

Reformed CELEBRATING GOD'S TRUTH

JULY - AUGUST 2024 \$5.62
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PERSPECTIVE

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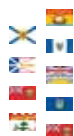
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READERS' RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR,

I really appreciated the Mark Penninga/Lucas Holtvluwer conversation in Real Talk's Episode #95 about declining birth rates, and smaller families.

In the Can Ref church too, I've heard many in their 30s and 40s state that they are "done having kids" and seek out permanent forms of birth control to ensure it. There are, of course, reasons for that and I don't mean to judge one situation to the next. My wife and I have chosen not to answer the question of "how many we want," but instead to ask "what about 1 more?" In that shift we are finding peace in God's plan while still finding contentment in the 3 kids we already have. Raising kids is intense, and if we are looking to do it in our own power and by our own means, then how would anyone be able to handle more than 2 or 3 kids!? Life is busy and expensive! But God is also gracious, all powerful, and in the most amazing act of grace He also is intimately interested in our lives!

I feel that my family is a perfect testament to this. My parents had 13 kids, and raised them on a Christian school teacher's salary. I was able to witness the communion of saints step in when finances were tight. I lived through a very raw and very real example in my Mom of someone parenting from their knees, hands open for the daily bread it took to do that. She did, and continues to, live one day at a time in God's grace. I feel that this can be a testimony to naysayers to debunk the myth that it's not financially possible to have large families. My family now shows the opposite. With God calling my Dad home it has shown the true blessing that a large family is – we can all chip in and care for my Mom, along with the communion of saints. It's almost as if

God knew what she would need ☺.

I don't see this as a failure to provide a life for your kids. I see this as a living example of Philippians 4:13: "I can do all this through Him who gives me strength." Will God give us more than we can handle? Absolutely! But we don't have to do it alone either.

My Dad, before he died, messaged me and my brothers for Father's Day one year and said this:

"To my sons who are dads: Happy Father's Day! Celebrating you as you guard and shepherd the children God has entrusted you. It's an awesome task. As with all things.... designed not to make you happy but holy... and then God gives you lots of happiness in parenting too. We serve a great God!"

And isn't living to the glory of God what this life is for?

I wanted to bring this as evidence supporting the conversation and talking points that you guys discussed.

Mark, I appreciate you advocating being fruitful and multiplying and I wanted to encourage you to keep speaking up for that!

Lucas, I appreciate the real conversations that you have, the guests you host, and the thoughtful podcasts that you've put together! I think it's a great outreach to this generation to always keep our eyes up and give Reformed, Christian insight into key topics in our society!

NICK VAN DELFT
CHILLIWACK, BC



DEAR EDITOR,

After reading Mark Penninga's article "Help for the Anxious and Those Who Struggle With Measuring Up" in the May/June issue, I had a chance to reflect on an area of anxiety in my life. This issue has plagued me for as long as I can remember. The worst day of this fear was a few years ago on a particularly turbulent flight from San Diego to Seattle – I had to battle near-panic for 2 hours. So you now know my fear: flying!

Although I cognitively recognize the safety of airline flight, it simply triggers rapid heartbeat, hypervigilance, trembling, and intense, dark dread. Oh how punishing is the nagging fear of fear! Looking back, I now realize the Lord had provided a way of escape from this temptation, namely constant, pleaded, rehearsed, out loud speakings of 1 Peter 5:6-7:

"Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

At one point, after the captain announced a period of even greater turbulence expected in 10 minutes' time, I resorted to a measure of New Testament proportion: I commanded the turbulence to not increase whatsoever. And it didn't! Before landing, I was so relieved and so bolstered by faith, that I was ready to walk out on the wings, confident of God's loving care. It was 2 straight hours of singing and repeating

over and over and over, the precious word of God. And it bore fruit.

In subsequent flights, however, the problem re-surfaced, and again, 1 Peter 5:6-7 was my "go to confession." Nevertheless, I lamented the fact that victory was not sustained. What was wrong with my faith? I was tempted internally to admit defeat and concede my lack of faith. The breakthrough came by the grace of God, who gave to me a wonderful revelation. Here is the key which may help you, I pray: *when you rejoice and look forward to bringing your fear (anxiety) to the Lord, He will turn your irrational emotional response around.* It counters the glee of the devil. *Face the fear aggressively;* it is an opportunity to commune with the living God.

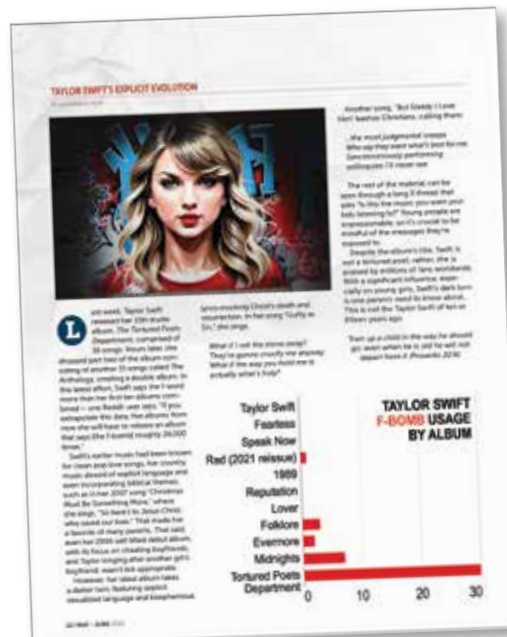
Now, as I am about to board yet another aircraft (with rain falling and likely unstable air ahead), I anticipate sweet fellowship with Jesus Christ. And by His grace, I am still edgy, but anticipating less and less emotional irrational impact. In short, He is giving me steps of victory, one flight at a time. How sweet is this?

JOHN BRINKERHOFF
KELOWNA, BC

DEAR EDITOR,

I am writing regarding Alexandra Ellison's "Taylor Swift's Explicit Evolution" article (May/June 2024). I am an 18-year-old who loves music and is concerned with the way that the music industry is going. I would like to thank you for publishing this article; it can be a touchy topic with a lot of people nowadays, but it must be talked about. What I mean by it being a touchy topic is that Swift's fans have raised her to a level of fame where it seems like they are worshipping her at this point, and this has become even more prevalent with her "Eras Tour." I am worried about the influence that Swift has been having on the youth of today, particularly the young girls and women. I am especially afraid that with her latest album release she will have more of a negative impact on the people listening. The themes of sexuality, using substances, and disobeying parents, are concerning. I think it is very important to point out the problems with the lifestyle Swift is portraying here, and important too, to make the Christian community aware. I am thankful that you were willing to publish this article and point out Swift's concerning behavior.

GLORIA NYWENING
WYOMING, ONTARIO



THANKING GOD FOR THE RICH

by Mark Penninga

Our Reformed communities include some very successful farmers, businessmen, and families, to whom God has entrusted a great deal of money and material wealth. Over the past fifteen years, I have come to know some of these men and women, as I was responsible for making sure that, first ARPA, and now *Reformed Perspective*, have the finances necessary to carry out their respective missions. In other words, it was my job to ask them for money.

While many people would rather swim in ice cold water or wear an “I ♥ Justin Trudeau” shirt in Alberta, than ask for donations, I have grown to enjoy these visits. That is because I have been so encouraged by the humble generosity and love that God has given to so many of these brothers and sisters in Christ.

WHAT WEALTH BRINGS

At the same time, because envy and coveting exist in the church as well, these riches sometimes create unfortunate barriers and even resentment among God’s people. Over the last several months, I’ve had the opportunity to sit down with a few of the wealthier people in our Reformed community to learn more about the challenges and opportunities that come from the money that God has entrusted to them. Here is some of what they shared:

Stewardship

In line with Scripture, there is a recognition that what has been entrusted to them isn’t actually their money. It is all God’s.

“What we have been given is obviously God’s doing. He puts the people in place and gives us the wisdom to do what we are doing. He put me in the place I’m in. The groundwork was laid for us.”

Loneliness

Sadly, money can create walls, even among those inside the Church:

- “Others don’t see the character you are. They see the stuff you have. People talk to you to get something. But they never talk to you otherwise.”
- “It is hard to fit in socially, so you end up associating with others like you who also have more money. These are people that can understand you and aren’t offended by the differences. This impacts our children as well.”
- “We purposely act like we don’t have a lot of money. It doesn’t consume my life. I would much rather have my faith and marriage and kids. There is so much more to life than money.”

- “People don’t realize that you can struggle personally, mentally, spiritually. They tend to think you don’t need help because you have money.”

Criticism

When generosity gets noticed publicly, it often leads to critical comments and resentment from the church community, rather than gratitude. On the one hand, our richer brothers and sisters are expected to cover the majority of the capital projects such as school additions, or budget shortfalls. On the other hand, it is almost impossible to do this in a way that is appreciated. “We were chastised big time for matching donations, even though our goal was simply to help” noted one businessman.

Pressures

If we take to heart the stewardship principle, “the rich” have more responsibility and a greater burden because they have more to steward faithfully. Many of us wouldn’t handle this well or enjoy it:

- “People don’t realize how hard it is to run a business, and the time and effort it takes.”
- “We face pressures of meeting commitments with banks, pressure from the many causes that need support, and a general expectation from local Christians that we ought to be the one to cover shortfalls. There are expectations from extended family for financial help, or employment.”
- “We face pressure to provide for all the families of the employees long-term. Laying people off was one of the hardest things I have had to do.”

YOU TOO

If the list of quotes above made you roll your eyes or think that these wealthy people are out of touch with reality, keep in mind that any North American reading this article is among the world’s wealthiest. Each of us has a far higher standard of living than the vast majority of humanity in the world today and throughout history. Regardless of whether we are a teenager with \$100 in the bank, a young couple who is renting rather than owning, or a retired couple living off of CPP, we all are rich because we have food, clothing, shelter, security, and medical care in abundance. If we relocated to a remote area of Uganda, we would sound just like the folks that I quoted above.

In other words, money is a very relative matter. And we have to be very careful about not judging others based on what we have. “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Matthew 7:2). With that said, all of us need to take seriously the warning in 1 Timothy 6:6-10, against the love of money.

LESSONS LEARNED

Through my years fundraising, I have learned some lessons:

1. **We are often wrong about who is generous and who isn’t:**
There are some individuals and families who are known in a local community as “very wealthy.” That may be true, but it doesn’t mean that they know how to give. In contrast, there are a lot of people who give very generously, and without being asked.



“We face pressures of meeting commitments with banks, pressure from the many causes that need support, and a general expectation from local Christians that we ought to be the one to cover shortfalls.”



3. **A relatively small number of people fund a lot of what happens:** I'm not privy to who funds the new churches, schools, and a host of other non-profits. But from what I have seen, the Reformed community relies on a relatively small number of individuals and families, many of whom people would never guess. For example, *Reformed Perspective* was bailed out by a couple families multiple times through its forty-year history. Without them, there would be no *RP* today. And a lot of ARPA's growth was possible thanks to a few generous individuals who were excited by what God was doing with the organization and wanted to see it go further. Without realizing it, a single small community contributes more than an entire province. And some large cities contribute almost nothing.
4. **The key ingredient is humility:** Whether we are able to write a cheque for \$25,000 or for \$10, the thing that matters most is the heart behind the giving. As I have come to know the hundreds of people who donate to these causes, the common ingredient that unites generous donors

The more important distinction is not between those who have money and those who don't, but between those who have learned how to give and those who haven't.

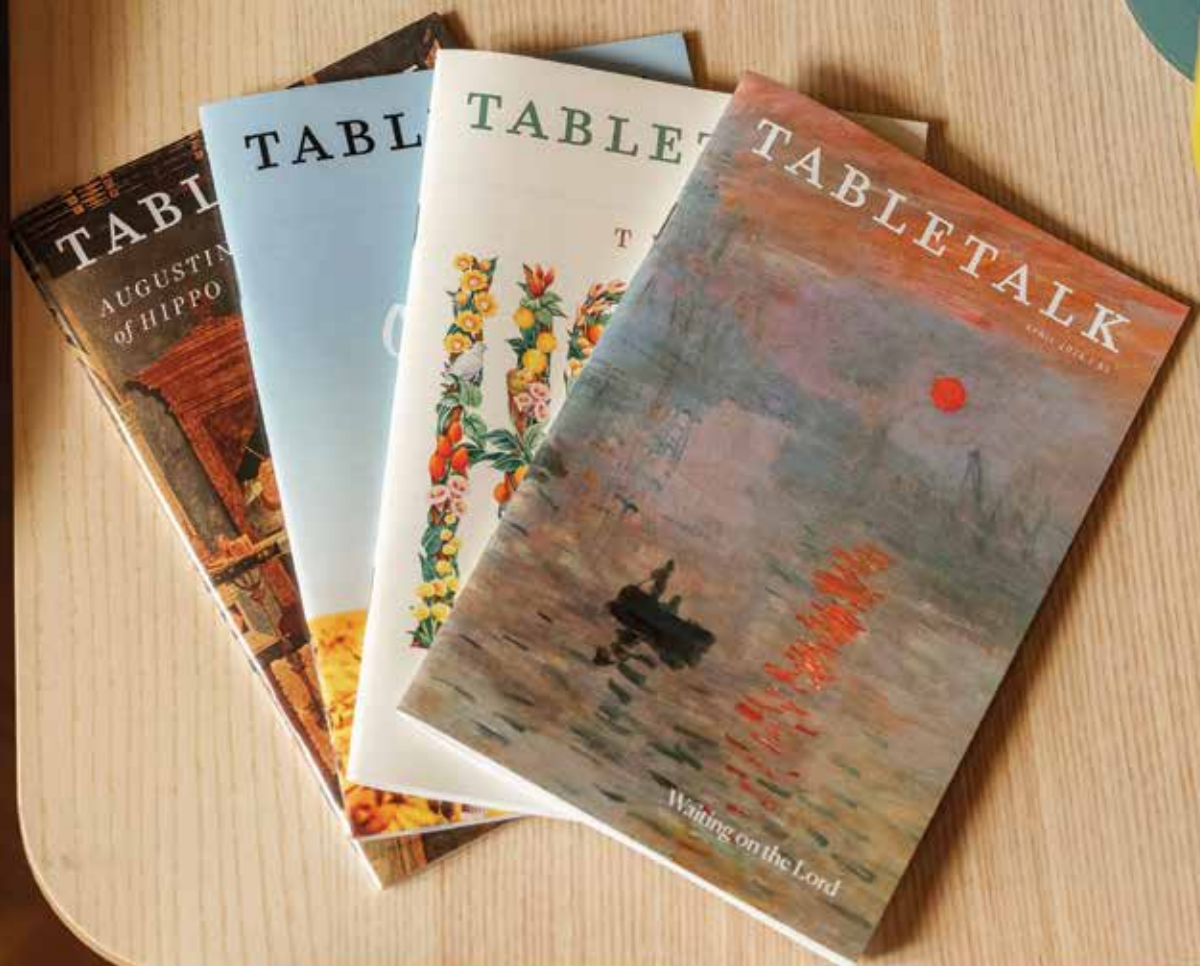
2. **The more important distinction is not between those who have money and those who don't, but between those who have learned how to give and those who haven't.** Everything does belong to God. Some people understand this and live it, and others don't. For those with a lot of money, some know how to build a business but haven't learned how to utilize this wealth to grow God's kingdom. Their business or property may have grown to be worth millions, but their giving isn't much different than the family living on a teacher's salary. Their eyes are closed to the impact they could have if they looked at their possessions with an eternal perspective (as explained so well in a booklet by Randy Alcorn called the *Treasure Principle*). On the other end of the spectrum, there are plenty of Christians who think that they are exempt from helping causes like building a school addition because there are others in the community who have far more money than they do. Out of discontentment with what God has given them, they decide that they can devote more to themselves, leaving others to donate. And in the Dutch-Reformed community, there also remains confusion between being stewardly (reusing Ziploc bags), and being miserly (expecting a Christian plumber to give you a generous discount since you're both Christians, but never thinking to pay him generously because he is your brother in the Lord).

of any amount is humility. They aren't looking for any recognition or reward. They find joy in giving money, just as others find joy in giving their time. They are like the good soil that bears a crop of 30, 60, or 100-fold (Matthew 13:23). In contrast, there are many people who have a lot of money or very little, who share something very different in common: they are possessed by their possessions. They fret over whatever amount they have, worried that it isn't enough, or that it will be lost to taxes or economic winds that they can't control. For them, money is thorns that choke them and prevent them from bearing much fruit (Matthew 13:22).

CONCLUSION

I'm grateful that it is God who decides what we need. We would make a horrible mess if it was up to us. I'm also grateful to God for surrounding us with so many brothers and sisters in Christ who understand that their money (as well as their time and skills) does not belong to them. Far from being reluctant givers, they are investing in countless causes and lives, and are doing so with joy.

And one day soon, God will allow us to see the abundant harvest of all of this giving. **RP**



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NEWS IN *Perspective*

TICKED-OFF HOCKEY FANS, AND 1.4 BILLION OTHER REASONS TO DEFUND THE CBC

BY JON DYKSTRA

The CBC got into trouble in late May and early June, when it broadcast the finale of the Eastern Conference between two American NHL teams, but not the last two games of the Western Conference Final, which featured the Edmonton Oilers as the last Canadian team standing. That got folks upset, including Conservative Party Deputy

Leader Tim Uppal, who tweeted:

"The Edmonton Oilers are the only Canadian team left in the playoffs. Despite receiving \$1.4 billion in taxpayer dollars this year, CBC decided not to air the Oilers games. Instead, CBC aired a *Just For Laughs* replay. It's time to defund the CBC. #DefundCBC"

It's not just those two missed games – there are 1.4 billion other reasons the CBC should be defunded. And they're not the only reporters the government is funding – legacy media outlets like the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* divvied up approximately \$885 million taxpayer dollars over the course of the last 5 years. The CBC took in more than \$5 billion tax dollars over that 5-year span, and also

more than \$2.5 billion in ad dollars. How much of that advertising revenue could online independents like the *Western Standard* (WesternStandard.news) or *True North* (TNC.news) have had coming their way if they weren't competing against these taxpayer-propped-up giants? We haven't even gotten into the CBC's "Pride" pushing, abortion-affirming, and transmutation-defending agenda. On these three fronts, and more, the CBC is opposing God Himself.

Then there's the enormous problem of the government subsidizing the very media that is supposed to hold it to account. We can be thankful that some independent outlets do still exist, and the Opposition Leader has learned how to use his YouTube channel to sidestep the media altogether to get his message out. But it shouldn't surprise us if the now paid-for legacy media is reluctant to bite the hand that feeds them.

So yes, let's defund the CBC.

And let's do more than that. As the Fraser Institute reported in their "Federal Support for Journalism" study, the government's attempts to support journalism haven't even preserved journalists' jobs. Since 2011 more media outlets have closed each year than new outlets have begun. The Liberals' most recent "media-supporting" effort, Bill C-11, has hurt rather than helped. It was supposed to support legacy media outlets by squeezing money out of social media heavyweights like Google and Meta whenever they listed a Canadian news article. While the government did get some money from Google, Meta decided that, instead of paying, they'd simply get rid of all the Canadian news off of Facebook. That hurt Canadian news organizations, big and small, by shutting down their access to their own social media audience. In our own case it halved *Reformed Perspective's* reach on Facebook.

The government should defund the CBC, but it shouldn't stop there. The government needs to stop meddling in the media in every other way too. Who knows what kind of media we might get if only open, fair competition were allowed to exist.



ALBERTOS POLIZOGOPOULOS: LAWYER FOR THE LORD

BY MARK PENNINGA



n May 9, 2024, the LORD called Albertos Polizogopoulos to Himself, completing his task on earth at the age of 41.

Not long after starting law school, Albertos was introduced to his wife-to-be Faye Sonier, a follower of Christ. Albertos decided to investigate the Christian faith for himself and was convicted by God's Word. He proceeded to dedicate the rest of his life to his Lord Jesus Christ, who drew him closer and closer.

Unlike the United States, Canada doesn't have many Christian lawyers devoted to upholding constitutional freedoms. Albertos has been one of the few exceptions. He regularly defended life and freedom in Canada's courts, including ten appearances before the Supreme Court of Canada.

When I first met Albertos, through our mutual friend and colleague André Schutten, he jovially compelled us to stay up well into the early hours of the new day. He loved to tell stories and debate, while enjoying a good cigar. But as the years progressed, he changed his priorities and devoted his



time to his family.

ARPA Canada worked with Albertos regularly through the years, either by retaining him or intervening alongside him. He also wrote for RP recently about the coming battles over church property.

His obituary testified to how the LORD continued to change Albertos and draw him closer, especially since he was diagnosed with cancer three years ago.

"Albertos frequently spoke about how Christ changed his life. He exhibited peace about his terminal

diagnosis and a profound trust that God was sovereign.... Days before his death, he looked at his wife from his hospital bed and said, 'I don't think I know anyone more blessed than I am.'"

There are very few lawyers who have the willingness and ability to devote their full-time career to upholding the value of human life, and our fundamental freedoms. I thank God for Albertos. His earthly race has completed, and I pray that more young Christians will pick up his baton and keep running.

MILLIONS SPENT AND STILL NO GRAVES

BY MARK PENNINGA



According to a report from the *Western Standard*, the federal government has confirmed that it had given \$7.9 million dollars to uncover the "heart-breaking truth" surrounding claims of a mass grave next to a former residential school near Kamloops, BC. In spite of this funding, no bodies have been discovered on the site to date, and there also has been no disclosure of how the funds were used by the First Nation.

In 2021, media outlets around the world shared the story of the "mass grave" of 215 indigenous children that was detected near the former residential school. Hundreds more "plausible burials" were reported at numerous other sites following then, prompting an outcry that has continued till this day.

As *Reformed Perspective* previously detailed in an extensive article on this topic, it is critical to determine whether



these plausible burials are actual graves, because when truth is verified, trust is built, and a foundation exists for genuine justice and reconciliation. To this point, all we still have are questions.

Undated photo is of Kamloops Indian Residential School, from the Oblate Fathers Ontario collection at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (10a-c000432-d0007-001).



SHOULD GOVERNMENT TRY TO BOOST FERTILITY?

BY HARMA-MAE SMIT

In his article, "We are not taking Canada's fertility crisis seriously enough," economist Tim Sargent highlights that a society with fewer couples and children will have more loneliness and depression, and will struggle to afford pensions and healthcare.

His solution? For governments to create incentives that make it easier to have and care for children. This could include making housing more affordable, offering financial incentives through the tax system, helping with childcare costs and reducing education requirements so young people can enter the workforce earlier.

The trouble is, there's very little evidence that government incentives can increase the birth rate. According to *The Economist*, since 2006 South Korea has been spending just over 1% of their GDP a year on incentives such as tax breaks for parents, maternity care and state-sponsored dating. And yet they continue to have the lowest birth rate in the world. Hungary has also put a lot of effort into increasing its birth rate, with some success, but they have not yet succeeded in raising the number of births to a "replacement rate" of 2.1

births per woman. The best a government policy seems to be able to do is to slow down the decline.

And this makes sense – birth rates tend to be higher not in richer countries with more incentives but in poorer countries with low GDP. Money alone is unlikely to be the solution. While people instinctively feel a lack of money is a major factor, other areas of life (that government has less control over) play a significant role in the low birth rate as well – like the fraying social fabric which puts people at odds with each other, the lack of community support that makes potential parents feel insecure, and the pressure to establish a career before a family. Other challenges include the struggle singles who want children experience in finding a like-minded partner to settle down with, the pervasive cultural messages that raising children is stressful and burdensome, and the looming sense of despair that a large number of young people feel about their future. These are not simple challenges for a government policy to address!

In contrast, the Church may be able to play a more effective role in providing social support, encouragement, and hope in the face of despair to potential young parents.

"IT'S WRONG TO MUTILATE MINORS," SAYS GOVERNOR

BY JON DYKSTRA

Both Florida's Governor Ron DeSantis and Alberta's Premier Danielle Smith have backed bans on transgender "treatments" – breast and genital amputations, puberty blockers, and hormones – for anyone under 16. And both have been rightly celebrated by conservatives for their position.

But even as she announced her ban, Danielle Smith also promised to make it easier for Alberta adults to get these same amputations, chemical castrations, and other experimental drugs. Currently, Albertans have to go out of province to get "bottom" and "top" amputations done, but Smith pledged to make efforts to attract "specialists" to Alberta, so these terribly confused people can have their healthy body parts cut off in-province instead. So what Smith banned for children, she affirmed as legitimate medical treatments for adults.

Meanwhile, after a federal judge struck down Florida's ban in June, Governor DeSantis pledged to appeal and actually called out these "treatments" for what they are.

"...it's wrong to mutilate minors.... You're not allowed to get a tattoo, but somehow you can have your privates cut off? Give me a break. This is wrong.... Are we going to be rooted in truth as a society or not? If we are rooted in truth, then you would say of course you can't do these surgeries because it's not going to take and transform somebody that's a male into a female."

Let's not minimize the good Smith has done for confused children in Alberta, but let's also not overlook the monstrous harm she's doing to the province's deluded adults. We can praise her as the bravest premier in the country, even as we demand she be all the more so by following Governor DeSantis' lead. Smith, too, needs to call out transgenderism for the lie it is, and denounce bottom and top amputations for the mutilations they are.

POLLING SHOWS CANADIANS ARE CONFUSED AND WRONG ON ABORTION

BY JOSH GILMAN

A recent poll on the legality of abortion in Canada is bad news for pro-life advocates in Canada, but it doesn't tell the whole story. Conducted by Leger, the poll found that 80% of Canadians believed that abortion should be legal. Even worse, a mere 6% of Canadians said they were strongly opposed to abortion being legal. Considering that abortion is currently legal in Canada in all circumstances up to, and including birth, the number is shockingly high.

However, a separate poll asking Canadians their thoughts on the morality of abortion yielded very different results. The poll, conducted by Research Co. early in June, found only 58% of Canadians say they believe abortion is morally acceptable.

These recent polls contain two pieces of bad news. Firstly, a shockingly high

number of Canadians believe that abortion should be legal. Secondly, many Canadians have bought the lie that morality shouldn't impact legality. It should be no surprise that too few politicians are willing to stand up for life when – if these polls are taken at face value – half of Canadians who believe abortion is morally wrong don't think it should be illegal. Currently, the pro-life community in Canada has lost the battle to the false narrative that the murder of babies should be a political issue.

This leaves us with three groups of people who should know better:

- Politicians waiting to find their voice for the voiceless until the public is behind them should realize they will



ultimately answer to God – not to polls.

- Canadians who know abortion is wrong morally should know that the murder of babies is not legally defensible.
- Canadians who think abortion is fine should realize murdering babies can't be moral.

This is reprinted from the June 15 edition of "The Dominion Report," a free weekly newsletter you can sign up for at DominionReport.ca/subscribe.

MORTGAGE DELINQUENCIES UP MORE THAN 20%

BY MARK PENNINGA

Increased spending and costs are catching up with Canadian households, according to the latest figures from the credit agency Equifax Canada.

Mortgage debt makes up a whopping three quarters (74.4%) of total consumer debt, even though the number of new mortgages hit an all-time low in the first quarter of 2024. More than a third (37.1%) of consumers extended their mortgage amortization as the effects of increased mortgage rates began to take hold.

Particularly troubling is the increase in delinquencies, i.e. missed payments. In Ontario, the balance of mortgages in "severe delinquency" – 90 or more days without payment – increased to over \$1 billion, or twice the level of severe delinquency before Covid. In early June, Rebecca Oakes, VP of Advanced Analytics at Equifax Canada, explained that "mortgage stress testing," introduced back in 2016, helped

prevent even more delinquencies. This "test" gauged whether or not a borrower would still be able to handle their mortgage payments if rates were to take an unfortunate bounce upward.

"[It] has helped to mitigate against the full effect of sustained high interest rates, but we still saw more than 34,000 consumers missing a payment on their mortgage in Q1,

which is up 22.7 per cent compared to 12 months ago."

In recent years our federal government has led the charge in running massive debts, with many provincial governments following suit. Although political parties used to campaign on the promise of balanced budgets, Canadians have rewarded parties who promise increased spending and large deficits. And especially since 2020, Canadians have followed their example, racking up massive debt from both home purchases and other big expenses.

A few thousand years ago, a wise teacher taught us that "the borrower is a slave of the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). Our government acts as if it is possible to incur debt and not pay for it, but we mustn't let their example mislead us. Solomon's ancient warning remains every bit as relevant to today, so take on debt with great caution!



NEW BRUNSWICK STILL ISN'T BANNING SMARTPHONES IN SCHOOL

BY HARMA-MAE SMIT

According to Paige MacPherson and Alex Whalen of the Fraser Institute, cellphones' negative impact on students has been especially apparent in New Brunswick. The Maritime province has *not* banned cellphones in school, and *has* seen math scores among 15-year-olds plummet between 2003 and 2022. Worse than that, these scores trail the national average significantly.

Other provinces, including British Columbia, Ontario, Alberta and Quebec, have introduced, or will introduce, smartphone bans in schools. And surprisingly, a large majority of Canadians seem to favor bans like these (one poll listed it as 54% completely in agreement and 26% somewhat so). Rather than seeing it as a restriction on student freedom, Canadians seem to recognize there is wisdom in taking

these devices away during at least part of the day.

Maybe that support comes from grown-ups recognizing how hard it is to regulate their own phone use, how difficult it is to resist the urge to look at it after just a few seconds of boredom. Maybe responsible use of phones during focus times isn't possible, especially when these phones are designed to be used as *often* as possible.

If the world around us is starting to reassess their relationships with their phones, maybe it's time for us as Christians to be more confident in the boundaries we draw with technology. Especially when young developing minds are concerned.

After all, with everything tempting us to use our phones more and more,



fighting that temptation will take the support of a community to reduce our dependence – and our children's dependence – on them. As parents, we will have to agree to be comfortable with phoning the school instead of reaching our children directly. As adults whom children look up to, we'll have to demonstrate how to handle those moments of boredom. And as a community, we can prioritize face-to-face interactions and social connections in the real world, enough to make the virtual world look much less attractive.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT BANS LIGHTBULBS IT ONCE PUSHED

BY JON DYKSTRA

Canada's Department of the Environment is now banning the sale of lightbulbs that it once pushed. Compact fluorescent lightbulbs – the lightbulbs that contained mercury – will be phased out as of Dec. 31, 2025. But for years these same bulbs were promoted by the government and environmentalists like David Suzuki as an important

means of reducing greenhouse gases.

They were promoted even as the government also warned us that should a lightbulb break, then homeowners had to get people and pets out of the room. After ventilating the space for 15 minutes, we could return, equipped with disposable gloves, to then pick up, and seal up, the remains of the lightbulb. In the name of combating global warming, they pushed a product that is so problematic they are now banning it.

If that inspires a lack confidence in the government's collective smarts, that's as it should be. But this lightbulb reversal isn't about how the *Liberals* have mangled this matter. The problem here isn't *who* is in charge, but rather *how much* they are trying to be in charge of.

What this blunder underscores is a curious Christian argument against

catastrophic global warming. Fighting this supposed existential crisis seems to require absolutely *everything* be the government's business, from weighing in on the fertilizer farmers use, to the water consumption of your toilet, the car you drive, and even the lightbulbs you use. But God doesn't prescribe a government of that size. Instead, He divvied up the responsibilities among various governments: self-government, family, church, and yes, also civil government. So if a problem requires the civil government to take up an oversized role God never intended for it, then might that be an indicator that the problem isn't quite what it has been made out to be?

After all, if our government can't even get lightbulbs right, they clearly don't have the omniscience required to run everything else. And God wouldn't expect them to.



YOUNG MEN BUILDING A HOME FOR THE REFORMED CONFESSIONS

BY MARK PENNINGA

Some ambitious young men can fix their own vehicles, and others can help frame a home or build an impressive app. But two young men from Southern Alberta, who have impressive tech and video skills, have channeled their energy towards advancing something else entirely – the Reformed confessions, including the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, and Westminster Standards.

The Reformed creeds and confessions aren't owned by any particular person or church. That is a good thing, but it comes with a challenge for those looking to read and understand them better online. Although there are many sites that list the text of the confessions, or provide commentary on various aspects of these confessions, it can be a dizzying experience.

"These documents are at the core of our Reformed faith and yet they have no true home. No location with everything you could want on our confessions," explain David Visser and Kyle Vasas, the men behind Faith to Film which is working to change this with an impressive new project: ReformedConfessions.org.

Not only does

the site include the confessions in an easy-to-navigate layout, it also provides extended commentary and sermon libraries on these confessions. The project is just the latest from Faith to Film. They have also done a documentary on Calvinism and a large video series on the "essential truths" of the Christian faith. As well, they have produced some excellent videos for Reformed Perspective.

And this website is just the start of their vision for the Reformed Confessions project. Faith to Film's next goal is to create a high-quality video series on the Heidelberg Catechism, with one short video introducing each Lord's Day, utilizing animation and featuring different pastors from different denominations.

The two young men behind Faith to Film have the ability and the drive but rely on others who have the financial means to sponsor these videos. If you are interested in helping, check out ReformedConfessions.org or FaithToFilm.ca.



OH DEER! GOVERNMENT PAYING NON-CANADIANS TO HUNT

BY MARK PENNINGA

Like many Canadian regions, Sidney Island has a deer problem. The small island, not far from Victoria, BC, is home to European Fallow deer, whose growing numbers are hurting the native vegetation and trees.

And though local hunters are able to take care of the problem, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) obtained documents that reveal the government-approved solution involved hiring foreign snipers from the US and New Zealand, armed with restricted rifles, and flying them in helicopters, to take shots at the deer. Phase one of the operation resulted in 84 deer killed at a cost of more than \$800,000, which works out to about \$10,000 per dead deer.

Eighteen of these ended up being the wrong type of deer, something that would be illegal if it were done by law-abiding hunters.

In contrast, local residents organized their own hunt last fall, killing 54 deer without any cost to taxpayers.

But this was just phase one. The CTF also obtained a detailed project budget that revealed plans by Parks Canada to spend \$11.9 million for this effort.



PREMIER FORD CALLS ON THE FEDS TO MAKE EV CARS MORE EXPENSIVE

BY JON DYKSTRA



ntario's premier has asked the federal government to impose a 100% tariff on Chinese electric vehicles, which would

make these cars twice as expensive as they would otherwise be. Why would Premier Doug Ford want to so strongly discourage consumers from buying these EVs? Aren't EVs the way of the future?

The premier explained he wants the tariff to protect Ontario jobs. Back in April, he announced he was gifting \$2.5 billion of Ontario taxpayers' money to induce Honda to build four EV manufacturing plants in the province. The federal government added in their own \$2.5 billion in tax credits. Combined, this \$5 billion would create 1,000 jobs, which works out to a cost of \$5 million per job. It's not surprising then, that the premier wants to protect these positions – they were a very expensive purchase.

But why are these Chinese cars so cheap? In an interview with the Toronto Sun's Brian Lilley, the president of Canada's Automotive Parts Association, Flavio Volpe, raised the possibility of forced labor – slaves – sometimes being involved. That could be a reason to ban sales altogether, not simply penalize them.

Another critique is that the Chinese government is heavily subsidizing these vehicles. But The Hub has calculated that overall, the federal, Ontario, and Quebec governments have combined to offer \$40 billion in subsidies and tax credits to our own EV industry. Or as Kiernan Green noted:

"This represents 15 percent more than the companies themselves have put forward for their investments in Canada's EV sector."

If subsidization is an unfair business practice, then shouldn't we should stop it ourselves (Matt. 7:12)? And if it isn't unfair, why are we complaining?

There are other issues involved here: as Flavio Volpe noted, the same federal government that is subsidizing Canadian



production is also involved in subsidizing foreign EV production too – the Liberals announced a program this past December that could credit EV manufacturers, both domestic and foreign, with as much as a \$20,000 credit per EV car sold. It is more complicated than that, but the short of it is, the government has gotten itself so muddled up in this market that its right hand is actively working against its left hand. Might that be evidence that it should get both hands, and its nose, out of the business sphere?

Taxpayers are shouldering a heavy burden for EV cars. And now, if this tariff goes through, Canadians will be asked to shoulder even more, as less expensive Chinese competitors will be tarified out of the marketplace.

There is a broader lesson here, as this is what tariffs always do, protecting local producers at the expense of local consumers. God calls on the government to administer justice, and one of the first principles of justice is impartiality (Lev. 19:15, James 2:8). What we have happening here is an example of the government picking winners and losers, favoring EV producers over EV purchasers (and all of it done at the expensive of taxpayers). Why the one over the other? What business is it of government to show such favoritism?

Picture credit: adapted from a photo by Bruce Reeve/flickr.com and used under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.0 license.

PORNHUB FOLLOWS THROUGH ON THREAT TO BAN ITS OWN PORN

BY JON DYKSTRA



fter state legislators in Kentucky voted unanimously to ban porn for under 18-year-olds, one of the world's largest porn companies – Canada's Pornhub – notified users there that they'd no longer be able to access their videos. The legislation requires pornographers

to get identification from users to ensure that they are over 18, and similar legislation has already passed in other states. And Pornhub has, instead of implementing the requirements, protested the law by promising to remove access to their site in those locations. It's a move akin to the Philistines turning their own swords on each other in 1 Samuel 14. God can make his enemies take themselves down!

WE AREN'T ALONE!

1,000+ converge in Texas for courageous faith

by Mark Penninga

In 1 Kings 19 we find Elijah lamenting to God that the Israelites had rejected God's covenant and that he alone was left, and Queen Jezebel was out to kill him too. God informed Elijah that he had it wrong, and that God had reserved a throng of 7,000 others who had not bowed to Baal.

I recently assembled with a couple dozen Canadians and over a thousand others in Arlington, Texas for the 2024 Colson Center national conference. Listening to the stories and seeing this throng of believers, it was very evident that God continues to preserve His people through each age, and that He also calls us to stand firm in the face of the Jezebels of our day.

As I've shared before, the Colson Center equips Christians to apply their faith to the cultural moment where God has placed us. This particular conference was focused on equipping attendees for "courageous faith." As the organizers explained:

"Faithfulness to Christ is not possible when we capitulate to profane cultural narratives, no matter how often or loud they are repeated.... The clash between the sacred and the profane is no longer 'out there' and the pressure to compromise is not merely hypothetical."

COURAGE PAST AND PRESENT

In the opening session on "courageous citizenship," the Colson Center's John Stonestreet interviewed Rod Dreher,

the author of the well-known book *Live Not by Lies*, and also Kamila Bendová, who was featured in Dreher's book. Dr. Bendová and her family live in the Czech Republic. Along with her late husband Václav Benda, they raised six children while holding underground seminars in opposition to their communist government, all while having their home bugged. Dr. Bendová shared how she didn't protect her children from their resistance efforts but rather involved them.

Now, many decades later, she reflects that all of her children and grandchildren have remained faithful.

We can learn from the past, but need to live in the present. Doctor Kristin Collier spoke about the courage to change your mind, recounting how her journey from unbelief to faith in Christ resulted in 180 degree changes to her convictions about contentious issues like abortion. God then forced her to make a choice to follow Him in her public work as well,



Mark and Jaclyn Penninga were just a couple of the Canadians at the Colson Conference. Other Reformed Christians included Rev. and Mrs. Slomp, and *RP* contributor Mark Slomp and his wife Jennifer.

which came at a cost. She pointed us to Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one,” noting that at the core of courage is listening to and obeying the Word of God.

Reverend Calvin Robinson, a broadcaster and commentator from England who himself was cancelled for his faith, challenged participants “we are called to be cancelled for our faith. We should embrace it rather than be afraid of it.” He proceeded to outline how our spiritual enemy is trying to divide and conquer by having Christians look to each other as moral compasses rather than looking to the teachings of Christ.

Other speakers bravely and compassionately shared their stories and lessons about critical theory, cultivating a

healthy identity, artificial reproduction, transgenderism, palliative care, and encountering suffering, all through the lens of living faithfully for our Lord.

CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

It is one thing to read articles, listen to podcasts, or watch videos about these matters and another to be physically present with hundreds of other followers of Christ, growing in our walk together. We don’t all get the privilege of doing that at a conference like this, but we do have the ability to gather with our brothers and sisters in church weekly, in addition to Bible studies and fellowship in our homes. Let’s not miss these opportunities to spur each other on to godliness in this present age!

If it interests you, the next Colson Center national conference is scheduled for May 30 to June 1, 2025 in Louisville, Kentucky, and we heard that Reformed authors Carl Trueman and Rosaria Butterfield are both scheduled to speak there. Pro-life apologist Scott Klusendorf will also be there. You can find out more at ColsonConference.org.

Although Canada isn’t blessed with a conference like this, *Reformed Perspective* hopes to help change this with something similar (though much smaller and simpler) in the years to come. As valuable as a magazine, podcast, newsletter, website, and apps are, there is no substitute to gathering with others to worship God together and spur each other on in our walk. RP

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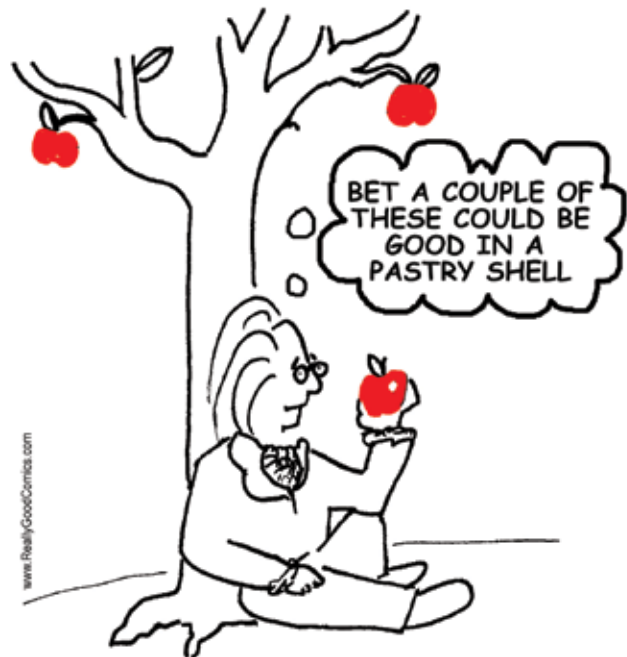
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A full-page photograph of a police officer in tactical gear. The officer is wearing a helmet with a camera, a face mask, and a vest with "POLICE" written on it. They are holding a rifle and standing between a silver car on the left and a black SUV on the right. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

by Mark Penninga

THANKING GOD *for* LAW ENFORCERS

Brad Stikma
in his work clothes

It was a beautiful spring day near Edmonton, Alberta, with the intensity of the sun making up for a hint of winter that wasn't quite ready to let go. I was sitting on a brick patio outside the home of police officer Brad Stiksma to hear from his first-hand experience about the life of a Christian law-enforcement officer.

Brad has served on the Edmonton City Police force for seventeen years and has seen his roles and responsibilities continually grow in this time. I knew enough about Brad in advance of the interview to respect his ability and integrity. And I wanted to dig into this deeper, to examine whether these traits were true of the law enforcement profession more generally.

Canada has over 70,000 police officers, which works out to about 180 per 100,000 people. We rely on them every day and night, yet the profession gets very little appreciation in the public, including from the mainstream media. Is this bad rap well deserved, or is it time we showed a whole lot more appreciation and respect for these authorities?

FINDING HIS CALLING

Brad didn't set his sights on policing till his mid-twenties. He first pursued a career doing land surveying. He found the studies enjoyable but the actual job too boring, so he moved on to a construction job for five years. Although he enjoyed the work, he realized it likely wouldn't be a good long-term option. He started investigating other careers.

"I saw the qualifications for police officer and I thought that I could do these things. And it sounds interesting. So I asked my wife about it. At the time we had two kids. And she's like, 'No, we're not. There's no way.'"

That wasn't the end of the conversation. Brad had two good friends who were police officers so he and his wife met with them and their wives to better understand the job and the dangers involved. The conversation convicted both of



them that it was worth pursuing.

Policing is overseen by the provincial governments in Canada. Alberta doesn't have its own provincial police the way that Ontario or Quebec does. Instead, some of the cities have municipal police agencies, and the rest of the province is under the jurisdiction of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Brad liked the idea of working with the Edmonton City Police. "I know that I'm sleeping in my own bed every night, and that's really

nice. I'm where I grew up. This is my hometown." In contrast, RCMP officers are posted to communities, sometimes in very remote regions of the country.

Being willing is a necessary, but not sufficient, step. To qualify for the Edmonton Police, Brad had to first undergo a written test, followed by an aptitude test, and a fitness test, before getting a behavioral interview that assessed how he would deal with various challenges. Next, there was a requirement to disclose anything he had ever done that may impact his suitability for the profession, followed by a lie detector test and then a psychology exam. "Then they'll decide if they want to hire you or not."

In Brad's case, the door opened.

FROM GENERAL DUTY TO LEADING THE SWAT TEAM

"Every police officer starts with just general duty, doing patrol in a uniform in a marked police car and going into general calls for service," explained Brad. "You do the six months of training academy and then you get in the street and usually do a minimum of about three years." Brad did this for exactly three years, before applying for and joining the more specialized surveillance team.



A photo of the 80 officers that had to come out late last year to separate two groups of hundreds of men who were fighting at an Eritrean festival.



To protect the public can mean taking on all sorts of hazardous duties. While the protective equipment is impressive, it can't eliminate the danger.

"So I did surveillance, just completely covert, like regular vehicles, regular clothes, watching crime. I did that for two and a half years.... Honestly, it was probably the most fun part of my career because it was like cops and robbers, kind of like being a kid, just watching people do crime and arrest them."

But each of these special positions has a tenure, a maximum number of years that you can serve. In the case of surveillance, it was just two and half years.

From there Brad went through a rigorous competition for the city's tactical team, more commonly referred to as a SWAT team (special weapons and tactics), where he was permitted to serve for eight years. "That was the pinnacle of working with the best of the best. We had a fantastic team, a really tight knit team."

"People often think that that kind of work must not be very busy in Edmonton," explained Brad. The team has an armored vehicle, and are often asked by the public if they ever need to use it and if they even have to deal with guns and situations requiring special forces in a city

like Edmonton. "Almost every day we take that [armored vehicle] out to something. In eight years there, I think I was involved in over 1100 high risk incidents."

A role like this required a lot of specialized training. "In that time, I got to train with some amazing special forces, like the Polish Grom and the Dutch Marines and the JTF2 and all kinds of SWAT teams from all over North America. It was the coolest job I've ever had. And I wouldn't trade that for much of anything."

SERVING BY LEADING

Brad credits that time to when he grew most as a leader. "I thought I knew a little bit about teamwork and leadership before that, but I didn't really at all." In the tactical unit he was taught how to build teams, get people working towards a common goal, develop respect, and all with a group of "type A dudes." He was selected as the team leader for four years, which meant that he was responsible for listening to the people on the ground, coming up with a plan, executing the plan, and then determining how they could learn from how it went to do better the next time.

After reaching the maximum number of years on the tactical team, Brad was promoted in 2021 to serve as sergeant of a patrol squad in the city's downtown. This also meant the nature of his work changed again. "I wasn't much of a policeman anymore. I wasn't doing the police work. I'm leading the police work and building the teams and that was super rewarding." In January of this year, he was promoted again to staff sergeant "so my job is to basically manage the policing response in downtown [Edmonton]."

In all of this, Brad has been able to not just walk according to his Christian values, but also model them to other officers as he leads them. Without reading the Bible to his colleagues he is able to demonstrate biblical truths.

"I can just share those principles because they're the right way to do things. They're absolutely the right way to do things. So when you teach them, and they see the fruit of it, it just starts to build."

He has found this to be the most re-

warding and satisfying position he has had yet.

“It’s actually not hard at all to build these teams where they all start to serve each other instead of serve themselves and be only interested in themselves. And you can do that by example.”

I asked Brad if his story is unique or whether other law enforcement officers can also share in some of these positive experiences. “I think I’ve been really blessed to have some fantastic leaders who set me up for success,” answered Brad. Yet he also thinks his experiences are very realistic for others. “That’s kind of the fantastic thing of the police world. There’s so many different types of people who do the job, because there’s so many different types of responsibilities.” He proceeded to give examples of those who are gifted with working with the socially challenged, investigating collisions, surveillance, and even doing presentations to children in schools.

As for himself, he has always had a heart for “catching the worst criminals that there are out there. That’s what I’ve spent my career doing. And I’ve loved every minute of it.” Later he explained his motivation further.

“There are people out there who can’t defend themselves, they don’t know how to defend themselves, they’re vulnerable. And there’s a lot of violent crime, where people are being hurt, or being killed and any way that I can prevent that, that’s my reward. That’s why I’m not interested in giving people a speeding ticket, if you’re going to a soccer game, when we’re going 10 kilometers over.”

A FORCE FOR GOOD

It is one thing for one officer like Brad to have these good values and motivations. But is he the exception or the norm? I also asked Brad if his deep-seated desire for justice is actualized, if



The fact that the TV cameras show Brad in the middle of a protest for transgender rights doesn’t mean he is being supportive of the cause. Rather, he is protecting these citizens no less than others.

(Picture credit: Global News screenshot)

he really is able to stop “the worst of the worst.”

He gave an emphatic yes, but also clarified that the branch of government in charge of law enforcement is distinct from the courts. “We put [the offenders] into the justice system, and then we have very little control of what that looks like.” And the results are not always what they’d hope.

Brad also recognizes difficulties within the law enforcement branch as well:

“There’s brokenness in this organization, for sure. This isn’t a bunch of perfect Christians here, right? No, we’re humans. And so things do go wrong.”

But he didn’t stop there.

“But the job is still being done, it’s still being done very well. If you look at the amount of moving parts and amount of things that the police have very little control of, and yet have to bring some sort of peace to, basically everybody’s worst day, it does function very well.”

And it isn’t just his word that things are healthy.

“There are very few other organizations or professions where the accountability levels are so high, that if something’s not right, if something isn’t healthy, it comes to light. It has to come to light. There’s so many checks and balances, there’s so many internal investigations. You’re in the public eye all the time.”

That is especially the case in this day and age when people can record whatever a police officer says or does and upload it to Tik Tok or YouTube in minutes, without any context.

“When there are people who make poor decisions and consistently make poor decisions, they come to light, they get dealt with through our professional standards branch process.” In addition to their own reviews, there is a provincial response team that oversees serious matters and also deals with appeals.

“The public can 100% trust that the police organization, for sure Edmonton Police, and I think across this country, that the motives are right, the intentions are right to serve the people.”

Brad then took the opportunity to challenge those who say there is systemic racism in the police service. “That’s just not true. That’s a narrative. And it’s simply not true.” He went on to explain “I have never seen someone oppressed or suppressed because of their race, their religion, their culture, their ethnicity, I’ve never seen it. It’s not a thing.”

We also discussed situations where there could be conflict between what we are told to do, and what we believe to be right. But here too, Brad was adamant.

“I’m never going to be forced to go and do something that I don’t believe. I would just say, I’m not comfortable doing that. That’s against my religion. I won’t do that. And they’ll find someone else to do it.”

At the same time, he recognizes that his job is to protect everybody, even if he doesn’t agree with what they are advocating for. The fact that the TV cameras show him in the middle of a protest for transgender rights doesn’t mean he is being supportive of the cause. Rather, he is protecting these citizens no less than others.

GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS

Not only does he not see racism, the opposite is true. He sees sacrificial love. Law enforcement officers literally lay down their lives to care for the public. “I’ve seen multiple times someone shooting a gun in a public space and police officers running towards it, to go and save people’s lives.” Referencing John 15:13, he elaborated:

“at the end of the day there’s no more clear example of it than that. There’s no greater love than to lay your life down for your brother.”

Given this positive testimony, I asked Brad if the profession attracts a disproportionate number of Christians to serve. He explained that the police force has to represent the entire population, so they hire male, female, Indigenous, East Indian, and a whole variety of people. But he also acknowledges that there are a lot of Christians. And even if the officers aren’t Christian, the hiring process is built around values that align with Christian principles. “Good heart, good actions, does come to the surface with community service rewards. Most of those rewards are premised around serving others, giving up yourself.” He



It's very much about being a part of a team.

also shared that when he was on the tactical team of eight people, at least half were devout Christians.

Brad also spoke to how the core values of the Edmonton City Police include courage, integrity, accountability, and innovation, all of which align with Christian principles. These values direct the hiring and the promotions and permeate the culture of the organization. “I think that people are seeing that the values, which are biblical principles, those are the ones that work.”

LAW ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES

Our conversation then shifted to the challenges that come with an intense occupation like this, for both the individual and their families. Brad explained that one of the most challenging aspects of the profession is the shift work, resulting in long hours away from family and church. “So you better be on somewhat of a firm foundation before you even consider the idea of working shift work.” This is because you won’t be able to take part in the regular nourishment that comes from attending every worship service and Bible study. Missing even a couple in a row can make it difficult to stay in the loop.

The hours also mean you don’t see your children each night and will miss their sporting events, as well as their birthdays. One of the impacts he didn’t expect was the challenge of maintaining friendships.

“When you have good friends, and they invite you to some sort of function, and you can’t go once, it’s no big deal. They will invite you the next time. But when they invite you two, three, four or five times and you’re unable to go they just start to not invite you.”

His point is not to blame anyone but to rather to help others be prepared. “You need to recognize that if you want to keep relationships, there needs to be some effort on your own part. And that’s not easy.” He also noted that effort needs to be put into catching the church services that he missed on Sunday.

“If you missed the service, and you have four days off during the week, well, listen. You can listen to the recording or something else that can keep you in touch with the church and what’s being preached, and who needs some prayers and things like that, because you can get very disconnected very quickly.”

To add to this are the pressures of being influenced by the world in a very worldly job. “When you’re working in the world at a level where there’s the pressures of shift work, being tired, decision making can get skewed.” He also acknowledged that when you are working with really dedicated and motivated people, work can feel like play and family life can feel like work. He proceeded by recommending the book *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement* by Dr. Kevin M. Gilmartin which he has really grown to appreciate.

In addition to good resources, Brad emphasized the importance of having a peer group, including coaches and mentors. “You need to have some people in your life that you can go to that aren’t cops just because it grounds you. I have a personal mentor from one of our Canadian Reformed churches who I meet once a month, we have great discussions both ways. I also have work coaches and mentors to keep me on track at work.”

He acknowledged that the profession requires that they see people on their worst days, and that takes a toll, especially if you are unable to detach from that at the end of the day. “One of my first training officers said, do your best not to take work home with you, like separate work and home.” Brad has come to really take this to heart, choosing to not even take pictures of his family to work, and not bringing work into his home.

When I asked how we can pray for law enforcement officers, Brad asked for prayer not just for them but for their families, who are directly impacted by their work and schedules. He also asked for prayers for understanding and grace, as well as safety and that the officers would stay rooted in their faith amidst a very worldly environment.

A CALLING, NOT A JOB

Based on these challenges, Brad believes there are many people who shouldn’t consider this profession. This includes people who can’t manage anger, or whose emotions run very high and aren’t able to stay calm. “There needs to be some discipline and routine in your life as far as how you manage your health, your mental health and your physical health, and the health of your soul. Without that you become very vulnerable.”

“So if you’re going to go do it for the money, if you’re going into it because you’re going to get a pension in 25 years, and because the pay is pretty good, and you don’t have to do much schooling beforehand, if that’s your goal, then it becomes a job. But I’d say it should be a calling for everybody.”

Brad explained that this also separated the cops he worked with who are fantastic versus the ones they wished would leave. Some cops are miserable and drag others down, contributing very little to serving the public. They are doing this as a job and not as a calling.

He singled out humility and being a good listener as critical qualities for the profession. “Be quick to listen and slow to speak.”

THANKING GOD FOR LAW ENFORCERS

I left my visit with Brad with a heart filled with gratitude, not just for this honorable servant, but the thousands of police officers who dedicate much for their lives for the public’s safety and good.

I thank God that Canada is governed by the rule of law, and that thousands of people work hard to ensure that this law is being enforced. We don’t like to face crime or disasters. But when we do, we can take comfort that God has appointed authorities that we can go to for help. They do their work in weakness and sin. But they deserve our thanks and praise. RP

Pictures supplied by Brad Stiksma and the Edmonton Police Service.



WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF FAMILY DEVOTIONS?

by Sharon L. Bratcher

A friend who was adopting two toddlers asked two of my adult children how we did our family devotions and what they appreciated about them. To my horror, my children described how “most of the time” they just complied as expected – singing, being quiet, and looking as if they were listening intently. They added that they had pretty much sat through church services the same way. There I sat, thinking that we had done a “good job” overall, and discovering that the kids were often just tuning it all out and biding their time until they were freed.

I shouldn't have been surprised. Many parents, including us, remember the fruitful times of good singing, contemplation, long discussions, and prayer. But we can also remember flying through the format – bing, bang, bong – done, only because we were supposed to. If the dinner con-

versation unfortunately ended up including arguments, or sibling rivalry, one of the sinful selves may even have shouted: “Settle down – we have to read the BIBLE!”

PURPOSE

Was it still worthwhile to “read and pray”? Yes. But it could have been done better. Even though our kids have all grown and established their own homes, this conversation gave me reason to think about how we might have improved those times, and might do so even now.

When we're setting aside any regular, large amount of time for something, we should consider the *why*. What's the purpose of setting aside time for Bible reading time, or devotions? Why do we do them? The answer is found repeatedly through the Bible. It coincides with the very purpose for which we were created: to glorify God.

As David wrote in Ps. 63:

*... earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you.
My flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there
is no water.
So I have looked upon you in the
sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
Because your steadfast love is better
than life,
my lips will praise you.
So I will bless you as long as I live;
in your name I will lift up my hands.*

As great as God is, we can and do regularly overlook Him. So, in Colossians 3:1-3, the Apostle Paul certainly encourages us to really think on what God has all done for us:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Do we have food to eat? A roof over our heads? Breath? Acts 17:25 tells us that “He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” The purpose of reading God’s Word and praying at a meal or any other time ought to be to take some time to reflect on the fact that He continues to do so!

SUGGESTIONS

If our family devotions aren’t going the way we’d like them to, it can be very challenging to change our current patterns. But we are told in Hebrews 10:24 to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,” so let’s take a look at four questions a family can think through and talk about:

1 - How do we really teach love for God in our Bible reading sessions and prayer?

We ourselves must first love God and express that love and honor to God verbally, and by our actions throughout the day. If we’re not patient and we shout angrily over small matters (perhaps even at the meal!), we won’t teach our children to use self-control. And if we won’t ask forgiveness, we won’t teach them to do so. Family devotions should demonstrate that love of God. We must genuinely glorify Him when we pray, not just rattle off words.

2 - If we rush through “just to do it” – is it still worthwhile?

How useful is it to shout, “Settle down – we have to read the BIBLE!”? On the other hand, if we wait until life is perfect,

we’ll never read or pray, because we sinners do get out of sorts. But how much better it could be, if we teach our children by example to quiet themselves and then read a short amount of Scripture and pray for forgiveness and strength. That’s exactly what is needed to get everyone back on track.

Consider letting young children leave the table when they are finished and then re-convening in the living room for devotions. This can provide a helpful transition, instead of taxing their patience and making everyone want to rush through and just get it over with.

An alternate idea might be to use pre-bedtime moments as a time when they will be happier to give attention to Bible stories and learning to pray. In this case, it might be the parents who must stay patient if they are eager to have their parental duties over for the night.

3 - Should we incorporate the children into reading the text and leading in prayer?

A rote prayer may or may not be a way to teach reverence for God. There are two kinds, actually. Kids might learn a short poem-prayer which they might pray sincerely or might say it robotically or in a goofy manner so as to make their siblings laugh. They will not initially understand the reverence that our Lord deserves. But we want them to learn that this is an important activity that is not just for parents. So to learn by doing, let them take a turn as soon as they can speak, read and sing. But let them know that they must also consider to Whom they are speaking or singing.

4 - How might we vary our prayers?

Adults also often fall into such a pattern that we pray our own rote prayer as well. We must take care not to become robotic. How many times have you heard a head of household repeat the same words in

the same cadence and wondered if much thought went into that prayer?

Having a prayer list of family, friends, and church members to go through 1 or 2 at a time on a monthly basis can help to keep prayers “fresh.” The children can add requests and items of thanksgiving as well.


Using the prayers in the *Book of Praise* or in the *Book of Common Prayer* can aid us in saying words that we mean but just haven’t initially thought of. It can be helpful to use a prayer that Calvin or Luther or another Christian has written because it moves us out of our usual comfort zone. Some people think that written prayers aren’t as meaningful because we ourselves didn’t create them. But if our own prayers become rote and robotic – looking to someone else’s carefully thought-out prayers can add fresh perspective and remind us of previously unmentioned requests and items for thanksgiving.

Praying part or all of a Psalm or using a New Testament passage is also a stellar idea.

TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 teaches us to tell our children about the Lord at all times.

... these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Throughout the day, we should read God’s Word and pray on our own, that we might have the wisdom and patience and love to lead our family members to do the same. We are the chief example that our children will follow. May our souls thirst for God as in a dry and weary land where there is no water! 

A version of this article first appeared in the Sept/Oct 2017 issue.

How useful is it to shout, “Settle down - we have to read the BIBLE!”?

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by Margaret Helder

OPTICALLY EXCELLENT

How could evolution craft something as complex as the eye in the first place? And how could it do it **again and again and again?**

Everybody knows that our eyes are wonderfully designed, even those who don't acknowledge their Designer. All the parts are special and each is important for vision.

SO MANY PARTS

The bulging cornea consists of clear material that not only lets light penetrate, but bends it toward the pupil.

The iris consists of a thin circular muscle which acts like a camera diaphragm, controlling the size of the pupil opening. The iris expands or contracts the pupil opening in order to control the amount of light entering the eye.

Behind the pupil is the lens which focuses light onto the retina (composed of light sensitive cells and nerve cells). The lens is a particularly important compo-

nent of the eye. This oval shaped object is made up of water soluble proteins, many of which are very large molecules. These proteins are tightly packed together in such a way that they are not only transparent, but they bend the light so that the rays are focused into a sharp point. This provides a clear image. Ideally the lens focuses on the retina (the receiver), but if the focal point is in front of the retina

(or behind it) then corrective lenses are required to adjust the focus onto the retina (ie. you'll need glasses!). It is also most important that the proteins in the lens retain their special tightly packed arrangement, otherwise the lens becomes opaque thereby disturbing vision.

The other particularly important component of the eye is the retina. It consists of certain receiver cells which contain light sensitive pigments called rhodopsins. These are composed of a form of vitamin A and a large protein molecule called opsin. Different precisely shaped opsins are sensitive to specific wavelengths of light. In humans there are opsin molecules sensitive to blue light, or to green light or to red light. Cones are cells which contain one or other of the specific color sensitive opsins. Other cells called rods are sensitive only to more or less light. These rods and cones point backward to the back lining of the eye, but the light is coming from the front direction.

Before the light gets to the rods and cones, it passes through the nerve cells which lie on top of the light sensitive cells, between them and the incoming light. Some people suggest that this is backward wiring – they say the nerve cells should have gone behind the rods and cones for a more efficient arrangement of parts. But what do they know? Others suggest that having the nerve cells in front, lying on top of the rods and cones, protects these sensitive tissues from getting too much light.

When light is sensed an electrical pulse is generated by the rods and cones and conducted by the nerve cells to the optic nerve and to the brain. The brain, for its part, puts the electrical signals together into images which are communicated to the person's consciousness.

There are other important components of the camera eye too, like the dark choroid layer lining the inner eyeball, which prevents light rays from scattering inside the eye, and jelly-like material which allows the eye to keep its shape. When we consider the special properties of all these component parts, we have to conclude that the camera eye is indeed a wonderful organ.

OTHER EYES

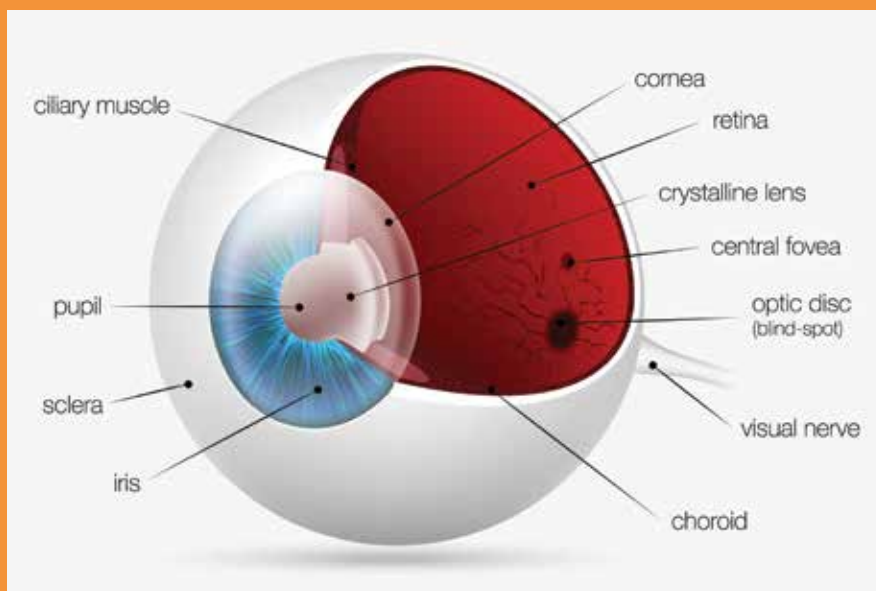
Among living creatures there are other eye designs as well. Some single-celled animals and even some much larger creatures make do with mere concentrations of light sensitive proteins or clusters of pigmented cells. In the many-celled animals, these are often associated with nerve cells. Some animals feature recessed eyespots to better focus the light. Creatures with jointed outside skeletons (exoskeletons) like insects, crustaceans, spiders, millipedes etc., are famous for their composite eyes. These bulbous structures are made up of many tiny eyes all of which focus on a central point. While these eyes are very good at detecting motion, they probably do not have the same sharp focus as the camera eye.

Before we become too proud of our fancy eye design however, let us reflect on a biological riddle. It sounds like the beginning of a

joke, but it isn't one and it's not funny, not even mildly amusing. I can well imagine the groans from you the reader when asked, "What does a single-celled animal, a highly poisonous jellyfish, a bristly marine worm, an octopus and a fish or dog all have in common?"

The question seems so totally meaningless! What could a single-celled animal and a dog have in common beyond the obvious characteristics all animals share? The surprising answer is that all these creatures share a common design in the eye!

Now, most of us have likely heard that all creatures with backbones (vertebrates) enjoy "camera-style eyes." But what about a jellyfish, octopus and a single-celled animal which closely resembles algae that cause toxic red tides in the sea? Do they have camera-style eyes too? Yes, yes and yes!



The stunning complexity of our eyes is a problem for evolutionists – how could something of such intricate design come about by an unguided process? But it gets worse. Not only are our eyes spectacular, they're not that unique – animals like the octopus and box jellyfish, which evolutionists concede have no evolutionary connections to us, share a similar eye design with us. In other words, not only did our amazing eye have to beat incredible odds to come about by chance once, it had to happen again and again.

OCTOPUS AND SQUID

Octopus and squid are perhaps the best-known animals without a backbone (invertebrates) that enjoy the benefits of a camera-style eye. We have all seen pictures of these creatures with their large eyes. Octopi are particularly intelligent, some say as intelligent as a housecat. Be that as it may, octopi make very good use of their eyes as they navigate their

environment and catch food.

The term cephalopod means *brainy foot* and it denotes a subgroup of mollusks which include squid and octopus. The cephalopod camera-type eye includes an iris, circular lens, gel filling the eyeball, pigment cells and photoreceptor cells that send an electrical signal to the optic nerve which is connected to the brain. In the case of the cephalopods, the

light sensitive rods and cones are in front of the nerve cells (not behind as in vertebrates). Moreover the crystal proteins in the cephalopod lens act the same way as our lens does, but the proteins are not the same.

Since cephalopods have a body design (plan) that is radically different from that of vertebrates, and since the chemical components of the eye are different, not even mainstream scientists see any kind of evolutionary connection between us and the octopus.

UNDERWATER WORMS

Most of us have handled earthworms in the garden or as fishing bait. These creatures have a complete digestive tract with a mouth at one end and an anus at the other end. They have strong muscles and a few projecting bristles, but no obvious sense organs although they react strongly to odors and the drying effects of light. This body plan possessed by a group called the annelids, does not seem promising for fancy sense organs.

However there are marine annelids called polychaetes (meaning *many bristles*) which lead more vigorous lifestyles. Among the polychaetes is an obscure group called alciopids. These are slender swimming creatures with conspicuous eyes. They actively pursue and catch prey. Most surprisingly, the eyes of these worms are camera-style eyes complete with cornea, lens and retina. And like cephalopods, the wiring of the retina features the light sensitive cells first with the transmitting nerve cells behind. Obviously there is nothing in the body plan of these annelids that is at all similar to vertebrates. So nobody imagines that there is a shared evolutionary history between the two groups. So where did the fancy plan for these eyes come from?

BOX JELLYFISH

As we move next to jellyfish consider this: these marine annelids don't have much that could be called a brain, but they do at least have some small concentrations of nerve cells at the front end of their body. If there is going to be any interpretation of the images detected by the fancy eye, it would be in this "brain."



They don't have bones like us, but they do have eyes like us.

Jellyfish however have no central nervous tissue (which could function as some sort of brain). These creatures therefore do not look like promising candidates for any benefit from camera-style eyes. Nevertheless box jellyfish do indeed possess camera-style eyes. The great differences with other creatures of similar eye design mean that no evolutionary relationship is imagined between eye-possessing box jellyfish, polychaete worms, octopi and vertebrates. It was in some other way that they came to possess the fancy eye blueprint.

WARNOWIID DINOFLAGELLATES

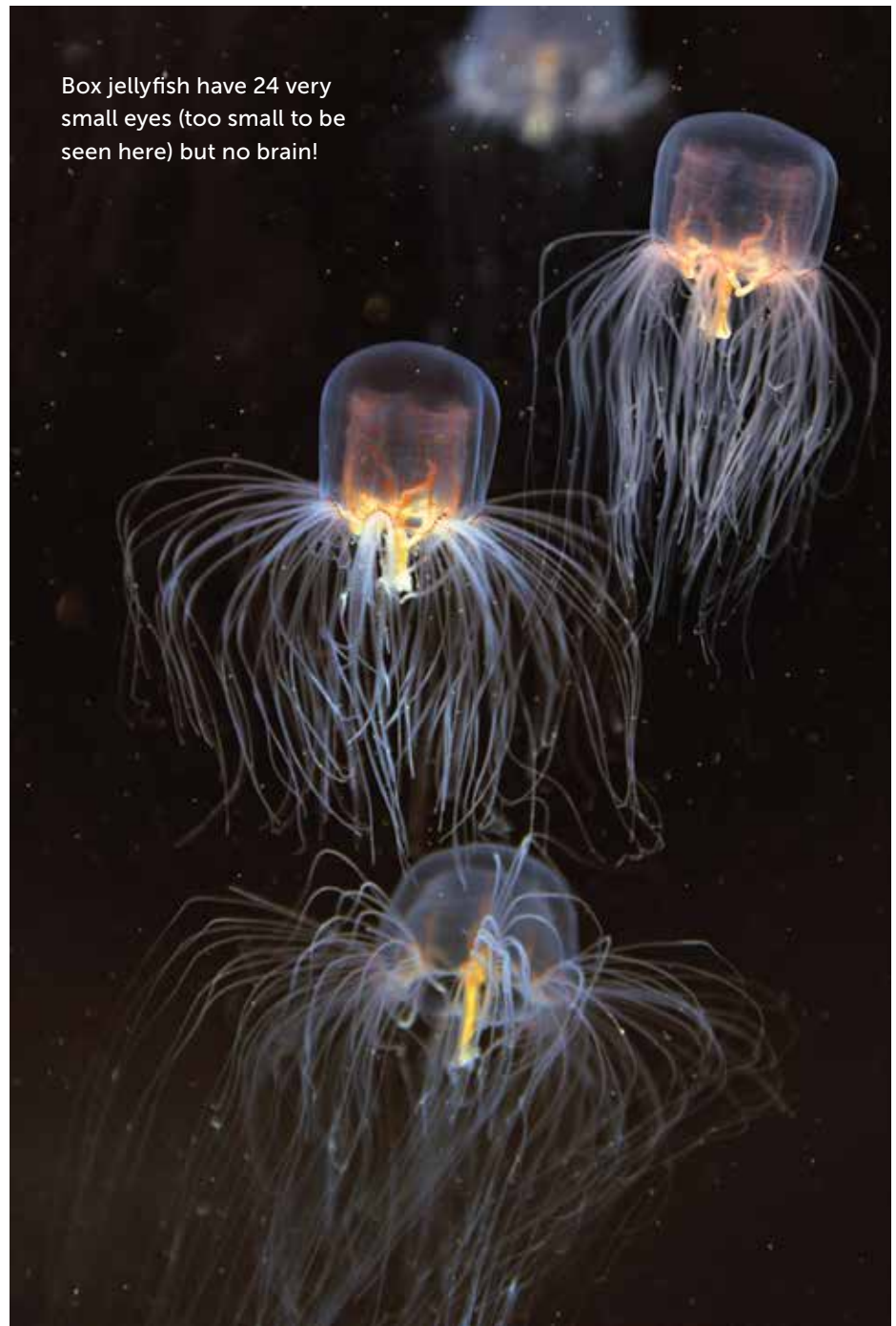
If camera-style eyes in a jellyfish are unexpected, how weird would it be to see the same design in a single-celled animal? A July 1, 2015 *Nature* article communicated the astounding news that there are some single celled protozoans – Warnowiid dinoflagellates – that have a sensory structure “so complex that it was initially mistaken for a multicellular eye.” The component parts include a cornea, lens, iris and retina. It is these parts, which, declares Gregory Gavelis and colleagues “so resemble the camera-type eye of some animals that they have been speculated to be homologous [related through evolutionary descent].”

In a July 9, 2015 followup, also in *Nature*, Thomas Richards and Suely Gomes rhapsodized that: “evolution has stumbled on similar solutions to perceiving light time and time again.”

DIFFERENT BODIES, SAME EYES

In the course of this survey of creatures with camera-style eyes we have observed that obviously there was no line of descent linking them all – these creatures are too different to even contemplate such an idea, and everybody agrees on that.

Instead mainstream scientists contemplate the separate surprising appearance of the same blueprint/design for an eye in wildly different organisms by means of an unguided evolutionary process. In the cases that we have discussed, the lifestyles are not even remotely similar, so it would be surprising to see similar



Box jellyfish have 24 very small eyes (too small to be seen here) but no brain!

solutions, especially through chance processes.

Christians can conclude that, rather than any sort of common process, these common designs came about by the conscious choices of a Creator – the same Creator, rather than the same ancestor. God can bestow what features He likes on whatever creatures He so desires. There does not have to be a pattern or a

reason why these creatures are the way that they are. When we see these examples as the work of God, our appreciation of the creation becomes much more profound. **RP**

A version of this article first appeared in the Sept 2015 issue. Dr. Margaret Helder also writes for the Creation Science Dialogue (Create.ab.ca).

FOR THERE IS HOPE

*Discipline your son, for there is hope;
do not set your heart on putting him to death.*

- PROVERBS 19:18

by Christine Farenhorst

Although the Bible in no uncertain terms condemns human sacrifice and abominates the act of killing babies and infants, this heinous practice has been recorded throughout history, both before and after the birth of Christ.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC) commented: "As to exposing or rearing the children born, let there be a law that no deformed child shall be reared." Babies were judged. Not as to whether they were created in the image of God, but as to whether they were created fit and able in the eyes of men.

Roman law during and after the time of Jesus saw nothing wrong with killing an infant, and parents left unwanted newborns on garbage heaps outside the city. Seneca (4 BC - AD 65), Roman philosopher during the time of the emperors Claudius and Nero, comments "...mad dogs we knock on the head... unnatural progeny we destroy; we drown even children at birth who are weakly and abnormal." Another Greek philosopher, Plutarch (AD 46 - AD 119), records that fathers were obliged to carry their children to a place called Lesche, an area where elders would determine by looking at infants if they were healthy enough to live. If they considered a child puny and ill, they would order that child to be taken to a cave and left to die.

In the first century catacombs were filled with little graves of babies, and with little mounds signifying aban-

doned children – children who had been forsaken on a dung heap outside of the city. Some of these tombs had inscriptions such as "adopted son of..." or "adopted child of ..." Having been rescued from garbage hills, these little ones, newborns and infants, were often taken into Christian families and raised as their own, raised as Abraham's children.

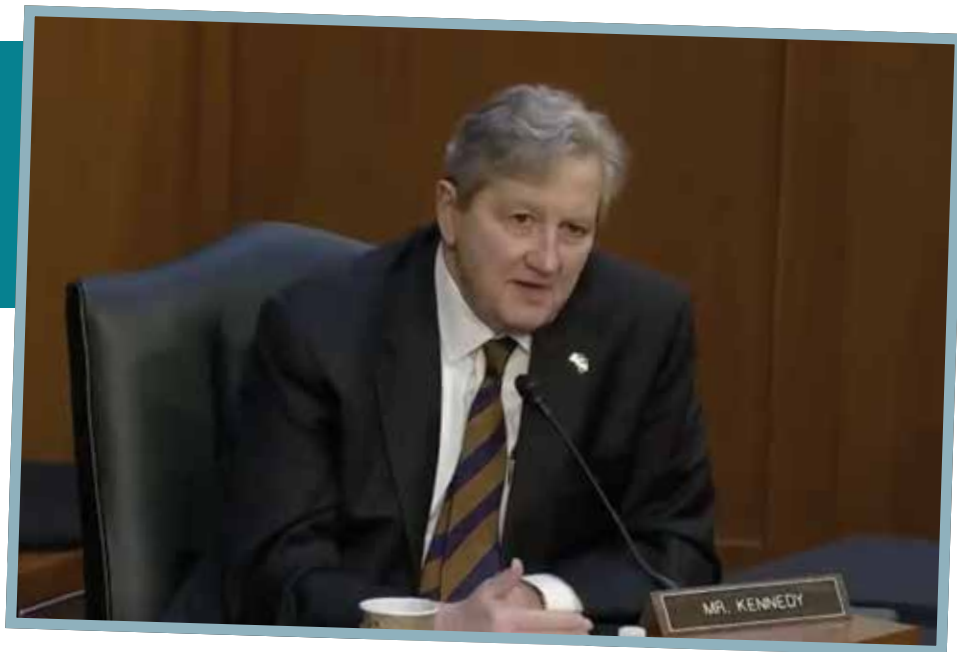
Yes, throughout the centuries there have been many abandoned, murdered and ill-treated newborns and infants. And the world has not evolved for the better.

FOR ALL THE WORLD TO HEAR

It takes courage to be used by God to protect the unborn. Senator John Kennedy, an American senator from Louisiana, has displayed some gumption with regard to this issue.

In February of 2024, during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, the senator gave a graphic description of an abortion procedure. He first addressed a doctor's conscience, asking: "If a person came to you and said, 'I'm having a baby this week and I've changed my mind,' would you do it?"





BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

There is a true story of a Romanian woman in the post WWII era. This woman, who had been an avid convert to Communism, was absolutely convinced that Marxist ideology would provide heaven on earth for Romania. After the Communist takeover, she initially had a good life. She mindlessly served Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin until her husband died, and then the money ran out. The woman, now a widow, had a child – a little three-year-old girl whose name was Jenny. She and her child often went hungry because of their lack of finances. Destitute and impoverished, they were close to being beggared. The woman was at her wits' end.

A high-ranking Communist official became attracted to the mother but made it clear that he did not want to support a child. So, the mother began to feed the little girl less and less food. Three-year-old Jenny began to cough, began to exhibit signs of malnutrition. The small amount of baby fat she did have wasted away, and her muscles became weaker and weaker. Then the mother left the window open when the child slept and, upon catching pneumonia, the pocket-sized girl died.

The mother, whose affair with the official was short-lived, was subsequently jailed on some petty charge. Here she met Sabina Wurmbrand, the wife of evangelist Richard Wurmbrand. Eventually, she confided her sin to Sabina. The neglect of love and responsibility, resulting in the death of her daughter, weighed her down and consumed her. Yet she refused to accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and she did not bow her heart in repentance so that God's forgiveness of sins would be hers.

Is there forgiveness for those who have aborted a child? Is there pardon for those who have helped in the murder of the unborn? Is there absolution for those who have committed murder? Yes! The Bible makes that abundantly clear!

Consider King David. He was a

"That is not how abortion works."
"But would you do it?"

When Kennedy's question was left dangling by the doctor, the senator commented:

"You won't answer my question and we have a bill in front of us that says a woman has the unfettered right to abort at any time, for any reason, up to the moment of birth. That's a gut check issue and I would expect you experts to answer that truthfully."

Later, Kennedy questioned a Mrs. Ford, an Adjunct Fellow from the Center on Opportunity and Social Mobility at the American Enterprise Institute (aei.org). He began his questioning by displaying a picture of a 21-week-old baby in the womb. Then he asked Mrs. Ford: "The baby can feel pain, right?"

Mrs. Ford responded affirmatively.

Senator Kennedy went on. "The baby's pretty well developed, right?"

Mrs. Ford again agreed.

"Do you know the name of the procedure the doctor would use to abort that baby at 21 weeks?"

Mrs. Ford answered, "I'm not a doctor but I believe it's called a D and E."

"It's called 'dilation and evacuation.' Is that right?"

Mrs. Ford responded by saying, "As far

as I understand the procedure."

Senator Kennedy went on: "Yes, and she'd start with the legs and pull them out, and continue with the arms and pull them out. Right? And she might go for the heart or the spine and pull the baby out, piece by piece. Is that right?"

Mrs. Ford nodded.

And Senator Kennedy went on, "And without giving the baby pain medication."

Mrs. Ford: "That's what I understand the procedure to be."

"OK. But then you've got to get the head out. The baby's dead, but maybe not. Maybe it's still in pain. But then you've got to get the head out and even with the cervix dilated, you've got to get the head out. So then the doctor would go in and use those pliers to crush the baby's head. Is that right?"

Mrs. Ford answered: "As far as I understand."

"And then she pulls the head out – the crushed skull. Right?"

Mrs. Ford responded with "Uh-huh."

At this point the chairman of the Judiciary Committee told Senator Kennedy that his time had expired. Although he protested, Senator Kennedy was cut off as he spoke concluding with some rather sarcastic words: "I thought we were here about protecting mothers and killing babies."

murderer. After all, he planned and ordered the slaying of Bathsheba's husband. Yet he is called a man after God's own heart. That is because David repented of his horrible sin. He confessed his guilt and asked God's forgiveness.

Consider the apostle Paul. He was a murderer. In his violent opposition to Jesus, Paul stood by as Stephen was killed, and after Stephen's death he breathed out threats to new believers, arresting and dragging many Christians to jail. Yet even with Paul's background of wicked depravity, Jesus called this man to become a pastor and missionary. Paul, even as David, repented of his wretched acts. He knew that Christ's blood covered him, causing him to cry out: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." And he was forgiven.

THE DAMAGE WE CAN DO

It is essential to contemplate, however, that when we think of murder, we

ought to think of more than the physical aspect; more than the corporeal. We must think deeper. We must also reflect on the spiritual state of our children and neighbors, a state which can also be fatally wounded.

As Christians, we must see the potential of such a thing as the homicide of a person's spirit. We must realize that we have the capability to feed *malnutrients* which could lead souls to the grave. We must see that we can open windows which are capable of blowing breaths of ruin onto young lives just begun. We must be aware that there are sopher clamps we could use which aid in pulling a child apart so that it cannot be born.

When mothers and fathers tolerate a child's disobedience and when they praise wrong behavior, they, in effect, pull out arms. When fathers and mothers permit a son's or daughter's unkind actions towards siblings or playmates, when they allow an adolescent to indulge in pornography, they pull out legs. When

children are allowed to talk out of turn and scream for what they want, when bad language is permitted, and when lies are not nipped in the bud, youngsters' mouths are being crammed full of poison. When Sunday basketball tournaments or hockey games precede church attendance, when the Bible is not read daily at regular times, or when earnest prayer on knees at a child's bedside is not made, then a child's heart is being ripped out.

Christian parenting would be impossible were it not for the grace that God provides. "In this is love," says John, "not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Children learn through example. They will see God's love through the sacrificial commitments we make to them and teach them to make. ^{RP}

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SOLVING LONELINESS

by Harma-Mae Smit

"[The study] revealed that 46 percent of American adults report feeling lonely sometimes or always. In that same study, younger adults reported feeling lonelier than their elders, with those aged between eighteen and twenty-two the loneliest of all."

– Jeremy Nobel in *Project UnLonely*

I used to latch onto quotes like this, because they made loneliness acceptable beyond the regularly-discussed groups of the sick, the elderly or the widowed. Loneliness is devastating for anybody, but I had the sense it was more acceptable for some people. "Normal people" – by which I thought of people like me, people on the younger side with their life ahead of them, who had jobs and knew lots of people – weren't supposed to be lonely.

But in the last decade, talk of loneliness has exploded for everybody. Loneliness has been declared a "pandemic," there is a "friendship recession," and "deaths of despair" are rising. Everyone in modern society is lonely, even the young, and it's getting worse.

This means that if you look around you, many people are probably lonely, including people who don't look like your idea of the typical lonely person. If you're lonely, chances are many others you meet are too. And it means that even though

your loneliness can feel like it is "all your fault," there must be something about our modern world that is making the rates of loneliness increase.

If the obvious answer to loneliness is *community*, then being part of the church community should solve the problem of loneliness. So why are so many church people lonely as well? Let's take a look at:

1. what loneliness is
2. what you can do
3. what the Church can do about it

1. LONELINESS HURTS

When I felt the most alone in my life, it felt like pure agony. Until that moment, I did not realize the depths of loneliness could feel like that. But why?

First, what is loneliness? A simple definition of loneliness comes from Harvard professor of psychiatry, Robert Waldinger: "the sense that I am less connected to other people than I want to be." This makes it different than just being alone. After all, some of us enjoy being alone, and some of us feel lonely in a crowd. Loneliness is actually the *feeling* of being alone or isolated, and so loneliness is something subjective. It's something you have to ask others if they're feeling.

This is what makes loneliness tricky, because it's not always obvious on the

outside. And circumstances that might make you feel lonely might not make someone else feel lonely in the same way. Uncovering loneliness requires actually connecting with someone, ironically.

The amount loneliness hurts can be underestimated unless you've experienced it yourself. But why would it hurt?

Humans weren't created to be alone. We know this from Genesis 2. But we also know this from the extreme difficulty of surviving entirely on your own. While there are survival stories where someone is lost in the wilderness for months, in general those separated from their group struggle to survive. So it's no wonder we feel vulnerable when we don't have anyone to rely on because we *are* vulnerable and in danger – not as vulnerable as if we were lost in the woods, wondering where we can find our next meal. But our bodies still perceive the lack of other people's presence around us, and for many, that'll get their brain screaming at them, *danger, danger, danger!*

You might know intellectually that you are never alone because God is there, but can you feel it? Sometimes you can, and sometimes, like Adam in the Garden, you can't shake the feeling of being alone.

Not only does it logically make sense that we'd react to the vulnerability of being alone, there's evidence that our bodies

You might know intellectually that you are never alone because God is there, but can you feel it?

seem to register loneliness like pain too. Scientists have found that areas of the brain that “hunger” for food react similarly when you “hunger” for social connection. MRI studies have found that areas that light up when you’re in pain also light up when you’re rejected by others. It’s not totally crazy that loneliness can feel like pain either – like pain, it can signal us to change our behavior. Perhaps God meant to remind us through these sensations that He created us to care for and live in relationship with other people.

Unfortunately, loneliness can lead to a negative cycle. You become less trusting of unfamiliar people when you’re lonely, and more likely to view them negatively. You imagine they view you negatively too, and this doesn’t get disproven because you pull away from others. And in turn, people can find you unpleasant to be around, since you’re more protective and less trusting.

This cycle works to keep you lonely and isolated, and it takes great energy to break that cycle and open up to others again.

This explains why sometimes you reach out to someone you know is lonely and they’re not receptive. It’s not easy to climb out of isolation once you’ve fallen into it.

Lastly, what makes loneliness complex is that it’s not a single experience. You might think, *I know what loneliness is, it’s uncomfortable but I don’t know what she means when she’s talking about pain.* Well, everyone’s experience of loneliness is different. Why, after all, do some feel lonely when surrounded by people? They’re experiencing the crowd differently than the others in the crowd.

Or take the vastly different life experiences that can lead to loneliness – a senior who can’t leave her nursing home, a husband who lost his lifelong companion, a child who just started at a new school – do all these types of loneliness feel the same? Do all people react to them the same way? So the label, *loneliness*, on its own doesn’t always explain exactly what a person is experiencing.

Loneliness matters because it causes us to really suffer, even before we start to

count the health problems that often stem from it. And it takes effort to break the cycle.

2. YOUR ROLE

It’s not “all your fault” if you’re lonely. The common advice given can make you feel that way because it’s so action-oriented. You’re told:

- **Just put yourself out there** even if you’ve been doing that for years and haven’t seen many results from it.
- **Invite people over** even when it feels like pulling teeth to find a time slot on people’s calendars when they’re free to visit.
- **Just be content** even when the person giving you advice has no idea how tiring it can feel to make every single life decision alone.

And reaching out to others for help can be difficult too. To say you are lonely can feel like you are opening yourself up to the scorn of the world, like a stamp



“The amount loneliness hurts can be underestimated unless you’ve experienced it yourself. But why would it hurt?”

on your forehead: *No one likes me.* It's the pain of rejection, combined with the judgment that maybe you're lonely simply because you weren't doing *enough*.

Much of the rising problem of loneliness comes from the world around us. We don't live in small communities where it's possible for everyone to know everyone, and people now move from place to place a lot more. You might just be getting to know someone and then they get a new job across the country. Some of it is the pace of modern life, and the burnout many of us are experiencing just trying to keep up with rising bills and inflation. It's hard to make friends when you work long hours, or if you're wrangling two toddlers and caring for your elderly parents 24/7.

Some of it is the way our cities are built, with a lack of places for us to casually run into our acquaintances often enough for them to become friends (which is actually the most common way to make friends – simply seeing them frequently). And some of it is the faceless technology we use every day which strips away personal connection in favor of apps, chatbots and

algorithms. So no, it's not all your fault.

But that doesn't mean you are helpless.

As with so many other things in life, it's about letting go of what you can't control, and working with what you can. We can't remake the modern world. At the same time, change can only start with ourselves. Our ancestors knew this, every time they spread the seed and prayed for rain. We can only do what's in our control.

So back to loneliness. What can you do?

You can take the risks, and make the sacrifices.

Accept the friction of living in community

Loneliness is painful, but connecting with others can be bitterly painful too. The simple truth is, it's hard to live with other people. We can have a negative view of "people" for good reason. People aren't trustworthy, people do hurt us, people can irritate or insult us.

Relationships involve friction, and we're

getting less and less used to that. Friendship is both being vulnerable with someone, and managing the tension of hanging out with someone who doesn't always think like you. So having connections and relationships can feel like a burden, and a burden is heavy when we're already burnt out by so many other things.

Maybe because we think of community and relationships as being fun and easy, then when they're hard we're stopped in our tracks. Maybe because we know community is a blessing, we forget about the thorns and thistles. Then, when the beginning of building community is often so very hard and fruitless, we think we're doing something wrong.

After all, through technology, we've made "connecting" easy. You can find people with the same specific interests as you, however niche they might be. And you can talk to people without leaving your house. You can see people's faces from far away. You can remove people you disagree with.

As relational psychotherapist Esther Perel puts it:

"We do not have the practice at the moment. Everything about predictive technologies is basically giving us a form of assisted living. You get it all served in uncomplicated, lack of friction, no obstacles and you no longer know how to deal with people."

In fact, because technology makes it easy to find "someone else," and because it seems possible to find people who think exactly the way we do, we are more likely to expect *others* to adapt to *us*. We become less used to the flexibility we need to live among people with differences.

But community is hard. Community is not finding someone who thinks identically to you, and spending all your time with them, but instead about feeling that friction, sometimes living in the discomfort, sometimes changing your mind and other times agreeing to disagree. It's about learning what parts of yourself you hold loosely, as well as learning about the more difficult parts of yourself.

Community isn't meant to not take sacrifice. As Stephen Junger puts it in



"...because technology makes it easy to find 'someone else,' and because it seems possible to find people who think exactly the way we do, we are more likely to expect others to adapt to us. We become less used to the flexibility we need to live among people with differences."

"...there are no words to express the abyss between isolation and having one ally. It may be conceded to the mathematician that four is twice two. But two is not twice one; two is two thousand times one."

G.K. Chesterton



his book *Tribe*, after describing the quiet life of someone who worked hard for his community:

"He understood that belonging to society requires sacrifice, and that sacrifice gives back way more than it costs... That sense of solidarity is at the core of what it means to be human."

So yes, it can be painful to live in community, but unlike the pain of loneliness, it can pay off in the end. Despite the effects of sinful human nature, belonging to society reminds us of what it means to be human, of what God created us to be. You see yourself reflected in others, you attempt to build new things alongside others, and your ideas are shaped by bumping up against what other people think.

The first step is to take the risk – to make that sacrifice without knowing what the “pay-off” looks like.

The sacrifice of time

One of these sacrifices is time, because it takes time to know someone. This was admittedly easier when you’d interact with

the same people frequently (such as back when you were in school). Then it was just built into your daily routine. When you’re lonely but busy, it can be exhausting to think of adding another thing to your “to do” list, to fit in regular contact with someone new. But you cannot build community without investing time.

Sometimes there simply aren’t enough hours in a day. But when you can free up time to get to know someone new, it can re-energize you in ways your tired brain didn’t expect, through the different perspectives and fresh outlook on life that other people can bring.

The sacrifice of effort without knowing results

It’s a sacrifice too, to put in the effort even when there’s no guarantee of results. If we knew we’d always feel great every time we talked to someone new, we’d probably do it more often. (In fact, studies have shown we underestimate how much enjoyment we’d get out of talking to a stranger.) But when talking to someone new, there is often a stage where it feels like we’re going through the motions, politely making small talk. And worse,

this investment in conversation might not “pay off” – this person might not turn out to be someone we connect with as friends. But while it might sound exhausting, it might not be as exhausting as you think to smile at the cashier or make small talk with strangers you meet. Even if not every interaction rises to friendship, you’re open to the possibility that they could.

We want friends that are comfortable, that we can just show up for and not need to put in the effort. But to get there takes an investment of effort without any guarantee you will ever connect on that level.

The sacrifice of opening up

Lastly, you’ll need to take the risk of being vulnerable. There’s no connection without true vulnerability with another person.

You do *not* have to be vulnerable with everyone you meet, and there is an argument that people sometimes reveal too much about themselves too quickly in our age of authenticity. It is wise to choose whom you talk about the deepest parts of your heart with carefully.

But the only way outside of yourself is to open yourself up. This can be as simple

as admitting loneliness to someone else.

You'll need to act in hope to overcome loneliness, because loneliness sucks you into negativity. Loneliness can convince you there's no way out – that the world is hostile and everyone hates you. Instead, climb towards hope. You don't need everyone to like you, you just need a few to connect with, and to know that they do exist out there somewhere. Proceeding in hope will have you continuing to put yourself out there to find them. In the current climate, optimism is in short supply, but as Christians we know there's hope no matter how bad things get. We have the freedom to be optimistic.

I'll stop there with the suggestions before it does start to sound like loneliness is all a result of what you do (or how you think). In the end, it's about looking at what is in your control, working with that, and letting go of what's not in your control. Letting go and letting God – we plant our seeds and pray for rain.

We can't solve everything

And here's one last painful truth – not all loneliness can be fixed. You can't ever replace someone's lost spouse. You can't resolve everyone's life experiences – there are sometimes reasons a person will feel alone even among other people, because no one else has seen the things they've seen. Things like burnout, and bad finances, and people moving or dying, can get in the way. It's even possible that the community you happen to live in is dysfunctional in a way that isn't healthy, and you can't adapt yourself to that.

Sometimes we can't control everything, we can't "fix" everything, and loneliness will hurt us. "Darkness is my closest friend," laments Heman the Ezrahite in Psalm 88, and so we know even this feeling was well-known to Christians before us. In this broken world, not all things are fixed, but we always *always* can hang onto hope, knowing the perfect fellowship that is to come.

3. THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

We can think of loneliness as a problem "out there" because here in the Church we have community. But the Church is

not immune to the impact of modern society – its faster pace of life, more technology and distractions, and increased individualism. When I mentioned I was writing this article, I received a flood of comments from Church members who could relate to loneliness for a variety of reasons. Yes, members of the Church shouldn't have as many reasons to feel lonely. But that doesn't mean that we don't experience it.

So what can the Church do?

Be the Church

A recent article by Derek Thompson, "The True Cost of the Churchgoing Bust," argues that the loss of social ties might be connected to declining religion in North America. Churches (and other religious buildings) provide a communal gathering space where people meet regularly, giving them a space to interact and see others often enough to make friends. They also provide religious rituals (such as the Lord's Supper) that take people out of the virtual world of their phones and into the here and now. "[T]he religious ritual," Thompson says, "is typically embodied, synchronous, deep, and collective." You have to be present to experience it.

So one way the Church can help is simply by existing and continuing to do the things it has done for centuries.

But a hard truth is that showing up week after week for two services provides *opportunity* for community, but not community itself. Yes, you have come together with other people in an objective way, but if the connections don't go deeper you may not feel very connected to other human beings at all. The rhythm of the Church community can be nice, because you don't have to "make plans" for the activities that have happened in the Church for centuries. But sometimes you need to pour your heart out to a listening ear, and that kind of activity still does need to be scheduled.

Recognize the problem

What more can the Church do? One thing the Church can recognize is how deep the problem runs.

We can be aware that the existence of

a congregation might not be enough to erase loneliness among us. When you're lonely, you feel invisible, and by recognizing loneliness is a problem, the Church can begin to help the lonely feel seen. However, this is more than just sympathy – too often an admission of loneliness is met with sympathy and nothing more. Sympathy is not companionship, and can be isolating. It's companionship that heals loneliness.

To say "I am lonely" is to be vulnerable without any guarantee of protection. Can we make it safer to admit loneliness to each other? Can we make it easier?

Another side to this is understanding the challenge of loneliness, and the negative cycle that can reduce lonely people's trust in other people. To bring a lonely person into community might take more time than we expect. We will have to show them they can trust the Church, and that they're safe opening themselves up to others again.

Show people where they belong

Next, a church can also give someone a "place." A better way to say it might be a "sense of belonging."

Modern life has brought not just a change in technology and urban sprawl, but also a change in our sense of belonging. In the past in our villages or tribes, we knew who we were and what we were expected to do. We knew who everyone else was, and we knew our role. Now we have gained a lot of freedom, but we've lost something too. We are able to constantly reinvent our "roles," and even our "selves," but in the end the burden of figuring ourselves out is laid on us.

But in the Church, there is opportunity to be reminded of where we belong once again. We're brothers and sisters, we're elders or pastors or members. You might have a task, or you might have a place to use your skills. Your place in the community is recognized by others – you are needed and seen by others. But we can be more deliberate about this, especially for those who aren't "in office." There are many who don't fit into the traditional Church roles (pastor, elder, deacon, pianist, bookkeeper, etc.) who

still need a place, and perhaps we can be more creative in finding ways for those who fall through the cracks to still feel they fit in in an important way. It's those on the edges of the community who don't feel like they belong, who don't think they have a role and who maybe even think no one would miss them if they weren't there. Reaching out and showing someone how they can grow into who they're meant to be can make a big difference.

Be a community that accepts social friction

If we're going to turn away from niche, online communities to real, face-to-face communities in the real world, we will have to get comfortable with the friction that living in community can bring. Since the Church community is built on truths that can't be changed, differences among us can feel destabilizing. Of course we should never compromise the truth, but we also have to accept God-created individuality among us. If there is any place where iron can sharpen iron, it should be in the Church, but it is a challenge to find ways of doing this wisely. We can start by accepting the possibility of discomfort, as well as practicing charity to others when we can.

Sometimes friction may come from people's past experiences, or past hurts. We can be patient, and not take all disagreements personally. We might need just a little more patience (and love!) than we thought.

Be a social space

Lastly, a church community can provide regular ways to connect beyond the worship services. Most of our churches already have many social events. But one thing to consider is the length of time it actually takes to make new, real friendships. This has been characterized as the 3-6 rule (three meaningful interactions with someone within six months), or as the 11-3-6 rule, described by Madeline Dore as "eleven different three-hour-long encounters, over the course of six months or so, to turn an acquaintance into an actual friend."

How many of our social events provide



"Lastly, a church community can provide regular ways to connect beyond the worship services."

this level of connection for integrating new members or new friends into our circles? This is a pretty high commitment when you think about it! Of course, it's not all on the Church itself to provide this, but a community can certainly think about whether it is making these kinds of deeper connections easier or harder to establish, as well as whether the current social events are easy for those on the fringes to be involved with (the singles, for example, or the elderly). Inviting someone to your house once every couple of months might not address the loneliness in their heart if that's the only social interaction they're getting.

We need to find the will to build communities again, or strengthen the ones we do have. In a world where social ties are crumbling all around us, this is more important than ever. But building community requires optimism, which is in short supply right now. It's hard to build when we feel anxious about the future, vulnerable to threats, and divided. There's a fear that what we build might not last.

But the Church has faced worse times before. And it was always by clinging to each other— and God — that we came

through the storms.

CONCLUSION

If you're lonely, I've been there. I know life can feel like it has a gaping hole in it if you're on your own. I know the comfort faith can bring while still feeling the intense longing for the presence of a human being beside you. I know how even the enjoyable things in life can feel pale when you don't have anyone to share them with.

The Church is a community of broken people stumbling as we journey to heaven. We fail so often at providing the needed support to each other, we fail at being real and vulnerable with each other, and giving each other what will support us as we grow in faith. By making some small suggestions for where to start, I hope our Christian communities can see ways to open themselves up to the need around them and begin to heal the pain of living in a sinful world. The first step is recognizing and understanding the problem. From there, we can all grow as individuals and as the Church to become the kind of community that draws others in, simply because of the warmth and belonging that exists inside it. **RP**

HALF OF IT AIN'T BAD →

← & HALF OF IT REALLY IS

by Daniel Zekveld

ONE STEP FORWARD & TWO STEPS BACK IN ONLINE HARMS BILL

What do pornography and hate speech have in common? Well, the federal government says they are both harmful. That's why they've wrapped these issues up together in the *Online Harms Act*, otherwise known as Bill C-63.

As the government's news release stated, "Online harms have real world impact with tragic, even fatal, consequences." As such, the government is of the mind that the responsibility for regulating all sorts of online harm falls to them. But the approach of the government in Bill C-63, though it contains some good content, is inadequate.

BACKGROUND

In June 2021, the federal govern-

ment introduced hate speech legislation focused on hate propaganda, hate crime, and hate speech. The bill was widely criticized and failed to advance prior to the fall 2021 election.

Since that time, the government pursued a consultation and an expert panel on the topic of online harms. Based on these and feedback from stakeholders, the government has now tabled legislation combatting online harm more broadly. Bill C-63 defines seven types of "harmful content":

- (a) intimate content communicated without consent;
- (b) content that sexually victimizes a child or revictimizes a survivor;
- (c) content that induces a child to harm

themselves;

- (d) content used to bully a child;
- (e) content that foments hatred;
- (f) content that incites violence; and
- (g) content that incites violent extremism or terrorism.

We will address the problematic hate speech elements of Bill C-63 further on. But though the bill could be improved, it is a step in the right direction on the issue of child sexual exploitation.

DIGITAL SAFETY OVERSIGHT

If passed, part 1 of the *Online Harms Act* will create a new Digital Safety Commission to help develop online safety standards, promote online safety, and administer and enforce the *Online*

Harms Act. A Digital Safety Ombudsperson will also be appointed to advocate for and support online users. The Commission will hold online providers accountable and, along with the Ombudsperson, provide an avenue for victims of online harm to bring forward complaints. Finally, a Digital Safety Office will be established to support the Commission and Ombudsperson.

The Commission and Ombudsperson will have a mandate to address any of the seven categories of harm listed above. But their primary focus, according to the bill, will be “content that sexually victimizes a child or revictimizes a survivor” and “intimate content communicated without consent.” Users can submit complaints or make other submissions about harmful content online, and the Commission is given power to investigate and issue compliance orders where necessary.

Some specifics are provided in Bill C-63, but the bill would grant the government broad powers to enact regulations to supplement the Act. What we do know is that the Digital Safety Commission and Ombudsman will oversee the removal of “online harms” but will not punish individuals who post or share harmful content.

NEW DUTIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES

Bill C-63 lays out three duties for any operator of a regulated social media service – for example, Facebook or Pornhub.

1. Duty to act responsibly

The duty to act responsibly includes:

- mitigating risks of exposure to harmful content,
- implementing tools that allow users to flag harmful content,
- designating an employee as a resource for users of the service,
- and ensuring that a digital safety plan is prepared.

This duty relates to all seven types of harmful content listed in Bill C-63. Although each category of “harmful

content” is defined further in the *Act*, the operator is responsible to determine whether the content is harmful.

While it’s important for the Commission to remove illegal pornography, challenges may arise with the Commission seeking to remove speech that a user has flagged as harmful.

2. Duty to protect children

The duty to protect children is not clearly defined. The bill notes that:

“an operator must integrate into a regulated service that it operates any design features respecting the protection of children, such as age-appropriate design, that are provided for by regulations.”

This could refer to age-appropriate designs in the sense that children are not drawn into harmful content; it could

refer to warning labels on pornography sites, or it could potentially require some level of age-verification for children to access harmful content. In its current form, however, the Act does nothing to directly restrict minors’ access to pornography. These regulations will be established by the Commission following the passage of the *Online Harms Act*.

3. Duty to make certain content inaccessible

Finally, Bill C-63 will make social media companies responsible for making certain content inaccessible on their platforms, primarily focused on child pornography and non-consensual pornography. If such content is flagged on a site and deemed to be harmful, the operators must make it inaccessible within 24 hours and keep it inaccessible.

This duty to make content inaccessible will provide some recourse for victims of



Canada had long had to deal with an abusive federal Human Rights Commission in the past, as this October 2008 article (available at ReformedPerspective.ca) demonstrates.

child pornography or non-consensual pornography to flag content and have it removed quickly. Further, the Commission will provide accountability to ensure the removal of certain content and that it remains inaccessible.

THE GOOD NEWS...

This first part of the *Online Harms Act* contains some important attempts to combat online pornography and child sexual exploitation. As Reformed Christians, we understand that a lot of people are using online platforms to promote things that are a direct violation of God's intention for flourishing in human relationships.

This bill certainly doesn't correct all those wrongs, but it at least recognizes that there is improvement needed for how these platforms are used to ensure vulnerable Canadians are protected. In a largely unregulated internet, social media companies need to be held accountable for illegal content, especially companies that profit from pornography and sexual exploitation. Bill C-63 is the government's attempt to bring some regulation to this area.

... AND NOW THE BAD NEWS

But while some of the problems addressed through the bill are objectively harmful, how do we avoid subjective definitions of harm?

Free speech is foundational to democracy. In Canada, it is one of our fundamental freedoms under section 2 of the *Charter*. Attempts to curtail speech in any way are often seen as an assault on liberty. Bill C-63 would amend the *Criminal Code* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to combat hate speech online. But the bill gives too much discretion to government actors to decide what constitutes hate speech.

HARSHER PENALTIES FOR "HATE SPEECH" CRIMES

The *Criminal Code* already has several offences that fall under the colloquial term "hate speech." The *Code* prohibits advocating genocide, publicly inciting hatred that is likely to lead to a breach of the peace, or willfully promoting hatred



It's said, if you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail. And if you are a lawmaker, then most everything will look in need of a new bill.

or antisemitism. The latter offence is potentially broader, but it also provides several defenses, including:

- a) the statement was true
- b) the statement was a good faith attempt to argue a religious view
- c) the statement was about an important public issue meriting discussion and the person reasonably believed the statement was true

Bill C-63 would increase the maximum penalties for advocating genocide and inciting or promoting hatred or antisemitism. The maximum penalty for advocating genocide would increase to life in prison instead of five years. The bill would also raise the penalty for publicly inciting hatred or promoting hatred or antisemitism to five years instead of the current two.

Bill C-63 defines "hatred" as "the emotion that involves detestation or vilification and that is stronger than disdain or dislike." It also clarifies that a statement does not incite or promote hatred "solely because it discredits, humiliates, hurts or offends." This clarification is better than nothing, but it inevitably relies on judges to determine the line between what is hateful or merely offensive.

NEW STAND-ALONE HATE CRIME OFFENCE

The *Criminal Code* already makes hatred a factor in sentencing. So, for example, if you assault someone and there is conclusive evidence that your assault was motivated by racial hatred, that "aggravating factor" will likely mean a harsher sentence for you. But the offence is still assault, and the maximum penalties for assault still apply.

Bill C-63, however, would add a new hate crime offence – any offence motivated by hatred – to the *Criminal Code*, and it may be punishable by life in prison.

It would mean that any crime found to be motivated by hatred would count as two crimes. Consider an act of vandalism, for example. The crime of mischief (which includes damaging property) has a maximum penalty of 10 years. But, if you damaged property because of hatred toward a group defined by race, religion, or sexuality, you could face an additional criminal charge and potentially life in prison.

ANTICIPATORY HATE CRIMES?

Bill C-63 would permit a person to bring evidence before a court based on fear that someone *will* commit hate speech or a hate crime in the future. The court may then order the accused to “keep the peace and be of good behavior” for up to 12 months and subject that person to conditions including wearing an electronic monitoring device, curfews, house arrest, or abstaining from consuming drugs or alcohol.

There are other circumstances in which people can go to court for fear that a crime will be committed – for example, if you have reason to believe that someone will damage your property, or cause you injury, or commit terrorism. However, challenges with unclear or subjective definitions of hatred will only be accentuated when determining if someone *will* commit hate speech or a hate crime.

BRINGING BACK SECTION 13

This is not the first time the government has tried to regulate hate speech. The former section 13 of the *Canada Human Rights Act* prohibited online communications that were “likely to expose a person or persons to hatred or contempt” on the basis of their race, religion, sexuality, etc.

As noted by Joseph Brean in the *National Post*, section 13 was passed in 1977, mainly in response to telephone hotlines that played racist messages. From there, the restrictions around hate speech were extended to the internet (telecommunications, including internet, falls under federal jurisdiction) until Parliament repealed section 13 in 2013. Joseph Brean writes that section 13 “was basically only ever used by

one complainant, a lawyer named Richard Warman, who targeted white supremacists and neo-Nazis and never lost.” In fact, Warman brought forward 16 hate speech cases and won them all.

A catalyst for the controversy over human rights hate speech provisions was a case involving journalist Ezra Levant. Levant faced a human rights complaint for publishing Danish cartoons of Muhammad in 2006. Then in 2007, a complaint was brought against *Maclean’s* magazine for publishing an article by Mark Steyn that was critical of Islam.

Such stories brought section 13 to public attention and revealed how human rights law was being used to quash officially disapproved political views.

Bill C-63 would bring back a slightly revised section 13. The new section 13 states:

“It is a discriminatory practice to communicate or cause to be communicated hate speech by means of the Internet or any other means of telecommunication in a context in which the hate speech is likely to foment detestation or vilification of an individual or group of individuals on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination.”

A few exceptions apply. For example, this section would not apply to private communication or to social media services that are simply hosting content posted and shared by users. So, for example, if someone wanted to bring a complaint about an ARPA post on Facebook, that complaint could be brought against ARPA, but not against Facebook.

If a person is found guilty of hate speech, the Human Rights Tribunal may order the offender to pay up to \$20,000 to the victim, and up to \$50,000 to the government. This possibility of financial benefit may incentivize people to bring forward hate speech complaints.

NO DEFENSES FOR CHRISTIANS?

As noted above, when it comes to the *Criminal Code’s* hate speech offences, there are several important defenses available (truth, expressing a religious belief, and advancing public debate).

But the *Canadian Human Rights*

Act offers no defenses. And complaints of hate speech in human rights law are far easier to bring and to prosecute than criminal charges. Criminal law requires proof beyond reasonable doubt. But under the *Human Rights Act*, statements that *are likely* (i.e. 51% chance, in the Tribunal’s view) to cause detestation or vilification will be punishable. So, hate speech would be regulated in two different places, the *Criminal Code* and the *Human Rights Act*, the latter offering fewer procedural rights and a lower standard of proof.

Section 13 leaves too much room for subjective and ideologically motivated interpretations of what constitutes hate speech. The ideological bias that often manifests is a critical theory lens, which sees “privileged” groups like Christians as capable only of being oppressors/haters, while others are seen as “equity-seeking” groups.

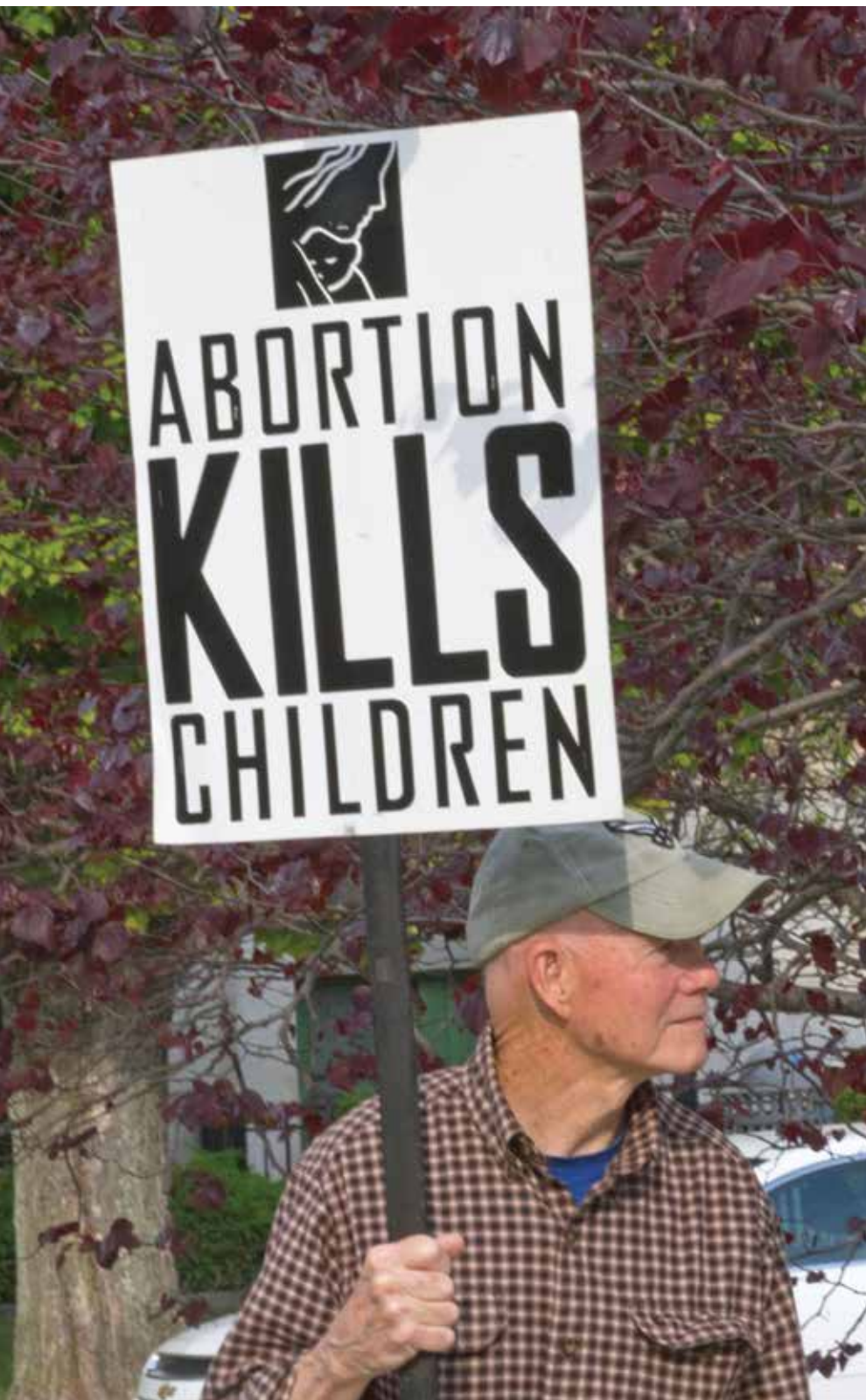
For example, in a 2003 case called *Johnson v. Music World Ltd.*, a complaint was made against the writer of a song called “Kill the Christian.” A sample:

Armies of darkness unite
Destroy their temples and churches with fire
Where in this world will you hide
Sentenced to death, the anointment of Christ
Put you out of your misery
The death of prediction
Kill the Christian
Kill the Christian...dead!

The Tribunal noted that the content and tone appeared to be hateful. However, because the Tribunal thought Christians were not a vulnerable group, it decided this was not hate speech.

By contrast, in a 2008 case called *Lund v. Boissoin*, a panel deemed a letter to the editor of a newspaper that was critical of homosexuality to be hate speech. The chair of the panel was the same person in both *Johnson* and *Lund*.

Hate speech provisions are potentially problematic for Christians who seek to speak truth about various issues in our society. Think about conversion therapy laws that ban talking about biblical gender and sexuality in some settings, or bubble zone



Is this man trying to incite hatred? Or is he acting out of love? Do we really want the government to weigh in on which it is?

laws that prevent pro-life expression in designated areas. But beyond that, freedom of speech is also important for those with whom we may disagree. It is important to be able to have public dialogue on various public issues.

GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN REGULATING SPEECH

This all raises serious questions about whether the government should be regulating “hate speech” at all. After all, hate speech provisions in the *Human Rights Act* or the *Criminal Code* have led and could lead to inappropriate censorship. But government also has a legitimate role to play in protecting citizens from harm.

1. Reputational harm and safety from threats of violence

Arguably the government's role in protecting citizens from harm includes reputational harm. Imagine someone was spreading accusations in your town that everyone in your church practices child abuse, for example. That is an attack on your reputation as a group and as individual members of the group – which is damaging and could lead to other harms, possibly even violence. Speech can do real damage.

But Jeremy Waldron, a prominent legal philosopher and a Christian, suggests that the best way to think about and enforce “hate speech” laws is as a prohibition on defaming or libeling a group, similar to how our law has long punished defaming or libeling an individual. Such a conception may help to rein in the scope of what we call “hate speech,” placing the focus on demonstrably false and damaging accusations, rather than on controversial points of view on matters relating to religion or sexuality, for example.

Hatred is a sin against the 6th commandment, but the government cannot regulate or criminalize emotions *per se* or expressions of them, except insofar as they are expressed in and through criminal acts or by encouraging others to commit criminal acts. That's why we rightly have provisions against advocating or inciting terrorism or genocide, or counseling or encouraging someone to commit assault,

murder, or any other crime.

When the law fails to set an objective standard, however, it is open to abuse – for example, by finding a biblical view of gender and sexuality to constitute hate speech. Regrettably, Bill C-63 opens up more room for subjectivity and ideologically based restrictions on speech. It does nothing to address the troubling interpretations of “hate speech” that we’ve seen in many cases in the past. And, by putting hate speech back into the *Human Rights Act*, the bill makes many more such abuses possible. We suspect it will result in restricting speech that is culturally unacceptable rather than objectively harmful.

2. Harm of pornography

As discussed earlier, Bill C-63 does

introduce some good restrictions when it comes to online pornography. In our view, laws restricting pornography are categorically different from laws restricting “hate speech,” because the former laws are not in danger of being applied to censor beliefs, opinions, or arguments. Restricting illegal pornography prevents objectively demonstrable harm. Pornography takes acts that ought to express love and marital union and displays them for consumption and the gratification of others. Much of it depicts degrading or violent behavior. Pornography’s harms, especially to children, are well documented.

The argument is often made that pornography laws risk censoring artistic expression involving sexuality or nudity. But Canada is very far, both culturally and

legally, from censoring art for that reason – and Bill C-63 wouldn’t do so. Its objectives as they relate to pornography are mainly to reduce the amount of child pornography and non-consensual pornography easily available online.

CONCLUSION

While the *Online Harms Act* contains some good elements aimed at combatting online pornography, its proposed hate speech provisions are worrisome. Unfortunately, the federal government chose to deal with both issues in one piece of legislation – this should have been two separate bills. Head to ARPACanada.ca for updates and action items related to the *Online Harms Act*. RP

THIS GOVERNMENT WANTS US TO TRUST THEM THAT MUCH?

Our government is subsidizing the very entity – the media – that is supposed to hold it to account by challenging and investigating government actions. As a former *National Post* editor, Jonathan Kay, tweeted:

“...much of the parliamentary press gallery literally depends on Justin Trudeau for 35% of their salaries. The prospect of missing a mortgage payment tends to affect one’s editorial judgment.”

That this government doesn’t see a problem with the independent media being independent no more speaks to their arrogance. Only those who think themselves angels – and are ignorant of history – would find counter balances to power unnecessary.

This government’s deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland, didn’t protest when her security detail arrested reporter David Menzies, who was trying to ask her questions. He was charged with assault, but as the video showed, he’d done nothing at all. While he was later released, Freeland said nothing at all in defense of a reporter who was just doing his job.

This same government has, by its incompetence or by design, curtailed news distribution over social media via their Bill C-18. With Canadian news now blocked on Facebook, Instagram, and elsewhere, it’s that much harder for citizens to know what the government is up to.

It’s this government that now wants more control over what speech we get to hear. They’ve proposed a hate speech law that could be abused; it was abused when it was in place a decade back. But, they want us to trust that it won’t be this time.

– Jon Dykstra



David Menzies getting arrested (Screenshot / Rebel News)



IS THE STATE OF ISRAEL A FULFILLMENT OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY?

by Cornelis Van Dam

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. In view of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, it is good to reflect on these issues.

THE LONGING FOR A RETURN

Through the centuries, Jews have cherished the hope that some day they could return to the land of their forefathers. After the very last remnants of

Jewish political power were crushed with the defeat of the second Jewish revolt under Bar Kokhba (A.D. 132-135), the dream of a return was never forgotten. Synagogue prayers, no matter where in the world they were offered, were made in the direction of Jerusalem. A strong emotional connection with that city was maintained. Through the centuries, the poetry and literature of the Jews spoke of Zion and Israel. Each year the Passover festival would end with the words, "Next year in Jerusalem!" However, and this is striking, for well over a thousand years, no attempt was made to return to the old Jewish homeland to transform the dream into reality. The pious hoped for a miracle and insisted that it would be blasphemous to force the hand of God by trying to get a homeland on their own. Even in times of tremendous persecution, in which the Jews suffered innumerable atrocities, there was no

mass movement to the old homeland. There were some minor exceptions with relatively small groups going to Palestine, but that was all. Far more Jews went to other places for refuge.

In spite of the emotional connection to Palestine, it was not coupled with action, even though those few who went apparently had no problems apart from enduring poverty. But that was surely a small price to pay compared to the difficulties they faced with oppression and persecution. What made the 19th and 20th centuries the time for the emotional ties and dream to be translated into action for a new reality? Why was it that even areas outside Palestine were considered as a possible new homeland for the Jews?

The explanation is often sought in the anti-Semitism of the 19th century. This was undoubtedly an important immediate factor. But anti-Semitism had been

around for centuries. Determinative were the new notions of nationalism and self-determination of which the French Revolution was a dramatic manifestation. People started to think that a nation is made up of individuals who determine their own destiny. A nation is no longer defined by a king or ruler, but by the people who determine what laws are to be passed and how to be a nation. The rise of nationalism positively impacted Jewish thinking about striving for their own homeland.

ZIONISM

The development of nationalism meant that Jews scattered all over the world began to think of themselves as needing to determine their own destiny as a people, and so the soil was prepared for modern political Zionism. Jews in the 19th and 20th centuries did what their forefathers had not done. They sought to determine their own future. Zionism was a nationalist movement in which a people sought their own self-determination and future as a nation. It was therefore not of ultimate importance to two fathers of modern Zionism, Leo Pinsker (Russian) and Theodor Herzl (Hungarian), exactly where the nation of Israel was to be established. Both had independently come to see the need for a national homeland and *that* was the important thing. When Pinkster published his *Auto-Emancipation* in 1882, he pleaded for self-emancipation, preferably in Palestine, but, if that wasn't possible, elsewhere would do. Herzl and others had the same view, as indicated by the seriousness with which they considered a proposal from the British government to establish a Jewish homeland in what was then Uganda.

Zionism was a political movement and not a religious one. The religious overtones were certainly there and that helped clinch Palestine as *the* place where the new state should be established. The basis for the state was however to be secular, although Judaism was privileged. Nationalist fervor demanded the restoration of the language of the nation – Hebrew. This return to an ancient language is unique in history, but

Hebrew would bind Jews from Russia, France, Italy and other countries into the one people that they are.

It is interesting to note that before the rise of modern Zionism, Reform Jews had eliminated all references to Zion from their prayer book, insisting that Judaism had outgrown Palestine and that it was now the mission of Israel to be a light to the nations. They therefore opposed Zionism. Orthodox Judaism was also against Zionism because they considered it forcing the hand of God. Their God would miraculously restore them to their homeland, for that is what He had promised, in their view. They must therefore wait for Him.

The establishment of Israel was motivated by secular considerations and had little to do with obedience to God. But could it not nevertheless be possible that the reestablishment of Israel as a state was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy?

DOES ISRAEL HAVE A BIBLICAL RIGHT TO THE LAND?

We need to look briefly at some of the prophecies that deal with the land and the promised return of Israel to the land that is now Israel.

The land

God promised Abraham, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18; cf. 17:8). Dispensationalists, who make a sharp distinction between Israel and the church, consider this promise to have been unfulfilled prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948. After that date, the prophecies about the land were being realized and so Israel will eventually get all the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (which would include most of Syria). The *New Scofield Reference Bible* in its note on Deuteronomy 30:3 states that it is important to understand that the nation has never been in possession of the whole land that was promised to them. However, is this true? The answer according to the Bible must be “no.”

God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Old Testament times. This was

most dramatically seen with Solomon's kingdom. It extended from the river Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt (1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chron. 9:26). We can therefore say that the promise of the land given to Abraham has been fulfilled. God has no further obligations here, so to speak. The present nation of Israel has no special biblical claim to the land on the basis of God's promise to Abraham.

The return

But what about the prophecies concerning the return? Many people regard the present situation of Israel in the Middle East as a partial fulfillment of the return to the land of which the Old Testament speaks. As a sample of what is usually quoted to support this idea, let us briefly consider promises made through the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah.

In Jeremiah 23:3, the LORD promised “I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold.” Important here for Dispensationalists is the reference to “out of all the countries.” This must refer, according to *The New Scofield Reference Bible* note on this text, to a restoration other than the restoration from Babylon which is just one country. This prophecy still awaits fulfillment. However, that is not so.

Why then does Jeremiah speak of a return “out of all the countries”? Because it was a customary practice to sell captives taken in war to other nations as slaves (see Joel 3:7, Amos 1:6,9). In this way Israelites could become scattered all over the known world (cf. Ezekiel 27:13). Representatives from both the northern and southern tribes returned. When for instance a sin-offering was brought at the dedication of the temple in the time of Darius, then it was “a sin-offering for all Israel, 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel” (Ezra 6:17, also Ezra 8:35). The prophetess Anna belonged to Asher, one of the northern tribes (Luke 2:36). The New Testament also considers Israel



as twelve tribes, whether literally or symbolically (Acts 26:7, Matthew 19:28). In view of the above, there is no need to take Jeremiah 23:3 and see the return mentioned there as referring to what is happening today.

For further support to the notion that prophecy is now being fulfilled, Dispensationalists quote Isaiah 11:11-12: "The Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people ... and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Dispensationalists consider the reference to this return being "the second time" as conclusive evidence that the Lord here refers to what is happening today, the first return having been from Babylon. But the first return was not from Babylon, but from Egypt. *That* was the first release from bondage for Israel. The Old Testament is full of that and even Isaiah 11:16 specifically speaks of it and connects it with the Babylonian return, which is clearly then the second return.

Furthermore, Isaiah 11 goes on to say that the returned exiles "shall swoop down on the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them" (verse 14). The late William Hendriksen aptly noted that these predictions were fulfilled, as is clear from the First Book of the Maccabees. In addition, "those who believe that *now*, in the twentieth century A.D., these Philistines, Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites

... as we have seen, the State of Israel today has no special biblical claim to Palestine.

must still be destroyed or plundered or subjected will have a hard time even *finding* them!"¹ Israel was restored after the Babylonian captivity. The prophecy of the return was fulfilled.

THE NEW ISRAEL

There is one other factor that needs to be mentioned before we leave the issue of the promise of the land. Dispensationalism makes a very strong distinction between Israel and the church. However, according to Scripture the church is the now "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise" (Rom. 9:8). All those who have believed God's promises belong to His children, "the Israel of God."

This identity of the church has consequences for the promise of the land. The fifth commandment as given to God's people at Mount Sinai stated: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the *land* that the LORD your God is giving you" (Ex. 20:12). However, when this command is referred to in the New Testament, the reference is to living long "on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3). God's children as the new Israel will inherit the whole world! That is also the point of Romans 4:13 which

states that the promise to Abraham and his offspring was that "he would be heir of the world"! The promise of the land for the new Israel is far more than some real estate in the eastern Mediterranean. In this final age, God's people have been promised the world!

WHAT MAKES ISRAEL SPECIAL AND WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Most Christians have traditionally held a soft spot for the Jewish people. After all, they were God's special people and they have preserved for us the Old Testament Scripture. "The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2) which have come down to us because the Jewish people so faithfully transmitted the Word from one generation to the next so that we have the complete Old Testament. We owe them much gratitude that God used them to give us so much of His Word.

However, as we have seen, the State of Israel today has no special biblical claim to Palestine. Like Abraham, Israel must look forward "to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Nowhere does the New Testament give a prophecy of restoration to the land of Canaan for Israel. The State of Israel is not the solution for the ultimate well-being and salvation of Jews.



The New Testament clearly shows this to be the case because thinking that a national political restoration is *the* solution for Israel is an old heresy. When the Lord Jesus walked on earth, many in Israel were looking for a political messiah. But Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world and He disavowed notions of a political restoration for Israel. Instead he prophesied the destruction of the temple. We do Israel no favor by appealing to the Bible to justify their existence as an independent nation in the Middle East. Their existence is legally and politically legitimate but not founded on the basis of biblical prophecy.

If we want to help the Jews, and we should, we can begin by praying more for them. Part of the Reformed heritage are the beautiful prayers, found in books like the Canadian Reformed *Book of Praise*. Among these prayers is “A Prayer for All the Needs of Christendom” which includes this petition: “we pray for the mission among Jews, Muslims, and heathens, who live without hope and without you in the world.” Note the order. We can and should pray this prayer because Christ came so that also Jews may inhabit the land of the LORD, that is, the new world that is coming. And not only Jews, but also Arabs who according to the flesh are counted as sons of Abraham. One day in *the* Promised Land, the true Canaan, there will be peace and joy. All the elect, including Jews and Palestinian Arabs, will be there in perfect peace and harmony. The Jewish people may sometimes be off

our radar, but not God’s. They remain a special people in God’s sight.

A question sometimes asked is: but have the Jews not been rejected? Have they not shown they want nothing to do with the crucified Christ?

HAS GOD REJECTED THE JEWS?

God has not rejected the Jews. Although the apostles turned from preaching to the Jews because of their unwillingness to listen and went to the Gentiles, yet, the apostle Paul said of the Jews: “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1). Scripture teaches that the conversion of the Gentiles will stir Israel to jealousy so that as Gentiles are saved, God will also gather Jews to Himself, until “all Israel” will be saved (Rom. 11:1-11, 25-26). This “all Israel” can be Jews plus Gentiles as comprising the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) or “all Israel” can refer to all the elect from Israel, all the believing Jews. In any case, the Bible gives no basis for the belief that there will be a mass conversion of Israel as a nation, but it does state that the total number of the Jewish elect will be saved (Rom. 11:26-27).²

We must never think that mission to the Jews does not concern us. In a sense we owe so much to them and they were God’s chosen instruments to prepare and to be part of the coming of our Savior to this world. The Jews remain a special people for the Lord and therefore also for us.

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East reminds us of a sober truth. There

is no abiding peace or political salvation here on this side of eternity. But there is hope and true salvation if eyes are lifted up on high and the God of Abraham is supplicated through our Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

There is only one ultimate solution. It is found in the gospel and in embracing the glad tidings. The Lord Jesus gathers His church, also in Israel, in the West Bank, and in Gaza. Messianic Jews in Israel are believers in Jesus Christ. In the West Bank and Gaza are also Christians who love and confess Christ under very difficult circumstances. They are a minority in a Muslim society.

How God’s people would rejoice if the evil forces that function in nationalism and Islamism could be conquered by the Spirit-fed force of a joint Jewish-Arab Christian testimony in the Middle East. With such a testimony the importance of who gets Jerusalem or which piece of territory is relativized because of the overarching promise of a new Jerusalem which comes down from heaven to give the ultimate peace. There Jew and Arab can truly dwell in peace together. RP

END NOTES

¹ William Hendriksen, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1968), 21 (emphasis is Hendriksen’s).

² See Romans 11 and the clear explanation in Hendriksen, *Israel in Prophecy*, 32-52.

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

7 DEBUNKED EVOLUTIONARY “EVIDENCES”

As Dr. Jonathan Wells has documented in his books *Icons of Evolution* and *Zombie Science*, there are long discredited “evidences” for evolution that keep popping up in science textbooks. Why do evolutionists use these bad examples? Because, as lies go, these are pretty compelling ones, especially to high school and college students who don’t know better. And they use them because they don’t have any better evidences.

1. Galapagos finches – Darwin thought changing beak sizes was a great proof. But the back and forth change only showed a built-in adaptability.
2. Junk DNA – Evolutionists presumed the majority of our DNA was just non-functioning remnants of our previous evolutionary stages. Wrong.
3. Vestigial organs – Evolutionists presumed that parts of the body they didn’t understand were just useless remnants of previous evolutionary stages. They were wrong again.
4. Backward retina – Our eye isn’t designed the way evolutionists would design it, so they thought that was evidence of bad – i.e. unguided – design. But it’s not bad; it’s brilliant.
5. Haeckel’s embryos – Embryos of different species were drawn to make it look like we all start life looking the same. But reality is quite different.
6. Miller-Urey experiment – This intelligently-designed experiment done in a controlled lab setting is often cited as proof that the building blocks of life could come about by sheer luck, in the great outdoors.
7. Homology in vertebrate limbs – Both frogs and humans have five digits, so does that show we evolved from a common ancestor? Well, no, as we now know very different genes can be at work here.

Go to Creation.com, AnswersInGenesis.org or ICR.org to find out more about each of these.

EDUCATION IS NEVER NEUTRAL

There is a quote circulating the Internet, commonly attributed to Dr. R.C. Sproul that certainly reflects his views, but which doesn’t seem to quite line up with anything I’ve found him saying. Whether he said it or not, someone certainly should have.

“There is no such thing as a neutral education. Every education, every curriculum, has a viewpoint. That viewpoint either considers God in it or it does not. To teach children

about life and the world in which they live without reference to God is to make a statement about God. It screams a statement. The message is either that there is no God or that God is irrelevant. Either way the message is the same.”

ONE PARAPROSDOKIAN DESERVES NINE OTHERS

A paraprostdokian is a turn of a phrase that might seem to be heading in a certain direction, only to then take a sudden twist.

- Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian, any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
- Always swim or dive with a friend. It reduces your chance of shark attack by 50%.
- If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the precipitate.
- Don’t let the village raise your child.
- Everything comes to those who wait... except a cat.
- Two guys walked into a bar; the third one ducked.
- I used to play piano by ear. Now I use my hands.
- Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
- Outside of a dog, a book is a man’s best friend. Inside of a dog it’s too dark to read. – Groucho Marx
- Last night I removed all the bad food from the house. It was delicious.

YOU ARE NOT YOUR FEELINGS

It is for the sake of “authenticity” that we now have men saying they are women. It’s how they feel, so the world has to take them as they identify.

But what this supposes is that we are our feelings, and these emotions define us more certainly than anything else. It also assumes those feelings are so set in stone, so utterly unchangeable, that if our body runs counter to our feelings, it is our body that needs to be changed and not our feelings.

To clear up this confusion, Tim Keller uses a thought experiment (from his book *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Scepticism*) to demonstrate that our feelings don’t define us.

“Imagine an Anglo-Saxon warrior in Britain in AD 800. He has two very strong inner impulses and feelings. One is aggression. He loves to smash and kill people when they show him disrespect. Living in a shame-and-honor culture with its warrior ethic, he will identify with that feeling. He will say to himself, *That’s me! That’s who I am! I will express that.* The other feeling he senses is same-sex attraction. To that he will say, *That’s not me. I will control and suppress that.*

“Now imagine a young man walking around Manhattan today. He has the same two inward impulses, both equally strong, both difficult to control. What will he say? He will look at the aggression and think, *This is not who I want to be*, and will seek deliverance in therapy and anger-management programmes. He will look at his sexual desire, however, and conclude, *This is who I am.*”



This highlights how there is something *outside* us that defines us. The unbeliever may just attribute it to “culture” but even he’ll have to admit that he is more than his feelings. Keller continues:

“...we receive some interpretive moral grid, lay it down over our various feelings and impulses, and sift them through it. This grid helps us decide which feelings are ‘me’ and should be expressed – and which are not and should not be. So this grid of interpretive beliefs – not an innate, unadulterated expression of our feelings – is what gives us our identity. Despite protests to the contrary, we instinctively know our inner depths are insufficient to guide us. We need some standard or rule from outside of us to help us sort out the warring impulses of our interior life.”

So what the world needs to hear from Christians then, is:

1. Your feelings are answerable to a standard that is outside of yourself.
2. Your culture can only offer an ever-changing, baseless standard.
3. Your Maker made you for a purpose, and we can only be our most “authentic selves” when we yield to the One who knows us better than we know ourselves.

NOT JUST A G-RATING

You have three kids wondering what they can do, and meanwhile laundry still needs to be folded, and you haven’t even begun figuring out what dinner will be. “What about a movie, Mom?”

That sounds like just the idea, an animated classic, with a nice safe G-rating of course.

But wait just a second! The authors of a 2014 study called “Cartoons Kill” compared death in kids’ films with adult dramas and found that main characters were more likely to die in the kids’ movies! If you find that hard to believe, consider what happens in just a few of Disney’s biggest hits:

- *Bambi* – Bambi’s mother is shot by hunters
- *The Lion King* – Simba’s father is murdered
- *Frozen* – Elsa and Anna’s parents are drowned
- *Tarzan* – Tarzan’s parents are killed by a leopard
- *Finding Nemo* – Nemo’s siblings and mother are killed by a barracuda
- *The Fox and the Hound* – Tod’s mother is shot

The researchers concluded:

“There was no evidence to suggest these results had changed over time since 1937, when Snow White’s stepmother, the evil queen, was struck by lightning, forced off a cliff, and crushed by a boulder while being chased by seven vengeful dwarves.”

While “effects of exposure to animated depictions of death have not been studied,” one experimental study showed an impact: “... children who watched a movie about drowning were less willing to try canoeing than other children.” The study’s authors wanted parents to understand that while animated films may have a G or PG rating, they can still have a death count comparable to adult films.

A TRIBUTE OF SORTS

Reagan once shared a quip about a teacher who'd:

"...taught her class about magnets and all their properties and then several weeks later gave a test and asked them what it was that was spelled with six letters, began with an M, and picked up things. Eight-seven percent of the class said, 'mother.'"

REASON TO PRAY

For those who find prayer difficult, there are many reasons to persist, one of which Willem J. Ouwenel lists in *The Heidelberg Diary*:

"There is a peculiar element in the Catechism's answer [H.C. answer 116] that we should not overlook. God gives his blessings 'only to those who pray continually.' Here, a direct causal link is seen between our prayers and God's answers. Some people feel that God's sovereignty implies that he cannot make himself dependent on what humans ask. If God would depend on humans, in whatever small way, they argue, this would ruin his sovereignty. They overlook the fact that, apparently, God has *sovereignly* decided to involve human actions and decisions as well as prayers in his ways with the world..."

SOURCE: (h/t Jan Broersma)

ON THE VALUE OF ONE PLUS ONE

"...there are no words to express the abyss between isolation and having one ally. It may be conceded to the mathematician that four is twice two. But two is not twice one; two is two thousand times one. That is why, in spite of a hundred disadvantages, the world will always return to monogamy."

– G.K. Chesterton

11 THINGS TO DO INSTEAD OF SCREENS

Summer is here and as blogger Arlene Pellicane noted, "more free time usually morphs into more screen time." While the pull of screens might persist, there is so much your kids can get up to. Here are 11 suggestions, but a 12th might be to have your kids create their own activities list.

1. Play ultimate frisbee, or create your own backyard frisbee golf course.
2. Wash your car... and your neighbor's or grandparents'.
3. Take an online course (programming, logic, Dutch, etc.).
4. Have a yard sale for a good cause. Canvass for donations, make posters, etc.
5. Create a list of books, with your parents' help, that you should read before you leave home... and then read some of them.
6. Play a board game. Change some of the rules to invent your own version.
7. Do a chore, unasked, every day.
8. Design and create a pro-life chalk picture for your driveway.
9. Write, and draw, a series of stickman comics. Recruit a

friend to do it with you.

10. Get outdoors, swimming, biking, rollerblading, paddleboarding, or whatever.
11. Compliment three people a day.

HAY MON!

My hearing isn't quite what it was, and I'm determined to have as much fun with it as I can. So I shared the joke when I couldn't figure out what it was that my neighbor's dad was up to that day. This 60-something gentleman has his own karaoke machine, so when his wife said he had left "to reggae," it at least seemed possible.

It turned out, however, that the retired farmer had gone "to rake hay."

ARE YOU INTERRUPTIBLE?

If it ain't an emergency your kids shouldn't interrupt, right? That's a good general rule, because we want our kids to be patient, and not think the world revolves around just them. But we also want them to understand God gave them parents to be there for them. So it can be overdone.

As I heard noted on a podcast, even Jesus was "interruptible" – the woman who reached out to touch Jesus (Luke 8:43-48), and the men who lowered their friend through the roof (Mark 2:1-12) weren't waiting patiently.


Busy parents need to note that it is often the unplanned conversations that really matter. Yes, your daughter might already be late for bed, but if she's sharing now, right before you're heading out her bedroom door, maybe you're the one who needs to learn some patience... so you can stop and listen. There is a balance to be had, but if you want your kids coming to you with their troubles – and you *should* want that – then you need to be interruptible.

BEWARE WINGS OF FIRE'S BAIT AND SWITCH

Wings of Fire is an incredibly popular kids' book series about dragons, but sadly the author has pulled the old bait and switcheroo.

She first lured young readers in with the promise of fire, fights, and fast-paced adventure. But starting in book 10 with a one-line mention of one girl dragon liking another girl dragon, the author began pushing the LGBT agenda. That comes out in a bigger way in books 14 and 15, with the introduction of a couple of "non-binary" characters (complete with they/them pronouns), a dragon with two moms, a trio of lesbian couples, and a homosexual pairing.

It's no coincidence that this agenda comes out big and bold only this far into the series. The author knows she has most of her young readers hooked, and they'll want to know how the 15-book series ends, no matter what she foists on them. Hopefully Christian kids will quit in disgust, but there will be a temptation to see how it all ends.

Parents can help their kids by finding better books for them. We have suggestions at ReformedPerspective.ca/books and we're always looking for your help. Send your recommendations to editor@ReformedPerspective.ca. 

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

JULY - AUGUST 2024

PUZZLE CLUES

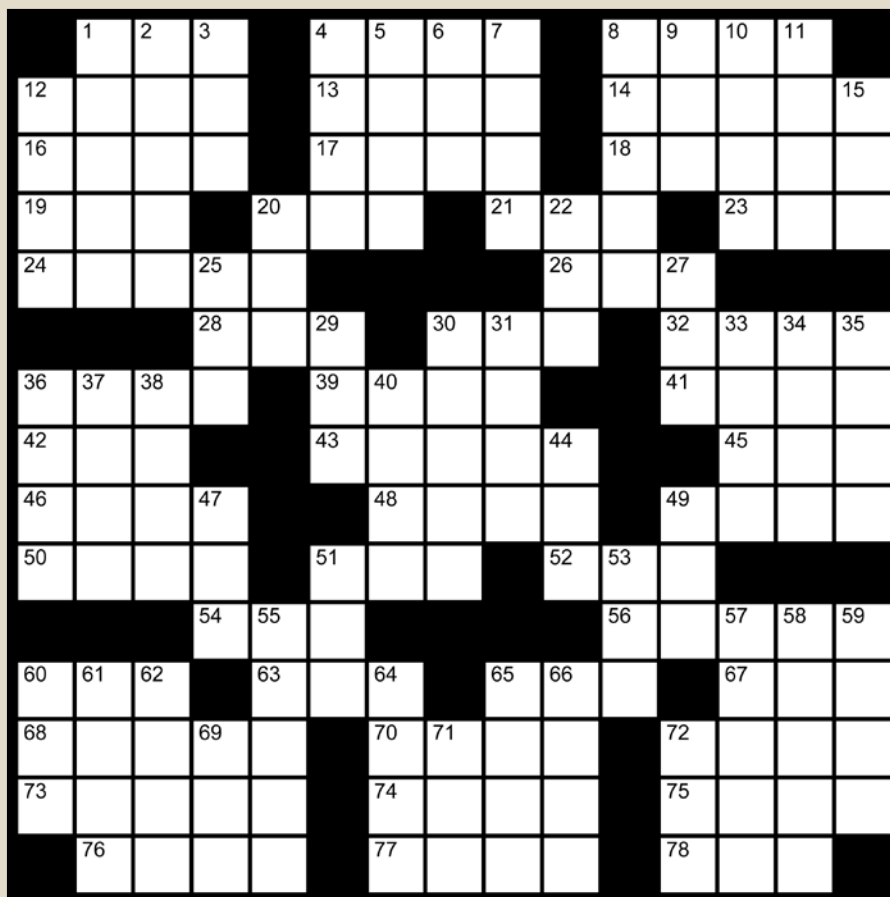
Find this issue's solution on page 2!

ACROSS

1. Abbreviated sandwich
4. One who needs the manual
8. Questions; queries
12. Song for one
13. Hindus call Jesus a _____, not God (but C.S. Lewis has rebutted that notion)
14. Pew people
16. One thing Pharisees tithed (Luke 11)
17. Description of cows in a dream (Gen. 41)
18. Far north housing option
19. "Greetings, O favored _____" (Luke 1)
20. *It is* Frank McCourt's 1999 memoir
21. ____ A: what you insert into slot A
23. "...for my ____ sake, I do it..." (Is. 48)
24. Modern Japanese martial art
26. Subject of a homicide case (short form)
28. Mine output (Job 28)
30. Plumbing or traffic intersection
32. Better kind of wine or cheese
36. "When the Sabbath was _____" (Mark 16)
39. Den of thieves, or lions, or tigers, or bears...
41. Number of bears or sons in a children's story
42. What God makes in winter (Job 37, 38)
43. Praise given for achievement
45. Abbreviation for when the pirate gets there
46. Southeast Asian starchy root vegetable
48. Hasty, ill-advised (leading to irritated skin?)
50. Really good quality sound system
51. Friend, buddy, amigo...
52. Bird that can take five people to catch
54. ____ the Lion (MGM mascot)
56. Hydrocarbon molecule component
60. Name of 20-year war site (short form)
63. Home of a real pig
65. "Wow! That classic novel is totally ____!"
67. What you give me when you get my money
68. Citizens of a country adjacent to Laos
70. Smelly smell
72. Shape of the nose (of a revolver or a person)
73. Dye used for temporary tattoos
74. "What does the ____?" "Make resolutions!"
75. "____ hand are the devil's workshop."
76. "____ signs and wonders" (Acts 2, 5)
77. "Has the _____ a father...?" (Job 38)
78. Nothing; naught

DOWN

1. Salty water
2. "the man clothed in _____" (Dan. 12)
3. Short form for very personal art
4. Unattractive Jamaican citrus fruit?
5. Takes to court
6. Epoch (for a mixed-up ear?)
7. Smallest of a litter of newborns
8. What every suspect wants to have
9. Sink; settle
10. 2.2 pounds (abbr.)
11. ____ and go: Chrysler minivan feature
12. Out of control, or a priest who returned with Zerubbabel (Neh. 12:17)
15. Hither and ____
20. Abbreviation on a Raptors scoreboard
22. Not a ST. or RD.
25. *Polka ____ Door* (1979-1993 children's show)
27. Charles Dickens's favorite pet
29. Deer found in the Rocky Mountains
30. Type or wave or bore
31. Greek name for Cupid
33. Grasp; grip
34. Irish Gaelic name for Ireland
35. Forgetful fish in *Finding Nemo*
36. Helmet material
37. Legendarily nutritious berry
38. "____'s up?" "Yes, sire, working your land."
40. Possible migraine or seizure symptom
44. Biblical pronoun for Jerusalem or Babylon
47. Treatment for injuries (Luke 10)
49. "...each cried ____ to his god." (Jonah 1)
51. Pol ____ - Cambodian communist dictator
53. "...we were ____ by a slave girl..." (Acts 16)
55. It can be narrative or persuasive.
57. Official language of India
58. "____ Never Know" (Michael Buble song)
59. "____ City" - Canadian oil change chain
60. To the ____ degree (= extremely)
61. "Your attention, please."
62. Supposed force permeating all things
64. "all ____ waves and ____ billows" (Jonah 2)
65. *From bottom to top* this is a false god.
66. "they came to the ____ gate" (Acts 12)
69. "You cannot miss that ____" ("Up-Hill")
71. Genetic molecule
72. "...and your ____ atoned for." (Is. 6)



come and
EXPLORE!

Folly in Duran's Cove

"Yer not thinkin' of taking yer new boat
out right now, are ya Charlie?"

"It about looks like I am, don't it?"

"Weather man says there'll be a big 'un tonight.
Storm for the ages, said he! Yer boat'll still be here
in the morn, better take 'er out then, eh?"

"Ah quit your belly achin'. Just a minute or two
ain't going to hurt. Just a wee run, eh?
Don't get all worked up, Jack."

Charlie hopped into his new fishing boat and turned the key. The engine purred. "See Jack? Look at 'er, listen to her purr - this beaut be the strongest boat there be and storm or not, she'll be steady. Let's not forget who won the sea derby three years in a row now, eh!"

Charlie took off, his boat disappearing into the distance. Jack stood on the dock, straining to see the clouds in the distance turn an ominous gray. *Sure is a fine boat, Jack said to himself, and Charlie be the best in the village, that's for sure.*

The sea was calm, a few waves lapping the side of the new Fishing Boat 3000, the fastest boat on the market. One minute turned into two. Two into five, five into ten and before he knew it, the small waves steadily grew in ferocity, the clouds growing darker and ever closer, and small drops of rain began to fall on Charlie.

"She'll hold me steady", Charlie repeated boldly, "she's a good boat, let's see how she handles 'em big waves." Charlie pushed the boat towards the storm, the waves now capped in white. "Just a minute 'er two - yeahawwww - she's a good 'un!" The waves pushed the boat this way and that and while one moment Charlie was enjoying his ocean rodeo, the next moment a furious wave jostled the side of the boat, causing Charlie to lose his footing. His head knocked the roof, slammed into the steering column, then, everything went black.

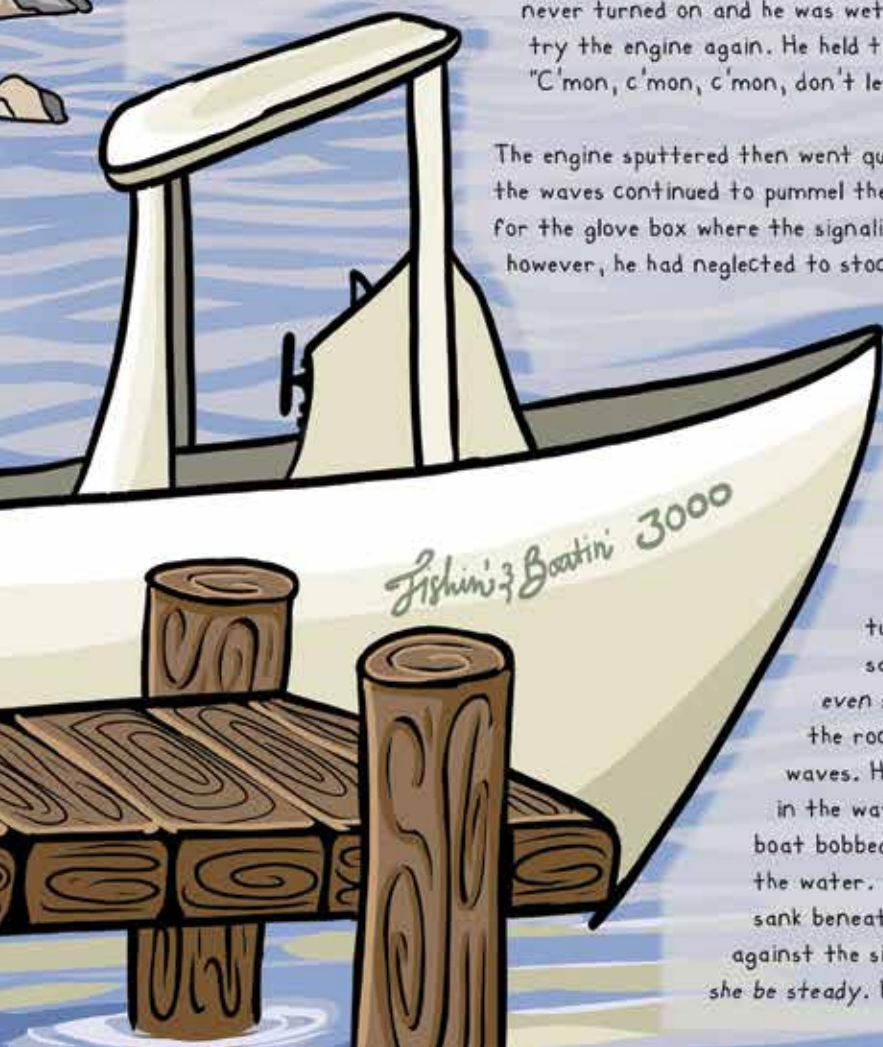
Jack stood on the shore, watching as the clouds rolled in closer to Duran's Cove. His stomach churned like the sea. Something was wrong, and he knew it. "I shoulda nailed 'em boots to the dock, I tell ya," he murmured to his wife, "I told him ner to go out there but nah! Never checked 'er over even, just vrrtthhhmmmm out 'e went! Foolish man!"

Everything was dark and hazy as Charlie's consciousness began to stir. The boat, being rocked to and fro, was handling the abuse from the ocean waves well enough, but Charlie, pairing a splitting headache and oncoming panic, started to fret. The engine had shut off, the emergency lights never turned on and he was wet. Sopping wet. He gathered his strength to stand and try the engine again. He held tight to the steering column and fumbled with the key. "C'mon, c'mon, c'mon, don't let me down!"

The engine sputtered then went quiet. The winds blew past his head from every direction, the waves continued to pummel the boat, and his head throbbed. Impulsively he reached for the glove box where the signaling flares would be. In his haste to try out the boat, however, he had neglected to stock the boat with any of the typical emergency items.

Another wave jostled the boat. Charlie sat down underneath the steering column to gather his wits.

What to do, what to do. I'm the finest sailor, and she be the finest boat. This storm is just a wee 'un eh. He squinted his eyes to try pick any thing out of the darkness. He made out a paddle tucked into the side near him. *It's a long shot, he said to himself, rather proud, but I'm a strong man even so.* He grabbed the paddle, steadied himself against the rocking boat and began to work hard against the waves. He knew it was useless the moment he put the paddle in the water. He had no sense of direction, no lights, the boat bobbed up and down, the paddle hardly being able to touch the water. Another wave hit. The paddle lept from his grip and sank beneath the waves. Charlie's knees went weak and he sat against the side of the boat. *Well, this ain't good, he muttered, but she be steady.* His thoughts were not confident. They were frightened.



Jack grew increasingly worried for his best friend. An hour had passed with no sign of Charlie's boat and no indication that the storm was going to let up anytime soon. The storm had hit the cove now and everything was being beat by the torrential rain. Jack donned his jacket and stood outside trying to see anything of Charlie, but couldn't. He was about to head inside when he saw it. The old lighthouse.

An old lighthouse stood on the bank of Duran's Cove, atop some ragged cliffs and staggered rocks down below. The locals knew how to steer through the rocks, a sort of rite of passage, passed from father to son, and with the new technology and common mild weather, the village closed up the lighthouse some years prior. Jack wasn't a very active man, thanks to his wife's splendid cooking, but he pushed his stout little legs up the hill to the lighthouse as fast as they were willing to carry him. 200 wooden steps awaited him as he slammed the door open. 200 steps and his legs already felt like jello. *Gotta save Charlie, he said to himself, persuading his legs to go on, one step at a time, one step at a time.... If my wife weren't the best cook in the village this'd be as easy as pie. Ah, pie. She makes the best pie. One step at a time...*

Charlie had lost all hope. He was alone in the dark, being beaten by the waves, and his thoughts. All of his attempts to rescue himself had failed. His head was buried in his hands. *I ain't nuthin' but a fool. I shoulda listened to Jack. He be the wisest man I know. My stupid pride got in the way again! When will I ever learn! Best sailor in the village, says I, well look at me now. Wet, useless. Best boat in the market, says I? Listen to 'er now! In his distress he called out, "Please, Lord! I have been so foolish. Why didn't I listen to Jack! Oh, my stupid and stubborn prideful heart! Forgive me! Rescue me from this terror!"* The waves continued to beat the boat.

Moments later, a soft glow began to flicker through the passing waves. Through his tears, he tried to focus on the light, trying to figure out what it was. It took him a while (let's not forget his pounding headache). The lighthouse! Charlie couldn't believe his eyes. His tears overwhelmed his face as he lifted his arms and exclaimed, "Praise the Lord! You have heard my cries!"

He struggled to his feet and gave the key a confident turn. *The Lord has heard my pleas.* The key turned, the engine sputtered and then roared. Charlie turned the boat towards the light, fighting with each wave to keep the boat in the right direction. It was a long, difficult journey back to shore. He was tossed to and fro, losing his footing every now and then. The waves hurled his boat upon the rocks, but he kept his eyes focused on the light. As he grew closer to the Cove, his boat took a solid hit against one of the ragged rocks and sprung a leak. Exhausted, Charlie jumped out and let the waves carry him to shore as the boat began to sink. Jack, having seen Charlie jump, waded in to get him. A few brave young men helped Jack get Charlie from the shore into the house. "I shoulda listened to ya, Jack. I'm a fool. Thanks fer the light." Thunder clapped as Charlie was set down to the fire, warm blankets piled high and a hot cup of soup sitting next to the couch. Jack smiled to himself as he looked out the window at the light that was beaming steadily through the storm.

*"Wisdom is better than folly,
just as light is better than darkness."*

Ecclesiastes 2:13.

character check.

Every now and then it is wise to take stock of our hearts
- read the descriptions below - are you a Jack or Charlie?

CHARLIE

LIKES STRAWBERRY RHUBARB PIE
WILL DO ANYTHING IF IT'S FUN
IGNORES THE WEATHER
ACTS IMPULSIVELY
IGNORES REBUKES
PRAYS AS A LAST RESORT
IS USUALLY THE FRIEND IN NEED
THINKS HIGHLY OF HIMSELF



JACK

LIKES APPLE PIE (WITH ICE CREAM)
HAS FUN WITHIN REASON
CONSIDERS THE WEATHER
PLANS AHEAD
REBUKES A FRIEND WHEN NECESSARY
HAS A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
HELPS A FRIEND IN NEED
ASKS FOR HELP



MORE ACTIVITIES TO BE FOUND AT:
REFORMEDPERSPECTIVE.CA/KIDS

WORD SEARCH

E O W E E U E V O C C H S V
N O I S A S W A V E S T F S
H H S I L O O F O E W I E S
E R E S I E I P D U R A N C
C H E S U O H T H G I L H H
N O I S S E F N O C H O F A
C I A N M N B H R P E I F R
S M A R I E O V E R I O S L
C B O S S O A H C R W E I I
I T S E D L T E E C R S I E
S O S T A E V T I N L H A L
O I I O R E P K L A H I T I
G W J A C K T O N S I O F S
W I T I E A R A H C N S O F

PIE
HOPE
BOAT
COVE
CHARLIE
SIN
WISE
DURAN
CONFESSION
JACK
WAVES
FOOLISH
LIGHTHOUSE
STORM
CLIFF

discussion questions:

Charlie uses the excuse "just a minute or two won't hurt" to justify his decision to go out even with the oncoming storm. What are some examples of using this excuse in different areas of sin?

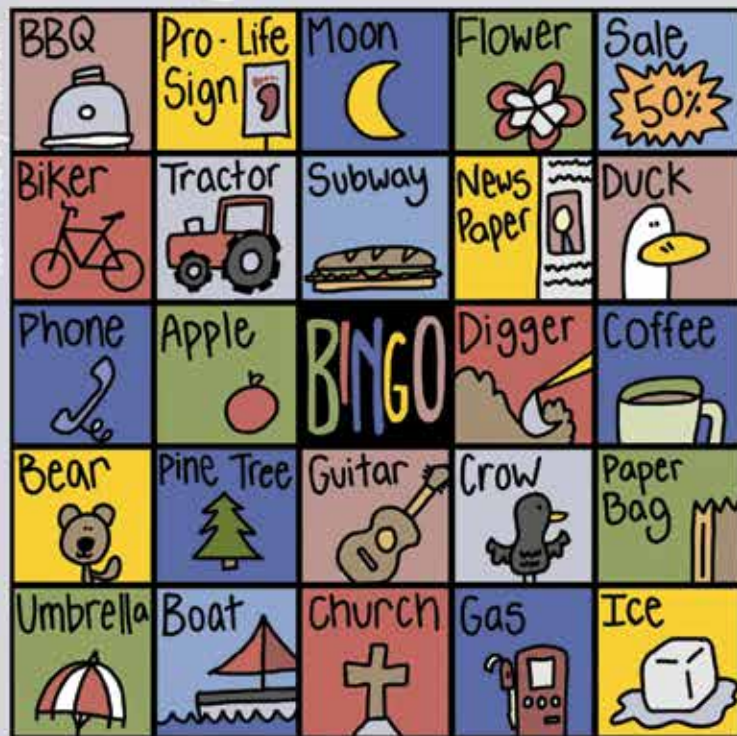
What different things did Charlie try to depend on before he humbled himself and asked God for help?

Jack was determined to get the lighthouse turned on to help his friend. Do you know a friend who is heading towards a storm of sin? How can you be a light towards that friend?

Charlie is packing his supplies for his new (new) boat. Circle the 5 items from on this page every boat must carry.

BINGO!

Heading on a road trip this summer? Download a printable copy of this bingo and play it with your family



submitted by Hannah F.

SIMONE BOS'S CALMING CUBES OF COLOUR

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman

Thank you, dear readers, for all your suggestions of artists to profile in this column. One name that has been shared repeatedly with me is Simone Bos – a landscape painter from Cambridge, Ontario.

Simone Bos has been painting seriously since 2017 and has been showing her artwork in local galleries since 2019. She currently works full-time as an artist, a dream she has had for over a decade. Simone admits that making her dream a reality has also meant accepting certain challenges. Working as a full-time artist involves long hours, significant risks and learning new skills required to successfully operate a business. All this “pushes me out of my comfort zone,” says Simone, “but I am growing and learning!”

Simone is also grateful for the meaningful help she’s received along the way. Simone’s parents recently gifted her space in an extra garage which she transformed into a beautiful artist studio complete with plenty of natural light. Her new garage-studio is now used as a workspace, a showroom for her artwork and, at times, a classroom.

Like many other Canadian artists, including some of those profiled in this column, Simone has been influenced by the *Group of Seven* and finds her inspiration in the wild Canadian landscape. She is particularly drawn to scenes in and around Ahmic Lake in Magnetawan, Ontario, as well as the local fields, farms, and country roads near her home in rural Cambridge, Ontario. “I paint places I know/love, which helps me to pull the feeling of the place from the photograph references I work from.”

Simone uses “layered cubes of color” to evoke emotion. She explains: “the intentional use of brushstrokes as cubes and shapes gives rhythm and interest to the paintings, and allows for a calming, art-making experience.”

Simone follows a rather structured process expressing her understanding of the “Master Artist’s” love for beauty and order.

“The finished paintings capture the essence of the landscape featured in a unique, energetic, and yet orderly way. I believe that the viewers who connect with my artwork see this and the sense of calm that comes with experiencing a beautiful scene in nature is evoked also.”

Simone has also been exploring art on a deeper level – understanding the structure and source of beauty and asking what it means to “engage with God in a meaningful way through [my work].” A verse from Ecclesiastes is of particular interest to her.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” (Ecc. 3:11)

Simone believes that all beauty is from God and wants to encourage viewers of her work to reflect on this too.

“The more I paint, the more my observational skills grow. I am able to notice more and more beauty in the natural world around me, which points back to a detail oriented, creative God. I am also learning to trust that God is the Lord of my business and has full control over it: over my sales, my opportunities, my successes, and failures. He is teaching me to trust Him.”

You can see more of Simone’s beautiful work and connect with the artist on her website SimsArtStudio.com, and you can follow Simone at Instagram.com/SimsArtStudio and Facebook.com/SimsArtStudio. 

If you have a suggestion for an artist you’d like to see profiled in RP please email Jason Bouwman at studio@jasonbouwman.com



Beauty Untamed (pictured with artist) | 30x48"

"Old Man's River Falls is a beautiful waterfall in Magnetawan, ON, near Ahmic Lake. In Autumn this scene is particularly spectacular, with white water rushing over black rocks, all framed by orange maples. I could sit and stare at this view for hours!"



Spaces In-between | 36x48"

"A beautiful spot to walk to; this country property in Cambridge, ON has some of my favourite views. I experimented with a lot of colour in this painting, which captures a sunset in early autumn, and was delighted with the final result."



How Majestic | 30x40"

"The sunsets on Ahmic Lake are always spectacular, but this one was particularly dramatic. A peaceful lake, with heavy clouds scattering the final sun rays. As the song of the same name by Citizens & Saints recognizes, "how majestic is Your (God's) name in all the earth."



Ahmic Lake Island II | 30x40"

"This painting features a bird's eye view of the island just outside of Bells Bay on Ahmic Lake in Magnetawan, ON. This particular island finds itself in many of my lake paintings. The walleye fishing near this island is pretty good too."



THE FARM AT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

BY GUILLERMO GONZALEZ AND JONATHAN WITT

2024 / 167 PAGES

THE FARM AT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

An anti-evolution novel every teen should read, but not alone

by Jon Dykstra

An astrobiologist has written a young adult novel with an Intelligent Design agenda, so the obvious questions are:

*Can he tell a good story?
Does he honor God?*

The answer to question #1 is yes, definitely, and to #2, no, or at least not nearly enough.

While the story doesn't *quite* stand on its own, it'll grab anyone who has

even the least bit of interest in learning about atheistic evolution's shortcomings. That's why every Christian teen should read this before they finish high school – undirected evolution is one of our culture's big lies (with fruit like euthanasia, abortion, homosexuality, etc.) so our students need to be ready to contend with it before they head to university or the workforce. And this novel format transforms what could have been a dry, dusty, academic debate into a much easier read.

As the opening chapter begins, Isaac and his older cousin Charlie are driving to visit their grandparents' farm for a week. Isaac is a teen who wants to know why God let his dad die from cancer. Charlie is in his twenties, and is also Isaac's science teacher (that's what can happen in a small town) and he's a tough love type, heavy on the tough. As a Darwin devotee, he tells Isaac that his dad's death is proof there is no God, just an uncaring universe.

It turns out Grandpa is not only a



more sympathetic listener, he's also a retired chemistry professor who has his own thoughts about how the universe came to be. He introduces Isaac to the "book of nature," which gives all sorts of hints as to what happened in the distant past. And he also highlights how brilliant design gives evidence of a Designer. This is both the book's strongest point and its weakest: it absolutely blows up evolution, but doesn't offer the true, biblical, six-day alternative.

Still, it is a very helpful read, and fun too, especially when Grandpa debates Charlie. But Isaac isn't sure exactly who he is rooting for.

"Part of him wanted Grandpa to be right about a Creator and Charlie to be wrong. Isaac didn't want his dad's death to just be random. If it were random, then there wouldn't even be a God for Isaac to be angry at for letting it happen. But another part of him saw the attraction of his cousin Charlie's view. The idea of a God so powerful He could create things like these microscopic machines that filled his body, but Who hadn't even intervened to help his dad, was oddly frightening. It was almost easier to just ignore a God like that – insist He isn't out there. The

silent treatment. Punish Him for letting good people die. And, after all, maybe just maybe, there really wasn't a God and he could just forget about all the hard questions."

That highlights some of the book's depth in raising the "problem of evil." Though it is a theological, rather than scientific objection, it is one evolutionists will frequently raise: if a good God exists, why does He let bad things happen? But this also highlights why *Farm* isn't a book for teens to read alone, because the objection goes largely unanswered. Isaac rightly notes that his feelings have no impact on whether or not God exists. That'd be a scientific answer to this objection, and a good one to have in hand.

But teens should know the biblical answer too, as God gave it to Job, or as Paul teaches in Romans 9:20-21: "Who are you, a human being, to talk back to God?" And this answer needs to be understood in the context of this same God sending His Son to humble Himself and die for us. He has shown He is loving, so while we don't understand all He does, we do know we can trust Him. That's an important point, but one parents will need to provide.

As Grandpa and Charlie continue with their back-and-forths, it gives them both a chance to pitch the arguments for and against Intelligent Design. I've followed this debate for decades, and I think this fiction format allows for one of the most concise, clear, and devastating evolutionary takedowns I've read. One of my favorite bits is when Isaac is worried his Grandpa might be exaggerating a bit, when he says the cell is like a miniature factory, because, after all, factories "were massive, complex buildings filled with machinery and workers who built things like cars and trucks and Grandpa's tractor." Grandpa's response?

"...you're half right. Calling a cell a factory isn't quite accurate.... It's not quite a good comparison because I'm giving too much credit to manmade factories. A cell is more like, how can I put this? A factory that builds factories that

builds factories. Or a robot that builds robots that builds robots. Do you know any man-made factories that do that?"

Despite Charlie's best efforts, the legs are kicked out from under his Darwin idol.

CAUTION

But what's left standing in its place? Grandpa briefly gives a nod to the Bible, reading from the opening four verses of Psalm 19 about how "the heavens declare the glory of God." But he never addresses the opening chapters of Genesis. Grandpa doesn't believe in unguided evolution, but it becomes clear he also doesn't believe that God created in just six days.

The problem here is akin to the situation we have with a Jordan Peterson or even a Pierre Poilievre. In our blind land, these one-eyed men see so much better than most. But they are still seeing only half as well as they could. The book of nature that Grandpa appeals to offers him only hints and clues as to the reality and nature of God, but God has revealed Himself much more clearly in another book, His Word. If only Grandpa was willing to rely on the clearest of the two books, instead of leaning on his own understanding (Prov. 3:5-6).

CONCLUSION

While every Christian teen should read this, none of them should read it alone.

They should read *The Farm at the Center of the Universe* because of how it makes quick work of atheistic evolution. It'll prepare them for many of the attacks a university prof might muster.

But while evolution-toppling accounts for about 99 percent of the novel's contents, there is also 1 percent that misdirects by leaving open the possibility that God could have created over billions of years. Are the authors proposing some sort of theistic evolution? That's never clearly stated, but it needs to have been ruled out. And since *Farm* is targeted to teens that 1 percent of misdirection shouldn't be overlooked. Teens should read it, but with a teacher or parent alongside. **RP**

CULTIVATION

At Dordt University, our mission is to “equip students, alumni, and the broader community to work toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life.”

In line with this mission, we recognize the deep connections between agriculture and faith. Cultivating land, nurturing crops, caring for livestock, and innovating with new technologies reflect God’s call for His people to be stewards of His creation, as stated in Genesis 1:28: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.”

Furthermore, as Matthew 7:16 says, “By their fruit you will recognize them.” We want our graduates to bear fruit as employees, spouses, parents, churchgoers, neighbors, friends, and in the many other roles they will take on during their lifetime.

That’s why Dordt’s agriculture program seeks to use a biblical foundation, theoretical knowledge, and applied experiences to help students honor God through lives of service and leadership in agriculture, wherever that takes them.

At Dordt, students have opportunities to engage in hands-on learning. They have access to Dordt’s Agriculture Stewardship Center, a 200-acre farm offering state-of-the-art facilities for livestock and crops. Students are strongly encouraged to

participate in internships during their college years, providing them with chances to work alongside seasoned agriculture professionals.

Dordt offers several agriculture emphases, including animal science, plant science, agri-business, pre-veterinary, ag missions, biotechnology, ag communication, and ag education. There are also two-year associate degree options available.

We need more Christian leaders in agriculture to guide and promote an industry that can generate sufficient food production while using sustainable practices that ensure stewardly use of resources. Reformed Christians can speak into issues in the agriculture industry, from animal welfare to biotechnology to profitability.

Dordt’s agriculture program aims to achieve this: we want to help students examine important agricultural issues through the lens of a Christian worldview so that they might respond in a way that glorifies God and furthers His kingdom.

Rich Vyn, '98

PROFESSOR OF AGRICULTURE,
CANADIAN AMERICAN



"Our call as Christians is to care for the land and the animals—to be stewards of God's creation. That was a huge part of shaping who I am, and to find faculty members at Dordt who validated what I care about made me even more passionate about agriculture."

**Ellie Steensma
Corbin, '19**

STEENSMA CREAMERY,
LYNDEN, WASHINGTON



"Dordt was a very influential time in our lives. It was a wonderful background to prepare us for working back at the family farm. We were educated in our fields, but we were also given a broad worldview to take back as a new perspective. Dordt helped solidify the foundation that God's work is done each day in everything we do."

**Jonathan
Van Keulen, '09**

DONIA FARMS,
SURREY, BRITISH COLUMBIA



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PERSPECTIVE

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A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a red tank top and black leggings, is lying on her stomach on a light-colored carpet. She is propped up on her elbows, reading a book. Behind her are floor-to-ceiling white bookshelves filled with numerous books of various colors and sizes. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

100 BOOKS TO BUY

A family library is a fantastic long-term investment

by Jon Dykstra

My parents never *made* me read.

But my mom read to me. And my dad surrounded me with great books, both on his own shelves, and on my own. I sometimes got books for my birthday, and when we went to the Dutch deli on a Saturday, if the Christian bookstore next door had a newly translated Piet Prins *Scout* book, he'd get it for me.

My dad's books weren't kids' stuff. They were all about economics, evolution, church history, the environment and more, and I didn't get to them for a long time. But they were there, waiting for me. Sometimes books can get tucked away in a spare room or even boxed up and stored in the garage, but my dad had his books on shelves in the family room, right across from the foosball table. That's where my friends would gather to battle it out. And while others played and we were waiting our turn, then maybe we'd scan the shelves and just happen upon an interesting title.

That's how both my brothers and I became readers, just by being around great books. Fostering a love for reading does come with a cost, because books aren't free. But parents make baptismal vows, and educating our children in the knowledge and love of the Lord will take both time and money. Whether you're homeschooling or sending your kids to a Christian school, that's thousands of dollars a year. And if you're at it for 15 years or more, that might amount to \$50,000 or even two, three, or four times

that amount.

So what if, early on, you spent just one or two thousand more on books your whole family could benefit from in the two decades that followed? It's a very different sort of long-term investment, but with a better return than most anything else you could put your money into.

What follows is a list of books that are intended to give families the biggest bang for their buck. These are books that will either be read repeatedly, or, hopefully will be read at least once by everyone in the household. They are not all Christian books, but they are all, in some sense, books that *should* be read – I've narrowed this down to a select few that have something especially creative, beautiful, educational, upbuilding, or just generally praiseworthy about them.

Now, if you don't have a room in your budget for book purchases – a young family rarely has a big budget – perhaps your relatives do. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, and family friends are often looking for present ideas, so if you like some of the suggestions that follow, you could photocopy this article (or print these pages from the pdf at ReformedPerspective.ca/magazine) and highlight the titles you'd like, then split the list between any interested relations. And if you make it clear you'd be happy with good used copies, so often readily available online, you may find that both you and your family can afford a few more of these than

you might have thought.

These are loosely ordered by age, going from youngest to oldest.

BOARD BOOKS TO CHEW ON

Every family should have their own set of board books, the better to ensure that shared slobber stays inhouse. Reading board books with your kids is primarily about bonding time. This is how baby brains grow – safely on mom or dad's lap hearing those familiar tones saying familiar words over and over again until something clicks. Another important factor in a board book is that it isn't so annoying that dad goes batty reading it the one hundredth time.

With that in mind, here's a handful that might amuse parentals, and tempt the tastebuds of little Timmy or Janey.

On the first two-page spread of Janet and Allan Ahlberg's **Peak-a-boo!** (32 pages) we see a baby in her crib on the left-hand side, and the right page is all white, but with a large round hole cut through it so that we (and the baby) can "peek" to see what is on the next page. We get to play peek-a-boo five times in all, and there is so much detail, dad won't mind looking through it again and again.

Eric Carle's **The Very Hungry Caterpillar** (22 pages) is over 50 years old and as popular as ever. The title character eats through one food after another, and different page sizes make this a fun one for children to handle.

Sandra Boynton has a boatload of board books on offer, and *almost* all of them are good. The best two are **But Not the Hippopotamus** (14 pages) about a shy Hippo looking for friendship, and finally being included, and **Personal Penguin** (21 pages) about everyone's favorite Antarctic bird and his love for his Hippo friend. It also comes with a free downloaded ditty by Davy Jones of *The Monkees*.

In Peggy Rathmann's **Good Night Gorilla** (36 pages) the zoo-keeper says "good night" to each animal, starting with the gorillas. But as he visits each animal in turn, there is a little gorilla and his mouse friend, trailing behind, and unlocking all the cages!

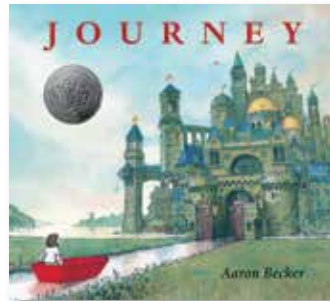
Kate Coombs' **Goodnight Mr. Darcy** (20 pages) is a gag aimed at adult Jane Austen fans, but the rhythm and rhyme will grab your children's interest too.

PICTURE BOOKS YOU'LL WEAR OUT

There's no shortage of picture books available at your local library, and we have hundreds of recommendations up on ReformedPerspective.ca/books. But there are a few extra special titles worth always having on hand. Here's a baker's dozen your kids will read and reread.

Wordless books are a treat for preschoolers since they can "read" them on their own. I did have to go through Jennifer Armstrong's **Once Upon a Banana** (48 pages) a couple of times

before my daughter could follow the monkey getting chased from page to page, but after that she loved doing it on her own. Another great wordless wonder: Aaron Becker's **Journey** (40 pages) is about a girl discovering another world where she can create boats and balloons simply by drawing them. My kids have pored over the original and two sequels.



"Pioneer Woman" Ree Drummond is better-known for her TV show and cookbooks, but **Charlie the Ranch Dog** (40 pages) is her best work. The story, about how her pet basset hound thinks he runs the ranch, has 4 sequels, but none better than the original.

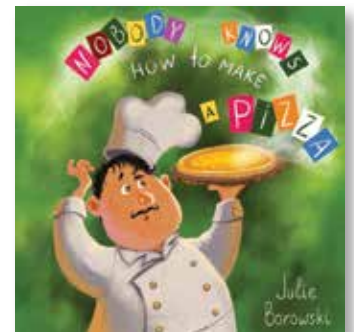
In David Wiesner's **Art & Max** (40 pages) two lizards have a paint mishap. When Max tries cleaning the paint off of Art, he cleans *all* the color off him and now Art is see-through! It gets extra wacky when Art's lines begin to unravel. This might be my favorite picture book for how much energy it has on each page.

Dr. Seuss's **Horton Hears a Who** (72 pages) and San Lloyd's **Mr. Pusskins: A Love Story** (32 pages) both have a moral to the story. No matter how unintentionally, Seuss's story is a wonderful pro-life tale preaching the biblical truth that "a person is a person no matter how small." And Mr. Pusskins is a furry, cuter version of the Prodigal Son looking down his nose at all his loving master provides him... until he has to live without it.

Also educational: Julie Borowski's **Nobody Knows How to Make a Pizza** (30 pages) illustrates the problem with big government by showing kids that no one person, or even a team of geniuses, knows how to produce all that goes into just a single cheese pizza. How then could government ever be smart enough to manage the entire economy? If that sounds too weighty for kids, it really isn't, but they may need help from mom or dad to get the whole point.

To be educated your kids need to know their fairy and folktales, and Trina Schart Hyman's **Little Red Riding Hood** (28 pages) is among the best, with a black cat hidden and waiting to be discovered on every two-page spread. Jerry Pinkney has a wonderful version of Red Riding too, but his best book is a mostly wordless retelling of Aesop's **The Lion and the Mouse**. Shirley Hughes' **Ella's Big Chance**

(48 pages) is Cinderella recast for the 1920s, and with a twist that's better than the original. Jan Brett loved telling the story of **Goldilocks and the Three Bears** (40 pages) so much that she did it two more times in *The Three Snow Bears* and *The Mermaid*... but her first is best. Larry V's **Larry Bendeco Johannes Von Sloop** (32 pages) brings a bakery twist on *Tikki Tikki Tembo*, both of which are



about how a sibling's long name caused him trouble.

In Cynthia Rylant's **Mr. Putter and Tabby Pour the Tea** (44 pages), we learn how the title characters – a retired gentleman and his pet cat – first meet. This kind, gentle tale is followed by 24 others, equally charming.



TREASURES FOR THE GRANDPARENTS TO BUY

If the grandparents want to make a big splash for a birthday or Christmas, then a big treasury is a good way to go with so many more stories to love.

James Herriot's Children's Treasury (272 pages) tells 8 beautiful, sweet tales about animals in the English countryside. And the artwork is gorgeous. The art in Mo Willems' **An Elephant & Piggie Biggie!** (320 pages) is a little simpler, but the 5 stories are hilarious – the earnest Elephant and adventurous Piggie are a comedic duo in the model of a kinder, gentler Abbot and Costello (and four other Biggie collections are available).

Be sure to get a hardcover, “deluxe” edition of A.A. Milne's **The Complete Tales of Winnie the Pooh** (368 pages) to stand up to repeated reads. **Richard Scarry's Best Storybook Ever** (288 pages) was my favorite treasury 50 years ago, and it's still in print, with its 80 short stories filling pages with animal police officers and mailmen and doctors running here there and everywhere – this is a busy, busy book! Shirley Hughes' **The Big Alfie and Annie Rose Storybook** (64 pages) tells stories from preschooler Alfie's perspective. Some of his big adventures involve getting a fedora hat from a neighbor, being in a wedding party, playing chase with dad, and looking through grandma's pictures.

Virginia Lee Burton's **Mike Mulligan and More** (208 pages) has four stories, three of them about vehicles with some personality – a steam shovel, a snow removal tractor, and a cable car – which might make it a boy book. Jill Barklem's **The Complete Brambly Hedge** (248 pages) is about mice having adventures in their tree towns, with their rooms and activities drawn in great detail, and is most certainly a girl book.

GREAT BIBLE GUIDES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

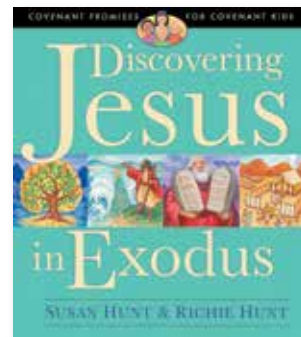
There are all sorts of “Bible storybooks” but many of them take creative license, either by providing details that aren't in God's Word, or by depicting Jesus as He may or may not have looked. So it's good to get our kids used to God's Word straight from God's Bible, unfiltered. That said, when they are very young some paraphrasing or explanation is both inevitable and necessarily. So here are four resources for parents and their preschoolers that teach the Bible carefully and respectfully.

In **Discovering Jesus in Genesis** (176 pages) mom and son team Susan and Richie Hunt tell a fictional story about siblings Cassie and Caleb doing a Bible study with their neighbor Sir John.

Parents can use the questions at the end of the 36 chapters to lead our own great discussions. Cassie and Caleb show up again in **Discovering Jesus in Exodus** (156 pages).

Kevin DeYoung's **The Biggest Story** (120 pages) takes just 10 chapters to summarize the whole Bible, and while I read it over three nights, my kids would have loved to do it all in just one.

Amanda DeBoer's **Teach Them Your Way, O Lord** (183 pages) is intended for two and up, telling just over 200 Bible stories with all sorts of questions peppered throughout to get kids thinking and talking.



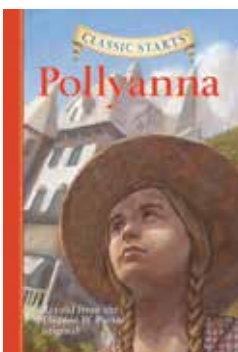
CHAPTER BOOKS FOR BEDTIME

A bedtime story can be a great way to settle kids down, and, if the day has been busy, it can also be an opportunity to check in with your kids. While girls will give boy books a try, the reverse isn't usually true, so I've divvied these up in boy, girl, and crossover groupings.

Among the girl books, our family read both the unabridged and abridged Classic Starts version of Eleanor H. Porter's **Pollyanna** (200 or 150 pages) and liked both. It's the story of an orphan whose father taught her to always look for the bright side of any trouble, which she does to often comical extremes. But it's something the rest of us don't do nearly enough, making this a very important read. In Cynthia Rylant's **In Aunt Lucy's Kitchen** (56 pages) three 9-year-old girl cousins are staying with their Aunt Lucy, and wondering what sort of fun they can cook up. There are five others in this “Cobble Street Cousins” series. In every chapter of Arleta Richardson's **In Grandma's Attic** (144 pages) a grandma tells her granddaughter stories

from when she was that girl's age. Your daughters are sure to love it, along with the three sequels. **Sarah, Plain, and Tall** (112 pages) is a Newbery Award winner by Patricia MacLachlan about a brave woman who leaves the ocean she loves to head west to Maine to answer an advertisement for a wife and mother. Can she help a widower and his children? And might she even find love?

Among the boy books, Brandon Hale's **Prince Martin Wins His Sword** (52 pages) tells a pretty involved tale, and all in rhyme. Donald Sobol's **Encyclopedia**



Brown, Boy Detective (98 pages) is the son of the local police chief, and he takes on kids' cases for 25 cents. All of the mysteries are solvable if you are paying attention, and there are 28 sequels.

A few more have broad appeal. Alexander McCall Smith's **The Great Cake Mystery: Precious Ramotswe's Very First Case** (82

pages) has a young girl in Botswana solving who, or perhaps what, took the missing cake. Joe Sutphin's ***The Little Pilgrim's Progress*** (320 pages) takes John Bunyan's classic, updates it into modern, kid-friendly language, and replaces the people with animals. The pictures are impressive but the dialogue is enough to keep kids' attention. In Jim Payne's ***Princess Navina Visits Malvolia*** (54 pages) a young royal visits a country where the ruler *tries* to make his people suffer. The lesson here is that the malevolent ruler's laws are uncannily familiar with the well-meant ones we know. Two sequels are good, but the fourth book takes small government notions to a naive extreme.

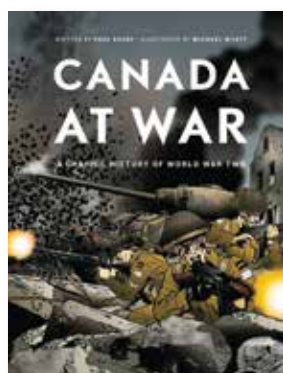
NON-FICTION IS FOR KIDS TOO

Stories are important food for kids, but so too is a good encyclopedic source of information on this topic or that. Here are a handful of resources kids can just page through and explore.

Ray Comfort's ***Made in Heaven*** (82 pages) highlights all sorts of animals and plants that engineers are looking to copy because of the brilliant engineering evident in their design. Orti Kashtan's ***God's Big Book of Animals*** (250 pages) is, as the title explains, a really tall and wide book full of huge pictures and fun facts about amazing animals. David Macaulay has two books called ***Castle***, one short at 30 pages and the other at 80 pages. Get the longer one.

COMICS THAT'LL HIT YA

At their very best graphic novels are more than the sum of their text and picture parts. That can make learning easier, and humor funnier.



In Eric Heuval's ***A Family Secret*** (62 pages) a young Dutch boy, searching through his grandma's attic, discovers that his family fought on both sides of World War II. A sequel is almost as good. Paul Keery's ***Canada at War*** (176 pages) taught me about Canada's early involvement in World War II, including tough battles in Hong Kong and Italy. Not all that gory, but this isn't for all ages. John Hendrix's

The Faithful Spy (176 pages) tells

the true story of how pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer joined in a plot to blow up Hitler. We learn about more brave Germans – this time a student group that spread illegal leaflets – in Andrea Grosso Ciponte's ***Freiheit!: The White Rose Graphic Novel*** (112 pages).

The whole family will learn some important church history in Rich Melheim's gorgeous ***Luther: the Graphic Novel*** (72 pages). A different chapter of history is told in Shaun Tan's ***The Arrival*** (128 pages), a wordless look at how odd a new country looks to a new immigrant.

One of the biggest battles in academia involves evolution, and Robert C. Newman and John L. Wiester's ***What's Darwin Got to Do With it?*** (146 pages) is an easy engaging overview of the

theory's biggest overreaches.

In John Patrick Green's ***Hippopotamister*** (88 pages) Red Panda leaves his crumbling zoo to get a job in the city. When he recruits Hippo to try it too, we find out how hilariously bad Red Panda is at keeping a job. Nothing important here, just comic genius.

RIP-ROARING STORIES FOR TWEENS

A well-spun story is a delight indeed.

We get a medieval-ish world in both Gerald Morris's comical take on King Arthur's court in ***The Adventures of Sir Lancelot the Great*** (96 pages), and Jennifer Trafton's ***The Rise and Fall of Mount Majestic*** (350 pages) about a castle built on a mountain that rises and falls once a day.

S.D. Smith gets downright ridiculous in his short story collection ***Mooses with Bazookas: And Other Stories Children Should Never Read*** (160 pages) and Babylon Bee contributor Ethan Nicolle tells an even crazier story in ***Brave Ollie Possum*** (373 pages) about a boy who thinks there are monsters outside his window... and he's right!

Four brilliant but lonely kids join forces to take on an evil super genius in Trenton Lee Stewart's ***The Mysterious Benedict Society*** (512 pages). Fifth grader Nick Allen wants to get a word into the dictionary in Andrew Clements' ***Frindle*** (112 pages) and his teacher seems dead-set against it.

SUPER SERIES

It's a joy to discover that the great book you've just read is only the first of a whole bunch. I've again divvied this up by gender, with the first couple for girls, and the rest for everyone.

Enid Blyton's ***First Term at Malory Towers*** (176 pages) and its 5 sequels are about girls at a British boarding school in the 1940s. They are the only entries on this list I haven't read, but my wife and three girls all insisted they had to be included. Be sure to get the new covers (we do judge books that way). Laura Ingalls Wilder's autobiographical ***Little House on the Prairie*** (352 pages), about settling the West, has been a favorite for generations, as have the other 8 in the series.

Andrew Peterson's 4-book ***Wingfeather Saga*** (1520 pages total) and Jonathan Rogers' ***Wildering Trilogy*** (760 pages total) are epic Christian fantasy on par with C.S. Lewis's Narnia series. They differ in that those series are all just one story, split over a number of books, while you can read Lewis's ***The Magician's Nephew*** (221 pages) and have a complete story. Peterson and Roger also resolve their stories better, as Lewis's epilogue, ***The Last Battle***, has some theological weirdness.



TEEN FICTION THEY'LL SHARE WITH THEIR KIDS

Your parents might have read two of the entries here to you. The other two are so good they might end up being read by your children to their children.

Sigmund Brouwer's ***Innocent Heroes: Stories of Animals in the First World War*** (186 pages) are all true tales, but lightly fictionalized in that they now all take place in just one Canadian battalion. Douglas Bond takes us back to the trenches in ***War in the Wastelands*** (273 pages), a fictionalized account of the then-atheist C.S. Lewis's stint on the front lines. We get to hear Lewis raising some of the very same theological objections he answers years later.

While J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* is too weighty for some, ***The Hobbit*** (320 pages) is a more approachable introduction to Middle Earth.

I never continued past Lucy Maud Montgomery's ***Anne of Green Gables*** (312 pages) to the other 7 in the set but, like me, many guys could enjoy this first one.

TRUTH FOR TEENS

As our children age they might need to be introduced to non-fiction. Teens don't always realize the breadth of helpful educational books that are available to answer the many questions they have.

Our kids are sure to get hit with evolution in university, so they should know about Ken Ham's ***The New Answers Book: Over 25 Questions on Creation/Evolution*** (384 pages), and its 3 sequels.

Identity is another big challenge for teens, and ably addressed in Rachel Jankovic's ***You Who? Why You Matter & How to Deal With It*** (246 pages). Alex and Brett Harris challenge teens to raise the bar on what they expect of themselves, in their ***Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations*** (320 pages).

AIN'T NO BETTER BIOGRAPHIES

If the only life you learn from is your own, you'll live a small life, and you may even make the mistake of thinking you serve a small God. But take a gander at these biographies, and marvel at what God has done.

Corrie Ten Boom's ***The Hiding Place*** (272 pages) shares "ordinary" miracles that preserved her life in the Nazi concentration camps, even as her sister and father died. In ***Unbroken*** (528 pages) Laura Hillenbrand tells the harrowing true story of World War II bombardier Louis Zamperini's survival on the open ocean, and torture in Japanese captivity, and how God preserved and encouraged Zamperini even before he turned to God.

In ***God's Smuggler*** (288 pages), Brother Andrew prayed for seeing eyes to be blind when he brought Bibles into the Soviet Union. And God gave him what he asked for.

Nabeel Qureshi's ***Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*** (384 pages)

shares his conversion story from Islam, and Rosaria Butterfield's shares her own conversion story from lesbian liberalism in ***The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*** (154 pages).

SUPER ACCESSIBLE THEOLOGY

These are tiny – they can be read in an evening – but their impact is large.

In ***How Do You Kill 11 Million People?*** (96 pages) Andy Andrews asks how the Nazis got millions to, mostly without protest, walk to their deaths. The terrifying answer may change how you vote next election. In ***The Grace and Truth Paradox*** (96 pages) Randy Alcorn explores how even as Jesus came to Earth full of both grace and truth, His followers too often manage just one or the other.

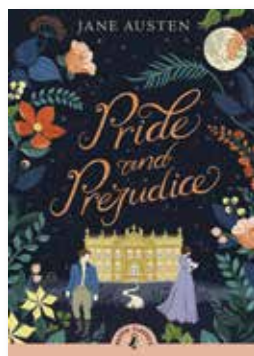
Not sure what God wants you to do with your life? Kevin DeYoung has a helpful answer in his ***Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will*** (144 pages). John Piper approaches the same topic from a different direction in his ***Risk is Right: Better to Lose Your Life Than Waste It*** (64 pages).

John Byl and Tom Goss give a great primer in their ***How Should Christians Approach Origins?*** (44 pages). It can be downloaded for free at ReformedPerspective.ca/freebooks. And Douglas Wilson tackles another big issue of our day in ***Devoured by Cannabis*** (99 pages).

CREAM OF CHRISTIAN NOVELS

Maybe it was after the one thousandth Amish novel was published, but somewhere along the line Christian novels got a bad reputation. But these are all fantastic.

The oldest entry here, Jane Austen's ***Pride and Prejudice*** (480 pages), should be read by everyone, including the guys, to get a look back at a culture that certainly had its own problems, but didn't have the same confusions about gender. Pay the extra money to get one with an attractive cover – it'll make it so much easier for your kids to want to pick it up.



Joel C. Rosenberg is a great writer, but with a dispensationalist theology that bleeds into most of his books. His World War II thriller, ***The Auschwitz Escape*** (480 pages) is a wonderful exception.

Patti Callahan's ***Once Upon a Wardrobe*** (320 pages) is a quick read.

A young sick boy recognizes there is something true about Lewis' literary creation, and enlists his Oxford-attending older sister to go ask the author "Where did Narnia come from?"

For a couple of more modern tales, consider **Rule of Law** (460 pages), Randy Singer's best, a courtroom drama in which the client is Christian, but none of the lawyers we follow. Douglas Wilson's **Flags Out Front** (206 pages) is about a quiet Christian college president who isn't looking for trouble but who discovers, when trouble comes looking for him, that he has a spine.

EDUCATIONAL FICTION

While most of these are only middling stories, they are all fantastic textbooks on incredibly important subject matter. And this fiction format helps make learning pain-free.

In Jay Adams' **Greg Dawson and the Psychology Class**, a pastor explains the difference between Christian counseling that starts with the Bible and Christian counseling that starts with Freud.

Douglas Wilson's **Persuasion: A Dream of Reason Meeting**

Unbelief (96 pages) riffs off of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but this time we stick with Evangelist, and the people he meets.

Socrates shows up in our modern day to debate an abortionist in Peter Kreeft's **The Unaborted Socrates** (156 pages) while Guillermo Gonzalez and Jonathan Witt tackle evolution's unscientific foundation in their highly readable **The Farm at the Center of the Universe** (167 pages). C.S. Lewis uncovers some devilish correspondence in his classic **The Screwtape Letters**, with a senior devil

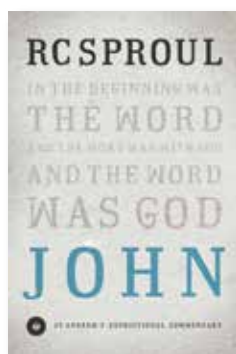
writing to a younger demon to teach him how best to tempt Man.

Henry Hazlitt's **Time Will Run Back** (368 pages) is a dystopian tale about when communism so completely took over the world that no one left remembered what capitalism was. When the world dictator's son wants to make improvements, guess what he invents? It can be downloaded for free on ReformedPerspective.ca. George Orwell's **Animal Farm** slogan that "some are more equal than others" is a perfect descriptor for today's "tolerance." Ody's graphic novel version (176 pages) might be the best bet.

COMMENTARIES YOU'LL READ

I've often found that when I turn to a commentary the one verse it skips over is the very verse I'm looking for help with. Not so with these.

R.C. Sproul's **John: An Expository Commentary** (381 pages) is the first commentary I ever read front to back, and can easily be used as a devotional. Jay Adams' **Proverbs** (240 pages) is intended as a resource for Christian counselors, but is quite the dinner devotions resource too, giving dad quick help on what each verse means. Both



Dale Ralph Davis's **Joshua: No Falling Words** (224 pages) and Douglas Wilson's **Joy at the End of the Tether: The Inscrutable Wisdom of Ecclesiastes** (126 pages) are sure to give you new insights into these two books.

ANSWERS FOR ADULTS

I'll finish up with a potpourri of non-fiction books that each address an important issue.

If you think your devices are controlling you, then there's no better book than Andy Crouch's **The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology In Its Place** (224 pages).

R.C. Sproul's **Everyone's a Theologian** (357 pages) has answers for theological questions you might not have known how to ask, but really did want answered. You might have thought that you already knew **How to Read a Book** (205 pages) but Andrew David Naselli helps make it so much easier. This is really a must-read for every single Christian, and should be required reading in our Christian high schools.

Randy Alcorn's **Heaven** (560 pages) is an encouraging book for old and young. If you ever thought you'd be bored in heaven, you need to read this. It is, at times, speculative, but Alcorn is always clear about when he's just guessing, and when he's got a firm biblical foundation. And if you've ever thought poetry was boring, then Sharon Creech's children's book **Love That Dog** (128 pages) will change your mind.

The environmental movement is primarily paganism, so how should Christians do environmentalism different? Gordon Wilson gives the beginnings of an answer in **A Different Shade of Green** (204 pages).

Finally, Greg Koukl presents a much easier way to defend your faith in his **Tactics** (288 pages).

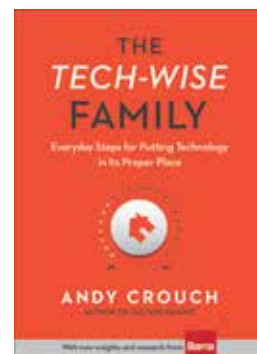
CONCLUSION

This is the list I'm hoping my own girls make it through before they head out the door. I'm not going to be disappointed if they don't get to every last one. They might have different interests, and find other equally important topics that they've needed to focus on instead.

But I will be disappointed if they know all the Pixar movies but don't know how to defend their faith. And I'll be disappointed if their jumpshot is fantastic, but they think socialism and evolution are credible. God has entrusted their education to me and to my wife, and we've only got 18 or so years with them. And as I'm starting to learn, that goes by in a blink.

So my hope is that this list will help young families get off to a quick start. **RP**

The online version of this article at ReformedPerspective.ca has clickable links to longer reviews of most of the books mentioned.



300+ TO BORROW

While my main article is about *quality* – books so fantastic they are better bought than borrowed – there is something to be said for *quantity* too. Not every book is among the all-time greats, but that doesn't mean they aren't really good too. And to that end, a library card can be a wonderful way to feed your kids oodles of new adventures, and keep your coffee table full of books you'd want to peruse too.

However, perusing your local library shelves, even in the picture book section, is now a PG-rated activity. It only gets worse in the teen section where the books on display are gender-questioning, sex-obsessed, and God-hating. So, rather than spend time in the library searching for the diamonds among this dunghill, check out RP's suggestions instead. Then figure out your library's online reserve system to have the librarians set aside your picks, so you can just walk in and walk out.

The three lists below skew towards a younger age group, because that's where RP has the largest number of reviews. We'd like to do better for teens and adults, so if you have recommendations of books that Christians really need to know about, send them to me at Editor@ReformedPerspective.ca.

100+ WORDLESS WONDERS

There's no better way to get preschoolers hooked on reading than books they can read even before they can read. Scan the QR code or go to ReformedPerspective.ca/wordless



100+ CALDECOTT WINNERS

The Caldecott Medal is awarded to the best illustrated American picture books, and while the world's idea of "best" needs a bit of sifting, I've got a list of the very best of their best. Scan the QR code or go to ReformedPerspective.ca/Caldecott

100+ GREAT GRAPHIC NOVELS

Comics aren't just for kids, so whether it's your teens, or your spouse, there will be something here to intrigue you and them. Scan the QR code or go to ReformedPerspective.ca/comics



- Jon Dykstra





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MORE More Than the Magazine

Everything in this magazine ends up online, but we can't possibly fit everything we have online 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 *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 articles from other publications. Those could be from the mainstream news, or other Christian outlets. If an article lacks Reformed perspective, I offer that in my short introduction. Highlights from the last couple of months include:



Consistency matters on IVF too

After *Roe vs. Wade* was overturned, the American IVF industry was threatened. Why? Because when embryos are recognized as precious human beings, then the law would be obligated to protect the "excess" embryos that IVF produces from being destroyed or frozen. However, with more people having fertility difficulties, IVF has grown in popularity such that a very confused pro-life senator has tried to effectively enshrine a right to IVF. But, as Rachel Roth Aldhizer writes, if we are pro-life then that logic should extend to IVF too.

How deer grow antlers

They do it every year again, and we're only just starting to fathom how much is all involved. Stem cells have something to do with it, but,

"...how do the two antlers maintain their bilateral symmetry, such that they branch at almost exactly the same points while separated by many centimeters to feet apart? Don't ask the deer. They don't know."



Why can't men give birth to puppies?

Some folks in India really believe that if they are bitten by a rabid dog, that will impregnate them with little puppies. Why are we talking about something so ridiculous? Because our culture needs some clarity about how *believing something doesn't make it so*. We've fallen for "Man, I feel like a woman" being a transformative belief. But why does *that* belief transform reality and not the belief that some men are in danger of giving birth to dogs?

Mothers' milk is amazing

If you believe mothers' milk evolved via chance from "a glandular skin secretion in synapsids" then you might conclude that the intelligently-designed substitute on store shelves must be a superior product. But it ain't so. God designed moms to be specially able to care for their babies, so Christians shouldn't be surprised to learn that the closer we look at mothers' milk, the more amazing we find it to be.



25 ways to provoke your children to anger

"How much of the anger in my home is caused by me?" That's a painful question for parents to ask, however the warning to not provoke our children to anger (Eph. 6:4) is given for a reason. One of the ways our sinful flesh manifests itself is by provoking others to anger. And the easiest place to do that is in our own home.



Best of *Real Talk*

Lucas Holtvluwer and Tyler Vanderwoude have been hosting their podcast for three years now. Find all the episodes at RealTalkPodcast.ca or scan the QR code to watch them on YouTube. Some recent highlights include:



#100 – Celebrating 100 Conversations

Join Lucas, Tyler, and Mariah as they look back at three years of conversations and guests. If you're new to Real Talk, start with Ep. 100 to get a taste of what it's all about.

#97 – Dating With Discernment

"For me, the breakup was the break-thru..." So said Mary K. Andreades, talking about the importance of being able to break up before ever agreeing to go out. In this episode Mary and her husband Sam chatted about dating with Elle Holtvluwer and her husband Lucas.

#95 – Be Fruitful And Multiply

Lucas talked with RP's Mark Penninga about the world's sharply falling birth rate and the opportunities that come if the Church, in contrast, obeys God's call to be fruitful and multiply.



YouTube link

Daily Devotionals

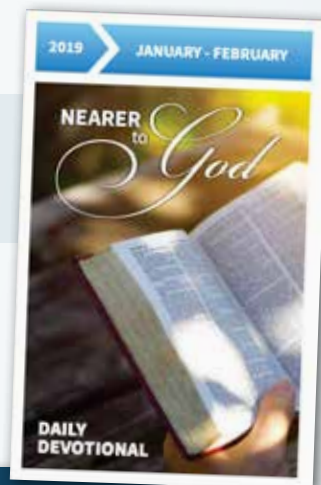
ReformedPerspective.ca hosts two daily devotionals, *Manna* in audio, and *Nearer to God* for those who prefer to read. You can also access both on the front page of ReformedPerspective.ca or through the RP App, downloadable at ReformedPerspective.ca/App.

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 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.



Daily devotional link

FILMS

by Jon Dykstra

NOMINEES FOR FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

ReformedPerspective.ca/movies

GOING TO THE MAT

FAMILY / DRAMA

2004 / 92 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



Jace Newfield is the "new kid" and he's blind, but what's causing him the most difficulties is his snark. He used to live in New York City but his dad's new job meant they had to move to Utah. So, the first thing this big city kid does is alienate his new classmates by calling them backcountry hicks.

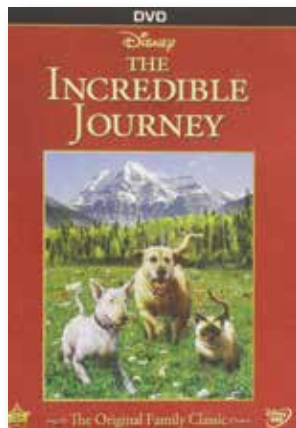
Fortunately, there are a couple of kids willing to overlook his rough start. Vincent "Fly" Shue tells him the only way to fit in is to be a jock, so Jace decides to try out for the wrestling team, where Jace learns that blind athletes can wrestle against the sighted. The only concession given is that the two athletes start with a hand on each other. Jace isn't the biggest guy, and a total newcomer to the sport, but this is the chance for him to just be an athlete, rather than "that blind guy."

Sports movies are predictable so no one will be shocked to see Jace losing in the early going, and triumphing, at least in part, in the epic slow-motion finale. But this does have a few fresh twists to keep it interesting. It's sweet, surprising in spots, and solid throughout: this is a fun film.

THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

FAMILY

1963 / 80 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



The Hunter family is heading across the ocean to Oxford for a semester, so who's going to look after their two dogs and a cat? It's family friend John Longridge to the rescue, volunteering to take care of the three pets back at his own cabin, some 200 miles away.

But then he leaves on a long hunting trip, entrusting the animals' care to his housekeeper Mrs. Oakes. But the note he leaves falls into the fireplace, so she thinks *he* has the animals. The result? When the trio take off, no one is missing them.

Luath, a yellow Labrador, wants to go back to their family, and convinces the other two, Siamese cat Tao, and Bodger, an English Bull Terrier, to come along. While Luath knows the right direction, he doesn't realize that home is on the other side of a mountain range. On the way they have to contend with hunger, whitewater, bears, a lynx, and, unfortunately for Luath, a porcupine!

What makes this such a wonderful film is the loyalty the animals have for one another. Bodger is old, and a drag on the group, but that only means that he gets to set the pace – Tao and Luath would never think of leaving him behind. Great family fun.

LEO DA VINCI: MISSION MONA LISA

ANIMATED / CHILDREN

2020 / 82 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



What would history's most inventive mind have been like as a kid? In *Leo Da Vinci* we find out that he was crazy creative even as a lad. His best friend Lorenzo is every bit as up for an adventure, and their friend Lisa (first name, Mona) brings some needed sanity to this rambunctious mix. Add in some wacky inventions, like a hand-pedaled car that can (sort of) fly and the world's very first diving suit, sprinkle in a few sharks, top it off with a dose of dastardly pirates, just a little romance, and a mystery to solve, and you've got the ingredients for an action-packed animated adventure.

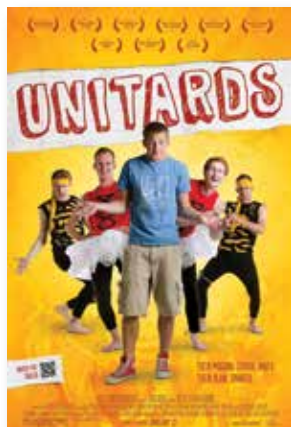
There are no big cautions, but a concern for parents would be the scariness, like a shark scene, complete with ominous music that'll likely get a few small ones anxious. Parents can assure any little worriers that it all turns out okay.

While this is strictly a children's film – teens will think it too kiddish – there's enough complexity to keep mom and dad awake. *Leo* is a fun adventure, with loads of action, and good mix of guy and girl characters to keep both your sons and daughters engaged.

UNITARDS

FAMILY / COMEDY

2010 / 107 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



Billed as “*High School Musical* meets *Napoleon Dynamite*” this is tears-in-your-eyes funny in parts. Director Scott Featherstone has combined elements of his own school experience with that of his son Sam (who plays Lewis Grady) to come up with the script. When the vice principal charges Grady with building up school spirit, he decides to start a guys-only dance...thing (it isn't a dance team because that's what girls do).

The villain of the piece is the teacher who runs the girls' dance team. She thinks the boys are making a mockery of dance, and she wants them shut down. While that adds drama to the story, this is mostly just goofy dance numbers, and quirky friends showing how fun can be had when you ignore the mockers and set out to be encouragers.

While the dancing is modest by worldly standards, there is a lot of it, and it isn't the formal sort you might see in a “*Pride and Prejudice*” film. This is more the jump and bounce and shake and wiggle type of dancing toddlers through teens do. It's slightly sexually suggestive, but incidentally, rather than provocatively so. And when paired with the students' generally modest dress, it is quite tame.

AN AMERICAN TAIL

ANIMATED / FAMILY

1986 / 80 MINUTES **RATING: 9/10**

This is the immigrant experience, set to music, and seen through the eyes of a 19th century Jewish animated mouse family who decide to come to America after they'd been driven out of their Russian village by rampaging Cossack cats. It's as unbelievably good as that sounds!

After escaping the Cossack cats, the Mousekewitz family takes a slow boat to their new land, surrounded by fellow immigrants from other countries. They're all so very hopeful... and that's when the storm hits.

Little Fievel, the Mousekewitzes' boy, is washed overboard and presumed lost, and his family is forced to continue on without him. Thankfully Fievel has survived. He's battered, but unbroken, and travels the rest of the way in a bottle, arriving only a short time after his family. Will he be able to find them? There are so many mice in New York! And it doesn't help that they aren't even looking for him.

Fievel soon discovers that there are cats in America too. Fortunately, the mice here are willing to fight for their freedoms. So it is that Fievel, and unbeknownst to him, his family too, help with an audacious plan to force the cats onto a boat heading for Hong Kong. But even as they're among the same throng working on the same plan, Fievel and his family never quite cross paths. Fievel is making friends though, whether it's a French pigeon helping with the construction of the Statue of Liberty, or a streetwise teen mouse who has Fievel's back, or even a cat who loves broccoli a lot better than mouse burgers.

The main caution here is scariness – there are a lot of cats chasing mice and these cats are *mean*. That, along with a brief counter Fievel has with some creepy cockroaches, make this fare for children ten and up. I'll also note that a minor character, the politician Honest John, always seems to be drunk. Fortunately, he's onscreen only briefly.

The Mousekewitzes discover that the streets aren't paved with cheese – that was too good to be true – but there are opportunities in this new land that didn't exist in the old one. *An American Tail* is a surprisingly nuanced celebration of the immigrant, showing that it wasn't easy for those early settlers, whether man or mouse.

As much as I loved it, I also recognize that *An American Tail* might not appeal to the whole family. A Jewish Russian American mouse musical? Yup, that is odd, and maybe even weird.

But it really couldn't be more wonderful!



COST-EFFECTIVE TUITION!

If you send a child to a Christian school in Canada, you are probably paying between \$700 and \$1,500 per month for tuition. A few may attend a Christian university, though that comes with its own enormous cost – in North America, you are probably paying \$12,000-\$30,000 in tuition each year.

Despite the cost, many Christian families prioritize this expense, especially for younger students, because we recognize the importance of providing an education that aligns with reality, by aligning with God's Word. This takes quality instruction over a long period of time.

Unfortunately, for most, Christian education comes to an abrupt halt either at 18, or with a Bachelor's degree later at 22.

Yet that's the age when the rubber hits the road in so very many ways. If we don't keep learning, we can make a lot of mistakes with dating, marriage, parenting, running a business, and making dozens of decisions each day again. We can also miss opportunities to honor our LORD where He has put us.

Reformed Perspective strives to provide a solid, God-honoring ongoing education for adults, and to serve it in a format that works for you. That includes our *Real Talk* podcast, our daily devotionals, thousands of articles online, our weekly e-newsletter, social media posts, presentations in your community, and of course this print magazine.

And we make this all available at no cost.

Although it is difficult to count, well over a hundred thousand people are edified by *RP*'s resources every year again, from around the world (with some of them being edified many times

over). But this is only possible because some people recognized the value and chose to make an investment in ongoing Christian education by making a donation.

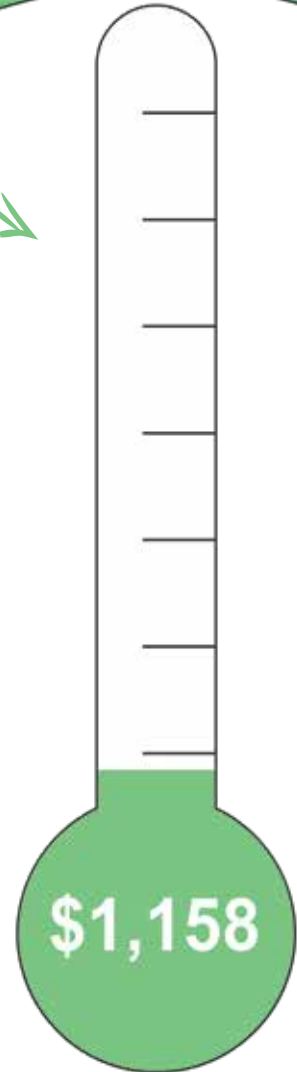
As you likely noticed in previous issues, *RP* is trying to raise **\$4,166 in new monthly donations** by the end of this year. And some generous folks will match these monthly donations with a full year's worth of support (e.g. if you **donate \$20/month, they will donate \$20X12 months = \$240**).

The year is half over and we are only a quarter of the way to our goal. Are you willing to pitch in? **\$3 a month covers your direct costs for getting this magazine.** And anything more allows us to develop more content and share it with many others. That is a very cheap tuition!

There are a number of options to start your "tuition" today:

- Go to **ReformedPerspective.ca/donate** (or scan the QR code) to find a monthly donor form that allows for a monthly donation to come from your bank account. This helps us the most, by providing us with the most stability.
- The same website page also allows you to **sign up for a monthly donation** with a credit card.
- Or call **Joanne DeRuiter** at **250-643-8114** (BC time) to set up a monthly donation over the phone.
- Alternatively you can find a **donation form** in the previous two issues of this magazine, which you can fill out and mail in.

\$4,166
per month





WHEN STRIVING FOR UNITY, DIRECTION MATTERS

by Mark Penninga and Jon Dykstra

I believe a holy, catholic, Christian church” – that’s what we confess as we recite the Apostles’ Creed. And we likewise take to heart Christ’s prayer in John 17 that His Church be one, just as He is one. But how does this look in real life?

Earlier this year, we expanded the distribution of this magazine from the ten denominations in Canada that are a part of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Conference (NAPARC), to congregations in four more denominations, which are also confessionally Reformed, including the Communion of Reformed Evangelicals, the Netherlands Reformed Congregations, and a number of Christian Reformed congregations.

So why this widening outreach? There are doctrinal, historical, and political differences between these churches, but all recognize God’s sovereignty over every square inch of creation. Almost all share a common Christian worldview concerning creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. That means that what we have on offer – the celebration and exploration of God’s Truth – is

something they are very warm to.

And there are numerous other churches, most of which don’t even have the word “Reformed” or “Presbyterian” in their name, who are also very warm to a publication like this.


So how is it that we can have some degree of unity with so many different denominations? It comes down to direction. Direction matters.

Our Western civilization has rejected its Christian foundation and is now Hell bent. Some denominations are following along – Reformed denominations even – and others are even leading the way. But there are also Christians, even in these same denominations, who have woken up. They might not share our Reformed history, but, like us, they are taking God at His Word, and they know they have to listen to God rather than that dress-wearing Man.

As I heard a wise older gentleman explain it once, imagine there’s a two-lane road, one lane heading to Hell and the other to Heaven. If on that road our Chevy truck passes another Chevy heading the opposite direction, that isn’t a time to honk and wave.

They might share our same make and model *but they’re going the wrong way*. We have far more in common with the super-charged Lambo up ahead of us, and the Ford Pinto trailing way behind that can barely hit highway speeds but which is, at least, traveling in the same Heavenward direction. Direction matters.

As the West embraces a godless chaos, Christians are going to feel more and more isolated from the culture around us. If our cultural collapse continues, society will become less understanding and less accommodating to anyone who professes Christ as Lord. We are grateful then, that Reformed Perspective has an opportunity to encourage so many travelers who share our same destination – who worship our same Father.

The Lord willing, we can then work together as we respond to similar challenges and opportunities in our culture, holding the light of God’s Word high. It can be a small foretaste of the unity we will experience in the new heavens and earth. 

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.

