



REFORMED

Perspective

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FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
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Haiti:
how we can help

Collision:

a film for our churches

Editorial

Jon Dykstra

According to pastor Mark Driscoll, in the US there are now more movie screens in churches than in movie theaters. That's a sobering statistic, and our churches are blessed to be bucking this trend. Happily there's no popcorn on our sanctuary floors or fountain pop being dispensed in our foyers – instead of learning lessons from movie clips, we are still a people of the Word. We should thank God for that.

But this past month, on January 8, a movie screen did make an appearance in one of our churches. . . and we should thank God for that too.

Why

The film that was shown that night is a must-see for everyone in our churches. It's a documentary called *Collision* in which leading atheist Christopher Hitchens is pitted against Reformed pastor Douglas Wilson. The genesis of the film started back in May of 2007 when Hitchens and Wilson were asked by *Christianity Today* to dialogue on the question "Is Christianity good for the world?" Their six exchanges were printed in the magazine and, in 2008, compiled into a book. When the two men headed out to do an east-coast book tour, filmmaker Darren Doane tagged along. He captured their

exchanges and interactions, both on stage in formal debates settings, and as they conversed over a pint of beer in the local pub. The end result is the most entertaining and enthralling debate you will ever see on film.

But its appeal is not the reason this is a must-see film. We should see *Collision* because:

1. *It prepares our children for what they'll encounter at university.* The attacks that Hitchens levels against God and Christianity are mimicked on secular campuses so Wilson's able defense of the Faith will be instructive and will be an encouragement to our young people when they face these same attacks from their professors and fellow students.
2. *It demonstrates the approach we need to take to answering the theistic evolutionists in our churches.* How are we to understand Genesis 1-11, and what role should Science take in guiding our interpretation of these chapters? This is a question being raised right now in the Canadian Reformed churches and in other conservative Reformed denominations too. To properly answer it we need to rediscover a mislaid aspect of our Reformed heritage – *presuppositional apologetics*. Throughout *Collision* Wilson brilliantly demonstrates (though never explains) this distinctly Reformed way of defending the Faith.

If you're wondering just what presuppositional apologetics is, you're not alone. Though this is the Reformed way of doing apologetics, it has been largely forgotten in our denomination. Instead we've turned to the *evidential* approach.

What

Evidential apologetics figure if we just present the evidence – enough of it, and the right sort – people will follow the facts and come to realize that there is indeed a God.

However this approach has a fundamental flaw: facts are always interpreted, they aren't neutral. Present someone with information about the stunning intricacy of the human eye and they'll fall back on their worldview – their presuppositions – to tell them how to understand this information. A Christian will look at the eye and acknowledge it as evidence of a great and wonderful Designer while an atheist will understand it instead as evidence of millions of years of evolution – something this amazing couldn't have sprung up overnight! Confronted



with the same evidence, they come to opposing conclusions because sin taints even our intellect – even our reasoning – so evidence can be twisted to support two radically different worldviews.

Presuppositional apologetics delves much deeper, examining the assumptions – the presuppositions – that underlie every worldview. So when, in *Collision*, Hitchens accuses God of being a tyrant for ordering the death of the Amalekites (Deut 25:19), Wilson asks Hitchens to provide, from his atheistic worldview, a grounds for being upset. If we are just “matter in motion,” as the atheist worldview contends, what reason is there for Hitchens to care what happens to Amalekites? Hitchens makes repeated moral claims, and Wilson repeatedly shows his atheistic worldview gives him no basis for claiming anything is wrong, or anything is right. While Hitchens has debated a throng of other Christians it’s only Wilson, and his presuppositional apologetics, that’s given him pause.

We can learn from Wilson and use this same approach to properly answer the theistic evolutionists in our churches. Like Wilson, we need to cut to the very core of the debate and address their presuppositions – we need to ask (as a group of pastors did in the January 1 issue of *Clarion*) how evolution can fit with Christianity when it requires a mythical Adam and Eve, millions of years of mutations and mistakes, and Death before the Fall?

There is no better way to be introduced to this presuppositional approach than seeing Wilson at work.

What’s next?

We had more than 100 people attend our church’s very first foray into the movie business. In the days that followed one question that kept being asked was, what are we going to follow this with? What film are we going to show next?

It was a nice question to hear – it meant people had really appreciated seeing *Collision* – but I think the organizers were quite content to have this be a one-time event. There is a time for most anything, but when it comes to placing a movie screen in front of a church’s pulpit the right time for that is only going to happen on the rarest occasion!

That said, the 1953 *Martin Luther* would be a great film for Reformation Day.



You can see a 13 minute preview of *Collision* at www.vimeo.com/4126086

How you can show *Collision* at your church

The difference between having a good movie night and having a great movie night comes down to putting in the extra effort. Here are a few things you can do to ensure your church’s foray into film is the best it can be:

1. **A public performance license** – To show any movie in a public setting you need to get a public performance license. You can get the license (and the DVD) at the *Collision* website www.collisionmovie.com under the heading “Group Screenings” or by emailing Josh Karchmer at josh@level4.tv. He was initially going to charge us \$225 US, but that was more than we figured we could recoup. We asked if \$100 was acceptable, and they accepted.
2. **Marketing** – One of the organizers printed a couple *Collision* posters, as well as enough event invitations for every church mailbox. The invitations and poster are both available once you buy a license.
3. **Baking** – We hoped people would stay around and talk about the movie afterwards so we arranged for baking and coffee in the foyer
4. **Babysitting** – To maximize the number of people who could come, one of the organizers asked his daughter and a few of her friends to provide babysitting in the church nursery.
5. **A great sound system** – You’ll need some sort of projector and movie screen but even more important is a great sound system – this is a very verbal movie, so it’s important to be able to understand what’s being said. After doing some testing we discovered our expensive church sound system wasn’t up to snuff, but we were able to borrow some much cheaper speakers from the school that did the job.
6. **An intro and conclusion** – *Collision* is intense – this is a film you can watch two, three, four times and keep learning more each time – so it will help viewers to briefly be told what they’re about to encounter. We started our night with Scripture reading from Romans 1, prayer, and a few words on presuppositional apologetics. After the movie ended we had a cookie and coffee break and then invited people back for a group discussion led by two of the organizers.

In This Issue

Editorial – Collision: a film for our churches	
— Jon Dykstra	2
Readers’ Response	4
Nota Bene	6
Why we should all be liberals — Michael Wagner	8
Why Christian is more than “Nice” — Kevin Bratcher	10
“Who – me?” — Mark Penninga	11
On serving God while serving in the Marines	
— Sarah Chase	12

Man and Beast — Jay Adams	13
Christians do retirement differently — John Voorhorst	14
Haiti: An eyewitness report — Randy Lodder	16
Tips for traveling with the family — Sharon L. Bratcher	19
The Fable of St. Patrick’s Purgatory — Christine Farenhorst	23
In a Nutshell — Jon Dykstra	27
The pre-flood world was beautiful — Margaret Helder	28
Soup & Buns — Sharon L. Bratcher	30
Puzzle Page — Bob Leach	31
Crossword Puzzle Series 17 No. 2	32

Readers' Response



Dear Editor,

In her article "The Telescope: 400-years-old" (October 2009) Margaret Helder quotes Owen Gingerich from an essay he wrote in the January 1 issue of *Nature*. She then states:

It is clear that the objective of most astronomers is philosophical, to bolster conclusions which entirely exclude God from the scheme of things. When Dr. Gingerich talks about "our understanding of our place in the Universe" (as he does in the same piece), he means that man must acknowledge that everything is meaningless with no special anything.

Knowing a little about Dr. Gingerich, I found this interpretation incredible. I emailed him to see if this is what he meant. He responded:

I am astonished by Margaret Helder's irresponsible interpretation of my essay in *Nature*. I have often said that I am psychologically incapable of believing in a meaningless universe. As I state in my book, *God's Universe*, "I believe, with the overwhelming majority of Christians, in a universe of meaning and purpose, a universe designed to be astonishingly congenial to intelligent life."

I assume Dr. Helder did not intentionally misrepresent fellow Christian and scientist Dr. Gingerich. But we have to be careful how we assess the beliefs and intentions of other scientists, or we

are in danger of losing credibility. Dr. Gingerich has more than once suggested the apparent fine-tuning of the Universe as evidence pointing to the Creator. Determining Dr. Gingerich's views on this matter could have been achieved simply by referring to his book *God's Universe*, doing some online research or sending a personal email. Dr. Gingerich, and the readers of *Reformed Perspective* deserve at least this much.

Ben Vanderugten
Surrey, BC

Editor's Response:

We should have used the word "implies" rather than "means" but I don't imagine this clarification will be appreciated by Dr. Gingerich.

*As he outlines in his book *God's Universe* Dr. Gingerich is a theistic evolutionist who is a fierce defender of methodological naturalism, the notion that acknowledging God has no place in Science. So what we have here is a very confused and very confusing man who acknowledges God as Creator of the Universe, and also argues that He is of no account when it comes to doing Science. He believes God is great and insignificant.*

*In his *Nature* article, it is his belief in God's insignificance that comes to the fore. Here he delves into the "existential question" of "Mankind's place in the Universe" and directs his readers to look to Science for the answer, even though it hasn't provided an explanation or*

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shown itself capable of discovering one. He never gives his readers any hint that the answer to this question is already known and can be found in God's Word. Dr. Gingerich asks, "what significance do rational, observing mortals have in the wilderness of a near-infinite space-time continuum?" but never directs his readers to God, who is the only source of our significance. So while he might profess to be a Christian, here he was writing like an atheist. The implications are clear. If he says that's not what he meant, we will take his word for it, but his astonishment, and his accusation of irresponsibility are unwarranted.

Dear Editor,

Thank you for bringing forward the topic of contraception. It is a relevant topic in an age where children are seen as a burden instead of a blessing.

Let us all make one thing clear and definitive: The Pill and other hormonal contraceptives are no longer an option for Christians. Mr. Dykstra did not make this point strongly enough. All hormonal contraceptives now have three mechanisms:

1. They prevent ovulation.
2. They thicken the cervical mucus.
3. They thin the lining of the uterus to prevent a fertilized egg from implanting.

If the first and second mechanisms fail and an egg becomes fertilized, the third mechanism ensures that the fertilized egg is aborted. If you check out any website on the Pill, Depo-Provera or the Nuva-Ring, this is what it states. There are no Pills that do not have this third mechanism in place. Otherwise its rate of effectiveness would not be 99 per cent. Is it possible to know how often an abortion takes place? No, it isn't. But the simple fact that it can, means that the Pill or any other hormonal contraceptive is no longer an option for Christians.

I agree that there may be varying views on the use of birth control and family planning, but the use of hormonal contraceptives is not a gray area, but should be very black and white.

Joanneke Kottelenberg
Hillsburgh, Ontario

Dear Editor,

Jon Dykstra's editorial on contraception in the December 2009 issue of *Reformed Perspective* requires a couple corrections.

Dykstra writes: "...some Christians argue that these hormonal methods also have a third mechanism that irritates the lining of the uterine wall."

This is not "some Christians arguing." The American Food and Drug Administration (on their website) say that:

Combination oral contraceptives act by suppression of gonadotropins. Although the primary mechanism of this action is inhibition of ovulation, other alterations include changes in... the endometrium (which reduce the likelihood of implantation) (my emphasis).

Pharmaceutical manufacturers like Merck, Janssen-Ortho and others will give you similar information.

Hormonal contraception goes against the God created and healthy function of the body resulting in a wide variety of acknowledged possible side effects. Some people compare it with

other medication and weigh the side effects to the benefits, but most medication is used to bring the bodily function afflicted by the consequences of sin as much as possible back in the way God had intended it in the first place.

Dykstra writes: "That would leave condoms as the only. . . . They have this decided upside: they're effective. . . ."

I'm not sure how they can be considered effective. The failure rate of condoms is 3 per cent *when used correctly and consistently*. This phrase refers to perfect or "laboratory" conditions. Most government and sexual education sites state that with "typical use" the failure rate is anywhere between 14-17 per cent. Pharmaceutical industries, who manufacture contraceptives including condoms, are great promoters of Planned Parenthood. PP is an excellent promoter of that industry's products. Since there is no such thing as foolproof contraception, it in turn will bring back a part of the clientele to PP for an abortion. This is called business.

The condom is not effective in the enhancement of the coming together of husband and wife either. A husband and wife relationship is to reflect the relationship between Christ and His church. Christ gave Himself fully for the salvation of His people, the church. The church is receiving salvation to the full extent. When using a condom the husband is not fully giving, the wife is not fully receiving and the act becomes self-centered.

Contraception means "against conceiving." Fertility and babies (= life) are not welcome. Society always has a certain amount of influence on us. I wonder how far that negative mindset towards fertility already has penetrated into Reformed circles when hearing comments like: "Hasn't she had enough trouble?" or "Don't they know what birth control is?" on hearing of a new pregnancy or, when a Reformed magazine addresses the topic of contraception and neglects to mention Natural Family Planning. NFP is the only way of trying to avoid a pregnancy where the mindset remains open to or positive towards receiving God-given life and where communication between husband and wife, self-control and prayer is needed, resulting in a strengthening of their relationship.

Although I appreciate the addressing of the topic of contraception, one article or speech will not even come close to taking in this topic without a full biblical understanding of the relationship between God and His created people, His church gathering work through generations, the relationship between husband and wife including their roles, the purpose of marriage, intimacy and children in marriage, sin and the consequences thereof, and many other aspects. Rev. C. Bouwman has done a great job by addressing these issues in his book *A Vow To Love – A Biblical Explanation of the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage*. It would be very beneficial for couples preparing for marriage to read this book before answering in the affirmative to their wedding vows.

Marry van Dijk
Carman, MB

Nota Bene

News worth noting



Sunday observance

by Anna Nienhuis

Despite enormous pressures to do otherwise, two top British sports figures have decided they are not going to work on Sundays.

Scottish rugby star Euan Murray spoke out recently about his unwillingness to play on Sundays. He also mentioned his avoidance of going out for coffee or dinner on Sundays, as he does not believe in encouraging or expecting

others to work on the Sabbath. "It's basically all or nothing, following Jesus," he says. While other sports stars have also spoken out about honoring the Sabbath, he is the first in his sport to gain a clause in his contract allowing him to miss Sunday games.

Similarly, sports reporter Dan Walker has proven doubters wrong by landing a high profile top job with the BBC despite refusing to work Sundays.

SOURCE: DailyRecord.co.uk; manchestereveningnews.co.uk

Canada's divorce rate down?

by Anna Nienhuis

After peaking in 1987, Canada's official divorce rate has been steadily declining, according to a study done by the Vanier Institute of Family. However, overall break-ups are not decreasing, as co-habiting couples are becoming more common and their break-ups are not included in divorce statistics.

While co-habiting is often endorsed as a way to avoid divorce as you "get to know each better before marriage," the survey results from Quebec show otherwise. La Belle Province, which has the highest rate of couples co-habiting before

marriage, also has the highest divorce rate in Canada at 48.4 per cent.

It is believed that factors making divorce or break-up more common include a loss of religiosity and the loss of the related belief that marriage is sacred, as well as an increasing emphasis on the self and personal happiness over responsibility and commitment. We have ended up in a society with a low tolerance for difficulties in marriage.

It is crucial then that we as Christians portray marriage as a positive, life-long commitment, putting things such as trust, children, and service above the self.

SOURCE: www.canadianchristianity.com

Christian photographers fined for obeying conscience

by Jon Dykstra



Unsettling news for the many in our Reformed communities on the West Coast where photography is proving a popular home-based business: Last month a New Mexico judge upheld a \$6,638 fine against Elane Photography for refusing to photograph a lesbian "commitment ceremony." In 2006 Vanessa Willock asked Elane Photography to take pictures for her ceremony, but the Christian owners of the company didn't want to participate in the celebration of this lesbian couple's sinful lifestyle, so they refused. In 2008, after a one-day trial, the New Mexico Human Rights Commission fined them \$6,638. The fine has been upheld, but the owners' lawyers, from the Alliance Defense Fund, plan to appeal again. Senior counsel Jordan Laorence asked, "Should the government force a videographer who is an animal rights activist to create a video promoting hunting and taxidermy? This is the same type of serious incongruity."

SOURCE: Christian Courier January 11, 2010 "Christian photographers to pay fine"

Yes, there is an abortion-breast cancer link

by Anna Nienhuis

In 2003 cancer researcher Louise Brinton claimed that no link could be found between abortion and breast cancer. Now, as one of the researchers involved in a recent study done by the U.S. National Cancer Institute she's reversed her position and now lists abortion under "known and suspected risk factors" for breast cancer. The study found that having an abortion raises a woman's risk of breast cancer by up to 40 percent.

Other recent studies conducted in both Turkey and China have found similar results, yet both the media and cancer institutes themselves are making no effort to draw attention to this connection to warn women of the risks.

Saskatoon MP Maurice Vellacott and Karen Malec, president of the Coalition on Abortion/Breast Cancer, are trying to get this message heard by women. It seems that this is not a connection that cancer organizations, let alone abortion clinics, want women to be aware of, despite the obvious benefit to women's health in knowing.

Source: www.abortionbreastcancer.com

Successful spanking

by Anna Nienhuis

A study conducted in Michigan has concluded that spanking seems to have a time and a place in which it is beneficial. 2,600 teens were questioned, and those who reported being spanked between the ages of 2-6 were found to be happier and more successful in school, more likely to volunteer, and more likely to plan on going to college. This was in comparison to those who continued to be spanked at a later age as well as those who were never spanked at all.

In Sweden, where corporal punishment has been banned for 30 years, serious child abuse cases have skyrocketed as parents resort to pushing and grabbing their children instead of spanking.

Economy plummets, and crime does too

by Jon Dykstra

Despite a poor economy and rising unemployment crime in the United States is dropping. According to the Jan. 16 *WORLD* magazine, in the first half of 2009 the national crime rates "dropped to the lowest in four decades." The murder rate dropped ten per cent, property crimes are down 2.5 per cent and even car thefts are down 19 per cent.

This seems rather counter-intuitive, particularly when politicians tell us that poverty does indeed cause crime. President Obama was the latest to make this link, noting that Abdul Mutallab, who tried to blow up Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas Day, had "traveled to Yemen, a country grappling with crushing poverty and deadly insurgencies." Abdul Muttallab was not poor, however, coming from a wealthy Nigerian family.

So then why is this link between poverty and crime so often made? Because

Decades into the ban, as those who grew up in these spanking-free households became teenagers, teen violence has exploded, fuelling arguments that ending corporal punishment

may not be the best solution. Occasional controlled spanking, used at an age when consistency and speed are crucial in connecting bad behavior to consequences, does prove to have benefits in raising happy, conscientious children.

Source: www.lifesitenews.com Jan. 5, 2010



if crime isn't caused by something external, like poverty, then it must be an internal problem. And acknowledging it as an internal problem, as a sin problem, isn't something our secular world is willing to do.

Manitobans the most generous Canadians

by James Dykstra



For the tenth year in a row, Manitobans have grabbed the title of "most generous Canadians" according to the Fraser Institute. Of those who filed tax returns, 27.3 per cent of Manitobans claimed a tax credit for a charitable donation compared with an average of 24.0 per cent in the country of Canada as a whole. Manitobans were also the most generous Canadians in terms of how much money they gave away, donating an average of 1.02 per cent of their income to various recognized charities.

By contrast, 26.6 percent of American tax filers donated about 1.6 per cent of their income. This compares with an average of 0.73 per cent that Canadians taxpayers donated making Americans far more generous than their Canadian counterparts.

One is left to wonder what acts of mercy could be accomplished if the whole tax paying population of Canada and the United States donated anywhere close to the Old Testament standard of ten per cent of their income.

SOURCE: www.fraserinstitute.org/newsandevents/news/7081.aspx

Why we should all be liberals

Have conservative Christians been duped?

by Michael Wagner

When it comes to their political views, what are the differences between a Christian voter, and a liberal?

According to Professor Randall Balmer, there shouldn't really be much of a difference at all. In his view, people who take the Bible seriously will be political liberals – Bible-believing Christians who adopt conservative political views have been duped by rightwing political strategists and big business interests. Could this be you?

His credentials

Balmer is a self-proclaimed evangelical. He grew up in an evangelical household and his father was an evangelical minister. Balmer has been on the masthead of *Christianity Today*, the flagship evangelical magazine, for many years. So, as he points out, his evangelical credentials are impeccable. And he is a dedicated political liberal and supporter of the Democratic Party in the USA.

Recently he has written a book, *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America*, to awaken evangelicals to the fact that they have been deceived by the Religious Right. In his view, evangelicals need to reevaluate their political stance in light of the Bible, and in doing so they will come to embrace the political agenda of modern political liberalism.

Tricked on abortion

This seems to be an unusual claim and it demands careful scrutiny. Let's start with the basics. The two biggest political issues for conservative Christians over the last three decades or so have been abortion and homosexual rights. Unborn children are being killed every day and homosexuals have been demanding that the government affirm their lifestyle through policy changes, and in some cases, punish those who oppose the homosexual agenda. According to Balmer, conservative Christians have these issues all wrong.

First of all, he says, these two issues get way too much attention from Christians. Balmer states that, "Jesus himself said nothing about abortion or homosexuality." He did not condemn either of them, so why are conservative Christians so hung up about them? It's because evangelicals have been deceived by crafty rightwing political strategists into focusing their energies on two issues that Jesus Himself didn't even care about. Doh! Now, doesn't that make you feel foolish, having been deceived like that?



Besides, Balmer says, the Bible is not clear on the issue of abortion. Some interpreters say the Bible condemns abortion, but other interpreters say the Bible is okay with abortion. This disagreement between interpreters means that the Bible isn't clear on that point. "The problem is, the Bible is rather silent on the matter of abortion." So why waste your time opposing something when you can't really know whether it's right or wrong? Here again, if you want to outlaw abortion, you have been deceived by those crafty rightwingers. Shame on them!

Gullible on homosexuality

Jesus didn't personally condemn homosexuality and homosexuals, did He? So why are you as a conservative Christian so opposed to homosexuality? They got you again – those same rightwingers trick you every time. Maybe you should be ashamed of your gullibility.

As Christians, how should we think about these two issues? According to Balmer, we need to recognize that during Jesus' ministry on earth He sympathized with the marginalized people of society. He ministered among the prostitutes, the poor, the disabled, generally the social outcasts. As His followers we, too, need to support the marginalized of our own society, such as Muslims, immigrants, women and homosexuals.

Jesus wants us to support the rights of women in today's society. And as we are constantly reminded by the mainstream

dia and the political establishment, the most important right for women is the “right to choose.” So as Biblical Christians we need to support women’s right to choose (to kill their unborn children) just like Jesus would if He were here right now. Women have rights, including the right to abortion. For Balmer, this is the Christian position.

Balmer concedes that abortion isn’t a good thing. Indeed, he takes the position that he personally is pro-life, he just doesn’t think the government should control women’s reproductive choices. “I have no interest in making abortion illegal,” he states. Besides, he argues, “making abortion illegal will not stop abortion itself” because some women will obtain illegal abortions, the kind commonly referred to as “back alley abortions.” If a law against abortion will not actually end all abortions, there’s really no point in outlawing abortion, he reasons.

People will still rob banks

Really? We have laws against theft, and yet some people still steal. By his reasoning, then, we don’t need laws against theft because those laws don’t actually prevent theft. Come to think of it, despite laws against murder, people still get murdered. According to Balmer’s reasoning on the abortion issue, the laws against murder are ineffectual and therefore they don’t do any good.

Balmer believes strongly that conservative Christians should support environmentalism. Since they believe God created the world and all the creatures within it, Christians should defend God’s creation by embracing environmentalism. In contrast to the abortion issue, though, Balmer wants the government to legislate protection of the environment. Laws are effectual in protecting the environment and endangered species from money-grubbing businessmen and developers. But laws are not effectual in protecting unborn children, in his view.

What’s really happening here is that Balmer is revealing his true agenda: he is passionate about the environment and therefore wants legislation to protect it, but he doesn’t actually care much about unborn children, and that’s why he strongly opposes legislation to protect them. You can discover what he truly considers to be important by looking at what he thinks the government should legislate: Laws against abortion? No way. Laws against developing certain wilderness areas? Yes, absolutely! Then wilderness must be more important than unborn babies. This is Balmer’s “Christian” perspective.

Balmer doesn’t say much about the homosexual rights issue except to criticize conservatives for opposing them. But he does say that Jesus supports marginalized people, and Balmer includes homosexuals among that group. In this way, he suggests that Jesus would support “equal rights” for homosexuals.

When Jesus confronts the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), he tells her to “go, and sin no more.” He was saying that adultery was sin, and people shouldn’t do it. Clearly, Jesus’ message to homosexuals would also be “go, and sin no more.” But liberals like Balmer seem to think that Jesus would advocate a “right” to homosexual behavior, that is, a “right” to this particular sin. Their message to the woman caught in adultery would be, “go, and if you are going to continue in your adulterous lifestyle (which you have a right to) be sure to practice safe sex and have your partners use condoms.”

Public schools the Christian way

Another issue that Balmer thinks evangelicals have all wrong is education. Many conservative Christians send their children to Christian schools or home educate them. But Balmer believes this is not the Christian way to proceed. The public schools of the United States (and Canada, for that matter) have as a central purpose mixing people of different backgrounds and beliefs so that they learn to get along well together. Children in Christian education don’t get that. Therefore Christians should send their children to public schools. “Christians who take seriously the teachings of Jesus,” he says, should oppose religious schools “because they perpetuate divisions, rather than reconciliation, within society.”

Furthermore, in the public schools those Christian children should be taught evolution as the only scientific explanation for the origin of the universe and life. Balmer argues strenuously that Creationism and Intelligent Design are not scientific. They are just theological positions. Therefore they must be excluded from public schools. Remember, Balmer says his view is the Biblical view. So if you truly want to be a good Christian, send your children to public school and insist that they be taught evolution there.

In sum, then, Balmer is arguing that Bible-believing Christians should support the so-called “pro-choice” position on abortion, as well as homosexual rights. They should also send their children to public schools (rather than Christian schools or home schools) where they are to be exclusively taught evolution as the origin of man and the universe. If you study the Bible and believe it, those are the conclusions you will come to, according to Balmer.

God’s Word is clear

Actually, I think Balmer is looking in the wrong direction when it comes to Christians being tricked into anti-Biblical political positions. Rather than pointing at nasty rightwingers, he needs to look in the mirror. The Bible is clear about the sinfulness of abortion and homosexuality. To argue that Jesus Himself wasn’t concerned with these issues is a ruse. The whole Bible is God’s Word, not just the specific comments made by Jesus during His earthly ministry. To set Jesus’ statements off from the rest of the Bible as uniquely authoritative is not orthodox, to say the least. It certainly raises questions about Balmer’s real view of the authority of the Bible.

Now, just because something is conservative or rightwing doesn’t mean it’s Biblical – that much is certainly true. But Bible-based positions on modern social issues are usually considered to be rightwing in contemporary discourse. When a Christian is persuaded by people like Balmer to switch from a rightwing to a leftwing position on issues like abortion and homosexuality, it means he or she has compromised the truth. Balmer might very well be a nice man who is sincerely trying to do what he thinks is best. But if you compare his views to the Bible, it is clear that he is wrong. If you believe the Bible, you cannot embrace the liberal political positions he is trying to sell. The Bible warns Christians to use discernment. A discerning Christian will not be led astray by Balmer’s erroneous perspective.



Why Christian is more than “Nice”

Simply being good is not good enough

by Kevin Bratcher

I’m sure you’ve heard this objection too: “Well I’m a good person.” Or, “I know so and so who’s not a Christian but he’s a good guy.”

The implied objection is that if someone can be a “good guy” without being Christian. . . well, isn’t that close enough? Doesn’t that validate him and make him – who knows – okay for achieving the afterlife, even if he doesn’t do “silly little rituals” like going to church and praying?

Augustine would answer that with a very definitive “No.” He writes in *City of God* that the soul must be *subjugated to God* in order for any virtuous restraint on the body to matter at all. For, after all, if a man restrains himself from what is considered sin, but does so in order to glorify himself (whether openly or subconsciously), then the virtue has instead become a vice. In fact, Augustine goes so far as to say that without submitting yourself to God, how can you ever even truly do a good act? All that you do, in that it is bent towards your own glory, will be twisted from a good purpose to a self-promoting one.

This is not unlike the discussion of faith and deeds in the Bible – faith without works is dead, but works without love, without faith in God, is like “a clanging gong or a clashing cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1). And that is the key here: whereas the Greek philosopher Aristotle’s concept of virtue is that each man does good because he naturally seeks his own good and it therefore advances his life’s pursuit, for Augustine *we are only virtuous if we act in love and submission to God*.

With such an understanding then truly only Christians might be counted virtuous people.

We don’t earn it

Now this sounds harsh – after all, there sure are a lot of people who help old ladies across the street or volunteer at food banks or give blood but aren’t Christian.

I am glad that many people see the need to give and to be good in this world. I am ashamed as well that many so-called Christians do not feel such a need, instead being content to happily rest upon the imagined laurels of a non-judging God. However, I think a fair self-assessment of most people’s charity would reveal that good acts are done so we can receive something in return. I’m not talking material goods, here – I’m talk-

ing honor; glory; recognition; goodwill, or maybe just a feeling of self-importance. Most of us can recognize that that is what motivates us a lot of the time.

True Christianity on the other hand, as Augustine understands it (and as it *is*) recognizes that God has *already saved us*. We don’t need to DO anything to earn salvation. What we do in this life out of loving faithfulness to Him is in thanks for what He has given us.

Is it necessary? Absolutely. A true faith and belief in God must produce good works. But this idea that simply doing good things for people is a merit badge you can gather to redeem at the pearly gates is ridiculous.

Seeking glory

The real tragedy of the non-Christian “nice” people is that they understand to a limited extent how to show love. Much like Christ talks about how a father, when asked for a fish by his son, will not give him a snake (Luke 11:11), so we understand to a limited extent what is *right* and *just* and *loving*. Why? Because of two things:

1. God is always at work in our lives
2. We live in a culture that, despite its best efforts, has a fairly strong grounding in Christian ethics. What is normative even for non-Christians, even for vehement atheists, is often only so because of Christian influences which shaped this country and its people.

But tragically, *the world doesn’t care*. By doing good and then rejecting God an unbeliever is saying, “I do good so that people may glorify ME, not my Creator.”

This is the fundamental difference between a Christian and “nice” people. I will not cease to be thankful that God is at work in our world and often does good things through nonbelievers – but I am also not going to stop praying that those who understand good and have loving hearts might *turn their hearts* to the true God who gave them life. I can think of few greater tragedies I have witnessed in my life than the friend who is so “good” and yet so absorbed as to ignore God, or pay Him only lip-service but no heart-service. I only hope that God will turn their hearts to Him so that they may truly live virtuously in view of the eternal salvation He gives to His people.



“Who - me?”

ARPA Canada’s Action Challenge 2010

by Mark Penninga

Most of us are, by nature, a little timid. Who are we to speak up and give our views on particular social or political issues? Why would a government official care about what I think about early-learning programs, creating jobs, fixing roads, or providing healthcare? There are people who get paid to look after those things. We should leave it to them, we conclude.

But is that really true? Monte Solberg, a former cabinet minister with the Conservative government, disagrees.

“[B]eing a citizen is what we are paid to do. Citizens get their pay in the form of freedom and democracy, and *our obligation is to keep caring about those things even when the government makes us want to quit caring*” (emphasis added).

Although it may not feel like it sometimes, living in a democracy means that you and I are the ones who have an obligation to, indirectly, govern this country. When ordinary people stop caring, it shouldn’t surprise us when the government is taken over by people who want to advance their own agenda.

Aiming higher

So what can we do? There is no need to become involved in politics or public life in a formal or serious manner if that doesn’t work for you. You can get active in little ways, right where God has put you in life. Regardless of whether you are a student, a full-time mom, or a senior, there is so much you can contribute by being a light in our nation.

To help Canada’s Reformed church community do just that, ARPA Canada has set a goal of 2010 action items to be completed, and recorded on our website this year. We also are providing the tools, news, and research to help you and your family carry out these action items.

In 2009 we were thrilled when ARPA Canada readers met our goal of 500 action items already by June. Given the growth in interest in our work from the Reformed church community, we are now aiming much higher.

Why are we pushing for such a lofty goal? We believe that now, more than ever before, Christians need to be challenged to transform our concerns to action. We are being bombarded with so much sensationalized information through the media and consequently become desensitized. The reality is that we have a difficult time getting active on these important matters unless there is a goal that we are called to achieve.

To complete this big goal, we ask all of our readers to *make a personal and family commitment of at least one action item every month*. Please record your action items on the action meter on the left side of our web page at www.ARPCanada.ca. Or, if you don’t go on the web, just call us at 1-866-691-2772 and we

will be happy to record it for you. Also, we would love to hear your stories of how things went. What did you or your children learn by doing the action item? What result did it have?

What can I do?

To assist you with this, here are some action items to consider (for each of these suggestions, more information and assistance is available either at www.ARPCanada.ca or by giving us a phone call):

- Send your MP a card, with comments from all your family members, thanking them for their time and devotion in serving as your elected representative.
- Write to your MP, Justice Minister Rob Nicholson, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper and urge them to make significant changes to the federal human rights code in light of the assault on freedom by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (the same thing applies to the provincial commissions and tribunals).
- Send in a story or submission to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights as they make decisions about what content to put in this new national museum. For help with doing so, read ARPA Canada’s submission on our site or ask us to send you a copy.
- Print off and collect signatures for a petition against Canada’s funding of Planned Parenthood international.
- Phone your MP and the office of the Justice Minister and encourage them to not only vote against Bill C-384 (euthanasia and assisted suicide) but also to work to ensure that Canada does not go down this road in the future either.
- Use one or more of ARPA Canada’s newspaper ads in your community to stir up awareness and opposition to Bill C-384. Supplement this with letters to the editor.
- Distribute the ARPA E-Luminary (printed version) in your local church, or help out the person who is currently doing this.
- Volunteer your talents to help out organizations like ARPA Canada (graphic design, web, video, writing, research, etc). Email info@arpacanada.ca.
- Go to ChildSafeNation.ca and learn what you can do to combat Internet sex-abuse images and the devastation of child pornography.
- Write Senators from your province an email explaining that you oppose the private member’s bill (S-209) that would repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code which allows parents and teachers to use corporal punishment within reasonable limits.

On serving God while serving in the Marines

7 questions with Greg Faber

by Sarah Chase

Greg Faber graduated with all his school buddies from Credo Christian High School. But while his friends went on to college or business, Greg decided to join the US Marine Corps. After four years, he returned from active duty. Last month, I had the opportunity of interviewing him about his experiences:

Sarah Chase: *What made you decide to go into the military?*

Greg Faber: Just about every young boy dreams about being in the military, and where some dreams change, mine didn't. I also felt that I was blessed growing up in a free country, many having died to make America the country it is. . . . and our country was at war. After much prayer I answered the call, and haven't looked back. I would also have to say I joined for the excitement and experience.

SC: *How did military life affect you?*

GF: You are pushed to grow up and play leadership roles, looking after younger marines and taking on the responsibility of their lives and wellbeing. Over the past few years, the Lord strengthened me, and I grew closer to Him and understood my dependence on Him for everything – it taught me to act in faith, looking to God in everything.

SC: *What sorts of challenges face a Christian in the military?*

GF: As a Christian you're away from church and the communion of saints and only 'til you're gone do you understand the importance of two sermons on Sunday and the encouragement of the church body. Having grown up in a small corner of the world, I've come to find out there's a big wide world out there, and it's not full of rainbows and butterflies. It can be ugly, full of temptations and distractions.

SC: *Would you recommend others to join?*

GF: I would never recommend or tell somebody not to join. I believe the decision should be brought before God in prayer and not made by somebody else. If this is something you want to do, you better be sure you want to do it because four years is a long time, and it is full of a lot of challenges.

SC: *Did joining the military prompt you to do a little extra thinking on issues of life and death?*

GF: This issue was thought about before I even joined the military, knowing what it meant when and if I were to sign my name on the dotted line – that I was putting my

life on the line for my country. My thinking came out of my faith and out of Lord's Day 1. I guess you could say, when it's my time, it's my time, and if that's the Lord's will for my life, then so be it. I had more concern for the young men that I was put in charge of, and who didn't know the Lord and didn't have a confidence in life or death. I also learned that life was fragile and fleeting.

SC: *You mentioned once that you held Bible studies with some of the guys. Tell us about that!*

GF: It started with one other friend. This Bible study between the two of us was blessed by the Lord and grew. We opened with prayer, read and discussed a chapter, and from there, it went to a lot of the bigger questions we have about life and God. Some of the marines have had childhood knowledge, some had kept up with it, and some had no idea what the Bible says. Yet with the Lord's blessing we were able to have a sincere Bible study where many were able to grow in knowledge and in faith. We had a group prayer at the end, supporting each other in whatever problems we faced. Having grown up in the church, this was the first time I've ever seen the Lord grab hold of somebody, and allow them to grow in faith. I was used to more of a gradual growth! Although I have much to learn this has solidified my faith in Christ, and I am nothing apart from Him.

SC: *What are some of the ways we can help fellow Christians in the military?*

GF: By sending sincere letters (which don't always require a response) to show support for the important work that they are doing and to encourage them as prophet, priest and king in a worldly environment. This shortens the distance between the community of saints and one of their members. Letters and care packages also allow for an opportunity to reach out to the military as a whole and thank them for the work that they do. But most importantly, never underestimate the power of prayer no matter the distance, for the Lord will hold fast to what is weak. I would never have been able to do it without Him.



Man and Beast

Leaving nature be isn't what we are called to do

by Jay Adams

There were good reasons why Israel's conquest of the Holy Land took so long. Providentially speaking, the unbelief of the people and their many failures largely contributed to the fact. But behind these historical factors, God reveals that He was using them to bring about a benevolent purpose. And, in our day of political correctness, environmental extremism and animal "rights" assertions it is well for Christians to be aware of God's words. Here is what He said,

"I will not drive them [the peoples living in Canaan] out before you in a single year. That the land may not become desolate, and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you" (Exodus 23:29; see also Deuteronomy 7:22).

Recently, there was an account of the eleven-year-old child of a family camping in Utah that was dragged out of their tent and eaten by a bear. The bear, we are told, actually tore open the side of the tent in order to get to him. In a TV interview in which this incident was discussed, a naturalist attempted to make a case that this was the fault of human beings who hold the ultimate responsibility for what occurred. He contended – with some plausibility – that by bringing food into wilderness areas campers have conditioned bears to search for food where people are. That may, I say, be true. But the intimation in his remarks was that people should leave the bears to their own territory and not invade their space. In other words – get out and stay out.

Now, this attitude on the part of some environmentalists, and particularly those among the animal "rights" crowd, is not new. In many ways – from the issues over the snail darter to the introduction of wolves into the countryside – they have made their preference clear. Given the choice, they prefer animals to human being! Many of those who would go to great lengths to "save the whales" also may be found among the most vociferous advocates of "women's rights." The aborting of babies is preferred to the killing of animals.

But from the outset, God has shown us otherwise. In the Garden of Eden, it was He Who made garments of animal skin for Adam (Genesis 3:21). Had there been no sin, animal death might not have been necessary, but afterwards, in a fallen world, there would be the necessity of choosing between the animal creation and the creation of man. Man, who was created in the

image of God at a separate creation that singled out his special nature among all of the creatures that God made (Genesis 1:26), was not only to occupy and fill the entire earth, but to subdue it (Genesis 1:28), thus bringing about an order in which he was to be God's delegated ruler of the earth. Man, clearly, was to rule over the animals (Genesis 1:28).

Indeed, along with plague, famine and war, wild beasts attacking human beings is clearly specified by God as one of His "four severe judgments" upon man (Ezekiel 14:21). Unwittingly, modern activists welcome such judgment upon themselves – as well as the rest of us. Whenever man acts against God's will, he brings judgment upon himself. In the modern reversal of biblically-stated values and order that pervades our godless, rebellious society (as evidenced in this man versus animal issue) we see again the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God at odds.

In the verses concerning the Israelite conquest of Canaan, God makes it clear that when it comes to a choice between man and beast as occupants of a particular territory, the wild animal must give way to man. The occupation was to take place gradually so that territory already cleared of wild animals would not be allowed to revert to once more become their domain. Plainly, such animals must give way to the migration and occupation of human beings. To allow them to multiply beyond reasonably safe limits, or to reintroduce them into territory that human beings already inhabit, is decidedly wrong. God, Himself, has made the choice – and it falls on the side of His special creation.

So, when your people inquire about such matters, as a pastor or elder you ought to be able to turn to such passages as those mentioned to help them acquire a perspective other than that which they are fed ad nauseum by pundits pontificating their godless values on television.

This is a blog entry from Jay Adams' site, www.nouthetic.org on January 19, 2010. For more bits and bites of wisdom be sure to check out his blog.





CHRISTIANS DO RETIREMENT DIFFERENTLY

Preparing for retirement financially and spiritually

by John Voorhorst

What does the Bible say about retirement?

Actually, the Bible does not speak about retirement much at all. There are a few passages that touch on the idea including Numbers 8:23-26 where we read:

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘This applies to the Levites: Men twenty-five years old or more shall come to take part in the work at the Tent of Meeting, but at the age of fifty, they must retire from their regular service and work no longer. They may assist their brothers in performing their duties at the Tent of Meeting, but they themselves must not do the work. This, then, is how you are to assign the responsibilities of the Levites.’”

There are also a few references in the Old Testament to the phrase “elders at the gate” which seems to indicate that there were men who no longer participated in the daily physical labor but whose main task seemed to be to give council and to make or assist in the making of judgments in various civil or theological cases. However, we also can read that Moses started his main work at the age of 80 and carried on until he died at 120.

Right attitude toward retirement

So, what are we to do with the topic of retirement? In today’s world we have become accustomed to thinking of life as having three distinct stages or phases: first, our youth and education years, then our working years and finally our retirement years. This idea of phases in our life seems to lend itself to the “me first” philosophy of this age. For example, as parents we sometimes are tempted to encourage our children to get a good education so that they have the opportunity to choose a career that pays well and permits them to accumulate much wealth so that they have the opportunity to retire early.

If we avoid that trap and treat our life as a whole, we may find it easier to encourage our children to serve the LORD in all that they do, including their years of education. They need to work hard at school because the Bible requires that they use the gifts that God has given them. Those gifts are to be used to honor God, not to achieve lofty goals. And once we are working full time, we can continue to focus on glorifying God. We must keep in mind that all that we have is the LORD’S. Then we need not worry and stew about retirement. And of course, also once we have reached the golden years, we must continue to glorify God with our entire life.

Preparing for retirement

It is prudent to put some money aside for the day that we are no longer able to do all the physical work. And then, when we are 60 or 70, we also can be counted to be among those who “sit at the city gate” or perhaps to be among the older women who are able to council the younger as we can read in the book of Titus.

So, a related question becomes, where do we invest that money? Should we invest in stocks and bonds or should we only put our money in the bank where we know there is a guaranteed rate of return. Or we can ask, may we invest in stocks? Is the stock market not just another form of gambling?

Stock market vs. gambling

To answer that it may be good to take a quick look at the difference between gambling and investing. Gambling seems to indicate that we are looking to get something for nothing. Yes, we might pay a dollar or two to buy a ticket, but we are anticipating that without doing any further work, we may be the beneficiary of a large return.

Investing, however, is a different thing altogether. We might invest our money in a small piece of land, for example, with the understanding that with some work the land will produce something. So we can rent the land to a farmer, or we could hire someone, or perhaps we might personally choose to work that piece of land. But no matter how we choose to work that land, we can all agree that if someone plants some seed, waters the field and keeps the weeds at bay, at harvest time there will a crop or we could say there will be a return on our investment.

.....

***While some people
compare investing in the stock
market to gambling,
there is a world of a difference.***

.....

Of course, there is a risk. There may be a shortage of rain, or there may be an early frost. But even though there is risk, we all understand that to purchase a small parcel of land so that we can grow a small crop, even just a crop of vegetables, is an enterprise that we are permitted to participate in. Now, instead of purchasing that small parcel of land individually we could get together with a few members of our family, pool our resources and purchase a parcel of land that is somewhat bigger and perhaps in that way also take advantage of some economies of scale. And really that is what the stock market is as well. No, it is not family members. However, a large number of people together own small parts, called shares, of companies like Air Canada, the Royal Bank or even shares of Ford. In each example there are people working at these companies either producing something or providing a service. There is potential for growth. You see, that is the difference. If we invest in a lottery ticket, no work is done. Only many people buy many tickets and after a period of time, once the tickets are sold, one person wins all the money. Gambling involves a loss for most participants. There is no production. Investing involves production or a service. Risk is part of both.

But there is still one more problem Most of us only have small sums of money to invest and with one hundred dollars or even with one thousand dollars, it is not prudent or cost effective to buy a few shares of say, the Royal Bank. So, the banking industry has developed mutual funds and the insurance industry has developed segregated funds. These are really no more than pools of money, similar to our example earlier of all the

members of the family pooling their money to purchase a parcel of land. In a mutual fund, the public is invited to pool their money and then the manager or team of managers purchases shares of many companies on behalf of or in trust for the investors. This permits the manager to spread the risk. Spreading the risk benefits each of the members of the public who have invested in the fund as well. As I already said, to buy shares of one company, even if it would be the Royal Bank is quite risky. If the Royal Bank were to make some unwise loans of a substantial size to one industry and if that industry, say the oil industry would go through a long period of low prices, then the Royal Bank could find itself in considerable financial difficulty. So we would ideally own shares in not just the Royal Bank but also of the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Bank of Montreal. But we would also like to own shares of retail companies and perhaps even of utility companies, some manufacturing companies and even service industries like airlines. But to buy shares of a basket of 20 or 30 different companies is impossible to do with one thousand dollars. So, we use a segregated fund or a mutual fund. We could choose a Canadian Equity Fund to invest our thousand dollars in and in that way, at say 20 dollars per unit, we would own 50 units of that fund. The manager of the fund adds our one thousand dollars to the millions he already has from others and we become owners of a very small part of all the companies that the fund owns.

Active in retirement

It may be good to stop here for now and just go back to the initial questions. I started by asking if retirement was a Biblical concept. From there we moved on to asking if Christians could invest in the stock market. I believe I have been able to show that Christians are not limited to bank savings accounts for this but they can also avail themselves of many other investment opportunities. The only consideration should be, is God's name glorified by the investments we make?

As for retiring? I would suggest that we may and even should put some money aside for the days when we are older. And we also need to keep in mind that we must remain active members in the local congregation. We mustn't think of retirement like the financial industry markets it; a life of leisure after 55 cannot be defended biblically. The Bible speaks often about how we need to teach our children's children and I would suggest that this teaching of the LORD's ways cannot be done when grandparents are in Florida six months of the year while their grandchildren are attending the local Christian school. It would be better if grandparents would spend their time providing advice at that school. And they should most definitely be involved in church life. The entire church community will benefit from the wise council of the "elders at the gate."



“Though the earth give way” (Psalm 46:1-2)

Haiti:

An eyewitness report from Randy Lodder of Coram Deo International Aid

Introduced by Sharon L. Bratcher

Haiti is considered to be the poorest nation in the western world, with 80% unemployment, and most people living on about \$1 a day, many in “shanty-towns.” It has very poor infrastructure, infrequent electricity and often unsafe transportation. There is no free education, medical care for most people is scarce, and most people do not know the Lord.

This was all true before the magnitude 7.0 earthquake hit this small country on January 12, 2010. Government numbers put the death total at more than 200,000.

Back in 2003 a group of Reformed Christians formed the Coram Deo International Aid charitable organization after some of the Board of Directors visited Haiti and the Lord laid it on their hearts to do something to help the people of this nation. Their mission is threefold: they maintain a free elementary school – Adoration Christian School – with 120 students (and feed the children two meals a day), and sponsor and mentor another 75 high school students, they provide a free healthcare clinic twice a week, and most of all they seek to tell people of the “good news” of Jesus Christ, that they might come to know Him as Savior.

Randy Lodder, who grew up in Fergus, Ontario, is the Director of Adoration Christian School in Haiti and he and his family were there when the earthquake happened. Their school building, providentially, was empty when it collapsed. At this writing (1-23-10), Randy is still safely working and praying with the Haitian people. The following is his January 16, 2010 letter about his experiences in the midst of the devastation.



Adoration school before (inset)
and after the quake

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Go to the Coram Deo International Aid website www.cdiacanada.org to find out how you can help with their efforts in Haiti. You can donate online there, or you can mail a cheque to:
27 Legend Court, PO Box 10033
Ancaster, ON CANADA L9K 1P2.

Make the cheque out to “CDIA” and mark it “CDIA Earthquake Relief Fund” in the memo line.

Please pray for the Ladders and others involved, and visit the Coram Deo International Aid website at www.cdiacanada.com to gain up to date information and to donate much needed funds.

Well, it's 10 pm on Saturday night (Jan. 16) as I begin to write this little update. I am sitting inside, which is a little unnerving, but all the doors are open in case I need to make a quick exit. We have had more aftershocks today that are not that big, but when the ground is moving under your feet for about 30 seconds, my brain keeps telling me that's not normal. It sends my heart through the roof every time. Anyway, I thought I would send a brief update so that you could know our prayer requests, and know a little of our situation.

This is hard to write because I have so many emotions that are coming up, and my nerves are fried right now.

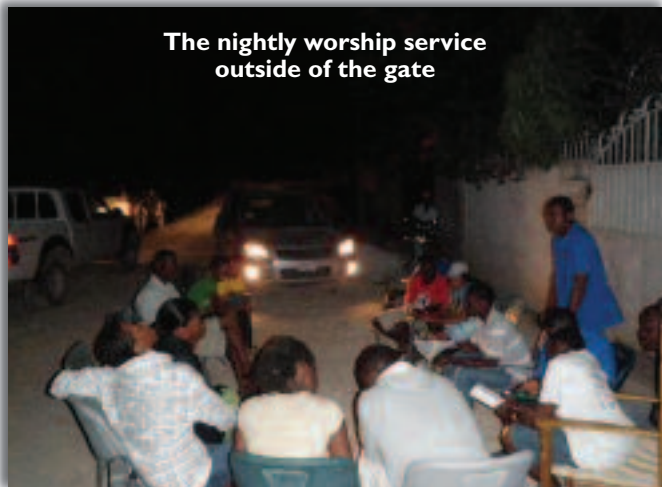
- **I feel so incredibly thankful** – my family was spared, Kim [Gringhuis the school administrator] was safe, our visitors John and Jim were with us and were spared, everyone was out of the school at the time, the earthquake didn't happen at night when there are a ton of locks to unlock just to get outside, that a lot of our friends are safe, that God put it in our heart and made a way for the [rickety] car-port to be taken down during the holidays, that my wife and child are safe in Canada right now, that my house, although it has a few cracks, it seems relatively safe, and my walls, which are very weak to the point of falling over, have not fallen over.
- **I have so much praise and thanks to give to God.**
- **I feel so fearful at times** – fearful of violence getting out of hand, not being able to find students, or co-workers, or friends, fearful of the next aftershock, fearful that people won't get enough food or water to survive, fearful that people are still trapped, fearful that my house might come down. . . .
- **I feel so much pain** – its hard to describe the pain that people are going through right now, pain of losing loved ones, pain of seeing all the destruction, pain of seeing so much death, and so many people grieving, the pain of not knowing – not knowing where someone is, or how they are,
- **I feel so much sorrow** – my heart and head are just heavy,
- **I feel joy** – joy in being able to share the gospel with people who need to know Jesus, joy in singing God's praises with neighbors I never knew before this, joy in living with all the guys who live with me now and seeing them work to help others and work to make sure that we are safe, joy in seeing [my wife] Karen and [daughter] Maia, and Kim, John and Jim making it safely home, joy in being reunited with friends that I didn't know what happened to them, joy in knowing that my sins are forgiven and that if I perish – that I am with my Lord and Savior.
- **I feel grace.** . . this is hard to explain, but we could have all perished – it is by God's grace alone that we are alive. So many emotions, amidst such a great disaster.

We have spent the last few days finding students, connecting with other organizations to see how we can work together, delivering medical supplies to clinics around the area, distributing clothes and supplies to fields of people, finding supplies so we can survive.

We lost two good friends and co-workers, and that is very painful. I went and visited their families and grieved with them. I also was visiting families of students I knew had lost their lives. One of our grade 6 students was killed with his father, leaving 9 siblings behind. We found him as we watched his body being pulled from a building. I am just trying to encourage, comfort, and be with our students and their families and our co-workers. It is a difficult task but a beautiful one that the Lord has given to us. We don't have enough food and water to give them, or a place to stay, but we can minister to them and care for them the best we can. We suffer together and we encourage each other to find our strength in the LORD alone.

We have been going through our storage room where teams and people have donated supplies and these are coming in handy right now. The guys have been distributing clothing to the parks which are packed with people, and I have been able to supply a bunch of clinics with a lot of medical supplies. We don't have a lot, but what we do have is such a blessing. Next we will hand out all the toys we still have to the children who have lost everything, and then the rest of our Adoration school uniforms to those who need clothes.

We had a scare yesterday. The guys came home at night and said that nobody could locate Wisly [a young man who lived on the school grounds], and then they said there was a smell coming from the school. I was almost sure that nobody was in the school, but my heart sank and was filled with so much grief. This morning we went to the school and started digging and searching. This was very difficult because the building is half fallen, held up by the neighbor's wall and house. It could go anytime. So we checked in the places we thought he could be,



**The nightly worship service
outside of the gate**

Aftershocks made this hospital unsafe so the patients were taken outside and the operations were performed in tents.

and we couldn't see anything or find anything. Then I asked who had asked for him that didn't know where he was, and it was only one person, but not a family member, so we went to go find his family in Cite Soleil [a slum/shanty town of 200,000+ people that is part of metropolitan area of the capital city of Port-au-Prince]. The only problem was that it is very dangerous in Cite Soleil right now, and so I went to the UN base and asked for a UN escort to find Wisly, and they wouldn't do it, they only travel in packs and did not want to go into Cite Soleil. Then we drove to the police station in Cite Soleil and they said it was too dangerous for them to go out. So then we went by ourselves – Cadeau [another of the young men who live on the school grounds] walked by himself the roughest part. And he found Wisly's sister who said that Wisly was safe and was staying with his mom. Praise the LORD!

There are quite a few students that I have not found yet, because everyone is everywhere. Most families are living in parks, or on the road or have left to the countryside. As I was dropping off medical supplies at a clinic I found one of our kindergarten students at the clinic. He had a broken foot, as the wall had come down on it. His mom was a cousin of [our co-worker] Guerdson, and I had to inform her that Guerdson had passed into glory. So much pain and sorrow.

There are truckloads of dead bodies being removed from the city. The roads are lined with the bodies, and the smell is pretty bad. But people are banding together and working to help out. People are mourning together and living together in parks and in the streets. Because all have lost so much, and because all are affected there seems to be a unity here that was not here before. At the same time, other people are getting desperate and the violence has started – looting, stealing, gunshots; it is definitely all around us. There is a definite fear in the air that things will get tough, and then violent. We are so thankful to hear that countries are sending Aid and sending troops to try to control the city and bring relief. We have heard so many planes landing, and I have seen many trucks leaving the airport with supplies. I have been to the Canadian embassy a lot this past week and have seen the soldiers come in, the medical supplies, and the different teams and organizations that have come to help. This gives us much hope – because much help is needed.

Right now we are still sleeping outside. We will go back inside once all the after-shocks are over, and I don't know when that will be. We are holding services every night in the street right now. We just take our chairs, go sit outside, walk around and invite all our neighbors to come join us, and then we start singing. Then we share scripture, and pray. It is a beautiful time. A time for us to lament together, to the LORD, a time to pray for others, a time to heal, and a time to bring Adoration. That is our main focus right now – ministering to people; being willing and ready to pray with people, share the gospel, and to comfort people, and give them hugs. We pray that the LORD would give us strength to do this. I woke up on Thursday morning and was praying and asking God how I could best




help people. He really put it upon my heart that I was to minister to their spiritual needs – the need to repent, to turn to Him, and in the midst of pain and devastation not to turn away from God, but to find our hope and comfort in Him alone. I talked to the guys that morning that that was to be our focus – working hard, but the main part was ministering – listening, grieving, helping, sharing with them, but also prayer and Bible reading.

That afternoon, I approached a man on the street who was just sitting there, who looked like he couldn't go on. He was a deportee, in jail for years in the States, and in a lot of trouble in Haiti. He was deeply shaken by the events that have happened and God opened up a door for me to share the gospel with him, and pray for him. He wants Jesus in his life, but has no idea how that works. Anyway, it was a blessed time. Please pray for Willice Fidel Mendez and his family that they may turn to Christ.

We have met many neighbors by just singing in the streets and asking them if they want to join us. Please pray that God would put it on people's hearts to come out and join us. And pray for my team – these guys are young, and are shaken, and are scared. They need a lot of prayer. The guys at the house are Cadeau, Samuel, Max, Yder, and John. Roland and his son are moving in too, as his family is moving to the countryside to be safe. And we have other guys that help us during the day – Allyn, Evenz, Deigo, and Silly.

Thank-you for praying for us. We are greatly encouraged by you and we need your prayers. I want to leave you with Psalm 46: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, and though the mountains tremble at its swelling. . . . Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress!

In His Service and In His Grip of grace,
Randy Lodder
Adoration Christian Center,
Coram Deo International Aid 

Tips for traveling with the family

by Sharon L. Bratcher

My favorite travel anecdote came from *Reader's Digest* years ago. An older woman felt overwhelmed while packing to go to Florida with her husband. She said, "George, I can either *pack* to go, or I can *go* but I can't do both." Many times, my husband has heard me shout out, "George? . . ." and has known what I meant.

Family travel can be a big challenge. But God has given us creative minds that spark with wonderful innovations, after which we wonder, "now *why* didn't I think of that sooner?" Then, just as I am doing now, we share them with others who might benefit.

"Are we there yet?"

The worst family trip I ever took involved three non-walking, whining one-year olds, a three-year old who accidentally barfed and pee-d on the other driver, a broken heater and three flat tires. After 600 miles, I really dreaded the trip back home.

But from experience comes wisdom and innovation, so as the years rolled by, we discovered ways to make the long traveling hours easier to handle.

There are *so* many ways to help your family prepare for a long trip, that the instances of unpleasantness can be greatly diminished, and the firm hand only needed on occasion. Even traveling with one-year olds can be somewhat improved, though they will *never* understand why they have to sit still all the time.

Here are some ideas that will help during the travel time.

1. Talk about what will be encountered and the behavior that is expected

A day or two before you go, talk about what the ride will be like: "*We're going to be in the car allllllll day. Breakfast, lunchtime, nap time, and dinner time, and we're even going to watch the sun go down!*" Talk about how they might feel and what they will encounter, and joke about what they might be tempted to do. Emphasize the importance of getting along when in close quarters.

Talk about safety hazards like screaming children, or not heeding the call to "Silence!" when driving directions are being discussed or you're facing the

border guard. Talk about watching for traffic and not getting lost at rest stops.

Knowledge enables children to know what to expect and it gives you information to refer back to when necessary. Pray together beforehand and on the road.

2. Study your directions/maps ahead of time

Nothing brings up anger or harsh words between mom and dad like arguing over directions. Plan ahead, and if there are mistakes, be forgiving and "go with the flow."

Remember that children hate listening to their parents argue; if it's necessary to "clear the air," perhaps it can be done away from the children.



3. Make everything as special and comfortable as possible

Choose books, toys, food and games that are unique so that the novelty will enthruse them. Our family visited a used bookstore a few weeks before each trip. Each child chose about six 50 cent books and then, to their chagrin, I packed them all away until it was time to leave! A three year old can manage a book/tape combination with headphones, or enjoy a Magna Doodle. Books on tape/CD from the library are a wonderful way for everyone, even the driver, to pass the time.

Each child can have a zippered bookbag with a coloring book and colored pencils (or markers if you trust your kids!) Add two small toys with no little pieces (one for each hand,) and a favorite stuffed friend. Some like electronic games, or DVD players: choose games and films that are new to them, that keep their attention.

Find some word or singing games to teach them. Be sure to play the silly ones that they suggest and enjoy. We once sang

“Hey, ho, nobody home” for 20 minutes straight just to see if we could do it.

Bring small pillows for everyone, and make sure whoever is always cold has a hoodie or blanket to put over her. Carry a roll of paper towel and some plastic bags for “whatever.”

4. Sitting in the back can be helpful

I turned around so often while seated in the front seat that I began to wonder whether I should wear my shoulder harness across my front or my back side.

Having Mom or Dad sit in a middle or back seat can actually alleviate a lot of problems, especially with the little ones who need the physical assurance of extra kisses or holding someone’s hand. Playing games also becomes easier and more fun for the kids because Mom or Dad is involved.

It’s also easier to pass around the food to everyone and collect up all of the trash. You might rotate seats at every stop, because whoever gets a turn in the front seat will feel very special.

“Mom, where’s my toothbrush?”

Packing tips for before and during the trip

There is a lot of strategy, preparation, and inspection involved in packing for a family trip. Devising a detailed plan can make it simpler, and even though it’s more work at the outset, it benefits everyone, including Mom.

The well-circulated belief that “moms are supposed to know where everything is at every given moment” was humorously illustrated for me two years ago when we attended our son’s out of state wedding. Another son, who was a groomsman, was lodging for two nights beforehand at a separate location from us and yet he still called me on the morning of the wedding to ask if I knew the whereabouts of his dress pants!

On a trip, a few organizational plans can keep Mom from going crazy from hearing constant requests for favorite t-shirts, swim suits or Sunday shoes. It’s also a good way for the rest of the family to learn responsibility. The following ideas will make the “suitcase living” a little easier.

1. Pack a “motel bag”

If there is a stopover on the way to your destination, pack a “motel bag” to significantly reduce the amount that gets carried in and out. Include a change of clothes and pajamas for each person, and toiletries.

2. Plan your vehicle-packing strategy

Take your empty suitcases out to the vehicle a day or two beforehand and determine the best way to fit them all inside. Some

families find that plastic bins or pillow cases or trash bags fit better than suitcases. Remember to make the “motel bag” the easiest to reach. A rooftop luggage pod or trailer might ease the crowding of the “stuff” also.

3. Give your husband his own suitcase

He will be out of his usual element too, and having his own space will make it easier for him to find his razor without having to dig through the baby’s onesies or your extra shoes. The goal is for *no one* to have to ask Mom questions. (You won’t ever reach it, but you’ll get closer.)

4. Number your suitcases

Use masking tape or adhesive labels to number them, for easier recognition and accountability. Even a four year old will be able to remember who uses which one. When Mom needs something out of a suitcase, she can easily direct someone to #5 instead of “the small blue one. . . no, no, the *small* blue one.”

5. Give each person over age three a list of what to pack and let them pack it. . . then inspect

Determine the general list: five shirts, two hoodies, 2 pairs of jeans, 6 pairs of underwear, etc. Our 12 year old daughter Julie gladly made a pictorial list for her 3-year-old sister; Amy was thrilled to be able to pack her own suitcase and confidently mark off each item as she found it. Make photocopies of the lists to save for next time.

5. Have rules and plans

Yes, it's hard to sit in a car all day, but that doesn't excuse bad behavior. We still have to love one another, and put others first. The loss of privilege that comes from arguing or disobeying might include not being allowed to speak for a set amount of time.

Take charge of a simple, flexible daily plan. "Let's sing for awhile." "Now we're going to listen to *Prince Caspian* for about an hour." "We're stopping at a rest stop in five minutes – everyone put away your toys and books *now* and get your shoes on." "After lunch it's naptime or quiet reading." Don't forget to read God's Word after each meal and pray. You have *plenty* of time for discussion or related Bible games: why not make use of it?

After two summers of driving about eight teenagers from Philadelphia to Ontario for Campfire! Summer Bible Camp, I learned that everyone got rowdy late at night after the last rest stop because there were less than two hours left on the trip.



Of course, you must inspect, because there's always one who still completely forgets his underwear or his toothbrush. But their work saves you a lot of steps, teaches them how to do it, and puts all their pre-trip excitement to good use!

Actually it's a good time to buy new toothbrushes for everyone; that way you can pack them up and not have to wait until morning to finish packing all the suitcases – they can use their old one before they leave in the morning.

6. Write it down, don't try to remember it all!

While packing, if you are missing an item or two or three from someone's case, write it down and tape it to the suitcase so that you don't have to try to keep all those details inside your brain.

And when you go to bed, put a pad of paper and a pen on the floor or nightstand next to you so that when you think of something that wasn't packed you can write it down instead of jumping up to go and retrieve it "before you forget."

The third summer I made a rule: no talking at all after the last rest stop: you may sleep, read with the ceiling light, or listen to a walkman." I also outlawed 32 oz. Cokes for the entire trip after *some* people began needing more frequent relief.

6. Eat in the vehicle as you drive

When you stop, you need to stretch and run and hug and throw a frisbee, and look at the flowers and license plates around you, *not* sit and eat. Eating is fun, and doing it while riding passes the time very nicely. I learned the hard way that it's also not a good idea to eat at the rest stop and then let the kids run and roll down hills right afterwards. Enter the need for paper towels. No wonder my "mean old mother" never let us do that.

For meals, you might bake or have Mom go into a grocery store bakery to buy fresh muffins for a special breakfast.

For lunch and dinner, pack favorite sandwiches and baggies of chips or fruit or cookies – a different kind for each meal. Freezing them the night before eliminates the need for a big

7. Use ziplock bags for daily sets of clothing

When the kids are young, place a shirt, shorts, socks, and underwear in a gallon size ziplock bag and write "Amy – Monday" on it, etc. This is especially helpful for Sunday clothes which might be kept in a separate suitcase. Dad can just hand out the packets and everyone can dress.

8. All packed!

Once a suitcase is declared "All packed," close it up and stand it in line in a designated place, and make a rule that no one except you is allowed to open it again. They are numbered, so everyone will know when they are all there.

I always like to pack them all into the car the night before, and let the children place their bookbags in the first seat they will sit in. We lay out the clothes for the next day. Some families who are leaving in the middle of the night just have everyone sleep in their travel clothes.

In the morning, we just use our old toothbrushes and share a comb or two, pack up the food and water and hit the road.

9. Packing to head home

To pack for driving home, you may need your "motel bag" as before. You should also appoint a suitcase or two to be only for "dirty clothes" and combine the clean clothes into other suitcases, taking note of the numbers on them. Now #1 and #2 can be left in the laundry room, #4 taken to the girls' room, and so forth.

cooler. On the other hand, the lid from a hard plastic cooler makes a great lap table for spreading fresh peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to hand around. Think about it: instead of using up more of your valuable pre-trip time making sandwiches, you could use your “nothing else to do anyway” hours stacking meat and cheese and tomato slices on buns.

6. Eight reasons to drink only water (except if the driver *needs* caffeine)

Water *rules* over juice, kool-aid, tea, and soda, and they'll drink it if they're thirsty. They get plenty of taste variety from their meals. Water is cheaper, healthier, not sticky, stain-free, non-caffeinated, and non-sweetened. It doesn't speed through your system as fast as other drinks, and it can be used to wash faces, hands and seats. Each person's bottle can be refilled at the next rest stop or from a bigger container near the parent's seat.

7. The fantastic trip comes to an end

My children finally convinced me that if we arrive home late at night, it is best to go to bed and empty the car the next day when everyone is rested and happier. The suitcases will wait patiently. The end of the trip is already a letdown for the children, so, while they do need to help with the gargantuan task of putting everything away, it's also good to consider their fatigue level and emotions. Have a nice breakfast, divide up the tasks, and tackle the pile.

But maybe you arrive home during the daylight hours, or maybe the car has to be emptied for Dad to go to work the next morning. It still might be best to give everyone a short break to “be happy to see their home,” perhaps coupled with a snack and a hug and a “de-briefing” session.

Later, you might put together a family newsletter with each one writing (or dictating) what happened at the cave, at Grandpa's, or in the ocean. This helps save the memories for years to come, and it's a nice gift for any relatives and friends you visited along the way.

“We had a blast on our trip!”

Traveling together can form close bonds with shared memories. When parents plan ahead, the possibility for frustration is lessened and a good example is set.

Together, give thanks to the Lord several times each day, and ask Him for safety, wisdom and strength.

Forty-five of Sharon L. Bratcher's articles are now available in a paperback book entitled: Soup and Buns: Nourishment from God's Word for Your Daily Struggles
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The Fable of St. Patrick's Purgatory

by Christine Farenhorst

Patrick Sucat, or Saint Patrick as he is known by most, lived around 389-461 AD. Probably born in Scotland near the present day Kilpatrick, he was captured by Irish pirates when he was a teenager. For a number of years he worked in Ireland as a slave, finally escaping and making it back home. Having become a Christian, however, he was compelled by the Holy Spirit to go back to Ireland to evangelize the pagans who lived there. His burning zeal, his love for the people, coupled with his gentleness, was used by God to win hearts for Christ. Both Catholics and Protestants have admiration for this saint of yore.

Catholicism's perversion of Patrick

Lough, (or loch), is the Irish word for lake. Lough Derg, an Irish lake, has two islands in its waters – the larger is known as Saints Island and the smaller as Station Island. At one time, Station Island had a cave. This cave was not just an ordinary cave but one in which it was said Saint Patrick had prayed. The lake, as well, was regarded as special. It was reported to have derived its name, Derg, (dearg – red), from the color of the blood of the last great serpent which Patrick reportedly slew there.

Today, in 2009, Lough Derg is still an uncommonly popular spot – a tourist attraction, as it were, for many Roman Catholics. As a matter of fact, August 16th, 2009 saw people from all over Ireland (and other parts of the world) come to Station Island for a pilgrim walk. It isn't just the dragon slaying legend that attracts people to this site, but the fable that while praying in the cave, God allegedly offered Patrick a nocturnal trip to heaven and hell in the form of a dream. In a way, such similar claims occur today. Inns and hotels are inclined to attract business and to enhance their fame by advertising that the rich and famous have slept on their premises.

The historical truth about Lough Derg, however, is first of all, that it is highly unlikely that Patrick ever visited the lake and, secondly, that he was wholly unconnected to either dragons or the island. The historical truth is that in the twelfth century, Augustinian monks built a priory on Station Island, located a cave and prevaricated horribly by saying that Patrick had seen a vision of purgatory there, hoping by this claim to further their popularity and influence.



Fortunatus and his sons

An interesting mediaeval romance entitled *Fortunatus and his Sons* recounts a fascinating story. In this story a youth named Fortunatus spends some time in the cave on Station Island – by then named Saint Patrick's Purgatory. He had heard that the cave was the entrance to purgatory and this so intrigued him that he went to visit the resident abbot on the island. Visiting the man for dinner, gifting him with an excellent bottle of wine, he asked whether or not it was true that purgatory was located in the cave. The abbot replied (and the following is an excerpt from the mediaeval account):

It is so indeed. Many hundred years ago this place where the abbey and the town now stand was a howling wilderness. Not far off, however, lived a venerable hermit, Patrick by name. Patrick was exposing himself to the desert for self-discipline and came

A knight visiting Station Island (at the left) listens to the enumerations of the torments of purgatory by the prior (in the center).



across this vast cave. He went in, wandered on in the dark, and lost his way, so that he had no idea where he was or how he should return to the light of day. After long ramblings through the gloomy passages, he fell on his knees and besought Almighty God, if it were His will, to deliver him from the great peril in which he lay. Whilst Patrick thus prayed he was aware of piteous cries issuing from the depths of the cave, just such as would be the wailings of souls in purgatory. The hermit rose from his orison and by God's mercy found his way back to the surface. From that day he exercised greater austerities of self-discipline, and after his death he was numbered with the saints. Pious people who heard the story of Patrick's adventure in the cave built this cloister on the site.

So spoke the abbot to Fortunatus whose appetite for adventure was stirred by the account and who wanted to know if all who went into the cave would hear the howls of tormented souls. The abbot replied, (and again this is from the mediaeval account):

Some have affirmed that they have heard a bitter crying and piping therein, whilst others have heard and seen nothing. No one, however, has penetrated as yet to the furthest limits of the cavern.

Fortunatus, perhaps because of his generous gift of the wine, was given permission by the abbot to go into the cave the next day, but was told to keep near the entrance and not to wander too far into the interior. Some people who had entered, he was told, had never returned.

The next day Fortunatus, together with a servant, entered the cave through a door in the cloister. Both men held a taper. The door was bolted behind them and they were left in total darkness, save the light from the candles. Slowly they walked on into the blackness and gradually the sound of the monks' chanting in the sanctuary behind them died away. Feeling their way along the rocky wall, they stumbled through several passages. Eventually their candles burnt out and they could not find their way back to the door. Sitting down, they comforted one another with the thought that surely someone would come looking. The day passed and so did the night, but they had totally lost track of time. Meanwhile, back in the cloister, the other servants of Fortunatus insisted that someone go and search for their master. Also worried, the abbot sent an old monk in after the two lost men. The monk held onto a ball of twine, the end of which was attached to the door handle. He located the two lost explorers and all three men returned to the cloister. So ends the experience of Fortunatus in the cave.

Opening wallets

Up to the sixteenth century, the property on Station Island was run by Augustinian and Franciscan friars. They made good use of the fable told concerning the cave. At Lough Derg, they said, access to purgatory could be gained by pilgrims through being locked up in the cave. Visions of heaven and hell occurred to some of the people so incarcerated. It was circulated that the cloister had been built around the cave by Saint Patrick himself. The advertising for remission of sins ran thus: "It was Christ's supernatural journey after Calvary that underlays a pilgrimage. He descended into Hell, and on the third day He rose again from the dead, before ascending into heaven. This possibility is also yours." And such a possibility attracted many, many pilgrims and such a possibility opened many wallets.

Roman Catholic doctrine defines purgatory as a state or place in the "next world" where the souls of those who died in grace but not free from all imperfection, make expiation for unforgiven venial sins, (sins committed against the law of God without full awareness of its seriousness, sins which do not deprive the soul of divine grace). In purgatory, these souls are purified before entering heaven.

The year 1700 saw five thousand pilgrims pass through Station Island. In 1790 the cave was filled in and a chapel was built on the site. In 1826 over 15,000 pilgrims visited Station Island and even as late as 1846, on the eve of the great famine, some 30,000 came.

Lough Derg today

In 1931 a new church opened and in 1960 Lough Derg and all its islands became the legal property of the Roman Catholic Church. Retreats and pilgrimages, as in the days of yore, are numerous today in this 21st century. Some 20,000 people arrive each summer. Special retreat times run from June 1 until August 15. Participants in these retreats must be over 14 years old and free from disability. People are told that, "The nature of the penances excludes anyone under doctor's care and the very old."

Today, a labyrinth has a prominent place on the Station Island grounds, perhaps taking the place of the now defunct cave. Roman Catholic advertisements for the labyrinth run thus:

"Labyrinths have been a feature of religious expression for a long time. Just as labyrinths have puzzled people for thousands of years, Lough Derg has always been a bit of an enigma – a place where people fast, walk barefoot and walk in circles repeatedly does not make much sense to those on the outside – but to the pilgrim the experience is profound. A labyrinth then, with its seeming endless twists and turns is therefore a good fit for this ancient site of pilgrimage. As we begin to understand the importance of integrating the mind, body and spirit to achieve true well-being, the labyrinth can act as a tool. Unlike mazes you cannot get lost in a labyrinth. They have just one path. They are about guidance, trust and reflection, acting as a metaphor for the years of life. Our labyrinth at Lough Derg compliments the ancient body prayer that constitutes the penitential exercises of the traditional pilgrimage."

Today in Lough Derg, perhaps the visions of hell are gone, but they have been replaced with interminable rounds of mind numbing paters and aves. Lough Derg is for Irish Catholics, and other Catholics, the most sacred lake in Ireland. A Roman Catholic visitor from Nigeria recently wrote about Lough Derg: "A deeply spiritual place where I can find rest for my soul and mind." In today's relative society where each individual is told to pursue what is right for himself, this sounds good. And if that same Nigerian Roman Catholic neighbor tells you he believes in the deity of Christ, in His substitutionary atonement and in the infallibility of Scripture, it begins to sound even better. And it does seem wonderful, especially in light of the fact that a number of Protestant churches down the road have scorned these particular doctrines. As well, you know that your Nigerian Roman Catholic neighbor hates abortion and is actively involved in opposing it.

What are we to make of Lough Derg?

So what are we to make of such places as Lough Derg? How are we to deal with our Roman Catholic friend from Nigeria who finds Lough Derg "a deeply spiritual place where he can find rest for his soul and mind"?

It is interesting to note that a recently published Roman Catholic catechism reaffirms the doctrines of purgatory, indulgences and a treasury of merits. But the one defining doctrine of salvation, called by Calvin the hinge upon which everything else



A 1666 map of Station Island, Lough Derg, Ireland

turns, is totally missing from its Roman Catholic pages. And we do well to mark those missing pages because those pages rip off salvation.

In 1870, perhaps to step up the number of pilgrims and to increase the money in the coffers of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Pius IX granted plenary indulgences to those pilgrims who traveled to Station Island. (A plenary indulgence is a remission of the total temporal punishment which is still due to sin after absolution.) In that same year, 1870, at the Vatican Council I, the doctrine of papal infallibility, although long maintained, was formally defined and declared necessary to believe for salvation.

Purgatory? Indulgences? Papal infallibility? A treasury of merits? Can you hear Peter stamping his foot with impatience and anger at these man-made doctrines?

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, as was necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:3-9)



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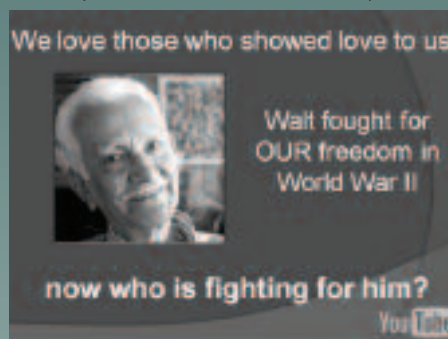
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Voting for the winner of the very first RP/ARPA Salt n' Light YouTube Video Contest is now open. You can see the three entries, and vote for your favorite at www.ReformedPerspective.ca. Who should win? Should it be:

FREE OUR LIVES

(Why is this couple hiding?)



THINK ABOUT IT

(Pro-life in black and white)



DROIDS FOR LIFE

("Hello there Droid 316")



Voting will be open until March 31, so vote, and tell all your friends to vote

IN A NUTSHELL

Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

.....

Great power and great responsibility

One great line in the 2002 film *Spiderman* so resonated with filmgoers they made the movie among the top grossing pictures of all time. They also repeated the line – to their friends, to their family, to coworkers, to that guy they see every morning at the bus stop – so that it’s now familiar even to people who don’t go to movies. The line is: “With great power comes great responsibility.”

It was a good line, a great line even, full of wisdom. But as Winston Churchill once said, “All wisdom is not new wisdom” and this is doubly true in this case. It turns out that more than a century ago, in 1906, Churchill himself expressed a similar thought: “Where there is great power there is great responsibility.” Both the *Spiderman* line and the Churchill quote are powerful, but they prompt a question that neither answers – to Whom are we going to be held responsible?

For the answer we have to go further back in time, almost two thousand years, to yet another version of this thought (Churchill’s quote wasn’t new wisdom either!). In Luke 12 we hear Jesus say: “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” The context of the chapter makes it clear exactly Who is going to hold us responsible and Who grants power and entrusts much.

The *Spiderman* line, and the Churchill quote are powerful, but ultimately incomplete because neither acknowledges our responsibility to God.

Now it’s official...

This sign marks the one place on Earth where men will actually pull over and ask for directions.



SOURCE: Photo by Megan Klaver, of a road sign in Aberdeenshire, Scotland pointing to the tiny farmstead of Lost

.....

When you rearrange the letters. . .

Below is a collection of impressive anagrams:

- Slot machines → Cash lost in me
- The eyes → They see
- The Morse code → Here comes dots
- A decimal point → I’m a dot in place
- Astronomer → Moon starrer
- Snooze alarms → Alas, no more Zs

SOURCE: the worldwide web

.....

Two to see for free online

If you’ve ever spent an hour just staring at a newborn, awestruck, then you’re going to love *Baby Steps*. It’s a five-minute peak into the womb using 4D ultrasound technology to get clear, moving, 3-dimensional images of unborn babies yawning, stretching, smiling and, of course, kicking months before they are even born. You can see it at www.babystepsdvd.com.

Atheist Richard Dawkin’s inventive-ness is perhaps best displayed when it comes to finding nasty names for creationists – he never seems to be at a loss

for words. But Renton Maclachlan is also an inventive fellow, and he has put his creativity to full use in securing an interview with Dawkins. He quite rightly bills this ten-minute conversation as “Richard Dawkins” – *like you’ve never seen him before*. This is worth a look and can be found at www.DawkinsInterview.notlong.com.

.....

The origins of gossip

The English word *gossip* used to have a very positive meaning. According to the Jan. 2010 *God’s World News* it finds its origins 1500 years ago as *godsibb*. The “sibb” part meant “kinsman” or “relative” – we get our English word *sibling* from this ancient root – while the first part, as you might have guessed, referred to God. “Godsibb” then, was basically a godparent. Six hundred years later the meaning had expanded to encompass any close family friend, or really anyone you might confide in. It took another 500 years to morph to meaning, “someone who engages in rumors and idle talk” or “secret sharer.” That switch might seem strange, but it makes sense if you consider that it is only your close friends, those you confide in, who can share your secrets.

So it took about a thousand years for the word’s meaning to shift from “loved one” to the very opposite. Gossiping itself can cause a similar, much quicker shift, turning a friend into an enemy in an instant.

.....

Quote of the month

“There are no atheists so thoroughly sure of their unbelief as to be willing to die a martyr’s death for it.”

– Herman Bavinck



The pre-Flood world was beautiful

. . .and Sauropods were among God's most gorgeous creations

by Margaret Helder

Beyond the fact that it was beautiful, you may think that there is little we can know about the pre-flood world. However, a little reflection will show we can learn a lot more than many Christians realize about this long lost landscape.

For example, the fossils preserved throughout great depths of rock tell us much about that past time. From these fossils we can learn that the variety of species was far greater than today. Although the basic body plans were like those we see now, at the same time, there were wildly extravagant variations on these themes. And though many organisms that we see preserved in the fossil record are now extinct, in their time, they contributed to the richness and variety of the creation.

We don't often think that extinct animals might have been examples of wonderful design, but they were! Even if we did reflect on extinct animals which were particularly well designed, we probably would not choose sauropod dinosaurs for that special category. Sauropod dinosaurs, you may remember, were the large plodding, four-footed specimens with long necks and long tails. They were probably the largest animals ever to have lived on land. They all grazed on plants. This was no doubt a good thing, since they probably were too slow to catch anything. So, you may well ask, what could be so special about these awkward looking creatures? Plenty!

Necks that don't quit

The most amazing aspect of these creatures was their long necks, which reached truly amazing proportions. *Camarasaurus*, for example, which was a relatively small sauropod at 18 meters (55 feet) long, had a neck about 2.7 m (8 ft) long balanced by a tail about 8 m or 25 ft long. *Apatosaurus* (famous for its original name of *Brontosaurus*, before it had the correct head attached to the rest of the skeleton), measured about 21 m (65 ft) long of which its neck was 4.5 m (15 ft) and its tail 7 m (24 ft). Then there was *Mamenchisaurus* with perhaps the longest neck of all. With its whole body length of 25 m (80 ft), it boasted a neck length of up to 14 m (46 ft), balanced by a tail which was even a little longer.

The tails, of course, could drape downward without compromising the lifestyle of the animal, but the head would have to be held up in the air, supported by a horizontal or somewhat vertical neck. Therein lay some serious engineering challenges for these dinosaurs. It is not so easy to hold a long neck up in the air.

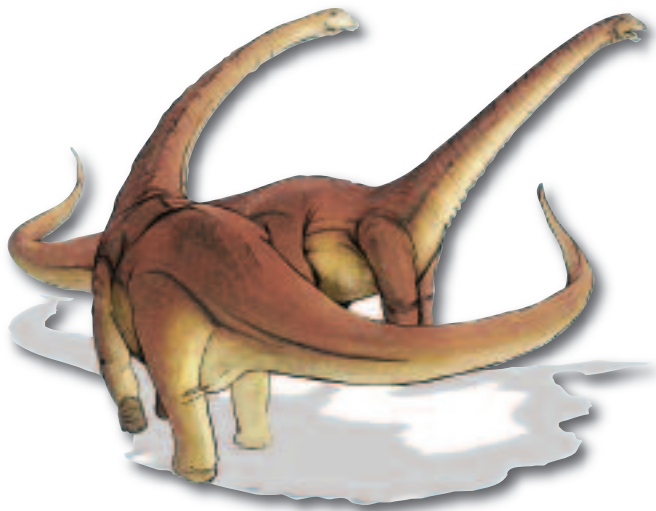
A design challenge

The problems of a long neck are as follows. Imagine for example that you have a vertical piece of wood. You want to attach a horizontal beam to the vertical structure. So, of course, you use lots of nails or screws to secure the second piece of wood at right angles to the vertical one so that you have a rigid board projecting from the vertical beam. Now suppose however that instead of a rigid board, you attach a string of wooden beads to the vertical structure. Do these beads stretch out horizontally the way the rigid beam did? Of course not, the beads hang down. Similar engineering principles apply to long dinosaur necks. A rigid piece of bone would keep the neck elevated in the air, but of course (being rigid), it could not move. Alternatively, if the skeleton in the neck consists of separate bones, it would hang down, unless some cleverly engineered modifications are applied.

The design solutions which allow the long dinosaur necks to move, and yet stay elevated, are as follows. Firstly the skeleton in the neck consists of only a few component parts. Thus the neck bones (vertebrae) are very long, each up to 1.5 m (5 ft) long. This means that the average number of vertebrae (bones) in a sauropod neck is only about 12, while the average number of tail vertebrae might have been as high as 80. The lower number of component parts meant that less extra support was needed to keep the neck in the air.

Balloons and bracing

Secondly the neck bones were exceptionally light but strong. Apparently the sauropod neck vertebrae were like those strong silvery helium balloons that we buy for celebrations.



The *Alamosaurus* grew up to about 70 feet long.

They had a very thin but strong layer of bone filled up by sacks of air kept under pressure from the lungs. It is easier to hold up a lighter structure than a heavier one and it certainly takes less energy to do so. The neck however would still hang limply if the component parts were not braced (provided with extra support). This is the third design feature. The beauty of bracing is that it allows for some support and some flexibility at the same time.

If you feel along your backbone, you will find small bumps marking the location of each vertebrae (back bone unit). These projections or spurs extend outward, but not very far in your case. In the case of some dinosaurs however, prominent spurs extended outward from each vertebra (imagine really big bumps along your back bone!) In the case of these dinosaurs, powerful ligaments connected the spurs together, thereby giving the whole backbone good support. This enabled any dinosaur with such a neck to enjoy considerable flexibility in the neck region along with adequate support to keep the head lifted upward. While such a neck was highly mobile however, the animal would have to work a little harder to keep its neck from wobbling. In addition, the bone spurs meant more weight to the neck, so these animals tended to have just moderately long necks. An example of such a dinosaur is *Apatosaurus*, formerly known as *Brontosaurus*.

The really long necks were braced on the other side of the backbone (in toward the internal organs). The bracing took the

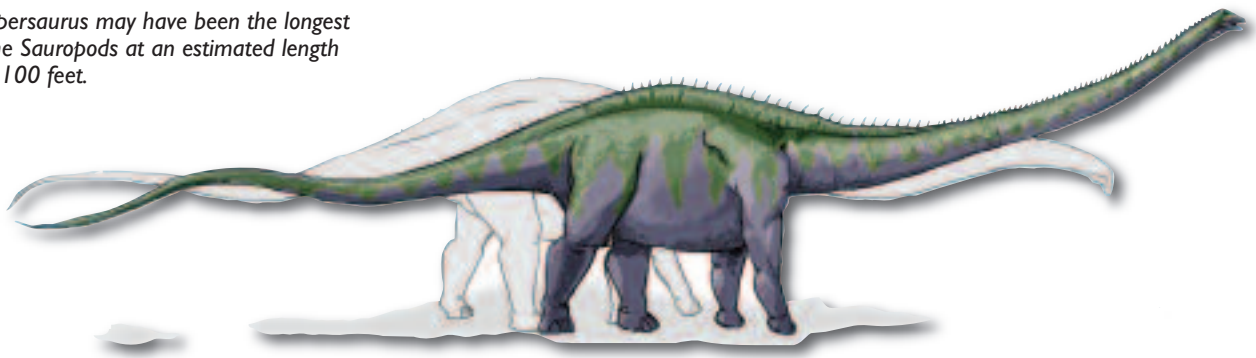
form of long thin pointy structures (called cervical ribs) which extended from one vertebra under several others in a row, thereby giving strength to the whole thing. These backbones tended to be very light, so extremely long necks were possible. The flexibility was not as great as for the other bracing design, but the neck was easier to keep from wobbling. Examples of such dinosaurs include *Brachiosaurus*, *Camarasaurus* and *Mamenchisaurus*. *Diplodocus*, on the other hand, is an example of a dinosaur whose neck was braced in both directions.

Conclusion

Thus we can see that the long necked style of dinosaur required some very special design features. Indeed some dinosaur experts have pointed this out. *The Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs*, edited by Philip Currie and Kevin Padian (1997) declares that the neck bracing provides “maximum strength for minimum weight – a true triumph of engineering.” Also Zdenek Spinar and Philip Currie tell us that the air filled neck vertebrae are “marvelously engineered structures for lightness and strength.” (in *The Great Dinosaurs* 1994). How very interesting these statements are. Everyone knows that engineered structures require an engineer, an intelligent individual who plans a structure for a particular purpose. In like fashion, engineered dinosaur necks have indeed been designed to solve several problems in managing these lengthy structures.

Of course the sauropod dinosaurs are now extinct and we are probably just as happy that this is so. They were, however, wonderfully designed for their lifestyle before the great flood. Apparently those that survived on the ark were subsequently unable to cope with new conditions in order to survive to the present. We can still nevertheless appreciate how these creatures contributed to the richness and variety of the creation when they roamed the earth. Such reflections may engender in us much more interest in the field of palaeontology, rightly interpreted, and fossils.

The *Supersaurus* may have been the longest of all the Sauropods at an estimated length of over 100 feet.





Soup & Buns

How many fish were in the lake?

On God's sovereignty, and our responsibility, in evangelism

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Six of Jesus' disciples went fishing in the Sea of Tiberias: Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, John, James, and two others (John 21:11). They launched the boat, fished all night and caught nothing. Early the next morning their Lord Jesus Christ, who had been crucified and had risen from the dead, stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't recognize Him.

Jesus called to them and asked if they had any fish, and they responded, "No."

"He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish." John 21:6

When they dragged the net ashore, it was filled with 153 large fish.

This was no doubt a delightful surprise for the disciples. They had fished all night long with no success and then someone came and told them to put the net on the other side of the boat. How far away might that be – 10 feet? 14? 20? In any case, not far enough for a fisherman to see a significant difference. But, they did it. When they got the large haul, John immediately realized that it was Jesus up on the shore, and they headed in to see Him, with eager, impulsive Peter swimming the distance.

There were 153 large fish in the net when the Lord filled it. The question I heard one OPC pastor, the Rev. Larry Westerveld, ask one Sunday was, "how many fish were in the lake?" It wouldn't be a stretch to expect that the lake probably had thousands of fish in it. But the Lord caused 153 of them to get caught in the net.

The lesson to learn from the sermon is this: the disciples had to throw the net out and then the Lord caused 153 of the total number of fish in the lake to get caught. The Lord could have made the fish just flop up onto the shore directly. He could have let the disciples catch more, or fewer. But this is what He ordained.

And so it was, and is, with the job of "catching" people. Out in the world are millions of people, none of whom seem very interested in being caught by Christ as they go about their daily business. And here are believers in Christ, going about trying this and that to attract the unbelievers in. And then comes

the Lord, giving direction in a somewhat different way, and drawing sinners to Him, as He will.

How many fish were still in the lake? The point is that God calls to Himself the ones that He plans to call. He caused 153 to come into the net, no more, no less.

The other point is that the disciples had to go out there and let down the net, because that's how the Lord decided to do it.

We go through various stages regarding reaching out to others with the good news of the gospel. Sometimes we sit back and wait for the Lord to bring in those whom He wants to be there – kind of like waiting on shore for the fish to flop up by themselves. Sometimes we get out there and expend ourselves with great planning and energy and worry and even frustration, eager to make a good catch to glorify the Lord, and perhaps a little bit to validate our efforts. Sometimes we look at the fish swimming the other direction and just cannot imagine that *those* fish would ever come to the Lord, so we keep quiet rather than possibly upset them, or have them criticize or mock us.

This point of the sermon really stuck with me and caused me to think on the entire balance of God's Sovereignty and our responsibility, all in this one short account at the end of the book of John.

God doesn't expect *us* to produce the fruit – we aren't the trees that can grow it. He expects us to *bear* it – to carry it away once it is ripe. When an opportunity arises where we can speak a word about the Lord, we can ask Him for courage, ignore the thumping heart inside of us, and speak the Truth – and let Him do what He will with it. His Truth sets people free. We have the Truth, but too often, we keep it to ourselves: we don't cast out the net. Perhaps we don't *really* believe He will fill it.

How many fish were still in the lake? The point is that God called the appointed number to Himself; but *first* the Lord's disciples had to let down the net.

45 of Sharon Bratcher's articles are available in *Soup and Buns: Nourishment from God's Word for Your Daily Struggles*.
\$10 (US)/book plus shipping. Contact sharoncopy@gmail.com.



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NEW PUZZLES

Chess Puzzle # 163

Riddles for Punsters #163 – “Animal sounds”

What is a duck's favourite snack?

Cheese and _____.

What kind of house does a Scottish sparrow look for?

One that is _____.

Why did the horse give so much help to horses living next door?

He wanted to be a good _____ b o u r .

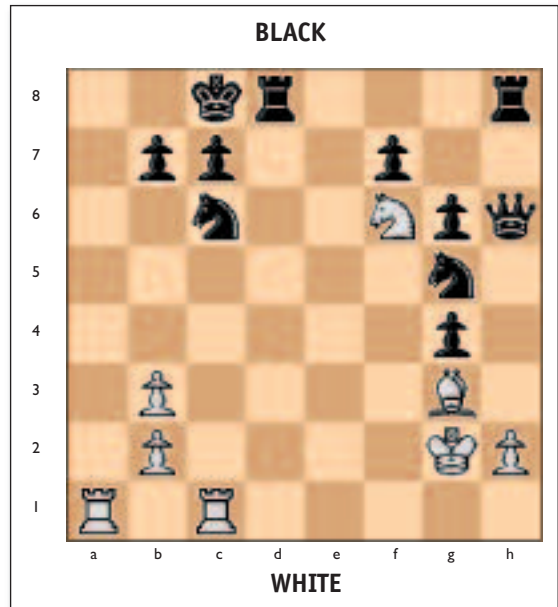
What did the surprised cat say when other cats reported to her about the new events that had taken place?

That is all _____ to me.

Problem to Ponder #163 – “Speeding Up Going Down”

While training for a speed skiing competition, Andy's time for a downhill run was recorded. Starting from rest (so his initial speed was 0 m/s), it took him **20 seconds** to travel about half way down a straight hill and reach his maximum speed. (The remainder of the hill was used for slowing down.) It was calculated that his **average acceleration was 2.3 m/s per second** during those 20 seconds.

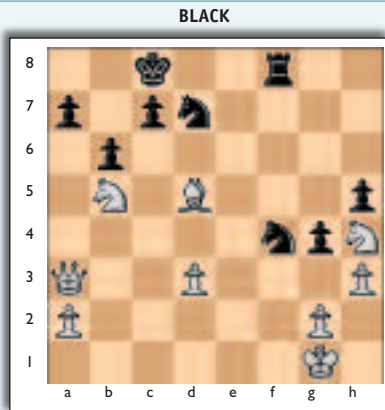
- Determine Andy's **maximum speed** (in both m/s and km/h) reached about half way down the hill.
- Next calculate his **average speed** going down the hill in the first 20 seconds.
- Using that average speed, what **distance** (in meters and in kilometers) did Andy travel downhill to reach his maximum speed?



WHITE to Mate in 2 (2 Solutions: Same moves, different order)
Or, If it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 4**

[HINT: After R-Q7 ch (Rd8-d2 +) by Black, White's King has **3 squares to move to**, all of which result in mate by Black]

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 162



WHITE to Mate in 3 or 4
(depending on Black's response to NxRP ch)

Descriptive Notation

- NxRP ch K-Q1
- N-B6 ch K-B1
- Q-R6 mate

- NxRP ch K-Q1
- N-B6 ch K-K1
- Q-K7 mate

OR (BLACK lasting 4 MOVES)

- NxRP ch K-N1
 - N-B6 ch K-N2
- (if black moves K-B1, white wins with Q-R6 mate)
- Q-R7 ch K-B1
 - Q-R6 mate

Algebraic Notation

- Nb5xa7 + Kc8-d8
- Na7-c6 + Kd8-c8
- Qa3-a6 ++

- Nb5xa7 + Kc8-d8
- Na7-c6 + Kd8-e8
- Qa3-e7 ++

OR (BLACK lasting 4 MOVES)

- Nb5xa7 + Kc8-b8
- Na7-c6 + Kb8-b7
- Qa3-a7 + Kb7-c8
- Qa7-a6 ++

BLACK to Mate in 3

- N-K7 ch
- K-R2 P-N6 ch
- K-R1 R-B8 mate

OR

- N-K7 ch
- K-R1 R-B8 ch
- K-R2 P-N6 mate

Algebraic Notation

- Nf4-e2+
- Kg1-h2 g4-g3+
- Kh2-h1 Rf8-f1 ++

OR

- Nf4-e2+
- Kg1-h1 Rf8-f1+
- Kh1-h2 g4-g3++

SOLUTIONS TO THE PREVIOUS (JANUARY) PUZZLE PAGE

Answer to Riddles for Punsters #162 – “Did you take note, which kind of boat?”

What kind of boats will be found neatly lined up, one after the other, in a store?

A r o w boat.

What kind of boat can be bought at a reduced price?

A s a l e boat.

What kind of boat is offered as a prize at fast food restaurants?

A s p e e d boat.

Answer to Problem to Ponder #162 – “Out of fresh snow these men will grow!”

Jennifer and Jason joyfully looked longingly at lots of sparkling snow spread on their lawn, almost 20 cm deep everywhere.

If their back yard is 18 m (1800 cm) long and 12 m (1200 cm) wide and the snow is exactly 6π cm deep, what volume of snow is in their yard (as a number times π(pi) cm³)?

$$\text{Volume } V = (\text{length})(\text{width})(\text{height}) = (1800)(1200)(6\pi) = 12960000\pi \text{ cm}^3$$

Also, Jennifer and Jason like to build snowmen, with the head 30 cm in diameter, the middle part 60 cm in diameter and the bottom part 90 cm in diameter. The volume of a sphere is $(4/3)(\pi)r^3$, where r is the radius (so one half the diameter) of the sphere. What volume of snow would they need to build one snowman?

$$\text{The radius of a spherical head is } 30/2 = 15 \text{ cm so its volume } V = (4/3)(\pi)r^3 = (4/3)(\pi)15^3 = 4500\pi \text{ cm}^3$$

$$\text{The radius of a spherical middle is } 60/2 = 30 \text{ cm so its volume } V = (4/3)(\pi)30^3 = 36000\pi \text{ cm}^3$$

$$\text{The radius of a spherical bottom is } 90/2 = 45 \text{ cm so its volume } V = (4/3)(\pi)45^3 = 121500\pi \text{ cm}^3$$

$$\text{Thus, the total volume of snow needed is } 4500\pi + 36000\pi + 121500\pi = 162000\pi \text{ cm}^3.$$

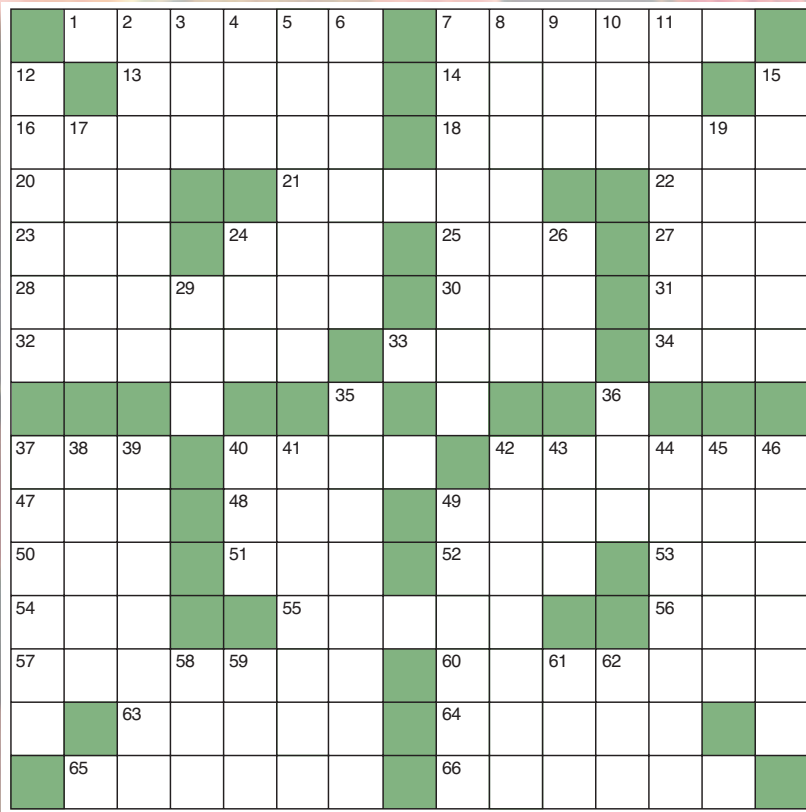
Therefore, how many snowmen could they build using all the snow in their yard?

$$\text{The number of snowmen is } V_{\text{snow}}/V_{\text{snowman}} = 12960000\pi / 162000\pi = 80 \text{ snowmen!}$$

Crossword Puzzle

Series 17 No 2

Last month's solution
Series 17 No 1



1	E	2	B	3	O	4	N	5	Y	6	C	7	M	8	A	9	T	10	A	11	R	12	N	13	S
14	S	A	M	O	A	15	A	A	R	16	S	H	O	A	T										
17	T	R	E	N	D	18	I	N	C	19	A	U	D	I	O										
20	E	O	G	21	A	22	P	R	I	L	23	R	24	E	V	A									
24	R	N	A	S	25	R	E	C	A	26	P	27	G	O	E	S									
					28	S	E	N	29	M	I	30	S	R											
31	R	E	C	E	I	V	E	35	P	A	C	I	F	I	C										
39	B	I	T	E	R																				
41	I	N	G	R	E	S	42	S	43	R	I	O	T	O	U	S									
					46	I	N	I	T	47	E	N	D												
48	R	A	V	E	51	S	O	N	A	R	53	C	54	R	55	O	56	C							
57	O	R	O	58	D	59	R	A	D	I	60	C	61	I	R	O									
62	B	O	W	E	R	63	M	I	I	64	R	A	65	D	A	R									
67	E	M	E	R	Y	68	E	R	N	69	A	R	E	T	E										
70	S	A	L	E	S	71	D	A	G	72	L	O	S	E	R										

ACROSS:

- One way to serve chicken
- Seats
- Country
- Country hit by earthquake
- One way to learn something
- Not lawful
- Uniform laws or acts (abbr.)
- Hot bean dish
- Height, for short
- Kind of metal
- Golf accessory
- Code for Dallas Airport
- Shoe part
- Jewish elementary schools
- John _____, Scottish surgeon and Arctic explorer
- Mess up
- Quiets
- Seconds in line
- Prosecuting officers
- Sum up
- Program where company's employees can acquire its stock
- Tiny picture parts
- Maiden name
- Observe secretly
- Sour cherry
- Int'l Chamber of Commerce
- Bill
- Big boat
- Boat accessory
- French month
- Fill with ink again
- Personnel Mgmt. Evaluation
- Canadian province
- Existing or occurring in space
- Fancy water
- German word for "innate" also German biophysicist Manfred
- Crustacean abdomens
- Dried root of a milkwort

DOWN:

- Herbal teas
- Hospital workers
- Bachelor's last words
- Crustacean's claws
- Window parts
- Very young people
- Famous Canadian port
- Become ill
- Resident (suffix)
- Put back in upright position
- Grab tightly, or a purse
- Changes something slightly
- Young man talking to Job (Job 32)
- Ancient Greek marketplace
- Kind of shirt
- Not dry
- An Omega-3 fatty acid found in fish oils
- Healthy vegetables
- Tree toppler
- Wild beast
- Sticker
- Unit of noise measurement
- French direction
- Native of Sparta
- Kind of hat
- Bother
- Running away to get married
- Long-necked mammal
- Painfully
- Houses belonging to the church
- Night before
- ____ de Janeiro
- Active galactic nucleus, for short
- Letter of the alphabet

Joyce