


Reformed CELEBRATING GOD'S TRUTH

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2024  
Volume 43 Issue No. 6

# PERSPECTIVE

SINCE 1982



**GET EDUCATED,  
NOT SCHOOLED**

**ON PURSUING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION...OR NOT!**

# Where will you study?

*"This great Western institution, the university, dominates the world today more than any other institution: more than the Church, more than the government, more than all other institutions. All the leaders of government are graduates of universities...The same applies to all church leaders...The professionals – doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc. – have all passed through the mill of secondary school, the college and the university.... No task is more crucial and urgent today than to examine the state of mind and spirit of the Western university."*

– Charles Malik, 1982

The past five years alone have shaken up the world of post-secondary education. Many university degrees don't have the value they used to, and learning can be done from anywhere. The cost of living has also risen, with the result being that fewer young adults in Reformed churches are pursuing post-secondary studies. But Malik's point still stands: our politicians, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and ministers do all need to pass through Higher Ed.

So is the decline of interest in university a good thing? Neutral? Or is it a bad thing?

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to mail class sets of 20 copies of this issue to 21 Christian schools across the country, to use for career education classes (or similar purposes).

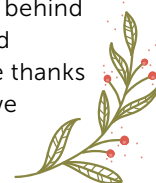
If your school didn't receive these and you would like a set, please email: [admin@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:admin@reformedperspective.ca).

In this issue, RP's new team of journalists and writers put their heads together to tackle this topic from multiple angles. Our hope is that the combination of these pieces will help you and your loved ones navigate as you make choices about where to study. God's people are called to grow in wisdom so we are to be life-long learners, even if it is simply through good ol' books or podcasts.

Our next issue will be quite different. Instead of focusing on a particular topic, our goal will be to share a lot of good news. Contrary to the impression we may get from the media, there are a lot of things to be very thankful for, and we want to focus on gratitude for those good things. If you have a story along those lines, please reach out to us:

[editor@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:editor@reformedperspective.ca).

And since this is our year-end issue, the team behind *Reformed Perspective* wishes you a very blessed Christmas and 2025! And we extend our sincere thanks to all of you who provide for this work so that we can carry it on into another year.



## Reformed **PERSPECTIVE** A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Published bimonthly by Reformed Perspective Foundation Inc.

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**Template Design (2013):** Compass Creative Studio Inc. [compasscreative.ca](http://compasscreative.ca)

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

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**Registration: ISSN 0714-8208**

**Charitable Organization under Canada Income Tax Act**

**Registration No. 118929272RR0001**

**RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:**

**One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5**

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# I'M GRADUATING – NOW WHAT?

by Marty VanDriel



**Y**ou're a high school senior; you've worked hard from kindergarten through 12th grade, and now you're almost ready to graduate. You're a little tired of being asked by friends and relatives: *What are your plans after high school?* You know they mean well, and are genuinely curious about your next steps, but you can't answer them, because you just don't know!

I was once in your shoes, and I'd like to help you make fewer mistakes than I made as I muddled my way through the morass of post-secondary schooling and different job opportunities, before finding the right path for me. I stumbled, and I muddled, but am grateful that the Lord provided in all circumstances.

## WHAT DIRECTION?

When I was your age, most young folks who showed interest or aptitude inside the classroom were encouraged to pursue a university degree, for two main reasons.

First, most people believed that to be able to provide well for your family, you needed a college or university degree to get the kind of job that would generate a reasonable income.

Second, many Reformed Christians believed that we as the children and grandchildren of immigrants needed to have more influence on the academic and professional culture of North America. Therefore, it would be good if more Christian young people obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Have things changed since my high school graduation in 1986? In a word: yes. A college or university degree remains a necessity for some professions, and a helpful résumé addition for many others. But you can go without and still generate an income that will allow you to support your family, your church, and your community. If you have a specific plan that requires a degree – if you want to become a lawyer, or a minister, or a teacher – then university is your path.

But what if you're not sure?

## DON'T BE A LOGAN

Consider this fairly common scenario for two young Canadian students. Good buddies Logan and Josh both got pretty

good grades at school, although Logan didn't have to work very hard to get them, thanks to his good memory. He even qualified for a scholarship to McMaster University that enabled him to get reduced tuition!

Josh and Logan both enjoyed working in the summers for a small local company, Boomtown Builders, doing small renovations and building decks, learning from their boss how to build efficiently and safely. Offered an opportunity, Josh decided that he would stay on full time at Boomtown after high school graduation.

Logan was looking forward to his new university life at McMaster. But there were a couple of problems: Logan didn't really know *what* he should study, and he hadn't really learned *how* to study – in high school, he had rarely needed to crack open the books in the evenings. But of course, this was all about to change.

In order to find his way, Logan took general courses in English, History, Biology and Calculus – he would have time to declare a major later. But with no one to look over his shoulder and remind him to get his assignments in on time, and without a clear direction and target to inspire him, Logan started to fall behind. Feeling behind the curve, he started to skip classes. Not going to classes meant he was ill-prepared for quizzes and tests, and he didn't hand in some of his assignments. At the end of his second semester, Logan had failed two courses, and his marks were so poor overall that he lost his scholarship and would have to pay full tuition the following school year. Will Logan end up going back for his second year, or has he just wasted ten months and thousands of dollars?

Meanwhile Josh was taking on more responsibility at Boomtown, even running a small job on his own so the company could take on a few more projects. With the boss's encouragement, Josh enrolled in a college course on estimating, so that he could help out on that side of the growing business. His responsibilities grew, and his income grew, and Josh became a very valuable member of Boomtown Builders, with a promising future.

In this simple story, Logan wasted his

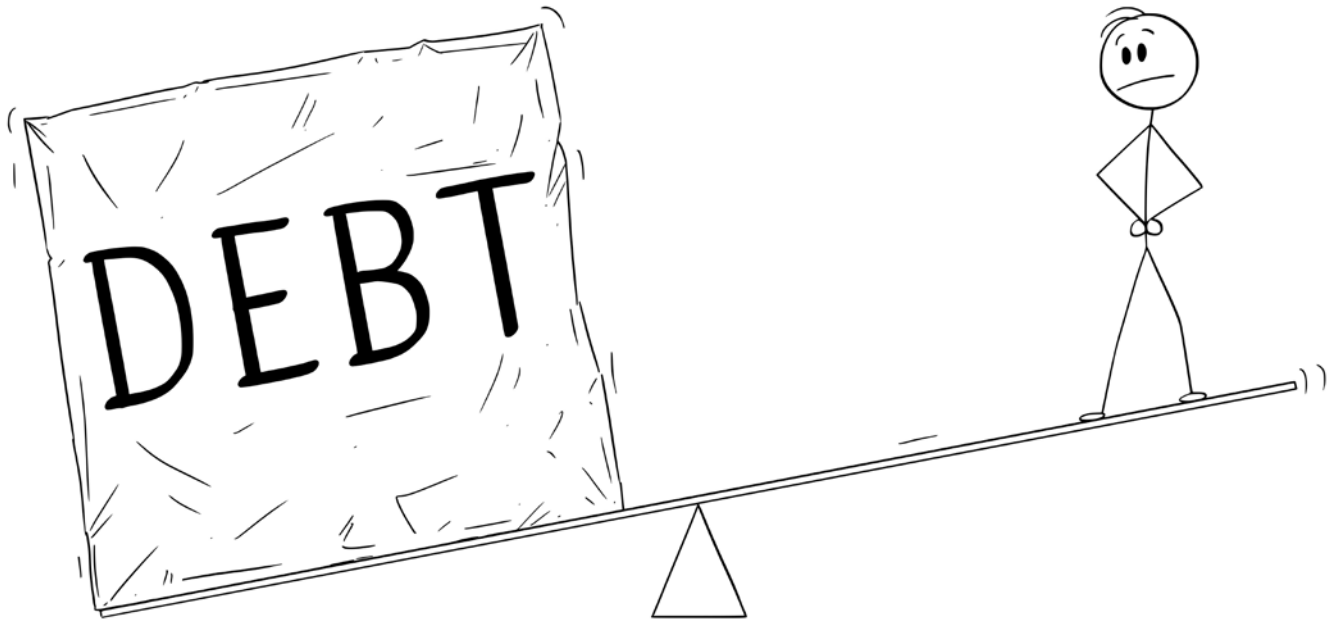
time and treasure by not working hard, and Josh made good progress and established a healthy direction for his life by applying his skills and working diligently. Had Logan just worked hard, attended classes, and applied himself, perhaps he also would have charted a path towards a successful career. But by enrolling at university *without a clear target and direction*, Logan ended up spinning his wheels ineffectively. It might have been far better for him to work a year at Boomtown to find out more about what he was good at, and what he enjoyed, before deciding on a target, and how to get there.

## HAVE A PLAN

In Proverbs 21:5, Solomon reminds us “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.” Earlier, in chapter 19, he advises “Listen to advice, and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.”

There are many resources available to high school students to help you make a plan for your post-secondary life. Your school has guidance counselors who would be glad to make you aware of opportunities that may suit your skills. Your parents, your uncles and aunts, and grandparents all might encourage you in different directions. The next time they ask you, “What are you going to do after high school?” you can ask them what they think you should do! You can't follow everyone's advice, but you can certainly listen and reflect on what those who know you well give you as counsel (Prov. 1:8-9).

By the end of your high school years, you'll probably have worked part time, or during the summers, with different employers. These job experiences can be hugely valuable in discovering your skills, your interests, and what long-term prospects are like in these fields. Whatever your current job is, work diligently and industriously for the benefit of your employer and their customers. On your breaks and at lunch time, ask lots of questions to your boss and your co-workers, especially about what this business needs to be even more successful. What kind of talents are needed there, and what kind



of education or training might one need to fill the areas of need?

Even if you determine that the type of work you did as a student isn't something you would want as a career, you haven't wasted your time. The experience will leave you more determined to find an occupation that you enjoy, and more motivated if you do enter college or a trade school to push through to get your qualifications: "I know I don't want to do that, so I'll work extra hard to chart out a different path!" Knowing how hard a restaurant server works, or how difficult it can be to work construction on a cold winter's day will also help you gain appreciation for your neighbors who do labor in these occasionally thankless fields.

### CONSIDER THE COST!

In Luke 14:28-29, Jesus says:

"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will mock him."

It's a basic principle in life, also echoed often in the book of Proverbs: have a plan, and count your costs up front!

Before enrolling at a college, trade school, or university, you should care-

fully consider how much your certification will cost, and how you will pay for your years of schooling. One financial analyst recommends that a student spend no more on tuition and books over the course of their schooling than how much they could expect to make in their first year of employment in that profession. As an example, if a newly certified teacher could be expected to earn \$45,000 in his first year of teaching, then he should find a way to spend less than \$45,000 in educational expenses to earn his degree. This is just a general guideline, not a hard and fast rule, but it may give you some direction for a reasonable and prudent budget as you begin your studies.

It is even more important to consider how you will pay for your degree. In the United States, it is very common for young people to borrow over \$120,000 to obtain a four-year degree, and lenders have made it very easy for them to get these loans.

According to Statistics Canada's latest numbers in 2020, on average, Canadians graduating with an undergraduate degree have \$30,000 in student loan debt, and will take an average of eight years to pay off these debts.

### AVOID THE DEBT TRAP

The Bible has warnings against becoming indebted, at one point comparing

debt to becoming a slave: "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is a slave of the lender" (Prov. 22:7). For many, student loan debt is a trap, easy to fall into and hard to get free of, so I would strongly advise against borrowing to pay for your degree.

If you find yourself short of your first-year tuition, perhaps you need to work for a year full time before starting school again. Count on working part time during the school year, and full time during breaks between semesters. Yes, homework takes time, and studying requires many hours: that is why it's great to get your degree while you are young and have the energy and focus that may be more difficult as you take on more responsibilities later in life.

Living at home and commuting to school can have a huge impact on your ability to stay out of debt. Moving out into a dorm apartment, or into a house near school with roommates may sound great, but these scenarios introduce all kinds of additional costs: groceries, utilities, rent, fast food, entertainment – these bills go up exponentially when you are away from home. No one cooks like your mother, and she would love to still have you home at dinner time. Your parents would most likely greatly encourage you to live at home so that they can enjoy your contributions to the family culture

for a few more years. I know, it may sound lame, and you may wish to spread your wings already now... but your older self will thank you for your decision to study from home!

### STAY NORTH YOUNG (WO)MAN!

While researching this article, I was surprised at how low annual tuition is in Canada compared to the average costs in the USA. A full-time student at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC may pay less than \$7,000 CDN for one year; while the equivalent cost at Western Washington University in Bellingham is nearer to \$14,000 USD!

Costs at private colleges may be considerably higher, but again the rates at Canadian schools can be far more reasonable than those at American institutions. Consider that tuition at Redeemer University in Ancaster is currently less than \$10,000 CDN (thanks in part to some generous donors!), while Calvin University in Michigan begins at nearly \$40,000 USD annually! (It is very common for Christian university students to get discounts and scholarships relatively easily, but these numbers do provide a helpful baseline.)

Since most readers of *Reformed Perspective* live in Canada, I can unequivocally advise, “stay north to study – your wallet will thank you!”

### ARE YOU MATURE ENOUGH?

University can be exciting and enjoyable when you find the right course of study, but are you ready? It's possible that you are not yet spiritually mature enough to take on the intellectual challenges of what is often a hostile environment for Christians. Professors and teaching assistants at most colleges and universities are no longer sympathetic to a Christian worldview. When you assert that there are two genders, that life begins at conception, or that you believe homosexuality is against God's created order, teaching staff and students will let you know you have fallen far outside of the mainstream of opinion. Perhaps even more dangerous, you may begin to feel “old fashioned” or “out of touch” – does the Bible really say that?

Christian post-secondary schools are not necessarily havens of safety either. Just consider how many universities were founded as Christian and aren't now – Harvard, Yale, Oxford, and the University of Toronto to name just a few. So, drift is common, and the lecturer at the front of your class may call himself a Christian, but his view of what the Bible teaches may be vastly different from how you have been taught, and what you know to be true. I don't mean to infer that every teacher at a Christian college is dangerous – not at all! But you must be thoroughly grounded yourself in the truths of God's Word so that you can weigh others' theories in the light of Scripture.

How do you know if you're ready? Ask people whose opinion you trust for their thoughts. Your grandmother, your uncle, your elder, your parents – those folks who know you well will be able to offer good insight on your readiness to make your way in the post-secondary world. Ask them to be honest, and don't be offended if they give different counsel than you expect!

### STAY GROUNDED

If you haven't yet publicly professed your faith, continue pre-confession classes while you are at college. Yes, it may fill up one more evening in your busy week,

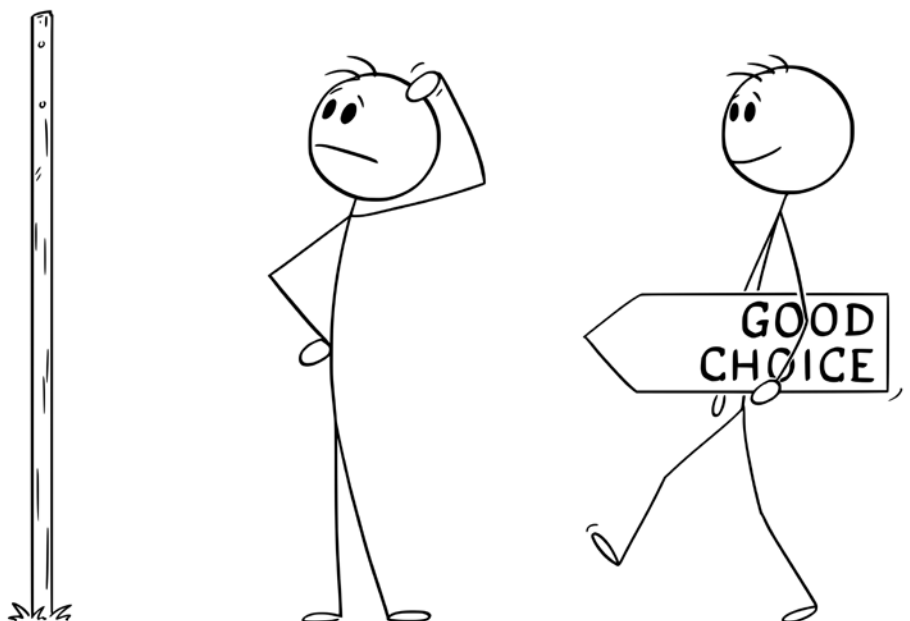
but the Lord gives us the great gift of ministers and elders who are qualified to teach the church's confessions to young people, and who enjoy the task. So take their instruction seriously – they may be providing the very answers you'll need when you are challenged in university.

If you have professed your faith, stay diligent in your Bible study opportunities with brothers and sisters in your congregation. Take the opportunity to ask questions about anything you've encountered at school: you may be surprised at the wisdom of a farmer or framer, or the insight of a housewife or teacher. Chances are very good that what you are wondering about has been faced by the saints before!

### CLOSING THOUGHTS

University is not for everyone. There is nothing shameful in deciding that you don't want a degree, and would rather get a two-year college diploma, or a certification in the trades!

But if you do decide to enroll at a university, I pray that this short article can give you some guidance in how to plan your years of study. The Lord has given many different gifts to His children: work diligently with what you have, and be wise in how you use the talents He has entrusted to you. RP



# NEWS IN *Perspective*

## THIS TIME THE LIBERALS ARE LEAVING: CONGREGATIONS DEPART CRC OVER ORTHODOX TURN

BY MARTY VAN DRIEL

**A**s many as 24 congregations will disaffiliate from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) after its Synod 2024 made clear that disagreement with the federation's official positions on homosexuality will not be permitted. At its federational meeting in 2022, the CRC had accepted *The Human Sexuality Report*, which affirmed the traditional Biblical teaching that homosexual sex is sinful and clearly forbidden by Scripture, and that the church's confessions already condemn such actions as sin against the seventh commandment.

The question that Synod 2024 ruled on was how the churches would deal with congregations that did not agree with this adopted teaching and allowed practicing homosexuals to remain office bearers and members in good standing. Synod 2024 ruled that:

"churches which have declared themselves to be... in protest... regarding synod's decisions shall be entered into a one-year process of

discipline requiring repentance and a move toward restoration with CRCNA positions, or towards disaffiliation."

By requiring repentance of these churches, Synod 2024 essentially called it sinful to affirm that homosexual behavior is permissible for Christians, and affirmed the clear delineation that

Synod 2022 had adopted. Remaining "in protest" is likely not an option for churches that disagree with these decisions: they are being asked to repent, or disaffiliate, within a one-year period.

In October, *The Banner* reported that at least seven churches have officially indicated a desire to disaffiliate from the denomination, while Religion News Services suggested that "at least two dozen" would do so. The CRC consists of just over 1,000 churches, and around 290,000 members, so these numbers represent a very small percentage that may increase in the coming months.

Interestingly, one congregation, Mountain View CRC in Lynden, WA is leaving despite *The Human Sexuality Report*, and not because of it. According to *The Banner*, they said that the same "hermeneutic that allowed for women in office has helped pave the way to other wrongful interpretations, namely the roughly 30% of Synod that promote full inclusion of practicing LGBT people."

Readers of *Reformed Perspective* are likely familiar with decisions by the CRC that tended towards a more liberal view of Scripture, especially in allowing women to become elders and pastors. It is refreshing and encouraging to see the denomination take a firm stand against our culture's celebration of sexual sin with this clear, Biblical stance.





## STATS CANADA: BIRTH RATE NOW AT JUST 1.26 CHILDREN PER WOMAN

BY JON DYKSTRA

**S**tatistics Canada is reporting that the country's birth rate has dropped to among the lowest in the world, at just 1.26 children per woman, and British Columbia leads the downward trend with a birth rate of just 1 child per woman.

To put these numbers in context, for a country's population to remain stable – neither growing nor shrinking – each woman needs to have, on average, 2 children – one to replace her, and one to replace her spouse. The real number is even a smidge higher at 2.1, to account for children that don't make it to adulthood. But outside of Nunavut, at 2.48 children, no province or territory is even at replacement level. Saskatchewan is next best, at 1.63 children.

So how might this impact Canada's population over the coming decades?

For simplicity's sake, we'll drill into this using a sample population of just 100, with 50 men and 50 women. If each of these women averages 1.26 children, then in one generation we're down to a population of 63. Let's round that up to 64, or 32 men and 32 women. If those 32 women then average 1.26 children each, we're down to a population of just 40. In just two generations we've seen the population drop by 60%.

Applied to Canada's current population of 40 million, that would see us drop all the way down to 16 million in two generations.

So why is Canada's population still growing, and growing fast? We're up by more than a million over just the last few years! This is due to an influx of immigrants – more than a million over the last few years. The growth isn't coming internally.

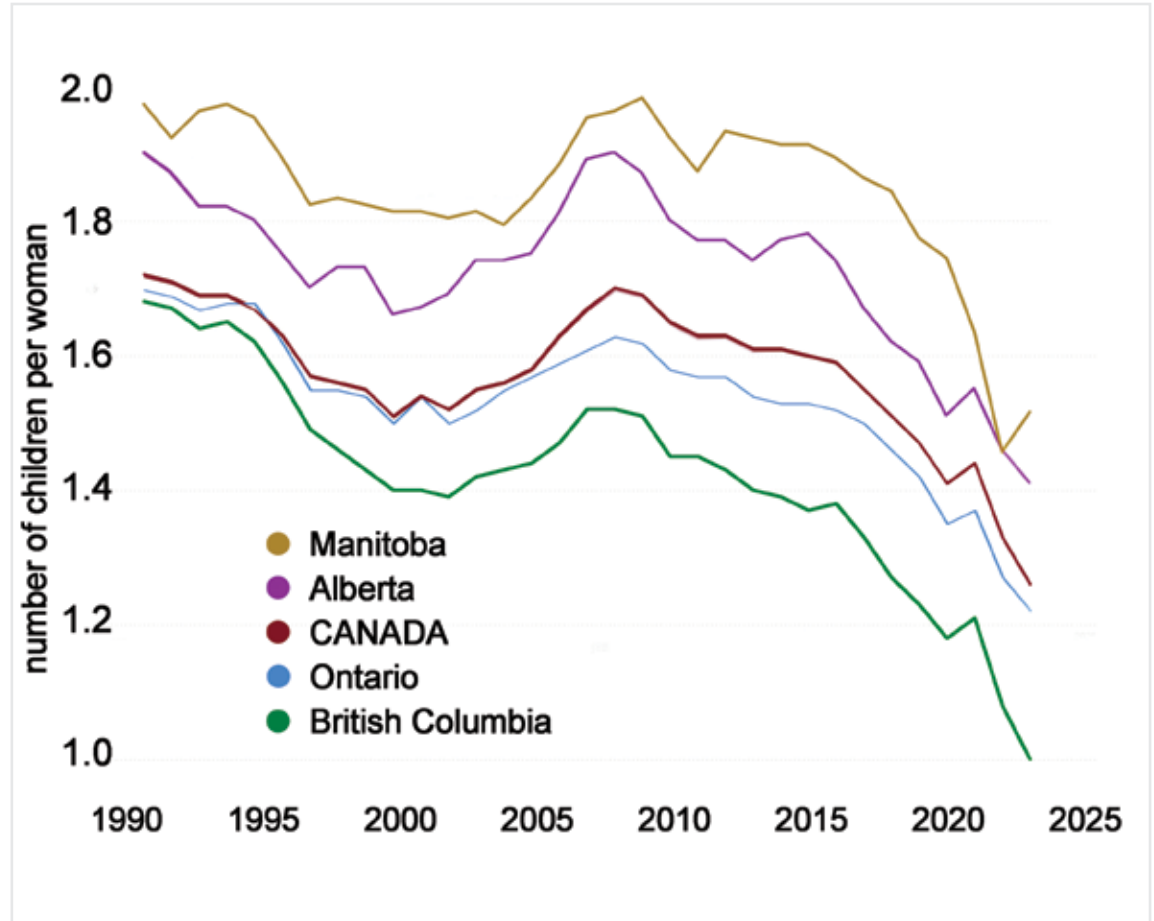
Massive immigration is one short-term means of forestalling population collapse, but it isn't a long-term answer, because birth rates are falling all over the world. And if the population decreases everywhere, there won't be immigrants knocking on our door.

What's the solution? Everyone seems to be looking to the government, but to this point, no program in any country has done much to slow the decline. The case could be made that the government isn't the answer, but it is part of the problem – every childcare program meant to make

having children easier needs to be paid for with higher taxes, and higher taxes make it that much harder to get by for one-income families where a mom wants to stay at home.

So what is the answer? Our culture needs to turn to God, not government. Do we sometimes find that a hard message to share? Well, thankfully, God is making it easier for us, by "platforming" us via the size of our families. It used to be you'd need to have 6 children or more to stand out, but now just 4 will give you an opportunity to let your light shine as people ask *why so many?* We can glorify our God, and help our country, just by speaking to the blessings He has given us in our children.

This chart is adapted from Stats Canada's "Fertility indicators, provinces and territories: Interactive dashboard" posted to StatsCan.gc.ca on Sept. 25, 2024. Used with permission. This does not constitute an endorsement by Statistics Canada of this product.



## SPORTS BETTING EXPLODES ACROSS CANADA

BY MARK PENNINGA & JON DYKSTRA

Since Canada legalized sports betting in 2021, the industry has exploded, and in September the Edmonton Oilers and the Alberta government were among the latest to cash in. On Sept. 9 the Oilers announced that they were getting sponsored by Play Alberta – the government’s own online gambling platform – to put a patch on the team’s home jerseys. Many fans weren’t impressed; an online poll by the *Edmonton Journal*’s hockey writer David Staples had the majority annoyed with the Oilers for degrading their uniform. But what about government promoting a vice that harms its own citizens?

Those harms aren’t limited to Alberta. With three years of data on hand, the Christian think tank Cardus has just published an extensive report on “The Hidden Harms of Single-Event Sports

Betting in Ontario.”

Their report shared that sports viewers in Ontario now get hit with *2.8 gambling references every minute* of a live sports broadcast. The advertising is effective – the number of sports betting accounts is climbing



quickly in Ontario, from 492,000 in the first quarter of 2023, to 1.3 million today. The average being lost by each of those 1.3 million gamblers is \$283 each month. As is always the case with gambling, the biggest winner is the company, organization, or government behind the scheme. Revenue from betting increased from an already huge \$368.1 million to a staggering \$588 million just from 2023 to 2024.

It isn’t only sports betting that has taken off. Revenue from casino gaming saw an even greater spike, doubling from \$854.8 million to \$1.78 billion.

Gambling is bad stewardship of what God has entrusted to us, because the odds are always stacked in favor of the house. Even if you do win it is only because your neighbor has lost, and lost big. And gambling is also addictive – sadly, those who have the least to steward are often the most likely to be hurt by this addiction, adding the additional yoke of debt to their already-challenging lives.

## JOHN RUSTAD, LATEST CONSERVATIVE LEADER TO PROMOTE IVF

BY JON DYKSTRA

During the last month’s provincial election campaign, BC Conservative leader John Rustad promised that, were he elected, he would expand access to in-vitro fertilization (IVF) by funding a second round of treatments. The NDP government had previously pledged to fund one round of IVF, starting in 2025.

Rustad’s pledge made him the latest conservative politician to promote IVF. South of the border, less than two months earlier, Republican presidential contender Donald Trump promised to get IVF treatments covered by insurance companies or by the government. Then, in September, US senator, and fellow Republican, Ted Cruz put forward a bill that would penalize any state governments that banned IVF.

Why has the political right come out for IVF now? The impetus might be an Alabama Supreme Court decision back in

February that initially looked like it might stop IVF. The decision allowed couples to sue an IVF clinic for the “wrongful death” of their frozen embryos who had died in a storage accident. The ruling wasn’t a full acknowledgement of the personhood of these preborn children, because the parents could have killed these same children without consequence. But for the IVF industry, it meant that if they killed these children against parents’ wishes, they could be sued for a wrongful death. And when these frozen children are protected and treated even a little bit like the children that they are, then the IVF industry can’t function because killing these children is a standard part of IVF “treatments,” with far more embryos killed or frozen than are ever born. So three of the state’s IVF clinics put themselves on pause as they sorted things out.

Sadly, “conservative” politicians were among those who came to their rescue,

the previously pro-life Ted Cruz among them, proposing legislation that would shield the clinics.

With IVF in the news, the formerly pro-life Donald Trump promised to make IVF free. Rustad took the trend north of the border with his own “pro-family” pledge to double the current government’s IVF pledge.

If there is a silver lining to the NDP getting back into power in BC, it would be that Rustad won’t be able to implement his pledge, and perhaps Christians can get him to reconsider before he makes it again. As even the Alabama courts’ *partial* protection of the frozen preborn shows, the IVF industry can only operate when we ignore the humanity of the embryos being created. What’s also evident is how badly the Church needs to speak out about the horrors of IVF, if even “pro-lifers” and conservatives don’t understand it is not pro-family to freeze and murder preborn babies. We have reason to hope they might even listen.

## LIBERAL MP REMINDS JOURNALIST WHO HOLDS THE PURSE STRINGS

BY MARK PENNINGA

ngoing funding of Canada's media by the federal Liberal government appears to be emboldening some government officials to demand favorable reporting.

On Sept. 7, Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed weighed in on a tweet made the previous day by Terry Newman, a senior editor at the *National Post*. Newman's tweet on X was critical of immigration minister Marc Miller specifically and the Liberal government overall, and that didn't sit well with Noormohamed who replied with his own public post:

"Your paper wouldn't be in business were it not for the subsidies that the government that you hate put in place...."

Newman was quick on the draw. "Okay. You win. You pay my salary," she replied. "I'll stop criticizing your government now. Please don't fire me."

Mr. Noormohamed is well aware of the *National Post's* funding, since he sat on the "National Forum on the Media" parliamentary committee this summer where he argued that since reporters were taking government money and were still remaining critical of the government, clearly such funding wasn't a problem. However, now, only a couple months later, he is the one making what appears to be an implicit threat to a journalist who dares challenge his government.

For years now the Liberal government has been channeling hundreds of millions of dollars to media outlets that meet their criteria. "We're pretty close, by my estimation, to a 50 percent wage subsidy on journalist salaries up



to \$85,000 per year," noted Rudyard Griffiths, executive director of *The Hub*, a relatively new non-profit media organization that has been very intentional about not taking government funding.

A recent poll has found that more Canadians say "a lot of the news is just government propaganda" than "the news is fair and transparent." And almost twice as many respondents said "I don't think I get the truth from mainstream news in Canada" as said "I get the truth from the news."

Media outlets have been struggling financially in recent years as the public is increasingly un-

willing to pay for a publication, relying instead on social media and other online content to stay informed. The federal government stepped in to help with direct funding, including a \$595 million dollar bailout and a "Special Measures for Journalism" fund that provides tens of millions in cash to numerous publications each year.

But one of the inevitable consequences of a government-funded media is that it makes it difficult for the public to trust that such media is independent of the government, and able to report objectively about the government's decisions.

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*It is our hope and prayer that the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ will reach the ends of the earth and that God would continue to use each of us as instruments in His hands. To Him be the glory!*





## ALBERTA TO HELP BUILD INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

BY MARK PENNINGA

**F**or the first time ever, a provincial government has promised to help cover the construction costs of new independent schools. And this recent Alberta government's decision has received the predictable outcry. "This policy shift increases the siphoning by funnelling what sounds like unlimited public capital funds to pay for the construction of exclusive buildings that most Albertan kids cannot access," complained the communications director of the activist organization *Support Our Students Alberta* in a column in the *Edmonton Journal*.

Independent schools in Alberta currently qualify for 70 per cent funding of *operating* revenue, but they have to cover all their own *capital* costs.

Michael Van Pelt and Catharine Kavanagh, from Cardus, defended the premier's announcement in their own hard-hitting *Edmonton Journal* article:

"Public education includes 45,000 Alberta kids attending independent schools. They too are members of the public — and their education is as much public as it is in any government-run school."

Van Pelt and Kavanagh explained that every child that is educated at an independent school leaves an open space in a "big-board" school. And that saves the province \$3,400 per student.

While government funding can be a massive relief to Christian parents, it was only six years ago that a previous Alberta government demanded Christian schools add terms like *gender identity* and *sexual orientation* to their policies, allow "gay-straight alliance" clubs, and remove some of their references to the Lord and the infallibility of Scripture from their policies. Schools that didn't were threatened with a loss of funding and accreditation.

So, while funding can be a blessing, let's be careful to not make our children's education dependent on it.

## ALBERTA PLANNING TO ENSHINE RIGHT TO REFUSE VACCINATIONS

BY MARK PENNINGA

**A**lberta Premier Danielle Smith announced in late September that her government is planning to amend and strengthen the Alberta Bill of Rights when the Alberta legislature sits again later this fall. As she explained via a video message:

"As our society evolves, so too must our laws, to ensure our rights and freedoms are properly protected in an ever-changing world."

Smith's first proposed change is to ensure that:

"...every individual in our province who has the mental capacity to do so, will have the right to decide whether or not to receive a vaccination or other medical procedure."

But the revisions aren't limited to vaccinations. The changes will also strengthen property rights to ensure that Albertans can't be deprived of their property without due process and just compensation. And they also include a plan to further affirm the rights of legal and responsible firearm owners. As the premier declared:

"In my view, these amendments to the Bill of Rights are not just legal changes. They are a reaffirmation of the values that make Alberta one of the freest jurisdictions on earth."

However, some are questioning the motives and the real impact of such changes. Mount Royal University professor Lori Williams argued that "she's clearly playing to [UCP party activists] in the hopes that they will not call her leadership into question in the leadership review at the beginning of November."

The Alberta Bill of Rights was passed in 1972 and updated in 1980 and 2000. Unlike the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it isn't a constitutional document, so it is easily alterable. That means that even while other bills and policies in the province are supposed to align with the Alberta Bill of Rights, the legislature can as easily override the Bill of Rights as they can amend it.

This highlights the differences between the rights God gives vs. rights from the State. As well motivated as the premier's efforts might be, if the New Democrats win the next election, they could quickly take these new "rights" away. In contrast, God grants irrevocable rights via the prohibitions in His 10 Commandments — for example, by banning murder and theft He gives a right to life and property. These rights may still be violated by sinful man, but they can never be erased.

Both the Alberta Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter pay lip service to this truth by recognizing in their preambles that the rights they seek to recognize are founded on the supremacy of God.

Picture credit: Screenshot from a Sept. 24 post to x.com/ ABDanielleSmith





# The **CAN YOU BUILD IT?** Contest

Our Creator made us in His image. We too can create and be creative. Building with toys like Lego is a wonderful means of fostering creativity. So *RP* is challenging our readers to a brick building contest!



## THEME: CREATIVITY

Create something entirely new. It can be functional, fun, or out-of-this-world. Perhaps a machine that you wish existed, or a vehicle from your imagination or....?

## CATEGORIES:

1. Age 0-9
2. Ages 10-13
3. Ages 14-17
4. Ages 18+

**PRIZES:**  
**\$100 gift certificate**  
**towards Lego for each**  
**category**

## RULES:

- One entry per person;
- Entries must be 100% original: not from kits or copying examples from books or online
- Entries must be designed and built entirely by the person entering the contest



## HOW TO ENTER:

1. Have someone take a picture of you with your creation
2. Have someone also take a video where you explain your creation
  - a. Say your first name only
  - b. Show us what you built
  - c. No need for editing the video or making it look professional. Just hit record on a phone or tablet.
  - d. Maximum 2-minute video
3. Send your picture and video in to [admin@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:admin@reformedperspective.ca) (or share it via Google Drive or another means of transferring files).
4. Under 18? Have a parent give permission to *RP* to share your video/photo (we will only post first names of youth online).

**Deadline: January 31, 2025**

*RP* plans to share some of the entries in our March/April issue, along with links to the videos.



Contest sponsored by:



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# LOST AND FOUND:

## God's guiding hand in seeking and finding a missing girl

by Mark Penninga

Just before going to bed on a Thursday evening in mid-September, Michelle Dykstra read a Facebook post by a mother whose six-year-old daughter had gone missing.

Earlier that evening, around 6 pm, Oaklynn Schweder had disappeared from her home on the Skin Tye Reserve, an isolated community in northwest BC. Her mother Gail Skin shared the devastating news on social media as the RCMP called in a canine team to help find her.

"I felt for her, because she is only six" recalled Michelle, a mother of three who lives just outside of Houston, BC. "I couldn't sleep very much that night."

Not only is Oaklynn young, she is on the autism spectrum and is non-verbal. To make it even more challenging for searchers, she would sometimes hide in unusual places or up in trees. Adding to the urgency, nighttime temperatures around Oaklynn's home dip below zero, and the surrounding wilderness teems with wildlife, including bears and wolves.

Oaklynn was still missing the next morning, and the updates kept coming back negative. Search and Rescue teams throughout British Columbia joined in,

along with the Canadian Rangers and the BC Wildfire Service. In addition to specially trained dogs, the RCMP deployed thermal-imaging drones to try to spot Oaklynn's heat signature in among the trees. As more help was brought in, media outlets from across the country picked up the story of the missing Indigenous girl.

### HEART FOR THE LOST

Unable to stop thinking and praying about Oaklynn, that evening Michelle talked to her husband Tim about whether they could help. They had never been involved in a search before, but they lived just a couple hours away and felt a strong pull to do something for Oaklynn. "I really did feel like it was definitely put on my heart" Michelle reflected.

Saturday wasn't possible because Tim and their son Owen had to work all day, but they decided that if she was still missing Sunday, and if the search and rescue teams were open to volunteers, they would go out to help (even though they don't normally miss church).

In spite of a team that grew to 600 searchers carefully sweeping the area, by Sunday morning Oaklynn was still miss-

ing. The searchers were professionally coordinated, using GPS plotting to ensure every part of the land was covered. By this time, hopes of finding Oaklynn alive were diminishing. Michelle was restless and eager to start searching. They filled a vehicle with Tim, Michelle, their children Owen and Morgan, along with Tim's sister Mandy Jaswal and her two sons Mica and Carson.

### PROVIDENTIAL FRUSTRATIONS

In spite of their eagerness to help, they were frustrated by one snag after another. A forgotten coat resulted in a short delay, which resulted in a missed bus ride, which in turn resulted in a missed ferry across Francois Lake. By the time they got to the search area, they missed the team that headed into the bush and had to wait to be called. They spent the next three and a half hours eating bannock, drinking coffee, visiting, and helping out with things like hauling groceries to the search teams. And then a search coordinator passed their group over, as he was concerned that they weren't experienced enough for the bush.

It was afternoon when they were finally called to search, and they were



put under the lead of Glen Franz, a search and rescue volunteer from their home town. Two volunteer firefighters also joined their group. In their designated search area, they were to walk 5 meters apart from each other back and forth, to cover a grid over the land.

Only ten minutes in, they hit another snag. The search leader was having trouble finding his location on the map and realized that they had started in the wrong place on their quadrant. By this time, they decided to keep searching from where they were, in the hope of going back later in the day to get the area they missed.

The problems didn't stop there. The devices that the search and rescue team was relying on to chart their progress had almost run out of battery. And there

were strong winds gusting, with trees falling regularly.

It wasn't until later that day that they began to see that all of these worries and frustrations were actually the means by which God was guiding them exactly to where they needed to be at just the right time.

### CALMING THE WIND

Although dogs, GPS devices, helicopters, drones, and about 1,400 searchers were all devoted to the singular goal of finding Oaklynn, Michelle turned to another "tactic" – going to God.

"I remember walking through the bush just praying, 'Bring her out! Just show her to anybody. We've got

hundreds of people out here. If she's hiding, just bring her out."

As they walked, they saw bear signs everywhere. Tim shared that some searchers even had to climb into bear dens to look for Oaklynn.

Although they at first felt they might turn around a corner and just find her, after hours of searching it sunk in to Mandy that:

"the only way that a kid is going to be out here, especially since she is only wearing socks and a t-shirt... is if an animal dragged her over here.... Your brain just goes somewhere else to try and prevent you from the pain of thinking of that."

## Just moments after Oaklynn was found

Photos are by Mica and Mandy Jaswal







**Michelle carrying Oaklynn out of the forest, with the team assisting**

At 6 pm the organizers informed the searchers that it was time to call it a day and head back to the base.

They were only half done their search area, when it was shared that their GPS search devices were almost out of battery. They were given the option to end their search. Mandy reminded the group that they still needed to go back to the corner where they were supposed to have started. She insisted that they search there so it wasn't missed.

The group agreed, but they also discovered it was the most challenging land in their area, with a steep gully and a lot of trees blown over that weren't easy to cross. Recent rain made it all very slippery. "We all went up to the top of that gully," Michelle said, "just so

that we could all get together and then leave." Given that it wasn't dark yet, the group wondered if Oaklynn had been located. "The thought came to my mind that maybe they had found a body," said Michelle. They later learned that the search was called because of the strong winds and the danger that falling trees posed to the searchers.

Then, for just two or three seconds, everything got quiet – the static on the radio stopped, and the wind fell silent. As Mandy explained, "All of a sudden [Michelle's sons] were like, 'Did you hear that? We heard something, Mom, it sounded like a kid!'" The others listened too, hoping it wasn't just an animal. When they heard the noise again they all started calling Oaklynn's name.

That's when they heard a response coming from the bottom of the gully. They all heard it.

None of the adults remember climbing down the gully, even though it had just been a major chore to climb through it. They said it felt like they were transported there.

"I just kept hearing 'I see her, I see her,' and I couldn't see her till the last second," recalled Michelle.

"So I just kept running. I could not see her until I got around this bunch of trees, and then all of a sudden there was that log, and she was standing behind it, and then she sees me, so she took a couple steps, and I'm full on running, and I just grabbed her and then sat down on the log. It was like, what just happened? What happened?"

While Michelle held the little girl, the others rubbed her feet to warm her up, checked her for injuries, got her some warm clothes, and gave her something to drink. They were amazed to find that, other than looking dehydrated, being covered in berries and grime, and smelling like urine, she looked to be completely unharmed.

Tim described the occasion as joy all around. Michelle kept saying "thank you Lord!"

Their team leader used his radio to report "subject found," to the disbelief of those at base camp. And then Michelle proceeded to singlehandedly pack Oaklynn through the forest, with the rest of the team holding back branches and helping her over trees.

They were so close to the base camp that they could even hear the cheer of the crowd when they were told that Oaklynn had been found and was okay.

Just twenty minutes later and they were back to where her mother and father were anxiously waiting.

The mom's reunion with Oaklynn was caught on video and has been viewed on Facebook over 3 million times, in addition to the TV reports that used the footage around the world.

But what wasn't captured was



Michelle and the team that God providentially used to find Oaklynn.

## RECOGNIZING PROVIDENCE

As Tim, Michelle, Mandy, and their children recounted the day's events, they kept coming back to the same conclusion: God was orchestrating every detail, even the mistakes and frustrations, to allow for the joyful reunion of Oaklynn and her loved ones.

If they had started searching where they were supposed, to, they likely wouldn't have found her because she was moving steadily and wasn't even in their search area when they actually found her. They also thank God for the young ears of their children, who were the first to hear Oaklynn, even though she couldn't speak and even though she was more than 100 meters away. Likewise, they praise God for calming the wind and radios so that they could hear her voice.

"So all these little glitches, all these little things, all the little breaks, all the perfect timing up to the point of the wind stopping. Like, Who stops the wind?" asked Mandy. "It's obvious, right?"

## CONFESSING PROVIDENCE

The previous Saturday, when Michelle was still at home folding laundry and thinking about Oaklynn, she recalled how so many Christians athletes who competed in the Summer Olympics used their platform to give glory to God. "I was thinking, if there's any chance, I would make sure I would glorify God, right? Because you've got to do that."

The day after Oaklynn was found they were invited to a feast organized by the local Indigenous band to thank the many people involved in the search. There was singing, drumming, and speeches, including a mix of traditional native spirituality and Christianity.

"The person at the mic asked 'Does anybody else want to say anything?'" recalled Michelle. "And everybody else is quiet. And then all of a sudden, I'm like, 'Wait, no, I do. I have to say something.'"

*Although she is fearful of public speaking, she took the opportunity to share with everyone that it was God who orchestrated all of this.*

Although she is fearful of public speaking, she took the opportunity to share with everyone that it was God who orchestrated all of this. She recalled how she had prayed while searching, and how God directed everything to work together so that Oaklynn was found. Her testimony was shared on Facebook live, and part of it was quoted in their local newspaper.

## REJOICING AND WEeping

In Matthew 18, Jesus shares a story of a man with a hundred sheep, one of which goes astray. When he finds it "he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray."

The searchers shared how vehicles were honking on the ferry ride as they returned from the search, and how they received numerous texts and messages of joy over the news that Oaklynn had been found.

Although their children slept well that

night, Michelle and Mandy shared how they both had a hard time sleeping, and experienced their share of tears in the days following.

By Wednesday, Michelle was back to doing laundry. "I find the sweater that I was wearing, and I pick it up, and it was just this strong smell of pee, like urine, and I just start crying like crazy. I completely broke down." Later, she went "to bring laundry from the washer to the dryer, and I find the sweater again, and it doesn't smell like pee, and I'm crying again, and it's just a complete mess."

The group admitted they had a hard time in the following days, feeling like a piece of them was missing, since they put their heart out for Oaklynn and now she is back with her parents and doesn't even know who they are.

In many ways, that is exactly what love is. RP



# THRIVING AT A NON-CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY?

YOU CAN BE BLESSED, AND BE A BLESSING, AT A SECULAR COLLEGE

by Jan Broersma

When Gillian, a 21-year-old from Langley, BC, talks about her love for art, her face lights up. Throughout high school she saw art as a way to glorify God and use her talents, so when it was time to make post-secondary plans, she decided to pursue a visual arts degree at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV).

However, it didn't take long for her to realize that the program wasn't for her. She describes walking into the hallway of her building at UFV and seeing a large, irreverent parody of Michelangelo's famous "Creation of Adam," now filled with LG-BTQ imagery. Art here was not about glorifying God; it was about "how we'll break the status quo." With no Christian friends in her classes, and the culture shock of her new environment, Gillian also felt very alone on campus.

"It just wasn't good for my personal and faith life," she says, adding that the experience – including recognizing the negative impacts – was still a beneficial time of growth for her.

Gillian finished her term, then took some time to reconsider her options and try out a few jobs. She says these were valuable months of figuring out what she did and didn't want to do. One thing she concluded was that she still wanted to do something creative.

As she explored different programs

and talked to different people, she was intrigued by commercial interior design. Happily, she was accepted into the interior design program at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), which has turned out to be a much better fit. She enjoys the work, as well as the more professional environment: "People talk about their career plans, not their pronouns."

When she reflects on her post-secondary journey, she advises younger students to know what they're getting into: "Know the bias of your chosen faculty or department." She recommends talking to other Christians who have gone through a program you're considering. And when you're on campus, she suggests searching for a Christian club to join, and making the most of what they offer. As well, she says, don't lose touch with your church and Christian school friends: "You have to hang onto them."

## A GOOD FIT?

As Gillian discovered, one secular university or faculty may not be a good place for a particular student while another program may be a great fit. Non-Christian universities have their own challenges for young Christians, but they can also be places where Christians can be blessed and be a blessing.

So why might someone choose a secular college or university – and what might

their experiences be like? How can their time at a non-Christian institution be beneficial for them, and a blessing to their neighbors? And how can they thrive there?

I asked a number of current and former students for their thoughts.

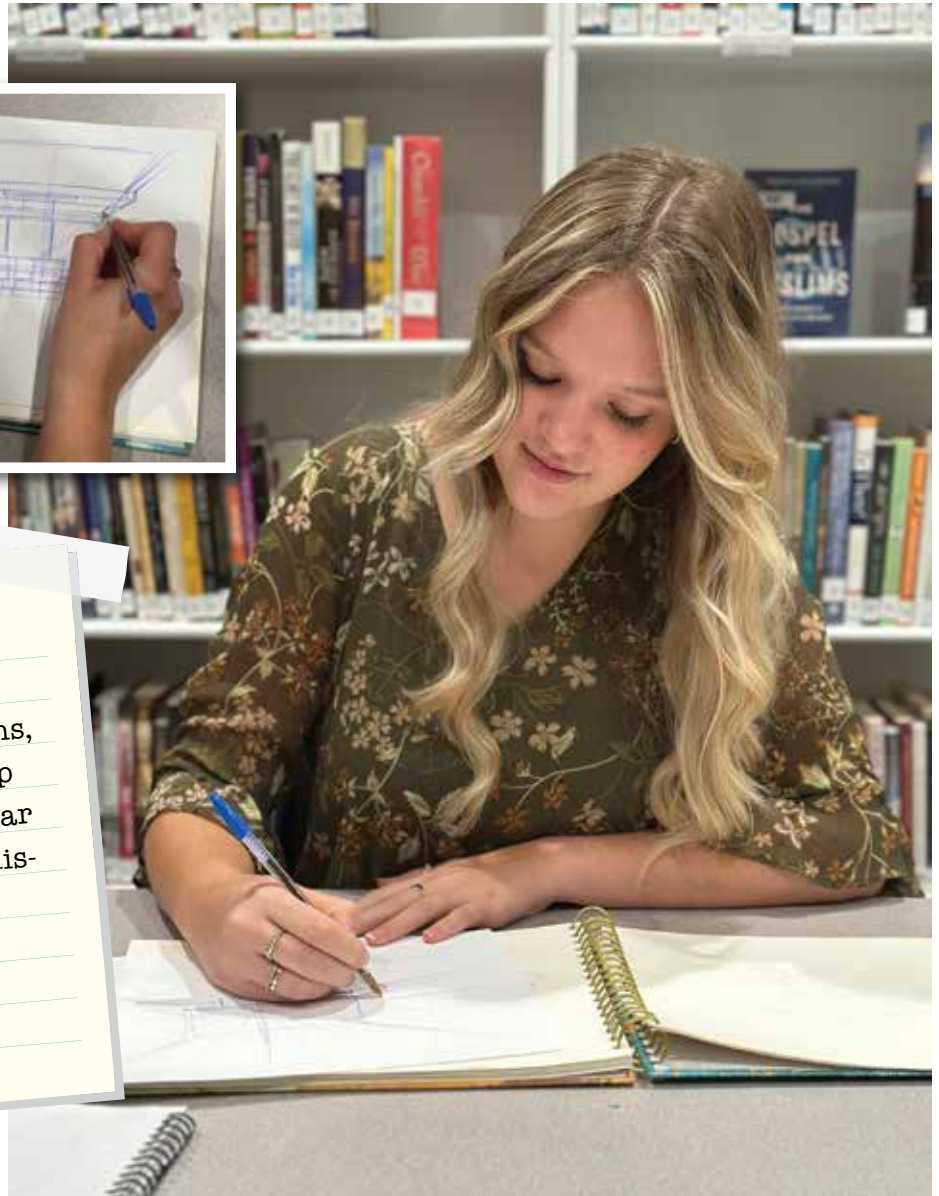
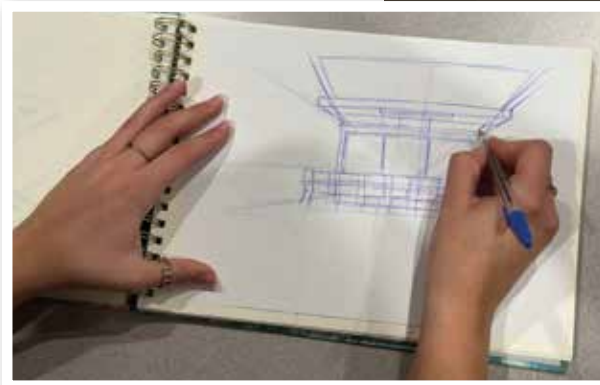
## MAKING THE CHOICE

For many, the choice of school was based largely on very practical considerations: cost, location, or acceptance into a particular program. Non-Christian colleges are significantly less expensive to attend than Christian ones, and chances are there's one close by.

James, a recent nursing graduate from the University of Northern BC, chose his school because of the generous scholarship he received, as well as its location in Prince George, BC – a town with a good Reformed church, and with a manageable cost of living, that is only a few hours away from his hometown of Smithers.

Amy, his younger sister, opted to try out the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), where she could live with her grandparents and attend one of the many local Reformed churches. The smaller campus and smaller class sizes of UFV also appealed to her.

Luke, a young articling student in Edmonton, AB, chose the University of Alberta so he could live at home during



After exploring different paths, Gillian found a way to develop her artistic talents at a secular institution without compromising her faith.

his studies and save money (“Thanks, Mom and Dad”) and stay connected to his Christian friend group. U of A was also a “top 5” university in Canada, so he felt it would be a good place for his personal and professional development as he pursued his law studies.

While most of the students I talked to cited considerations such as cost, convenience, and alignment with career goals, they also all noted that proximity to a solid church remained an important factor.

### MIXED EXPERIENCES

So what was it like for these students, many of whom had attended a Christian

school and lived largely within a Reformed community their whole life?

Experiences, both socially and academically, were mixed.

Emily, a young physiotherapist who grew up in the small, largely Reformed town of Lynden, Washington, found tolerance and respect among her classmates at the Okanagan campus of the University of British Columbia (UBCO) – but also some real hostility from her dormmates. She formed some close connections with her fellow human kinetics students: “Even though we were quite the blend of up-bringsings and backgrounds, we respected each other’s differences and it was in these

times that I got to speak about my faith and answer their questions, without being attacked or ridiculed.”

At the same time, she found it difficult to be the only “church girl” on her dorm floor. “There is a difference between living *among* unbelievers and living *with* unbelievers. I was accused of being a ‘hater’ yet teased about ‘being the good girl who went to church.’ Home (my dorm) was no longer a safe space like it was growing up; now it was a spiritual warzone. And yet this experience was one of the best things that happened to me. This taught me how to defend my faith – when to do it and how to do it – with people I *lived with*.”





Emily found that her secular university could be a “spiritual warzone.” Her strong church, and Christian family and friends, helped her both spiritually and practically.

Ben, who is studying criminology at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, has found that the social sciences are a tough place to express Christian viewpoints. He says there’s lots of “anti-Christian rhetoric” in fields like psychology and sociology; “Christians are the number-one bad guys.” And although there are several small conservative groups on campus (made up largely of Christians), he says they don’t feel particularly welcome there; Ben mentions that any pro-life or anti-pornography materials that the groups post are very quickly ripped down.

James, at the University of Northern BC, didn’t find as much overt hostility to Christianity in his classes, but did soon notice that his Christian worldview and values were an exception on campus. He remembers a first-year English professor who repeatedly used “very [sexually] explicit” writing samples in his teaching; week after week, “I would sit there, quietly and awkwardly,” James remembers wryly. Eventually James gathered up his courage and talked to the professor about it during office hours. “I explained that the examples made me uncomfortable, and could he tone them down a bit?” James says that the professor was “surprised, but receptive. He apologized and promised to change his examples. He was a nice guy, actually.”

As Sam, who is completing a history

major/English minor degree at UFV with a view to teaching, notes, how much conflict you encounter is partly up to you. “A debate will only break out if you spark a debate.” There may be times to (constructively) stick out your neck, like James did, and other times when you need to consider your response carefully.

“There are times to refuse being drawn into silly questions, which Paul told Timothy to avoid,” says Emily, citing 2 Timothy 2, “yet times to answer, but with gentleness, so that [unbelievers] might have a chance to come to know the truth.”

### MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT?

Is it harder to be a Christian on a non-Christian campus now than it was ten or twenty years ago?

Harma-Mae, a regular RP contributor who completed a history degree in 2013, reflects on the ideological shifts that have taken place in the last few decades: “When I was in school there was a good amount of postmodernism (i.e., there are many perspectives and we can’t tell which one is true, or if there even is any truth), which seemed to result in many perspectives being allowed to be shared and voiced, as long as it was just another perspective. So there were times when I could say what my perspective was. Now I think there is much more tolerance for censorship – it

seems to be allowed to view some perspectives as wrong, though they would probably be called ‘harmful’ rather than wrong. Which means that a young person today would face different challenges than what [I] faced!”

### SECULAR VS. CHRISTIAN COLLEGES

When I was a student, there was a saying in our church community that the devil wore “klompen” (those noisy wooden shoes that the Dutch are, apparently, so fond of) at the public universities, but snuck around in “stocking feet” at the local evangelical Christian one. The point wasn’t so much to disparage Christian institutions as to acknowledge the different, more subtle dangers and attacks against their faith that young people might encounter at such places.

There’s something straightforward about attending a secular university. You know that you won’t agree with a lot of what you hear; you’re on your guard; you take what’s useful, but don’t particularly expect to find your new best friends or a community where you’ll belong. As Harma-Mae puts it, “I preferred to be taught from a secular perspective because I found it more tiring to try to evaluate Christian teaching I didn’t agree with. It was easier for me to assume I disagreed and figure out where there might be some truth poking through



rather than hearing things that sounded kind of right but something was off.”

Emily echoed some of these thoughts, pointing out that it’s easier to spot the “counterfeit” truth at a secular university, where it’s often so much more obviously wrong.

Whether you choose a Christian or secular university, of course, it’s important to keep the bigger picture in mind of why you’re there and what your primary goal and purpose is. I love how Ben put it: “Your number one goal in life is not to get an education and get a good job, but to live as a Christian in this world” – wherever God has put you right now.

### MATURING IN YOUR FAITH

Grappling with your faith, and having it challenged, is also an important part of maturing as a Christian – and preparing for life as a Christian in a world that won’t always appreciate your beliefs. This may not be *why* you’d choose a secular college, but it is something that many students appreciate as they look back.

“Seeing your worldview challenged [can] serve to strengthen your faith and belief,” comments Crystal, who studied English and creative writing at UBC.

“When you see how broken the world is, and how flawed many accepted ideas are, it only points to how much better God’s way is.”

James felt it was useful to get outside his somewhat sheltered community, and understand some different perspectives better. “It’s easy to miss nuances” until you’re up close to those who are different from you, he says.

“Knowledge is very different than experience,” Sam adds. “It’s very important to... know the other side well.”

“I feel like I was taught to view ‘the world’ as a scary place as I grew up in the Canadian Reformed bubble,” says Harma-Mae, “and that I did need to get outside that bubble and learn to talk to other people who were not the same as me, and learn how to live in the world as a Christian, face that fear.”

Ben comments on how his time at Simon Fraser University has led him to depend on and appreciate his Bible more, and to learn to “exercise [his] spirit of discernment,” while Luke found that the challenges of university life helped him learn “to trust in the Lord at all times, [and that] God has a plan for our lives. University allowed me to grow.”

Asia, who recently completed a Bachelor of Science at the University of Alberta, reflects on how university was good for her growth not only spiritually, but in many areas: “I learned a lot about myself and what practical life skills I was good at or needed more practice in (e.g., my time management, how I handled high-stress situations, the best way I learn, my communication skills, work-life balance, how the views/opinions of secular students and professors affected me, my ability to shine as a light on campus). I think I’ve grown up a lot since I graduated high school and I attribute a significant part of that change to four years of university.”

Of course, the same challenges to their faith that may lead to growth for some – as they learn to defend their Christian worldview and really learn to trust God – can cause others to stumble. That’s why the solid foundation of a good church with which you’re connected, regular time for Bible study and prayer, and relationships with strong Christian friends, family members, and others are so vital. You can withstand the storms of a secular post-secondary experience, and even come out stronger for them – but not if you try to

Ben reminds students to keep the big picture in mind:  
“Your number one goal in life is not to get an education and get a good job, but to live as a Christian in this world.”



# Advice from grads

## 12 QUICK TIPS FROM THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE YOU

by Jan Broersma

- » Don't be shy about sharing where you went to high school or that you go to church on Sunday (you never know what good conversations or friendships might come of it!).
- » Get to know your professors personally. It can be a big help with understanding what is expected with assignments and projects. But it can also be important if they have different worldviews. When people know you as a person rather than just another student, they will be more likely to try to understand you, rather than dismiss you and your values.
- » It is often better to live off campus. Transit often works well close to a university. And that way you have space from some of the social activities that aren't wholesome or healthy.
- » Don't write anyone off, be it students or professors. Some of the people who look and act most different may have been placed on your path for a reason.
- » In the first two weeks of classes, try say something that will help other Christians in the class to recognize that you are a Christian as well. For example, mention that you were blessed by being raised in a solid family. That way you can find each other. It makes a huge difference to have someone else who has your back and who can work with you if you need to.
- » Ask current or previous students which professors to avoid.
- » Don't get distracted by people who are really passionate about things that you aren't really interested in. Just because it's one person's passion doesn't mean it needs to be yours! Lots of things will sound really cool, but don't feel pressured into things you're not sure will be worth your time.
- » Volunteering before choosing a program can really help. Sometimes your program won't give you the hands-on experience that you're looking for. I would encourage university students to volunteer or work in areas that they find interesting during university to help you get some practical experience and narrow down what you might want to do with your degree afterwards.
- » Don't be discouraged if you change your mind and your degree changes or doesn't work out. It isn't wasted time!
- » Consider pursuing a double major. Doing so allows you to not get stuck in one direction.
- » Join the campus pro-life club. It can provide you with great opportunities to practice talking with people who have very different beliefs.
- » Take advantage of the flexibility and opportunities that university can offer, with its often less rigid schedule and wide range of opportunities. For example, make use of the amazing recreational facilities! They are usually included in your student fees.

Luke and Asia (now married) both attended the University of Alberta, and both found their university years to be a time of growth – spiritually and in other areas.



go it alone (“a three-fold cord is not quickly broken,” as Eccl. 4:12 puts it).

As well, everything that happens before you head off for college – the training you receive at home, church, and school for the first eighteen years or your life – should give you a firm foundation. As Emily puts it, and as she experienced it herself, “Both the church and home are training grounds to expand and increase a child’s knowledge in their faith ... needing to know what you believe and why.”

### SALT AND LIGHT

Students also shouldn’t underestimate the value of their Christian presence and witness on campus.

You may be intimidated by the idea of debating your faith, but you can start by simply being “the Christian who, just like me, has the cross around their neck, and maybe someone will ask you [about your faith],” says Sam.

As Harma-Mae relates, “I was often surprised by how open people on campus were at having conversations about faith ... I think university is a time of life where people are often searching and also curious about other perspectives – at least in one-on-one conversations.”

If we really believe that “every square inch” of this world is God’s, then we can’t abandon any of it – including our local universities with their many lost and confused young people. And in our increasingly secular society, you may be the first or only Christian some of your fellow students interact with in a meaningful way.

### CHOOSING WISELY

To gain the benefits and avoid the biggest pitfalls of a secular university experience, it’s important to choose your school and program wisely.

Several students I talked to said they “wouldn’t bother” taking an arts or social science degree at most secular universities, because the ideological biases can be so insurmountable.

Others recommended researching programs and even individual classes and professors before signing up, and

talking to other recent and current students.

Amy, from Smithers, BC, found it very helpful to visit multiple campuses before making post-secondary plans. Groups from her school regularly come down to the Fraser Valley to check out different institutions, and she made such a trip in eleventh grade. She comments on the very different “vibe” she got from UFV, where she is now pursuing a sales and marketing certificate, versus at the very liberal Simon Fraser University; she felt she would be comfortable at the former, but not at the latter.

### THRIVING ON CAMPUS

When I asked current and former students about their tips for thriving on campus, they were unanimous on the point that staying connected to your church community and Christian friends is absolutely vital.

James remembers gratefully how the Prince George congregation supported him and kept him grounded during his years at the University of Northern BC, when he was exposed to so many new things and, in his field of nursing, saw so much brokenness up close; “there was lots to process.” He says the church was very welcoming to students, and he enjoyed the strong Bible study and lots of good discussions. “That was my community – not the college,” he explains. Staying connected to a church like that is key, he says – especially if you’re living away from home – and having one nearby should be a determining factor when you’re considering a university.

Emily strongly agrees. As she faced hostility and confrontation in her dorm, “the church was now my only ‘safe space’ – how beautiful, actually. It gave me a different perspective on how the church is a sanctuary, a place to be spiritually nourished and refreshed after a long week living in the trenches.” Pastors, elders, and mentors in the church prayed for her and helped her continue to learn and grow in her faith; in her weekly Bible studies, she could even practice answering questions like “can God be a loving God when people suffer? How are we saved? How can





James credits his church, the Prince George Messiah Canadian Reformed Church, with helping him stay grounded during his years at UNBC. He, his wife Hannah, and their young daughter continue to appreciate this small but vibrant congregation.

Sam advises students to know what they believe and be ready to defend their worldview. "Get your values straight. Understand your faith."



you believe in Christianity when there's no science to prove it; I believe in science and you don't?' ... On that note, we prayed for the Holy Spirit to give me the words and the wisdom for when to say it."

"You cannot do it without a local church and church family," she concludes, adding, "Even if you're going to stay in your local church and commute to/from campus, be prepared. Living in dorms or not, start practicing defending your faith in your home and church now. We know the world asks us difficult questions – and some of them are out to kill."

"It's good to have some people you look up to in your church that you can discuss challenges you are facing as a Christian at university," Luke adds.

Asia reflects on the need to be on your guard constantly in a secular educational environment. "I wasn't used to having my 'spiritual armor' on all the time because in high school I was with a good group of friends that generally encouraged me in

my faith. I quickly realized when I started university that I had to actively make sure I was in the Word."


Sam notes the value of having Christian friends on campus, as does Ben, though he has found that if you join a Christian club, you still need to be discerning. "Many [Christians] are letting their education and the culture impact how they interpret the Bible, instead of vice versa." They key is to "know your Bible inside out," he says, so you'll also "know when the things of the world are influencing you, and not the other way around."

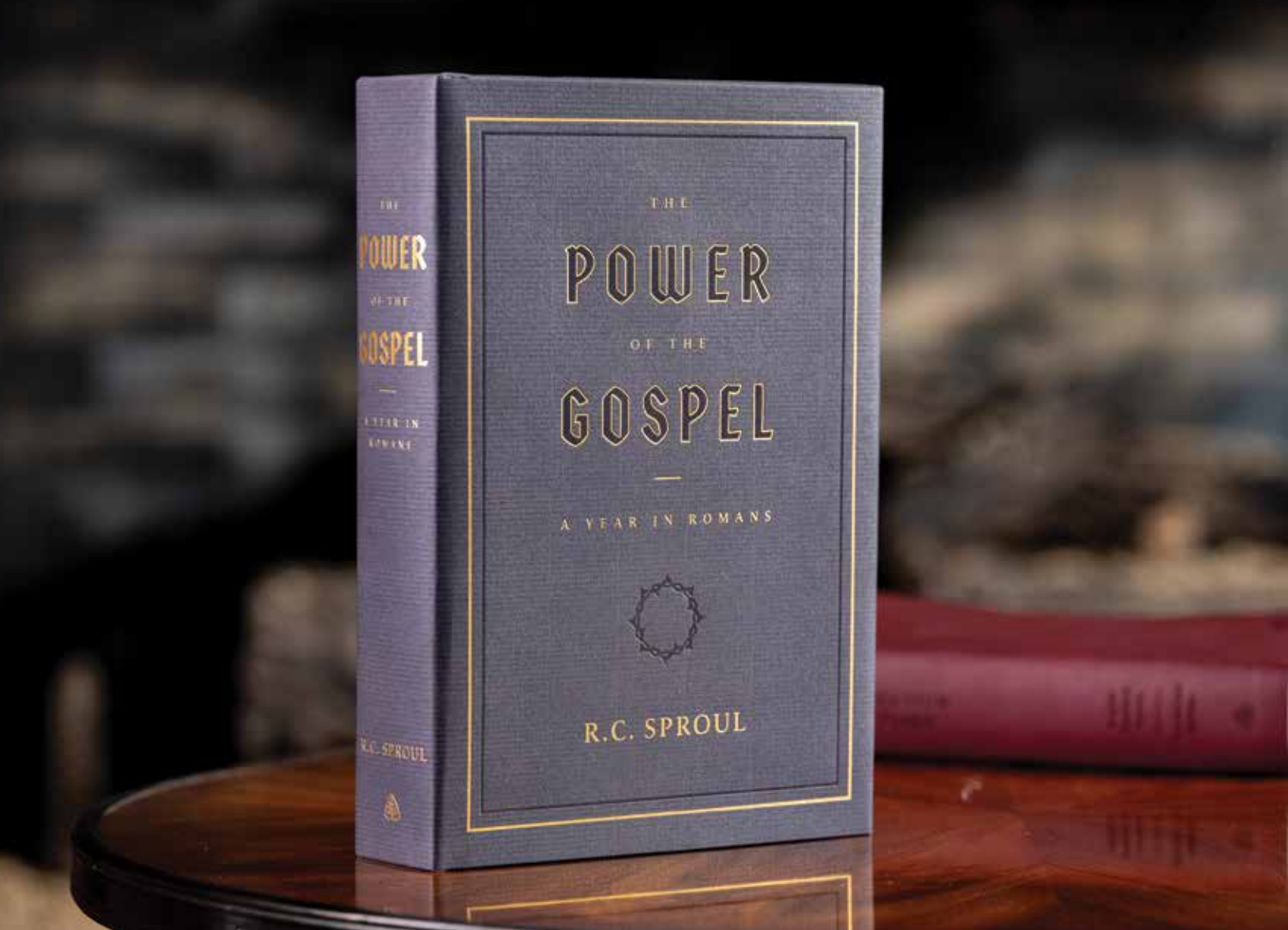
Sam agrees with that as well. "Realize that when you are going to a secular university you are going to come across people who disagree with you, but... just because someone disagreed with you doesn't mean you can't have an open conversation with them." He adds, "Get your values straight. Understand your faith. Don't just follow the book on arguments; bring your own. Figure it out yourself."

### FLOURISHING IN EXILE

Daunting? Perhaps. But also a chance to grow, to mature, to prepare yourself for whatever mission God gives you in this life.

As well, attending a secular university may give you a chance to make a real impact. As Crystal notes, "In order to have more influence on the world, we actually have to participate in the world, and having more [Christian] voices can only be a good thing." The world needs Christian nurses and welders and security guards, salespeople and librarians and social workers. And its campuses need Christians who are willing and able to "speak the truth in love" and show what it looks like to live with gospel hope and meaning.

And, really, why should we be afraid? We the God of truth behind us – and He is certainly able to bless us, and make us a blessing, wherever He puts us. 



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# 10 lessons learned at 8 post-secondary institutions

by Mark Penninga

Like most high school students, I didn't really know how to answer the "what are you going to do after school?" question. The world was so big and my experience was miniscule. How was I supposed to commit to something when I had no idea how it would go? Geology sounded interesting, but I knew it wasn't a good idea to spend weeks in the mountains and away from church and family. And my teachers' feedback suggested that I may be better suited for something that involved a classroom or office. I decided to aim for a teaching degree, in part because my wiser and older brother blazed that trail ahead of me.

College or university had some appeal, but I was more interested in getting a job in the "real world." Perhaps that was in part because I had to pay for my studies out-of-pocket and always had a hard time remembering what I learned. So, I would never have guessed the post-secondary path and resulting careers that the LORD had planned for me since then. It has straddled 25 years and eight different types of institutions so far:

- Northwest Community College
- University College of the Fraser Valley
- BC Institute of Technology

- Laurentian Leadership Centre
- Trinity Western University
- University of Lethbridge
- Crest Leadership Centre
- Colson Fellows

Although I didn't see it at the time, in hindsight I can see how God was directing each step and weaving it to accomplish His purpose in my life. The careers that resulted didn't even exist when I graduated from school.

## LESSONS LEARNED

If I could sit down with the teen or young adult version of myself, or if my own teenaged children were willing to ask, I would offer the following lessons based on this journey.

### 1. "Seek first His kingdom"

Our lives aren't first and foremost about us. God put us here, and wants us to follow Him where He leads. So do your best to filter out motivations that are self-interested and people-pleasing. *And listen carefully when you see a need in the world that aligns with how God made you.* Many of these callings, like being a mom or a carpenter, don't require post-secondary studies.

### 2. Trust God to guide... and provide

Yes, jumping into a particular program or stream can be daunting and comes with a cost in both time and money. But, assuming that you made the decision wisely, you can trust in the LORD to provide.

That also means not closing doors that God hasn't closed for you. I would never have expected that I would have the financial means to get a degree from a private university, or do grad studies. But God provided through many means, from a generous Christian foundation, to a scholarship from the government. Whether we devote eight years to becoming a minister, or work for eight years pouring concrete or fixing vehicles, either way we are working hard. Life is hard. Don't look for shortcuts. God will walk with us every step of the way.

### 3. Start walking

Instead of being overwhelmed by all the options, just start taking steps. As Kevin DeYoung says so well in his book *Just Do Something*, we don't have to wait for mysterious signs from above or crack the code to a secret plan for our life that God expects us to find. If we are seeking first His kingdom, we can pick from many wonderful options. Don't expect to know



what is a good fit without experience. There is nothing wrong with pivoting along the way.

#### 4. You don't have to plan too far ahead

We may want to have a satisfying answer for those who ask *What are you going to do with your life?* But there are just so many more options than we can ever foresee from where we are standing at 18. If we are too fixated on “our plan” we may miss opportunities where we can be even more effective in God’s kingdom. Keep your eyes and options open.

While completing a very good semester studying marketing management and entrepreneurship at a technical institute, I surprised everyone (including myself) by leaving the program to seize an opportunity to study at the Laurentian Leadership Centre in Ottawa, even though it hadn’t been anywhere on my horizon. That switch changed the trajectory of my whole career from marketing to political science. Yet I can now also see how God used those marketing studies to assist with building ARPA Canada years later. None of it was a waste.

#### 5. Work experience can be the best education

Although I’m generally grateful for all my studies, my jobs have taught me as much, or more, than I learned in school. And jobs can be much more rewarding, as you get to apply your work to the real world, rather than put a lot of time into something that never goes beyond your professor. Be as intentional with what jobs to pursue as which programs to apply for.

Over the last fifteen years I have hired many people. Some of the best ones had no, or limited, post-secondary studies. They were able to learn on the job. What mattered far more was their character and work ethic. In other words, you may not even need the degree or diploma that were expected in the past.

#### 6. Study within your means

As much as possible, avoid student debt. When you are done your studies you likely will be prioritizing being married and having a family. “The borrower is a

slave to the lender” (Prov. 22:7), especially at a time in your life when there will likely be a lot of pressure and expenses already. Unless you are very confident that you can pay off your student debt within a couple of years of graduating, it may be best to pick a different track.

#### 7. Keep your eyes wide open

Satan is the author of lies, and he seems to thrive at post-secondary institutions. I experienced this head-on in my first year, when my “Christian” professor at a community college attacked anyone who wasn’t fully committed to evolution.

But I also experienced it in more subtle ways at Trinity Western University, where many of my philosophy classes simply weren’t taught from a biblical worldview. Instead, most involved confused professors teaching confused students about secular ideas, with little or no biblical basis.

If you are going to study at a private institution, make sure that the professors are fully committed to God’s Word, including things like creation and God’s design for sexuality. Don’t trust the brochures or the smiling person giving you a tour of campus. Talk with people who study there and ask the hard questions. For example, ask them how God’s Word is used in the classroom. Is it opened and examined? Does the professor demonstrate humility under God’s Word? Is there a willingness to apply Scripture to sensitive topics, without compromise?

Otherwise, why pay big bucks for an education that isn’t going to help you think and live faithfully?

#### 8. Don't just jump through the hoops

I was so keen to finish my program as quickly as possible that I didn’t take the time to treasure what I was being taught nearly as much as I should have. Later in life, people often wish they could have the time to study at a college or university again (or for the first time). Don’t squander the gift you have been given by treating it as a means to an end. Take the time to really listen, think, and engage.

The goal isn’t getting studying over with. Rather, the goal is to get an education. And if the content isn’t worth

learning, that should make you question whether you ought to be there at all. There will always be some garbage being taught in secular institutions that require you to hold your nose and get through. But if that is a big part of your program, it is probably best to study something else or somewhere else.

#### 9. Education really is life-long

Although the years out of high school are often the only window most of us have to devote time to post-secondary studies, in more recent decades so many new opportunities have been made possible that allow people of all ages and all positions in life to get a great education, at very little or even no cost. Some of my favorite studies have been the online programs that I have done in the past four years, like the Colson Fellows program (ColsonFellows.org).


The wonderful thing about these opportunities is that they are accessible to most people, regardless of your experience, your financial situation, or whether you even finished high school. And if you aren’t able to go through a program, simply reading good books and listening to good podcasts/lectures may be just as valuable.

#### 10. It isn't necessarily about the degree, or the cost

Most of my certificates, diplomas, and degrees are hidden. They really don’t matter. The more important take-aways from the studies are being able to focus, discern, analyze, and write, among other things. And these skills are all the more necessary in a world where concentration levels keep diminishing and people have trouble writing more than a few words in a text message. LOL LMK TTYL. Although studies may not result in a great return on investment for you personally, we need to think about God’s kingdom as a whole. If everyone pursues the trades, what impact will that have around the consistory table, or when it is time to send elders to synod?

Now would my teenaged version of myself have listened? Well, sometimes we need to experience life to be open to learning. And I still have a long way to go. RP

# PODCASTS TO GET YOU EDUCATED, NOT SCHOOLED



Only universities give degrees, but you can get an education even while you're driving, jogging, or mowing the lawn

by Jeff Dykstra

About forty years ago, when I was taking my Bachelor of Education degree at the University of Alberta, I got schooled, but not all that educated. I was schooled in both senses of the word – both getting some training in how to teach, and just plain made to feel like a fool.

## GETTING SCHOOLED AT A SECULAR U

My “Educational Foundations” professor was, I found out, a lapsed Catholic, and proselytizing atheist. I’d met atheists before – kids in my neighborhood as I grew up – but never one who was educated and articulate and eager to use class time to pitch his anti-Christian worldview.

My instructor seemed pretty confident about his atheism, and that left me shook. And it got me studying how to better understand the Christian worldview and be able to defend it. This self-study is really where my education started. My actual education degree never did set me up well to make year plans (the first thing a teacher needs to start organizing the courses they teach), but the very secular university’s library thankfully included several books on worldview and apologetics. I started my defense of my faith in two different libraries – the university’s, and also my dad’s much better stocked basement bookshelves (better in quality, if not in quantity).

In short, while university did not educate me well, it did provoke me (and even equip me, to some degree) to educate myself.

Could that happen now? It seems doubtful. I wonder whether the university library would still stock books as useful as the ones I took out to learn more about the Christian worldview. As well, how many (even lapsed) Catholics or Christians of any kind are still teaching in secular universities?

Even if you wanted to build up your faith in university, you would still face the monumental challenge of trying to absorb solid Christian teaching while (as I had to do at some points) reading (and taking notes on!?) fifty pages a night

from the secular textbooks mandated for the courses you were taking.

## GETTING AN AUDIO EDUCATION

So, how now shall we learn? If you don't need or want post-secondary education, or you're finished yours, and (like all of us), your time is limited, and (like many of us), you're "not a reader" (!?) then what? How can you get not schooled, but educated?

One answer has been promoted by Jordan Peterson, who believes that this generation could be the best educated in history, because we have access to the internet, and through it, to podcasts and videos from the best thinkers of our day. One way to see the potential advantages of Peterson's suggestion is to compare this method of self-education with one from a hundred years ago. The "Everyman's Library" book collection started in 1906 to promote the reading of classic literature.

One obvious advantage of internet education over Everyman's Library is cost. The cheapest volume I could find from Everyman's had a price of £10.99 or roughly \$20 Canadian. Meanwhile podcasts and YouTube videos are free (although there is always more material behind a subscription paywall).

The second advantage of education online is the time involved. Although I can always find time to read a book (brushing your teeth, during breakfast...), reading generally demands exclusive attention, while "talking head" videos and podcasts can be heard while you are otherwise active (of course, not while juggling or other involved activities). It is worth noting that audio books have the same advantage.

The final advantage of internet learning over the Everyman's Library is the sheer volume of material on the internet. Of course, that can be pretty overwhelming; hence the list of great places to listen that follows.

## DISTRACTION VS. EDUCATION

A couple words of caution are warranted.

First, the internet can be a dangerous place to spend your time, even when you

are getting educated. It's easy to go down rabbit trails, because everything connects to everything else. The very fact that book learning involves more commitment in time and money tends to promote greater care in the selection of authors and their work. As we often hear about grocery shopping, *stick to your list*. Browsing the internet may not be as expensive as browsing the supermarket, but it is potentially at least as great a waste of time.

Second, let me offer a word about "outrage porn." Podcasts and video creators make money on getting more clicks and longer time on their platforms from their audience, and one sure way to do that is to stoke our anger.... but God warns us against both anger and worry about things that we have no power to change. James exhorts us to be "slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20), while Christ, who is Himself "gentle and lowly" (unlike many podcasters), asks, "which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (Matt. 11:29, 6:27). A good rule of thumb is to focus on podcasts or YouTube channels that bring an appreciation of God's glory in creation and redemption into your life, that make you more effective in your service to God and your neighbor, or that equip you to be salt and light in a society that desperately needs both, and needs even more the Christ that they deny.

## 6 TO START WITH

With all that said, here are half a dozen great bets for your internet time.

### 1. Real Talk

Let's begin with what might already be near and dear to *RP* readers: *Real Talk* at [www.RealTalkPodcast.ca](http://www.RealTalkPodcast.ca), which you can also find on *RP*'s own app (avail-



## Two Stewards

able at [ReformedPerspective.ca/](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/) app). The two hosts have settled into a great rhythm, with over 100 episodes behind them. When the podcast started in July 2020, both Lucas Holtvlüwer and Tyler Vanderwoude appeared together to interview guests with extensive practical experience in such areas as Christian education and the missional church, with feedback every second episode. As time went on, each became more confident to host certain episodes solo, and the feedback episodes are now called "Real Talk Roundup" and feature other *RP* personalities, best book lists, and other highlights, with recent topics of real relevance, like "Death and Dying" and "Parenting and Pornography."

### 2. Two Stewards

For more Canadian content, check out [TwoStewards.ca](http://TwoStewards.ca). As the homepage says, they explore "money, economics, real estate investing and more from a Christian worldview." Although the podcast



## Thinking in Public



opens with the warning that Mark Krikke and Brent Vanderwoude are not giving professional financial advice, the listening enjoyment they do provide is packed with plenty of insight. For example, they rightly saw the latest hostility to giving your children an inheritance as motivated by covetousness, and contradicting the Biblical commendation for “[a] good man [who] leaves an inheritance to his children’s children” (Prov. 13:22). Wisdom backed up by God’s Word combined with good-natured banter between the two stewards (and with their guests) makes this podcast both entertaining and thought-provoking.

### 3. *The Briefing... And More*

While Albert Mohler, a Southern Baptist, has experienced his share of controversy, his website, at [AlbertMohler.com](http://AlbertMohler.com) has a wealth of listenable resources:

- *The Briefing* – Mohler’s take on the day

- *Thinking in Public* – roughly hour-long interviews with noted Christian and/or conservative writers
- *Speaking and Teaching* – shorter takes on a variety of Christian and current topics
- and clips from his “Ask Anything” tours.

### 4. *Ligonier*

From a solidly Reformed (and generally paedobaptist) perspective, Ligonier Ministries ([Ligonier.org](http://Ligonier.org)) has even more resources than Mohler, some of them current, and many more in archives: seven different podcasts of varying frequencies, at least

545 sermons from the late R.C. Sproul, daily videos on doctrinal issues, and more than 100 teaching series from multiple teachers (with multiple videos in each series). Ligonier Ministries also has a YouTube channel – [YouTube.com/LigonierMinistries](https://www.youtube.com/LigonierMinistries) – that includes enlightening and sometimes entertaining clips of question-and-answer sessions from Ligonier Ministries conferences, with answers from such well-known writers and speakers as Stephen Nichols and Sinclair Ferguson.

### 5. *Breakpoint This Week*

Another solidly Christian organization, Breakpoint Ministries, at [Breakpoint.org](http://Breakpoint.org), gives you several ways to get educated while listening, including the daily Breakpoint Podcast and a podcast called *Breakpoint This Week* – with a focus on applying Christian worldview to current events and trends. A recent daily podcast applied the Biblical command to “bear one another’s burdens” to the stress of intensive parenting, while the September 13 weekly podcast discussed, among other topics, abortion distortions in the presidential debate and the younger generation’s view of 9/11.

### 6. *Created to Reign*

The Cornwall Alliance ([CornwallAlliance.org](http://CornwallAlliance.org)) has a solidly Christian perspective on economic and environmental stewardship, as is evidenced in their multitude of current articles. That worldview is evident in their podcast too, hosted by Dr. E. Calvin Beisner and Dr. David Legates, and titled *Created to Reign*. Two recent episodes of *Created to Reign* explained why free markets are generally not only more effective in helping the poor, but more just. Find it on Spotify, Amazon Music and Apple Podcasts. 



Ligonier



Breakpoint This Week



Created to Reign

# Gillespie Academy:



## A one-year Reformed bootcamp

by McAuley Tucker

Whether you're graduating high school, college, or trade school, the most common question is "What's next?" For those who are uncertain, let me recommend Gillespie Academy, a one-year, two-semester program in Woodstock, Ontario, as an option to consider.

Founded in 2010 by Rev. Brian Murray, Gillespie Academy is named after Presbyterian theologian George Gillespie. It aims to prepare young Christians for future careers, further education, and building homes grounded in God's Word. While many Christian students have experienced 12 years of biblically-sound schooling, Gillespie builds on these previous teachings and also challenges young Christians to really explore the implications of their faith. Danae Gritter, an alumna from the 2024-2025 class, shares, "Gillespie wasn't just something I did for a year and moved on; it was a foundation for the way that I think about what I'm learning now in my further post-secondary education."

Running from September to April, the Academy is housed within Grace Presbyterian Church (a congregation of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Canada) in Woodstock, Ontario.

Gillespie students attend a four-day week of classes, Tuesday to Friday. Some

subjects are in place to help build a strong theological foundation like:

- Old and New Testament Studies
- Introduction to Systematic Theology I & II
- History of Western Thought I & II
- Apologetics
- Christianity in the Modern World

Courses in *Practical Ethics*, *Academic Strategies*, *Oral Communication*, and *Logic* help refine communication skills – essential tools for both professional success and navigating complex world-views. Students typically handle around 15 hours of homework weekly, balancing rigorous study with practical application.


While the program is demanding, it is rewarding. And while Gillespie does not formally organize social activities, it fosters a close-knit student community, with friendships that often extend beyond the classroom. Students are also encouraged to participate in the life of Grace Church, with various opportunities to join church-led activities.

The Academy's success rests on two key pillars. As Rev. Murray emphasizes, the first is "the Lord's blessing," and the second is Gillespie's commitment to rigorous classroom learning, where students build a strong theological understanding and develop critical thinking skills. With tuition around \$4,000

per year, Gillespie offers an affordable Christian education compared to many other institutions, though costs may rise depending on the housing options offered by the Academy.

Gillespie decided not to be accredited in order to maintain its commitment to Reformed Christian principles and create its curriculum independently of the government. Traditional accredited schools often focus on preparation for the workforce, but Gillespie stresses a greater goal: knowledge of God. It sees education as an instrument for students to understand God's creation, preparing them to meet the philosophical and practical problems of life, and shaping how they view their responsibility as young Christians. With more than 100 students from three different countries – ranging from ages 17 to 24 – having successfully completed the program, Gillespie's impact is felt far beyond its doors.

Rev. Murray sums up the Academy's mission: "If we believe that there is a God who made everything and hasn't left us on our own, but has revealed Himself in His Word and through His Son, the Lord Jesus, then that truth impacts every area of life."

To learn more about Gillespie Academy, go to [GillespieAcademy.ca](https://GillespieAcademy.ca). 

*The author is a graduate of the Gillespie Academy.*





# WHAT ABOUT A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY?

## My experience at Dordt University

by Levi Minderhoud

I love learning. Whether that love is innate or whether it was instilled in me as I grew up, I don't know. I've always loved learning about pretty much anything. The biological intricacies of life, the vastness of space, the stories of history, the nuances of political philosophy, or the mysteries of the end times have all taken their turns at seizing my imagination.

And that learning didn't stop at head knowledge. I remember a specific story from Ralph Moody's *Little Britches*, a novel that my dad once read aloud to me

and my younger siblings. I've forgotten most of the plotline, aside from the fact that the homesteading setting reminded me of the Ingalls in *The Little House on the Prairie*, but I remember the analogy that the father relayed to his younger sons. "Your character is like a house," Pa said, "You can either add boards to build it up, or you can tear boards off." Ever since, that idea that your character requires constant building and maintenance has been etched into my mind.

And so, when I was in my final year of high school, I naturally looked for places

to pursue this love of knowledge and continue to build my character as a young Christian man.

I didn't even bother applying to secular institutions. I knew that I might glean some knowledge there, but that they certainly wouldn't form me into a godlier Christian. To borrow from some of the parables of Jesus and the analogies of James, why would I expect a bad tree to produce good fruit or a salty spring fresh water? No, if I truly wanted to mature in my faith, I felt that an education in an institution that is antithetical to God



simply wasn't a wise option. I had spent twelve years being homeschooled, studying at a Christian school, and attending a Reformed church. My parents, my teachers, and my pastors all emphasized the importance of Christian education. Why would I forsake that lynch pin in my Christian formation after graduating high school?

And so I applied to the Christian institution I was most familiar with: Dordt University. My parents had both attended the rural university in north-west Iowa. I had just stayed on campus for a week during a family reunion the previous summer. I had extended family in the area. I got a decent scholarship and was lured by the opportunity to play on a university hockey team. And so, two months after graduating from high school, I packed my bags and made the twenty-five-hour road trip stateside.

Now, I have no idea what God has in store for me over the remaining years of my life, but my four years at Dordt have been the best four of my life. And I count myself a wiser, godlier, and more successful person for them.

## THE BENEFITS

The formal academics were part of it. Dordt is a liberal arts university, meaning that every student has to take a wide range of courses in addition to required courses in their field to graduate. All of these courses were based in a Reformed Christian worldview, focusing on the religious orientation, creational structure, and creational development of all the subject matter and contemporary responses of Christians in these fields. In my experience, this Reformed worldview was applied just as consistently – if not more consistently – than the Reformed high school that I had attended.

The relationships that I formed, though, were even more impactful. In university, you might be shaped by professors in the classroom 15-20 hours a week, but I interacted with other students almost every waking hour. Over 90% of Dordt's student body lives on campus in dormitories or apartment buildings, so you are with fellow Christian students virtually all of the time. Because of this



*I stayed up well past midnight almost every night for four years laughing with friends and engaging in deep conversations with roommates.*

continual contact, I formed more and deeper friendships with fellow students at Dordt than at any other time of my life. I developed deep friendships with roommates, hockey teammates, and members of my "Dordt family." These friendships even extended to the professors. I visited the homes of three or four professors over the years, attended church with some of them, and even exchanged Christmas cards with one over the years. Some of the godliest role models that I have met were fellow students from Dordt's hockey team and from student Bible studies.

Dordt is also where I met my wife, Jillian. Now, both Jillian and I very intentionally went to Dordt *not* to find a future spouse. We were there to study and learn, particularly in our first couple years of study. But God, in His providence, had other plans for us. He brought us together in our first year of university. We dated and were engaged most of our university life and got married a few months after we graduated. One of the most important decisions of your life is finding a spouse. I'd hazard a guess that most members of the Reformed community have found a godly spouse from their local church or local Christian high school, though some may have gone further afield to a regional youth retreat in search of marriage partners. One of the advantages of a Christian post-secondary institution is that it brings young Christian men and women from across the country – and, in my case, across the world – to the same spot.

And while I firmly believe that the primary reason for education is for personal formation – formation of character as well as knowledge and skills – getting a post-secondary degree is certainly an ancillary bonus. With so many professional jobs today requiring or giving preference

to applicants with a post-secondary degree, getting a degree opened up a whole new world of employment opportunities and has made me better at the job that I have now. There would be no way that I could write in this magazine as well, or analyze policies for ARPA as astutely, without having attended a Christian post-secondary institution.

And finally, attending a Christian post-secondary institution was just plain fun. I stayed up well past midnight almost every night for four years laughing with friends and engaging in deep conversations with roommates. I hit the ice four times a week for hockey practice and traveled the central states playing back-to-back hockey games Friday and Saturday evenings. I started a Sunday afternoon board games club to challenge friends to friendly games of Settlers of Catan, Seven Wonders, or Tammany Hall. I traveled to Washington, DC, to attend a national conservative political action conference and volunteered at a presidential debate with the College Republican Club. I volunteered to visit a fundamentalist Mormon community in Arizona, a Navajo reserve in New Mexico, and hurricane-battered New Orleans for short-term missions trips on three of my spring breaks. I won a campus air band competition, participated in the campus choir, and jammed with talented student vocalists and musicians.

A growing number of people point out that a university education might not have a positive return on investment. In other words, it might end up costing more to attend in tuition payments and lost years of income than would be made up in higher salaries over the rest of your working life. And, depending on your field of study, that can be true. But, in my opinion, that is a pretty bare, narrow



the embrace of LGBTQ identities, and an egalitarian view of gender. Many Christian universities certainly leave something to be desired on these topics.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

In my experience, the perceived and real dangers and costs of Christian post-secondary have led many in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed churches (NAPARC) orbit not to even seriously consider a Christian post-secondary education, much less actually pursue one.

At the end of the day, I'm sharing my positive experience with a Christian university. And I'm not necessarily arguing for a specific Christian institution. There are lots of Christian universities, colleges, institutes, and Bible colleges in North America that are faithful to God's Word to varying degrees, and I think that there is a strong case to be made that new orthodox institutions need to spring up to train the next generation to participate in all areas of society with a Christian worldview. But I certainly am arguing for the concept of Christian post-secondary education.

I'll wrap up with an application of the familiar parable of the talents. In this parable, a master gives each of his servants different amounts of money to steward while he is away. When he returns, he rewards the fruitful servants who grew that money and rebukes the fearful servant who simply hid his talent in the ground. Sandwiched as it is between other accounts of the final judgement in Matthew 25, the central message of this parable is clear. God expects us to develop the gifts that He has given us to their fullest extent. Burying those gifts is not only a waste. It is condemned.

Not every high school graduate has the academic aptitude, moral character, or the financial means to attend a Christian university. But to those who do, I encourage you to at least seriously consider one Christian post-secondary institution. It can be an excellent way to cultivate the gifts that God has given you and to grow in your development as a follower of Christ. **RP**

calculation. If it is just about the money and just about the degree, don't bother with Christian post-secondary. You can definitely find cheaper alternatives to get a university degree. But Christian post-secondary is more than just about dollars and cents. If you prioritize deepening your spiritual walk with the LORD, developing a godlier character, making lifelong friends, and cultivating a more consistent Reformed Christian worldview, then Christian post-secondary, especially when it has a solid Reformed base, has a lot more plusses in its column.

### THE DANGERS

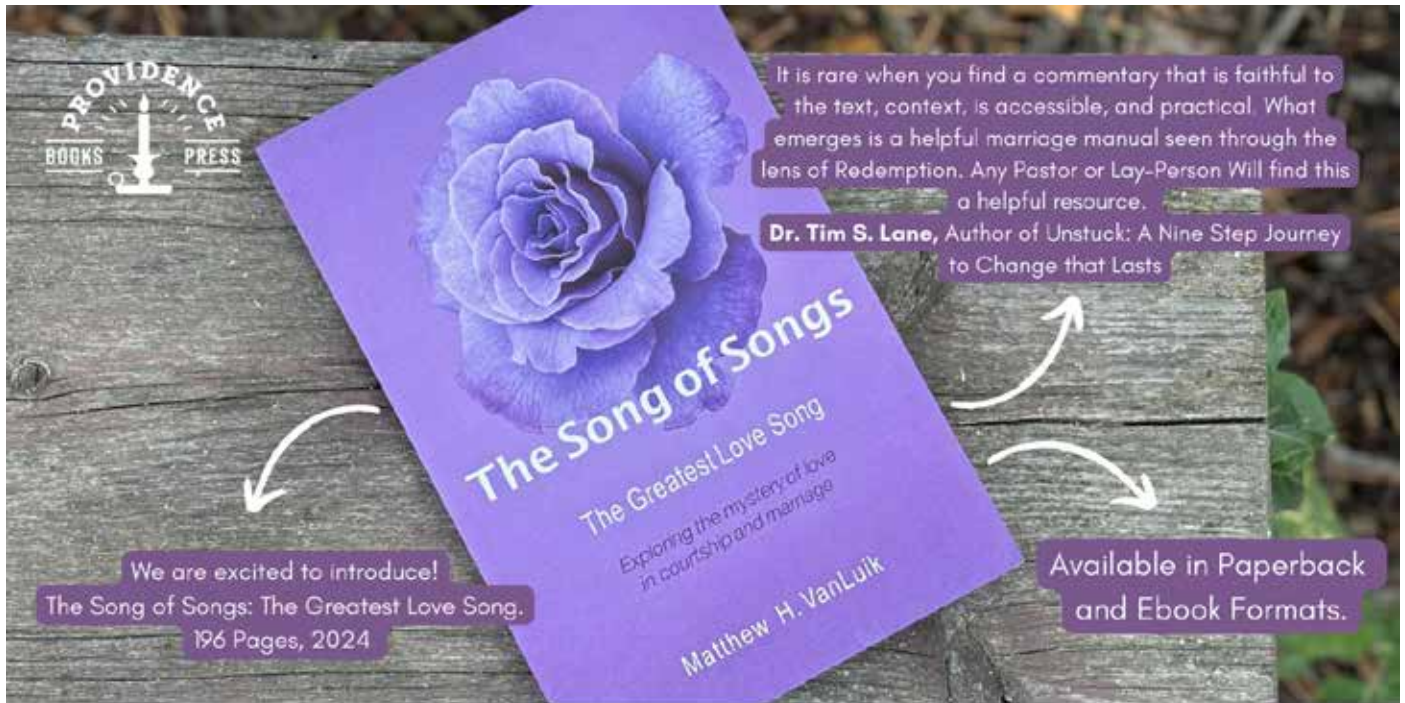
Of course, that doesn't mean that there are no minuses to Christian post-secondary. No institution this side of glory is perfect. Even the best Christian post-secondary institution has its faults. The temptations common to young people

in every other sphere of life don't simply disappear because they are on a Christian campus. Discerning parents and prospective students should certainly be aware of the imperfections of Christian post-secondary institutions.

I saw students kicked out because of substance abuse and disciplined because of sexual sins. Some students seemed to be more interested in partying and troublemaking than studying. A saddeningly high number of students didn't attend church on a regular basis, much less twice a Sunday. Most students thought that it was perfectly acceptable to study on Sundays. Some professors were fired for bad theology or inappropriate conduct.

And some unorthodox views will certainly be present on any Christian post-secondary campus, either among the student body or among the faculty. I encountered a belief in theistic evolution,





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# MORE TO CONSIDER:

## Women on setting life and post-secondary goals

by Harma-Mae Smit

The timing of a woman's life can get complicated, especially when she faces decisions about whether to pursue higher education or not. In a society that insists on women getting an education and establishing a career before even thinking about marriage and family, it's not always fashionable to point this reality out. But women simply have more considerations to take into account when making these decisions.

The challenging part is because there is no guarantee of a husband coming along, or children being born, she faces an added layer of uncertainty. Essentially, a woman who wants marriage and a family is trying to plan for two futures, without knowing which future will happen for her.

The questions are endless. Should she pursue practical education and a career just in case she doesn't get married? Should she work in a dead-end "for now" job because she expects to transition into motherhood soon? Should she take out student loans, which could limit her freedom to make choices in the future? And when a woman is intellectually gifted, or "smart," the questions can be tougher. Is she "wasting" her gifts if she doesn't pursue an education? Did she waste her time or money if she does pursue an education and never "uses" it after she gets married?

The ultimate answer to this bewildering maze of questions is simply



"Should she pursue practical education and a career just in case she doesn't get married? Should she work in a dead-end 'for now' job because she expects to transition into motherhood soon? Should she take out student loans, which could limit her freedom to make choices in the future?"

that there is no one-size-fits-all path. The many possible ways an individual woman uses her gifts can look quite different from one woman to another. Life, after all, is not mapped out for us ahead of time, but it is a journey where we take each step as best we can, trusting in God.

But in this article I want to explore these challenges in a bit more depth so that, first of all, women see that they're not alone in facing these questions – especially in a culture that shies away from discussing them. And secondly, I want to explore them so that the Christian community understands how complex (and frustrating!) navigating these questions can be. And lastly, I want to offer guidance where any guidance can be given.

## MAKING A LIFE PLAN

For me, deciding what to do after high school was a confusing mess. I was open to marriage and children, but I hadn't met anyone. I was considered “smart” and everyone expected me to go to university, and I *did* want to study, but I didn't know what to study. The idea of having a “career” didn't appeal to me – I certainly didn't relate to the idea of being a “girlboss.” But I felt stuck between devoting time and energy and money to studying things I enjoyed, or finding a career that could support me while I was single, or keeping my options open if I met someone.

I wanted to go beyond what I personally experienced in writing this article so I reached out to other Reformed women I'd connected with through Facebook. And I received a flood of responses about their own experiences in considering post-secondary education.

How women timed their education was an important question for me, because I've heard a lot of theories about how college is to blame for the low birth rate in North America. My assumption initially was that women who wanted children had always had that on their mind to some extent. But in my conversations it turned out that not everyone did. For some women, the timing of their life just “worked out.” As Jen Crowder explains, “As a young person



*It's easy to say, 'women should pursue marriage first, then children, and then a career if she wants,' or, alternatively, 'women should get an education and a career first, and then marriage and children.' But in real life, the path individuals take tends to be more much complex than that..."*

in my 20s, there were times where it felt ‘hard’ to not be dating, but the Lord richly blessed me – with peace to be patient, and even more so in bringing my spouse and I together in His marvelous timing shortly after I started my first teaching position. As a young person, it's very hard to see four, five, or six years as a very short period of one's life, but looking back on it now, God's timing is always perfect.” And her experience was echoed by other women who met their husband in their last year of their studies, or just after, and didn't experience a big conflict between education and beginning a family.

Life does not nicely “work out” for everyone, but when considering whether to study or not, this is a comforting reminder to young women that everything is in God's hands. Sometimes you do borrow worry about the future before you need to.

For other women, the timing of life events did overlap. “I remember study-

ing for an exam while in labor at the hospital, and writing an exam a week after giving birth!” says Anna Nienhuis. Some had to fit their studies in around taking care of small children, or put their studies on hold and resume them when their children were older. Some women did not start until later: “I did not consider post-secondary possibilities until I was in my early 30s, married for 12 years, and had five children,” says Sarah Vandergugten. And some found themselves required to go back to school in order to support themselves or their families when they hadn't expected it. All of these circumstances made studying much more challenging, but somehow they continued to see God's hand guiding them through it all.

Sometimes when you're young you can feel like you have to be able to predict your future and plan for it responsibly. And to some extent, women do have to consider how their education, jobs and financial situation might impact



“...some women went the opposite direction, switching from something ‘practical’ to pursuing study at a Master’s and Ph.D. level when they discovered their love of learning...”

their freedom to have children. But well-meaning advice can make it sound like your life can all be planned out perfectly. It’s easy to say, “*women should pursue marriage first, then children, and then a career if she wants,*” or, alternatively, “*women should get an education and a career first, and then marriage and children.*” But in real life, the path individuals take tends to be more much complex than that, in ways that can’t always be planned out. Even when events in our life overlap in chaotic ways, women and families muddle through while trusting in God. The challenges teach them to trust in Him and the strength He provides.

Some women did change their plans when they met their future husband. It might have been a switch from a longer program to a shorter program, such as switching from nursing to healthcare aide. Or it was a switch from something less flexible to something more flexible. “The career I was studying for was not compatible in any way with my husband’s and so I chose to change my plans. Since I had just started my education it was easy enough to change it,” says Deanna DeWit. Others switched

from something with fewer career opportunities, such as a Ph.D., to a regular teaching degree which offered more employment. And lastly, some women went the opposite direction, switching from something “practical” to pursuing study at a Master’s and Ph.D. level when they discovered their love of learning, with the encouragement and support of their husbands.

This simply shows how, as you grow up, you can become more aware of yourself and your gifts, and what makes sense for the life God has called you to. You can start something and change paths later. Sometimes changing your path while you can is the best decision.

Then there were more than a few women who regretted pursuing higher education, or at least weren’t sure it had been worthwhile for them. A few felt they had pursued it because of family expectations, or because they’d absorbed the message from culture to pursue a career first. Some even mentioned in hindsight they felt they’d delayed marriage and hadn’t been accepting God’s will for their lives at that time, though they had come to terms with the choices they’d made. It seems that post-second-

ary wasn’t a perfect fit for every woman.

And it’s true that higher education is not for everyone! For many women it makes sense, especially if there is no husband on the horizon and they may have to support themselves one day. In fact, many women felt free to begin because they weren’t expecting marriage in the very near future.

But decisions should never be made primarily because of cultural messages, family expectations, or fear of bad consequences. And cultural messages do shift over time – older generations felt unusual when pursuing higher education, whereas younger generations felt more cultural pressures to pursue it. “I had believed the idea – a lie actually – that if I was to be successful I had to go to university,” says Rebecca Van Middelkoop. “No one ever told me that directly but it was an idea that I seemed to have picked up over the years and I think many people believe it as well. As someone who was academically gifted it seemed like I was obligated to do something ‘big’ ... We often think that some careers are superior or more meaningful compared to other careers, especially ones that are more entry level.” She suggests job shadowing, internships and summer jobs in a field you’re interested in to test out what opportunities exist and whether you do need more education.

For other women, higher education could be a path God is calling them to. “God doesn’t have a general plan or calling for all women... God has a specific plan for each of His children,” says Rachelle van Leeuwen. “God’s plan for me was to put people in my life who would continue to encourage me to further my education. If He is putting those people in your life, don’t balk at it; instead, explore different paths that are realistic for you in your current stage of life (not on where you hope to be one day).”

Which brings us to discernment, or listening to God’s will for your life.

## DISCERNMENT

In the end, making this decision is simply a process of discernment, of



drawing near to God. What is God's call on your life specifically? For me, the phrases "pray about it," and "seek God's will," felt formulaic when I was trying to make decisions, and felt frustrating when it felt like He was silent. But so often phrases become a cliché because they're true. When I'm making decisions in life, when I feel in the dark and confused, that is when these supposedly tired and formulaic statements hold the most truth. That is when God is teaching me to be persistent in seeking after Him, making decisions as best I can at each step, and trusting that I don't need to be afraid of the future.

You may not hear God's voice from the sky telling you directly what to do, but you can lean on Him as you study your gifts, circumstances and responsibilities and make the best choices about how you can serve Him with what He's given you.

This means that, yes, if your passion is to be a wife and mother, it's worth discerning what steps to take to pursue this too! Sometimes we feel we have to leave this area of our lives entirely in God's hands without taking any action that we might take in other areas of our lives (in the way we might in our careers). Of course, we can't pursue marriage in the same way as a career, but we can do things like staying social with other likeminded Christians (even if we're busy studying at university), being involved in church activities, being open to being introduced to possibilities, and maybe even visiting other areas of the country. While we should do the tasks God gives us, it's not an either/or choice when it comes to marriage or career. Society might tell you to not think about marriage until after your career is established but if you want it, it's worthwhile to keep your eyes open even while you're studying.

Lastly, some women mentioned feeling judged, both for looking too "desperate" for marriage by not pursuing a career, or for having a career when most women around them didn't. But if we truly believe our sisters are looking to God to discern how He will work in their individual lives, we can expect it to look

a little different from person to person. God created humans in His image to glorify Him, but this also happens in an individual sense – we are not all eyes, or hands, or heads. We do not start off knowing all that we as an arm (for example) can do, but we grow into it by fixing our eyes on Christ. And so we can also turn to one another and encourage each other, and take the time to truly understand how others navigated their experiences and made their own decisions.


And so, my last piece of advice would be to talk to other women! Through writing this piece, I was inspired by my fellow sisters in Christ, as I listened to how God had guided their life journeys. Each story is an amazing story, whether their path was straightforward or more bumpy. In fact, I wish I had more room to tell these stories. In my confused high school years, I could've benefited from having some of these conversations about how life paths can be anything but straight and still be clearly guided by the hand of God.

Jenn VanLeeuwen sums it up like this, "If you would have asked me at 18 what my life was going to look like at 24, I definitely envisioned being married and

having a few kids and a dog. However, God, in His wisdom, had that in store 10 years later. I was able to complete a number of university degrees and certifications, move across the country a few times for different teaching jobs, travel, and grow so very much as an individual!"

## CONCLUSION

There are many more considerations I haven't covered, including financing education and whether debt makes sense, whether to choose a practical career or follow your passion, whether secular college is wise, and when seeking knowledge for knowledge's sake is worth pursuing. Debt, in particular, can have a huge impact on young women's freedom to make choices, but her passions and goals can also shape the path of her life. In short, while figuring out how education fits into the timeline of your life is one piece of the puzzle, there are many other factors to take into account.

However, ultimately the process is not about weighing every possible consideration, but rather about drawing closer to God and to what He is calling you to. May He guide you. 

Traveling is an education in itself.



# HIGHER ED ADVICE: 34 WOMEN, 6 PRINCIPLES

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by Harma-Mae Smit

After connecting with at least thirty-four women about their experiences considering higher education, I discovered several key themes running through their responses. Read their advice below!

Keep in mind that any advice here is just that – advice, not a command. Learn from observing women who've had to decide whether to pursue higher education or not, but lean on God and His Word to determine your steps!

## Flexibility is key

Most women prioritized flexibility when choosing a career path, but flexibility could mean many different things. It could mean shortening the length they studied for, or changing their studies to a career that could be easily “paused” and then started again after a few years. This actually means that some women found jobs with specific licensing requirements (such as nursing) can be a bit more challenging for some to stay up to date in, though these jobs were flexible in other ways. It could mean a job with flexible schedules. It could mean studying something that could be used in multiple ways, instead of one specific field only. It's worthwhile to think about what kind of flexibility matters most to you, and consider how to achieve that in your life.

## Less debt is less stress

While debt can sometimes be worthwhile, in general the less debt you carry the more freedom you have to make choices later in life, such as the choice to pause your career or stop working. Women financed their education in a variety of ways, including scholarships, grants, jobs, help from family, and yes, debt – so take the time to consider all the options.

## Your passion can be a starting point

Many women “knew” from a young age that they wanted a specific career. For some, it was a practical career like nursing or teaching, which were easy to pursue since these are traditionally female-dominated careers anyway. You can be called to something obvious!

For others, it was a passion for something less practical, like art. But it can still be worthwhile to discern whether to pursue this, because career paths are not always obvious when you're a teen unfamiliar with an industry. For example, many who studied art have found careers as graphic designers or illustrators.

Other academically gifted sisters have pursued higher degrees and stretched their intellect, and found employment that matched their education. Some even spoke of the freedom they felt to pursue what they loved, because they didn't

expect to have to support a family on their income. If it is truly a gift God has given you to use, you can lean on God and see how He will use it. It might not be something you're called to study, but it might be an option to explore if you're not quite sure where to start.

## Practical concerns

Many women reported choosing their course of study specifically because it led to a specific job path. For them, it didn't make sense to invest in something that they wouldn't be able to find a job in. If being able to support yourself is a goal, this is helpful to keep in mind! One thing to consider though is getting “stuck” on a career path you don't like – it can take quite a bit of time to retrain from engineering to another career (for example) because the subject is quite specific.

## A love of learning can guide

Don't be afraid if your passion is a love of learning rather than a specific job. For some women, the priority was developing the mind that God gave them, and learning more about their dear Father as a result of their learning. Many women spoke of how learning is never a waste, and the academic world can use more Reformed minds! However, if you pursue this path, it's good to combine this with responsible views on debt, as well as with wisdom on how well you can stand firm in a secular environment. The higher levels of education can raise many questions in believers' minds, and everyone should have a strong system of support for questions if they choose to study in secular environments or at these higher levels.

## Consider the future, but not with fear

Many women mentioned how education could come in handy during difficult times in their lives, such as if they had to support their family on their own. Some said their husband could rest more easily knowing their wife could help out if anything happened to him. And of course, a higher-paying job was helpful for the women who never married. But while these are very logical reasons to pursue education (and they're worth keeping in mind), if it is a fear of bad consequences that is driving you to a life path, it's worth pausing and leaning into God to discern if it's really a path you should take. Some women decided higher education was not right for them, and it's not right for everybody. And if it is the path God is calling you to, then joy, a love of learning, and a passion for developing the gifts God has given you are better motivations than fear.

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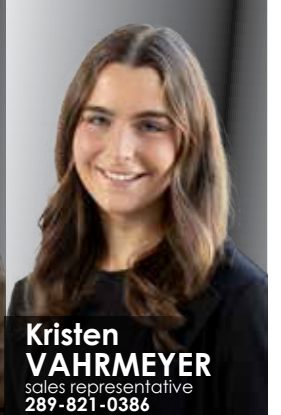
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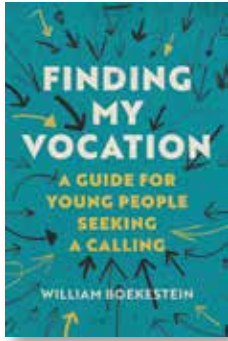


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### FINDING MY VOCATION

BY WILLIAM BOEKESTEIN  
2024 / 154 PAGES



Like the good Reformed pastor that he is, Boekestein has three points, or rather parts, to help young readers figure out how they can pick the *right* job.

In Part 1, "Pondering Vocation," he covers what work is, and the different reasons that Christians have to want to work, like providing for our family, serving others, and as a means of expressing our gratitude to God.

Part 2 gives us biblically-grounded tips on how we can start "Preparing for Your Vocation." We need to make ourselves valuable to an employer by fostering key character traits: honesty and respect for authority might seem bare minimums, but they can really set a Christian apart. The author encourages readers to be ambitious – make the most of the skills God has given you – and reminds them also not to neglect the other vocations God has called them to, like parent, elder, friend, and more.

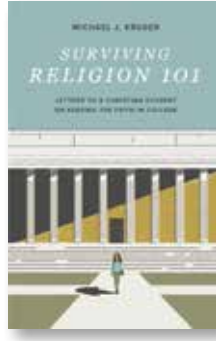
Part 3, "Practicing Vocation" we're challenged to work hard, and reminded that God does give us a weekly Sabbath rest.

This is a solid primer for high schoolers, Grade 9 or 10, as they start planning for their post-school years, best used with a parent or teacher along for the ride.

For more on the book, and this topic, be sure to check out Rev. Boekestein's recent conversation with RP's Lucas Holvluwer at [www.RealTalkPodcast.ca](http://www.RealTalkPodcast.ca).

### SURVIVING RELIGION 101

BY MICHAEL KRUGER  
2021 / 272 PAGES



Even back in my day, Christian students who put their head up would often encounter a head-hunting professor. While I was sometimes brave enough to face up to them, I often didn't have the words to offer much of a reply. That might have been different if I'd had this book.

The author was prompted to write this when his own daughter headed off to university, and he saw how students today: "...need a framework for dealing with the flood – no, tsunami – of intellectual attacks they will receive from their professors, classmates, and campus organizations."

What makes this incredibly readable is how he frames each chapter as if it was a letter to his daughter. Some of these really resonated. I can remember how intimidating it was to realize that my prof not only believed in evolution, he was also really smart. I didn't know those two things could go together. And Kruger tackles that straight on with his chapter titled: "My professors are really smart – isn't it more likely they're right and I'm wrong?"

And what makes it so helpful can be highlighted with a few of the chapter titles:

- I have gay friends who are kind, wonderful, and happy – are we sure that homosexuality is really wrong?

- My prof keeps pointing out contradictions in the Gospels – can I still trust them?
- How can a book be from God if it advocates oppression or genocide?
- Science seems like it can explain everything in the Universe – do we really need to believe in God?
- I'm finding it harder to believe events like the Resurrection – how can I believe in miracles if I've never seen one?

Kruger nails the questions a student is going to be pressed on... though with the one exception being that he doesn't address the transgender nonsense that wasn't in force yet when this came out. There are fifteen letters in all, all written from an explicitly Reformed worldview, and with a presuppositional bent, and to top it off, it's just a great read.

There's at least three important uses this could be put to:

1. **Evangelism** – Here are key answers to key questions that Christians can share.
2. **Encouragement** – For the serious Christian getting shook, here is something solid.
3. **Eye-opening** – For the not-so-serious if you won't bother reading these answers to your questions, you don't have doubts, but only excuses.

I suspect that some of these chapters won't necessarily seem like the gold that they are if the reader hasn't yet hit university and been hit with these questions. So, if you give it as a gift to a high school graduate, be sure to tell them that they should remember where they put this one. If it doesn't grab them straight off, it is sure to be a go-to resource some time in their academic future.

So, two thumbs way up!

## SKIP COLLEGE

EDITED BY CONNOR BOYACK  
2019 / 250 PAGES

This is the case against college, but not because any of the 9 contributors here think education is unimportant. They just want to share what they believe is a shorter, cheaper, more enjoyable, and more productive way to get the education you actually want.

Editor Connor Boyack shares in his introduction that a survey of 600 human resource leaders found “90 percent were open to hiring a candidate without a four-year degree.” If you’re going to be a nurse, doctor, or lawyer, you’ll need a degree, but in other fields, increasingly, it isn’t the requirement it once was. And with far more people getting degrees today than in our parents’ and grandparents’ time, a degree also isn’t the guarantee of high-paying employment it once was. Add to that the ever-increasing tuition costs, and what kind of return on investment are you going to get?

Contributors Ian Morehouse and Brittany Hunter pile on by highlighting just how anti-intellectual many college campuses have become.

Morehouse hits it from the student side: “Everybody cheers when class is canceled because they aren’t there for learning but for a piece of paper.” So, he asks, why not create your own piece of paper by building up a résumé of accomplishments? Since it is hard to get a job without experience and hard to get experience without a job, Morehouse pitches the idea of offering to do a project or two for free – maybe create a website for a company. Your low cost means they can take a chance on you and you can learn as you work. Getting paid nothing to work might sound like a sucker’s deal until you remember that in university your work *actually costs you tens of thousands*.

Hunter’s chapter, “Indoctrination Factories,” focuses more on the professors and administration. She uses mostly US examples, but Canadian Jordan Peterson gets a mention for how his University of Toronto administration pressured him to use students’ “preferred” pronouns. He isn’t Christian, but wouldn’t submit to compelled speech. The fact that they came after him as a professor highlights just how hard it’d be for students to take the same stand.

Next up is Kerry McDonald, on learning through living. She shares this quote:

“...very little of what is taught in school is learned, very little of what is learned is remembered, and very little of what is remembered is used.”

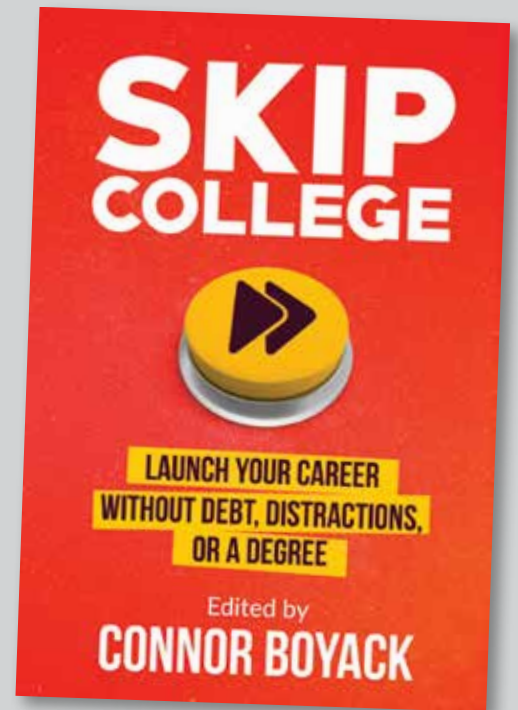
Sometimes that’s intentional: I took an education course that covered the evolutionary origins of play, and I crammed what I needed into my short-term memory so I could pass that test and the course, but I sure didn’t want to remember any of this nonsense afterward.

The material we actually retain is what we value and what we use. Remember all those young men who weren’t great students, but became great learners after they left school? That’s because now they’re studying something that has a clear application to what they’re doing. In this chapter McDonald offers tips on how you can best plot out your own self-directed educational path. Mentors and digestible, do-able, micro-goals are important, but the key might simply be that there’s no better way to learn than doing. And if you start doing right out of high school, imagine how good you might become in four years time! Now compare that to where you’d be if you got a degree and only started doing after graduating.

The editor of *Skip College* is Mormon, and I suspect the rest of the contributors run the gamut from godless to Christian. But what makes this book valuable to Christians is the one principle we’d agree with and which every contributor supports: young people need to consider how to best steward the skills, money, and time they’ve been given.

This would be a great one for any high school student to contend with, whether they are thinking of university, or planning for something else. And it’d be particularly needed if a student has no plans at all, as this gives them no excuse but to start building up their résumé, whether it’s academically or otherwise. This is certainly a book all my kids are going to read.

While *Skip College* is a little difficult to find in Canada in paperback, the American publisher, [LibertasPress.com](http://LibertasPress.com), will ship north of the border. And it can be readily found as a Kindle e-book on [Amazon.ca](http://Amazon.ca).





# The IVF Gendercide

by John Stonestreet and Jared Hayden

Critics of in-vitro fertilization (IVF) have long warned that the technology could be used to customize children, allowing parents and doctors to effectively play God. According to a recent *Slate* article, “The Parents Who Want Daughters – and Daughters Only,” which sounded like a review of the movie *Gattaca*, those fears were well-founded. According to the article,

“You can have a baby when it suits your career, thanks to egg freezing (or at least you can try). You can sequence your embryos’ genomes for \$2,500 a pop and attempt to maximize your future child’s health (or intelligence, attractiveness, or height) ... you can even select eye color. There is a vast disparity between who gets to use IVF... and who is using it to create designer families.”

## ABANDONING SONS

Another example is sex selection. Numbers vary from clinic to clinic, but one Los Angeles-based IVF clinic estimates that about 85% of its patients engage in sex selection. However, which sex is being selected is surprising.

Historically, when parents choose between sons and daughters – think of China under its one-child policy or Romans who practiced infanticide by exposure – boys won out. Today, Americans using IVF are abandoning the sons in favor of daughters.

“Abandoning” is the correct term when it comes to IVF. Standard procedure involves the creation of anywhere between five and 10 embryos that are then implanted either one at a time or in multiples. Embryos that are not implanted are frozen, donated to medical research, or worse, destroyed, a tragedy because every embryo is a whole life in its very earliest stage. Today, an estimated 1.5 million embryos are stored in freezers in the U.S.

Why are Americans voluntarily abandoning these boys? According to the *Slate* article, “toxic masculinity” is a main concern for many women (even those who are already boy moms). Boys are, after all, more likely to be mass shooters and less likely to help break glass ceilings. Perhaps some parents think that raising daughters will be easier.

## COMMODIFICATION OF KIDS


While some have rightly noted that sex selection is inescapably sexist, underneath the practice is something far more insidious. Parenthood is widely seen as a consumerist activity. Children are viewed in the same way as pets or plants. They are objects to be acquired rather than persons whose intrinsic dignity must be respected. For many parents, children exist to serve their happiness, whether to be a parent’s “bestie” or to fulfill their parent’s hopes and dreams.

It’s difficult to imagine that some of the factors behind the dramatic increase

of young females experiencing gender dysphoria are not at work here as well. Girls are thought to be more malleable, in terms of personality, appearance, and even identity. It may be consumerist parents prefer girls instead of boys for this reason.

## WE MUST EVALUATE IVF AS IT IS BEING USED

Whatever the motives, the practice of IVF is enabling a “gendercide,” a term used by *The Economist* in 2010 to describe why 100 million girls were missing in China, India, and elsewhere. Despite claims that IVF is all about “fertility” and bringing children into the world, the practice must be evaluated according to how it’s actually practiced – not just by what it promises. Infertility is tragic, but it does not warrant an “anything goes” kind of ethic or policy. It certainly cannot justify a push for designer babies and third-party parenting.

Even the wonderful “ends” of a new life cannot justify unethical means. The lack of regulation around IVF is a recipe for disaster, a recipe already serving up more deaths than lives. 

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# Obstacles and Roadblocks to Having Children

Some obstacles to having children aren't entirely in our control. But there are also roadblocks that we can set up in our own way

by Katelyn Van Haren

**O**n my 20th birthday, I flopped back on my dorm bed and told my mom on the phone, "I thought that I'd have kids by now."

So why didn't I?

## FIRST COMES MARRIAGE

The first and most obvious reason was that I was so busy studying at university I wasn't even dating.

I knew that God intended kids to be raised in a home with a mom and a dad. Since I was single, I wasn't in a position to have children – even if it was my hidden desire. It was so hidden, in fact, that the girls I lived with voted me as “the

most likely to never have children.” So I needed to start bringing what was hidden to the surface, and that began with praying for a husband. I prayed for a God-fearing man who was eager to provide for our family and I trusted God's will for my life. In addition, I was now up for doing the other things I could to meet eligible men including:

- Putting myself in places where I was likely to meet eligible men by prioritizing my attendance at church events over other activities and entertainment, and by going to a Christian post-secondary institution,
- Speaking graciously to many new single men by listening well, being cheerful and kind in the content of my speech, and encouraging them in godly pursuits,
- Dressing modestly and attractively to avoid two pitfalls: being noticed for the wrong reason and being overlooked because my God-given beauty was hidden, and
- Being willing to go on dates and try new things, giving guys a fair chance.

Over time and by God's leading, I was married at 25.

## THERE'S WAITING AND THEN THERE'S WAITING

But we didn't actively try to have children right away.

There are some benefits to waiting for a time after marriage to have kids. It is not necessary, but it allows time to adjust to new roles as husband and wife without the added challenge of pregnancy hormones. Just as God typically allows 9 months for a pregnant couple to adjust to the idea of parenthood (and for the baby to develop in preparation for the transition to life outside the womb), my husband and I agreed to allow ourselves some time for the transition from being single to being married.

I also saw this as a time that I could complete some life goals before the added responsibility of children. I was eager to complete my schooling for my professional designation. The final test was nine months after my wedding and required intensive studying. My husband and I agreed that it was ok to wait to try for kids until after the final exam. We felt that this was a reasonable amount of time to wait after marriage.

However, there are some disadvantages to waiting. There is a risk that life goals snowball. After the exam was finished, I could have said I wanted to hold off trying for kids until I got a promotion, or had a down payment for our own house, or *[fill in the blank]*. I knew we would never arrive at the ideal situation prior to having children, but I was happy to have the big exam behind me.

Another disadvantage to waiting is having an unhealthy motive. I knew God designed married couples to have children. If I chose to forgo having children to better be able to climb the corporate ladder I knew I would be disobeying God. My life goals would then be an idol, keeping me from loving and serving God whole-heartedly. Being open to God's blessing of children keeps life

goals from becoming idols. In my case, I was content to set aside my goal if I got pregnant before I passed my exam.

## OPEN STILL TO THE BLESSING OF CHILDREN

Yet in the period of not actively trying for children, it is important to consider what method of preventing pregnancy the married couple is using. Three methods of birth control exist, and some Christians argue that any form of family planning is problematic because God so designed sex as to be procreative. They'd argue sex apart from procreation is a problem. I'm noting the objection, but I don't share it. But I do think two of the three methods have problems.

The first is simply to not have sex. While it is a highly effective form of birth control, it goes against God's design for marriage. As the Apostle Paul puts in 1 Cor. 7:5 abstinence isn't a good idea, except maybe by mutual consent for a short period, "so that you may devote yourselves to prayer" but then he encourages couples to "come together again so that Satan may not tempt you..." A couple devoted to prayer is different than a couple trying to avoid precreation; therefore, this is not a biblical form of birth control.

A second method involves preventing ovulation – the release of an egg – by taking a birth control pill or using a birth control implant. If there is no egg, then there can be no baby; but it doesn't always work. If ovulation does happen, then this chemical means of birth control has a secondary effect of making the womb less hospitable to a fertilized egg. A new life begins when an egg is fertilized, even before implantation. Therefore, this secondary effect would end this new life. A conversation with a medical expert using these layman terms would help when trying to clarify how your preferred birth control works. I felt

that using this second method of birth control was like firing a machine gun at my sleeping baby's crib. I wanted to create a safe environment for my children, even in the womb.

The third method involves preventing a sperm from fertilizing an egg by using some sort of barrier, like a condom, or not going all the way. The timing of intercourse can also be done when the wife is less likely to be fertile. These forms of family planning prevent life from being created.

Some forms of birth control are more effective at preventing pregnancies than others; yet Christians can rest knowing that God's ways are not our ways and children are one of His gifts. I was comfortable with the "risk" of becoming pregnant before I met my milestone of finishing school.

## WRESTLING WITH MYSELF

After I finished my exam (and before I knew if I had passed), we started trying to conceive, but there was still some wrestling that I had to do with myself before the throne of God. I knew that even though I may not meet this milestone of being professionally designated, there were other goals that I'd have to change or forgo in order to have a child. I started to "count the cost," doing almost a cost/benefit analysis to see if child-bearing was "worth it."

Part of my wrestling was because I was inexperienced with babies. I was the youngest of two kids so I'd never seen my parents welcome a baby into the home. I also had limited babysitting experience.

I had limited experience with the joys of children, but I could imagine all sorts of costs that welcoming a child would bring. Not only would my clothes be stained by gross baby fluids, my hair pulled, and my sleep drastically interrupted, but:

- my career pursuits would be put on hold, slowed or abandoned;
- my youthful body would stretch and become a different shape;
- my attention would be split by keeping track of someone else's life;
- my free time to travel and enjoy

*Being open to God's blessing of children keeps life goals from becoming idols.*



hobbies would dwindle or include children;

- my friends and conversations would be different; and,
- my treasured possessions would be at risk of being damaged by curious children.

## REASONS FOR HAVING CHILDREN

With all these worldly fears and reasons not to have kids, why did I do it?

First, childbearing is the purpose of marriage. Malachi 2:15 says, “Didn’t the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union.” God wanted me to have children filling my home. It was my joyous duty to live in obedience to His command and trust Him to give children as He saw fit.

Furthermore, I can trace back in my genealogy many generations of faithful Christians. I felt called to continue this tradition. The psalmist sings to God saying, “One generation will commend your works to another” (Psalm 145:4). I could tell the next generation of “God’s mighty acts” by teaching Sunday school, but I could do it when I sit at home, when I walk on the road, when I lie down and when I get up if I had children in my own home (Deuteronomy 6:7). It would be arrogant to think that all the sacrifice and obedience of my ancestors was for my benefit. No, my responsibility was to continue what they had done. God first blessed and commanded mankind: “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). I didn’t have to do a cost/benefit analysis. I could obey Him.

Second, being a mother is a worthy calling, and better than so many of the pursuits the world focuses on instead, like trying to accumulate wealth and experiences. Being a mother involves creating a life that will continue into eternity. I thought of the author of Ecclesiastes complaining that all pursuits were meaningless and without purpose, like chasing after the wind. In contrast, a newborn has a soul that continues into eternity. All my other life pursuits (wealth, beauty, pleasure, etc.) would fade and be worthless. But people

will live forever, either in heaven or hell. God uses women to create and nurture new life. He uses many of His people, by the guidance of His Holy Spirit, to win souls for Christ’s sake. Since children and people in general have eternal value, this makes the sacrifices of moms and all His servants “worth it” and is better use of their time and efforts than focusing on things of this world.

Third, I trusted that having a child would bring joy. There are many women of the Bible who expressed joy upon holding their first born:

- Eve, the first mom, expressed awe at her firstborn son (Gen. 4:1).
- Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter” (Gen. 21:6).
- Hannah prayed and spoke of God lifting up her heart: “My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:1).
- Naomi and Ruth both rejoiced at the birth of Obed, speaking of how he’d nourish Naomi in her old age and be a restorer of life (Ruth 4:15).
- Elizabeth’s joy in giving birth to John the Baptist was so great that it bubbled over to her neighbors and relatives (Luke 1:58).
- Mary “treasured up” Jesus’ birth and pondered it in her heart (Luke 2:19).

These biblical women described such meaningful happiness at holding their bundles of joy that I wanted to know that experience for myself. Furthermore, these women were from a span of history that covered 4,000 years, yet all expressed similar joy. Childbearing is a gift God has given women that transcends cultural expectations.

Life has eternal value. Childbearing is a joyous gift of God and He commands it of Christian marriages. Therefore, the benefits of having children were far greater than my list of costs. Wrestling through this helped me to pursue conceiving a child with joy and peace, but again I did not get pregnant right away.

## ONE LAST BARRIER

The last barrier I went through to having a child was an ability to conceive

as quickly as I’d expected. I was actively trying to get pregnant, but it wasn’t happening. Every month that I wasn’t pregnant I was disappointed. Reading medical articles about fertility helped me to better understand the typical time it takes to get pregnant and I learned that it takes longer the older the age of the mom:

“When a woman is younger than 30, she has an 85% chance to conceive within 1 year. At the age of 30, there is a 75% chance to conceive in the first 12 months. This chance declines to 66% at the age of 35 and 44% at the age of 40. This is due to the effect of aging on the ovary and eggs.”<sup>1</sup>

I learned that a 1-2 year wait to get pregnant was within the range of normal. My experience fell into this category.

However, I know there are more complexities to the issue of infertility than time. Many seek medical advice. Christian couples pray and search Scripture for wisdom as they consider the various options available, including fostering and adoption.

My struggle to conceive was a monthly challenge, but I am thankful for this trial. It produced peace as I learned to surrender to the Lord’s authority and trust in Him to provide.

My first child was born on a Monday morning, just as the sun was coming up. It was a girl! She was dainty and muscular. We gave her a name that means “strong” and the middle name “joy” to remind us and her that “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). The Lord led me through the barriers blocking my way to childbearing and blessed me with the joy of motherhood. **RP**

## ENDNOTE

- <sup>1</sup> “Knowledge about the impact of age on fertility: a brief review” by Ilse Delbaere, Sarah Verbiest, and Tania Tydén, in the *Upsala Journal of Medical Sciences*, Vol 125 (2), 2020, pages 167-174



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# A NATION NEEDS A CONSCIENCE TOO... *but does Canada have one?*

by Daniel Zekveld



When we hear the word “conscience,” we typically think of it in relation to an individual’s sense of ethics – the little voice in the back of our head that tells us when we are doing something wrong. We don’t usually think about a “national conscience.” But doesn’t a nation need to have a sense of right and wrong too? Yes, of course! So Canada, as a nation, needs a conscience... but does it have one?

It does have Christian citizens who know the truth about the world, and about right and wrong, through Scripture. And God’s people are called to bear witness to His Truth. Christians then, have a calling to be the voice – the conscience – that holds our nation to account.

## SEEKING WELL-BEING

Of course, when Christians bear witness to the truth, there will be strong reactions to at least some Christian principles.

Think of the preamble to the 2021 Canadian law which banned conversion therapy (helping homosexuals convert to heterosexuality), which referred to the “myth” that heterosexuality or one’s biological gender should be preferred to other expressions of gender or sexuality. Or think about reactions to speech that opposes abortion or homosexuality. Increasingly, such speech is limited because some are deeply disturbed by it.

This evidences the need for the conscience to be speaking up. We have a much better idea of what would be good for our society and we seek to promote these ideas despite opposition from some. We read in 1 Timothy 2:1-2:

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”

As we do so, we seek the well-being of the church, but also of those outside

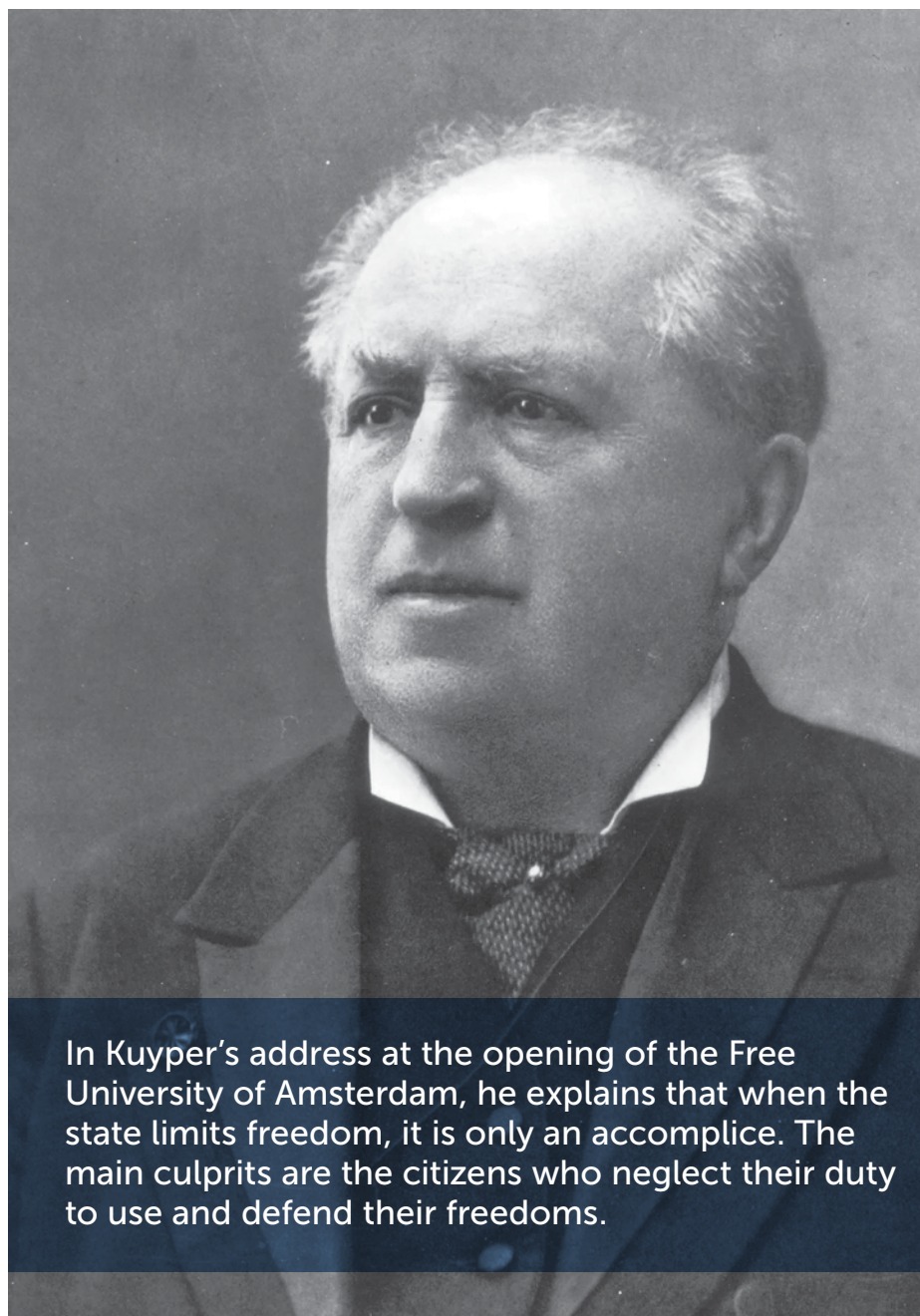
the church. Despite opposition at times, an important way of doing this is by being the conscience of the government.

## THE “CONSCIENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT”

Abraham Kuyper explains that God’s Word directly impacts the conscience of the government for those in government who study the Word and learn from it. But it also impacts the conscience of the government indirectly through four

areas of society. These are the Church, the press, public opinion, and world opinion.

1. The Church cares for its members, who are also citizens of a political community, and encourages them not to ignore civil society.
2. The press either reminds king and country of their duty toward God and His will, or it dulls the conscience by suggesting that you can



In Kuyper’s address at the opening of the Free University of Amsterdam, he explains that when the state limits freedom, it is only an accomplice. The main culprits are the citizens who neglect their duty to use and defend their freedoms.



...when Wilberforce first became an MP, there were only three devout Christian MPs. Fifty years later, there were nearly two hundred.

engage in politics apart from Christ.

3. Public opinion and...
4. ...world opinion likewise affect what the government and its people think.

In his Christian political manifesto, *Our Program*, Kuyper writes,

“Public opinion exerts influence on the conscience of those in government. If a people is serious, its government cannot be light-hearted. A people that seeks after God cannot be governed unless the sovereign allows himself to be governed by God’s Word. The spirit of a nation and the spirit of its government may be distinct, but they are not hermetically sealed from one another. They interpenetrate.”

A government cannot act conscientiously if the people within the nation are not doing so. People influence government. Building on this idea, Kuyper explains,

“If a government knows that enacting laws according to the demands of God’s Word will meet with reluctance and resistance, it will be tempted to go astray itself and burn incense before the idols of the day. Conversely, if folk songs and folk sayings, days of prayer and national holidays, petitions and elections encourage a people to raise the level of seriousness, ennoble national life, and praise the Almighty – then it will automatically motivate government, if only to satisfy the nation, to inquire again after the ordinances of God.”

Bad government policies do not simply come from the government but are pushed by the people as well. Although law and politics can shape people, they also reflect the prevailing beliefs and attitudes of the people. But this also points to the ways that people influence each other. What individuals and communities do can, as Kuyper



puts it, is to “encourage a people to raise the level of seriousness” and motivate government to do the same.

In Kuyper’s address at the opening of the Free University of Amsterdam, he explains that when the state limits freedom, it is only an accomplice. The main culprits are the citizens who neglect their duty to use and defend their freedoms. So we have to remember that it’s not just the government’s fault when they overstep their authority or when they enact bad policies. It’s the fault of other “spheres of society” as well who fail to act as the government’s conscience.

## WHEN THE CONSCIENCE IS DULLED

God often gives people what they want in response to sinful requests and attitudes. Samuel told Israel why they would regret asking for a king like other nations, but the Israelites insisted. And God told Samuel (1 Sam. 8:7):

“Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.”

Today, God also often gives people what they want. Canadians ask for abortion, euthanasia, gender ideology, and so much more, and suffer the consequences.

The government receives its authority from God, and it is thus bound to His ordinances. The truth of the gospel operates as the conscience of the government. While God’s Word does not speak directly and explicitly about many issues that governments face, the government should be working from principles that stem from God’s Word. Where the government’s conscience is dulled, other segments of society must continue to hold the government and the nation to account.

## A NATIONAL CONSCIENCE

William Wilberforce is an example we can be inspired by – this Christian’s persistent advocacy for what was right caused him to be known as the con-

Christians are called to be the moral compass of the nation.



science of his nation. Wilberforce is known for his work on the abolition of the slave trade and the “reformation of manners,” referring to his efforts to bring the country back to biblical principles as he combatted some of the particularly immoral social issues in his day. Eric Metaxas, in *Amazing Grace*, writes:

“Wilberforce years later came to be thought of as the ‘conscience’ of the nation. A conscience reminds us of what we already know to be right. Wilberforce realized that Britain was a nation that had effectively lost its conscience or grown deaf to it, that claimed in every outward way to be a Christian nation, but that acted upon principles fundamentally at odds with the Christian view of human beings as immortal creatures, creatures created in the image of God.”

Does this sound like Canada? Are we not a nation that has lost its conscience or grown deaf to it? We might appear in some ways to honor God as a nation – think of the acknowledgement of the supremacy of God in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, or the fact that over half of Canadians identify as Christian. But we are a nation that acts on principles at odds with Scripture and devalues creatures created in the image of God.


## GOD CAN WORK MIRACLES

However, change is possible. Metaxas notes that when Wilberforce first became an MP, there were only three

devout Christian MPs. Fifty years later, there were nearly two hundred. Wilberforce exemplified what it means to be the conscience of the nation. He spoke up for the vulnerable in his society and called for change, not just in government, but in the hearts of the people of the nation.

That speaks to how we too can be the conscience of the nation in Canada today. We begin with prayer, knowing that it is God Who changes our own sinful hearts and the hearts of our neighbors and government. We look to God and seek to be faithful where He has placed us.

But we don’t just wait for God to act; we also work. We pray that God will be glorified and that His people will be faithful. And we work for His glory and the good of those around us. We seek to influence government by getting involved, by communicating with our elected representatives, and by voting. We influence our neighbors by living faithfully, sharing the gospel, and informing others about the ways Canada’s conscience has become dull. We do this also within our families, our churches, our workplaces, and any other spheres God has placed us in.

Christians are called to be the moral compass of the nation. We have the truth, and we proclaim it to our neighbors and to our governments. That means speaking up for over one hundred thousand children who are aborted every year, for over fifteen thousand Canadians who will be euthanized this year, and for the children who are pressured to change their gender rather than receiving the help they need, among others. Let us pray that the conscience of the nation will be revived and let us continue to seek the peace of the nation where God has placed us. As we pray, let us continue to make every effort to be a faithful conscience of the government. 

*Daniel Zekveld is a Policy Analyst with the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) Canada (ARPACanada.ca).*



# WHAT IS GOING ON WITH CANADA'S CONSERVATIVE LEADERS?

*Pierre Poilievre, Danielle Smith, and John Rustad have discovered success in a "blue ocean"*

by Mark Penninga

**W**hen the leaves rustle and the winds blow in the valley that I call home, there is a good possibility that a new weather system is brewing.

Over the past year, a political wind that began in Ottawa and carried on through Alberta has reached BC. Something significant is changing, and the new system is catching the old guard in Canada's political and media landscape off guard.

Under Conservative Party of Canada Leader Pierre Poilievre, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, and now also BC Conservative Party leader John Rustad, conservative politicians are figuring out how to champion conservative principles, skirting the mainstream media gatekeepers. And they are being rewarded with a growing and energized base of support that has eluded their predecessors.

## **NOW, FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT**

The concept of "blue ocean vs. red ocean strategy" was first introduced in a 2015 bestselling business book called *Blue Ocean Strategy* by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne. The book explained how businesses' traditional strategy involved them trying to outperform their rivals to capture more of the existing

market – businesses succeed by taking market share away from their competitors. With this strategy the ocean is red because there is blood in the water from all the fierce competition.

In contrast, those who employ a blue ocean strategy leave that contested realm altogether by creating an entirely new market space through innovation, where there is little to no competition. Now there's no need to beat the competition, because the competition doesn't even exist. A classic example is the introduction of the iPhone to the mobile phone market. Apple made something people didn't even realize they wanted and had the market to themselves for years, still dominating it today.

Although the blue ocean strategy is usually confined to business school, conservative politicians, and Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre in particular, have discovered a place for innovation in Canada's political landscape. By championing conservative principles publicly, and communicating them directly to voters via social media (like his YouTube channel), Poilievre is making both the mainstream media and the traditional way of doing politics far less relevant.

This innovation is not only translating into political success in the polls and ballot box, it is emboldening other

conservatives to champion conservative principles, and to do so with a level of conviction that hasn't been seen for many decades.

## **OUT WITH THE OLD**

For fifteen of my past seventeen years, I devoted much of my livelihood to promoting Christian principles in Canadian law and public policy. The organization I led worked closely with MPs, MPSs and MLAs, encouraging them to advance laws that would uphold life, freedom, and flourishing.

Although we developed good relationships with government officials from a variety of political parties, we worked most closely with conservative officials, since many of them shared similar principles.

Some of these MPs and MLAs were champions. They were willing to devote their political career to defend the values that motivated them to run for office in the first place.

But, without fail, the chief obstacle to these principled men and women was not their political adversaries inside or outside the legislature, but their own parties. The party leader, as well as a relatively small group of un-elected staffers, were convinced that their chief purpose was to form government, at which point



Pierre Poilievre figured out that he doesn't need to rely on the mainstream media to get his message to Canadians.

they could really make a difference. And the only way to form government was to hide or minimize many of the principles that activated the party base.

But as *Reformed Perspective's* editor Jon Dykstra explained so well in a piece already back in 2016,

“while power is a wonderful servant it is a terrible master. When getting elected is our first priority, then everything else – including our message – must serve that goal.”

And those who wielded the sword decided that conservative principles, especially social conservative ones, were a liability. If there was even a whiff of social conservative values being promoted beyond the office walls, these MPs and MLAs were often put in their place. That meant staying in the back benches and being denied opportunities for influence.

Time and again I witnessed how, after hundreds of hours of work to spearhead and build a coalition of support around

a worthy initiative, such as a new bill, inevitably the MP behind it would get a call from above, scuttling the effort. “It isn't the right time” was the most commonly used and accepted justification. “Perhaps when we form government.” Of course that would change to “when we have a majority” to “we don't want to lose this majority.” It was never the right time.

These leaders and staff were perpetually in fear of the media. Talking points were carefully crafted in a way that the media may find them worth sharing in a favorable light. Yet in spite of all their efforts, the media had its own interests and were happy to share the narrative the way *they* wanted.

So what happens when the desire for power overrides conviction, principles, and ideology? It doesn't take long and the party is little different than any other parties that share this same prioritization of power. It is little surprise that only about 6 in 10 eligible voters bother to vote when the parties don't stand for

much. But it isn't just demoralizing for voters. It also takes away the motivation to volunteer for, donate to, and even care about candidates and parties. Speaking from experience, it is hard to be motivated to give my time and money to candidates who say one thing in private and something entirely different in public.

What has come from the leadership of Andrew Scheer and Erin O'Toole (federally), Tim Hudak and Patrick Brown (Ontario), Brian Jean (Alberta), and Kevin Falcon (BC)? Have they left any legacy, either through principled policy that was advanced, or through championing conservative principles so that Canadians would at least understand the direction we could have gone?

After so many years of failed ambitions, have these leaders and staffers learned their lesson? More often than not, instead they chose to blame their lack of political success on the “extreme” elements in their party who dared to speak up for principles that they believed in and were “caught” by the media.

What a contrast this is to leaders from the other side of the political spectrum, who have continued to champion their “progressive” values, even back when these values were considered extreme.

## PIERRE POILIEVRE FINDS A BLUE OCEAN

Quite the change happened on the federal scene when a relatively-unknown MP, Pierre Poilievre, won the leadership of the Conservative Party in 2022, in the first ballot.

Poilievre was a whole lot more than a good communicator who happened to come on the scene at the right time. That is red ocean thinking – competing in the existing market to win. Instead, Poilievre is to be credited with showing that the old way Canadian conservatives did politics is obsolete.

He did this in two ways.

First, unlike the leaders before him, Poilievre was willing to take a stand on conservative principles, even if it risked making him the center of fire from the political and media elites. For example, he showed up at the Trucker Convoy in Ottawa in 2022, standing with those

*... what happens when the desire for power overrides conviction, principles, and ideology?*

whom all the other mainstream political leaders declared to be on the “fringe.”

And although previous Conservative Party leaders were fearful about making any principled stands on social issues, he was clear and public in his opposition to providing surgery and puberty blockers to gender-confused youth. And he stood up for parental notification in cases where children want to change the name or pronouns they go by at school. He regularly challenges woke culture and says out loud that he wants to defund the CBC.

But having ideological conviction isn't itself enough to have created a whole new “ocean” of possibilities. He combined this with a new medium of communication. Instead of relying on the mainstream media to reach Canadians, he largely ignored them and spoke directly to the public through his own channels, especially YouTube.

Poillievre's videos allowed him to not only frame an issue the way he wanted, it also allowed him to explain it with a *depth* that the mainstream media rarely provides. For example, he produced a 15-minute documentary about housing that has been billed “the first of its kind in Canadian politics” and has garnered millions of views across platforms. It is one thing to get 30 seconds to communicate a message to distracted Canadians on TV, and another entirely to have Canadians choosing to give 15 minutes of their own time to be educated about why housing has become so expensive, and about possible policy solutions.

And when the media tried to nail him with accusations of “taking a page out of Donald Trump's playbook,” Poillievre responded with simple questions of his own, all while munching on an apple. That too has become a YouTube sensation, with millions of views. Yet another strike for the “legacy” media.

## MORE LEADERS FIND THE BLUE OCEAN

Poillievre's approach has struck a chord with millions of Canadians who no longer trust what they are being told by the legacy media. The Conservative Party

polls have climbed to levels not seen in their 21-year history. They are currently tracking twenty points beyond the next party.

In the past year we have seen other conservative leaders copying these tactics by:

1. being willing to demonstrate their own convictions
2. actively circumventing the legacy media

Danielle Smith is the most notable example. I followed her personal newsletter

during Covid and didn't think it was possible for someone with her strong views on the subject to be elected to office. But I was wrong. She didn't back down from her opinions, and was rewarded with the top role in the province.

And I'm seeing this play out in even more dramatic fashion in my home province of BC right now.

The BC Conservative Party hasn't held power since 1952 and didn't elect even one MLA in the last election. They weren't even considered a serious contender in BC politics until last year when they received official party status in the

Danielle Smith didn't back down from her convictions, and was rewarded with the office of Premier.





legislature after two MLAs left the BC Liberal Party to join the BC Conservatives.

One of those MLAs was John Rustad, who went on to become the leader of the fledgling party. Yet within a year, he had this party neck and neck with the NDP, and was even in contention to win the provincial election this past October.

I first met John Rustad when he kindly agreed to join a group of local residents in a neighboring community for a dessert social, so that they could get to know their MLA. What was striking about him then hasn't changed today – he is an ordinary guy who cares about this province. He is humble but confident about the truth. And he isn't scared to say the truth, even if his party leadership or the mainstream media disagree.

Rustad didn't leave his former party because he was looking for better opportunities. He was kicked out, after challenging the established thinking on climate change.

And then, for his very first question in the legislature as the party leader, he called on the Premier to replace the government's sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) program in the province's schools. SOGI, like climate change, was another sacred cow that the BC Liberals didn't want their members to publicly talk about unless they were upholding the "progressive" consensus.

Not only have the BC Conservatives exploded in popularity, the BC United party (formerly known as the BC Liberal Party) collapsed almost overnight. Kevin Falcon, the United leader responsible for kicking Rustad out, humbly chose to not run the United party against the Conservatives.

And the NDP, who were favorites to win the election, are suddenly rethinking their own progressive policies, announcing that they support getting rid of the carbon tax if allowed by the federal government and reversing their opposition to involuntary care for those with mental health and addiction issues. This is all the more remarkable when you consider BC was the first province to put a carbon tax in place.

## FROM BLUE OCEANS TO BLUE SKIES

We may be encouraged by, and even rejoice in, some of what these politicians and parties are now embracing. It is a welcome change from the political leadership we experienced over the past decade.

But just as their new approach was unthinkable a few years ago, there are so many more principles and opportunities that are still unthinkable in today's political climate... but which would be a great blessing to our nation and society.

Imagine a country where our leaders humbled themselves under our sovereign God, acknowledging that He is Lord over all. Imagine a constitution and laws that uphold God's unchanging will for humanity. Instead of appealing to "common sense," our leaders would direct our eyes to God's Word.

Imagine the blessings that would flow from a nation that prioritized marriage, as God designed it, and the children that God so graciously gives to many. A nation where the rule of law is upheld and our leaders are hungry to pursue justice and uphold the fundamental freedoms that God has granted.

It isn't just the world that gets mixed up on priorities. I'm also guilty of prioritizing power over principles. If I'm in a public forum, I'm tempted to stick to values that others will share. I downplay or hide what God has made very clear in His Word, even though I confess that "I delight in your decrees" and "I will speak of

your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame" (Ps. 119:16, 46).

Yes, we need to be prudent and not throw pearls before the swine (Matt. 7:6). But if we love our neighbors, we should want the very best for them. Cutting taxes and shrinking government is great, but it doesn't get close to addressing the real brokenness in our culture and country. The real problem isn't taxes or restrictions, but sin. And the amazing reality is that there is a solution! Jesus Christ offers the kind of life and freedom that can never be taken away.

So while we can be grateful that some of our leaders have discovered blue oceans, and that may be as good as we get in the political realm today, let's point them and all our neighbors to blue skies. Real and lasting hope are found in Christ alone. RP

Picture credits: Pierre Poilievre: screenshot from "How do you like them apples? Part 1" from YouTube.com/@PierrePoilievre; John Rustad: screenshot of a Sept. 13 tweet on x.com/JohnRustad4BC; Danielle Smith: Marvin Samuel Tolentino Pineda / istockphoto.com



John Rustad challenged the narrative on SOGI and climate change, and almost became BC's new Premier in October.

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# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

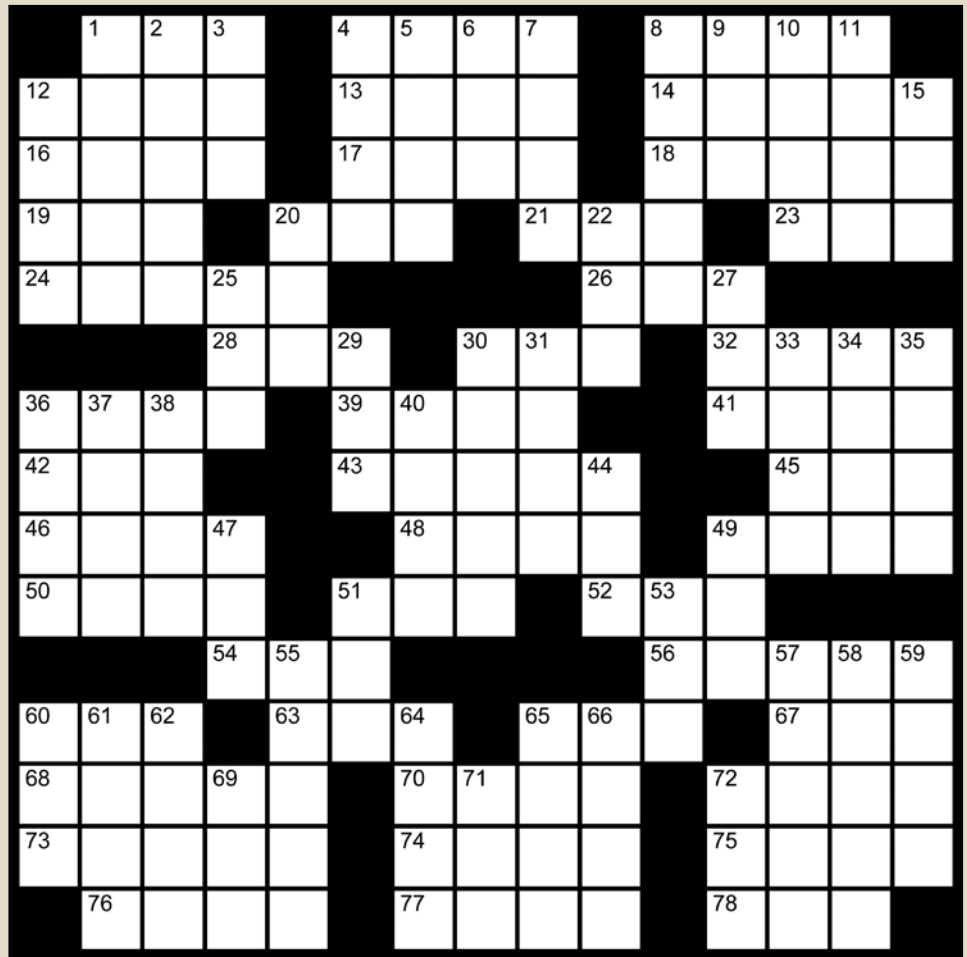
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2024

## PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 66

### ACROSS

1. Acronym for movie imagery made by computer
4. Morsels – cooking gone to the dogs
8. Abbreviation at top of calendar column
12. Bring home the bacon
13. "a \_\_\_\_ wrapping in swaddling" (Luke 2)
14. "if a man should \_\_\_\_ wind" (Micah 2)
16. Apple, cherry, and rhubarb, etc....
17. Country on the Arabian peninsula
18. What one can do with their mistakes
19. Anger (in Ireland?)
20. An edible mushroom
21. \_\_\_\_ de coeur (*cry from the heart*)
23. Location of Simon's house (Acts 10)
24. Type of line dance
26. Appropriate; likely
28. Part of a circle
30. "May you \_\_\_\_ worthily" (Ruth 4)
32. Corporation that sells to Wile E. Coyote
36. Hockey goalie equipment
39. Reverse a command
41. "fed in the \_\_\_\_ grass" (Gen. 41)
42. Hockey playing surface
43. Disease countered by vaccine in 1950s
45. Lass's beloved
46. First syllable of country in Asia
48. La \_\_\_\_ - recurring climate pattern
49. Someone on your side
50. Where you steer a ship
51. Weep
52. "went into a \_\_\_\_ country" (Luke 19)
54. What the weasel went in the song
56. Permeate down to lower soil levels
60. "I will \_\_\_\_ fifteen years..." (Is. 38)
63. Acronym to bring attention
65. Type of bread or whiskey
67. Vietnamese soup
68. "For a \_\_\_\_ moment I..." (Is. 54)
70. "A flea and a fly in a \_\_\_\_" (O. Nash)
72. "\_\_\_\_ Is Our God" (Phil Wickham song)
73. "\_\_\_\_, \_\_ need to talk." (Dad)
74. Acronym for group launching the Shuttle
75. Last number in a German countdown
76. Type of pressure
77. Scots version of *over*, or one who owes
78. US group with brushing advice (acronym)



### DOWN

2. Capital of Egypt
3. Not outs
5. A good slant on entering the freeway
6. Acronym for we know not what coming up
7. Get watches on the same time (informal)
8. Acronym for Calvinist principles
9. Short for utility vehicle (Aussy slang)
10. Arrival times at airports (acronym)
11. Serenade "in the \_\_\_\_ and yellow leaf"? (*Macbeth*) No. But there is \_\_\_\_ in serenade.
12. Long tale on a grand scale
15. Genetic molecule (acronym)
20. Automobile
22. Animal frequently found in the lab
25. Helium, hydrogen, nitrogen, or oxygen
27. Road covering
29. "my \_\_\_\_ overflows" (Ps. 23)
30. Make up your own lines
31. Lost item in a parable (Luke 15)
33. It's in a prisoner; a prisoner's inside it.
34. Good diet: three of this per day.
35. A current running counter to the stream
36. Type of cloth-covered helmet
37. "...the heart may \_\_\_\_" (Prov. 14)
38. "He can \_\_\_\_ gently with..." (Heb. 5)
40. Doubled, hyphenated word for *taboo*
44. "Clumsy galoot!"
47. Mischievous fairy or child
49. Plural form for *to be*
51. What you do with your little eye
53. It can be blonde, pale, red, or dark.
55. Present, proffer (partially?)
57. Small sap-sucking insect
58. Much \_\_\_\_ comes from \_\_\_\_.
59. Southern U.S. slang for horse
60. Muscles found below your pecs
61. "they \_\_\_\_ trouble upon me" (Ps. 55)
62. What you do at breakfast, lunch, or sup
64. Begins second part of a two-part question... when you need *info*.
65. Trick; diversion; ploy; stratagem
66. "went to Jerusalem every \_\_\_\_" (Luke 2)
69. Ram's mate
71. "skilled in the \_\_\_\_ of Moses" (Ezra 7)
72. It can be white, yellow, black or green.





"The great mass of this bleary-eyed world can see nothing of the ineffable glories of Immanuel. He stands before them without form or comeliness, a root out of dry ground, rejected by the vain and despised by the proud.

"Only where the Spirit has touched the eye with eye-salve, quickened the heart with divine life, and educated the soul to a heavenly taste, only there is He understood."

# The Quickening

by Christine Farenhorst

*Solving vexations, conundrums, predicaments, heartaches, questions, challenges, dilemmas, mysteries and, in short, anything, is hopeless and impossible unless there is a hunger and a thirst within a spirit for righteousness. This hunger and thirst is not fathered by the human heart. This hunger and thirst is created by God.*

\*\*\*\*

The bird feeder area was literally teeming with birds. It had been a long, hard winter and food was difficult to find; the feeding station provided an oasis. Tiffany stood by the windowed patio door and smiled at the little bodies strutting about while pecking at the seed. Sparrows, nuthatches, juncos, and robins mingled freely on the lawn. What pretty individual names they bore. Adam had chosen well. Of course, he had not spoken English. Probably the many different species of birds had been given individual names over time. She smiled to herself and considered that although her generic name was Woman, because she had been taken out of Man, her personal and unique name was Tiffany.

Her mother had not really given her a reason as to why she had been named Tiffany. "I don't know, child," she had said. "I think I just liked the sound of Tiffany. Or maybe I read it somewhere. I just don't know."

Several sparrows burst out into chirping. Were they alarmed by some hawk flying over? She searched out the sky, pressing her nose against the window

pane. Or were the little birds perhaps arguing about why their name was *sparrow* and not *flutterwing*? There had been various times in her own life, times during which she had pondered the significance of her name, stages of discussing with her parents as to why they had not named her Johanna, after her paternal grandmother, or Helen, after her maternal grandmother. It had a curious dictionary meaning – the name Tiffany. It meant sheer fabric. Eventually, when she was a teenager, rapidly approaching adulthood, she was reconciled to the rationale that her father held out to her.

"It doesn't really matter, does it, Tiffany? When people hear your name, they should automatically think of what you do, of what you stand for, and how you speak. After all, your name ought to signify the reputation you give it. So be careful about what you say and do. That's what it comes down to."

Tiffany smiled at her reflection before moving back from the window. She remembered Dad's words very clearly. And she also remembered Psalm 139.

*For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

Surely a fabric, a sheer fabric, such as her name denoted, was precious to think

on as being woven together by God. It was an intimate thought, between God and herself, and it was a thought that made her feel special and whole.

\*\*\*\*

She and Evan had been careful when they had named their children. Their oldest, a boy, had been baptized John, meaning "God is gracious"; the second, Noah, had "rest and repose" affixed to his person. They had frequently spoken to both boys about the meaning of their names. Both John and Noah had been fascinated. Their names had cultivated their identities. Like a gift that could be unwrapped over and over again, the truth was that the bestowal of a good name was better than giving a child riches.

Their third child, a daughter, had been a wee, tiny thing when she was born. A total surprise, born a good seven years after Noah, this baby had been considered an added sweetness by Evan and herself. She was an extra joy, which was why the name they had chosen for her was Joy. She was now married and had a family of her own.

Tiffany sighed. Time went by fast, inexplicably fast.

Leaving her place by the window, Tiffany walked through the dining room to the kitchen. The counter was still cluttered with washed breakfast dishes which she had not, as yet, put away. Absently, she took her place in front of the sink, picked up a dish rag and began wiping a spot that needed no cleaning at all. Pain-

fully aware of what made her so reflective and philosophical, she fought the desire to put on her coat, to escape outside and take the car for a long drive out into the country. If she did that, she would not have to wait for the doctor's phone call; if she did that, she would not have to hear the results of her recent lab tests. Even as she doggedly continued to wipe the counter, she fought a rising compulsion to leave. There was no appetite in her at all to digest the knowledge that the doctor might impart. A terrible dread encompassed her that after his phone call this morning nothing would ever be the same again.

A fly landed on the counter and she swatted at it with her dish rag. In the middle of her third swat, the phone rang. Startled, Tiffany froze for a moment. She waited for the fourth ring before she finally walked back through the open kitchen door to the dining room. The phone, large and black, stood on the table. Hesitantly, she picked up the receiver.

"Hello."

"Hi, Mom."

"Joy?"

"Yup, it's me. Your one and only daughter. How are you, Mom?"

Tiffany's left hand fiddled with the telephone cord. Then she took a deep breath before she answered, "Oh, I'm fine, sweetheart." There was no need, no need at all, she thought, to worry this child, or the others, when there was really nothing to tell. Not yet, anyway.

"Listen, Mom, Rob and I thought we might drive up for a visit this weekend, maybe from Friday night until Monday morning. That is, if a visit suits you and Dad." Joy's voice still sounded just like it had when she was a little girl.

"Sure, honey. That's fine. We'll look forward to that. I'll have Dad take the playpen out of the shed and the crib's still up in the spare bedroom."

"Thanks, Mom. I was hoping it would work out. For some reason, I've missed seeing you guys so much the last few days. Also, and I admit it freely, I really, really want to see how the addition to the house is coming along. Rob and I are so excited about it! But I have to go now. This is a middle-of-the-day call and Rob

always tells me to wait until the evening when the rates are lower. But I just had this sudden impulse to call and ask you if we could come and I just wanted to hear your voice."

"OK, honey and I'm happy to hear your voice too." Tiffany smiled at the telephone cord which she was crumpling in her left hand. Joy was impetuous, as impetuous as she had been when she was six and had asked the mailman over for supper because she supposed that he looked lonely.

"Bye, Mom. See you soon. Suppertime Friday?"

"That'll be fine, Joy. Bye, honey."

"Bye, Mom. I love you."

"I love you too, sweetheart."

Tiffany hung up the receiver slowly, and drifted back to the glass patio door. They had begun construction for an addition to the house. She viewed the cluttered backyard with some misgiving. Evan and she had talked about putting on the addition for weeks before finally coming to

the decision that it was the right thing to do. However, Noah...

She turned abruptly and slowly meandered back to the table, remembering that Joy and Rob might not be the only ones visiting this weekend. Noah and Amy had mentioned that they might drop by on Sunday afternoon. Noah did not approve of the addition. Noah did not approve of Joy any longer either. The remembrance of it fell on her like a shadow and a hard knot gathered in the pit of her stomach. Should she call back and ask Joy to wait – to come another weekend?

The phone rang again. This time her hand was on the receiver before it finished its first ring. Somehow she had expected to hear Joy's voice again, but this time it was the doctor. "Tiffany?"

"Yes. Dr. Brewster?"

Her voice was hoarse. Dr. Brewster wasted no time.

"Tiffany, I'm sorry, but the results of your lab tests were not good."

*Pictures are all by Havilah Farenhorst*



“Cancer?” She barely had the breath to push the word out. Behind her, in the kitchen, Toby, the dog, moved about in his woven, wooden basket. The creaks interrupted the doctor’s reply.

“Yes, but I don’t want you to panic.” His voice was impersonal, calm and professional. “If you have to have cancer,” he went on calmly, “the uterus is not such a bad place to have it in the beginning stages. And that’s what I think the lab results show – that you are in the beginning stages of uterine cancer.”

“So what do I do?” Tiffany felt helpless, hopeless, and tremendously lonely all at the same time. She had not even told Evan about this doctor’s appointment. It had, after all, only been a routine appointment, an ordinary appointment. However, Dr. Brewster’s insistence on lab work after her last physical had made her nervous, had put a barbed wire fence around the appointment. It had seemed to her that telling Evan would unnecessarily emphasize the possibility that something might be wrong. And she had not wanted to consider that possibility.

“Well, Tiffany,” Dr. Brewster’s voice bruised her ear, “I would suggest a hysterectomy as soon as possible to be your best option. How quickly would you be able to arrange to check into the hospital? The earliest possible arrangement I would be able to make for you would be next week Tuesday or Wednesday. Is that too fast for you and Evan to come to grips with the idea?”

“No, that would be fine.” What was she saying? What was happening here? Just a few moments ago she had been watching sparrows, and chatting with Joy.

“Good.” Dr. Brewster’s voice was competent, almost chipper as he went on. “Well, keep your chin up. I’ll go ahead and book you in for next Wednesday. Just count on the fact that you’ll probably have to check into the hospital on Tuesday evening.”

Tiffany swallowed. There was a lump in her throat and words would not come.

“I know this is difficult to take in, Tiffany,” Dr. Brewster’s voice suddenly became more sympathetic, “it’s all rather sudden, isn’t it? So, if you have any questions, don’t hesitate to call me back. My nurse

will call and confirm all these things and will also let you know this week what you may or may not eat prior to checking in.”

“All right.” Tiffany’s whisper was barely audible.

“Bye, Tiffany.”

“Goodbye.”

Woodenly leaning her left hand on the dining room table, Tiffany’s right hand still clutched the receiver. Laboriously she placed the phone back on the hook.

She had always loved the Romans 8:28 text. The recitation of it came easily.

*And we know that for those who love God all things – all things – work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

It rolled off her tongue smoothly, effortlessly. She had always accepted it as totally true, absolutely true – for everyone else.

But now she had to apply it to herself. Now she had to say and believe that cancer would work for her good. Now she had to acknowledge that cancer would surely build a closer relationship with the Lord. But she was quite satisfied with the relationship she had with Him presently.

“Oh, Lord!” she moaned, and again, “Oh, Lord!”

Slowly inching over, she sat down on one of the leather-backed table chairs. Then she slumped forward, dropping her hands at her sides, shivering as she did so. Feeling the hard wood on her face underneath the tablecloth was not exactly the most comfortable position. But the tablecloth had belonged to her Mom and right now she longed for her Mom and for her Dad and for Evan. She sobbed, first softly but then the whimpers spilled over into great wails of such an anguished nature that the dog got up from his basket in the kitchen and trotted over. Sitting down at her side, he began licking her left hand, whining as he did so.

Eventually Tiffany stopped keening. She was totally depleted, weary in both body and soul. It came to her that Janice Edgar had died of uterine cancer. Janice had been a strong Christian, often testifying in front of the church, often speaking at women’s groups, that God’s grace sustained her. Would she be able to do

that too? Janice Edgar had been dead for almost fifteen years now.

Sitting up in slow motion, Tiffany reached for the hanky in her skirt pocket. Blowing her nose and wiping her face, she contemplated the shades of red in the tablecloth. Mom had also died of cancer, of breast cancer, seven years ago. Mom was in heaven now and so was Dad.

“What is your only comfort in life and death?”

Tiffany could see her father, grey hair unruly and ruffled, teaching catechism to a room full of teenagers. He had boomed out the answer himself.

“That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.”

And his fist had hit the table at the word “belong.” All the catechism students had jumped, herself included.

Tiffany blew her nose again, and her thoughts shifted back to Joy. Joy was a teller of tales and Joy was coming home this weekend. How often, Tiffany recalled, had she not been glad at that six-word phrase, *Joy is coming home this weekend*. After graduating from a journalism program and accepting a job at a newspaper, Joy had left home. Regularly sent overseas on assignments, the child had a drive to speak the truth and had an amazing ability to weave words together. She was a stitcher of stories. Joy was a writer, a writer like her Dad had been.

Tiffany shook her head sluggishly. Writing was an ability she herself did not possess. No, as a matter of fact, stuttering came easily and her heartrate accelerated considerably whenever she was called upon to say something. She continued gazing down at the tablecloth. How often had they not, the five of them, Evan, John, Noah, Joy and herself, sat around this table? How often would it still happen?

\*\*\*\*

Joy and husband Rob, and their children Lacy and baby Evan, lived about two hours north. Rob was a graphic arts de-





noticed her because some of the garbage was moving and then there was this tiny cry.”

Tiffany had found herself reaching for Joy’s hand.

“Mom and Dad,” Joy resumed, “I loved this child the moment I saw her moving underneath the garbage. In a flash I could see myself, covered with the filth of sin. And I felt God reaching out to take me away from garbage, to remove filth from me. So, I reached down for Lacy and she became mine.”

“How?” Evan asked again.

But Joy had gone no further than to say that the child now had her name, was properly registered with the authorities, and that she was listed as the child’s legal mother.

And Lacy was a Down Syndrome child...

signer and worked from home. After her marriage, although still writing articles, Joy had opted not to be sent on assignment any longer. She was a full-time mom and loved it. Five years ago, before she was married, Joy had been on assignment in Pakistan. Gone for about ten months, she had returned with a baby. That baby was Lacy.

“The name Lacy is like Tiffany, Mom,” Joy had smilingly told her, “they are both a fabric. Lacy though, like her name, is frail – very frail. But she is named for you and you’ll have to pray that she will acquire strength.”

Lacy had been frail. She had been the tiniest nursling Tiffany had ever seen and she and Evan had loved her instantly. They had been sitting by this table when Joy had come home with the baby the first time.

“Where...” Evan had carefully begun, but Joy had stopped him.

“I can’t tell you much, Dad. Just a little.

But I’ll tell you what I can.”

Evan, who had started to speak again, stopped and nodded. And Joy had commenced. “Thousands of children go missing or are abandoned each year in Pakistan. Neonaticide is common. This is the act of a parent murdering their own child during the first twenty-four hours of life. Some babies are found ...”

Joy stopped for a moment, swallowing before she resumed her narrative. “... some are found in piles of rubbish, some in garbage cans...”

And then it had almost been as if Joy began reciting a lesson. Her voice had turned neutral, monotone. She had gone on, repeating herself. “Many girl babies are found in garbage dumps. There is a strong preference, you see, for boys in Pakistan. One day a four-year-old girl was found in my street. Her throat was slit.”

Quiet for a moment, she eventually continued, continued wearily. “I found Lacy in a trash bin next to a toilet. I only

Get the rest of the story at **ReformedPerspective.ca/quickening**. For 33 years it’s been an annual tradition for *Reformed Perspective* to feature a longer, 10+ page story written by Christine Farenhorst at Christmas. Space constraints have meant that in the past the story was sometimes split over two or three issues, requiring readers to have quite some patience to wait for the whole story. Thankfully our website has no such constraints, so we’re featuring this four-page teaser here to grab your attention. You can go to the URL above with your computer or tablet, or use the camera on your phone to scan the QR code below to read the rest of the story.



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

## LORD OF THE RINGS ON DATING

If you're having trouble mustering the courage to ask out the girl you're interested in, just know you aren't alone. Dilly-dallying when it comes to dating is common to many a man... and even a hobbit or two. As a certain Jesse Cox tweeted, in the *Lord of the Rings* films we see:

"... Samwise Gamgee traveled across the world and carried his best friend up a volcano in order to gain the courage to ask out a girl who was already interested in him."

Samwise did finally get around to it, and his Rosie said yes, and they went on to have 13 kids. But hobbits live longer than we do, so if you're going to have 13 kids too, don't be dithering as long as Sam!

## DADS ROCK

"If masculinity were truly toxic, then kids growing up without fathers would presumably be better off than those who have them. But they're not."

– Noelle Thea

## I WISH THIS GUY HAD WON

This past election I recognized the gentleman at the door as a fellow youth league basketball coach. He was running for the public school board, so we got to talking about what he'd do when the transgenderism the government was pushing made an appearance in our small town. What would he do if a visiting girls' basketball team included a couple of very confused guys? His answer? He'd get the guys' team to identify as girls, just for the day, then beat the out-of-towners by a hundred or so. And, hopefully, that would put an end to that.

I've shared his plan with friends, and the question comes up: *would it be honest?* I think so, and far more honest than letting the transgender lie go unopposed. After all, no one involved in this stunt – on either team or in the stands – would think our boys are really saying they are girls. These young men would be making the exact opposite point, loudly and clearly, and be protecting our girl athletes too. If we wanted to be even more up front we could have our guys explain that they "identify as girls to the same extent that #3 and #11 on the other team are girls." No lie there.

We can see this sort of thing in the Bible too – consider how the Prophet Nathan used an entirely fictitious scenario to have David judge his own adultery (2 Sam. 12:4). The Bible teaches (see also 1 Kings 20:27-43, not to mention Josh. 2:1-7) that there is a time when a lie can serve the truth. In this high school setting the real deception is on the other side, and the

proposed stunt would only expose their lie.

Last year Canadian powerlifting coach Avi Silverberg did something like this in his sport. The bearded Silverberg showed up at a women's event, and then, according to the *New York Post*, he "casually bench-pressed nearly 370 pounds," beating the previous Alberta women's record by almost 100 pounds. And who held that record before him? A confused guy by the name of Anne Andres. Silverberg exited without explaining himself, but his point was quite clear.

Christians could do something like this and be even clearer. The problem isn't primarily that these confused men are ruining women's sports. The real battle is over whether God made us male and female (Gen. 1:26-27). For the sake of our confused world we need to bring them God's clear proclamation, and not simply the half measure of someone's common sense. Darkness is an opportunity to show the way, shining the light of the Gospel – it's an opening for evangelism, if we take it.

## THEN AND NOW

"The early church wanted to know 'What must I do to be saved?' Today's church is asking 'What can I do and still be saved?'"

– Paul Washer

## SAME OUTFIT ON REPEAT

Author Amy Krouse Rosenthal once decided to conduct a year-long experiment that involved wearing basically the same outfit every day – a solid black top and gray pants, with the occasional black dress thrown into the mix. She had several of each, enough to make laundry easy to manage. She didn't tell anyone about her experiment except for family and a few close friends. As she described the experiment, it seems like she didn't even know why she was doing it. A bit of it was about how it might be freeing to never have to spend time thinking about what she would wear. But it wasn't like she spent all that much time thinking about it in the first place. After more than six months of it, she was getting tired of her limited options, and found that "getting dressed was always easy but never pleasing." Still, she finished off the year. And, after 12 months, here was her biggest illumination:

"No one noticed. Not one single person ever said to me, *Amy, why are you wearing those same gray pants and black shirt every time I see you?* This information is equal parts humbling, depressing, and liberating."

Humbling, yes, to realize that folks aren't paying much attention to us. But liberating too because it means that as embarrassed as you might have felt today, folks probably aren't going to remember how you tripped over your own feet. Getting cut down to size can be a very good thing, so long as we remember Who really is the center of the universe, and remember too, our special status, being made in His Image (Gen 1:26-27).



## DOWN LOW ON THE DOWN UNDER

Did you know that boomerangs are Australia's biggest export? And they're also their biggest import.

## A POEM FOR THE UPCOMING ELECTION SEASON

I met a traveller from an antique land  
 Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
 Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
 The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:  
 And on the pedestal these words appear:  
 "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:  
 Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
 No thing beside remains. Round the decay  
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.  
 —Percy Shelley, "Ozymandias"

## BEST ADS FROM THE 2024 US ELECTION

Election campaign ads are too often just name-calling but every now and again they say something significant... though

sometimes accidentally. What follows are a few of this year's more revealing ads.

- A Trump campaign ad highlighted how Kamala Harris has supported taxpayer-funded sex changes for prisoners. The ad's tagline? "Kamala's for they/them; Trump is for you."
- In an ad for Kamala Harris, voters were urged to vote for change: "There's promise that lies in change, and the time for change is now... it's time for hope, for change..." The *Babylon Bee* spoof of the ad wasn't all that different: "I will fix things if you vote me into office," says woman currently in office."
- The Constitution Party ran an ad that pulled no punches: "... We're reaping what we've sown. The blood of millions of babies cries for vengeance, and God hears their blood. We must repent as a nation to avoid the wrath of God for killing His children. That means we must stop voting for Democrats that murder babies by abortion."
- In a nostalgic turn, the Trump campaign shared Ronald Reagan's closing comments from his 1980 debate with Jimmy Carter: "Are you better off than you were four years ago? Is it easier for you to go buy things in the store than it was four years ago? Is there more or less unemployment in the country than there was four years ago? Is America







## *In loving memory of* **Maarten Cornelis Van Driel**

Born November 5, 1941, Den Haag, the Netherlands  
Died in the Lord on September 7, 2024, Langley, BC, Canada

*“All the days ordained for me were written in  
your book before one of them came to be.”*

– PSALM 139:16

Beloved husband for 59 years of  
Jennie Van Driel (nee Tenhage)

Dearly loved father, grandfather and great-grandfather to:

**Cason (Helena) Van Driel (Lynden, WA)**

- Jason (Brienne) Van Driel – *Sophia*
- Aaron (Lydia) Van Driel
- Jaymie (Ian) Jagersma
- Julia (Ryan) Wieggers – *Miller*

**Marty (Faith) Van Driel (Lynden, WA)**

- Andrew (Emma) Van Driel
- Ayden Van Driel
- Heidi (Aaron) Bosscher – *Finley, Daniel, Micah*
- Rachel (John) Roach

**Robin (John) Westrik (Guelph, ON)**

- Matthew (Betty) Westrik
- Marty (Shawna) Westrik – *Eddie*
- James (Brooke) Westrik – *Gus*
- Jason Westrik
- Alexander Westrik

**Pauline (Ken) Bulthuis (Langley, BC)**

- Cason (Michelle) Bulthuis – *Bexley, Kenton*
- Kim (Bryan) Groen – *Rylan, Caden*
- Evan (Corinna) Bulthuis – *Levi, Jack, Ezra*
- Kelian (Luke) Doorten
- Quinton Bulthuis

**Ryan (Michelle) Van Driel (Lynden, WA)**

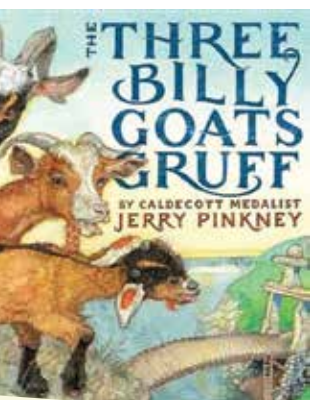
- Joel Van Driel
- Tyler Van Driel
- Dylan Van Driel
- Anna Van Driel

*Promoted to glory earlier were  
grandson Luke Van Driel (2012), and  
great grandson Marcus Groen (2020)*

Correspondence address: Jennie Van Driel, Unit 4, 22225 50th Avenue, Langley BC V2Y 0G7;  
or by email to [maarjen65@gmail.com](mailto:maarjen65@gmail.com)

# 9 GREAT PICTURE BOOK AUTHORS

by Harma-Mae Smit



Ready to settle down and read your kids a cozy bedtime story? Looking for some new and fun ideas? When choosing a picture book, some things to look for are a high quality story, great illustrations, and a tale that teaches without being preachy. And the very best books bring a smile to the face of adults as well as children.

Here are some fantastic picture book authors we've covered in *Reformed Perspective* over the years, and why they're great. Since not every book by an author can be a winner, our reviews have also broken down a few books to be cautious about, or to avoid.

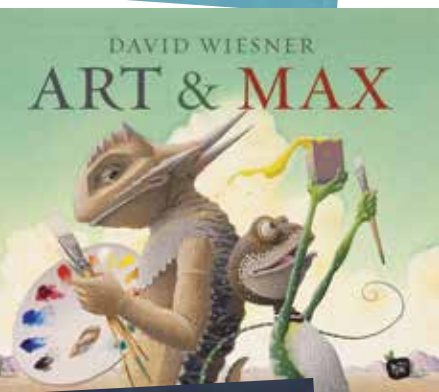
These authors have so many books to love – more than 160. Exploring their works will give you enough bedtime reading for nights and nights to come! The online version of this article links to longer articles on each of these authors, so for a more indepth look go to [ReformedPerspective.ca/9great](https://ReformedPerspective.ca/9great) or use your phone to scan the QR code here. Then grab hold of your library card, and you're ready to go!



## KEIKO KASZA: ALL ABOUT CARTOON CRITTERS (12 TITLES)

Keiko Kasza's skill is in sharing a gentle moral in a playful way! Colorful illustrations of furry and feathered friends fill the pages of her books, and each story builds to a fun punchline. This makes them a joy to read.

Check out *Ready for Anything*, where Raccoon wants to be prepared for every disaster while Duck can only imagine all the good things that could happen. Or try *The Dog Who Cried Wolf*, where the family dog learns that living like a wolf is not all the fun he imagines it would be!



## JERRY PINKNEY: MAKING THE CLASSICS KINDER (10 TITLES)

We often want to introduce our children to classics, but that can be challenging because even classic children's stories can cover all kinds of mature (and dark!) topics. Introducing Jerry Pinkney, who makes these stories more approachable for younger readers. And by adding his own spin, he brings in his creativity instead of simply retelling these stories.

Some of the classic stories he covers are *Aesop's Fables*, *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, and *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* (by Rudyard Kipling). Even adults might find a new appreciation for some of these stories!

## VIRGINIA LEE BURTON: QUEEN OF NOSTALGIA (4 TITLES)

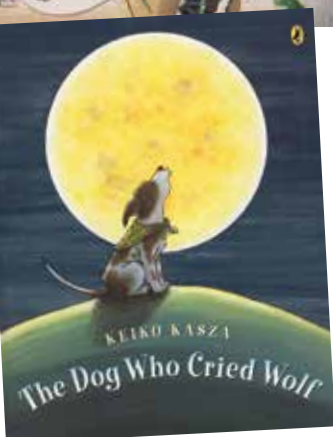
Nostalgia can be fun to indulge in, and Virginia Lee Burton's stories excel at presenting an idyllic yesteryear. Even better, parents might remember reading some of these stories from their own childhood. We might have to remind our children that everything in the past is not necessarily better than the present, but with that in mind, these stories are delightful.

*Katy and the Big Snow* is a classic, where a red crawler tractor named Katy saves the day by clearing snow off the road for police cars, ambulances and more. And *Maybelle the Cable Car* imagines the life of a cable car in San Francisco.

## DAVID WIESNER: WEIRD AND WONDERFUL (7 TITLES)

Children's books that aren't predictable! This is the achievement of David Wiesner, whose stories are full of living clouds, flying frogs, artistic lizards and super creativity. And if you're on the hunt for a few wordless picture books, some of his works are excellent options.

*Art & Max* is an incredibly creative story about two lizards, one who can paint and one who wants to learn. Max, who wants to learn, is challenged to figure it out quickly when he needs to help out his friend. If you're looking for a wordless book to try, check out *Free Fall*, where you get to come alongside a little boy in his dreams.





# THAT PARENTS WILL LOVE

## JAN BRETT: PICTURE BOOKS' PEAK (20 TITLES)

Illustrations are a *huge* part of what makes picture books come alive, and that means Jan Brett needs to be mentioned! Brett excels at using the edges of pages to give hints about what's coming next, which rewards children who pay extra attention to all the details on the page.

Some standout books are *The Mittens: A Ukrainian Folktale*, which follows what happens to a lost mitten, and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, where Brett goes into detail about exactly *how* the bears knew Goldilocks had been in their chairs and beds.

## DAVID MACAULAY: AUTHOR AND ARCHITECT (14 TITLES)

Does your child have an inquisitive mind that needs to know how things work? That's exactly who David Macaulay's books are for. He's explored how pyramids, jet planes, our bodies, and even toilets work.

*Cathedral: The Story of Its Construction* is his first and a classic. It dives into every detail of the whole construction process, complete with illustrations. As cathedrals took over a hundred years to build, the book covers a lot of ground, and even adults can learn something. Another fantastic book to explore is *Castle: How It Works*, which explores the construction of a castle in a similar way. Excellent books for budding engineers.

## CYNTHIA RYLANT: MR. PUTTER & TABBY'S SWEET STORIES (25 TITLES)

Cynthia Rylant has created a sweet series of stories about two lovely seniors and their pets. Mr. Putter and Tabby are the main male and cat pair, and they go on adventures with Mrs. Teaberry and her dog, Zeke. Throughout the stories they bake cakes, pick pears, paint a porch and more.

Some intriguing titles in this series are *Mr. Putter and Tabby Dance the Dance* and *Mr. Putter and Tabby See the Stars*.

## MO WILLEMS: SO MANY TO CHOOSE FROM! (51 TITLES)


Mo Willems has worked for Sesame Street and Nickelodeon, so it's no surprise he has a knack for creating fun and entertaining picture books for kids. Christian parents might wonder if that means his books are suitable for their children, and thankfully they are. His most well known characters, Elephant and Piggie, and Pigeon, are well on their way to becoming classic children's book characters.

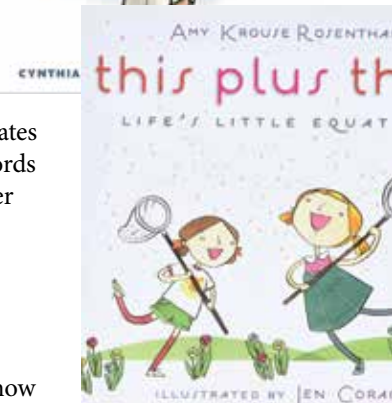
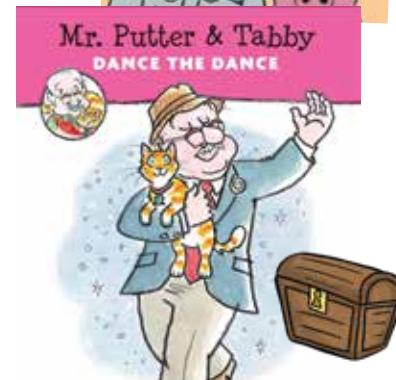
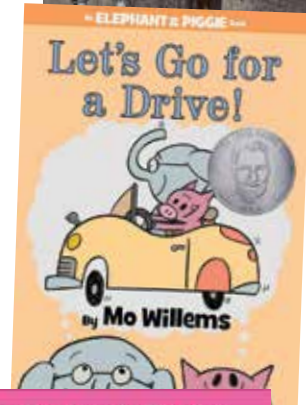
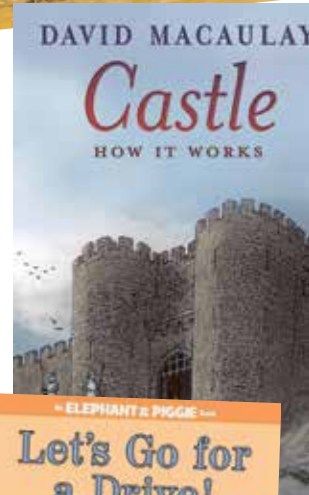
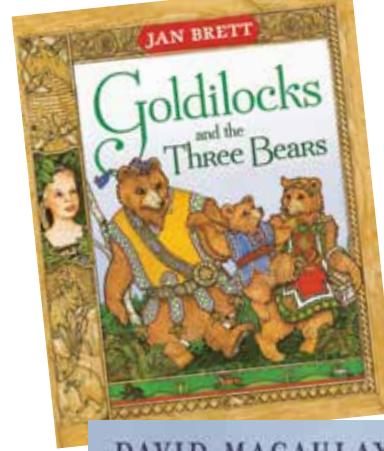
The stories are all simple, energetic tales full of silly fun. Pick up *Let's Go for a Drive!* to find out what Elephant and Piggie think they'll need to take on a trip, or *We Are in a Book!*, which is an inventive story in which Elephant and Piggie actually realize they are inside a book. For even more Mo Willems ideas, check out the books which feature Pigeon as well!

## AMY KROUSE ROSENTHAL: THE GINGER ROGERS OF PICTURE BOOKS (19 TITLES)

Amy Krouse Rosenthal published more than 30 picture books before her death at 51 in 2017 and there are so many innovative and fun selections in her works. Take *I Scream! Ice Cream!: A Book of Wordles*, which pairs up soundalike words and invites the reader to guess them. Another, *This Plus That*, creates fun "equations" like "1 + 1 = us" and "somersaults + somersaults + somersaults = dizzy." Having fun with words and pictures through her books makes story time interactive and exciting. Check out our review for all of her best, as well as a few that can be skipped.

## CONCLUSION

There you have it – more than 160 picture books to fill your story times for a long time to come! These authors have many tales to delight you, make you laugh, and teach you something new. We hope you enjoy reading them, and if you have any other authors Reformed Perspective should check out, be sure to let us know at [ReformedPerspective.ca/contact](https://ReformedPerspective.ca/contact). 



come and  
EXPLORE!

# BORED.

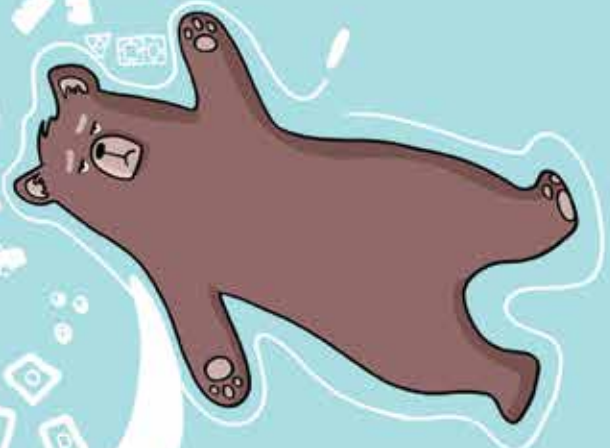
There was snow outside the window,  
It was minus 30 degrees.  
There was nothing to do, nowhere to go.  
We begged for TV - pleeeeeeaaase!?

But our mother said "No,  
Boredom's good for your brains,  
TV's not the way to go, -  
Play with your trains!"

So we played with the trains  
And the LEGO blocks galore.  
Dolls, trucks, and toy cranes  
Were scattered on the floor.



Oh what can we do now?  
The toys have lost their fun.  
We're two days into break  
And our playing is all done!



Is there still joy to find?  
Can we find a boredom buster?  
Perhaps from deep inside our minds  
Creative ideas we can muster!

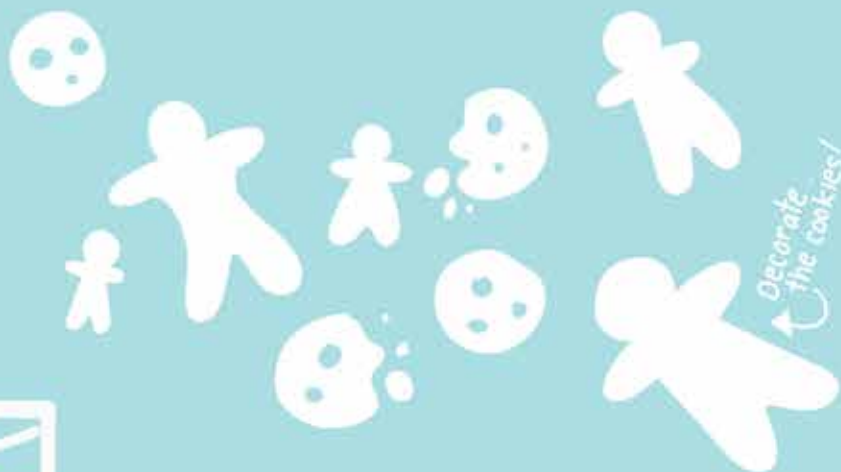


Then suddenly out of nowhere,  
"What if," my sister said,  
"We took the books from over there  
And made a library instead!"

We set up a home library  
With take-out cards to lend.  
Don't take all that you can carry -  
Ten is the limit, my friend!

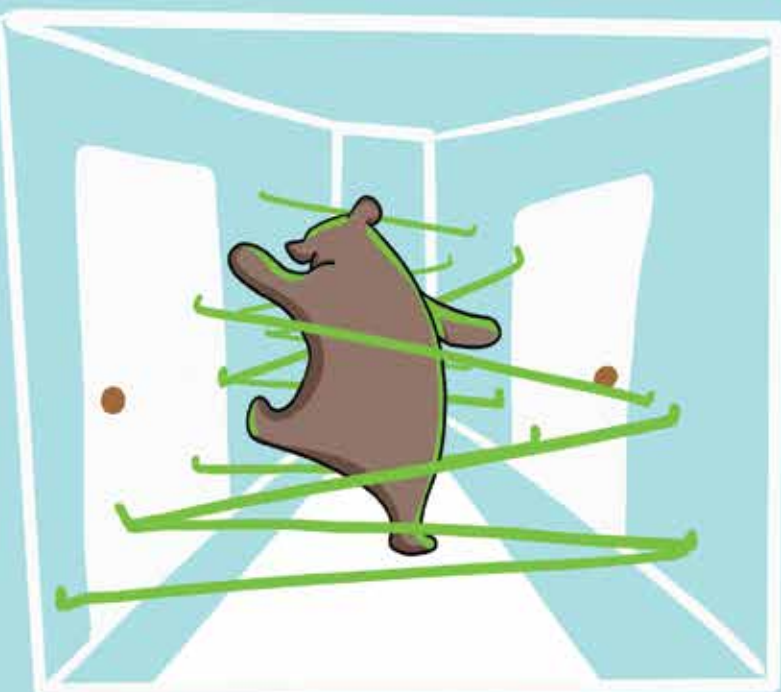
Then the ideas were flowing,  
The creative train was running fast,  
Our break now had no slowing,  
And boy, we had a blast!

Baked cookies of all flavors,  
We iced them nice and neat.  
Gave some to the neighbors,  
Except the ones we'd eat.



We played board games to excess.  
Monopoly, Exit and Clue,  
Wingspan, Survive, Mantis and Chess,  
Kingdomino, to name a few.

We stuck strips of tape in the hall  
From the left wall to the right.  
Go over and under but don't let them fall  
(I was the sneakiest, all right!).





Mom sighed and gave us her consent  
To camp inside one night.  
Christmas lights adorned the tent  
And gave the indoors starlight.

We grabbed blankets of all sorts,  
And all the mattresses too,  
Then made the most EPIC fort...  
The clean up, though, was ewww.

We said "no thanks" to steaks,  
And had pancakes for dinner,  
Accompanied by milkshakes.  
It was such a winner!



We tried to make an igloo home  
From all the books we could find.  
Round and round we stacked our dome  
Till it was perfectly aligned.

We spent a day in our PJs  
And even dad joined in!  
He read a story round the fireplace:  
*Lewis' Prince Caspian.*

We hid some treasure in the home,  
For our siblings to find.  
The entire house they did comb -  
It was candy! Mom didn't mind.




HEY KIDS!

The bears went on a treasure hunt and you can too! We've hidden a number of treasure chests throughout the magazine, so see how many you can find, and note down where they are. Then your mom can use her phone to scan this fancy QR code to share what you've found and **ENTER TO WIN** a treasure that you (and your mom) will love... minus the cavities.







We played funky music loud  
And danced some silly moves.  
Have you ever seen a kiddish crowd  
Do the dance of the kangaroos?



We pushed together the couches  
Front to front, just like a bed -  
Grabbed all the pillows in two houses  
And made a pillow pit instead.

We played the "Floor is Lava" game  
In every room we could.  
The bathroom though, had no flame,  
But that was understood.

Too fast, our break, it speeded  
And boy was it the bomb!  
Turns out that all we needed  
Was a good dose of

**BOREDOM.**



Come and Explore is created and illustrated by Stephanie Vanderpol. This particular spread was inspired by my 4 children who will often get bored and ask for screens. I typically offer laundry or cleaning instead,

but for some weird reason they will decide right then and there to turn on their creative imaginations and find something to do. I'm still waiting for the day they agree to the laundry idea.

# JORDAN FEENSTRA

## is copying His work

### INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman

Jordan Feenstra is back in British Columbia for the second time in her life. Jordan, who was born and raised in “small town” Ontario, first moved to BC as a teen to pursue a graphic design diploma in Vancouver. This move was temporary, however, she returned to the province in her late twenties, along with her husband and young daughter. Jordan describes herself as “a lifelong follower of Jesus, a wife, stay-at-home mom, designer, small business owner and adventurer.” Her favorite place to be? Outside. Her love of the outdoors makes the mountains, forests, and rivers of British Columbia feel like home.


Feenstra is also the mind behind “A Thousand Elsewhere,” a boutique design firm offering handcrafted inspirational goods and creative services. Whether it's pen on paper, or paint on the kitchen wall, chalk, paint, markers, or pixels, Jordan has used it.

Jordan has been hand lettering and drawing for as long as she can remember. But it was after studying graphic design in college that Feenstra challenged herself with a unique project – to hand letter a Bible verse every day for 5 months straight, and to then share a photo of the work to social media no matter what, mistakes and all. The purpose of the project was for Feenstra to refine her lettering and illustration skills while letting go of her need for perfection (a tendency she was struggling with at the time). The project was also intended to encourage Jordan to spend more time with God. “That project,” she says, “changed my life.”

Feenstra continues to share her experiences through writing and hand lettered artwork on social media and her blog. As a mental health advocate, this includes sharing her experiences with anxiety and postpartum depression. In 2015 Jordan, together with her husband, completed the Life Renewal (LifeRenewal.ca) program – Jordan then founded A Thousand Elsewhere with the vision of helping others fight the same battles she once fought. It is now many years and thousands of creative explorations later and Jordan continues to, in her words, “share imperfect gospel-centric musings and creative meditations while living ‘a thousand elsewhere’ until she can spend a day in His courtyard” (from Ps. 84:10).

“I don't consider myself an artist, but a creative,” Jordan says. “I think God is the original Artist, and we're all just copying His work.” She continues:

“In my experience, pursuing a life outside of Jesus is in vain so I am poised to live a life that brings glory to Him (the original Creator, my inspiration), and brings others to Him. I am restless for His return and can think of no better way to spend ‘a thousand elsewhere’ than caring for my family, exploring [God's] creation and sharing His word in the form of creative meditations, goods and resources with the world around me along the way.”

You can view more of Jordan's art at [Instagram.com/AThousandElsewhere](https://www.instagram.com/AThousandElsewhere), and visit [Etsy.com/shop/AThousandElsewhereCa](https://www.etsy.com/shop/AThousandElsewhereCa) or her website, [AThousandElsewhere.ca](https://www.AThousandElsewhere.ca), to buy her artwork on shirts, hoodies, wall art, toques, greeting cards and more. 

*If you have a suggestion for an artist you'd like to see profiled, email Jason Bouwman at [studio@jasonbouwman.com](mailto:studio@jasonbouwman.com)*





▶ **Love in action**

"The world doesn't have the same mission Christians do, no focus on dying to self and living for Christ. We have been filled with the forgiveness and sacrificial love of Christ. Our focus is Jesus, our goal is Heaven as we strive to run the race that others aren't running."



▶ **Faith like a mustard seed**

"I'm talking to you. Yes, your faith. Believe it, test it, prove it, show it, share it. Start small, take one step in faith. Your faith is your sharpest tool – don't forget to use it. All you need to start is faith like a grain of mustard seed."

▶ **Salt of the earth**

"Jesus, looking at the disciples said, 'you are the salt of the earth.' He didn't say that they should be salty or that they needed to do something in order to become salt. Instead, at the moment of conversion, a believer becomes the salt of the earth."



# STOP SWIPING, START SERVING

Romans 13:13 in the age of online escapism

by Tim Challies



I'm going to go out on a limb and suggest that in the past few weeks, you have probably not gotten rip-roaring drunk nor participated in a debauched drinking party. You have probably not given yourself over to rampant sexual immorality or a life obsessed with sensuality. At least, I hope not.

I raise these particular issues because Paul raises them in his letter to the Romans. As he helps the Christians in Rome understand how the gospel is meant to work itself out in life, he lists three pairs of sins that are unfitting for Christians. "Let us walk properly as in the daytime," he says, "not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy" (Rom. 13:13). It seems to me that if he went to the trouble of listing such sins, we should go to the trouble of considering them – and not only as vague representative sins that other people may be tempted to commit, but as actual sins that may be present in your life and mine, whether subtly or explicitly.

### USING RATHER THAN LOVING

It is my understanding that what binds these sins together is that they are a failure to love. After all, Paul makes clear that the great implication of the gospel he has outlined in the opening chapters of Romans is love! Your duty, your calling, your responsibility, your privilege is to

love others as a display of God's love for you. And each of these sins represents a failure to do so.

And so you can't love others when your life is marked by drunkenness or partying. And what stands behind these sins is a desire for escapism. It could be bingeing on alcohol or on Netflix, on video games, or on social media – whatever causes you to lose control of your time and devote too much of it to pursuits that are ultimately vain and distracting. If you are utterly devoted to addictive substances or addictive entertainment, that will necessarily diminish your willingness and ability to love others.

You also can't love others when you're given over to sexual immorality and sensuality. By definition, when you commit sexual immorality you are *using* other people instead of *loving* them. You become captivated by that sin so that your focus in life becomes satisfying yourself instead of blessing others.

### QUARRELSOME MUCH?

And then you can't love others when you are quarrelsome or jealous. That's because you are failing to love others with your words and attitude. I think I've met more quarrelsome people in Reformed churches than anywhere else in the world. Quarrelsome people usually think they are wise or discerning or otherwise gifted by God, but more often they are prideful and rebellious. They get pleasure from an argument, they gain satisfaction from playing devil's advocate.

And often at the root of it is jealousy – they are jealous of what other people *are* or what other people *have*. If that's you, you need to consider that being quarrelsome is not some minor peccadillo, but a major transgression that is listed alongside drunkenness and adultery. You need to put such sins to death and direct your passion, your time, and your intensity to loving other people and devoting yourself to their good.

### WASTED POTENTIAL

I recently found myself pondering this: How many men could be serving as elders in any

given church, except that they have sold themselves out to sexual immorality? Or how many men and women could be serving as deacons in any given church (if that church opens the office of deacon to women), except that they've devoted vast amounts of time to hobbies or games that just don't matter that much? Or how many church members could be leading important ministries, except that they spend hours on social media thinking that some daft controversy on Twitter in any way impacts the real world? And all the while there are people right before them who need to be loved and cared for and shepherded. The local church desperately needs qualified elders, committed deacons, and faithful ministry leaders, but so many have disqualified themselves.

What does it say about you if you know more about the controversies in the wider church than the needs in your local church? Hear it from me: the real troubles of the real people in your real church have nothing to do with what happens on Twitter or YouTube. The more time you spend clicking and scrolling and swiping, the less you've got to give to the people you have covenanted with, the people you can actually impact, the people who need to be loved. Your church needs people who are experts in love, not experts in controversy and celebrity. Put away whatever is captivating you when you should be captivated by Christ. Stop swiping and start serving!

Indulgent sins, sexual sins, social sins – all these are a failure to love. If you're in bondage to any of these sins, plead with God for His help in putting it to death.

But don't stop there. Consider how as you labor to diminish the power of that sin in your life, you will at the same time increase love in your life. Consider how you can replace self-indulgence with expressing love to others, self-centeredness with a life of blessing and serving others. For this is why God made you, why He called you, and why He saved you – so you could live a life of doing good to others for the glory of His name. **RP**

*This first appeared on Challies.com and is reprinted here with the author's permission.*







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- Send completed applications to Mrs K Wielstra - Assoc Sec [wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au](mailto:wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au)

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# MORE More Than the Magazine

If you're only reading Reformed Perspective's print issues, you're missing out on all we have online. Scan the QR codes to take you right to the best of the rest.

## Best of *Saturday Selections*

Every Saturday, I share links to great pieces from other publications, often times secular, so if an article lacks Reformed perspective, then I'll offer a dose by way of short introduction. Get them delivered to your email inbox by signing up for our email newsletter at [ReformedPerspective.ca/RoundUp](https://ReformedPerspective.ca/RoundUp). And use your phone to scan the QR codes below to visit some of the highlights from the last couple of months.

### SATURDAY



#### Why do movies take God's Name in vain?

Films that are otherwise family-friendly will routinely throw out an abuse of God's Name. Nobody blurts out Mohammad or Allah. No one drops an f-bomb. So why God's Name, so often? The folks at the Christian film review site [MovieGuide.org](https://www.movieguide.org) offer their best explanation.

#### 101 evidences for a young earth

Whether it's elastic tissue from dinosaurs that supposedly died millions of years ago, or folds (not cracks) in strata that is supposed to encompass millions of years, here's all sorts of evidence for the Earth being way younger than the world insists.



#### Why you shouldn't lie to your kids about Santa

...or else this will happen!



#### Who will you believe about spanking?

Big name psychological groups say spanking is harmful. But that says more about them than about spanking.



#### How not to be a grumpy old woman

"My ninety-eight-year-old mother recently passed away after living with me for three years. When I spoke at her memorial service, I said, 'You could not do what I did for an easier person. She was grateful, cheerful, and never complained.' Watching her made me wonder what sort of old person I will be. Churches hold parenting retreats, marriage conferences, and seminars on managing finances, but have you ever heard of a church that offered a seminar on how to grow old?"

#### How green energy endangers us in an emergency

How far is your EV car going to get you when a storm knocks out the grid? But a truck with a full gas tank can get you out of the danger zone. And a tank of gas can get ambulances where they need to go. And power the semis bringing in emergency supplies. And etc. and etc.



- JON DYKSTRA





# Real Talk Feedback on Homeschooling



## #106: Should Christians Homeschool? Part 2!

In July, *Real Talk*'s Lucas Holtvlüwer interviewed homeschooling mom Andrea Veldkamp on the topic of "Classroom or kitchen table? Should Christians homeschool?" (Episode #101).

Given the passion in our Reformed circles for Christian education, the listener feedback was immense, so in September, Lucas and co-host Tyler Vanderwoude revisited the topic, along with RP editor Jon Dykstra, to wade through questions and comments about individualism, financial costs, and consideration for the "blood, sweat, and tears" our grandparents invested in starting up our schools.

I can't summarize the whole discussion, but I will share a few highlights, starting with parental baptismal vows, where parents vow to raise their children up in the doctrines of God. As the trio discussed, we make this vow in front of the congregation because we know it "takes a village" – the congregation is called on to assist. However, the responsibility for children still lies primarily with their parents. The natural result of this is that the school can call upon all church members for aid, in as far as the school is helping our brothers and sisters fulfil their baptismal vows. But this doesn't mean the school can, as Jon points out, "call on me to send my kids there. My kids don't exist for the school, the school exists for my kids."

Appreciation for our Christian school founders' "blood, sweat, and tears" was shared by all, but this segment was particularly interesting to me because it's a comment I've heard often. While our covenantal school model does its best to serve as many people as they can, our schools can leave some kids struggling if they have specific needs, or talents. Jon mentioned that maybe we ought to embrace the competitive spirit that having an alternate form of schooling can provide, and then strive to, like our grandparents did, emphasize good, Reformed education whatever method that takes.

I was particularly intrigued by Tyler's question, "Are we operating the same institution with the same principles, the same priorities, and the same vision for education that our grandparents were?" I had never thought of it in quite that way before; school was just school. But we're a couple generations in now, and our schools and curriculums have changed over those years.

The trio then discussed the varying costs of covenantal versus home schooling and what good stewardship of our resources might look like. They chatted about how a covenantal Christian school that desires to meet the needs of many might therefore incorporate a wide range of different courses and extracurricular options. But that all comes with costs. Tyler wondered if increasing what is available in our schools leads to rising tuition costs that then leave some people financially short. Then do they have just two options – homeschooling or going to the deacons?

I've both asked and have been asked these questions in past chats about education. If you have as well, I strongly encourage you to give a listen to Episode #106, with Lucas, Tyler, and Jon, and to check out the one that started it all, Episode #101: "Classroom or Kitchen Table" with Lucas and Andrea Veldkamp.

- CAITLIN HAMOEN



# REPORT CARD TIME!

by Mark Penninga

If you are a student, or were one in the past, you probably are acquainted with the nervous excitement of awaiting your marks.

This issue doesn't just signal the last issue of this magazine for the year. It also means that RP's 2022-2024 Strategic Plan – our game plan for the past few years – has concluded. That makes this a good time for reflection... and gratitude.

## FROM BARELY SURVIVING TO THRIVING

We drafted this strategic plan in the spring of 2022. To say we were nervous doesn't quite capture it. The organization had lost a couple of key staff, was almost out of funds, and was weary from many years of struggles in an industry where one media company after another is closing its doors.

But instead of calling it quits or carrying on with the status quo and hoping for the best, RP's board adopted a new strategy and put it before the LORD, seeking His blessing.

And God provided in abundance! We look back with thanksgiving to our gracious Father for answering our prayers, and far beyond what we could have hoped for.

- Circulation has grown from about 1,500 homes in years past to about 10,700 homes today;
- Reach has increased from two denominations and a few dozen churches to 200 churches and 15+ denominations;
- Issues have grown from about 50 pages to 84;
- Content has grown as well, with more focus on original journalism, new writers, and special sections to reach more ages and interests.

Almost all of our other platforms have seen growth as well:

- Our website received 639,000 page views from 216,000 active users, coming from 215 countries in the past year alone;
- The Real Talk podcast was downloaded 42,200 times in the past year, not including thousands more views on YouTube;
- Our Manna daily devotional podcast was downloaded 42,400 times in the past year;
- Our weekly e-newsletter has grown by another 600 subscribers, to 4,600;
- The RP app has been downloaded close to 35,000 times since it started, and was opened 130,000+ times in the past year;
- And over the past year we did presentations to churches in Ontario, Alberta, and BC about God's first command to mankind: "be fruitful and multiply."

***In sum, hundreds of thousands of people, from 215+ countries of the world, including 200+ churches in Canada, were blessed with a quality Reformed perspective, delivered straight to them at no cost.***

## IMPACT?

How do you measure the impact of giving your child a solid Christian education? We may have to look carefully, but there should be fruit. We would hope to see growth in faith, character, and virtue.

Unlike a Christian education, RP's exposure is much more limited: an article here, a podcast there, a discussion stem-



ming from a presentation at your church, and perhaps using the app to get your daily devotional. It doesn't seem to add up to much.

But what would the Reformed church community be like today if there weren't publications like *RP*, *Christian Renewal*, *By Faith*, *Clarion*, or *Messenger*? God has graciously used these limited means to promote unity within and among churches, promote awareness of important issues that need attention and provide leadership in communicating a faithful response. In short, if we aren't staying active in applying God's Word to our times, we can expect Satan to do the catechizing. There is no shortage of examples of churches where youth and adults alike are no longer comfortable with what God has to say. This didn't happen overnight. It is usually a slow and steady process that starts with listening to, watching, and reading information that doesn't align with God's Word.

And from time to time we do see a very direct impact from this work. For example, this summer we received the following email:

Last fall, either late October or early November you made a presentation at [name of church] on family and the blessings of children. My wife and I were at the presentation and greatly appreciated it. It put many things in perspective for us, as well as encouraging us as a couple. Just wanted to reach out and let you know that earlier this month, 4 covenant children were born in our church within a 2-week period (9 months after your presentation.) Coincidence? For sure not entirely, but maybe somewhat. But we were one of those couples. 😊 We really appreciate the work of Reformed Perspective. It is one magazine I can read cover to cover. Wishing you the LORD's blessing in your continued service.

Our society is increasingly abandoning marriage, and saying no to having children. But the same pressures are felt in the church as well. With topics like this, we are silent to our own peril. Each of us, and each generation again, needs to encourage each other all the more as we see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:25). Our hope is that RP can be a means to celebrate God's truth.

### PLOTTING A COURSE

RP's board is set to meet in Ontario in December to review our current strategic plan and finalize a new plan. On the back cover of our last issue, we invited readers to speak into this by telling us what RP needs to keep doing, drop, do more of, do less of, or change course on. If you are reading this before December, we would sure appreciate it if you could take a few

minutes to add your thoughts through this QR code or by emailing [admin@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:admin@reformedperspective.ca). Tell us what you like, and would like more of, and what you could do with less of.



We recognize that we still have plenty of room to improve with all of the activities we are currently doing. There are also some amazing opportunities that exist. We have ideas, but we would love to hear yours as well.

### CALCULATING THE COST

Speaking about the cost of being a disciple, in Luke 14 Jesus told the crowd "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'"

RP was able to significantly expand the circulation of our print magazine thanks in a large part to a few generous donations, including by a charitable foundation that gave \$100,000 in both 2022 and 2023. Over the past three years we have been working hard to diversify the sources of funding so that we can carry on with this circulation even after the two years of special funding ended.

Our goal for new monthly support for 2024 is \$4,166/month. Over twelve months that would equal \$50,000 – a huge help with covering our bills. And a group of generous businesses is willing to match


this with \$50,000 in one-time support if we can do this (e.g. if you donate \$20/month they will donate \$20 x 12 months = \$240).

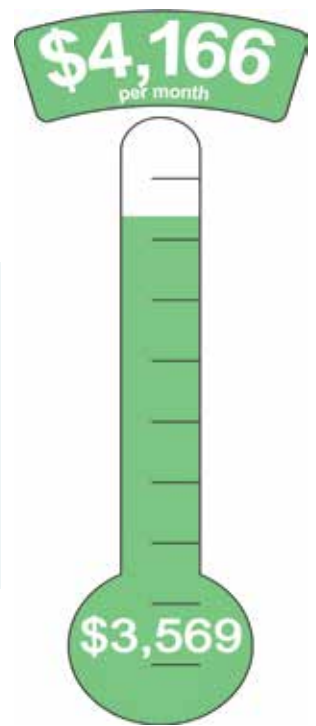
**As I write this, we are almost there. So far, we have received \$3,569/month. That means we are only \$619/month short.**

If you have the means and willingness to help keep this mission going strong into 2025 and through our new strategic plan, we invite you to help us reach this goal. You can go to [ReformedPerspective.ca/donate](https://ReformedPerspective.ca/donate) to give.

### THANK YOU!

We wrap up this strategic plan and this year with immense gratitude to God for His provision and grace, and to so many of you, who have been enthusiastically making so much of this possible. To all of you who distribute the magazine in your churches, who give financially, who contribute content or were willing to be interviewed, and who keep this work in your prayers, we offer our heartfelt thanks.

To God alone be the glory! 



### Welcoming New Teammates!

Going into our December board meetings, RP is grateful to welcome two new board members. David Visser is a young husband and father from Lethbridge, Alberta. He is also one of the two men behind Faith to Film, which has worked with RP to produce videos and which is devoted to spreading God's message of salvation through film. And Rebecca Van Middelkoop is a young woman currently living in Hamilton, Ontario. Rebecca has worked as an assistant to Members of Parliament and is engaged to be married in December, DV.

We also are grateful to welcome Caitlin Hamoen to our team of part-time staff. Caitlin works for a print company in Edmonton. She is helping with publishing our content to our website, social media, and e-newsletter.







# GIVING HOPE

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A Bible to be given to one of our beneficiaries.



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School supplies for one year for a student at Adoration Christian School.

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Text books for a student at a Christian school in South Africa.

\$100 CAD  
\$73 USD

### **FOOD RELIEF (Haiti)**

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\$105 CAD  
\$75 USD

### **SEWING MACHINE (India)**

A sewing machine for a graduate of a women's sewing program in India.

\$150 CAD  
\$115 USD

### **HOME-BASED CARE (South Africa)**

A year of home-based care for a patient of the Nakekela HIV/AIDS Clinic.

\$180 CAD  
\$135 USD

### **CLASSROOM SUPPLIES (South Africa)**

Supplies for a classroom at a Christian school in South Africa.

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### **BOOKLET PRINTING (Malawi)**

Print and distribution of 100 theological training booklets for Logos Ministries.

\$2,300 CAD  
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### **VOCATIONAL TRAINING (South Sudan)**

Operation of a vocational training program for 20 youth for one month.

## **PLACING AN Order**

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