

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

MAY 2014
Volume 33 Issue No. 7

PERSPECTIVE

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Reformed Perspective, 322 Caradoc St N., Strathroy, ON N7G 2N2
subscribe@reformedperspective.ca
1-888-773-7780

For Letters to the Editor, Advertising and Submissions, contact:

E-mail: editor@reformedperspective.ca

Editor: Jon Dykstra

Regular Contributors: Sharon Bratcher, Christine Farenhorst, Margaret Helder, Anna Nienhuis, Michael Wagner

Board of Directors: John Voorhorst (Chairman); Henry Stel (Managing Editor); James Teitsma (Secretary/Treasurer); Bob Lodder

Secretarial Address (Board Matters): James Teitsma
8 Granite Cove, East St. Paul, MB, Canada, R2E 0L6

Art Direction, Design and Layout: Compass Creative Studio Inc.
compasscreative.ca

Contact Address for South Africa:

Arie Roos, Box 584, Kuilsrivier, 7580 Republic of South Africa

Contact Address for Australia:

Pro Ecclesia Publishers, PO Box 189, Kelmescott, W. Australia 6111

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BE MENTORED!

p.18

– Michael J. Schout



EMPTIED AND FILLED

– Johannah Van Dyk

p.22



CHARITABLE JUDGMENTS

– Ken Sande

p.28



THOUGHTS ON FISH AND FISHING p.16

– Christine Farenhorst

FROM THE EDITOR p.4

– Jon Dykstra

NOTA BENE p.7

IN A NUTSHELL p.15

A CASSEROLE IS ENOUGH p.25

STRIKING OIL p.32

Heaven bound

*"Will Heaven be boring?" the child asked.
"No, of course not! What a silly question!"
"Oh...sorry."*

Contrary to what you've been told, there is such a thing as a stupid question. Unfortunately, in our desire to avoid asking that big dumb one, many seemingly stupid, and actually quite good, questions go unasked. This is particularly true when it comes to the topic of Heaven.

Many children wonder if Heaven will be boring. The idea of strumming on a harp and singing all day, every day, isn't appealing to most of them (nor to many musically inept adults). But while this question bothers many kids, few will ask it out loud – even at a young age they've discovered asking these sorts of questions can be embarrassing.

Adults also have "Heaven questions" that go unasked. What is Heaven going to be like? When we get there will we remember our time here on earth? And will we recognize each other in Heaven?

When these questions are raised they rarely get treated with much respect. Instead of garnering thoughtful responses, questions about Heaven are usually answered with another question: Does it really matter? We're going to get to Heaven soon enough, and then we'll find out exactly what it's like, so what's the use in thinking about it now? What's the point?

Well, when we turn to Scripture we find out there are at least two reasons to learn more about Heaven.

Comfort

First, many of the heavenly descriptions are a means of comfort to us. Those who weep now will laugh in Heaven.¹ Mourning, crying and pain will end, and God himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes.²

Here on earth we may have to persevere, suffer, stumble, and endure, but we can do so knowing that God has prepared a heavenly reward for us.³ As John MacArthur puts it in *The Glory of Heaven*:

...we don't seek to *escape* this life by dreaming of Heaven. But we do find we can *endure* this life because of the certainty of Heaven. Heaven is eternal. Earth is temporal.

Correction

And God does more than comfort us with His descriptions of Heaven – He also uses them to correct our misdirected desires. You see, Satan loves to use our desires, even our desires for God and Heaven. If he can twist them, just a bit, he can use them to point us in exactly the wrong direction

For example, a friend told me about his desire for a "great teacher." He had learned from some of the smartest men alive, and yet, ultimately, they had all

disappointed him. They might provide great insight in one area, and yet be completely blind in another. This friend wanted to be able to sit at the feet of a great teacher, and just learn. He was quite surprised when he realized why his desire wasn't being met. What he was really looking for wasn't merely a teacher, but *the* Teacher. He had wasted all this time trying to satisfy a desire that couldn't fully be met here on earth; it was one that could be fulfilled only in Heaven, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

In his book, *In Light of Eternity*, Randy Alcorn gives another example of this misdirected desire. A couple in his congregation wanted to give more to the church but also had a strong desire for a "perfect home" in the country. Was that desire wrong? "Not at all," Alcorn noted. "In fact, the dream of a perfect home is from God. It's just that such a dream cannot and will not be fulfilled in this life." That perfect home does exist, though, but we have to look to Heaven for it, where Jesus has prepared just such a place for us.⁴

All of us have misdirected desires. All of us are busy storing up treasures here on earth, investing our time and energy into things that will rust or be broken, the sorts of things that will be destroyed by fire⁵ when Christ returns. If we focused more on Heaven, talked more about it, and thought more about

it, perhaps then we would start trying to store up treasures there instead of here.

So will Heaven be boring?

That's why it's worthwhile thinking about Heaven. Now what will it actually be like? Let's try and answer a few of those questions.

When we get to Heaven will we remember our time here on earth?

We will have to, as we are going to be called to give an account for our every earthly word and deed.⁶ Works done in faithfulness will follow us into Heaven, where we will be rewarded for them.⁷ So it seems clear we will remember these acts as well. Revelation 6:9-11 gives a direct glimpse into Heaven where the martyrs there clearly remember what happened to them on earth – they call out to God to avenge their blood.

Finally, the fact that the crucifixion scars remain in Christ's eternal resurrected body seems to be conclusive proof that we will remember earth. These scars will forever bear witness to what He did for us; they will be a constant reminder of just how undeserving we were, and how gracious and merciful God is.

Now, since we are going to remember our time on earth, that means what we do here is a foundation for our eternal life. This is only the beginning, but it is a beginning we will build on later in Heaven.⁸

Will we recognize each other in Heaven?

Some think that since in Heaven we will "no longer marry nor be given in marriage"⁹ we will no longer recognize


our marriage partners or any of our other past relationships made on earth. But that reads far too much into a single text. Many other passages in the Bible clearly show that we will recognize each other.

For example, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus¹⁰, the rich man recognizes both Lazarus and Abraham in Heaven. When Moses and Elijah come down from Heaven for Jesus' Transfiguration¹¹ they were still recognizable as Moses and Elijah. And according to Luke 16:9 the friends we make through our generosity here on earth will remember us in Heaven and welcome us into their eternal dwellings.

So friendships interrupted for a time by death can continue in Heaven.

Will Heaven be boring?

One of Satan's biggest lies is his portrayal of Heaven as a tedious place of idleness and enforced endless singing. We are not going to be idle¹² in Heaven, and when we sing it will be because we can't contain the praise within us (and even the musically inept will now be able to carry a tune). Have you ever been to a wedding where the bride beamed happiness? Where the joy just spilled out of her? Her joy is but a pale reflection of the greater Joy we will experience in Heaven. Everything good and amazing here on earth, from the Niagara Falls to the Grand Canyon to the intricacy and wonder of a single living cell, reflect only a tiny part of the glory of their Creator. And in Heaven we will finally be able to see Him face to face.¹³ Face to face!

Heaven will be the very opposite of boring. 

Texts

¹ Luke 6:20-23

² Revelation 21:4

³ Hebrews 11

⁴ John 14:2,3

⁵ Matthew 6:19-21, 2 Peter 3:10

⁶ Matthew 12:36, 2 Corinthians 5:10

⁷ Matthew 25:14-30, 1 Corinthians 3:14

⁸ 1 Timothy 6:19

⁹ Matthew 22:23-30

¹⁰ Luke 16:19-31

¹¹ Luke 9:28-36

¹² We're going to reign with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12), serve God (Rev. 22:3), and be assigned responsibilities based on what we did on earth (Matthew 25:14-30).

¹³ Revelation 22:4



The first version of this article was written a decade ago when I was single and when Jesus' declaration that there will be no marriage in Heaven (Matt. 22:23-30) was a lot easier to understand.

Jon Dykstra can be reached at editor@reformedperspective.ca.

READER RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR,

Thank you to Mark Penninga for inviting response to his article "School: who should rule" (Feb. 2014). I welcome the opportunity to share a few thoughts.

My husband and I home-educated our three children from birth all the way into post-secondary institutions (college, university, and tech institute). They learned the three Rs, played in a band, were involved in sports and volunteer opportunities, and pursued their varied interests with passion. They memorized Scripture, tried art and pottery, learned math with manipulatives, and excelled in their chosen pursuits.

Parents who send their children to school are not choosing a better or worse method,

simply a different method. Home-education (by Reformed parents) is a Reformed, effective option for educating our children.

The Church Order at the moment does not reflect this. A better wording would perhaps be: "The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children receive instruction which is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions." This would also reflect the promise made at their baptism, that we as parents will "instruct your child in this doctrine as soon as he is able to understand and to have him instructed therein to the utmost of your power." Home-education does not have to be explicitly mentioned, but neither is it a type of school - school

describes institutional education. Home-educating parents have chosen to give their children a Reformed education at home instead.

In the yearly home visit, the elders can discuss the home-education of the children with the parents: Are the children memorizing Scripture? Are there daily devotions in the home? If the parents are faithful, the expectation is that they will pass that faith on to their children as promised; nobody loves a child more than his parents except for God, and as parents we "have no greater joy than to hear that [our] children walk in truth" (1 John 4).

Marianne van der Ahé
Edmonton, Alberta

DEAR EDITOR,

In his February article, "Church, Home, and School: A Two-Legged Stool?," Mr. Kent Dykstra suggested that homeschooled students miss out on "instrumental music groups, sports teams, and volunteer opportunities."

I am a second-generation homeschooling Mom, and I cannot think of a single homeschooled child who has not engaged in all of these activities. I hesitate to use my own life as an example because it can come across as boasting, but I want to end the misconception that homeschoolers don't get the same opportunities as school students. Throughout my elementary and high school years, I:

- took violin and piano lessons
- played in two orchestras
- sang in four choirs
- fiddled in a small ensemble
- competed in soccer, volleyball, curling, and badminton
- volunteered at our local Pregnancy Center
- worked with a dear handicapped boy once a week for two years
- babysat every week
- worked in a greenhouse
- managed a farmers' market stand
- worked as a medical receptionist

And I did this all while traditional schools were still in session. With no homework to tie me down in the evenings, I could work through my subjects in the most efficient order. I could start earlier in the morning if I wanted more free time in the afternoon, or double up the day before a sports tournament or music competition. The flexibility of homeschooling enabled me to engage in many pursuits I couldn't have while in school.

Mr. Dykstra also believes that Christian schools are necessary because "few parents can match the breadth of knowledge or experience that is represented by a staff." God instituted the family and the church, and while it is true that two parents do not have the same amount of knowledge as an adult teaching staff, this is fundamentally missing the point of what the purpose of education is, and ignores evidence that, even inside homeschooling, a parent with a teaching degree has no advantage (many will claim it as their chief disadvantage!) over the parent without a degree. I believe this is because learning is not confined to institutions, classrooms, experts, or textbooks. A well-educated person will dig deeper, engage in personal study, and utilize alternative streams of information not exclusive to a staff that must also deal with curriculum dictates, time

constraints, classroom management, and tight budgets. One of the many purposes of homeschooling is to help our children learn how to self-educate. We want to give our children the tools they need to learn everything they want about anything they want (within biblical parameters, of course).

Another positive of dealing with only one or two primary teachers (as opposed to a staff of them) is that education becomes relationship based. There are no stories from the staff room to influence a parent for or against their child at the beginning of each grade. When mothers and fathers spend year after year instructing a child they care more about than anyone else in the world, they discover his strengths and weaknesses, and can tailor curriculum to meet their needs.

Parent-led, Bible-based, home discipleship's offer of a unique combination of consistency and flexibility is a distinct advantage. Character development can be emphasized and academics individualized while we pursue the chief end of education: the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jacinda Vandenberg
Brantford, Ontario

NOTA BENE

News worth noting

US SUPREME COURT SAYS CHRISTIAN COUPLE MUST PHOTOGRAPH GAY WEDDINGS

BY ANNA NIENHUIS



In early April the United States Supreme Court refused to hear photographers Elaine (pictured) and Jonathan Huguenin's appeal. The couple had been fined by a New Mexico lower court for refusing, on the basis of their Christian convictions, to take wedding pictures for a lesbian couple.

The courts decided that standing up for your faith comes with a very high price: along with legal fees the couple was forced to pay over \$6,000 to the disgruntled couple they had turned down.

SOURCES: "What now? Court won't hear gay wedding appeal"; April 8, 2014, worthynews.com; www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/page/elane-photography/; Photo by Bruce Ellefson, Alliance Defending Freedom

WORLD VISION DOES A 360 ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

BY RAOUL KINGMA



World Vision®

The American branch of World Vision caused quite the brouhaha in the evangelical world in late March over their stance on same-sex marriage. They announced a change to their hiring policies that would allow professing Christians in legal same-sex marriages to be hired by the charitable organization.

This announcement swiftly incurred the wrath of many parts of the evangelical world, sparking a firestorm on blogs and social media. Up to 2,000 donors purportedly canceled their support for World Vision after hearing about the announcement.

Because of this enormous backlash, World Vision backtracked and reverted

to its original hiring policy just 48 hours after the initial announcement. World Vision U.S. President Richard Stearns wrote in a letter that,

...we failed to be consistent with World Vision U.S.'s commitment to the traditional understanding of Biblical marriage and our own Statement of Faith, which says, "We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God."

These events have again highlighted some of the problems that surround "parachurch" organizations. These organizations seek to transcend denominational borders and unite Christians of all stripes to a given cause. This strategy has allowed World Vision to become one of the largest charitable organizations in the world. However, this big-tent approach to charity can also result in a lowest-common-denominator approach to the faith commitments of the organization. They have to adopt policies that appease a

wide spectrum of supporters, liberal and conservative alike. This is evident in the rationale that World Vision gave for the initial policy change, where they stated that they wished to remain neutral on same-sex marriage because this is an issue that is not settled at the local church level. World Vision has taken a similar tack on other contentious issues such as divorce and remarriage and women in office. Unfortunately, despite the rhetoric of neutrality, World Vision is, in fact, taking a stand on these issues, whether they realize it or not; to make no decision at all is a decision.

Parachurch organizations such as World Vision have undoubtedly done a great deal of honorable work. However, we should be careful not to let them displace the messy community life of actually existing church bodies, or to mistake them for the church itself. The church should not be eclipsed by her children.

FOOD ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE

BY ANNA NIENHUIS AND JON DYKSTRA



For decades now, the fear of over-population – the fear that the Earth may soon have more people than it has the ability to feed – has been used to justify population control efforts like China’s coercive one-child policy, and the United Nations’ effort to make abortion more accessible around the world.

However, this fear has, repeatedly, been shown to be unfounded. The latest study to make that case is, “Will the world run out of land” published earlier this year by the journal *Environmental Research Letters* which found that “crop yields have largely kept pace with population expansion.” The population of the earth has grown by

4 billion people since 1961, and crop yields have also gone up. According to the *Atlas of Population and Environment* (atlas.aas.org): “...there is currently an average of 2,790 calories of food available each day for every human on the planet – 23 percent more than in 1961...” (emphasis added).

Consider also that there is room for further crop yield increases – many areas of the world have yet to implement the most productive growing practices. There are also new innovations to be discovered, such as making use of the insect population, which, while nutritious and plentiful, remains underutilized as a food source. It is, of course, important to care for God’s earth and exercise our stewardship responsibly, but those who encourage limiting family size in the interests of our earth will need another reason besides food scarcity to convince those willing to trust and follow the command to “be fruitful and multiply” to limit or forego the blessing of children.

SOURCES: “Will the world run out of land? A Kaya-type decomposition to study past trends of cropland expansion” *Environmental Research Letters*, Vol. 9, #2; Nadya Ancombe’s “Crop yields have largely kept pace with population expansion”; environmentalresearchweb.org; March 4, 2014 and Shannon Roberts’ “Food keeping pace with population”; March 6, 2014; mercator.net

“LIVING WAGES” MAY NOT IMPROVE LIVING

BY ANNA NIENHUIS

While a high minimum wage sounds good to many, it comes with pitfalls that we need to know about. In the Spring 2014 edition of the *Canadian Student Review* Charles Lamman reported on studies that show when the minimum wage goes up employers learn to function with fewer employees and fewer shifts, and keep only the most productive, valuable employees around.

This means vulnerable workers, such as young people, new employees,

or those who struggle to complete tasks quickly, will not benefit from a living wage – they will instead find themselves with no wage at all. Many small businesses cannot support dramatic wage increases and may have to shut their doors, further decreasing employment opportunities. And history bears out the truth that increasing the minimum wage is not a means to addressing poverty.

Certainly higher pay for all is an attractive idea, but perhaps “living wage” advocates need to take into account the real-world viability of minimum wage increases, especially for small businesses.

SOURCE: Charles Lammam’s “Living wage laws can hurt the most vulnerable workers”; Spring 2014; fraserinstitute.org.

HOSPITALS USE ABORTED BABIES FOR FUEL

BY ELISSA DYKSTRA



In late March a story broke that indicated hospitals in Britain had burned the fetal remains of up to 15,000 aborted and miscarried children. Ten of the hospitals had these remains incinerated alongside medical waste, and at least two more used the remains in their waste-to-energy program, which provides heat to their buildings.

There were three types of reaction to these reports.

In the first camp were those who focused only on the babies who had been miscarried, centering on how the “insensitive treatment” would further the pain of parents who had lost their children.

But what of the aborted children? Pro-lifers pointed out that both the abortion and incineration of these babies was immoral.

The strangest reaction was the third. There were pro-choice advocates who were angry and disgusted by the treatment of the bodies of all of the children who were incinerated, yet saw no issue with the fact that these children had been aborted in the first place. They became concerned about these children only after they were dead!

It is important to defend the dignity of all human beings, and it is encouraging to see such a large number of people recognize that even human remains should be treated with respect. More important, however, is to defend human life at all stages before it is taken away.

Sources: “Warning over burning aborted fetuses” posted to BBC.com March 24, 2014; Steven Ertelt’s “Shocking Report Shows 15,000 Aborted Babies Incinerated to Heat British Hospitals” posted to LifeNews.com March 24, 2014; “This doesn’t even seem real”: European hospitals burning aborted fetuses for heat” posted to GlennBeck.com March 25, 2014

HEAVEN IS FOR REAL, BUT IS THE BOOK?

BY JON DYKSTRA

In April a very different sort of Christian movie opened in theaters. *Heaven is for Real* is based on a bestselling book of the same name about Colton Burpo's claim that he visited Heaven. When he was three years old he suffered from an undiagnosed burst appendix and was close to death before being taken into surgery. It was while he was being operated on that Colton says his heavenly visit took place: he describes sitting on Jesus' lap, and being sung to by the angels. Some of the other details he passed along to his father include:

- there are multi-colored horses in heaven
- angels have swords to keep Satan out
- at the end of the world men are going to battle flesh-and-blood demons using swords or bows and arrows, while the women and children look on
- everyone in Heaven has wings, except for Jesus

As of early May the film was on pace to make more than \$100 million, and the book written by Colton's father, Pastor Todd Burpo, has sold 9 million copies. With so many people talking about this, reading it, and going to the movie version, what should Christians think of *Heaven is for Real*?

The key question for Christians is whether the account is true. Colton and his family aren't presenting this as the next great Christian novel; they claim his visit to Heaven really happened and what Colton shares about Heaven is fact. So it is on that basis that we need to evaluate the film and book – can we be confident that Colton's description of Heaven is accurate?

And the short answer to that question is, no.

Colton isn't the first person to claim they went to Heaven and returned. Christian bookstores have shelves devoted to titles such as *My Journey to Heaven*, *The boy who came back from heaven*, *90 Minutes in Heaven* and many others. However, these books conflict on significant points, leaving readers with the inescapable conclusion that not all of them can be true.

Does that mean that some of these authors are lying? There is a more charitable possibility. The Bible warns us that the Devil masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). It is possible, then, that some of these authors could be entirely sincere and yet completely wrong because they have been deceived by the Devil.

In *Heaven is for Real* Colton's father is at first skeptical about his son's heavenly claim. But that skepticism ends when Colton tells his mom about meeting a baby sister in Heaven who had died while she was still in mommy's "tummy."

His parents never told Colton about the miscarriage, so how could he have known? Colton's father, Pastor Burpo, concludes that the only way Colton could have known was if he really did meet his sister in Heaven. But there is another explanation: the Devil also knew about their miscarriage. If the authors of other heavenly visitation books may have been deceived, we should acknowledge the possibility that this very sick three-year-old, near death and under anesthetic, may also have been tricked by the Great Deceiver.

But what about all the good the movie and book are doing? Millions of people are talking about Heaven! Surely that is proof that the Devil couldn't possibly be involved, right?

The fruit of this film and book is not all positive. While Colton mentions that people need to know Jesus to go to Heaven, many readers will be left with the impression that if they call themselves Christian, they are assured of going to Heaven – this book on Heaven never really explains what a person needs to do to go there. Pastor Todd Burpo added to this confusion when he appeared on *The Glenn Beck Program*. Beck, a Mormon, started the interview by sharing with Pastor Burpo details about what Beck was certain was his own message from Heaven. He then asked Burpo:

Why did I receive this message? Why did you receive this message?Do you think God is sending a message of any sort to us, and if so, what is it?

Pastor Burpo readily accepted Beck's message as coming from God. He responded:

I think He absolutely is, and I think the biggest message to me is the value of childlike faith. I think as adults we become cynical. We become doubters. We question everything. And Jesus even said to his followers, the faith I am looking for is the faith of child....



A few moments later Burpo described Beck as a "follower of Christ." Burpo wants us to stop questioning everything and have a childlike faith. But failing to distinguish between Mormonism and Christianity is not childlike faith. It is dangerous. If the Burpos can't distinguish the Mormon God from the Christian one, we have good reason to doubt their discernment.

More issues could be raised, but the intent here isn't to prove the book false. The point here is only to show that we have no reason to believe it must be true. If we want assurance that Heaven is real we should believe because the Bible says so.



SPRING HAS COME

(Based on Song of Songs 2:10-14)


My lover spoke and said to me, "Arise
and leave with me, my darling one! Make haste!
The autumn rains are gone, the winter dies,
and spring has come—there is no time to waste!
The flow'rs show bold upon the sun-soaked earth.
The time of song has come to spread its joy.
All vines and trees rejoice at life's rebirth
and every fragrant smell and scent deploy.
Arise and come with me, my heart's desire.
Don't hide from me, my shy and modest dove.
Show me your face whose beauty so inspires.
And let me hear your voice, so full of love.
O come, my dear, let us not hesitate
to go together to my own estate."

Rev. George van Popta

This is one of 24 sonnets in Rev. George van Popta's new book *Pure Love: Solomon's Song of Songs*, each based on a portion of the biblical book. This, the sixth, is inspired by chapter 2:10-14 and is paired here with "Windflowers" (John William Waterhouse, 1903), the same painting that accompanies it in the book. *Pure Love* would be a romantic gift for a wife, and also serves as an intriguing type of Bible commentary, making the somewhat mysterious Songs of Songs much easier to understand. It can be purchased at www.lulu.com/spotlight/gvanpopta. – *Jon Dykstra*

PREACH

Scott Bredenhof



*The Psalm's last note is spoke
and he steps up to what he wrote,
sermon notes and quotes
from what God spoke,
by way of a pen-stroke.
And he knows it's hope that he holds;
soap for the soul and he hopes he won't choke.
So he clears his throat, and as faces lift
he sees the sea of faces he's faced with:
every face a story, every story a face.
So there's plenty of stories sitting in this place*

*Like the father who's a slave to the fast pace of
the rat race, and the money he chase,
so he needs a break from the stress and backaches.
Or the mother whose faith takes a real shake,
'cause her kid's in the hospital,
tubes in and out of his face.
Doctor's on the case, but his future's up
in the air-space,
so something as simple as a decent heart-rate
is cause to celebrate.
Over here's a daughter who hates her weight and
the imperfections of her face,
Got her face in a pillowcase.
Kind of like the girl who can't seem to get a
second date.
Time don't wait, and that's got to frustrate, '
cause she late.
She just wants to feel safe in a man's embrace.
Next to her is a guy who hate that he feels fake,
'cause one stage, with his hands raised,
he sings praise,
but yesterday at a friend's place in the basement
he was getting wasted.
You see it's easier to abdicate greatness,
play it safe and aim for a low-place just in case.
And he knows that's a waste,
but he's too afraid to pave the way so he just imitates.*

Now behind him is another guy,
who thinks going to church saves.
When he prays, he prays ``for Christ's sake`` -
a disgrace, cause I don't think he understands
grace.

He thinks to escape that hellish fate
he just has to self-elevate.

Meanwhile her heart's about to deflate
from the weight of her past mistakes
that she can't erase or escape
'cause it takes all her intakes.

And where is God's grace in the heartache?
How much hurt can a heart take?

Well he might know: he's eighty-eight,
lost his soul-mate in '08.

That devastates and that left a great space
he can't replace.

So as he contemplates, a fresh love radiates
from a couple who anticipates
the new life that waits at the wedding gates.
And as for me, I'm giving my head a shake,
trying to calculate if I got my priorities straight
'cause I was out late, but now I'm barely awake.
So you see, every mind is an inmate
to its own mind-state.

We all want words clear and straight, that captivate,
speech to fascinate and resonate.
Something great to motivate and illustrate the life
we ought to emulate.

Well you can be sure he's feeling that weight.
He's feeling weak when he speaks,
not smooth or sleek or elite in technique.

But still he has to preach the gospel complete
and repeat week after week,
to reach deep and breach the hearts of the sheep
so they seek and speak love in actions and speech
and walk the streets with beautiful feet,
all the while keeping humble and meek.

And that's just the tip of the job descript,
so he feel so ill-equipped,
inadequate and unfit for the fight
with just Word on his lip.

But then he remembers that this is not his stage.
Converts and souls are not his wage.
He's just called to lift that Word off the page,
and let loose the Lion from its cage.
The Word is alive and it cuts both ways.
It has power over the wind and the waves.
It has power over sin and it saves.
And it has power to lift dead bodies
from deep graves.

So silly us, thinking we need to manufacture the
message to attract the masses.
Brokenness and the anticipation of salvation is
something real we all can relate to.
The Gospel has inherent relevance,
so no need to speak eloquence
with excellence to stay relevant.
God did not put parameters and requirements
on His prophets;
only thing required is a willingness to serve
and submit to the Spirit.
And our pastor is Exhibit A as example.
Man is but a mouthpiece,
and God works His glory in our flaws.
Isn't that the cause, that tonight we stop, pause,
and applause?
All Glory is God's.

"Preach" by Scott Bredenhof was recited on the
occasion of Rev. Slomp's retirement evening
February 1, 2014.



SUMMER!

Daybreak! See the misty haze?
Fullthroated robins caroling,
School's out! Ah joy, the first of days.
Bright cardinals, come hear them sing,

Buds all a-bloom, God's jewels flit
From flower to blooming rose ablaze,
Winged iridescence, never to sit,
Man, let your voice respond with praise,

Come smell the fields, the fresh mown grass,
Where eagles mount up in the sky
Below her image in lake's glass
Beneath, on outspread pinions high.

Listen and hear the insects thrum
Yet silence here speaks louder, still
Bullfrogs reply, the partridge's drum,
Sounds echo over vale and hill.

Both pine and aspen, see them stand,
Beneath the shore above the lake
Under it's surface on dry land
Beyond the verge of reeds and brake,

A world a-bloom a-bud alive
A rush, to let Life's senses reel,
As bees industrious from the hive...
Yet, still? O my dear God I feel

A longing spread throughout my soul
A sense of loss deep in my heart...
When will you come and make all whole?
Your world renewed, from sin apart?

Aart Blokhuis

IN A NUTSHELL

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE.

BY JON DYKSTRA

Screen first for friendship. Look for someone who understands you better than you do yourself, who makes you a better person just by being around them. And then explore whether that friendship could become a romance and a marriage.

SOURCE: Thanks to Jay Younts at ShepherdPress.com for passing this along.

ON JUDGING UNCHARITABLY

- Don't judge others for sinning differently than you do.
- Pride is concerned with who is right; humility is concerned with what is right.
- Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you (Matthew 7:1-2 ESV).

SOURCES: Top two are unknown, circulating the Internet

FOUR LIGHTBULB JOKES

Q: How many actors does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Only one. They don't like to share the spotlight.

Q: How many aerospace engineers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. It doesn't take a rocket scientist, you know.

Q: How many visitors to an art gallery does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: Two: one to do it and one to say "Huh! My four-year old could've done that!"

Q: How many Dutchmen does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Change?

SOURCES: lightbulbjokes.com, and overheard at a wedding reception

ANNIVERSARIES OF NOTE

In the last couple of months we've had an anniversary for two of *Reformed Perspective's* regular contributors.

Christine Farenhorst was published in *RP's* pages for the very first time in the month of May, 24 years ago. The article, titled "It is easier for a camel," acquainted readers with Andrew Carnegie, one of the richest men in the world in the early 20th century. It was intended for younger readers, but was something readers of any age would appreciate - a bit of intriguing history, paired with a distinctly Reformed perspective.

Margaret Helder's first article, "The modern creationist movement," appeared in the April, 1982, edition, 32 years ago. It included a sidebar on a 1981 court case about teaching creationism in public schools in Arkansas, and Dr. Helder had appeared as an expert witness. Even as evolution has made inroads in the Church, Dr. Helder is one very big reason why in the Canadian Reformed Churches we have largely escaped this compromise.

Many thanks to you both for your encouraging and insightful contributions through the years!

SCREENING FOR MARRIAGE

What really matters in a marriage partner? Is it looks? Because looks fade. Is it a man's ability to provide? Because jobs and money can be lost. In his book, *The Meaning of Marriage* (pages 125-126), Tim Keller asks us to re-evaluate the way we evaluate potential marriage partners. He writes:

Most of us know that there is some truth in the stereotype that men overvalue beauty and that women overvalue wealth in a potential mate.

But if you marry someone more for these things than for friendship, you are not only setting yourself up for future failure - wealth may decrease and sexual appeal will decrease - but you are also setting yourself up for loneliness. For what Adam needed in the garden was not just a sexual partner but a companion, bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh.

If singles accepted this principle, it would drastically change the way people seek a marriage partner in our day. It is typical for a single person to walk into a room, see a number of people of the opposite sex, and immediately begin to screen them, not for companionship but for attractiveness. Let's say three out of ten look appealing. The next step is to approach those three to see what rapport there may be. If one of them will agree to go out on a date, and you get romantically involved, perhaps you will see if you can turn that person into a friend as well. The problem is many of your best prospects for friendship were likely among those you ruled out because they were too tall or too short, too fat or too skinny.

We think of a prospective spouse as primarily a lover (or a provider), and if he or she can be a friend on top of that, well, isn't that nice! We should be going at it the other way round.

CORKY VELVEETA'S FACT FILE

from Calvinist Cartoons

"Pluto never made a full orbit around the sun from the time it was discovered to when it was declassified as a planet."

"You can't hum while holding your nose."

"It rains diamonds on Saturn and Jupiter."



THOUGHTS ON FISH AND FISHING

By: Christine Farenhorst

My great grandfather, whose surname was Huisman, was not a “houseman” as that surname suggests, but a fisherman by occupation. He did not, as far as I know, ever take any days off to relax on the edge of a lake, pond, or canal, to leisurely dangle a fishing pole over a favorite spot. No, his job was to be in a boat on a daily basis for long hours, rain or shine, casting out heavy nets to catch herring and other fish so that he could later sell these on shore and make a living. He had a young wife and was expecting a child – a little child who would one day become my grandmother.

My great grandfather was killed at sea. The particulars were never told me. It could have been that his boat capsized during a storm, and it could have been that he fell ill and tumbled overboard and was perhaps unable to swim. These are speculations. But the fact is that

he died during a fishing absence from home. My grandmother was born a few months after his death, and my great grandmother, now a widow, had to bring her up alone. Perhaps that is why my mother always harbored a particular dislike for fish and fishing in general.

My father, on the other hand, loved both fish and fishing. Not that he was able to indulge in this form of relaxation very often. But I have fond memories of sitting in a boat with him, a rod in my hand as well as in his, both of us casting a line into the water, dreaming of the big one.

When spring shows signs of appearing, and the captivating songs of the first robins are heard, when the sheen of green starts to shimmer around the branches of trees, that’s when stories of fish caught and fish lost begin to make the rounds around our dinner table once more. Phrases such as,

“Remember when...,” and, “That was the biggest...,” and, “Next time...,” dot the conversations. The truth is that the one that got away was always bigger than the one that was caught. When our children were small, we often fished with them during the summer holidays. They all enjoyed it. We also tell fish jokes, as in:

A man walks into a fishing store and asks: “Can I have a fly rod and reel for my son?” The proprietor answers: “Sorry, sir, we don’t do trades.”

FISHING FANATIC

There are those people, of course, who take fishing to the extreme; there are those who say, as one Patrick McManus said: “The two best times to fish are when it’s rainin’ and when it ain’t!” There is the story of an Englishman by the name of Hardinge who would be very much in agreement with Patrick McManus.



Hardinge's story takes place during the Second World War. This stalwart soldier loved fishing

so much that he took his fishing tackle with him overseas – that is, he took it with him wherever he went. In 1942 Hardinge was posted to Iceland, and while there he heard from the locals that there was a good fishing spot some nine miles from where he was stationed on his boat. However, the most shore leave ever allowed for an enlisted man was a mere four hours. Being that there was no transportation of any sort on shore, the only way to reach the coveted and heard-about fishing hole was by foot. Hardinge could not stop thinking about the stream and racked his brains about how he could reach it. He calculated that if he ran the nine miles as best he could, give or take some moments for a brief rest, he could possibly average five, maybe even six, miles to an hour. That would give him approximately twenty minutes of fishing before running back again. As well, to save more time, he thought he could tackle up before leaving.

The next time Hardinge's shore leave came up, he was a man prepared. And as he had planned, so he did. Although he was tuckered out from running, upon reaching the stream he immediately cast in. That first cast landed him a two-and-a-half pound sea trout. Elated, he took it off the line, deposited it in his fishing basket and, after consulting his watch, immediately began his return nine-mile jaunt back to the boat. Eighteen miles for a solitary cast! As one Arnold Gingrich said: "A trout is a moment of beauty known only to those who seek it."

FISH FANATIC

There are other fanatic attitudes about as well – not to fishing, but to fish. And these attitudes should be of more

concern to us than Mr. Hardinge's overzealous attitude. Recently, in February of this year, thousands of people across Australia joined in a protest calling for an end to a new law that allows sharks to be culled. For the record, according to the International Shark Attack File report issued by University of Florida scientists

That first cast landed him a two-and-a-half pound sea trout.

who have been tracking shark attacks for decades, there were 72 confirmed unprovoked shark attacks on humans in 2013. The year before that the number was 81. Fatalities were reported in Australia, the island of Reunion, Brazil, Diego Garcia, Hawaii, New Zealand and South Africa.

At the recent Australian protest in Perth, in which area there have been seven fatal shark attacks in the last three years, people were tremendously upset over the new law allowing sharks to be culled. Placards such as, "Sharks are more important than human creation," were shaken angrily and lifted high above heads as people shouted. The government says the fatalities caused by sharks have dented tourism, and that beachgoers should be protected.

In February of 2013, a shark attacked and killed a 47-year-old man who was swimming off a beach near the New Zealand city of Auckland. The police, who arrived at the scene shortly after the attack, were able to shoot the shark before it disappeared. There are a growing number of people who hold that the animal in this particular situation, or other situations like it, should not have been killed. The Darwinian belief that fish, or other animals, are equal to or more important than humans is an idea invading our society and one that should

be taken very seriously.

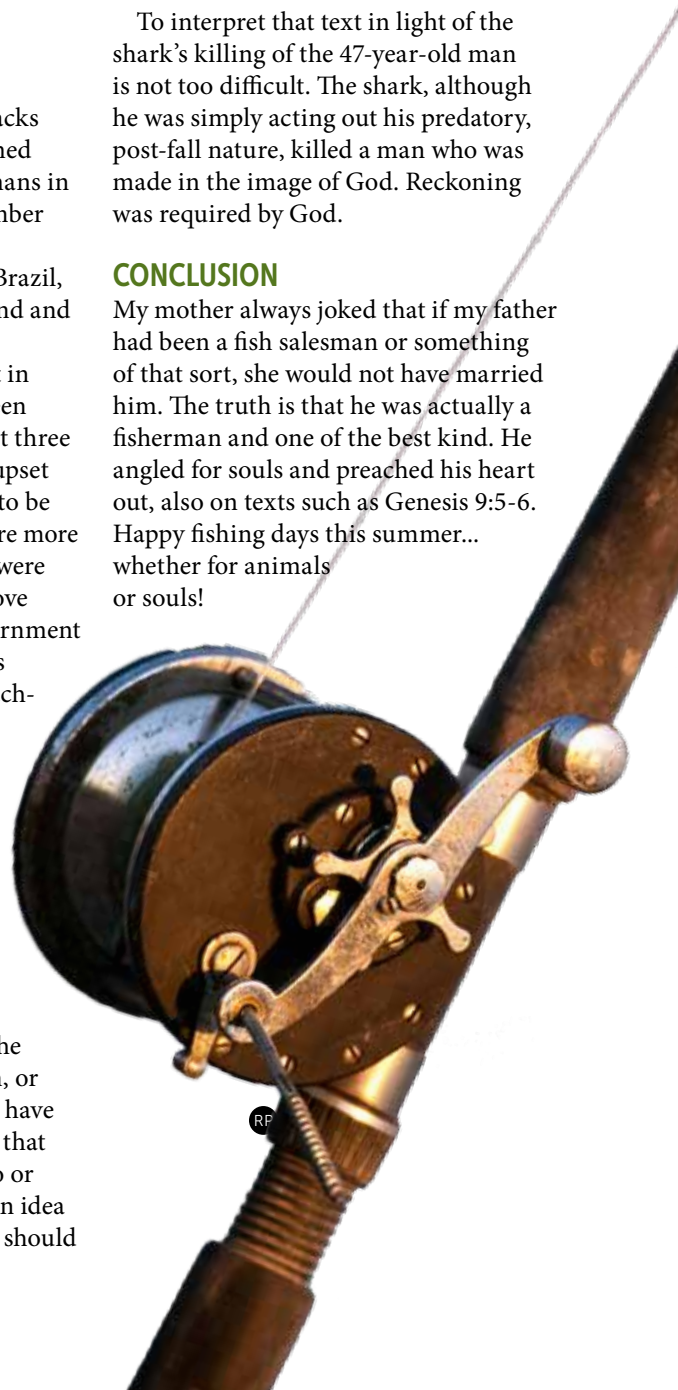
In Genesis 1:26, God gave man dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. As well, in Genesis 9:5-6, God tells Noah something regarding animals:

For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in His own image.

To interpret that text in light of the shark's killing of the 47-year-old man is not too difficult. The shark, although he was simply acting out his predatory, post-fall nature, killed a man who was made in the image of God. Reckoning was required by God.

CONCLUSION

My mother always joked that if my father had been a fish salesman or something of that sort, she would not have married him. The truth is that he was actually a fisherman and one of the best kind. He angled for souls and preached his heart out, also on texts such as Genesis 9:5-6. Happy fishing days this summer... whether for animals or souls!



BE

LOOK FOR PEOPLE
YOU WANT TO BE LIKE,
THEN ASK IF THEY'LL
SPEND SOME TIME WITH YOU

MENTORS



By: Michael J. Schout

ED!



Past generations had heroes. That was, in part, because there were more heroes to be had. This was back in the day when astronauts walked the earth (and moon!), and when baseball players stayed married to one woman (most of the time), and when being a politician meant you were serving your country rather than being served (with some exceptions).

Young people don't have heroes anymore. Or least not as many. And often the people they want to be like are anything but heroic. Our athletes cheat, our politicians sleep around, and our movie stars go to rehab when they aren't working. There are lots of exceptions, of course, but you get the general idea.

SMART ≠ WISE

I might be wrong, but I don't think the shallow hero pool is the only reason why youth don't have heroes like they used to. I'm persuaded that young people don't have as much interest, in general, in seeking out people to follow. And this is a problem.

Young people are smarter than they used to be (at least, that's what they think). Don't know the answer to a question? Hold on, let me Google that. You've got information at your fingertips (literally). Unlike previous generations, you can learn almost anything in a matter of minutes with the simple click of a mouse.

Anything, that is, except wisdom.

That you can't Google. You can learn how to change a tire on YouTube, find out the migration habits of Canadian waterfowl on Wikipedia (which is always trustworthy...), or compare the world religions by doing a quick search. But the Internet can't show you what it means to be a loving, caring husband or wife. Google can't teach you how to show forgiveness, or what Christian maturity looks like in real life. Surfing the Internet won't provide you with a living, breathing, and tangible example of how to deal with suffering or how to love your local church. Knowledge and wisdom

are not the same things, which is why I believe mentoring is indispensable.

I'm writing as one who has been the beneficiary of many mentors. In fact, I continue to be mentored by several men. It really started in high school, when in God's providence I was cared for by my youth leader. Beyond the usual group interactions, I would meet with him individually to be discipled. I would spend time in his home. I watched him care for his wife. I saw him balance a full-time job as an engineer with his callings in the home and in the church. In other words, I spent time with him. Intentional time. And it was one of the best things I've ever done.

So, yes, I've chosen to write about mentoring not only because I think it's

*Here's the reality:
you are following
somebody. The
question isn't a
matter of if, but who.*

sadly lacking in today's youth culture, but because it's meant (and continues to mean) a lot to me personally.

BIBLICAL WARRANT

Although no Bible index or concordance includes the word mentoring, its practice plays a prominent role throughout the Scriptures. The word mentor means, "A wise and trusted counselor or teacher."

For starters, we might turn to Moses and the influence of his father-in-law Jethro (Ex. 18). As the newly appointed and anointed leader of God's people, Moses's plate was already getting full. People were coming to him with their problems. He was both their counselor and judge.

Yet Jethro, being older and wise, cautioned Moses that he could not continue working this hard – major burnout was on the horizon. His advice

was to find God-fearing men to help carry the load, to bear the burden. And so it went. And Moses was the better for it.

The principle here is worth noting. Moses, while not young in age, was young at leading. Sometimes new leaders think they have all the answers and can do all things. Yet he listened to the counsel of his mentor. We need teachers who will instill wisdom into our lives, in part because we have blind spots and often think too highly of ourselves.

Maybe this is a good place to mention your parents. I'll have more to say about finding mentors inside the church, but don't forget that your parents, assuming they love Christ, have been placed over you to instruct and guide you. I recently had a conversation with a man in his 70s who, when reflecting back, joked that his parents got a whole lot smarter the older he got. Sometimes in our teenage years we think we're smarter than Mom and Dad. But the older we get, the smarter they become (actually, they were always the smart ones...you just didn't see it then). Of course, parents make mistakes. But they can often see what you can't. As Solomon teaches in Proverbs 6:20-23:

My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life.

The New Testament emphasizes the importance of mentoring and being mentored even more than the Old. Jesus spent three years with a group of twelve men. And what was he doing? Equipping them to lead the church when he'd be gone. It was Christ who said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and *follow me*" (Matt. 16:24-25). Surely our Savior was more than an example, but he wasn't less.

But perhaps the Apostle Paul gets the "award" for talking the most about mentoring. It was Paul who said, "Follow

my example as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Again, in his letter to the Philippians, he says, "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Phil. 3:17). Later he writes, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil 4:9).

And how could I not make mention of entire letters written to Timothy and Titus, Paul's young pupils in gospel ministry, where he exhorts them to remember his leadership, his teaching, as well as his example of suffering for the sake of the gospel?

Finally, Paul's co-laborer to the Jews, Peter, exhorts the elders to be "examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3). Of the many

For you "older" folks reading this article: perhaps this means pouring more energy into your church and less energy into your golf swing.

responsibilities of your elders, serving as mentors is among the most important.

As you can see, the Word of God clearly testifies to the importance of mentoring and being mentored as one of the primary means of growth in the Christian life. Here's the reality: you are following somebody. The question isn't a matter of if, but who.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Having considered the biblical warrant for this practice, I want to conclude by suggesting a number of ways to make this a reality (as an aside, make sure you're listening for the "so what" of sermons and lessons and studies, and pray that your pastors and teachers and youth leaders would build the

appropriate bridges between the ancient context and your own).

First and foremost, mentors are sought more than they seek. Most "older and wiser" people are not going to offer themselves, but would gladly (and humbly) agree to spend time with you.

I currently meet with a former missionary and current pastor every month for an hour or two over coffee. And I can assure you he didn't approach me, I approached him. He's too humble to offer his "services" (which is one of the reasons I asked him to mentor me). He confessed that before our first meeting he had to Google (even adults do it!) the word "mentor," because he didn't exactly know what he was getting himself into. We've met for almost a year now, and while we don't follow a particular script other than talking and praying, it's been incredibly sweet fellowship. He's the kind of guy I just like being around. Which leads me to my next tip.

Look for people you want to be like. The Bible puts no age requirement on this. For some of you, this means finding people in your youth group or your school that you respect. Spend time with them. Who we associate with is huge, especially in our developing years. Friends will rub off on you one way or another! Make sure those friends are pointing you to Christ and giving you a good example to follow.

Maybe this means spending more time with your Grandpa or Grandma. Perhaps it means asking your youth leader if he would be willing to get coffee some day after school (you heard it here first: they'd be tickled to!).

My wife meets monthly with a friend from our church who she enjoys, respects, and can learn a lot from. She's just a little bit older, so age is not always the issue. The goal is growth.

My third suggestion is to look for people right around you. Start in your local church. This is, after all, your spiritual family. In my opinion, one of the weaknesses of the Reformed church community is that we don't take discipleship seriously enough. We need more "older women" teaching "younger women," and "older men" teaching the

“younger men.”

Paul writes to Titus,

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things - that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed (Titus 2:1-5).

Of course, this means that our “older” members need to have a willingness to pour themselves into younger Christians. For you “older” folks reading this article: perhaps this means pouring more energy into your church and less energy into your golf swing. There’s no

So the impetus is on you, my younger brothers and sisters. Seek people to emulate.


shortage of opportunities.

CONCLUSION

But from my experience, I’ve never heard of a situation where a person is asked to be a mentor and then refused. So the impetus is on you, my younger brothers and sisters. Seek people to emulate. Watch those who love Jesus. Learn from Dads and Moms. Take notice of the husband who loves his wife. Don’t be afraid to copycat the twenty-something single girl who seems to care more about

what God thinks of her than what the world does.

And, finally, pray. Would you ask God to bring you one, perhaps two people into your path who would invest in your life? The answer is probably right in front of you, but maybe not. Ask God, who invested His precious blood for you, to provide a mentor.

God loves to use people as His sanctifying agents to bring about the necessary progress in our faith. None of us are where we need to be. Ask others to help, and see God’s grace pouring into your heart through the gift and wisdom of a mentor. 

This article first appeared in the November/December issue of The Outlook (www.reformedfellowship.net) and is reprinted here with permission. Rev. Michael J. Schout is the pastor of Grace URC in Alto, MI, and welcomes your feedback at mikeschout@gmail.com.

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EMPTIED AND FILLED

BY: JOHANNAH VAN DYK

ONE FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE WITH FOSTER PARENTING

I used to say I wanted to adopt someday. I envisioned a dark hand in my pale one. And maybe a few more little hands as well. A full color palette of little hands. It was a pretty picture that I now realize was sustained mostly by a rose-colored romanticism. Adoption and Christianity just seemed to go together. But whether or not adoption and I went together was another thing entirely.

I also used to say that I'd marry young and have a handful of kids. I envisioned a mob of us. Loud. Chaotic. Bursting with messy love. In this case, hope became reality at a whirlwind pace. I met my husband at 19, married him at 20 and had my first child within a year. My next four children came quickly on the heels of the first. And that loud, chaotic love wrapped itself around me like a second skin.

Somewhere along the way I began to learn about being filled and emptied. God would fill my mind and heart with His designs for me, and I would expend myself on them. The association was slow in coming, however. In my immaturity it went down more like this: I would obsess about something and then go after it with wild abandon, heedless of prayer, meditation or counsel. Slowly, I realized He was trying to lead me, and it went far better when I slowed down to listen and talk to Him about it.

Simple as it seems, that was the spiritual process by which my husband and I became foster parents. We had five healthy, thriving children, the youngest of whom was three. I couldn't carry any more children of my own, but the desire remained. Our home was safe and secure, as was our marriage. We were inundated with support of all kinds. And we began to be filled up with God's design. He told us He had more for us to do. More children for us to parent and to love.

It was a series of connected messages on a theme. Our local Christian radio station began Adoption Month, and my drive time was filled with stories of fostering and adoption. Sermons seemed to refer to God's adoption of us as sons and daughters everywhere I

[My husband] said that through adoption we would be able to help a few kids. But through fostering we'd be able to help many.

went. Friends of ours began the process of becoming foster parents. And, finally, we visited a church where we reconnected with a family that looked a lot like ours. They had five kids of their own, but had launched into foster care a few years earlier. It was in the air. A palpable calling.

The practical unfolding was a high-speed ride that was a pleasure to be a part of. I made a first inquiry online to our local Children's Aid Society one morning as I sat sipping coffee. That was all it took to rapidly launch us on to a six-month path to becoming full-fledged foster parents. Everything lined up for us. We had prayed for a foster care worker who would understand our hearts. We got her. We prayed for a new vehicle that would fit a few more little passengers. Within a month a huge white van with a bumper sticker that read "I heart foster parenting" on the back was parked in our driveway. We flew through every hoop. Even the sticky ones that come up when a Christian family butts up against a secular system. The way was smooth.

Why fostering rather than adoption? I credit my husband with offering up the gem of insight that settled us on this path. He said that through adoption we would be able to help a few kids. But through fostering we'd be able to help many. Foster care comes with a special kind of pain because you can never ever

mistakenly think of these kids as your own. They all have mothers and fathers waiting for their return. But, therein is found the other jewel of an opportunity in foster care; it is a ministry of love to the moms and dads who are watching and waiting. You are given a chance to love them right alongside their children.

And so, with all the i's dotted and t's crossed, we waited. And then on June 13, 2012, we got the call. A little girl needed a home. . .

BRAIDING HER LONG BLACK HAIR...

Ten minutes. *That was the amount of time* I was given to decide if I was ready to change my life. My whole family's life.

The call came around noon. "We have an Inuit toddler who needs a home. Will you be ready for her in an hour?" This was it. I called my husband and couldn't reach him at first. I paced up and down the kitchen in prayer. When he finally called, he said only this: "Yes. Let's say yes. This is why we're doing this."

An hour later she arrived. Sleepy and disheveled, she watched us carefully, clinging to her sippy cup. Our two dogs were an asset, as their wet greeting eased her out of her confusion and into giggles. And then she was in my arms, swinging with me on our old wooden swing. Minute by minute swaying her way deep, deep into our hearts.

A year and a half. *That is the amount of time* we had to braid her long black hair and practice our tongues at the strange new words that were home to her. A year and a half to watch her grow steady on her feet and move steadily into her place as baby of the family. A year and a half of that husky laugh, that smile, those dimples. Of memorizing the shape of her and the way she fit into our arms. A year and a half of marveling at her ability to embrace every new day, place, and person as though they were an anticipated delight. A year and a half is the amount of time we had to begin to lose sight of losing her.

Until we did. You see, our little girl had a terrific mother. In this system, we



Foster care comes with a special kind of pain because you can never ever mistakenly think of these kids as your own.

have been told, most grow weary and choose vice over motherhood. But there are others who fight, kick, claw their way back to health and to their children. This little girl had a mother like that. It didn't take long for us to see it, and it made us want to join her fight. The battle of the broken should never be a spectator sport.

It isn't enough to show an empty-armed mother that you love her child, the one you get to hold in your arms at night instead of her. That heartbroken mother will take in the picture of you in your nice house, with your shiny family. And she will only feel more broken if she watches from a distance as her child is loved by people deemed more stable, more secure, more safe. We knew there had to be a gathering-in. We wanted to honor her for every one of the 18 months that shaped this child before she made it to our door. We asked her to teach us

all the things we didn't know about her daughter. And she did.

As we opened up wide our life, our home and our church to her, this mom opened herself up wide in response. She helped us grow more familiar with her language: "Akuluk means 'I love you.'" It was with her that we first tasted whale meat – an experience I hope never to repeat, mind you. One day, she gifted me with a beautiful hair clip made from seal pelt. She told me that her aunt had made it to thank me for taking such good care of her little niece.

As she gave, she also allowed herself to receive. She became a familiar face at our church, even though it must have initially been very uncomfortable for her. We invited her to join us for afternoons at my parents' home where she and my Mom would discuss the finer points of mystery novels. She joined us for many celebrations throughout the time we cared for her daughter, and she did so without reservation. I will never forget the day we gave her a ride home, and as she climbed out of the van she leaned in to kiss *our* daughter. "I love you," she said. And I knew she meant it.

LOVE GIVES...

A lifetime. That is the amount of time we will remain awed by the gift of having lived this. We are soberly aware that this story is a rare gem in the circles of social care. But it is our gem. A little while ago, our girl came to spend the weekend with us. I watched her run around the house, rediscovering the landscape of her toddlerhood, and I could barely breathe. I looked up to find my husband looking back at me. "*This hurts,*" I mouthed silently across the room. He nodded. Yes, it hurts. But it took only a minute for pain to be covered over by awe at the stunningly vast parameters of love. Look what love does! It gives. It takes. It shares. It loses. And it tenaciously roots and grows through it all. RP

Johannah Van Dyk blogs at www.puttingdownroots.blogspot.com.



A CASSEROLE IS NOT ENOUGH

...except when it is!

By: Megan Hill

I have made some casseroles for people. I've assembled dozens of lasagnas. I've made chicken spaghetti and chicken enchiladas and chicken with broccoli, baking them in countless disposable pans. I've simmered pots and pots of chili, too, and purchased enough salad-in-a-bag to feed several colonies of rabbits. Oh, I have made some casseroles.

And then I've driven them to the homes of church people in need, walked my dishes to their kitchen counters, chatted for a few minutes, and left. Sometimes I've cried all the way home.

The casseroles for new moms are great. Everyone is happy, lasagna is just what they need, and I get to hold a newborn for a minute or two. But it's the other homes that afterwards leave me shaking over my steering wheel with grief and inadequacy.

A casserole, baked until bubbly, seems like such a small offering in a home where someone is lying in the bedroom, fighting that last enemy, death. Cheese and noodles in a foil pan – so flimsy in a place where a child is chronically ill, where a family has been deserted by a sin-craving father, or where cancer is growing under a woman's skin.

Waving chicken-and-rice in the face of death seems pointless.

But – as my husband so kindly reminds me – it's not.

For one thing, people need to eat. And, if some of them have no appetite, it's a sure bet there are cousins or neighbors or friends – people a few steps removed from the struggle – who will wander into the kitchen wanting a meal at some point. My nine-by-thirteen may not meet all the needs in the home, but it meets one.

Waving chicken-and-rice in the face of death seems pointless.

Food is also fellowship. The breaking of bread together (both sacramental and ordinary) was one of the marks of the first-century church, and it is still important for the Body today. Even if I have to leave my dish at the door, I have (as I tell my children) “baked the love into it.” My recipe, my time, my hands mixing and seasoning and assembling, are a bit of fellowship with me, delivered. And as I head home, often to eat the second batch with my own family, we share fellowship. Two families, tasting the

same food at the same time: thinking of, praying for, and growing in love together as we eat.

And, perhaps most importantly, the inadequacy of a casserole reminds me of the adequacy of my Lord. Even if I could do more than bring a casserole to seriously suffering people – if I could move in, do all the laundry, mop all the floors, play with children, and organize the medications, even if I could meet every human need in these homes – it wouldn't even begin to solve the problem.

Only Christ, drawing near by His Spirit, can mend broken hearts and broken bodies. Only Christ can bring eternal hope to the downcast and eternal life to the dying.

It is perhaps God's kindness to me that the most I can do is something that fits in a pan. That way, I'm not tempted to think for one minute that my efforts are enough. Instead, the meager mouthfuls I create can only point to Him who is the Bread of Life. A casserole is not enough, but He always is. So, I set my oven – yet again – to 350. And while it warms, I pray.

Megan Hill is a freelance writer, pastor's wife, and mother of three. She lives in Mississippi and writes a blog www.SundayWomen.com, where this article first appeared.

RP

THE GLORY OF HEAVEN

BY JOHN MACARTHUR
224 PAGES / 2013

John MacArthur believes “You simply cannot gain a better understanding of Heaven than we are given in Scripture.”

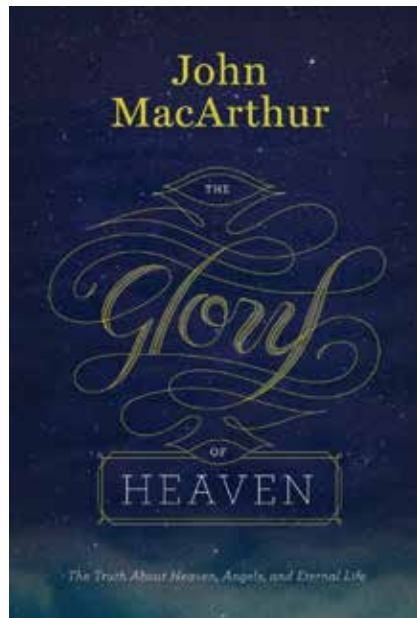
But is that really so? If you check your local Christian bookstore you’ll find a shelf or two filled with titles by people who say they know a lot more about Heaven than the Bible reveals. This insight comes from their personal experiences: they claim to have visited Heaven and returned to tell us all about it.

In *The Glory of Heaven’s* opening chapters and appendices, MacArthur outlines how these authors’ widely varying accounts conflict with one another, and how most of these books include elements that clearly contradict Scripture. He explains that this genre – characterized by Reformed blogger Tim Challies as “heaven tourism” – has a gnostic character:

The distinctive claim of every gnostic belief system is that true enlightenment comes from some source beyond Scripture. Gnostics did not overtly deny Scripture, but they taught that the necessary key that unlocks the true meaning of the biblical texts is *gnosis* (the Greek word for “knowledge”) – supernatural enlightenment that comes from a mystical experience.

MacArthur then largely lets these books rebut themselves by sharing with readers some of the stranger claims made in them, including: some angels are only two feet tall, there are multi-colored horses in heaven, there is a hole in heaven that leads to hell, and everyone will be saved.

He pays the most attention to *Heaven is for Real*, but should really have said a



bit more. It is by far the most popular of these books, in large part because it is the least peculiar – there is little that will leap out at readers as being obviously unbiblical. MacArthur does point out the man-centered nature of its description of heaven – this is an account given by a three-year-old who explains how he was given his own little chair so he could sit in God’s presence, and the angels sang the boy a song at Jesus’ instruction. That contrasts with what we read about in the Bible, where every description of Heaven is God-focused, with the heavenly host continually singing *Him* praise. Instead of getting a chair so they can be comfortable, the common reaction among biblical prophets when they get a glimpse of heaven is extreme discomfort. Both John and Ezekiel fall to the ground (Revelation 1:17 & Ezekiel 1:28), and Isaiah cries out, “Woe is me!” (Isaiah 6:5). Heaven is where God dwells, so to

get a glimpse of it while still in our sinful state is going to be terrifying! MacArthur presents a telling contrast – this doesn’t sound much like the place that three-year-old Colton Burpo describes.

But I wish MacArthur had spent some time exploring the book’s “evidences” – events that seem to have no other explanation but that Colton did go to Heaven. For example, Colton told his mother that he met his sister in Heaven, a baby who had died while still in her mommy’s “tummy.” His parents never told Colton about their miscarriage so how could he have known? His father concludes that the only possible way he could have learned this is if he really met his sister in Heaven.

Now, a cynic could offer another explanation: the family is lying about the whole thing and cashing in on their success.

However, by all accounts the Burpos are a nice, hardworking, sincere and, yes, trustworthy family. If we don’t think they’re lying, do we then have to conclude Colton went to Heaven?

No. What Colton’s father never considers and what escapes most readers (and what I wish John MacArthur had more directly addressed) is that there is a third possible explanation for Colton’s unexpected knowledge. Christians understand that there are unseen spiritual beings around us who know everything that happens to us *and not all of them are heavenly*. Satan almost certainly knew about the miscarriage and he is subtle enough to make use of that knowledge. When we remember that Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light then we have no compelling reason to believe that Colton must have been in Heaven. Why

Many more book recommendations can be found at ReallyGoodReads.com.

would we insist a very sick three-year-old under anesthetic couldn't have been fooled by the Great Deceiver?

I am not insisting this is what must have happened. My point is only that no one can know what happened. Even if we were to conclude there are no biblical reasons to be skeptical about *Heaven is for Real* (a point that John MacArthur would certainly dispute), there are no compelling reasons, biblical or otherwise, to believe it either. And if we can't know one way or the other, of what value is it?

And that brings us back to the thesis of MacArthur's book: if we want to know about Heaven, then there is no better source than Scripture.

In his book's second half MacArthur lays out what Scripture has to say about Heaven. We learn what Heaven is like, what we will be like in Heaven, what it means to have our citizenship there, and what the Bible has to say about angels. It is all pretty fascinating stuff, and practical as well: MacArthur wants us to be heaven-focused so that in any difficulties we face we will be able to endure, knowing that our difficulties are temporary, and our time with God will be eternal.

While I'd say he does a pretty good job of explaining what Scripture has to say, I would recommend Randy Alcorn's *Heaven* as the better book for giving readers an anticipation of Heaven. Alcorn's book will have you wanting to leave today!

The strength of MacArthur's book is in directly responding to and rebutting the most popular "Heaven tourism" books. He should have spent a bit more time on *Heaven is for Real* but what he does have to say about it, and the others, highlights the contrast between these accounts and what the Bible has to say.

HEAVEN

BY RANDY ALCORN
512 PAGES / 2004

Author Randy Alcorn wants us thinking about Heaven. But why?

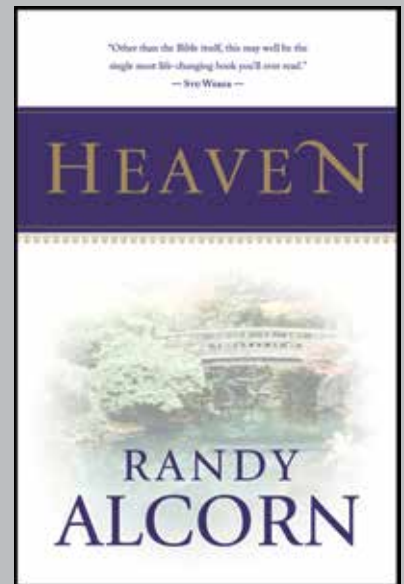
Setting our minds on Heaven is a discipline we have to learn. Pastors and church leaders should train themselves to be Heaven-minded. This means teaching and preaching about Heaven as our future Home. It means presenting a biblical theology that can shape and transform people's lives, liberating them from the hopelessness of life centered on a fallen and failing world.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I daily reflect on my own mortality?
- Do I daily realize there are only two destinations -Heaven or Hell - and that I and every person I know will go to one or the other?
- Do I daily remind myself that this world is not my home and that everything in it will burn, leaving behind only what is eternal?
- Do I daily recognize that my choices and actions have a direct influence on the world to come?
- Do I daily realize that my life is being examined by God, the Audience of One, and that the only appraisal of my life that will ultimately matter is His?

This is a large book, with much to love. It is a thorough study of everything the Bible has to say about Heaven. The format is also a big plus. The table of contents is detailed, allowing a reader to quickly find the specific area they are most interested in. What will our bodies be like? Page 281. What does the Bible say about whether there will be animals on the New Earth? Alcorn covers it on page 373. That's not to say you will agree with all his conclusions. But in each case he gives you a lot to ponder.

What might be perceived as the weakness of the book is how often



Alcorn makes use of the word "perhaps." Alcorn takes quite a number of speculative leaps, wondering, for example, whether we might take on space exploration in the next life. However, while some of his thoughts are quite imaginative, Alcorn is always very open about when he is guessing and when what he is saying has much clearer biblical roots. That clarity makes him a reliable guide.

My only critique is one I share with Rev. Johan Tangelder, who first reviewed this book for *RP* nine years ago. He wrote:

I suggest that Alcorn thinks about Heaven too much from an ego-centric viewpoint – focusing in on what interests us the most. With all the discussions of what we may do in Heaven, we easily forget that Heaven is the place of habitation of the Triune God.

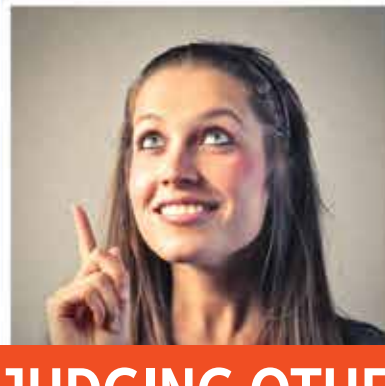
But lest that dampen your enthusiasm for the book, let me also end with Rev. Tangelder's conclusion:

...my critical observations don't take away the appreciation I have for Alcorn's work. He gives new insights, and makes you think about the best that is yet to come for God's people.

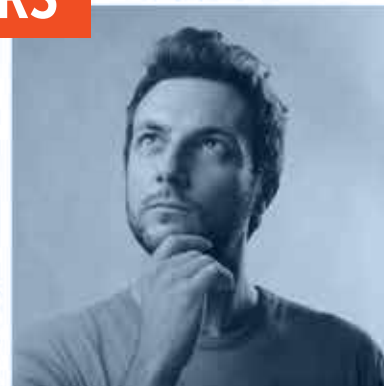
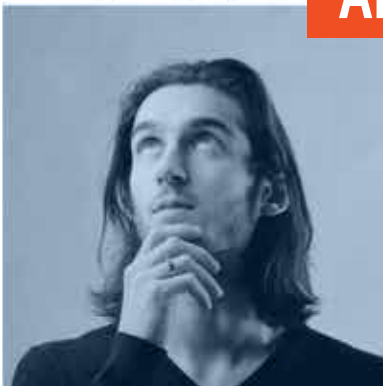


CHARITABLE JUDGMENTS

By: Ken Sande



AN ANTIDOTE TO JUDGING OTHERS



I knew he was too proud to take criticism,” thought Anne, “and now I have proof!”

On the previous Sunday, Anne had dropped a prayer card in the offering plate asking her pastor to stop in and pray with her when she went to the hospital for some minor surgery. When he failed to come by, she called the church secretary and learned that her pastor had already been to the hospital that day to see another church member.

“So he has no excuse!” she thought. “He was in the building and knew I needed his support, but still he ignored me. He’s resented me ever since I told him his sermons lack practical application. Now he’s getting back at me by ignoring my spiritual needs. And he calls himself a shepherd!”

After brooding over his rejection for three days, Anne sat down Saturday evening and wrote a letter confronting her pastor about his pride, defensiveness and hypocrisy. As she sealed the envelope, she could not help thinking about the conviction he would feel when he opened his mail.

The moment she walked into church the next morning, one of the deacons hurried over to her. “Anne, I need to apologize to you. When I took the prayer cards out of the offering plates last week, I accidentally left your card with some pledge cards. I didn’t notice my mistake until last night when I was totaling the pledges. I am so sorry I didn’t get your request to the pastor!” Before Anne could reply to the deacon, her pastor approached her with a warm smile. “Anne, I was thinking about your comment about practical application as I finished my sermon yesterday. I hope you notice the difference in today’s message.”

Anne was speechless. All she could think about was the letter she had just dropped in a mailbox three blocks from church.

JUDGING IS NECESSARY BUT DANGEROUS

As Anne discovered, judging others can put us in embarrassing situations. Does this mean that we should never judge others? Not at all. As you interact with other people you must constantly interpret, evaluate, and form opinions regarding their qualities, words, and actions, so that you may respond to them appropriately (see Prov. 8:12-21; 9:1-6; Matt. 10:16; 1 Cor. 2:11-16).

For example, when you buy something, you need to decide whether the seller is being honest about its quality and value. If someone disregards your advice, you need to interpret her actions so you can approach her more effectively. And when someone is nominated to a church office, the congregation needs to evaluate whether he is qualified to serve.

If someone at church seems unfriendly, we assume she is proud or aloof. Could it be that she feels awkward and unsure of herself...

Although judging is a normal and necessary part of life, Scripture warns us that we have a natural tendency to judge others in a wrong way. For example, Jesus says:

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of

sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” (Matt. 7:1-5)

As this passage teaches, when we evaluate and judge other people, our natural inclination is to ignore our own faults and to make critical judgments of others. Jesus is not forbidding critical thinking in the positive sense, which is evaluating others’ words and actions carefully so we can discriminate between truth and error, right and wrong (see Matt. 7:15-16).

What he is warning us about is our inclination to make critical judgments in the negative sense, which involves looking for others’ faults and, without valid and sufficient reason, forming unfavorable opinions of their qualities, words, actions, or motives. In simple terms, it means looking for the worst in others.

CRITICAL JUDGMENTS COME NATURALLY

When Adam sinned, he corrupted the entire human race. He passed on to each of us an inherent tendency to sin, which includes a natural inclination towards mistaken, negative judgments.¹

This inclination is revealed throughout the Bible. The Old Testament offers many examples:

- After the Israelites conquered the promised land, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh returned to their allotted land and built an altar by the Jordan. When the other tribes heard about the altar, they assumed the worst and rashly assembled their troops to go to war

against their brothers. Fortunately, before a battle began, those who had built the altar were able to explain its legitimate purpose and avoid bloodshed. (Joshua 22:10-34)

- In 1 Samuel, we read how the high priest made a hasty, critical judgment. When Eli saw Hannah praying in the temple, moving her lips but making no sound, he concluded that she was drunk. Only after harshly confronting her did he learn that she was communing with the Lord in a way that put Eli to shame. (1:12-17)
- Even King David made critical judgments. When he fled from his son Absalom, a man named Ziba brought David a critical report regarding Saul's son, Mephibosheth, saying that he had turned against King David. Without waiting to hear Mephibosheth's side of the story, David passed judgment against this innocent man and turned all of his property over to a false witness (2 Sam. 16:1-4; 19:24-30).

The New Testament also portrays this pattern of making critical judgments.

- When Jesus was performing miracles and healing the blind, the Pharisees stubbornly closed their eyes to the good he was doing and interpreted his actions in the worst possible way, saying that he was actually serving the devil (Matt. 12:22-24).
- In Acts 21:26-29 we see that Paul meticulously followed all of the Jewish customs as he prepared to come into the temple. Even so, the Jews assumed the worst, jumping to the conclusion that he had defiled the temple and should be stoned.
- As 1 Corinthians 10-11 reveals, the Apostle Paul repeatedly was condemned falsely, not only by the Jews, but also by people from within the Christian community. Like many church leaders today, he learned the hard lesson that servants of the Lord are often misunderstood, criticized, and judged by the very people they are trying to serve.

But we don't need to look back thousands of years to see people making critical judgments of others. Just think how easily we ourselves believe the worst about others' motives or actions.

- If someone delays answering a letter or fulfilling a commitment, we assume too easily that he is avoiding us or evading his responsibilities. Could it be that he's been in the hospital recovering from a serious accident? Could he be overwhelmed by other responsibilities?
- If our children do not complete their chores on time, we conclude that they are being disobedient. Could it be that they are secretly wrapping

Believing the best about others is not simply a nice thing to do; it is not optional behavior.

- a special present for their mom's birthday? Could they have gotten distracted, and a simple reminder would help?
- If an employer fails to give us a raise, we assume she is unappreciative or greedy. Could she be struggling to keep the business going in the face of increasing competition and operating costs?
- If someone at church seems unfriendly, we assume she is proud or aloof. Could it be that she feels awkward and unsure of herself, and is hoping someone will reach out to her?
- If the elders do not accept a proposal we make, we may conclude that they are narrow-minded and do not understand or appreciate our opinions or needs. Could it be that God is leading them to give priority to a different ministry?
- If church members raise questions about policies or new programs,

church leaders may conclude that the members are stubbornly unwilling to consider new ideas or stretch themselves to grow. They may even be labeled as rebellious troublemakers. Could it be that they have legitimate insights and concerns that deserve a careful hearing?

JUDGE CHARITABLY

Instead of judging others critically, God commands us to judge charitably. The church has historically used the word "charitable" as a synonym for the word "loving."

This has resulted in the expression, "charitable judgments." Making a charitable judgment means that out of love for God, you strive to believe the best about others until you have facts to prove otherwise. In other words, if you can reasonably interpret facts in two possible ways, God calls you to embrace the positive interpretation over the negative, or at least to postpone making any judgment at all until you can acquire conclusive facts.

For example, when Anne's pastor did not visit her in the hospital, she should have realized that there were at least two possible explanations. One explanation was that he was deliberately slighting her. Another was that he had not received her note or had some other valid reason for not visiting her. If she had developed the habit of making charitable judgments, she would have believed the positive explanation until she received facts that showed otherwise.

Believing the best about others is not simply a nice thing to do; it is not optional behavior. It is a way to imitate God and to show our appreciation for how he treats us. God knows everything and judges accurately. He has the final say in criticism (and in commendation). Yet he judges charitably, even mercifully, passing over and putting up with many wrongs. He is kind to ungrateful and evil people (Luke 6:35).

Charitable judgments are also an act of obedience to God. As we saw in Matthew 7:1-5, Jesus himself forbids us to judge others until we have done two

things. First, we must take responsibility for any contribution we may have made to a problem. Second, we must make a diligent effort to “see clearly,” that is, to accurately understand what someone else has done and why he or she did it. Therefore, whenever we gloss over our own faults, assume facts, speculate on motives, or jump to conclusions about others, we have disobeyed our Lord.

Charitable judgments are also required by Jesus’ command in Matthew 7:12, where he sets forth the Golden Rule. “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” How do you want others to judge you? Do you want them to believe good about you instead of evil? To interpret your actions in the best possible way? To really try to understand your side of the story before drawing conclusions or talking to others about you? If so, Jesus commands that you do the same for others.

Our responsibility to judge others charitably is reinforced by Jesus’ teaching on the second great commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39). Just think of how quickly we judge ourselves favorably! When we are questioned or criticized, our natural response is to explain our actions in the best possible light and make excuses for any perceived wrong. If this is how we are inclined to love ourselves, it is also the way we should love others.

Charitable judgments are also implicit in the Apostle Paul’s teaching on love in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Pay special attention to the last sentence – Paul teaches that love “always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” In other words, love always looks for reasonable ways to trust others, to hope that they are doing what

is right, and to interpret their words and actions in a way that protects their reputation and credibility. This is the essence of charitable judgments.

Notice that I said we should look for “reasonable ways” to believe the best about others. We are not called to suspend critical thinking in the positive sense or to make judgments that are contrary to clear facts. If we hear someone say something that is patently false or vicious, we can conclude that it is wrong and legitimately confront the speaker. But if we only hear second-hand information or observe an act that could be interpreted in different ways, God calls us to withhold judgment and look for a reasonable explanation. The call to judge others charitably is not something new or novel. It finds its roots in the Ten Commandments and is consistent with hundreds of years of church doctrine. In Exodus 20:16 God says, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” The church has historically interpreted this commandment

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” How do you want others to judge you?

not only to forbid lying but also to require charitable judgments. Luther’s Small Catechism teaches that this commandment means, “We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.”²


Similarly, the *Westminster Larger Catechism* teaches that this commandment requires

preserving and promoting truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, ...a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for and covering of

*their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocence; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them...*³

Jonathan Edwards, one of America’s greatest theologians, thoroughly discussed God’s call for charitable judgments in his superb book, *Charity and Its Fruits*.⁴

Drawing on the passages discussed above (Matt. 7 and 1 Cor. 13), he shows that the Bible condemns censoriousness, which he defines as “a disposition to think evil of others, or to judge evil in them,” and commends charitable judgments, which he describes as “a disposition to think the best of others that the case will allow.”⁵

The phrase “charitable judgments” may sound new to many of us today, but the concept itself is rooted deeply in the Word of God and the teaching of the church. Therefore, it should be rooted deeply in our hearts and displayed in our lives. 

END NOTES

¹ In fact, we also have a tendency to make mistaken positive assessments! We can be impressed by things we ought to criticize (2 Timothy 4:3; 2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Samuel 16:6f., Proverbs 7, etc.).

² Luther’s Small Catechism, Question 61.

³ *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Question 145.

⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits: Christian Love as Manifested in the Heart and Life* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1962; reprint of 1852 edition).

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 204.

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STRIKING OIL

By: E. Calvin Beisner

WHY DOES A GREAT OIL STRIKE BENEFIT NORTH DAKOTANS BUT HARM NIGERIANS?

There aren't many bright spots in America's economic doldrums, but one is most certainly the State of North Dakota. Its 2013 unemployment rate of just 2.6 per cent was not only

- far below the national average of 7 per cent
- but also the nation's lowest, and
- about as low as most economists think is possible granted the natural, brief unemployment that occurs as people change jobs.

Its population grew by more than 3 per cent (22,000 residents) in the year, the highest percentage rate of any state, as people rushed in to fill the roughly 18,000 new jobs (an increase of about 4 per cent) created in the state over the year.

The result is higher incomes and better standards of living for practically everyone in North Dakota. And not only for them, but also for the rest of America, who benefit from the vast amounts of oil being produced there from the vast and recently developed Bakken field – one of many made useful with the advent of hydraulic fracturing of oil-bearing shale.

Not a boon elsewhere

But such widespread social benefits from oil finds aren't always beneficial to the residents of the locales where they occur. In fact, when those finds occur in nations with corrupt, unaccountable

leaders – such as in many nations of Africa (Nigeria is a prime example), Asia, and the Middle East, and more recently Venezuela – they benefit oil consumers *elsewhere*. Their main *domestic* effect is to prop up the corrupt regimes and fill their leaders' Swiss bank accounts, with very little of the revenue going to the common people.

The difference between accountable governments that rule by consent of the governed (such as in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea), and rule by thugs with little or no concern for the good of the people, is one of the most important political differences in the world.

The difference Christianity makes

Why are governments accountable throughout most of the "West" but remain unaccountable in most of the "rest"? It is largely because of the impact of the Biblical/Christian worldview on the "West" – a worldview that knits together belief in:

- a righteous, personal Creator to whom all men must answer.
- the image of God as definitive of human beings, giving them dignity and rights to life, liberty, and property that governments may not violate.
- the recognition of the sinfulness

of man. This recognition makes plain the need for governmental accountability through division of powers, checks and balances, the preference for local over regional or centralized (let alone global) government, and democratic representation within the limits of an enduring constitutional order.

Where most people, especially leaders, embrace those beliefs, governments, though of course not perfect, tend to be accountable and to respect human rights. Where they deny them, they tend to be unaccountable and to violate human rights. And when such unaccountable, autocratic governments – thugocracies, I call them – get their hands on vast revenues from mineral resources, they become all the more dangerous.

All of this is one reason among many – especially the eternal destiny of billions of individual persons – why making disciples of Jesus Christ in all nations and teaching them to obey everything He has commanded (Matthew 28:19) is the most crucially important task in the world. RP

E. Calvin Beisner, Ph.D., is the Founder of the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation, which promotes environmental stewardship and economic development built on Biblical principles. To find out more, visit their website at www.CornwallAlliance.org.

How can purchasing a casket be "PRO-LIFE"?

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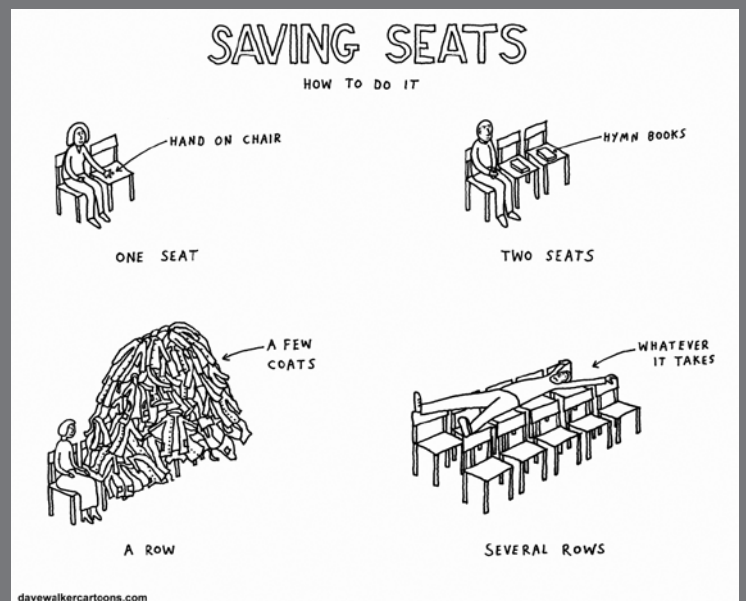
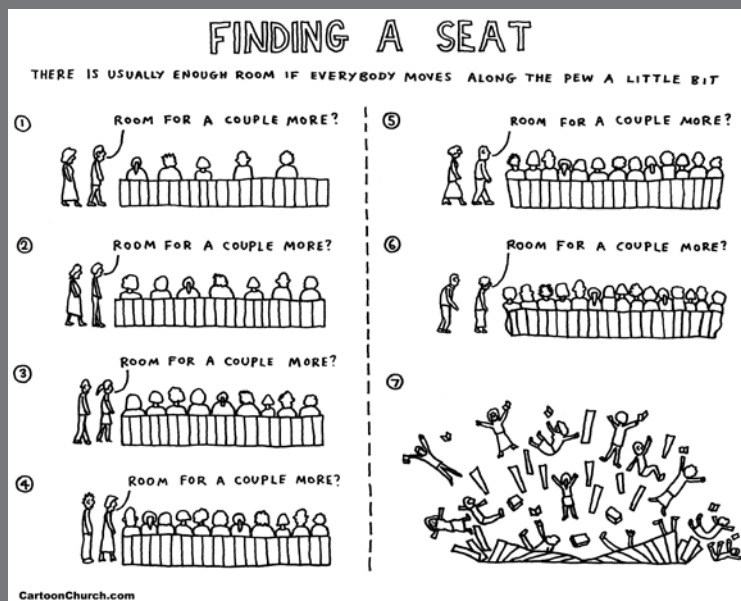
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COMICS



ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #210



WHITE to Mate in 3

Or, If it is BLACK's Move,

BLACK to Mate in 4

Riddle for Punsters #210 "His Name Strikes a Chord"

Why did the piano salesman earn a large salary each week? He knew that making his customers happy was the **key** to success. He always looked **sharp** in his pressed suits, and when customers were hesitant to buy he used some old-fashioned **flattery** to make them feel at ease. He also took **note** of their concerns. He explained details clearly so that customers would not **talk** him out.

Problem to Ponder #210 "Figuring Fitting Simple Solutions"

Find the positive number that fits the following conditions:

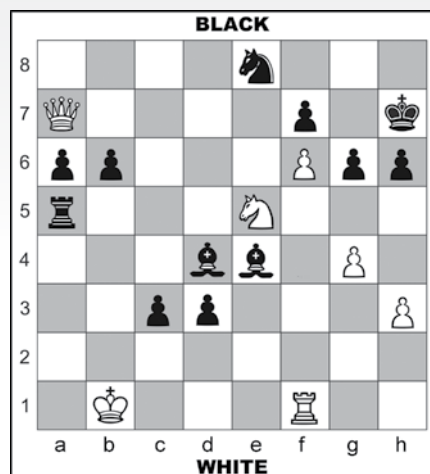
- The cube of a number is larger, by 480, than 4 times that number.
[HINT: If x is the number, then $(x)(x)(x) = 4x + 480$]
- The difference between the cube of a number and the square of that number is 180.

Find the two positive numbers that fit the following conditions:

- The sum of two numbers is 15 and their product is 54.
- One number is 3 larger than another. Add together the square of each of the two numbers and the resulting sum is 65.
- One number is double the other. Subtract the square of the smaller from the square of the larger to get the result 27.

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #209



White to Mate in 4

Descriptive Notation

- QxP ch K-R1
- QxN ch K-R2
- Q-B7 ch K-R1
- Q-KN7 mate

IF

- QxP ch N-N2
- QxN mate

Algebraic Notation

- Qa7xf7 + Kh7-h8
- Qf7xe8 + Kh8-h7
- Qe8-f7 + Kh7-h8
- Qf7-g7 ++

IF

- Qa7xf7 + Ne8-g7
- Qf7xg7 ++

BLACK to Mate in 2

Descriptive Notation

- P-Q7 dis ch
- N-Q3 BxN mate

Algebraic Notation

- d3-d2 +
- Ne5-d3 Be4xd3 ++

Answers to Riddle for Punsters

#209 - "No Kid-ding It's Serious"

What advice did the father goat give to the youngest of his offspring? "Listen, **kid**, don't tease those older male goats. Do you know what the **ram**ifications could be if you try to **butt** heads with those stubborn guys?"

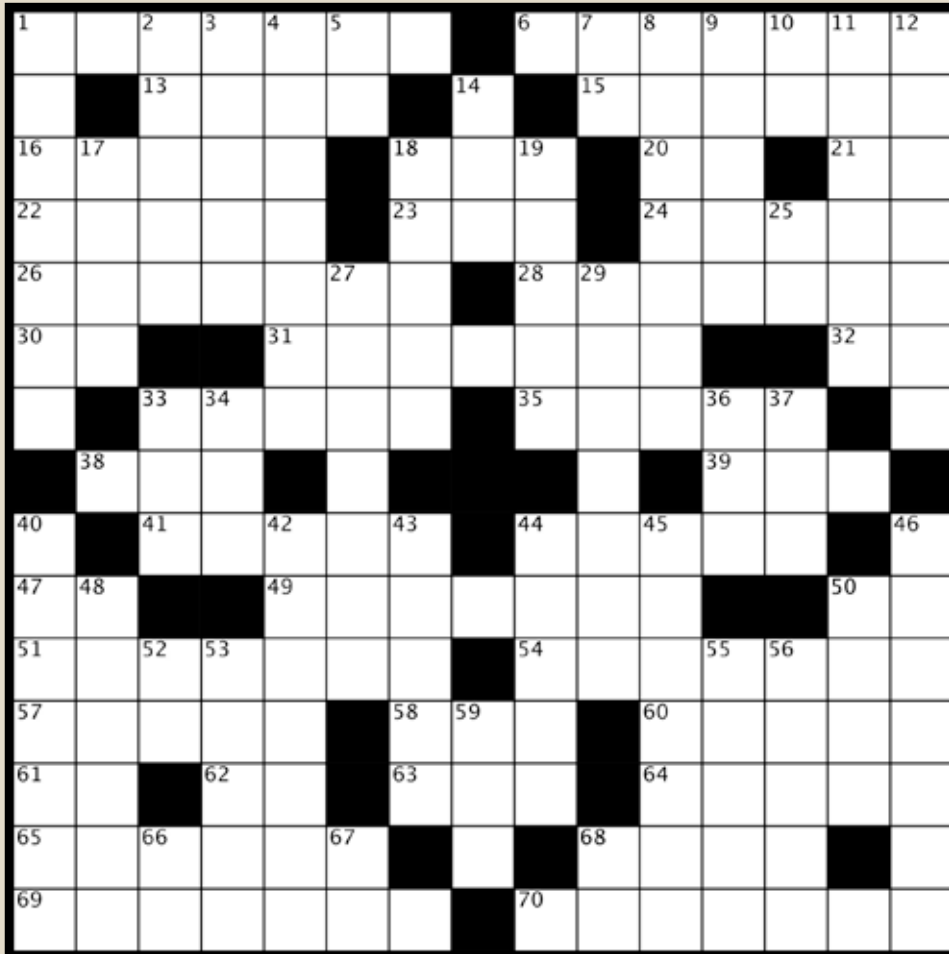
Answers to Problem to Ponder

#207 - "Parts of the Human Body Word Scramble"

slelc	cells
padenixp	appendix
lecsun	muscle
seesnittin	intestines
thare	heart
skinyed	kidneys
narib	brain
slaken	ankles
chostma	stomach
laneoit	toenail

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to Puzzle Page,
43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 or
robleach@gmail.com

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



SERIES 4 #6

PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

1. Unit of food energy
6. Vacillates
13. If your belly button isn't an outee, it's an _____
15. Capsules
16. A central point
18. Not stood
20. Sun god
21. Hospital procedure (abbr.)
22. Spasm
23. Cutting tool
24. Obliterate
26. Perform again
28. Burst
30. Name of God: I ___
31. Canonized

32. Direction (abbr.)
33. A puppy
35. Parental explanation: Because I ___ _
38. Personal history (abbr.)
39. Seller of seashells (backwards)
41. Headdress
44. Vapor
47. Not them
49. Bible book
50. Thanks! (British)
51. City where Joshua renewed the covenant
54. Futile
57. _____-power is caused by the moon
58. Asian musical instrument

60. Drinks
61. Time of day
62. Concerning (abbr.)
63. Negative reply
64. Musical drama
65. After purchase discount
68. Premium (abbr.)
69. Expand
70. Day of expectancy (two words)

DOWN

1. In the middle
2. French book
3. mano-a-mano or ___-___-one
4. Let go
5. Latin abbr. for "that is"
7. Department that helps with computers

8. Ropy, thin
9. Core
10. Secular alternative to A.D. (backwards)
11. Lifts up
12. Cut off
14. Levy
17. Throat clearer
18. Flat breads (backward)
19. Trials
25. Near
27. Unit of heat energy
29. Fireplace floors
33. Humor
34. ___ polloi
36. Not quite an ocean
37. Unit of electrical resistance
40. Condiment
42. Physically trained

- competitor
43. Lot's son
44. Scrutinize
45. Offensive to see
46. A portion of a written work
48. Cursed David & killed by Solomon
50. Variation of czar
52. Man's name
53. Gem weight
55. Cantered
56. swelling
59. United Arab Republic (abbr.)
66. University degree for those not Arts inclined
67. Letter of the alphabet & also a type of dash
68. Plutonium (abbr.)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



SERIES 20 #11

Joyce

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