meaning that's being conveyed here: they are protesting against the evolutionary tyranny... which is also why their version of the mask has been ape-ified.



6: *Mutations break; they don't create*

The Bible says that due to Man's Fall into Sin the perfect world that God created is broken, and wearing out (Is. 51:6, Ps. 102:25-26). In this worldview it is no surprise that mutations are harmful, causing things like cancer. It's no surprise because Christians understand that we as a species are breaking down.

But evolutionary theory says Mankind is the end result of a long process of beneficial mutations that changed us and improved us, progressing upward from life's simple origins as a single cell, to eventually evolve into the incredibly complex creatures that we are today. Evolution says that we as a species are improving.

So which worldview fits best with the evidence? Do we see mutations improving us, or harming us? A closer look at the science shows that mutations don't have the type of creative power that evolution proposes and needs.

SEASON 2

While the first season sticks to points that creationists could enthusiastically agree with, the second season occasionally conflicts with the biblical account by incorporating some evolutionary presumptions, like a timescale of millions of years, or the evolutionary take on the geological "record." It's worth noticing, though, that even were we to presume millions of years, evolution still doesn't have the answers.

7: *Big bang: something from nothing?*

The Bible says God created in six days, just some six thousand or so years ago. Evolution proposes a Big Bang billions of years ago. While this video argues for

the Big Bang, it also highlights how even the Big Bang leaves evolutionists the problem of accounting for how something, or rather *everything*, came from nothing.

8: *Human evolution: the monkey bias*

Does the fossil record really support the evolution of humans from ape-like ancestors? This episode highlights the scant evidence, and shares how the evidence there is has been manipulated, and even sanded off, to align with evolutionary assumptions.

9: *Fossils: mysterious origins*

Evolution can't account for the sudden appearance of life that repeatedly occurs in the fossil record. That's a devastating problem for Darwinian evolution.

But what sort of answer can Intelligent Design offer? They offer up the very general idea of an "intelligent mind" intervening. Who was that intelligent mind, and how did they engineer these various species? The specifics don't really come up in this video. Creationists have their own proposals though, which don't presume repeated creative acts. They look at the geological column as evidence of a worldwide flood, rather than the history of millions of years.

10: *AI: will machines take over?*

As computers become ever and increasingly more powerful, will they become thinking machines? The folks who say so believe we're nothing more than computing machines ourselves, merely the sum of our parts. But Christians know we are made in the very Image of our Maker (Gen. 1:27), and that's not ever going to be true of machines. **RP**

...materialist scientists reduce us to mere machines. And yet they have to acknowledge that 'our DNA code is more complex than any man-made software'...



You can find the whole collection at **ReformedPerspective.ca/Uprising**, or by using your phone to scan the QR code. Happy viewing!

ASK — RP —

There's nothing quite like a good question to get a great discussion going. So we're starting a new column called "Ask RP" where we are really hoping – you guessed it! – that you'll

send in your best queries, and we'll see if we can get someone to give them the answers they deserve.

Go to ReformedPerspective.ca/AskRP or scan the QR code with your phone to submit your questions. We hope to answer at least one question each issue.

To start this first one off, we're answering a question of our own manufacture. The key here is most *impactful* and not always our own personal Top 5. At one point these titles hit us with particular punch.



TECH IN SCHOOLS - DO YOU HAVE AN ANSWER?

This question below was sent in, after our "Technology in Schools" issue. Do you have a good answer? Please share it with us, at ReformedPerspective.ca/AskRP or by scanning the QR code and we might print it in the next issue.

Q: "Why have our schools so completely embraced the digital age? Every time my daughter has an assignment in grades 7-12 they need access to online material. Their assignments are posted online, they are due online. No longer are hard copies required. Computers come in and we no longer source real books and page numbers. We are allowing a dumbing down of society, always needing Dr Google. We are losing the art of discernment. I would love to know why teachers have embraced entirely the online use of resources and materials in an age when we are seeing kids getting overwhelmed by the online world, and even their parents struggling with putting limits on screen time?"



What are 5 of the most impactful books you've read outside of the Bible?

JAN BROERSMA

1. **New Morning Mercies**

by Paul David Tripp

Probably my favorite devotional, *New Morning Mercies* consistently reminds me that life is about God's kingdom... not mine.

2. **Mom Enough**

by Rachel Jankovic et al

This collection of short, encouraging blog posts on "missional motherhood" had a place of honor beside the rocking chair when my kids were small. (And the e-book can be had for free at DesiringGod.org/books.)

3. **Sometimes a Light Surprises**

by Jamie Langston Turner

Thoughtful and well-written, this was an inspiring example of what Christian fiction can be, with interestingly complex characters and a plot that isn't trite.

4. **When Faith Is Forbidden**

by Todd Nettleton

These stories of persecuted Christians stuck with me and gave me, as a Western Christian, a lot to ponder.

5. **The Power of Generosity**

by Dave Toyen

I've always had a soft spot for World Vision, and this book by the organization's long-time Canadian president touched me – and reminded me that generosity, in all its different aspects, is key to so many parts of our lives as Christians.





JON DYKSTRA

1. God & Government

by Chuck Colson

Through true stories of Christians in politics, Colson demonstrates that Christ's lordship over all isn't something Christians have to bring about, but rather rely on... and proclaim too, even in the public square.

2. Heaven

by Randy Alcorn

Before this I had some vague notion of Heaven as a place where we'd sing for eternity. I didn't like singing very much, so that wasn't enticing. Alcorn got me to better understand what it means to enjoy God forever, and has me looking forward to what's coming next.

3. Death by Living

by N.D. Wilson

This might not be the book you'd give someone suffering burnout but Wilson's message, that life is meant to be spent, was an encouragement when our small kids weren't allowing for much sleep at night.

4. Love that Dog

by Sharon Creech

The Bible has poetry so I should appreciate poetry. But I didn't until this book. In each chapter the grade-school boy narrator shares a different style of poem he had to write for school. He doesn't like poetry (we were on the same side!) but as he continues making them, his poems help him deal with a deep grief he couldn't express any other way.

5. God's Smuggler

by Brother Andrew

A Dutchman saw the need for Bibles behind the Iron Curtain, and succeeded as a smuggler only through God's ongoing miraculous interventions. We all rely on God constantly, but Andrew understood it better, and so, in trust, relied on God more.

ALEXANDRA ELLISON

1. The Air We Breathe: How we all came to believe in freedom, kindness, progress, and equality

by Glen Scrivener

It's quite common for the secular world to bash Christianity and blame religion for all the world's problems. I found this book really helpful in dismantling those arguments with history proving that the teachings of Jesus Christ have shaped the values that we hold to today.

2. Christian Mind

by Harry Blamires

I read this while working a job that was very secular, and I found the ideas of not only living but thinking "Christianly" quite convicting. Blamires calls Christians to develop a "Christian mind" characterized by a commitment to truth, a recognition of the authority of Scripture, and a discerning approach to contemporary thought and culture.

3. Them Before Us: Why we need a global children's rights movement

by Katy Faust

I found Faust's boldness impactful, especially in her challenge to the IVF industry, particularly regarding Christian parents who, while meaning well in wanting to bring children into the world, may not fully grasp the serious ethical concerns surrounding IVF.

4. The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness: The path to true Christian joy

by Tim Keller

A very short read, but one that packs a powerful punch and offers a refreshing perspective on humility and its role in finding true joy in the Christian life.

5. You're not enough (and that's okay)

by Allie Beth Stuckey

I would recommend this to any young Christian woman struggling with the world's ideas of "self-love." Stuckey challenges the pervasive notion that we must strive to be "enough" on our own. Instead, she offers a liberating perspective rooted in Christian truth and that our insufficiency is not a flaw but a gateway to reliance on God's sufficiency.





MARK PENNINGA

1. Loving God

by Charles Colson

Right when I needed it (in university), this book hit both my heart and mind and convicted me of the paradox of the Christian life: finding self by losing self.

2. Just Do Something

by Kevin DeYoung

In a world so full of opportunities, this book is a much-needed kick in the pants to stop wasting your time and to move forward in faith.

3. The Grace and Truth Paradox

by Randy Alcorn

Alcorn put into words a truth that I saw demonstrated so powerfully in Scripture and in the lives of people that I respected the most. 100% grace and 100% truth, rather than one at the expense of the other.

4. The Treasure Principle

by Randy Alcorn

This book (and his other writings) convicted me at an early age to make decisions about possessions with an eternal perspective in mind.

5. Mission Drift

by Peter Greer

For all those who lead successful businesses and organizations, this book gives practical strategies to keep it faithful to the mission that you care so deeply about.

MARTY VAN DRIEL

1. Resurrection

by Hank Hanegraaff

The "Bible Answer Man" wrote a logical, powerful defense of the historical truth of Jesus' resurrection. Thirty years later, I can still easily recall its main points: "FEAT" reminds us of – Fatal torment, Empty tomb, Appearances of Christ, and Transformation of the lives of the resurrection's eyewitnesses. A great apologetic tool for the layman.

2. An American Life

by Ronald Reagan

Outlining Reagan's improbable rise from poverty to Hollywood to the White House, the book reminds us that good men believing in timeless principles can accomplish much that is God pleasing, even in a broken world.

3. Cold Case Christianity

by J. Warner Wallace

A retired police detective brings the same skills and techniques he used to solve "cold criminal cases" to examine the evidence for a historical Jesus and the accuracy of the Scriptures. While logic alone can't bring one to faith, its application can help break down barriers to belief.

4. One D--- Thing after Another

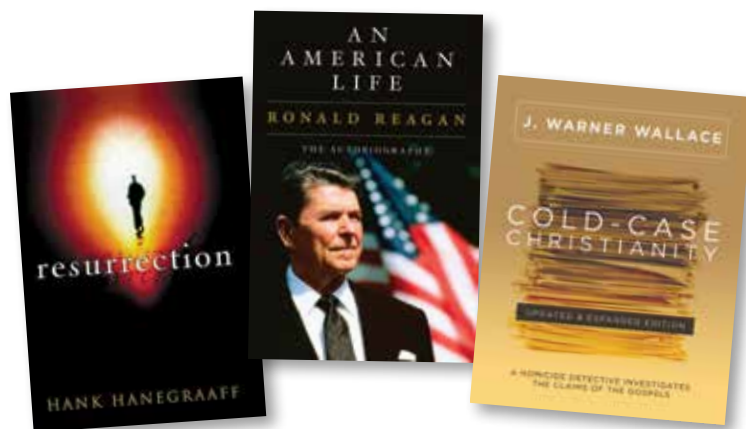
by William Barr

Former Attorney General Barr writes his life story, reflecting on much more than just the years he served alongside President Trump (although these chapters are fascinating). Barr brings principled insight, wisdom and practical advice to matters of faith, justice, education, capital punishment, and the legal system.

5. Death Comes for the Archbishop

by Willa Cather

We're used to tales of priests' misbehavior, but Willa Cather praises the simple, humble obedience of two French clergymen serving bravely in the American southwest in primitive conditions to God's glory. RP





by Mark Penninga

HELP FOR THE ANXIOUS AND THOSE WHO STRUGGLE WITH MEASURING UP

Last summer, in an issue of this magazine devoted to the topic of anxiety, I shared my own struggle with burnout and anxiety. I don't think I ever received as much interaction with any other article I have written in my lifetime. From bachelors to mothers, loggers, seniors, and pastors, people continue to pull me aside to talk about their own struggles with anxiety. It has been a great encouragement to see how the LORD works through our weakness to refine us, burn away the chaff, and direct our eyes upward to trust in Him.

Since then, a couple more solid resources have been published that I'm confident will be a blessing to many who desire to live in the freedom that Christ has obtained for us.

BUILDING A NON-ANXIOUS LIFE

With anxiety symptoms being so widely recognized and diagnosed, it is becoming more common to hear comments like "I have been feeling lousy, visited my doctor, and discovered that I have anxiety!" Or, "my 5-year-old isn't able to do that because she has anxiety." Underneath these comments is a perception that anxiety is a kind of illness or condition we are stuck with, a part of our identity, with little hope of change. We then reshape our lives and the world to adapt accordingly. Sadly, this often results in us building a world around ourselves, doing little for others and for God's kingdom.

In his new book *Building a Non-Anxious*

Life, Dr. John Delony challenges this way of thinking about anxiety head-on, offering a far more hopeful and practical approach. Dr. Delony's thesis is that anxiety isn't the problem. Rather, our focus needs to be on "addressing the things causing anxiety in the first place – the situations, thoughts, schedules and choices throwing your wellness and world totally out of whack."

Dr. Delony compares anxiety to a smoke alarm in our homes. If the alarm goes off, the problem isn't the alarm itself. We can find all sorts of tricks to try make the smoke alarm less irritating, like covering our ears, distracting ourselves, or even stuffing a pillow on top of it. That may help muffle the noise and make things more

bearable in the short-term, but it doesn't address the root of the issue: there is something causing the smoke! That is what needs our attention.

The book proceeds to introduce six daily choices that he argues will help build a non-anxious life, putting out the fire. It begins with choosing reality – becoming aware of what isn't working in your life. Although he writes for a broad and even secular audience, the sixth choice is "belief." Specifically,

"If you want to go all the way to truly live, build, and enjoy the fruits of a non-anxious life, you have to surrender. You must choose belief in something greater than yourself."

Delony is open that he experiences this in his faith in Jesus Christ.

The book has become popular quickly for good reason. Dr. Delony has a knack for being able to explain complicated things in simple terms. This book is easily accessible for all ages and walks of life. I know of one family with teens that is working through it together, chapter-by-chapter.

But what I appreciate most about it is that it helps to set captives free, challenging the disposition among many to allow anxiety symptoms to hold them in bondage. Although some people may have predispositions to anxiety, and it may be a life-long struggle, it is so important that we take to heart Galatians 5:1: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by the yoke of slavery."

As a result of some quality resources, counseling, and God's tender care, when I experience anxiety symptoms today, I can see them as something to be grateful for. I'm reminded that God has designed my body to sound an alarm when things aren't right. That means I can make changes. Delony's book has given me even more tools to help with building a non-anxious life.

IMPOSSIBLE CHRISTIANITY

The causes for anxiety symptoms and burnout will be different for each per-

son. It can be connected to being raised by an anxious parent, early life trauma, stress, illness, or drug use, among other things.

But there is another factor that many of our readers may share with me, namely spiritual guilt and a struggle with knowing whether God is pleased with us. Yes, we know that our eternal destiny is secure in Christ. But it is another thing to know that He is already pleased with us right now. And if we aren't sure about this, we can foolishly try to earn God's favor by our performance, and feel guilt or even despair when we fall short.

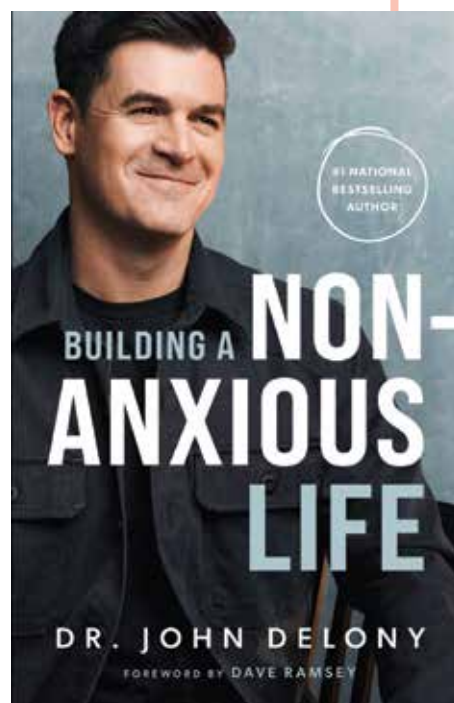
Kevin DeYoung's latest book, *Impossible Christianity*, isn't directly about anxiety, but it gets to the heart of a problematic way of thinking that seems to be more common among Reformed Christians. His subtitle gives a clue: "Why Following Jesus Does Not Mean You Have to Change the World, Be an Expert in Everything, Accept Spiritual Failure, and Feel Miserable Pretty Much All the Time."

I keep buying and giving away copies of DeYoung's *Just Do Something* book, as it is such a big help to those struggling with discerning God's will for their lives. It truly is a liberating read (and not just because it is short). *Impossible Christianity* is proving to be no less impactful, and I think it will be particularly so for folks from the Dutch-Reformed tradition.

DeYoung begins by sharing stories about his long-standing efforts and love of competitive running and then notes that "many Christians have come to expect (and accept) that being a disciple of Jesus is a lot like my thirty-five-year journey with running. You read the books. You watch the videos. You get the right equipment. You try to be disciplined. You try to improve. But with only the mildest of success."

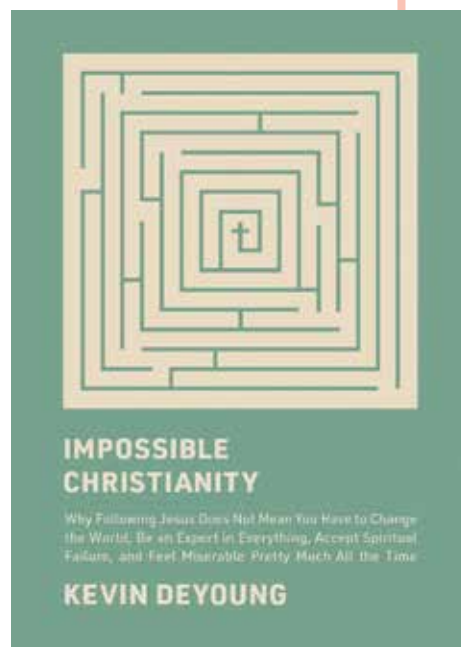
He then proceeds to make the case that he now sees how this has been the implicit message in all his other writings as well:

"following Christ is never easy, but it does not have to be impenetrably mysterious, exceeding complex, and relentlessly guilt-producing.... Ordi-



BUILDING A NON-ANXIOUS LIFE

BY JOHN DELONY
2023 / 304 PAGES



IMPOSSIBLE CHRISTIANITY

BY KEVIN DEYOUNG
2023 / 168 PAGES


nary Christians and ordinary churches can be faithful, fruitful, and pleasing to God. In short, Christianity doesn't have to be impossible."

There is a lot of theologically sound content packed in another very short book. For example, he takes readers to the book of 1 John to find three road signs that can provide assurance of salvation. Based on 1 John, he notes that we should have confidence if we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (1 John 5:11-13), if we live a righteous life (1 John 3:6-9), and if we love other Christians (1 John 3:14). "These are not three things we do to earn salvation, but three indicators that God has indeed saved us by his grace." To be clear, this is just one small part of a larger argument he makes, and I'm not going to try capture his full case in this article.

Most compelling for me is his discussion about how God looks at us as a Father does, not just as a judge. As a father myself, DeYoung's words resonated in my heart in a way that intellectual arguments have not been able to. If one of my children draws me a picture, mows the lawn, or cleans up part of the house, I'm truly pleased with them. Sure, the picture may show that I have four hairs on my head (I'm sure I have at least six), the lawn may not be cut in perfect lines, and they failed to dust the shelves. But I'm not looking for perfect obedience. Rather, I'm looking for true obedience – from the heart. It meant the world to me to realize that God looks at me as a Father, who has already found perfect obedience in our elder-brother Jesus Christ. God is actually pleased with me.

The reason why I think this book is particularly relevant to those with a Dutch-

Reformed tradition (i.e the majority of RP's readers) connects to his point that "Too many Christians make the mistake of thinking that if they are to be seriously godly, they must utterly denigrate everything they do as Christians." Hardly a week passes where we aren't reminded about how our best works are "like filthy rags." Yet God's Word, and the Reformed confessions, make it clear that our good works are accepted by God in view of Christ's work. He is willing to say to us "well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:23).

From the conversations I have had with some others in Reformed churches, guilt over not doing enough is one of the contributing factors leading to stress and even burnout. If that includes you, I heartily encourage you to buy this book and take the encouraging words to heart. 

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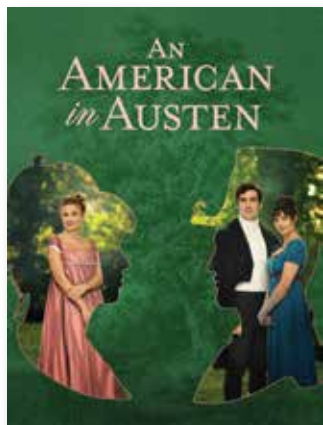
 

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AN AMERICAN IN AUSTEN

DRAMA / ROMANCE

2024 / 84 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



In the opening scene, we discover that Harriet-the-aspiring-author is struggling with writer's block, but her alter ego, Harriet-the-librarian is having quite the day. First a teen patron asks for a recommendation and Harriet gets to introduce the girl to Jane Austen. Harriet briefly hugs a copy of *Pride and Prejudice* before handing it over. Then Harriet's boyfriend of three years, Ethan, arrives early to take her to an anniversary dinner.

But when Ethan pulls off the most romantic surprise marriage proposal ever, Harriet finds herself giving what might be the worst answer possible: "Maybe?"

That scene ends with a quick cut to Harriet commiserating with two friends, all three wondering what on earth just happened. When they see a shooting star, one friend suggests Harriet wish for a do-over on the night. But instead, she wistfully declares, "I wish for Mr. Darcy."

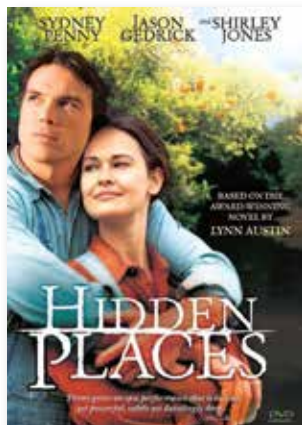
And that's when it happens. On the cab ride home, Harriet falls asleep, only to wake up in the back of a carriage. The shooting star has done its work – she's been transported into Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and soon she's going to meet Mr. Darcy!

Lots of fish-out-of-water here, and safe for the whole family. But it would be best enjoyed by those already well-acquainted with Jane Austen and yet not fiercely loyal to her.

HIDDEN PLACES

ROMANCE / DRAMA

2006 / 86 MINUTES **RATING: 6/10**



In the Depression of the 1930s, the young widow Eliza Wyatt is trying to help her father-in-law keep their orange farm going. But when he dies suddenly of a heart attack, Eliza doesn't know what to do. She has two children to support, and her only other help is her Aunt Batty. But between the four of them, there's just too much work, too little time, and too pressing a deadline, with a mortgage payment coming due.

Then along comes Gabe, a First World War veteran, wandering the rails and backroads of the country, heading away from his home, but towards nothing in particular. They can't afford to pay him. But he ain't looking for much more than a roof above his head.

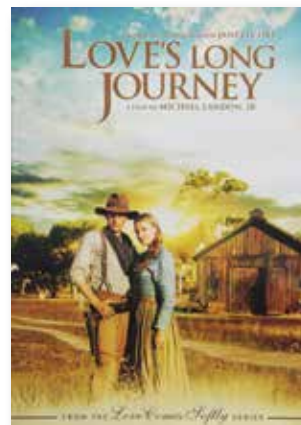
The one caution would be that like many a Christian film, the source of hope and security in this film doesn't seem to be God, but faith.

Based on a Lynn Austin novel of the same name, this is a pretty typical Hallmark film, different from the others primarily in that it does have some Christian overtones. I liked this more than my wife, and I think that might have been the orange grove setting, and learning a little bit about how they brought the harvest in way back then. If you're looking for a "safe" film, this fills that bill.

LOVE'S LONG JOURNEY

DRAMA / FAMILY

2005 / 88 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



Missie LaHaye isn't quite the perfect wife – she's an impossibly bad cook – but she is good with a gun, and in the Wild West that's far more important.

Our story begins with Missie and her husband Willie heading out west to start their own ranch, far from their family, and far from anyone they can count on. But even in the Wild West friends can be had – Willie hires a group of castoff ranch hands that no one else wants, and Missie befriends her Indian neighbor, creating a community out of this group of outsiders. And when Missie becomes pregnant, and bandits come looking for their savings, it is these friends that Missie and Willie will have to rely on.

The only caution regards the violence. One bad guy is shot and killed, but it isn't gory, and he does have an opportunity for redemption.

There are now nine other films in this series, and all are more or less based on a series of novels by Christian author Janette Oke. But in the two that precede this one – *Love Comes Softly* (2003) and *Love's Enduring Promise* (2004) – both included an instance of misuse, or at the very least questionable use, of God's name. Fortunately, *Love's Long Journey* can be enjoyed all on its own.

CLASSIC BOOK, CLASSIC FILM

THE ULTIMATE GIFT

ROMANCE / CHRISTIAN

2006 / 114 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



Jason, a spoilt rich kid, is given an inheritance by his billionaire grandfather... but it comes with conditions. To get the money Jason has to complete 12 separate tasks, all of which are intended to humble and shape him. It's hard not to love the curmudgeonly grandfather Red, handing out tough love from beyond the grave.

Each of the 12 tasks Red assigns involves a "gift," and while I don't want to give too much away, I'll note one: the gift of friendship. Jason has until the end of the month to come up with one true friend. When Red also arranges for Jason's credit to get cut, his entourage cuts out. Even his mom won't help. Forced to sleep on a park bench, he meets a single mom, Alexia, and her daughter, Emily. While they're willing to befriend him, Jason still has some growing to do – he sees them as a way to finish a task, and not as the better sort of friends that they really are.

This was based on a Christian novel of the same name. It's quite the fun film, with each new task a different sort of adventure. However, one key character does die (in addition to the grandfather) so it isn't one for the littles.

There was a time when the Hallmark brand meant more than royalty romances, bakeshop mysteries, and Christmas, Christmas, Christmas (of the most secular kind). At one point, they even produced films that had Christian undertones, like this one here.

SARAH, PLAIN AND TALL

DRAMA / ROMANCE

1990 / 98 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10



In 1910, Jacob Witting, a Kansas farmer and widower, places a newspaper ad asking for a woman interested "in making a difference" in the lives of his two small children, Anna and Caleb. Sarah Wheaton responds to his ad and agrees to a one-month visit. She brings with her a cat, a collection of seashells and a streak of stubbornness that is the young widower's match.

When Sarah arrives, she quickly learns that while Jacob's wife Katherine died six years ago, he is still grieving. He's packed away all his wife's pictures, and blankets, and anything else that reminds him of her. And he hasn't sung since her death.

But little Caleb loves to sing and Sarah does too. Anna isn't as quick to warm up to her, but when Sarah arranges to have Katherine's pictures hung back up, she starts to win the little girl over too. Sarah's love for the two children, and her better understanding of what they need pits her against their father, so when the month is done, will Jacob even want her to stay? Or will he start to love her as his equal... and his match?

CAUTION

No real cautions to offer. This does deal with the topic of losing a mother, and the children worry that they might lose Sarah at month's end, so there is some tension here that younger viewers might find harder to deal with. Especially when the neighbor goes into labor early and the delivery is not an easy one. But it comes to a beautiful resolution.

CONCLUSION

This is based on the book by Patricia MacLachlan which won the 1986 Newbery Medal for best American children's book of the year. It's a loyal rendition, as the screenplay was written by MacLachlan too, and I think it's one of those rare times where the film really does equal the book.

It's a wonderful quaint, quiet, and beautiful flick, sure to bring a tear to your eye. That means some boys might have a bit of trouble sitting through it during the early going, and maybe it just isn't for them. But if they can be settled, with their own bowl of popcorn perhaps, then I can't imagine a lovelier film for a family movie night.

INVEST WITH 2X THE IMPACT

The *Reformed Perspective Foundation* is able to give 10,000+ copies of this magazine away each issue, and publish its other podcasts and resources, all at no cost to readers and listeners. How? Because over 750 individuals, families, and businesses have chosen to invest in this mission. These investors understand that the purpose of life is not to build a kingdom on earth, but to advance God's kingdom and glory. And getting God-honoring information into the hearts and minds of Christian families can be an important means to promote faithfulness. We understand that when it comes to investing in Reformed schools, but we don't always see this through with resources for the rest of life.

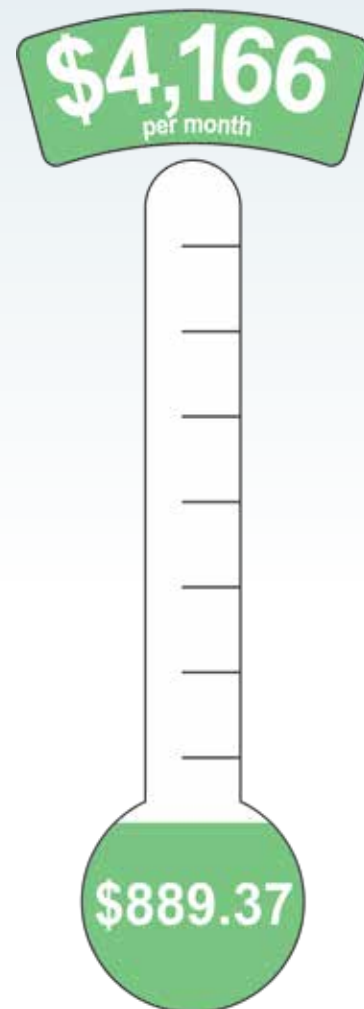
In the last issue we shared that a generous foundation, one that made it possible for us to provide free magazine to thousands more families in the past two years, has informed us that it will be up to these new readers to carry this cost moving forward.

Thankfully, some generous individuals stepped up to the plate offering to match a full year's worth of new monthly donations. Monthly donations are important, as our costs are monthly and can't be covered just by ads and one-time donations (each issue costs us about \$30,000 just to print and ship).

Now, if you invest in *RP* with a monthly donation of \$20, *RP* will be blessed with your ongoing support plus a matching investment of \$240 (to a maximum of \$50,000 in matches by the end of this year). Last month, one family even signed up for \$250/month, which will translate into a match of \$3,000 in addition to their support! So far this year we have been blessed with \$889.37 in new monthly donations. Our goal is to hit \$4,166 by the end of this year. That would result in \$50,000 after a year of monthly donations, plus \$50,000 from the matches, for a total of \$100,000.

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THE COLSON CENTER: a sibling we look up to

by Mark Penninga

Growing up as the second youngest in a family of ten, I learned a lot about life from my older siblings. Once grown, most of us continue to lean on our siblings in Christ as we navigate what it means to run a business, parent children, or serve in a church. We'll get in trouble quickly if we think we can figure things out all on our own.

That's why, through the years, we have introduced our readers to some of *RP*'s "siblings" – organizations and individuals that we have learned a great deal from and aspire towards. If you appreciate what we are doing, you will probably like them too.

I have already shared about *WORLD* Media Group, which covers the news from a solid Christian perspective via a magazine, video program for kids, podcasts, and more. *RP* is taking steps in that direction (with more journalism).

But we don't want to give up something that has always been core to our identity – worldview training. And the organization that best models this to us is the good folks at the Colson Center, a Christian organization which exists to "equip Christians to live with clarity, confidence, and courage in this cultural moment."

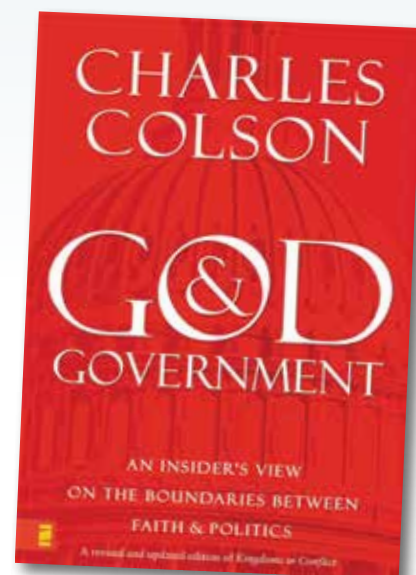
The organization is named after

Charles Colson, whose books *Kingdoms in Conflict* (now retitled as *God & Government*) and *Loving God* have been very influential to both *RP*'s Editor Jon Dykstra and myself. Colson had served alongside President Nixon, before being thrown into prison for his role in the Watergate Scandal. By God's grace, he repented and became a born-again Christian. God used him in a powerful way, first through creating Prison Fellowship (a ministry in prisons around the world), and then in developing Christian worldview training. He was concerned by the emphasis among evangelicals about "getting saved" without understanding the life of thankfulness we are saved to.

The Colson Center trains Christians through many mediums including their daily *Breakpoint* commentary (on many radio stations), e-newsletters, podcasts, conferences, and intensive courses/programs.


Over the past year, my wife Jaclyn and I have been enrolled in the Colson Fellows training program, following a curriculum that requires daily, weekly, and monthly training commitments that average about an hour a day. If you are looking to grow in your biblical worldview, I highly recommend it.

Like *WORLD*, the Colson Center isn't explicitly Reformed. But a Reformed perspective is very evident in both the underlying principles that guide them, and the teams that lead them. Both organizations seek to be faithful to God's Word, applying it to the issues of our day, and waging war against Satan's lies that abound in so many other resources. And they do so with grace, maintaining a positive tone that should always be found among those who hold to the Lordship of



Chuck Colson's *God & Government* (originally titled *Kingdoms in Conflict*) is highly recommended.

Jesus Christ and the sovereignty of God.

I heartily encourage you to get plugged in to their short daily *Breakpoint* newsletter or podcast (available in both formats at no cost). You won't be disappointed. To give you a taste, we included a *Breakpoint* article, along with a more detailed explanation of their basis on pages 46-47. You can also find more about them at **Breakpoint.org** and **ColsonCenter.org**. 

*P.S. Some of our readers aren't aware that *RP* has our own podcasts (Real Talk and Manna) and weekly e-newsletter. *RP*'s newsletter was always one of my favorites, even before I worked with *RP*. In it, Jon Dykstra shares both our latest articles as well as great content from elsewhere on the web (places like *WORLD* and the Colson Center). It saves you from having to find it yourself. Subscribe at ReformedPerspective.ca/roundup*

Become a Colson Fellow

To find out more about the Colson Fellows program, and to see if this is a challenge you'd like to take on, go to **ColsonFellows.org**, or scan the QR code with your phone



RP 2024 SUMMER PHOTO CONTEST!

Capture the Contrast

From the first day of creation God has crafted stunning contrasts, light and darkness, dry land and waters, fur and feathers, work and rest. In this year's photo contest what we're looking for is a snapshot that captures one of the many astonishing contrasts in God's creation.

As always, this theme is meant as a springboard for your creativity, and not any sort of limitation on it. The contrast can be of any sort: a bird bursting past a plodding turtle, an in-focus foreground against a blurred background. Maybe the contrast is between something God made, and something His imager-bearers have come up with. It could be a sharp difference in ages, heights, colors, locations.... anything!

Just try things, have fun, and share what you capture with all of us!

So get out there and start clicking!

CATEGORIES:

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

RULES:

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

PRIZES:

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

DETAILS:

- Send your photo (high-resolution) to admin@reformedperspective.ca **before August 15, 2024**;
- Include the name of the photographer, age, title, and brief explanation of how it connects to the theme (max 100 words). Also indicate whether you give permission to RP to publish it.

