

PERSPECTIVE

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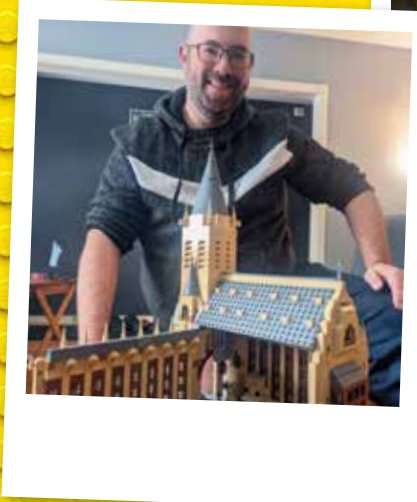
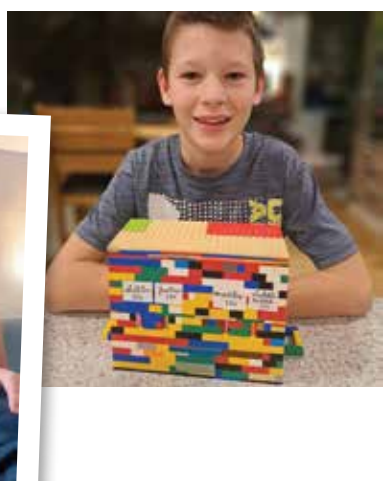
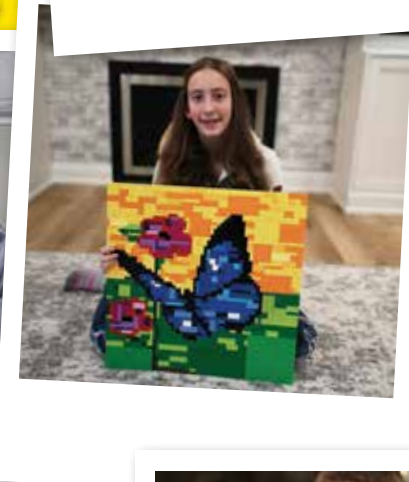
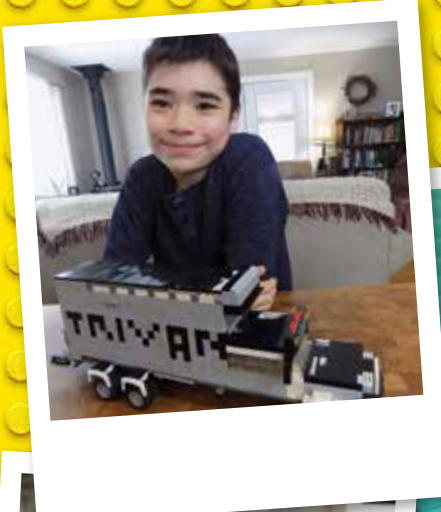
CAN YOU BUILD IT?

MORE THAN 500 READERS SAID, YES WE CAN!!!

**LIFE IN BLOOM:
THE GIFT OF FLOWERS**
p. 40

**CHRISTIANS
DON'T RETIRE**
p. 8

**HOW TO
WRITE FOR RP**
p. 58



What do Lego, flowers, and retirement have in common?

You will find them all covered in this issue you are holding!



When we advertised our first-ever “can you build it” contest, we had no idea that over 500 of you would respond with an entry! Wow! It was a very fun surprise, and we sure hope you will take the time to check out these amazing creations. A special thank-you goes to our three “Lego enthusiast” judges who carefully considered each entry and had the very difficult job of selecting the winners.

Beyond Lego, our team of writers worked together to tackle the theme of retirement. Our world has a lot to say about what life should look like after age 60 or 65, but little of it aligns with God’s blueprint for life, which is so much more meaningful. Be sure to read Jeff Dykstra’s beautiful interview with Christina and Martin Veenstra, both in their 90’s and living in a seniors’ home. They help us understand what it means to not waste our lives.

We also included a special article in this issue about how to write for a publication like this one. We are thrilled that RP’s writers’ team has grown, but we would love to see it grow even more. Whether you are a stay-at-home mom, a retired teacher, or someone else, perhaps this publication can be a means by which you can help us “celebrate God’s truth.” If this is something you wish to explore, please introduce yourself, along with some writing samples, to editor@reformedperspective.ca.

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For advertising, print magazine requests, or to change your address, contact:

Joanne DeRuiter - Reformed Perspective Administration,
admin@reformedperspective.ca
PO Box 3609
Smithers, BC, V0J 2N0
250-643-8114 (Pacific time zone)

For Letters to the Editor and submissions: editor@ReformedPerspective.ca

Editorial Team: Mark Penninga (Executive Director); Jon Dykstra (Editor);
Marty VanDriel (Assistant Editor); Jan Broersma (Copy Editor)

Board of Directors: Bruce DeBoer (Chairman); Marty VanDriel;
Mark Penninga (Executive Director); David Visser; Aubrey Vandergaag;
Sharon de Boer; Lucas Holtvliwer; Rebecca Van Middelkoop

Art Direction, Design and Layout: Annelies Veurink

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'CAN YOU BUILD IT?' CONTEST RESULTS

pages 32-39

4	READERS' RESPONSE	27	Necessary Endings: Finding the courage to let go in business, church, and family <i>- Mark Penninga</i>	61	CROSSWORD PUZZLE <i>- Jeff Dykstra</i>
8	GUEST EDITORIAL: Christians Don't Retire <i>- Levi Minderhoud</i>	32	'CAN YOU BUILD IT?' CONTEST RESULTS	62	BOOK REVIEWS: Fiction for Tween & Teen boys <i>- Jon Dykstra</i>
10	NEWS IN PERSPECTIVE <i>- Jon Dykstra, Mark Penninga, Marty VanDriel</i>	40	Life in Bloom: The gift of flowers <i>- Jan Broersma</i>	64	Chang Shen: Grace to Persevere <i>- Christine Farenhorst</i>
18	Trudeau resigned and Parliament prorogued – now what? <i>- Daniel Zekveld</i>	48	A Century of Cinema for Your Family <i>- RP Staff</i>	70	IN A NUTSHELL <i>- Jon Dykstra</i>
20	Aged Saints Can Tell You What Your Peers Don't Know or Won't Say <i>- Josh Senneker</i>	52	Euthanasia Changed the Abortion Battle <i>- Janelle Oosterhof</i>	74	COME & EXPLORE: God's Majestic Microverse <i>- Stephanie Vanderpol</i>
22	Planning for Retirement: More Than Just a Financial Snapshot <i>- Maria Dawes</i>	56	Why Write? You might not make a lot of money writing, but you can have an impact <i>- Sharon L. Bratcher</i>	80	More Than the Magazine
24	More Time To Pray: Martin & Christina Veenstra on Retirement in Your Nineties <i>- Jeff Dykstra</i>	58	How to Write ... for Reformed Perspective <i>- Jon Dykstra</i>	83	E.D. UPDATE: Honoring our printer (and founder) <i>- Mark Penninga</i>

READERS' RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR:

I would like to take the time this morning to tell you what I am thankful for, in response to your article, "How to Be Happier" (Jan/Feb 2025 issue). My mother passed away last year at the age of 92, and she was always a very thankful, positive woman who always appreciated her many blessings. When she woke up in the morning, she would count 10 blessings from God on her 10 fingers, to focus her attention on her privileged position through Christ. At night she would fall asleep listening to psalms and hymns. So your article struck a chord with me.

Following her example, here is my list of 10 things that I'm thankful for which are popping in my head as I speak.

1. The free gospel promises and redemption through Christ.
2. Family and friends, and the communion of saints. Especially my parents who raised me, and Janice, my wife of over 35 years who has such a beautiful heart.
3. My grandchildren. They are an absolute joy, although some are in Australia.
4. Physical copies of the Bible and so much other good literature (including *Reformed Perspective* naturally).
5. The work that you have been doing for 25 years, Jon. God has given you a beautiful gift: the ability to clearly shed light on the world around us from a biblical perspective.
6. The doctrine of judgment, so that we don't have live with feelings of revenge and hatred since God will take care of all the wicked people. I'm thinking especially of those who have used their position of power to harm other people.
7. God sparing Trump's life, his election and inauguration and the good work that he is doing. On a related note: I appreciate you publishing a long quote of his in "News in Perspective." This man deserves respect for literally saving what is left of Western Civilization, at least for the time being.
8. Elon buying 'X' (formerly Twitter). This purchase has prevented dark Satanic forces from suppressing the truth, and allowed honest journalists to inform their readers about what is really going on.
9. Comfortable home and warm showers.
10. The gift that I received from God to absolutely love nature, especially plants, insects, and birds. It has given my life such a beautiful dimension; I can't imagine a world without all this beauty.

Well. That wasn't hard.

For other believers who have difficulties in their lives it may be more challenging to come up with a list. However, if we look at what God has promised, I'm sure that all believers can come up with a similar list, even if there are challenges.

HERMAN VAN BARNEVELD
CAYUGA, ON



DEAR EDITOR:

This letter is in response to the article, "The case against MMA, boxing, gladiatorial combat, cockfighting, bullbaiting and other blood sports" (Jan/Feb 2025 issue). I really appreciated reading this article, as I feel it was much needed.

I would also like to highlight violence in hockey. Although it is not the main focus of the sport, a lot of fighting happens and is enjoyed. Just before Christmas, I attended an Ontario Hockey League (OHL) game fundraiser for our Christian school, during which a fistfight started between two players on opposing teams. Our section, of which the majority were from our church, cheered loudly. And when the one guy went down, the cheers escalated. It was heartbreaking. It was also a terrible witness to those who knew we were Christians. We all rightly condemn the Roman coliseum, but were our actions that night any different? This sounds like an extreme comparison, but both the coliseum and fighting during hockey are a glorification of violence. Violence goes against everything we are called to as Christians. We teach our children not to fight but then cheer for the fighting we see in sports.

Shortly before the OHL game, our family attended a provincial Christian hockey league game. I understand that sometimes penalties happen as a result of mistakes, but it is a different matter when you see shoving, slashing, and even a full punch. We are called to serve Christ in everything we do, and that includes playing hockey. Over half a year ago, the Lord blessed us with a new daughter. Although she had some Christian influences in her life, she was raised in an unchristian home. She has been growing in her faith and in her love for God; she has also been learning what it means to live as a child of God. On the way home from that hockey game, she asked a simple question. "Were those people not Christians?"

We all regularly pray the Lord's Prayer. The first sentence is, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." Our purpose in life is to make God's Name holy in all that we do; to hallow His Name. Is God's Name being hallowed in the way we watch and play hockey?

Hockey has the potential to be such a beautiful game; it requires speed, skill, teamwork – it's a fast-paced and exciting game. It could be a healthy way to spend a Friday or Saturday night. It could bring such glory to God's Name. Will we allow it to?

KRISTIN SWAVING
FERGUS, ONTARIO



Violence might sometimes be necessary, but it should never be amusing

by Jonathon Van Marren

28 | JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2025

REFORMED PERSPECTIVE 28

Adventure calls...

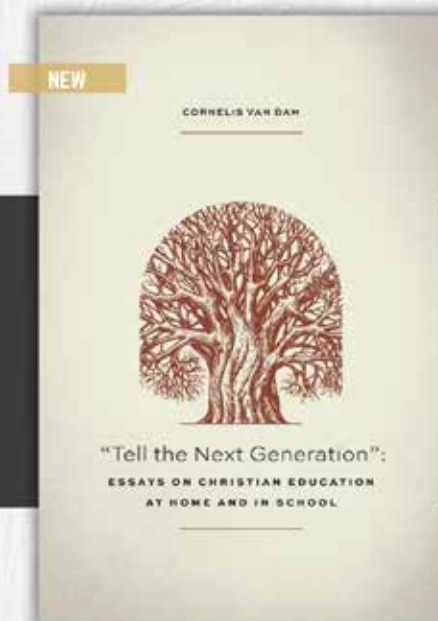
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PSALM 78:4

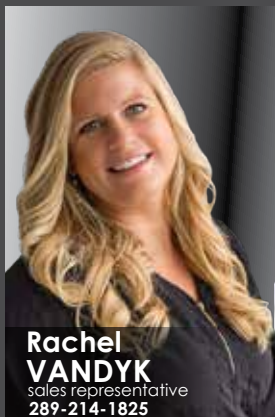
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CHRISTIANS DON'T RETIRE

by Levi Minderhoud



For some retirement might be an opportunity to take on new tasks and roles, while others might continue on in the same role, passing on their expertise to the grandkids.

Retirement is unbiblical.

Before you think that I'm accusing everyone over the age of 65 of unbiblical behavior, let me lay out the case for why Reformed Christians should be wary of the concept of retirement.

God created men and women to work – He placed Adam in the Garden of Eden to “work it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). This was an application of the cultural mandate to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion” (Gen. 1:28). Although the fall into sin made work toilsome (Gen. 3:17-19), God continues to call each and every person to work and to labor for His Kingdom.

Now, this work is not just paid employment. Paid employment is work, but caring for children is work too. Doing chores inside the house and out in the yard is work. Volunteering is work. Serving and ministering to others is work.

GOING HARD SIX DAYS A WEEK

Throughout our entire lives we are called to work six days of every week, with the gift of regular rest on every seventh day. And Scripture is full of rebukes for those who shirk work. Proverbs calls upon the sluggard to consider the industrious ways of the ant (Prov. 6:6-11). In the parable of the talents, Jesus condemns the servant who buried his talent in the ground, exclaiming, “You wicked and slothful servant!” (Matt. 25:26). In 2 Thess. 3:11-12, Paul warns against idleness, having heard that some

“walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.”

Beyond just providing for ourselves and our families, a Christian is also called to “labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need” (Eph. 4:28). We are called to work as we are able, for the good of ourselves, our neighbors, and ultimately for the glory of God.

WORLDLY VIEW OF RETIREMENT

But our wealthy, twenty-first-century culture has invented the concept of retirement from work. Public policy and cultural expectations encourage people to work until they are 64 years and 364 days old and then quit working entirely on their 65th birthday. From that day on, our culture promises that life can be one of leisure, full of exotic vacations, games of golf, and doting

on grandchildren. It is some sort of horrible, evil thing if people have to work past 65.


It is this caricature of retirement that I suggest is unbiblical. There is no biblical precedent for retiring from work or picking an arbitrary age to stop serving in the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps some will push back and say that rest is good and biblical. And so it is. But perpetual rest on this side of glory is not. The fourth commandment, although the emphasis is on rest, still commands “six days you shall do all your work.” That is the pattern that God gave from creation. Our eternal rest doesn't start when we reach the age of 65. That rest is only to be found in the life to come.

FROM ONE LINE OF WORK TO ANOTHER

And so, to those who are retired from their paid employment or whose retirement is on the horizon, Reformed Christians should encourage each other to look around for ways to consider laboring in God's Kingdom as they are able. Perhaps that is paid employment. Perhaps that is looking after grandchildren. Perhaps that is serving more in the church or volunteering in the community. (And it is worth repeating *as you are able*. The diminished health and energy of old age can and do limit opportunities for service.)

There are any number of suggestions for service that could be made, so I'll just make one from my personal experience. This is for the older men in the church. My home church in Abbotsford is very blessed to be a young congregation. It is literally overflowing with families and young children. As beautiful as that is, it comes with challenges too. One of those challenges is that many of the potential office-bearers are young and haven't served as office-bearers before. I just finished my first term as a deacon and, aside from one experienced brother, the other five of us were first-time office-bearers in our twenties and thirties. We all served to the best of our abilities, but doubtless our youth and inexperience shone through many times. It is in situations like these that retired office-bearers have a perfect opportunity to mentor, advise, and encourage younger office-bearers, perhaps going along on visits, joining with a younger office-bearer in prayer over his task, sharing book recommendations, or offering their expertise and advice on difficult situations.

The opportunities for service throughout retirement are endless. But the central point is that we view our entire lives as devoted to service of the Kingdom of God. Not just our first 65 years. 

NEWS IN *Perspective*

CHARITABLE STATUS OF CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS CHARITIES THREATENED

BY MARK PENNINGA

While the country's attention was focused on the conflict within the Liberal Party and the threat of new tariffs from south of the border, the Finance Committee tabled a report in the House of Commons with their recommendations for the next budget. Among 462 recommendations, one called on the government to drop "advancement of religion" as a basis for charitable status.

If adopted in the next federal budget, this would threaten over 30,000 charities, making up over 40 percent of all Canadian charities. This includes an estimated 23,000 congregations, as well as many Christian non-profits. Losing charitable status would mean that churches and religious charities wouldn't be able to give charitable tax receipts for donations, or accept



donations from foundations and other charities.

In a call to action for its members, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) noted that this is also significant because "it indicates that members of the committee, from all the major political parties, supported the idea." They explained that although the Conservative Party wrote a dissenting opinion on the report, they didn't specifically mention

opposition to this recommendation.

In their own letter to the Minister of Finance, the EFC made a passionate case for retaining charitable status based on the advancement of religion. "Religious charities foster vibrant social networks, mobilize outreach, spark local volunteerism, and foster community resiliency," they explained.

"More and more Canadians are grappling with loneliness and social isolation. Polarization and lack of social cohesion are increasing concerns. This is a time to encourage the presence and participation of religious charities, which foster hope, mutual support and belonging, rather than taking steps to destabilize them."

ARPA Canada noted that:

"In some ways, the favorable tax treatment of religious organizations is also a recognition of sphere sovereignty. It represents respect and appreciation by the civil government for the mission and work of the church and other institutions, to disciple people in the way of God and to minister to the poor and needy."

The EFC explained that "committee recommendations can function as a trial balloon. If a recommendation seems widely supported, or at least not opposed, it may encourage the government to move ahead with it."

While it looks likely we're heading for an election, Christians still need to contact their MPs on this now, in case the Liberal government should survive long enough to present a budget this spring.

And regardless of whether this recommendation is adopted this spring, it should serve as a wake-up call to Christians that we live in a political climate that has shifted from supportive towards faith-based organizations, to lukewarm, and now even hostile at times. This underscores the importance of churches taking the time to build a relationship of mutual trust and respect with their government officials, regardless of which party they are from.

POILIEVRE ANSWERS A FOOL ACCORDING TO HIS FOLLY

BY MARK PENNINGA

While appearing on a CTV news program on Jan. 22, Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre once again demonstrated how to expose foolishness with a simple question. When asked by a news anchor about President Trump's executive order declaring that the United States will only recognize the two sexes of male and female, and whether he would do the same as Prime Minister, Poilievre responded with a simple question:

"Do you have any other genders that you want to name?"

After an awkward pause by the anchor, followed by repeating the question, Poilievre stated "I'm not aware of any other genders than men and women. If you have any other that you want me to consider, you are welcome to tell me right now."

After more stumbling, the anchor proceeded with a third attempt by moving on to a related question on the same topic. But instead of looking evasive or frustrated, Poilievre simply pivoted the conversation. Citing some devastating statistics about the topics he wanted to discuss – housing prices, poverty, and crime – he explained "I find it to be a strange priority to spend time talking about this."

The tactic of asking a simple question, as Poilievre did in this instance, lines up with what Solomon teaches in Proverbs 26:4-5. This passage presents two instructions that, at first glance, seem to contradict each other.

"Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be

wise in his own eyes."

Taken together, these verses make it evident that there is a time to answer and a time to not answer. Discerning the difference requires wisdom. In his interaction with this news anchor Poilievre answered in such a way as to quickly reveal who the fool is. So, Christians should take a page from Poilievre's book when we're being pressured by fools.

Answering a question with a question might go against our instinct to try to be as helpful as we can. However, while a genuine questioner does deserve a good answer, what Scripture is teaching us is that we shouldn't treat someone who is foolish or downright wicked as if they have any interest in actually hearing truth. We have to understand they are simply looking to cause harm.

Our Lord exemplified this questions-as-answers approach best. There are a whopping 305 examples of where Jesus made His point by asking questions.

We can learn from Poilievre, but where we'll differ is that, instead of stepping over the fool to talk to the listening audience about what is popular, we can follow Christ's example and step over the fool to pivot the conversation to a humble but confident explanation of God's good design for sexuality. That's what anyone listening in the audience really needs to hear.

Picture credit: screen shot of January 22 CTV News interview.



TORONTO'S BREAKING NEWS



FREE VIDEO SERIES TO PROTECT FAMILIES FROM PORN

BY MARK PENNINGA

Parents who want to keep pornography away from their family received a gift early this year. John-Michael Bout and Jacob Valk have produced two new series of videos to do exactly that.

Under the banner of their Into the Light ministry, their nine-episode Parenting & Pornography series helps parents talk to their children about sexuality and pornography from a biblical perspective. As the group shared on their website:

"You may feel nervous, ashamed, scared, or like it's too late when you approach this topic. Don't count yourself out. This series is for you."

And realizing the frustration that many families encounter when trying to take steps to block porn, the group also produced a practical series called TechSafe, featuring tutorials to "equip you to safely live with and enjoy your technology to the glory of God."

Bout and Valk, both Canadians, previously teamed up to produce the Into the Light documentary, and shared their story on a couple of episodes of RP's Real Talk podcast (check out #50 and #104 at www.RealTalkpodcast.ca). Both men are currently pursuing higher education at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

To access these series for free, all you'll need to do is provide them with your name and email at www.intothelightministries.ca.

TARIFFS ARE TERRIBLE ECONOMICS: WHY CANADA SHOULDN'T HIT BACK

BY JON DYKSTRA

Free trade – free of barriers and restrictions – has, traditionally, been pretty exclusive to the Right side of the political spectrum. But now, with President Trump implementing tariffs on steel and threatening tariffs on Canada and Mexico, we're even hearing the Left talk about the harms that tariffs could cause. And not just to Canada and Mexico, but to American consumers too. As the far-left stalwart Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (aka AOC) noted on X,

"Remember: *WE* pay the tariffs....Trump is all about making inflation WORSE for working class Americans, not better."

But what is she talking about when she says Americans pay the tariffs it charges?

Think of it this way. Imagine two towns located right next to each other – Town A and Town B – and each has a car mechanic. These mechanics are full-service: they go right to your house to do the repairs. The only difference between the two is that the car mechanic in Town A – let's call him Arnold – is way cheaper, so not only do all the folks in Town A use Arnold, so do most of the folks in Town B.

That, understandably, makes the mechanic in town B – we'll call him Bill – quite unhappy, as it really hurts his business. So Bill demands that his town put in a tariff of sorts. He wants a 25% surcharge on any "out of town" car mechanics. He argues that this surcharge will be incredibly beneficial – applying it to Arnold for the work he does in Town B will help fund Town B's government. It will also help protect Town B's homegrown car repair businesses – Bill's – by making his prices seem more competitive. And, Bill notes, if he gets more business, the government will benefit from the taxes he'll pay. Bill pitches his tariff/surcharge as a win/win all the way around.

But Bill is forgetting someone – several someones, in fact.

The surcharge will make Arnold's prices higher. Any Town B clients who do continue to use him will now be paying 25% more. And any clients he loses to Bill will be impacted too, having to pay Bill's higher prices for their car repairs, taking a bigger chunk out of their household budget than ever before. In other words, Bill is staying in business at the expense of the car repair consumers in his own town. That's not win/win at all – that's a win for Bill, at the cost of everyone else in town. This is what AOC meant when she said that Americans will pay the tariffs they charge.

Canada rightly fears American tariffs on the energy and goods they produce. Those tariffs could hurt our producers badly. But hitting back at American tariffs with our own tariffs on US goods is only going to compound the pain. It might benefit some of our producers – whoever makes the goods that compete with imported American goods – but that benefit will come at the expense of Canadian consumers overall by making them pay more. Just like Town B's car repair

"tariff" hurt Town B's citizens.

Is there an explicitly biblical perspective to be brought here? Well, what about Leviticus 19:15?

"Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly."

God equates justice and impartiality, which prompts a question: should a government take actions that benefit some of its citizens – some producers – at the expense of other citizens, the consumers and producers who use those goods? Isn't that partiality? God also speaks to this in His Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12). "Do unto others as you would like done unto you," applied to the economic realm would mean that car mechanic Bill wouldn't argue for his surcharge because he wouldn't want that same surcharge applied to everything *he* buys. If Town A has cheap car parts, or groceries, or gasoline, he'd love to be able to benefit.

The fact is, tariffs always hurt consumers, so no matter what the US does, let's not let tariffs beget more tariffs. Instead of putting up trade barriers, there are actually interprovincial trade barriers that we could greatly benefit from taking down, as Pierre Poilievre has been highlighting recently.



TARIFFS AS A DRESSING DOWN: IF IT IS ABOUT DRUGS WE SHOULD LISTEN

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

With a lot of bluster and bravado, President Trump has made good on campaign promises to impose trade tariffs limiting other countries' access to the prized American market, especially if these trading partners are reluctant to go along with concessions and demands from the new U.S. administration. Canada has experienced the uncertainty of these tariff threats, causing unsettlement for businesses on both sides of the border, and raising ill feelings among Canadians towards their southern neighbor.

Economists almost unanimously agree that tariffs are ultimately harmful for the overall market: certain domestic industries can benefit from these financial penalties on their international competition, but the resulting prices will hurt domestic companies that use these imports to make their goods. And eventually the consumers who pay for finished goods will see these new increased costs included in the price they pay. Christian economist David Bahnsen recently wrote that Trump's key economic officials agree that tariffs are harmful:

"I believe Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent is essentially a free trader who knows in his heart and mind that tariffs are a cost on the U.S. economy paid by U.S. importers, and ultimately, consumers. I believe NEC chair Kevin Hassett

knows this. I believe CEA chair Stephen Miran knows this."

If tariffs cause economic harm all around, why is the U.S. President insisting that he will impose them? It all seems to be based on extracting action, not promises, from trading partners that the U.S. has deemed to not be living up to their commitments.

U.S. officials allege that Canada is too lax on border security, allowing aliens to enter the U.S. from Canada: "[Illegal immigration] is not confined to the southern border – encounters at the northern border with Canada are rising as well." Trump's team has stated that Canada is not doing enough to capture smugglers bringing fentanyl into the U.S. "There is... a growing presence of Mexican cartels operating fentanyl and nitazene synthesis labs in Canada," stated a White House fact sheet.

I spoke recently off the record with several U.S. border patrol employees in Washington State who indicated that fentanyl coming into the U.S. from Canada is indeed becoming a bigger problem.

The Trudeau government responded to the tariff threats by promising to beef up border security and appointing a fentanyl czar, resulting in a delay, but not cancellation of the tariffs. At the time of this writing, the tariffs are still scheduled to come into effect in the beginning of March.

Canadians as a whole have been offended by this aggressive talk from our normally friendly neighbor to the south: the U.S. anthem was booed at sporting events, and some consumers have threatened boycotts of American-made products. How should Christians view these developments?

It is good to recognize that every government has the duty to protect its citizens and defend its borders: while Canadians may not agree with President Trump's assessment of dangers coming from "up north," we should recognize that as chief executive of his country, he has the right to ask for increased cooperation in fulfilling this essential task of protecting his country's citizens.

In Luke 14, the Lord Jesus illustrates negotiation between sovereigns in this way:

"...What king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not first sit down and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand. And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace."

While citizens might not appreciate the heavy-handedness of demands brought by a nation we consider our friend and ally, our government should respond positively to reasonable requests, especially if they are intended to increase law and order, and stop criminal behavior that is harmful on both sides of the 49th parallel.



YOUNG CANADIAN DEFENDS SCRIPTURE TO MILLIONS

BY MARK PENNINGA

Things can change quickly when you have the courage to seize an opportunity, and are blessed by God.

33-year-old Wesley Huff is serving as the Central Canada Director of Apologetics Canada, while doing his PhD in New Testament at Wycliffe College in Toronto. Although he is well-respected by the relatively small audience plugged into the work of Apologetics Canada, that was about the extent of it. That is, until a few months ago.

Last fall, Huff agreed to a last-minute request to come onto a podcast the next day to debate Billy Carson, someone who is well-known worldwide, but for all the wrong reasons. Carson is a proponent of New Age teachings and argues that ancient texts disprove the deity of Christ.

It wasn't long into the podcast before Huff humbly and respectfully dismantled Billy Carson's arguments. Reflecting on the debate later, Huff said that what surprised him was that he expected a rebuttal from Carson. But there wasn't one.

"People like Billy are confident in the way that they say things, but that confidence isn't always backed up by the reality of the evidence and so confidence and competence are not the same thing."

It went so poorly for Carson that he sent a legal "cease and desist" letter, to try to prevent the podcast from getting released. But it went public, and got noticed – it's had millions of online views.

One of the people who noticed it was Joe Rogan, who runs what might be the most popular podcast in the world. Earlier, in 2024, he'd interviewed Billy Carson, and seeing Wesley Huff dismantle Carson got his attention. On Christmas Eve, Rogan sent an invitation to Huff to come down to his studio in



Texas within the week to do an interview about the historical accuracy of the Bible.

"There is no way I could have orchestrated any of the events leading up to this moment," Huff told *Faith Today*.

"I could not have gotten myself on Joe Rogan's podcast by my own volition, and so beforehand, I was really trying to just trust, leaning not in my own understanding, but leaning on the fact that this is a situation that the Spirit has designed."

The interview with Rogan went for over three hours and has currently been seen 5.9 million times on his YouTube channel (not including so many other clips and versions). Huff's personal YouTube page went from relative obscurity to 482,000 subscribers.

Huff shared with *Faith Today* that the interview with Rogan is an indication that people are warming to Christianity. "Seven to 10 years ago he was mocking Christianity and religious perspectives to now, I think he himself has seen that there has to be more."

Although he has been inundated with requests for more debates, Huff shared on his personal YouTube channel that he will be declining almost all of them as his priority is to keep serving as a husband, father, student, and employee.

TAXPAYER-FUNDED DRUG TRAFFICKING EXPOSED IN BC

BY MARK PENNINGA

BC's NDP government and provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry have long denied or downplayed the concern that the free drugs they are giving to addicts are being trafficked. However, a leaked document from BC's Ministry of Health now admits that "a significant portion" of the drugs are being sold and trafficked "provincially, nationally and internationally."

When confronted by reporters about the revelation, BC's Health Minister Josie Osborne admitted that "there's absolutely

no denial of it." As the opposition Conservatives pointed out, this means that the BC government is guilty of "taxpayer-funded drug trafficking."

The BC government has been operating a so-called "safer supply" program since 2020. The leaked document revealed that from 2022 to 2024, the government gave out the equivalent of 2.5 million hydromorphone 8-mg pills and 70,000 20-mg oxycodone pills. As an addiction outreach worker explained to the *National Post* way back in April of 2024:

"You can stand in front of just about any of these pharmacies that are involved in this – usually close to the



safer supply prescribing office – and you can sit outside for five minutes and watch all kinds of transactions going down."

In 2023, BC's provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry acknowledged that "some diversion is occurring" but her suggestion was to expand the program



BLIND GUIDES CAN'T STOP DUTCH MP FROM DEFENDING UNBORN

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

Early this year, a Dutch politician managed to vividly illustrate the horrors of abortion, despite the efforts of the opposition to shut him down. Presenting at a January 15 meeting to fellow members of a committee on medical ethics, Member of Parliament Gideon van Meijeren brought along a model of a 22-week-old baby to show the reality of who a doctor is killing, and how children of that age can feel pain as they are brutally murdered.

As Jonathon Van Maren reported in his piece on TheBridgehead.ca "Dutch MP silenced for exposing reality of

abortion releases powerful pro-life video," when Van Meijeren brought the model out to accompany his remarks, committee chair Mohammed Mohandis immediately objected. The chair would not allow the doll to be shown, even instructing that the live feed of the meeting be turned off. A neighboring committee member actually grabbed the plastic model in an attempt to put it out of sight as the meeting continued.

Van Meijeren objected to the decision of the chairman, reminding his colleagues that illustrations and objects have often been used in Parliament, and that his freedom of expression

was being curtailed, but Mohandis would not change his mind. Rather than continue without visual aids, Van Meijeren left the meeting.

But that wasn't the end of it. A little later, he released a powerful video, and in a wonderful twist it has been seen by almost 100,000 so far, which is many more than would have seen the committee meeting. There he further explained how terrible it is that the Netherlands allows abortions all the way up till 24 weeks gestation, well past the time frame that children are perfectly formed, and can feel pain. Speaking in Dutch, he said:

"It is not new to me that other members of Parliament would like to close their eyes to reality, but that there is such a panicky reaction to the showing of an anatomical model of a 22-week-old fetus, yes, that is quite telling, because the model itself is, of course, not shocking at all. No, what *is* shocking is that these babies are killed on a daily basis in the Netherlands. *That is why this may not be seen.*"

The young politician went on to describe the horrific manner in which older babies like these are killed through the indiscriminate ripping off of limbs and body parts inside the womb.

By nature, we want to deny the realities of our sinfulness: Adam and Eve hid from the Lord in the Garden after their rebellion; David was blind to his own murder of Uriah until the prophet Nathan confronted him. When our political leaders deny citizens access to the truth by suppressing free speech and covering up atrocities, they have become like the "blind guides" that Jesus condemned in Matthew 15: "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone, they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit" (Matt. 15:13-14).

Picture credit is a screenshot from the MP's viral video.

and make the drugs more powerful so that addicts wouldn't want to sell them for something stronger.

The BC government's drug strategy has been built on a worldview that does not acknowledge sin and its resulting misery. The "harm" that they are trying to reduce is not the misery resulting from wrecking our bodies and lives through drugs, but the stigma (i.e., shame) associated with drug addiction. It has only taken a few years and the world has witnessed just how devastating this strategy has been. One of the root issues is that shame is not something to be minimized or avoided, but instead heeded. It is an alarm from our conscience and God telling us we need to stop. Trying to reduce

stigma is akin to putting our fingers in our ears to deal with the noise from our fire alarm – that avoids the real issue, to our harm.

The 6th commandment gets to the heart of true treatment. Here God reveals His high regard for the value of every human life. The Heidelberg Catechism explains that the commandment not only condemns murder, but "I am not to dishonor, hate, injure, or kill my neighbour by thoughts, words, or gestures, and much less by deeds." It also adds "moreover, I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself." A loving God wants to protect us from things that harm and kill us. A deceitful Satan wants to do the opposite.

CANADIAN ECONOMY STANK IT UP UNDER TRUDEAU

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

With the Justin Trudeau era (almost) over, it's time to assess his record. In a January 9 article posted to *The Hub* (TheHub.ca), Lakehead University's Professor of Economics Livio Di Matteo compared current Canadian economic conditions with 2015, when Trudeau was elected as Prime Minister with a majority government. Di Matteo's conclusion? The Canadian economy is in much worse shape now than a decade ago, especially in six key areas: GDP, job growth, interest and inflation rates, and the federal deficit and debt.

Canadian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per person grew more slowly than other capitalist countries. For comparison purposes the figures that follow are in US dollars. In 2015, Canadians produced about \$43,600 per person, compared to \$57,000 for the Americans. We were producing approximately 76% of what they were producing, by this economic measure. As of 2023, the World Bank Group has Canada at just above \$53,400, or almost \$10,000 more than eight years ago. But over those same eight years the US per person GDP has grown to \$82,800, an increase for them of about \$25,000. So instead

of producing 76% of what Americans do, we're now at about 65% of our largest trading partner's productivity.

On the jobs front, an almost identical percentage of Canadians were unemployed in 2015 and as of November 2024 – just under 7%. However, this statistic conceals that a larger slice of the population is working in the public sector than ever before: 21.1% as of 2023, versus 19.7% in 2015.

Interest rates in Canada have increased from very low in 2015, when the Bank of Canada rate hovered just below 1%, to around 3.5% at the end of 2024. Higher interest rates contribute to slow business growth, and an increased cost of living especially for people looking to buy a home. Inflation rates have recently eased from a high of nearly 7% in 2022, to just under 2% in 2024. However, Di Matteo points out that "from 2015 to 2024, the All-Items Consumer Price Index grew by 26 percent." This Index is another inflation measure based on the rising cost month by month, year by year, of a basket of goods and services. That 26 percent is a far cry from the slow growth of the economy overall.

According to the Trudeau government's own account, they spent \$63.1



Picture credit: paparazza / Shutterstock.com

billion more than they collected in revenue in the fiscal year ending March 31 of 2024. As Professor Di Matteo shares, "over the terms of the Trudeau government, the net federal debt has nearly doubled rising from \$701 billion to \$1.35 trillion." Di Matteo reminds readers that when you borrow, you must also repay: the cost of servicing Canada's national debt is increasing at an alarming rate.

"Debt charges are expected to reach \$53.7 billion in 2024-2025, or about 10 per cent of federal spending."

Solomon alerts us in Proverbs 14:23 that "in all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty." We pray that future Canadian leaders will be better stewards of the great resources that God has given us.

NFL PLAYER PULLS THE SWORD ON KICKBOXER ANDREW TATE

BY MARK PENNINGA

How do we respond when the "influencers" of the world spout folly? By pulling out the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) and showing that it is sharper than any double-edged sword (Heb. 4:12).

Former NFL player Ben Watson demonstrated this with a five-word reply to a post by kickboxer Andrew Tate, whose public debauchery has resulted in a following of millions of young men on social media. Tate had posted "if all your children come from one woman you are not a conqueror." Watson replied with a picture of

his family of nine and five words: "Indeed. More than a conqueror."

Watson's reference was to Romans 8:37: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

And if we keep reading in that chapter, we can also be encouraged that even the demonic forces that have a hold on Tate and so many others, won't "be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Tate looks and talks like a macho, but he is one heartbeat and breath away from standing before His Judge and Maker.





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Trudeau resigned and Parliament prorogued – now what?

by Daniel Zekveld

“I intend to resign as party leader, as prime minister... This country deserves a real choice in the next election and it has become clear to me that if I’m having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election.”

– Justin Trudeau, Jan. 6, 2025

With those words, Trudeau announced that his time as prime minister will soon come to a close. But his resignation, his announcement that Parliament is prorogued, and uncertainty around upcoming confidence votes in Parliament have sparked all sorts of changes. Some are good. Some are bad.

And some are simply opportunities for Reformed Christians to take action.

HISTORICAL MOMENT

Justin Trudeau’s resignation is the eleventh time in 158 years of Canadian history that a prime minister has resigned in office. John Abbott (1892), Robert Bor-

den (1920), and William Lyon Mackenzie King (1948) all resigned because of poor personal health.

John A. Macdonald (1873), Mackenzie Bowell (1896), William Lyon Mackenzie King (1926), Lester Pearson (1968), Pierre Trudeau (1984), Brian Mulroney (1993), and Jean Chrétien (2003) all resigned mid-term in the face of political turmoil or scandal. So, a prime minister resigning instead of losing an election is hardly unprecedented.

Because of the Prime Minister’s resignation, the Liberal party will select a new leader who will then become Canada’s 24th prime minister. When Parliament reconvenes on March 24, the new prime minister will outline his or her priorities, subject to a confidence motion.

What is unprecedented is how short Trudeau’s successor’s time in office could be. To date, Sir Charles Tupper was Canada’s shortest-tenured prime minister, serving only 68 days. Justin Trudeau’s replacement will be selected on March 9 and Parliament returns on March 24. If the Liberal government loses a confidence

vote soon after Parliament reconvenes, the new prime minister might also be the prime minister with the shortest term in office. Trudeau’s resignation so close to a potential election is not too dissimilar from Joe Biden’s recent decision to drop out of the presidential race so close to the American presidential election.

EFFECTS OF PROROGATION

If the Prime Minister had chosen to *dissolve* Parliament, parliamentary business would have been terminated and a general election would ensue. Prorogation, on the other hand, gives no indication regarding the timeline of the next election. However, the minority Liberal government will need the support of at least one other party following prorogation to be able to govern.

The main effect of prorogation is to end the current session of Parliament – there can, at least in theory, be multiple sessions for each elected Parliament, but to this point there had just been one session going on since the 2021 election. But the effect of this prorogation is that bills that have not yet become law are now terminated, committees cannot proceed, and members of parliament are released from their parliamentary duties until the new session. The final effect is that, instead of reconvening on January 27 as planned (and likely facing a non-confidence vote that could force an election), Parliament won’t meet again until March 24.

Prorogation of Parliament is a little more common than prime ministerial resignations. I was somewhat surprised that Parliament has been prorogued nine times in my lifetime (versus only one other prime ministerial resignation). But what makes this occasion more unique is its connection to the Prime Minister’s upcoming resignation.

Government bills

All government bills that have not received Royal Assent are terminated by prorogation, and in some cases, this is excellent news.

For example, Bill C-63, the *Online Harms Act*, was filled with bad policy ideas, particularly around hate speech



Prorogation of Parliament is a little more common than prime ministerial resignations.

and hate crime. Such hate speech provisions would be potentially problematic for Christians who seek to speak truth about various controversial issues in our society. Free speech has already been under attack through conversion therapy laws that ban talking about biblical truths on gender and sexuality in some settings, or bubble zone laws that prevent pro-life expression in designated areas. The *Online Harms Act* would have made Canada's free speech climate worse. But because Parliament is prorogued, Bill C-63 is now dead. If the government, in a new session, wishes to move forward with this legislation, they will need to start the law-making process all over again and re-introduce it for another first, second, and third reading, all of which take time.

Late in 2024, the government also said it would introduce legislation to require pregnancy care centers to publicly disclose that they do not provide or assist with abortions. These organizations could also risk losing charitable status. The House of Commons Finance Committee also recommended that the government strip religious organizations of their charitable status broadly. The government had not yet introduced any bills regarding charitable status, and prorogation means it will be delayed in doing so.

In a Parliamentary session that passed laws including conversion therapy bans, increased regulation of what people say online, and universal child care, we can be thankful that laws around hate speech and charitable status have been (at least temporarily) stopped before advancing further.

Private members' bills

Unlike government bills, private members' bills introduced in the House of Commons are not automatically terminated by prorogation. Instead, when Parliament resumes, they are automatically deemed to have passed all stages previously completed.

Four bills in particular stand out as ones we would love to see proceed when Parliament resumes. These bills deal with issues of protecting minors from pornography, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking, and protecting political expression. Each of these bills could be reinstated immediately following

prorogation.

For example, Bill C-270, the *Stopping Internet Sexual Exploitation Act*, is focused on combatting illegal pornography and would require pornography companies to verify the age and consent of those depicted. The bill has already completed consideration in committee and might be reinstated past that stage.

On the flip side, other private members' bills, focused on allowing advance requests for euthanasia and on banning corporal discipline in Canada, might also be reinstated.

Private members' bills introduced by Senators, however, cannot be automatically carried over into the new session. Only through a special process can these bills be reinstated at their previous stage. Bill S-210, for example, would have required pornography companies to verify the age of potential viewers on their sites. However, the bill had one stage left before receiving Royal Assent and will be terminated in a new session. The bill was introduced over three years ago, and it is difficult to see such an important bill terminated so close to the end of the legislative process.

POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

Of course, if Canada does go to an election shortly after Parliament resumes, none of these bills will advance anyways. It seems unlikely that the government will be able to pass any bills, given the stated intentions of other parties to defeat the government in a non-confidence vote.

The Conservatives, Bloc Québécois, and NDP have all said they will vote for a motion of non-confidence against the government at the next possible opportunity and force an election. So, unless the new prime minister can convince one of these political parties to prop up the Liberal minority government, we will likely have a federal election sometime this spring.



Justin Trudeau's resignation is the eleventh time in 158 years of Canadian history that a prime minister has resigned in office.

LOOKING AHEAD

While political change includes uncertainty about the future, it also allows for new opportunities – opportunities to influence a new prime minister, to communicate with candidates prior to the next election, and to elect MPs who are committed to good policies. A new government also means new priorities and new agendas.

Political change creates new avenues to witness to God's truth and show how that truth also applies in the political arena. Groen van Prinsterer, the 19th-century Dutch historian and statesman, wrote prior to a period of political revival that:

“Even in unfavorable circumstances, however, one can witness to the truth; and this continuous witness itself is already a real application and a powerful practice.”

And we know that, in whatever political circumstances we find ourselves, Christ is on His throne, sovereign over all that is happening in our nation right now. And as Canadian Christians advocate for biblical principles in public policy, we pray with the Psalmist Moses:

“Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!”

(Ps. 90:17) **RP**

AGED SAINTS CAN TELL YOU WHAT YOUR PEERS DON'T KNOW OR WON'T SAY



by Josh Senneker

In late 1785, the 26-year-old British Member of Parliament William Wilberforce secretly met with 61-year-old John Newton. Wilberforce had very recently encountered the grace of Christ. Deeply convicted about his squandered youth and self-serving ambition, the young MP seriously considered resigning from Parliament to enter the ministry. Uneasy of mind, he visited Newton – the slave-trader-turned-clergyman – under cover of darkness.

Newton encouraged Wilberforce to remain in Parliament and continue his parliamentary career as a Christian. Newton would later tell Wilberforce, “It

is hoped and believed that the Lord has raised you up for the good of His Church and for the good of the nation.” Following the meeting, Wilberforce stated that “when I came away I found my mind in a calm, tranquil state, more humbled, and looking more devoutly up to God.”

Two years later, Wilberforce would boldly declare that:

“God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.”

Newton’s prescient advice to his

younger brother in the faith shows us what it looks like to live out the biblical mandate for older Christians to mentor younger Christians. The much older Newton had turned to Christ three decades earlier and had much more experience in the Christian life than his newly saved counterpart. In consistency with the example of Scripture, he used his hard-earned wisdom to guide a young believer in need of direction.

WE NEED NEWTON, NOT TATE

Sadly, our age has undermined the mentorship role of the elderly. Popular culture idolizes youthful attractive-

ness and athletic achievement over the wisdom gained in old age. Worse, the world portrays the outward decay of the elderly as an imposition on those who are still enjoying the fleeting pleasures of youth. As a result, care for the elderly is kept away from the family and offshored to a professional class. This is poignantly exhibited in the rise of euthanasia, now Canada's 4th leading cause of death. If true life consists in beauty, youth, and health, then life itself must be ended once these qualities have disappeared.

However, as with all other attempts to reorder God's creative design, the removal of the elderly from societal influence has produced dire consequences – an emerging generation whose primary influences are their own peers rather than seasoned mentors.

Popular online influencers, such as Andrew Tate, have filled the mentorship gap among young men with a false and sinful masculinity. Speaking to Tate's growing influence, John Stonestreet writes,

“young men, when left to be taught by assertive online influencers eager to avoid the feminist ditch, can be driven straight into the pimp ditch. They must instead be taught through real relationships with fathers, pastors, friends, and mentors who are willing to live out all that is distinctive about God's design for men.”

This problem is not unique to young men – social media is dominated by celebrations of a false femininity that devalues the dignity of godly womanhood and instead encourages young women to pursue licentiousness.

CALLED TO SPEAK

For the Christian, however, gray hair is not the gutting sign of approaching death, but the hard-won crown of a life spent in service to God (Prov. 16:31). With Heaven as the horizon, there is deep value in a life well-lived – the lessons from which may be shared with those who are young.

In this way, the Apostle Paul instructs his own younger disciple in the faith,

Wise, aging Christians have been called to deliver godly exhortations to young believers.



Titus, about the relationship between older Christians and younger Christians (Titus 2:2-5):

“Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.”

The priority of mentorship between old Christians and young Christians is clear. Just as the eye cannot say to the foot “I have no need of you,” so also the young Christian cannot say to the old Christian “I have no need of you.”

Rehoboam foolishly listened to the council of his childhood friends rather than the mature instructions of his father's advisors. We too are susceptible to surrounding ourselves with similarly aged peers who affirm our decisions and never rebuke our errors. But godly young people require godly, aged mentors who are committed to speaking directly and truthfully. Wisdom earned in old age provides the mature Christian with the hard-earned right to speak difficult truths that may not as readily flow from the lips of a young Christian's peers.

The willing reception of this gift, however, is only one part of the equation. The gift must also be offered, which requires diligent instruction on the part of the aged and a refusal to listen to a culture which tells those in their final stage of life to hide away until death comes.

Wise, aging Christians have been called to deliver godly exhortations to young believers. With such exhortations, mature believers are paving the way for a new generation of the Christian church and the never-ending proclamation of Christ's glory. Gray hair truly is a far more noble crown than the fleeting bravado of youth.

KEEPING THE FIRE FLICKERING

After nine years of laboring against the slave trade with very little success, a wearied, 36-year-old William Wilberforce wrote his old friend John Newton and questioned whether he could continue the fight. The now 71-year-old Newton replied:

“It is true, that you live in the midst of difficulties and snares, and you need a double guard of watchfulness and prayer. But since you know both your need of help and where to look for it, I may say to you, as Darius to Daniel, Thy God whom Thou servest continually is able to preserve and deliver you.”

Wilberforce did not quit and, on March 25, 1807 – some dozen years after Wilberforce's disheartened letter to Newton – Parliament voted to abolish the slave trade throughout the British Empire.

A society that scorns the exhortations of aging and faithful men is a society where young men such as William Wilberforce flicker out in discouragement. But, thankfully, God delights in using aging Christians to encourage young Christians in the faith. Godly old men and women must not relinquish that duty, and young men and women must not despise these lessons. In this way, aging Christian believers can fulfil their integral role in the victorious history of Christ's Church. **RP**



PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT: MORE THAN JUST A FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

by Maria Dawes

The ideal retirement for some might involve more time to babysit the grandkids, or a chance to take on those projects you've never been able to do before. For many it includes a drop in workplace pressures as you move onto other challenges. But it may also come with a drop in income. The reality of retirement looks different for each person. It's no wonder that when people ask, "How much do I really

need to retire?" the answer is often, "It depends."

Today, thanks to advances in technology, many people are working more flexibly and finding ways to ease into retirement in phases. Some choose to continue working, but on a part-time basis or in a different capacity. If you're able to stay in a job you love while supplementing your income, that can be a win-win for both you and your employer.

However, it's important to recognize that paid work will eventually come to an end for all of us, and it's crucial to be prepared for that next phase of life. As you approach retirement, your budget will largely depend on the lifestyle you want to maintain. Let's take a closer look at some key areas of your financial picture to consider as you prepare for this new chapter.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPENSES

Do you have a clear picture of what your expenses will look like in retirement? It's important to know what you spend on a monthly basis for essentials like groceries, utilities, and discretionary items such as entertainment. A good starting point is to track your spending for at least a year, so you can capture both monthly and annual expenses like vacations or car repairs. This exercise can help you plan for a smoother transition and may even prompt a reevaluation of lifestyle choices – like whether it's time to downsize your home.

PLANNING FOR CHANGES IN YOUR DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

Retirement often brings significant changes to daily routines. For example, will you be eliminating a daily commute? If so, do you really need a second car? Will you take up new hobbies that come with additional costs, such as joining a golf club or sailing? On the other hand, many find that retirement provides the opportunity to pursue inexpensive yet fulfilling activities like volunteering, which can offer both a sense of purpose and social engagement at little to no cost.

TRAVEL: HOW MUCH WILL IT REALLY COST?

Travel is another area that requires thoughtful planning. For some, it may mean a few short trips in the RV during the summer months, while for others, it might involve cruising several times a year. Understanding how much you plan to spend on travel is essential, and don't forget to factor in travel insurance, which tends to increase rapidly as you age. For many retirees, the early years are when they travel the most, so it's important to budget for this early in the process while recognizing that these trips may reduce over time.

SOURCES OF RETIREMENT INCOME

When it comes to funding your retirement, several income sources are worth considering. Government benefits such as the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) are crucial, and understanding how much you can expect to receive from these programs will help you assess whether there will be any gaps in your monthly income. Keep in mind that OAS starts to be clawed back once your taxable income exceeds \$93,454 (as of 2025), so planning how you'll structure your income in retirement is important.

In addition to government benefits, many individuals will rely on personal savings. This could include pensions from your employer, savings in RRSPs and TFSAs, or income from other investments. For some, rental properties may generate additional income, and for others, the equity in their home can play a significant role. Downsizing your home can free up cash and reduce maintenance costs.

SHIFTING INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

Before retirement, it's essential to review your investment portfolio. As you near retirement, your focus should shift from an accumulation and growth strategy to income generation. It's also a good time to ensure that your investments align with your values, especially as a wider range of ethically sensitive investment options become available. For those who prioritize faith-based investing to align with your Christian values,

these investment solutions are also worth exploring as more investor interest will continue to open more opportunity in Canada.

A FEW FINAL THOUGHTS

From those who have witnessed many individuals making the transition into retirement, here are a few pieces of advice:

1. Try your retirement budget before retiring

If possible, practice living on your retirement budget before you officially retire for at least 6-12 months. This can provide valuable insights into your spending habits and the practicality of your plans.


2. Plan for the future of your home

If you plan to stay in your current home for the long term, make sure you're in a position to downsize or transition to assisted living, if needed. Going through decades of belongings is much easier while you're healthy and able to manage it yourself. This will be a great gift to your family when the time comes.

3. Create an estate plan

Set up your estate plan while you're still in good health. This includes drafting a will, assigning a power of attorney, and determining your health care directives. These provisions will give you peace of mind knowing that your loved ones won't be burdened with the stress of making difficult decisions during a challenging time.

4. Embrace flexibility

Finally, remember that life can be unpredictable. Your plans today may need to be adjusted as you move through retirement, and that's okay. The key is to be proactive and flexible. As Proverbs 16:9 reminds us, "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." 

Maria Dawes CIM CFP® is a Certified Financial Planner professional and Portfolio Manager with Capstone Asset Management.

More Time to Pray

MARTIN & CHRISTINA VEENSTRA ON RETIREMENT IN YOUR NINETIES

by Jeff Dykstra

Little did Christina Veenstra know, more than six decades ago, that meeting her future husband, Martin Veenstra, at Michigan's Reformed Bible Institute would help her preparations for retirement. I recently had the opportunity to interview Christina and Martin, and as she explained, prayer was a part of her life then, and is all the more so now, in her nineties.

"I went to Reformed Bible Institute (RBI). I wanted to go into nursing, then, but [as a recent Dutch immigrant] I didn't know enough English yet, after three years, so they advised me to take [other course work first]. So I went to RBI and that's where I met Martin. He was in his first year, and I was in my last year, and for me, it was love at first sight. But he had other plans, and he had other girlfriends, but I prayed for three years. When I was in nurses' training, I prayed for three years that the Lord would give me Martin.

"I was a C student in nursing at RBI, but I always passed everything. But then I did not pass my state boards for nursing, because it was multiple choice, and I still was having some problems with dealing with English, so my mind went blank. So I became a graduate nurse. And after I graduated, I think it was either the same week, or the week after, I got a letter from Martin [asking] that we would correspond. Then I knew that's

what the Lord meant me to be, that the husband I prayed for would become my husband."

While we do not always get the spouse that we desire, even when we pray for them, in the grace of God, Christina's three years of prayer brought her two great spiritual benefits: a partner to pray and serve with, and practice in persistent prayer, which she carries on now in her retirement years.

PARTNERS IN PRAYER AND SERVICE

God did see fit to grant Christina the husband who, sixty-three years later, continues to join her in prayer for the people they care most about.

Martin: "Now that we're retired, and we're both 90, I think that our service is more here [in Emmanuel Home], because I don't drive anymore either. But we do get a ride to church every Sunday. So we talk to people here, the people here who don't know the Lord. We hope that we can help to mold them, and talk to them at hymn sing."

Christina: "We have a hymn sing every Monday evening. Martin plays the organ, and I more or less lead it. We have 50, sometimes 60 people come, and some of them are not from the church. So we are so happy about that. I pray the Lord that I can sing until the day I die."

PRACTICE FOR PERSISTENT PRAYER

Three years of earnest prayer for a very specific thing is good practice for the life of prayer that is now the focus of Martin and Christina's retirement.

Me: "What do you see right now as your role in your own family?"

Martin: "Prayer, and more prayer, and then some more prayer, because we have some grandchildren or great-grandchildren that don't walk with the Lord. They all love us, and we love them too, but they need the Lord."

Christina: "That's why I pray every morning for the whole family, every one of them, in the morning."

Me: "What do you think is your greatest challenge in life right now?"

Martin: "The greatest challenge is prayer, and just, to live daily for the Lord. And hopefully that somehow, in time, rubs off on our children, that they say, 'We love the Lord.'"

Christina: "The Lord can change the heart. As long as we are alive, we'll pray for them until the very end. The Lord can change their hearts and lives."

"LIVING THE DREAM"

Of course, a life of prayer is not what our culture sees as ideal "golden years." Back on May 20, 2000, John Piper told a crowd of 40,000 college students to



aim for more than just comfort in their retirement:

"I tell you what a tragedy is. I'll read to you from *Reader's Digest* what a tragedy is: 'Bob and Penny took early retirement from their jobs in the Northeast five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now they live in Punta Gorda, Fla., where they cruise on their 30-foot trawler, play softball and collect shells.'

"That's a tragedy. And people today are spending billions of dollars to persuade you to embrace that tragic dream. And I get forty minutes to plead with you: don't buy it. With all my heart I plead with you: don't buy that dream. The American Dream: a nice house, a nice car, a nice job, a nice family, a nice retirement, collect-

ing shells as the last chapter, before you stand before the Creator of the universe to give an account of what you did: 'Here it is Lord – my shell collection! And I've got a nice swing, and look at my boat!'

"Don't waste your life; don't waste it."

Is that "Freedom 55" attitude still around? It seems to be harder to achieve now, but many of those who have the money still want it.

Recently, as I was waiting in line at A&W beside an older gentleman, he said that it was good that "we" retired people (I guess I look retired) had plenty of time to kill. So I asked him what a typical day was like for him. He told me that he spent six months every year in Arizona, playing softball and tennis. Living the dream?

A COUNTER-CULTURAL DAILY LIFE

Martin and Christina have certainly not bought into that "American dream."

Me: "In what ways are you staying close to the Lord?"

Martin: "I love to read Scripture. One thing we learned at Bible school; we fell in love with our Bibles. We love our Bibles; we want to read it more, and I should read more, and now I have the time, so I can. There's some wonderful things in there that we can know, and remember, and put into practice."

Christina: "I do it in the morning. I'm an early bird. I'm up at five, and Martin gets up at seven, so I have my devotions in the morning."

Martin: "So I read more at night."

Me: "Do you have any things that you share, Bible readings that you share?"

Christina: "More or less all day long. If he finds something, then he will tell me, and if I find something in my Bible reading..."

Me: "Do you have a list of people that you pray for?"

"John Piper told a crowd of 40,000 college students to aim for more than just comfort in their retirement..."

Martin: “Mostly family. We pray for people when we hear about the need, but it changes all the time...”

Christina: “And people from the church...”

GREATEST JOY IN LIFE

So, what is retirement like without the 30-foot boat, the shell collection, or even a driver’s license? For Martin and Christina, it is, even with all the problems of aging, a time of joy:

Me: “What is your greatest joy in life now?”

Martin: “You raise a wonderful subject. Yesterday [Sunday] we heard about Levi, who is a tax collector who came to know the Lord. He could instantly know the Lord. I think the greatest joy is that we can serve the Lord, and we know that we are His. He made a covenant with us: ‘I am your God, and you are my people,’ and we take that to heart, and believe that, and we rejoice in that. I do think that sometimes there may not be joy enough in this place. We need to dwell on that more. The joy of the Lord is our strength.”

Christina: “What is your only comfort in life and death? That I belong with body

and soul to my Lord Jesus Christ.”

Martin: “I think He strengthens us daily for the walk that we have with Him, and if we want to live with Him, we get reminded of that daily. He wants us, daily, to read the Scriptures, how He loves and cares for us each day...”

While Christina needs a walker for her daily walk, because of peripheral neuropathy – “The outlying nerves don’t like getting old, so they let me know” – she also finds joy in the Scriptures, and the opportunities she has to serve others less formally.

Christina: “Over the years, the Bible means more and more to you – how much the Lord means to you. It’s just wonderful. I love this age. You have all the time in the world to be of help, or to read the Bible. When I see somebody that looks a little bit sad, I do encourage them, as much as I can.”

Martin: “You want to encourage people as much as you can. When people live in a community, it gets very lonely for people, especially when their spouse dies. So when somebody says, ‘Hi, how are you today?’ – sometimes that’s all it takes.”

Christina: “We love it here. We do believe that God put us here...”

Unlike Bob and Penny from John Piper’s illustration, who have cause to tremble at their eventual meeting with their Creator, Martin and Christina are not wasting their lives. They are, instead, living in genuine hope in the time that God continues to give them on this earth, as the final Bible passages we discussed show.

Me: “Is there a specific Bible passage that lifts you up at this time in your life?”

Martin: “Philippians 1: ‘For me to live is Christ; to die is gain.’”

Christina: “‘The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life.’ (Ps. 27).”

Martin: “Or [Psalm] 103 would be a good one: ‘Bless the Lord and forget not all his benefits.’”

Christina: “He is in communion [with us] all the time.”

Interview responses have been lightly edited for brevity and clarity. ^{RP}



BOOK WINNERS

Pictured from left to right are Jenoah, Samuel and Caleb, the winners of the Jan/Feb issue **Treasure Chest** hunt, shown here enjoying their prize. So how many treasure chests were hidden in-between the two covers?

The correct answer is either 6 or 7 depending on whether you counted the treasure chest shown on the *Come and Explore* pages. You can find them on pages 2, 30, 50, 56, 69, 72, and 80.

Be sure to check out this issue’s **Come and Explore** section on page 74 for our new **Seek the Scientist** hunt!



Necessary Endings

Finding the courage to let go in business, church, and family

by Mark Penninga

Why did my dad's tomatoes and cucumbers always flourish? I used to think it may have something to do with the tobacco smoke from his pipe, which he puffed while tending to them. But the success carried on even when the days of the pipe ended. I got my answer some years ago when my dad checked out our greenhouse and noticed lanky cucumber bushes with little fruit. He showed me how to identify "suckers" and shoots that needed to be pinched off.

For a new gardener, it seems strange, even shocking, to cut off healthy branches and flowers. But whether it is cucumbers, apple trees, or flowers, God designed many plants to produce more buds than they can sustain. Plants have limited energy, so without pruning, that energy goes towards growth that literally isn't fruitful. I was looking for cucumbers, not huge cucumber plants without fruit. In other cases, sick branches or dead

branches need to be removed, as they will hold back the plant or tree from flourishing. Contrary to popular thought, nature doesn't do best when left alone.

Through these plants, God is teaching us something about our own lives and the causes we invest in, including in business and the Church. We need deliberate pruning – we need to make endings happen. That is true for all stages of life, but especially as we feel the effects of age.

ENDINGS ARE NECESSARY

As much as we value beginnings and growth, God has made endings a natural and important aspect of life, even before the Fall into sin. There is day and night, and a season for planting, watering, harvesting, and cleaning up so that it can start over (Eccl. 3:1-2). Accepting endings, and making them happen at times, is the design that God wove in the very fabric of our lives.

"In your business and perhaps your life, the tomorrow that you desire and envision may never come to pass if you do not end some things you are doing today."

That is how Christian psychologist and business coach Dr. Henry Cloud opened his book *Necessary Endings*. This book gave direction and encouragement when I had to make some hard endings a few years back. But the value of it keeps resurfacing as I notice how much we can struggle because we resist endings:

- We hold onto possessions that have no more use to us;
- Teens refuse to end their childhood, and continue doing little to help the family;
- Young adults grow older but fail to launch, continuing to be cared for by their parents;

For a new gardener, it seems strange, even shocking, to cut off healthy branches and flowers.



- Seniors don't deal with past hurts or ongoing sinful patterns because they have resigned themselves to who they are;
- Spouses endure abuse because they think they have no choice.

In some cases, endings seem to be even a bigger challenge for Christians:

- Committees and societies continue longer than they should because the people involved are simply fulfilling their term, and don't think it is their place to end something that others started;
- Poor performance by people in positions of authority (pastors, elders, deacons, volunteers, school board members) can carry on perpetually because others feel that if they speak up, they will be seen as the problem, inviting unwanted conflict and stress into their lives;
- A church member can take

advantage of the kindness and care of their congregation year after year, without consequence;

- Church leadership can struggle for years with following through on church discipline because of the desire that things will turn around.

Dr. Cloud pulls no punches in response to scenarios like these. Endings are crucial and "your life and business must face them, stagnate, or die."

He explains that we prune our lives for the same reasons we prune plants.

1. "If an initiative is siphoning off resources that could go to something with more promise, it is pruned.
2. "If an endeavor is sick and is not

going to get well, it is pruned.

3. "If it is clear that something is already dead, it is pruned."

WHY AREN'T WE PRUNING?

This is a proven formula for flourishing. So why do we sometimes have such a hard time doing it?

An obvious reason is that endings often require confrontation and some pain. Cutting away an apple tree, or pulling flowers off a plant, doesn't feel good. There are no immediate rewards. We convince ourselves that the status-quo is a better option than change.

But the problem with this approach is that we are being led by our feelings rather than reality. It is wishful thinking.

Dr. Cloud compares our reluctance to make necessary endings to getting an infected tooth pulled. It isn't a pleasant experience. But it is so important to get done. "We all hurt sometimes in facing hard truths, but it makes us grow.... That is not harmful. Harm is when you damage someone. Facing reality is usually not a damaging experience, even though it can hurt."

Another reason why we may not be making necessary endings in our lives is because we don't know what we are aiming for, or pruning towards. We are drifting with the current, reacting to whatever comes our way.

This makes sense for our unbelieving world, which struggles to understand what it means to be a human being, man, woman, parent, or senior. The world isn't interested in following God's blueprint. It isn't sure it even wants the cucumber plant to produce cucumbers.

Unfortunately, it is also an issue for Christians, even though God gives very clear direction for our lives. We struggle with disciplining our children in response to behaviors that need to stop, even though the Bible makes it clear that God has entrusted parents with this task. We let teens have the responsibilities and

"...endings often require confrontation and some pain."

expectations of children even though an entire Bible book was given to them to chart a path of responsible living (see Proverbs). And even church leadership can have a difficult time seeing through commands like 1 Corinthians 5:13 to “expel the wicked person from among you.”

When we refuse to prune, not only are we making growth more difficult, we are also getting in the way of the beautiful plan that God has for our lives, the church, and society.

Perhaps another reason why Christians may feel uncomfortable with this talk of pruning is that it seems to clash with our calling to love even our enemies, or to care for the vulnerable. As we read in Isaiah 42:3, the Lord sustains the weak: “A bruised reed He will not break and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out.” This is where we need to realize that the pruning metaphor has its limitations. The point of this article, and Dr. Cloud’s book, is not at all to cut away people who have weaknesses. Caring for the vulnerable is one of the goals we are pruning towards and aiming for. We are pruning away what hurts the vulnerable. For example, a church committee that has long passed its expiration date will continue draining the time of its members, and cut into their capacity to help those who really need help. And a person or family who is taking advantage of the care of others in the congregation because they keep asking for help (when they could be taking care of themselves) is preventing the congregation from caring for those who really need it.

If all of this sounds like it is based on worldly motivations for productivity, it may help to remember that our Lord Jesus Christ spoke strongly about this: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (John 15:1-2). He was also willing to leave an area and move on. For example, in Mark 1 we read how Jesus went to a solitary place to pray. When his disciples came they said “Everyone is looking for you!” To this, Jesus replied “Let us go somewhere else

– to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”

PROACTIVE PRUNING

I have written elsewhere how I learned the hard way (through burnout) that life produces too much to sustain. Unfortunately, I had to feel significant pain to pull the pruners out. The problem with waiting until something crosses a line is that it unnecessarily leads to lasting hurt for ourselves and others. My lack of pruning may have seemed to benefit my family (as I was fixing up our home and property) and employer in the short-term, as there was a lot of growth, but it ending up hurting them both.

As we age, it is critical that we make pruning a normal and healthy practice of our day-to-day living. As with a cucumber plant or apple tree, this pruning should be done before there is obviously a problem.

Proactive pruning also means that we

have to let go of meaningful relationships that we once had, even though there is nothing wrong with them. Dr. Cloud points to brain research that shows we seem to have capacity to manage 140 to 150 relationships. As we grow older, our circle will grow quickly. Trying to juggle 300 relationships in a meaningful way is a recipe for doing a horrible job with all 300. So we will only be able to take on new ones if we are pruning old ones. Settling in a new community will mean having to let go of wonderful people from your old home that meant so much to you. Serving on the school board may mean having to give up that weekly visit you treasure so much. And yes, this also means that some people that we used to send a Christmas card to may no longer get it. It doesn’t mean that we no longer care for these people. Rather, it means we are investing in the relationships that God is calling us to in this time and place. Like a cucumber plant, we are

“A successful business like Starbucks will still regularly shut down hundreds of stores. Dr. Cloud notes that often ‘when that occurs, the stock prices go up.’ That is because the business community understands that pruning isn’t a sign of weakness but of health and strength.”



Teens need to end their childhood –
it isn't good for them to let their parents do all the housework.



directing the limited energy or “juice” we have to the fruit God wants to see.

It also means pruning off parts of our lives that haven't been fruitful, even if we really hoped they would be. A successful business like Starbucks will still regularly shut down hundreds of stores. Dr. Cloud notes that often “when that occurs, the stock prices go up.” That is because the business community understands that pruning isn't a sign of weakness but of health and strength.

The fact that a church plant isn't growing to the point where it can sustain itself is a reason to consider working towards an ending, not to stop planting churches, but to try again somewhere better. More fertile ground may be waiting, but your next effort can't start until the other has ended and sufficient resources are freed up.

This is also why it was so important that Christian aid organizations have come to realize that simply giving more money, food, and supplies to people in need isn't necessarily a blessing. In fact,

it may be the very thing holding back people from making the changes necessary to succeed long-term. Sometimes the best way to help a person, family, or non-profit is to stop giving them what they are asking for. They won't make necessary changes until you stop enabling them to carry on as they are.

THE WISE, THE FOOLISH, AND THE EVIL

Throughout his book, Dr. Cloud coaches the readers to figure out if endings are necessary and how to make them. He teaches the reader to get realistic, and even get hopeless if they expect change while carrying on the same way, so they'll get motivated.

But I found the most value in a chapter he devoted to figuring out how to discern whether the process of change is even worth it. For example, “how do you know when to invest the effort with someone to work on making things better and when should you tell them that you are done talking about it?” He does this by

explaining that there are essentially only three categories when it comes to people's character: the wise, the foolish, and the evil. Although his audience isn't all Christian, he explains that these Scriptural categories are proven true in all fields of life, including business, psychology, and law.

It is critical that we understand whether the person we are dealing with is wise, foolish, or evil, because it will determine the track we take and whether an ending is necessary.

A wise person recognizes truth for what it is, takes it in, and adjusts themselves accordingly. When corrected, they listen and change their life. As a result, they improve every day again. They are motivated to change, and are willing to show genuine remorse when they need to. When dealing with a wise person, communication goes a long way. They are eager to be trained or coached. Talking helps.

A fool doesn't adjust to the truth. Rather, they adjust the truth so that they don't have to change themselves. He or she isn't the problem. Others are. They are defensive, they blame, and talking to them doesn't help at all. Instead, it creates conflict and division.

“At this point it is time to change the conversation from trying to get them to change to talking about the fact that no change is happening and that is the problem.... *Roger, this team and the environment we want to have around here are important to me, so I can't allow your abusive behavior to ruin it anymore.*”

Adding consequences is often required.

“*Dave, I want to live in a sober house, and since you have chosen to not do anything about your addiction, I won't be living with you anymore until you get treatment and get sober.*”

The key with dealing with foolish people is to end the pattern.

“You cannot control them or get them to change. What you can do is create

an ending to the effects their refusal to take responsibility is having on you or others.”

Although we would love to think otherwise, there are no shortage of fools in our lives. Apart from God’s grace and the working of His Holy Spirit, we are all fools. But we have been born again, and it is important that we act accordingly.

Finally, there are evil people, who intentionally want to hurt you. An evil person is the

“kind of person who likes to bring others down, is intentionally divisive, enjoys it when someone fails, and tries to create the downfall of others or of the company [and] is to be protected against at all costs.”

As Christians, we can be guilty of a living in a pretend world. We see numerous examples of evil people in the Bible, including among God’s covenant people (e.g., Old Testament Israel or the New Testament Church). But we act as if there are no evil people in our families, schools, or churches today, even when the evidence is clearly stacked against us. Untold pain has been caused by tolerating wicked abusers in our circles, simply because we foolishly assumed that if they

came from another Reformed church, they must be trustworthy. Parents, elders, and school boards must have the courage to do whatever is necessary to protect God’s children from these wolves in sheep’s clothing (see Matt. 7, 1 Cor. 5).

IT’S TIME FOR CHANGE

Is God looking to you to make a necessary ending? Will you prayerfully consider this? It may be the beginning of a whole new life. A transition begins with an ending, not a new beginning. We don’t just become an adult. We first stop acting like a child.

At this point I should add a caution. Some people are so motivated to see things change that they are too eager to prune. Pruning isn’t something to be done carelessly. It takes discernment. If you attack an apple tree with a chainsaw without knowing the right season or method (something I’m guilty of), your tree may die. The goal of this article, and Dr. Cloud’s book, is not to pursue endings for their own sake. Rather, it is to nurture flourishing lives. As such, if you are eager to see an ending, it would be good to first search your heart to discern what is motivating you.

Dr. Cloud is a Christian, but the book is written for a broader audience. If we go to Scripture, we can find even

more wisdom and perspective as it relates to the importance of endings. God makes it clear in His Word that our lives, and all history, are progressing towards an ending: our impending death and the judgment we will face before His throne.

Whether it is through the pain of burn-out, disease, or old age, God is reminding us that our lives on earth won’t carry on forever and we shouldn’t pretend they will. He has given us a blueprint to show us how He wants us to use the time He has given. And He also warns us to “keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come” (Matthew 24:42).

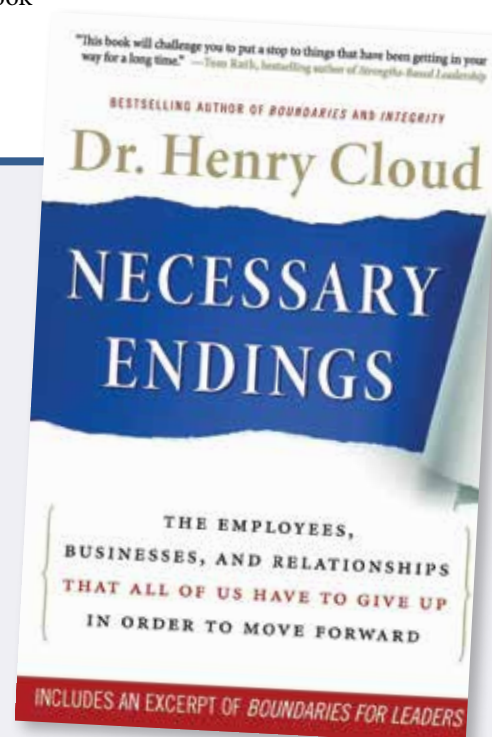
But Scriptures also show that God is not a harsh boss who is only interested in the bottom line. Our works aren’t going to satisfy Him. Thankfully, because of the good news of Jesus Christ’s victory over death in our place, death isn’t an ultimate ending. Rather, it is a door to a whole new life of joy. Once again, we see how endings are necessary and open the door to a new life.

May our willingness to make endings here reflect the confidence we have in the new life that is waiting. **RP**

NECESSARY ENDINGS: THE EMPLOYEES, BUSINESSES, AND RELATIONSHIPS THAT ALL OF US HAVE TO GIVE UP IN ORDER TO MOVE FORWARD

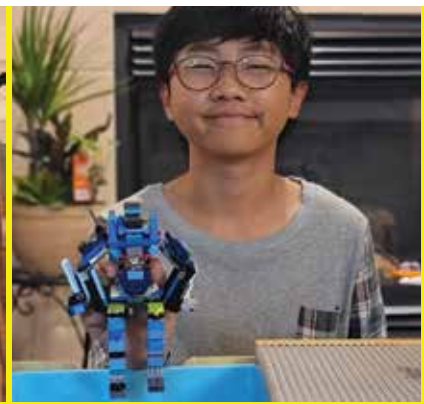
BY HENRY CLOUD
2011 / 238 PAGES

It is one thing to see the need for pruning, and another to know how to do it. The idea of ending an activity that has gone on for years, or cutting someone out of our lives, can be scary and needs to be managed carefully. Space doesn’t allow me to summarize all of Dr. Cloud’s advice so I’m going to instead encourage readers to get a copy of the book to discover the wealth of wisdom he shares. This includes topics like “having the conversation: strategies for ending things well.” And if you find it difficult to read a whole book on the topic, it is also available as an audio book. Perhaps you can listen to the book with someone else who would be blessed by it.



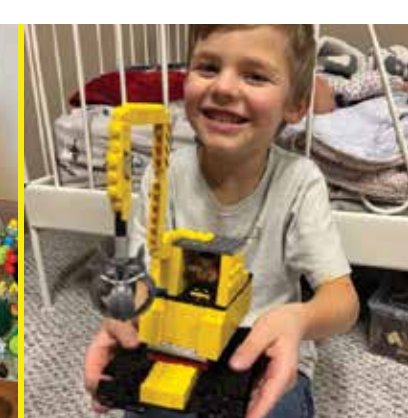
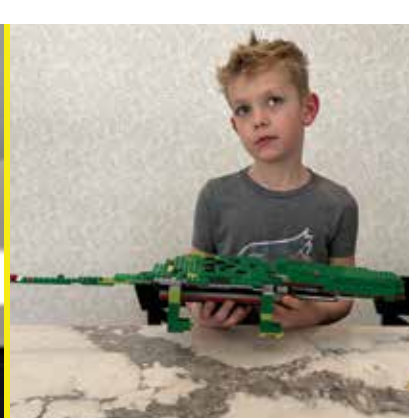


This is just a small taste of the 500+ entries we received – so many amazing builds!





You've got to go to ReformedPerspective.ca/bricks to see the winners' videos!





CAN YOU BUILD IT?

Yes, you can!

"...it has provided weeks of entertainment for our children as they worked tirelessly to come up with their best Lego creation."

"I think they designed 10 different things over the Christmas holidays and January before they settled on these to submit."

Sometimes things go better than we could have hoped, to the point of being overwhelming. Our "Can You Build It?" contest not only proved to be popular, it was so much so we almost couldn't handle the volume of responses. We received **a staggering 514 entries, from over 500 children/youth and 10 adults.** And the entries were incredible – they represented thousands of hours of effort and ingenuity.

But try organizing 514 entries and then judging them!

We get that many of our readers ignore the QR codes and URLs we'll include to point you to even more content online. But this time, *you've just got to.* You will be amazed! You just have to watch the videos of the LEGO entries because the pictures here in the magazine just can't do it justice. This could be a great activity for your whole family, or to invite someone over to enjoy them with you!

Why do we organize contests like this? *Reformed Perspective* is not a product to sell, like so many other magazines. It is a mission that is centered on helping Christians *think, speak, and act* in line with our confession. We can write about an important topic like God as our Creator, and our calling to likewise create. But a contest like this one resulted in over 500 people *being* creative and experiencing the joy of doing what God made us to do. And the medium of this magazine and our website allows us to take this all a step further by letting their work inspire others to creativity. These mediums also promote unity – showing children and adults alike that we aren't on our own. We are a part of a big group of Christians – God's children. We aren't just aligned in our confession. We have so much more in common.

So let's foster unity with other believers! Somehow, being Christian has been associated with being stuffy and boring. But being God's people is about being able to enjoy the world He's crafted, and that includes enjoying our fellow Image-bearers and their own work. From enjoying their artwork to laughing at their jokes, we have so much to celebrate.

On the back cover you will see an ad for our annual photo contest. This time we are giving the adults a slightly harder challenge to capture! And we would love to hear your ideas for more contests in the future.

And now... you are in for a treat! *Please, please,* do check out those QR codes – it's as simple as pointing your smartphone camera at it, and clicking on the link that pops up or just go to

ReformedPerspective.ca/bricks



SCAN ME



ADULTS (18+)

WINNER!

PETER V – CHURCH

No words suffice for how amazing this build is. "Based on a number of older church buildings that I've appreciated over the years," Peter gives us an art, architecture, and history lesson as he opens up his building for better viewing. From hammer-beam trusses that vault the ceiling, to the beautiful stained glass windows, the spiral staircase leading up to the truly awesome organ, and even a nursery tucked in the basement, there's no end of detail and depth.

"I hope it will be a yearly event!"



*Honorable
Mention*

HENRY B – FLYING CITY

The wonder of what might be – a flying city that gives every resident a penthouse view. You sure wouldn't get bored living here!

14-17-years-old

WINNER!

BENAIHAH, 16 – SNOW PLOW

As the judges noted, this is a "very technical design" – six-wheel drive, working lights, dump function, suspension, and a differential in the drive train, all integrated into a remote control to create a snow plow that can get work done.

"Every one of my kids wanted to enter their own creations! Thank you once again for the chance, they had a lot of fun with it!"



*Honorable
Mention*

CARSON, 17 – SEMI TRUCK AND TRAILER

A gorgeous black semi that can be remote-control-backed into its car trailer, with the connection automatically clicking in, ready to go. As the judges note, "very authentic looking."



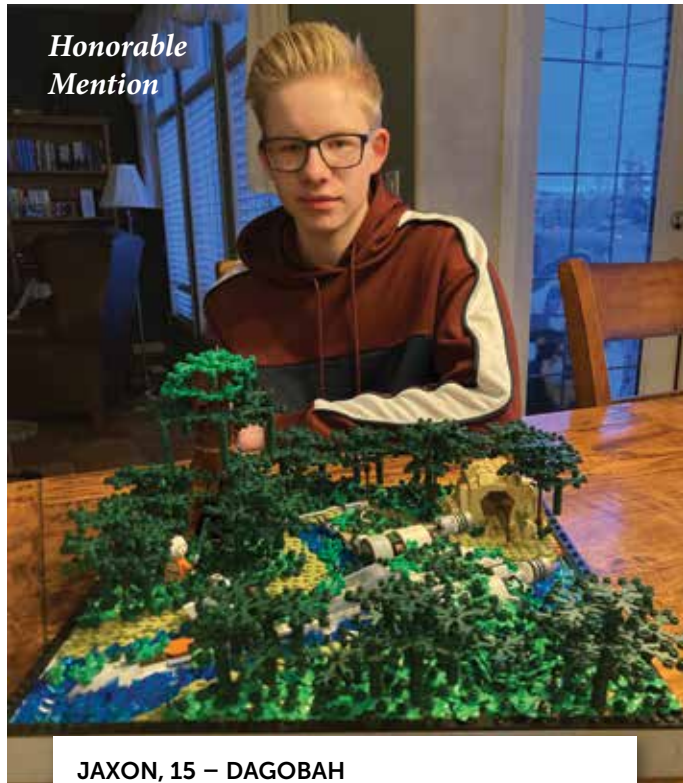
**TRAVIS, 15 –
PLYMOUTH SUPERBIRD**

A gorgeous model of a colorful legend of a car. As Travis explains, "it has the distinct wing of the Superbird" with functioning doors and hood, and moving pistons in the engine. It is steerable from the rear, and the trunk include accessories that can trick it out as a supercharged dually.



*Honorable
Mention*

*Honorable
Mention*



JAXON, 15 – DAGOBAH

Jaxon has captured several key scenes from the Star Wars films that take place on the planet Dagobah. The forest and river landscape are very realistic, with all sorts of texture and color.



"They had a
blast making
these!"



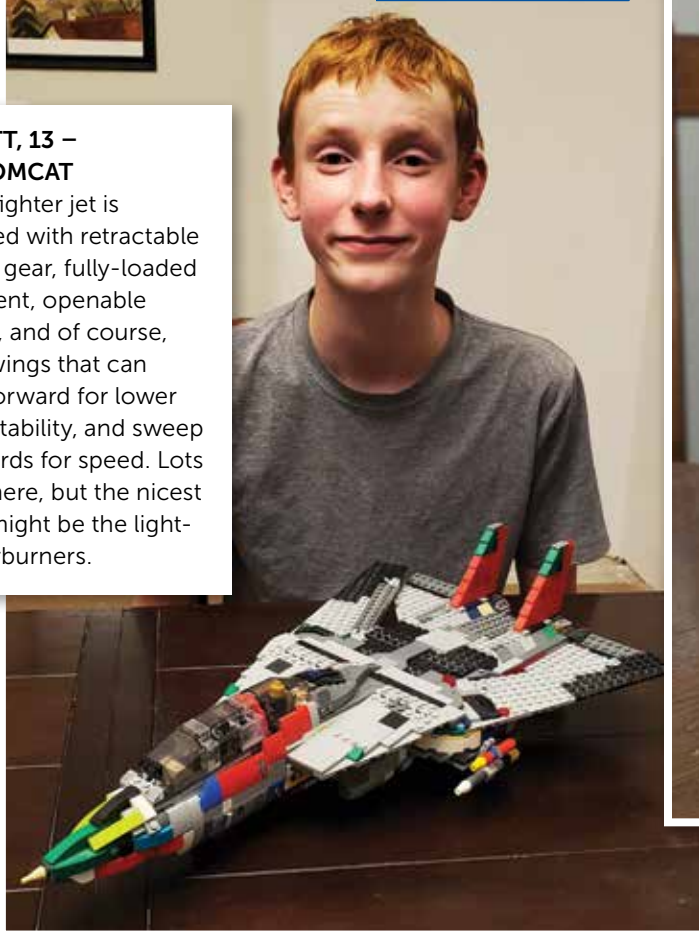
"CAN YOU BUILD IT?" CONTEST RESULTS

10-13-years-old

BOYS' WINNER!

EVERETT, 13 – F-14 TOMCAT

This fighter jet is equipped with retractable landing gear, fully-loaded armament, openable cockpit, and of course, swing wings that can move forward for lower speed stability, and sweep backwards for speed. Lots to see here, but the nicest touch might be the light-up afterburners.



GIRLS' WINNER!

MIKELLA, 12 – CHICKEN

Who knew you could make a mostly round chicken look this good using mostly square blocks? A very fun 3D rendition.



LOGAN, 12 – HORSE FARM

So much to see in this farm setting, from the classic red horse barn, to the semi-truck unloading hay into the loft, and the flower garden on the backside of the barn – everybody is working hard!

Honorable Mention



BRAD, 13 – WORKING CANDY DISPENSER

This has to be seen to be believed – it really does work. Push in your dime, and out comes your selection – four candies to choose from! Fantastic engineering and creativity!

Honorable Mention



GIRLS' WINNER!



CARINA, 8 – SNOWMAN

If it's too cold to make a snowman outside, that shouldn't stop you from making one inside. A very nice 3D look.

9 and under

BOYS' WINNER!



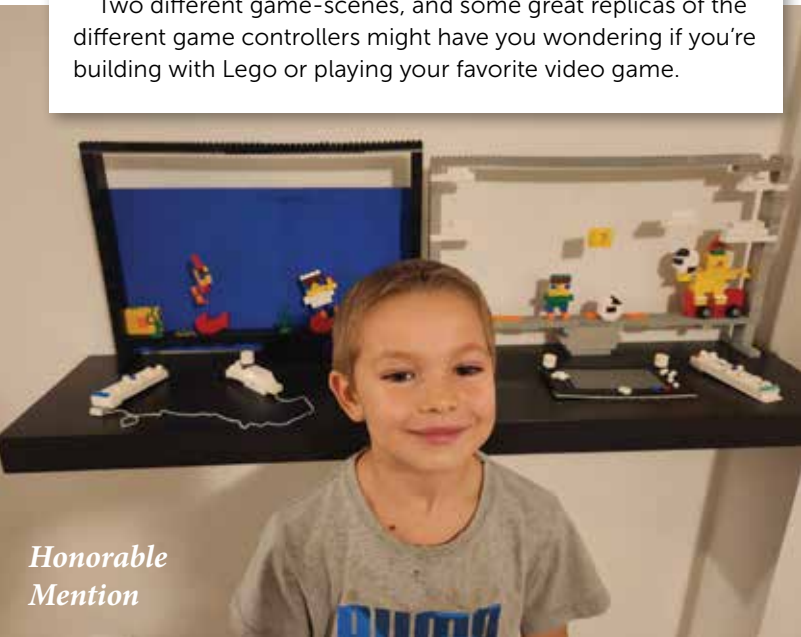
JOHN, 9 – BATTLESHIP

This enormous model dominates the coffee table it is displayed on. But don't get too close – those guns actually shoot. Great job!

"It was quite a lot of fun watching our 5-year-old's ideas unfold."

CHASE, 7 – SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD GAME

Two different game-scenes, and some great replicas of the different game controllers might have you wondering if you're building with Lego or playing your favorite video game.



Honorable Mention

Honorable Mention



GABRIEL, 7 – STANLEY CUP PLAYOFF GAME

Could this be more detailed!! There are fans in the stands, a Zamboni waiting in the wings, change rooms, and even a penalty box. Oh, and a Stanley Cup ready to be awarded!



LIFE IN BLOOM: *The Gift of Flowers*

by Jan Broersma

“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”
- LUKE 12:27



When God created the first humans, He placed them in a garden. So it's natural enough that, since then, people have not only cultivated plants for practical reasons (food, medicine, clothing), but have delighted in the beauty of plants and flowers. Our love of flowers seems to be built into our DNA. In a sense, a garden is our natural habitat.

I was reading an article recently about all the ways flowers are good for us (which include lowering stress, improving mood, and boosting memory and concentration). The article quoted from a 2005 Rutgers University study that

investigated why exactly humans have the seemingly innate positive relationship with flowers that they do – which is, after all, hard to explain from an evolutionary perspective. I was struck by how the researchers (with their evolutionary assumptions) seemed baffled as they summarized their findings:

“For more than 5000 years, people have cultivated flowers although there is no known reward for this costly behavior... There is little existing theory in any discipline that explains the findings. We suggest that cultivated flowers are rewarding because they have evolved to rapidly induce positive emotions in humans...”

But what baffles evolutionists simply delights Christians, teaching us about our Creator. Surely our love for flowers points us to a God who made the world more extravagantly beautiful than it had to be, a God Who takes pleasure in His creation and invites His image-bearers to do the same. Surely flowers are one of His good gifts to humanity – a gift with many different facets.

FLOWERS ARE GOOD FOR US

Flowers do more than bring us passing joy; their impact can go much deeper, offering benefits in a variety of ways.

Mental, emotional, and physical benefits

As the Rutgers study, among others, found, flowers are good for people – mentally, emotionally, and even physically. The positive response of humans to flowers seems to be universal, crossing age and gender lines, and going beyond cultural associations with flowers (for example, the idea of flowers as gifts representing affection or gratitude). As the Rutgers study summarized it,

“The presence of flowers triggers happy emotions, heightens feelings of life satisfaction and affects social behavior in a positive manner far beyond what is normally believed.”

Exposure to nature in general, and to flowers in particular, can contribute to many health benefits. Even the simple presence of a vase of flowers has been

shown to reduce stress and increase well-being in studies of college-age women, male office workers, and hospital patients. Other research in multiple settings has shown that the activity of flower arranging can lower blood pressure and heart rate, and decrease stress, in participants (including the elderly and those struggling with mental health issues).

Theresa Brouwer and Christine VanEerde, sisters who own a flower shop in Fergus, Ontario (and who happen to be my cousins), wouldn't be surprised by the results of these studies. "Being in the floral industry can be quite therapeutic," they told me. "We get to be creative and expressive using God's creation. To be busy with one's hands, creating floral designs, is a great way to spend one's day."

The sisters agreed that flowers generally bring a lot of joy to their customers as well. "People typically leave the shop with flowers in hand and a smile on their face. Flowers tend to bring joy all around – whether it be the joy of giving them, or receiving them. To be able to assist others in 'making their day' is quite rewarding."

Horticultural therapy

John Helder is a horticulturalist with many years experiences working as both the long-serving director of Edmonton's Muttart Conservatory and greenhouses, and as the city's Principal of Horticulture. He and his wife, Margaret, a botanist, appreciate flowers both personally and professionally. Their beautifully planted front and back yards bring smiles to the faces of many passersby; and John has seen first-hand the far-reaching benefits of flowers in his work.

"At Muttart [Conservatory], opportunity is provided for people to be exposed to and enjoy the beauty of plants of God's creation. Many people come to relax and to be spiritually or emotionally refreshed in such a beautiful, calm setting."

His work with the city of Edmonton also involved working with plants for social improvement.



John and Margaret Helder at Muttart Conservatory, where John served as director for many years.



John with his one of his daughters and granddaughters at Muttart. "Many people come to relax and to be spiritually or emotionally refreshed in such a beautiful, calm setting," he says.

"As Edmonton's Principal of Horticulture, I worked with community beautification, school plantings, community gardens. Some projects were with various social agencies whose clients were helped through their volunteering in horticulture (planting and caring for floral beds) and using their activities for horticultural therapy."

"Horticultural therapy" was a new term for me, and I was fascinated to learn more about it. This type of therapy is generally designed for people with physical limitations, mental illness, or other particular challenges. Working with plants can stimulate, engage, and bring joy and satisfaction, as well as give opportunities for beneficial socialization.

John described his work in helping establish community gardens and community planters in several low-income, troubled areas of the city. Over time he witnessed both personal and social growth for those who participated. Residents began to take pride in their

neighborhood, interact more, and even support each other more (in one case by developing a cooperative babysitting service) as they built relationships and trust while working together. Community gardening was a catalyst with many ripple effects, providing "a non-threatening environment [in which people could] start to interact, socialize and counter their loneliness and grow as people."

John also told me about a member of his church who lives at a seniors' home which started making planters available for residents' use. "A number of people now gather at the planters and chat, interact and enjoy the growing or just observing and enjoying each other's company."

Horticultural therapy can be a struc-

tured, formal activity; but everyone can benefit from growing or simply appreciating natural beauty. "In my mind, gardening, working with plants and soil, is enjoyable, and people should be exposed to horticulture from an early age to learn to appreciate flowers, plants, nature and beauty," John concluded. He added,

"This also goes for music, the arts, literature, culinary arts, and in whatever other ways we can stimulate our senses and our talents, enjoy life and God's gifts, and through our interests serve

and share with others. As per Philip-
pians 4:8: 'Whatever is true, whatever
is honorable, whatever is just, whatever
is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is
commendable, if there is any excel-
lence, if there is anything worthy of
praise, think about these things.'"

FLOWERS TEACH US

Like all of the "book" of creation, flow-
ers teach us about their wise and creative
Designer. And we can learn other things
from them as well.


Lessons from God's Word

In the Bible, flowers are sometimes
used as a metaphor to remind us of the
brevity of life. As David soberingly put
it, "As for man, his days are like grass; he
flourishes like a flower of the field; for the
wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its
place knows it no more" (Ps. 103:15,16).
Flowers remind us to "number our days,
that we may get a heart of wisdom," as
Moses expressed it (Ps. 90:12).

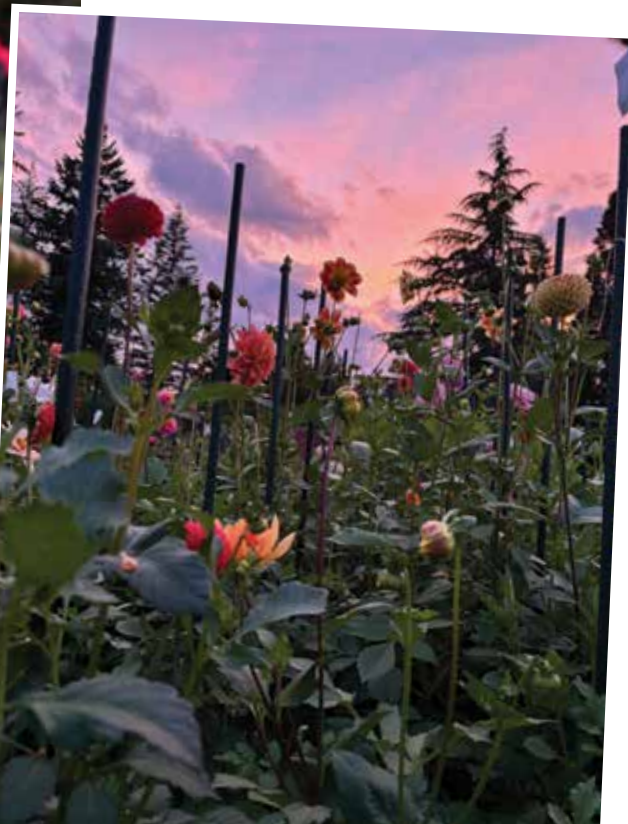
Flower imagery in the Bible also gives
us a vivid picture of the blessings God
will pour out on His people: "I will be like
the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like
the lily; he shall take root like the trees of
Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out....
they shall blossom like the vine" (Hosea
14:5-7). In Isaiah 58, when God promises
restoration to His repentant people, He
tells them, "you shall be like a watered
garden" (Is. 58:11).

In Isaiah 35:1, the result of the coming
of the Messiah is described as the burst-
ing into bloom of a dry and lifeless land:
"The wilderness and the dry land shall be
glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom
like the crocus; it shall blossom abun-
dantly and rejoice with joy and singing."

These types of word pictures sink into
our minds and hearts in a way that more
dry, abstract teaching may not.



"Working and walking in my garden... reminds me of
God's goodness, blessings, and grace," says Gina.





Learning experientially

Working with flowers can also teach us lessons, and help us experience truths, that we wouldn't as easily learn in a less tangible way.

For myself, my (very small-scale) flower-growing is always a hopeful but also a humbling endeavor. So many variables are outside my control, and the final results are usually not quite what I'd pictured. When I do end up with vases full of vibrant flowers, I know I can't really take any credit. The flowers from my garden – like so many of the good things in my life – truly are a gift.

Gina is one of the women in my church who enjoys growing and sharing flowers on a somewhat larger scale. She shared how working in her garden is a powerful reminder that she has a choice every day whether to focus on all the weeds – the difficulties and discouragements of life – or on the flowers, the beautiful blessings in the middle of the messiness.

“Working and walking in my garden full of flowers reminds me of God's goodness, blessings, and grace,” Gina told me. “Just like life, my garden is chaotic, often a mess full of weeds. I can't control the weeds or stop them from coming – they keep popping up – but in the midst of this messy garden I can see little patches of beautiful flowers growing.”

“I will need to deal with the weeds and mess on a daily basis. Sometimes it can be discouraging or overwhelming to keep going. So it's the flowers in front of me I choose to focus on – like beautiful rays of sunshine of God's grace and goodness.”

FLOWERS COMMUNICATE & EXPRESS

“Say it with flowers” is the slogan of Grand Floral (the Fergus, Ontario flower shop), and it captures this key communicative aspect of flowers. As co-owners Theresa and Christine explain:

“There are so many things you can express to others by giving flowers.... Gratitude, love, thankfulness and celebration to [add to] what may already be a joyous

occasion. Expressions of sympathy or simply ‘thinking of you’ to lift someone's spirits on a difficult day. “Being able to help our customers convey this message to others is often a joyful task – either in meeting their needs or supporting them through any of these occasions. It is often through the difficult times (grief, loss) that we have the opportunity to provide a word of encouragement and support.”



Theresa and Christina, co-owners of Grand Floral, love helping their customers “say it with flowers.”

Kim's Good Friday arrangement included palms, thorns, white lilies and yellow forsythia – all subtly meaningful.



Kim sees her flower arrangements as a way to express and share gratitude and thanksgiving.



Can you spot the blueberries?

Expressing joy and gratitude

Flowers have meanings, or can evoke emotions, which make them a beautiful way to express things like joy and thankfulness – also in the context of worship. Both the Old Testament tabernacle and temple included floral designs, and flowers can add a note of joy and vibrancy in our own churches as well.

My church has enjoyed beautiful bouquets and arrangements at the front for many years. Mrs. Lenie Noort provided these for well over a decade. “Going to church should be a joyful thing,” she told me, explaining that it’s natural to express that joy with the beauty of flowers. “I loved using the flowers God created to make His house beautiful.”

Several years ago, Kim Kieneker took

over providing flowers for our church. Kim, who comes from a family of flower growers and arrangers, loves all things green and colorful. “I love the soil,” she told me. “I enjoy beautiful and created things, I enjoy creating with them.”

As she described how she goes about putting together arrangements for the church, and her thoughts during the process, the words “thanks” and “thankfulness” came up often. Kim sees her work as a beautiful way to express, share, and inspire gratitude and thanksgiving in the congregation, giving glory to God for His bounty and blessings. “God gives us so much natural beauty around us,” she commented; “it’d be shame not to give a thank offering of it to Him.”

Kim often subtly integrates meaning into her arrangements. She likes researching the meanings of particular flowers, and also thinking about the church season and significant occasions

or celebrations in the congregation. She finds it interesting how different people often see different things in her arrangements, and she loves giving people something to reflect on.

For example, in her arrangement for Good Friday last year, she made use of palms (looking back to Palm Sunday), thorns (representing the crown of thorns,



Mrs. Lenie Noort still delights in her many flowers – including these geraniums, which she has been growing and planting for 65 years.

“but pulled apart to recognize that Jesus no longer wears the crown of thorns”), white lilies (which are often associated with Christ’s resurrection), and yellow forsythia (which evoke hope, joy, anticipation, and the coming of spring and new life). Even if we don’t consciously make all these connections, we as members of the congregation often experience an emotional response and are given something to ponder.

More simply, some Sundays Kim just enjoys providing “seasonal bouquets from nature” – many of which she gives away to church members at the end of the day. She loves foraging for plants and flowers, wherever she happens to be – “I always keep a pair of rubber boots and a pruner in my vehicle” – and delights in creating from what she finds.

Kim is drawn to asymmetrical designs and interesting shapes, finding beauty in the natural “quirkiness” of nature, rather than aiming for stiff, static perfection in her arrangements. Often the results are a bit unexpected or whimsical; I loved the flowers arranged inside a pumpkin last fall, and the blueberries peeking out of a bouquet early last summer when they were in season.

“Sometimes it’s hard to find a way to use your talents and passions in a special way to serve in the church,” Kim commented. In her case, providing weekly flowers has been a beautiful and rewarding way for her to do just that.

FLOWERS CONNECT US

Finally, flowers can connect us – with our roots, our families, and with our neighbors – sometimes in wonderful and unexpected ways.

Connecting the generations

My parents grew (and still grow) big, beautiful dahlias, while my father-in-law introduced me to colorful, sturdy zinnias. Both flowers have become standbys for me, and I enjoy how they remind me of people I love. Similar experiences were shared by many people I talked to. As Theresa Brouwer remembered,

“My Oma always had windows full of plants, and took such good care of



Gina and her granddaughters Noelle and Esmee love working in the garden together. Picking, arranging, and wrapping up bouquets to give to other family members has been a special highlight.

her gardens. I spent a lot of time there and must’ve picked up on her love for ‘everything nice.’”

Her sister Christine VanEerde felt the same way. Even before working with flowers at Grand Floral, she always had a love for them; “Often you could find fresh cuts on my table after a grocery run.”

Mrs. Lenie Noort also reminisced about the important place of flowers in her family history. As a child in Holland, she remembered how “after the house was cleaned up, then the flowers went on the table.” In Canada, her father was able to buy a greenhouse business – which is still thriving and is now run by the fourth generation of her family.

Gina has also found flowers to be a wonderful way to connect the generations. Her young granddaughters enjoy working in her garden with her, and Gina has especially loved helping them pick and prepare flowers as gifts for other family members. Gina described the rewarding feeling of

“seeing the joy in [my granddaughter’s] whole being when she picked, arranged, and wrapped up a bouquet to give to her great-grandmother. I realize I am passing on the joy of giving.”



Henk and his daughter Shelley planting dozens of their yearly baskets together.

In Henk and Ginny Vanderhorst’s family, planting baskets together in spring has been a father-daughter tradition for twenty-five years now (although, with one of the two daughters having moved away from Langley, BC, where her parents and older sister still live, the

tradition has changed over the years). The sons of the family don't participate, and Ginny understands that, although she is politely welcome to bring coffee, it's "dad and daughter" time.

Preparations begin several weeks ahead of time, as the three visit favorite nurseries and select a variety of plants and flowers, which they'll later share and exchange with each other. Back at the parental home on the designated planting day, the three use the back of Henk's truck as their work surface, putting together countless planters and baskets – enough for all their homes, and often a few to give away.

The running joke is that, while shopping for their plants, they "didn't go over budget" – mainly because they didn't have one.

Some things are priceless.

Connecting with our neighbors

The beauty of flowers and plants can also connect us to neighbors and even strangers around us. John and Margaret Helder have found that their beautifully planted (and unfenced) property has become a draw for acquaintances and passersby alike.

At first, this "sharing" of their yard and garden was unintentional; "we never thought of fencing our yard because I (a cheap Dutchman) thought a fence to be an unnecessary expenditure," John told

me with a smile. As well, the couple liked having an open play area for their children (and a small collection of outdoor pet rabbits, pigeons, and a chicken), connected to the municipal grassed walkway and treed berm behind their property.

"As the grassway became more popular for residents, our menagerie became a popular destination for the neighborhood: little children with parents, as well as school and child-care groups," John explained. Over time, as their yard matured and the Helders made various changes and additions, including adding an experimental rain garden, "people continued to stop by." A number of years ago, as part of a more dramatic makeover, they replaced all the grass in their front yard with "a wild diversity of ground cover, flowers and shrubs." Especially in the spring, when all the front bulbs were blossoming, "we



John and Margaret Helder are happy to share the beauty of their property and garden with neighbors and passersby.



The Helders' frame-worthy front yard, which features a diversity of ground cover, flowers, and shrubs, gets a lot of attention.



During the “Covid spring” of 2020, the Ravensbergens’ full greenhouses (shown here this past February) called for creative solutions.

got a lot of attention,” John told me.

Eventually the Helders started “sharing” their property in more deliberate, organized ways: “Along with the general public, school and summer camp groups stop by and learn about plants, composting, our rain garden, etc. We have invited specific groups to our garden as well” – including sending out an impromptu invitation to their congregation for a “yard open house” this past summer.

“Many people enjoy our property and chat with us about our garden,” John concluded. “The conversations lead to a wide diversity of topics well beyond flowers and plants.

Connecting in Covid

A unique example of connecting with the community through flowers took place in southern Ontario in the spring of 2020, during the first of the Covid lockdowns.

Many wholesale florists, including P. Ravensbergen & Sons in Smithville, Ontario, found themselves with greenhouses full of flowering plants – hydrangeas, begonias, chrysanthemums – that were no longer needed by many of their regular buyers.

Although Ravensbergen was already regularly donating surplus flowers to

charitable organizations such as the Grimsby Benevolent Fund, Habitat for Humanity and others (as they still do today), the sheer volume of “extra” plants called for creative solutions.

Staff searched for new and creative ways to sell and donate the plants.

“We sold some from trucks by the side of the road,” said general manager William Ravensbergen, “and donated some to seniors’ homes and senior living neighborhoods in the area.” Help was received from a local business that wished to help scale up the distribution from the immediate West Lincoln area to create a larger impact. This involved reaching out to many local Reformed churches with an offer to sponsor flower distributions in the churches’ communities, if groups such as home mission and outreach committees were interested in organizing these activities.

The response was positive – both from many churches, and from neighbors who eventually received the cheerful blooms, along with messages of support and encouragement, during that difficult and isolating spring season. Countless plants were delivered door to door or, to avoid physical contact, left on porches, and the gesture clearly made an impact. “We received literally hundreds of thank-you cards from those who got flowers,” William told me.

I spoke to one young woman who had been part of the “flower drop” around Dunnville, Ontario. She described how her young people’s group knocked on doors around town, delivering the flowers along with encouraging notes and invitations to their church’s live-streamed services. She remembers it as a very positive experience; “you never got tired of seeing people’s reactions to the flowers.”

One older woman broke down and cried when she received her flowers, explaining that she hadn’t had contact with anyone for days. The young woman who had brought them was struck by the older woman’s utter loneliness, and decided to maintain contact. The two of them continue to visit regularly to this day. Although the older woman has hesitated to accept her new friend’s invitation to church, she says she sees God’s hand in making their paths cross. Another friendly church family has recently moved in down the street, and the woman has also expressed that she now feels so much less lonely – surrounded by caring community.

And sometimes during a visit the older woman will smile and say, “It all started with flowers, eh?” RP

A CENTURY OF CINEMA FOR YOUR FAMILY

20+ films to take you and your kids through the 100 years of feature films

by RP Staff



While most other art forms have been around for centuries and millennia, “motion pictures” have only existed for just over a century. Back in March of 1895, two Frenchmen, the Lumière brothers, had a public screening of their black and white, silent, 46-second-long film *Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory*. And while that was as boring as it sounds, improvements started coming fast and frequently – later that same year they showed a 40-second comedy of sorts, *The Tables Turned on the Gardener*. The title character is using a hose to water his plants and when the water pressure drops, he looks down his hose to find out why. And that’s when the boy who’d been stepping on his hose lets the water resume – a first go at cinematic slapstick.

In the decades that followed we got plot, then color, and eventually sound. Cinema brought different art forms together – writing, acting, costuming, cinematography, music, and more – and it took filmmakers a couple of decades to really figure out how to gel them all. So it isn’t until the 1920s that we get films that begin to stand the test of time, and can entertain still.

Now it’s never been that easy to find

quality movies for kids, and even less so when you have Christian standards for what your family watches. But if you expand your choices beyond what’s come out in the past year, it does get a little easier.

And if you want to mix some education along with your entertainment, then now might be a great time to introduce your kids to great children’s movies of the past. You can show them the ways the world has changed and the ways it hasn’t, and they can learn that newer is not always better!

To make it easy to do, we’ve created a list of suggestions for you from movies we’ve previously reviewed. Travel backwards in time from today to the 1920s to see a hundred years of cinema history. And by heading backward one movie at a time, you can slowly get your children used to the very different pace and look of the older movies.

All the films that follow are linked to their longer reviews, so if there are any cautions, you can see what they are by visiting this article online by scanning the QR code with your phone or by going to **ReformedPerspective.ca/timetravel**



2020s

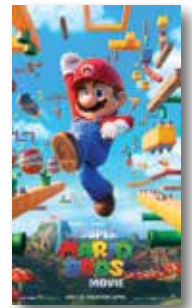
PAW Patrol: the Movie

Who hasn’t heard of PAW Patrol by now? But rest assured you don’t have to have watched the show to enjoy the movie. When an incompetent mayor runs amok in Adventure City, the pups have to help clean up the chaos. This film is good old-fashioned fun.



The Super Mario Bros. Movie

If your kids are a bit older, they might enjoy this fun romp through the world of Mario Bros. Mario and his brother Luigi get sucked into a strange and colorful land, where Mario has to rescue everyone from the dreadful Bowser.



2010s

Tangled

This retelling of Rapunzel is a favorite of many. Rapunzel has been told she needs to stay in the tower to stay safe, but when she meets a thief named Flynn, she gets an opportunity to leave and explore the wider world. A highlight is her versatile hair and all the ways she uses it to help her and Flynn get out of tight situations!



The Peanuts Movie

This movie brings in all the silly fun of the comic and leaves out some of the melancholy. Charlie Brown tries a variety of activities to impress the Little Red-Haired Girl, and gets helped out by his friends. Will he succeed?



2000s

Pollyanna

Orphaned Pollyanna teaches her aunt and neighbors about the "Glad Game" her father taught her – this game involves striving to find something to be glad about in even the most difficult situations. Throughout the movie, things happen that make it very hard for her to stay "glad" – will Pollyanna stop playing her game?



Chicken Run

This one is for teens and maybe tweens but not younger – a clever

claymation homage to the World War II prisoner escape genre, this takes place on a chicken farm, with the hens working together to plan a mass exodus. But they'll have to get past the Nazi guards farmer and his dogs first. This might be more for dads and their lads, but kids with an interest in World War II history should appreciate this.



1990s

Little Women

Four sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy, come together through hard times their family experiences, and do their best to grow up into good young women.



Toy Story

All of the *Toy Story* movies are worth watching, but the first one came out all the way back in 1995, making it a great fit for the 1990s. Andy's toys – Woody, Mr. Potato Head, Little Bo Peep, and more – all come to life when no people are around. Then a new toy, Buzz Lightyear, arrives to make Woody jealous. Both adults, and children as young as 12, can really appreciate this one (a bully and his initially creepy toys might be too much for the younger crowd).



1980s

An American Tail

Animated films are often assumed to be "just" for children, but the best of them use the art form to

showcase stories for all ages – which means this could be a great film for the whole family! *An American Tail* explores the story of immigration, which is something many of us are familiar with as a result of our own family histories with immigration.



The Fox and the Hound

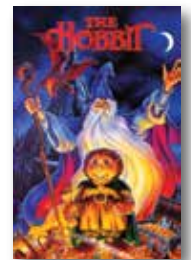
A fox and a hound meet and become the best of friends... but as they grow up, will their friendship last? They're told foxes and hounds are natural enemies. This is a classic film with strong lessons about racism contained in it.



1970s

The Hobbit

While the live-action *Hobbit* trilogy hit big screens in the 2010s, the initial animated version came out in 1977. It has a lot to offer, and is not split into three parts!



The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh

Who doesn't love Winnie the Pooh? This movie contains several classic Pooh stories, and is a perfect way to introduce children to Pooh and his friends.



1960s

The Incredible Journey

Another classic movie based on a book. In this story, two dogs and a cat have to find their way back to their family, who are over 200 miles away.



Hans Brinker, or the Silver Skates

A movie set in the Netherlands! Young Hans has to support his family, but he struggles to afford both food for them all, and medicine for his father. So he enters a 26-mile skating race with a big prize. Will he win?



1950s

Jack and the Beanstalk

Abbott and Costello, the well-known comedy duo from the 40s and 50s, star in this version of Jack and the Beanstalk. It's slapstick, so some parental explanation might be needed for kids to get the jokes and comic physical humor, but kids will surely enjoy all the zany antics.



20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

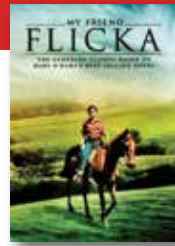
A mysterious "sea monster" is destroying ships in the ocean, and three men are sent out to discover what it is, and stop it. It turns out not to be a sea creature, but a submarine! The three of them are taken aboard and start to learn all about its mysterious captain...



1940s

My Friend Flicka

A classic story of the love between a boy and his horse – a wild colt who needs to be tamed, and a boy who daydreams his way through school. Maybe they can both help each other grow up. A few cautions: for children who love horses, the death of a horse in this movie might be a tough watch, and the pace of this movie is slower, especially by modern movie standards.



Lassie Come Home

A boy is forced to sell his beloved and loyal dog Lassie when his family can't afford to feed her anymore. Lassie's new owner takes her to Scotland, but she is determined to find her way home, and goes through some serious adventures on her long journey.



1930s

The Prince and the Pauper

Stories about switched identities are fun, and this is one of the classic versions. A poor boy and a prince realize they look almost identical, and after they switch clothes, they're both mistaken for the wrong boy. Will the wrong boy end up crowned king? This is a black-and-white film, and is slower paced, but many children 9 and up will enjoy it.



The Adventures of Robin Hood

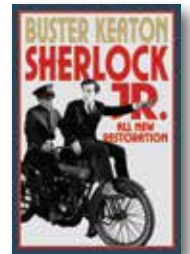
This film is consistently mentioned as *the* classic version of Robin Hood on screen, which went on to influence all the others. No dark and gritty retellings of Robin here! Our longer online review lists four reasons you'll never find a better version than this one.



1920s

Sherlock Jr.

We're getting into movies old enough that some children will find them very, very different from modern movies... that said, most children do enjoy the silent films that are jam-packed with action! This could be a great opportunity to expand their viewing – and yours. Our first recommendation for silent films is *Sherlock Jr.*, which is also free online if you click the title.



Seven Chances

Another silent film! Jimmie has seven chances to find someone to marry that day, in order to fulfill the conditions to inherit his grandfather's fortune.



Conclusion

And that, then, is a collection of 22 films covering just over a century of cinema. If you do end up working your way through this list with your family, please let us know your thoughts, especially on the older ones. What were your favorites? We hope you find some gems!

To find even more film recommendations, including many films for younger children, be sure to check out our list of "200+ movies King David might watch" at:

ReformedPerspective.ca/200





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CCBR interns on the downtown sidewalks



Janelle reaching people on the streets



EUTHANASIA CHANGED THE ABORTION BATTLE

Dozens of pro-life volunteers spent the summer talking to strangers about the unborn

by Janelle Oosterhoff

In 2016 euthanasia was legalized. That was also the summer I did my first pro-life internship with the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform (endthekilling.ca). After that I was involved for several years, and now after a bit of a break I've returned. My sister and I are interning for the summer. We're spending our time door-knocking, having conversations, and showing abortion victim photography in the streets of Calgary.

ONE HEART AT A TIME

One young man I talked to said abortion was okay earlier on in the pregnancy, and in difficult circumstances. I agreed with him about how difficult those situations would be, and then I asked him to consider a girl who ends up in a difficult situation once the child was born. I asked if he thought we could ever kill that child, because of her situation. Then we talked about the humanity of the preborn – that if abortion ends the life of a biological human being, then it's a human rights

violation. At the end of the conversation, he agreed that abortion was never okay, and he took a pamphlet with resources to share with his friends.

That was one of three conversations I had during that one hour of activism. And throughout the city about 20 other activists were having similar conversations!

So many people change their minds when they see the signs and hear the arguments. And many of them end the conversation saying, "Thank you for being here."

EUTHANASIA CHANGED THINGS

It's still shocking to me how many times we hear "I had an abortion," "My girlfriend had an abortion," and "I drove my friend to the abortion clinic." Everyone has been affected in some way or another.

I'm also stunned that we live in a society where so many people think it's better to die than to live through suffering.

There's so much need for the gospel. We can show the inconsistencies in pro-abortion logic, and when we do, even the most philosophical nutcases will agree (at least in theory). But when people don't even value themselves, how can we expect them to value other human life?

This summer is showing me clearly what a hurting society we live in – and how that brokenness has progressed even since I started in 2016. When I first did pro-life work, euthanasia rarely came up, which is why I clearly remember one instance where it did. A man came up to me and shared that he had helped his mom get euthanized in the Netherlands, when it wasn't accessible in Canada. It was a good thing, he argued, because she hadn't wanted to be a burden on the rest of the family. I was shocked.

Now, eight years later and euthanasia is widespread. A few weeks ago, a friend shared with me that his grandma chose MAiD – and she had considered herself a Christian.

THEY USED TO MEET US HALFWAY

We're no longer just talking with people who think it's okay to kill preborn babies; we're talking with people who want to be killed themselves if their life no longer seems worthwhile. Beliefs are a bit different person to person, but the equation goes something like this: a person's life is worth living, if (and only if) they have awareness of what's going on around them, they aren't suffering, and they aren't a burden to society.

One of our strongest anti-abortion arguments concludes: "If we'd never kill a born person for (X) situation, why is it okay to kill a pre-born human for the same situation?" The underlying principle is that we don't kill people, regardless of situations.

The foundation of our pro-life arguments is built on two premises:

1. **that the pre-born are human**
2. **and that killing humans is wrong.**

Now we're having a rising number of people challenge the second premise.

IF LIFE HAS NO MEANING DEATH BECOMES ATTRACTIVE

Why should we be surprised when a generation that's okay with killing babies decides that it's also okay to kill parents? Abortion and euthanasia are symptoms (and certainly not the only serious ones) of materialism and abstract spiritualism. You live for personal happiness, you don't judge, and have only *personal* morals and religion – don't impose those on others. It's an echo of an earlier time when "everyone did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

The root issue here is a loss of values of our nation; virtue itself is no longer a virtue, and suffering is seen as the ultimate evil.

Victor Frankl talks about suffering in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, where he reflects on his time during the Holocaust. He observed that some people shut down while others

became more determined to live, and he found that meaning (purpose) was the ultimate difference. For some, meaning was the literal difference between life and death.

With Medical Assistance in Dying, the messages are clear: "Your life no longer has meaning. You are a burden to society and to your family," and "Your value is dependent on your circumstances."

WHERE DOES OUR WORTH COME FROM?

If materialism is the secular religion of our day, then the message of the Gospel stands in sharp contrast. That contrast is highlighted in Dr. Goligher's book, *How Should We Then Die?* where he brings the discussion back to whether human beings have intrinsic or extrinsic value. Do we have value based on our humanity, or do we assign value based on age, circumstances, and usefulness?

As Christians we know that we're made in God's Image. That's why we know that we have value and purpose in every stage of our life. And we know to treat others according to that intrinsic value.

Christians also understand that pain and suffering are often a means to refine and shape us. In our suffering, there's meaning and comfort that we ultimately cannot lose. Our society lives for pleasure and comfort, but it is also craving purpose and meaning. And because it can't find meaning, it's not shocking that we find ourselves in a culture of death.

GOING ALL PROPHET NATHAN ON THEM (2 SAM. 12)

While doing activism, I met a woman named Janice. Her sister had died of a terminal illness a few years ago, and she cried as she said, "They wouldn't let her have MAiD, so I had to watch her suffer." I had nowhere to go but the Gospel, and I was able to bring it in.

Logic and truth are also essential and effective in ending abortion – I've seen the fruits over and over again. Our nation's moral conscience can only be numbed so much; the Law is still written on our calloused hearts (Romans 2:15). We might obscure the Law and justify ourselves, but everyone still know that it's wrong to kill innocent humans.

To show that abortion is wrong, we draw out an analogy that makes it real. I often say, "I know of a baby named Laura. Laura's mom was on drugs while she was pregnant, but she thought she could handle it. After Laura was born, her mom realized she couldn't handle it, and she abandoned her. Now, just a few months old, Laura is suffering from neglect and from drugs in her system. She may end up in foster care her whole life. Would it be okay to kill Laura to spare her from a difficult life?"

When this picture is drawn, murder is harder to justify. In the same way, it's much more difficult to justify abortion after looking at an abortion image, and much easier to justify it if the discussion is kept in the abstract. This is the reason everything gets covered in euphemisms – euphemisms help us to forget what we are actually talking about.

With euthanasia, we can use the same type of argument. We appeal to cases where it's clearly wrong, and use that to show our listeners that they are creating a hierarchy of value. "You're saying that there's one category of people to whom we should offer help, and another group that we can kill." And if there's one thing this culture likes, it's equality.

So, there are ways to humanize the victims and to change minds.

IT'S A HEART ISSUE

In pro-life apologetics, we recognize some conversations as "heart conversations." When we deal with a heart issue, we check in with the person and hear their story. We show them that we care. And then, gently but with full truth, we bring the conversation back to abortion – they can't heal until they acknowledge the wrong.

The reality is that every person you and I ever talk to has a heart issue; we've all hurt and been hurt. And what sin is heavier than killing your own child or grandparent? That's the burden of guilt weighing down on our nation. And who else can take away this burden, than the One who died to save us? As Christians we convict and grieve, but we aren't stuck there – we can share the Gospel of redemption and forgiveness.

My brief encounters on the street are one step in pointing people to a higher morality and a higher purpose. Most often it's a first step, but sometimes it's a later one. But especially in a world where it's so countercultural to just love your neighbor, we have a profound opportunity to show the difference of living with the Gospel.

CONCLUSION

Early Christians in Rome were set apart by the Gospel they preached and by the Gospel they lived. In that culture, it was normal and socially acceptable to abandon babies outdoors so that they would die of exposure. There was no question on the humanity of those children but in Rome a child that wasn't wanted didn't have value. Value was assigned, not inherent.

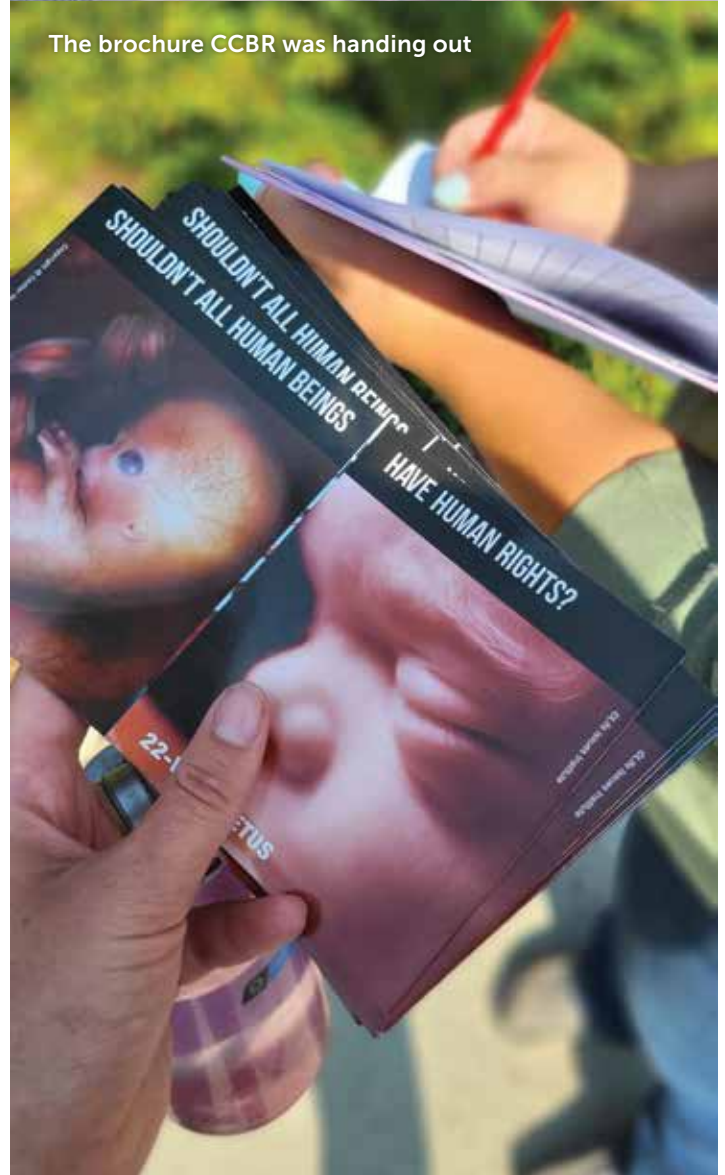
Where were the Christians? Rescuing those they could and raising them as their own. Eventually, culture changed so much that exposure became a crime.

When I walk through downtown Calgary, there's little that makes me think of Rome. On the surface, we're extremely civilized. But our values aren't too different – we just hide it better. Whether we're headed for destruction or revival, our calling as Christians is clear: Be salt and light; defend the orphan; share the Good News. ^{RP}

To find out more about the work of the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform, and to investigate spending a summer working for them, go to their website, endthekilling.ca.



The brochure CCBR was handing out





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WHY WRITE?

You might not make a lot of money writing,
but you can have an impact

by Sharon L. Bratcher

It's been said that all that is needed to become a writer is the strong desire to say something. Writing is simply taking your thoughts and research and organizing them on paper, or in your computer, or on your blog, to prove a point or tell a story. It may soothe someone's soul, clear up a dispute, record family history, challenge someone to live a more godly life, or simply brighten a person's day with humor or appreciation.

This issue marks the 20th anniversary of my first article in *Reformed Perspective*, and over the years I've had people ask me how they could get started in writing. Sometimes what they mean is, "How can

I make money off of writing?" and the short answer is, that probably isn't a good motivation to write... at least not for most of us. I heard at a Christian writers' conference that with most books you might only make about a dollar off each one, so unless someone famous promotes your book, you won't earn much. Magazines pay a bit, and if you can get into one with a larger circulation, it will pay more. Newspapers may take articles on a volunteer basis, or give you \$25 (for the 6 hours you spent on it!).

But getting paid is only one reason for honing your writing ability.

In her book *The Hidden Art of Home-*

making, Edith Schaeffer shared that she thought there was all sorts of "art found in the ordinary areas of everyday life."

"Each person has, I believe, some talent which is unfulfilled in some hidden area of his being – a talent which could be expressed and developed."

Schaeffer pointed out that the ability to write ought to be used to express our creativity and/or to bless others, and not just considered as a way to possibly earn money. She gave many examples of how one might use writing in daily life, such as letters of appreciation, explanation or

persuasion; poems, anecdotes, adventure, humor, family history, or stories given as a gift.

Writing also helps the writers themselves organize their thoughts and process their feelings – as one best-selling author put it, “I write to find out what I think.” This is true of journaling and of writing fiction, as it can aid you in processing your own thoughts and emotions through your characters.

So how did I get started? Let me outline how it has progressed for me.

WRITING JUST FOR FUN

I discovered in grade school that I enjoyed writing. In 5th grade I wrote 50 stories in 6 weeks to earn an A, and a funny poem in 6th grade that was well-received by my classmates. In high school I found essays very easy to write.

However, when I got to college, my previous attempts were deemed “average” and I was challenged to improve. My professor said, “Somebody has to write the books and tracts and magazine articles – why not you?” I kept that advice in mind over the years. When I taught English Grammar and Composition for 5 years, I honed my abilities while seeking to inspire my students as I had been inspired.

My interest in writing didn't stop when I got married and had 6 kids. I found opportunities to write for various company and club newsletters for free. I wrote occasional poems for family members, and composed songs for my children. I wrote Sunday School lessons for little children. I also wrote a letter to the sellers of a house we dearly wanted to purchase – and that letter caused us to win the bid! I wrote three articles for free for our local newspaper, which turned out to be good listable experience on my résumé since the articles were posted online.

I also attended Christian writers' conferences. These seminars provided advice, encouragement, and connections with seasoned writers and publishers.

ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER

We cannot know what we might do that will lead us to something else. As far as paid writing goes, here is how my journey has progressed:

Writing also helps the writers themselves organize their thoughts & process their feelings

- In 2005, with high hopes, I sent an article to *Reformed Perspective*. After improvements, my first and second articles were published. Then I was on a roll, tackling numerous topics for my own column, entitled “Soup and Buns.”
- An article about those earlier Sunday School lessons that I had written with a friend, led to an Orthodox Presbyterian Church in California hiring me to write a 2-year curriculum entitled “Bible Overview for Young Children” with matching topics for ages 2-6 and 6-9. Copies have been sold to churches, families, and Ladies' Bible Study groups and given to missionaries.
- In 2009, I published a book, a collection of *Reformed Perspective* articles, entitled *Soup and Buns: Nourishment from God's Word for Your Daily Struggles*.
- From 2010 to 2013 I began writing SEO (Search Engine Optimization) paragraphs for clients' websites. Each paragraph of 350-500 words paid from \$3 to \$9 each. I found the opportunities through Upwork.com and wrote about everything from credit cards to chicken recipes.
- After a month using Upwork.com, I bid on three requests for community newsletter articles in small towns about an hour away. Note: those freebie newspaper articles I wrote a few years back were the proof to this new company that I knew how to write. They got me the job! One thing led to another, and soon I was invited to apply for a full-time position as their Publication Manager.
- I have continued to write for *Reformed Perspective*, and occasionally for *Una Sancta* (a Free Reformed Churches of Australia publication) and *New Horizons* (the OPC denominational

magazine). I have a new book entitled *Life and Breath and Everything* which contains over 50 articles first published between 2010 and 2024.


ENCOURAGEMENT

The best writing teacher I ever encountered assigned numerous projects to her 7th graders, and graded them only on content. She wanted them to express, explain, or exult, not be exasperated! Each student then chose their favorite 3 projects and cleaned up all the grammar and punctuation in them for their final grade.

If you had a teacher that frightened you away from writing by marking you down for each misplaced comma and word on every project, don't think that you cannot write. Write. Express yourself! If someone else is going to see it, fix it up before you deliver it. Very rarely is a first draft perfect.

CONCLUSION

In Ecclesiastes 9:10, we read, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” Schaeffer's book applies this to writing, but also to other forms of creativity, such as sketching, painting, cooking, gardening, or music. We all have God-given skills that can be used in our daily lives.

The important thing is to start doing it, and then see where one thing might lead to another. 

Sharon's new book *Life and Breath and Everything* is available on Amazon.com and Amazon.ca. Her first book “Soup and Buns” and her “Bible Overview for Young Children” are available by contacting her at sharoncopy@gmail.com.

HOW TO WRITE

...for Reformed Perspective

by Jon Dykstra

Everyone has at least one article in them – I’m convinced that’s true. It doesn’t matter who I’m talking to, they all have a story, some lesson, a piece of wisdom earned or received, that is so valuable they should feel obligated to share it with the rest of us (Ps. 71:17-18).

Sure, we aren’t all writers, and yes, there are other ways of telling “the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord” (Ps. 78:4b). Sharing can happen via chats at church, over coffee, or in the car with the kids. Maybe you can start your own podcast – that could be brilliant too.

But there is something about putting pen to paper and just pondering, *what has the Lord been teaching me?* And if it’s something you’d share with your spouse, friends, or kids, then couldn’t a few thousand others benefit too?

You don’t even have to be the writer to get it down on paper – one of my favorite *Reformed Perspective* articles is Alice Kuik’s World War II remembrance “War through the eyes of a child,” as told to her writer friend Jane DeGlint. Together they crafted something that should be read every single Remembrance Day.

The point is, we all have our God to glorify, and we all have a story to share,

and pulling out your laptop and typing away might be a really good way of doing both.

But what if you’ve never written much of anything before?

Well, then you’re like the new homeowner who has to figure out for the first time how to get your shower draining like it should. There’s nothing to it but to start, turn to whatever advisors you might have at hand (“Hey dad, have you ever...?”), ask YouTube and ChatGPT for a few tips too, and then slog through until something works. Yes, there are master plumbers out there who could do it better, and master writers too – folks who can just churn out poetic, punchy stuff – but for the rest of us, it is just a matter of putting in the sweat and time.

And I’m here to help too. While I can’t make it easy, I can make it easier. What follows are my own best tips, the same half dozen I’ve been sharing with aspiring writers, and repeating to myself every time I’ve run stuck, these last 25 years. I’m not sure I like the acronym (so if you think up an alternative let me know) but I’m going to run with it – let’s see if we can get your writing to pass the SMELLS test.

1) *Specific detail (or, Show, don’t tell)*

If I told you that Wes Huff is a witty Christian apologist, you’d have to take my word for it. But what if I showed you? In his recent appearance on *The Joe Rogan Experience*, Huff explained why it’s not enough to respect Jesus as a great teacher:

“I have a friend, Andy Bannister. He’s out in the UK, and he says if you take Christ out of Christian, all you’re left with is Ian. And Ian’s a great guy but he’s not going to save you from your sins.”

Now, instead of just taking my word for it, you’re a witness – this guy *is* funny. Specific details like this key quote help a writer to *show, rather than tell*.

Specific details that liven up your writing could include pertinent statistics (so long as it isn’t just dry data), on-the-ground facts, setting-the-scene descriptions, and the right biblical text. The key here is specificity. The difference between an insightful blog post read by only dozens and an insightful article read by thousands can come down to whether the writer is talking in generalities, or whether he is willing to dig up specific examples and illustrations and facts and figures.

So, it’s one thing to say abortion is devastating and another thing entirely to say that it may account for 52% of all deaths worldwide. It’s one thing to say we are facing a demographic crisis, and

... we all have our God to glorify, and we all have a story to share, and pulling out your laptop and typing away might be a really good way of doing both.



another to explain, as Mark Penninga recently did, that “if we look at Italy, in just 30 years it is projected that 60 percent of Italians will have no brothers, no sisters, no cousins, no aunts, and no uncles.” It’s specific details that catch our attention and drive home the truth.

2) **M**urder your darlings

In her latest book, *Upheld*, Christine Farenhorst remembers when her husband Anco was taking classes in veterinary school, and they were thankful for folks who’d take compassion on their poor student status and invite them over. The Pots were an example, but “rather impoverished themselves.” So when Mrs. Pot offered her a pastry, Christine was grateful for the treat. But after a few bites, she was horrified to discover her pastry was full of mold. Should she say something? The elderly woman was quite delighted with her own piece: “Isn’t it

good? I’ll bet you haven’t eaten anything like this for a long time!”

“Mrs. Pot beamed at me again and a patch of sunlight caught a faded spot of the carpet. I knew she considered both Anco and myself underfed, and had taken great pains to buy something special for us.”

And so, Christine ate it all down as quickly as she could, and when asked whether she’d like another piece, she “croaked a trifle hoarsely” that no, she did not, “but it was delicious.”

“[Mrs. Pot] appeared very pleased with the comment, and I knew that my statement, strange as it sounded to my stomach, was Gospel truth to my heart.”

I love this exchange, and since reading it I’ve wanted to use it in an article about

how Christians’ love of the truth needs to be better understood. The point I want to make is that it would be no lie for a high school boys’ basketball team to identify as girls for one particular game against *that* team – the one with the “girl” with the 5 o’clock shadow who’s been dominating the women’s league. In trouncing that team, our boys would be highlighting the truth that men are not, and cannot become, women. I wanted to use Christine’s story because here too, a lie is no lie at all – the cake was both disgusting and also delicious; stomach-churning, and heart-warming all the same.

But try as I might, I can’t make Christine’s story fit smoothly. It is a *fantastic* story, but to include it and explain its relevance will only complicate things, distracting from my point, rather than illustrating it. And so, for my purposes, I need to cut it (though in Christine’s book, it is perfectly placed).

This is what G.K. Chesterton meant

when he said “Murder your darlings” (or was it Faulkner?). Every line and paragraph in your piece has to advance your plot or argument. If it doesn’t, it can’t matter how much you like that passage – how well written it is, or how funny – it needs to go. So yes, you must be able to “murder” your favorite lines, paragraphs, and examples.

3) *Evocative*

God’s Word is evocative – He calls us to not only hear, but to live out what He’s told us (Matt. 7:24-27; James 1:22-25). That’s what we want in *RP* articles too – there needs to be a call to action. The reader should not, once the conclusion is consumed, be able to simply file this away for information. We are trying to pass along wisdom, not just knowledge, so an article has to evoke a response: it needs to become wisdom *used*.

4) *Lead line*

The most important sentence in your article is the first one, with the second almost as much so – if you don’t grab readers right from the start, flipping the page is really easy to do. That’s why your lead line and lead paragraph have to start things off with a bang and it’s also why I spend the bulk of my editing time on just the first few lines of each article.

What’s the key to a good lead? A question can draw a reader in – here are examples from the last couple issues:

- How do you buy a house when you are 19?
- Want to reduce your chances of being depressed?

A pithy quote (both, again, from last issue) can also be a strong start:

- “How we see is who we be.” – a wise pirate
- “The public school has become a counter-church.” – Abraham Kuyper

And a solid standby is to begin with an anecdote – pull us in with a story.

But while there are all sorts of tricks, it’s really about effort. Flip through a few

RP issues and study how each article begins, and jot down the openers you like best. Then figure out what you liked about them. Grab a *Christian Renewal* or your local paper, pull up your news feed, and start collecting the best beginnings. Learn by just opening your eyes to the writing you are reading every day.

5) *Less is more*

Blaise Pascal quipped this apology in one of his articles: “I have made this longer than usual because I have not had time to make it shorter.” Brevity takes time, but it’s key to readability. If you could have said it in two pages but take four, you either won’t get your article accepted in the first place, or your double-stuffed piece will get half the readership it might otherwise have.

So a key to good writing is to be a good editor who can cut away all the fluff and confusion. Fortunately, if you are a reader (as every writer should be), you have all the makings for being a pretty decent editor – you can already tell when something is wordy, confusing, or repetitive. So get your first draft down, put it away for a week, and then with fresh eyes get to cutting, cutting, and more cutting.

6) *So and but, not and*

Not all your paragraphs should begin with “so” or “but” – that would get repetitive fast –but it’d be good if it was at least possible. These are transitional words that show there’s a tight linkage from one paragraph to the next.

In contrast, if you could only begin a paragraph with “and,” it would indicate that this paragraph isn’t all that connected to what came before it. You can test that out on this article, and here are some sentences that illustrate the same point:

- I ordered a chicken burger and an egg salad so I could see which came first.
- I tried to write a joke about procrastination but I never got around to it.

With “so” and “but” the second part of the sentence is responding to the first. We end up with what’s basically a very short story, and that’s great because

stories are great.

But substitute the word “and” in either case and you just have a series of unrelated events. *I ordered a chicken burger, and I ordered an egg salad, and I could see which came first.* If that’s how your article sounds, you need to work on your transitions, tightening up your story or argument so it’s clear how it flows from one paragraph to the next.

CONCLUSION

This SMELLS Test is just a half dozen tips that should be taken for the helpful suggestions they are intended to be, and not as some sort of unbreakable rules. Shucks, sometimes these tips conflict. For example, in writing up Tip #2, I wanted to use some “specific detail” to “show rather than just tell” what it would look like to have to “murder your darlings.” All that showing meant it became one of my longer tips, ignoring Tip #5, that “Less is more.” However, in this case I judged that more was more.

Some of these tips are more important than others, and #3 is a big one, so I don’t want to end without issuing my own “evocative” call to action. So, how about it? Will you seriously consider writing for *RP*? Yes, not everyone is a writer... but it sure does seem like we’re all storytellers, and that’s almost the same thing. If you’ve got a story you’ve just had to share with all your kids or grandkids, or if you’ve been sharing business tips or marriage, parenting, mentoring, and general life lessons, how about sharing them with a few thousand more? If God has gifted you a lesson, pass it on.

We’re not all writers... but that doesn’t mean we can’t be. **RP**

You can send your queries or articles to editor@ReformedPerspective.ca and I’ll get back to you within two business days. If you want to dig deeper into the topic of writing as a Christian, you can’t go wrong buying a copy of Marvin Olasky’s “Reforming Journalism,” which offers all sorts of thoughts and lessons. For more tips in a much shorter format, you can also check out ReformedPerspective.ca/write-for-RP.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

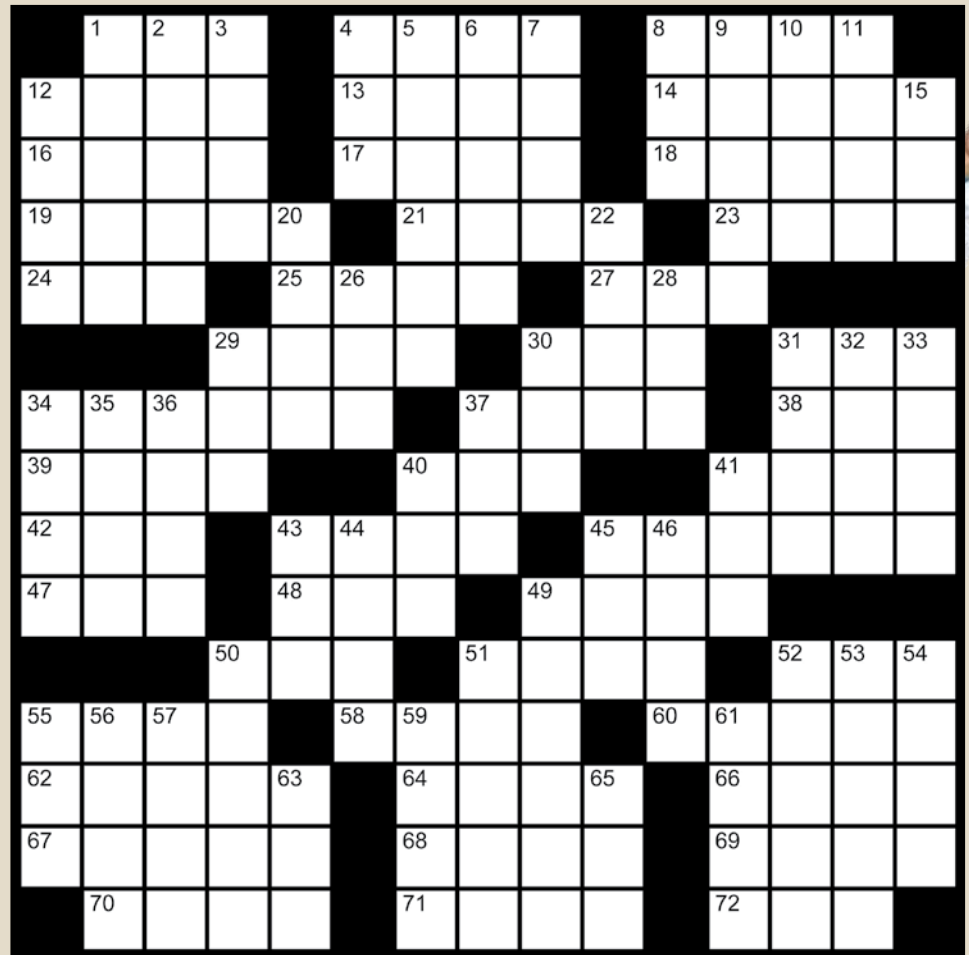
MARCH - APRIL 2025

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 72

ACROSS

1. Sis's sibling
4. King of Alaska?
8. What you need to get that big hit!
12. What the suspect did before the judge
13. Prefix before *goblin* or *philia*
14. "Whining is a _____." (Peter Hoeg)
16. Starch made of pith of a palm tree
17. It has blind eyes and deaf ears. (Ps. 115)
18. Those gathered in by Christ (Mark 13)
19. Trait that makes Aleck annoying?
21. Prison ship in *Great Expectations*
23. One way to prepare manna (Ex. 16)
24. ___ Aviv, Israel
25. Unrefined, ill-mannered person
27. International Labour Organization
29. Nickname for kid King Arthur (T. H. White)
30. Social insect
31. Vim; vigor
34. "You _____ to great things?..." (Augustine)
37. Peggy's _____, Nova Scotia
38. Summer in Trois Rivieres
39. What Pilate was afraid of (Matt. 27)
40. "there arose a ___ king..." (Ex. 1)
41. Walking stick
42. "Just the Way You ___" (title of two songs)
43. Vile, but mixed up?
45. Tribute-paying king in ancient history
47. New York opera house or museum
48. "___ no one disregard you." (Titus 2)
49. Sound system rejected by inventor of Bose
50. With *kith*, it refers to your extended family.
51. What you can do with charm
52. Special Air Service (British military)
55. Those styrofoam darts in a Nerf gun battle
58. Hue; shade (looks like the i in explosive?)
60. The Good _____ (!?) of the North in Oz
62. People in danger of having pants on fire?
64. Way to join two boards without nails
66. North Atlantic Treaty Organization
67. Commending someone to God, in French
68. Animal killed by Samson and David
69. "the rooster will not _____ till..." (John 13)
70. Prayer leader of a mosque
71. *Cogito*, _____, *sum* (I think, therefore I am)
72. NHL defenseman Bobby _____



DOWN

1. What Judah was willing to bear (Gen. 43)
2. Royal
3. It *didn't* come after four days. (John 11)
4. Twenty-second letter of Greek alphabet
5. Frank's Sauce
6. Love of Montreal?
7. Weevil's favorite food
8. St. crosser?
9. He traded riddles with Gollum.
10. Carpet layer's calculation
11. Robin Hood's favorite friar
12. Quick, quiet attention-getter
15. Roman Catholic title of Joan of Arc
20. One way to get to the top in skiing
22. Capital of Ukraine
26. "Get a lode of this!" said the miner.
28. Brand of jeans
29. "Brevity is the soul of _____." (Shakespeare)
30. Part of the ship that got stuck in Acts 27
31. Good friends are like two of these in a pod.
32. Sicilian volcano
33. The leftover when a banana is split
34. Where Jacob lived for a while (Hosea 12)
35. James W. _____ (author of worldview book)
36. "I'm a _____, and I didn't even know it!"
37. Short for celluloid; used in 2D animation
40. Something picked by a critical person
41. Crime Scene Investigation
43. Hawaiian garland
44. How spies get into or out of a locked room
45. Namely; in other words; specifically
46. _____ *Good Men* (military legal drama)
49. Cheap meal, with a soft drink, at Costco
50. Peninsula with a Demilitarized Zone
51. Where you're walking when in love
52. Beatles drummer Ringo _____
53. Television performer
54. "_____ perfect courtesy" (Titus 3)
55. Pie ___ mode (with ice cream!)
56. Skirt length (at noon in Quebec?)
57. Cause permanent injury
59. No-_____ zone (clean air bylaw)
61. Canadian mining company founded in 1902
63. *Cogito, ergo* _____ (I think, therefore I am)
65. Yoko _____ (widow of bandmate of 52 Down)

BOOKS

FICTION FOR TWEEN AND TEEN BOYS

ReformedPerspective.ca/books

THE GREAT BRAIN

BY JOHN D. FITZGERALD
1972 / 175 PAGES



The Great Brain tells the story of Tom Fitzgerald, a ten-year-old boy living in frontier Utah in a time so long ago that indoor toilets were considered a novelty. His hometown of Adenville is, like most Utah towns, populated mainly by Mormons who live beside a handful of Catholics and Protestants. For Tom that doesn't matter since he can out-think them all.

The all-consuming love of Tom's life is money. If there's a way to get it, Tom puts his great brain to work so that the money can be his. The "Great Brain" dreams up schemes that are often hilarious and crazy and almost always successful.

The whole tale is told by Tom's younger brother, John. Part of John knows, however silky the Great Brain's explanations might be, that his brother's schemes still aren't quite right. Tom also has great parents who catch onto his antics.

This is good for anyone 9 and over – I absolutely loved it when I first read it as a kid. While it tells the story of a sometimes shady child, it doesn't glorify his antics. Tom's activities are clever, entertaining, confounding and successful, but you still are left with a clear sense that they're wrong. It's a fascinating tale with an "old fashioned" sense of morality; good must ultimately win out.

Best part? There are sequels!

– JAMES DYKSTRA

HOSTAGE LANDS

BY DOUGLAS BOND
2006 / 235 PAGES



On his way home from school British lad Neil Perkins takes a nasty spill off of his ATV, creating a small crater where the machine lands. In this crater he discovers tablets covered in Latin. So Neil, with the help of his previously underappreciated Latin teacher, starts translating them. He finds out they comprise a story told by a Roman centurion who lived two thousand years ago!

This is really two stories in one, the first a short one about a boy named Neil who doesn't like his Latin class and doesn't talk much with his dad. This accounts for 6 of the book's 37 chapters, serving mostly as an introduction and conclusion to the larger story about Roman centurion Marcus Aurelius Rusticus. The Centurion's story starts with his account of what he suspects will be a suicide mission into the lands north of Hadrian's Wall, the territory of the savage Celts. Rusticus only manages to escape death with the help of a friendly Celt, Calum, who he soon discovers is a very different sort of man, for Calum is a Christian.

Bond's book is a great read, and also has a strong message, contrasting Christianity with worldviews that elevate power, the State, and honor as supreme. This is a boy's book, for the ten to early teens range, but adults could enjoy it too, especially reading it aloud to their kids.

– JON DYKSTRA

THE SECRET CODE

BY COEN HARTMAN
1980 / 195 PAGES



Hank and Dick are two average teenagers who dive into the deep end of espionage. The boys' adventure begins when they agree to help a grocer hold down his shop while he picks up some forgotten asparagus from his warehouse. While they're managing the shop, a customer gives the boys an envelope for the grocer when he returns. Due to the boys' forgetfulness and curiosity, the envelope is not delivered until after they have copied the message it contained. Much to their delight, it's a secret code! After some attempted decoding the boys are well on their way to one of the most thrilling and dangerous times of their young lives.

I had a great time reading this novel and would recommend it to any reader twelve and up. The pacing and suspense of the story made it very difficult for me to put down. I appreciated that this book is clearly written by a Christian author. Both boys recognize sin and grapple with their own guilt. Another very unique aspect of this novel is that the secret code is actually a numerical code that the reader can attempt to crack on their own before it is solved.

One caution: do not read the back-cover blurb! It does a great job summarizing the plot but gives away about half of the story. Find it at ReformedChristianBooks.com.

– AARON BOSSCHER

TEAM BURGER SHED

BY TAVIN DILLARD
2024 / 188 PAGES



"Author" Tavin Dillard is of an indeterminate age and lives in a small, indeterminate town, probably in Arkansas. What we do know for sure is that he likes softball. When his buddy Myron Curtis invites him onto a team, Tavin is quick to say "yup" and hand over his twenty bucks for a team shirt. But then Myron gets himself all distracted after asking out Mary Beth, and never gets around to ordering the uniforms. That means that for their first two games, everyone has to play "skins."

And that brings us to a colorful caution. When Tavin tries to steal a base, he slides in "chest naked." I don't have a problem with it, but that's a bit of descriptive folksy terminology that I could imagine some younger boys in the target audience taking to every time their shirt is off. Hmmm... But I read it to my girls, so that was not a situation here.

Each chapter centers around softball-related developments, including how the team gets a sponsor (the Burger Shed), and how the softball field concession stand burns down when Mary Beth gets the idea to try selling s'mores. One whole chapter is about Tavin eating a "black nanner" (a blacker than black banana) because it would have been rude to decline. This is folksy, ridiculous, and charming – it's what you'd expect if you turned the Duck Dynasty TV show into a book about a rec league softball team.

– JON DYKSTRA

MOOSES WITH BAZOOKAS

BY S.D. SMITH
2023 / 160 PAGES

Like C.S. Lewis before him, S.D. Smith is a popular Christian author who had some curious correspondence land in his lap. And how Smith got his hands on these letters is every bit as mysterious. Eleven "jug notes" from one Wally Warmbottom – author, expert, and solitary shipwrecked resident of the deserted island of Peachpitistan – somehow floated across the ocean to Smith, who lives in the land-locked state of Virginia. Smith doesn't understand it, but he collected and has now published the notes.

As Wally Warmbottom recounts it, his small island is full of peach pits and beach pits, both of which are tripping hazards. It also has a "story cave" with tales preserved there in jugs, written by, well, who knows? The stories didn't interest Wally, but he thought Smith could take a look, so the book includes, in addition to 11 letters from Wally, four of these short stories. What Wally missed, you will most certainly enjoy, as "Binsley Bustbucket burns the buns" and "Rocket and Elsie and Rocket" are a hoot!

This is wonderfully stupid throughout, but I think I might have most enjoyed one running gag that pops up in a couple of Wally's letters, and also in the title story. Barry the Moose has been having quite the day: Fort Moosefort has been overrun by flamethrower-wielding bears, Barry's lucky stick has been burnt to ash, and a bear bullet broke off a favorite bit of his antler. So now he's on the run, and who can this silliest of all creatures turn to when he's in desperate need? Well, Science of course. But when Barry invokes this modern-day god it's always to no effect:

- "The bears started firing rocket launchers at the cabin. 'Trust in Science!' I screamed..."
- "I swiveled and saw a pack of wolves rushing at us with fully loaded shotguns. Were they locked as well? I couldn't tell. I didn't know if you could lock one or if you would even want to in a fight, because if it's locked, can you still shoot it? ...'Help me, Science!' I cried as I dove behind a skinny tree."
- "The wolves had abandoned the chase – or at least the chase of me. Maybe that was bad news for J. J. whathisname or whathisinitials, but for me, no loaded or locked gun would be fired or shot at me for a while. *May Science guide you*, I thought towards J.D., finally remembering his initials..."

It's a joke that will breeze right over the kiddos' heads, but is there for mom and dad to appreciate. So, a silly goofy story, with some political subtext – what more could you want? I'll rate this as a great one for everyone eight to eighty-eight, so long as they can appreciate Dad-joke humor. And you may be interested to know that this same S.D. Smith has also written the less silly but more adventurous *Green Ember* series about "rabbits with swords."

– JON DYKSTRA





Like as the armèd knight
Appointed to the field
With Thy Word will I fight
And faith shall be my shield.

- *Anne Askew (1521-1546)*

CHANG SHEN: GRACE TO PERSEVERE

by Christine Farenhorst

The *Christian Daily International* reported, at the end of December 2024, that two pastors had been murdered in Colombia. Both were shot by criminals who hated the preaching of God's Word. The *Morning Star News* reported that same December, that authorities in Sudan barred Christians who'd been internally displaced by war, from conducting Christmas services. This news agency also shared that, in that same month, Hindu extremists in eastern India stripped and beat a Christian woman. Tying her to a tree, they tortured her till she lost consciousness. And the Emergency Committee to Save the Persecuted and Enslaved documented that 14 Christians were killed following a 2024 Christmas carol service in Nigeria.

AS IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN

Is there something new here? Not really! The history of Christians being persecuted for their faith, is an age-old history. Beginning with Abel, and traversing towards the ancient Roman Empire, it is a fact that martyrdom has always been present. Although more common under certain rulers than others, it has never really been absent.

During the Middle Ages, for example, and with the rise of Islam, many Christian communities were subject to discrimination, violence and death. The Catholic Church's Inquisition took many lives and this persecution swept through the Reformation era. Putting names and faces on these remarkable saints who withstood lies about the Bible, and who testified until their last breath, is helpful and a reminder that the Church is a flesh and blood body of believers – real people who form the essence of Hebrews 11. Anne Askew, a faith-filled woman whose

poem is quoted at the top of this article, was one such martyr during the Reformation.

The number of saints we will see the other side of this life, is large. As a matter of fact, we cannot even count them. John, in Rev. 7:9-10, proclaims:

“...I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

THE BOXER REBELLION

A little closer to our time period are the Chinese Christian martyrs of the early twentieth century. Specifically, the time period of November 1899 through to September of 1901, were days in which many Christians were killed. This short time span was the time of the Boxer Rebellion. Chinese nationalists, known as the Boxers, fanatically rose up during this almost two-year time period, to protest western influence in China.

At this time, many countries had spheres of influence in China, including Russia, Japan, the US, France, Britain and Germany. There were conflicts: the First Opium War, the Second Opium War, and the First Sino-Japanese War. Each war caused western powers to have more control over trade.

In China, a feeling of resentment grew against the West, and against the western missionaries. The term “boxer” was actually first used by missionaries to refer to young Chinese men who were skilled

in the martial art of boxing. These young men called themselves “The Righteous and Harmonious Fists” and they were especially hostile to Christian and western influences. As a matter of fact, they dubbed Christianity *the religion of the foreign devils*. Wanting to preserve their own pagan religion, a black magic ritual was performed on these young men which left them foaming at the mouth and which sometimes included human sacrifice. A potion smeared on them by “priests,” was supposed to render them bulletproof.

The country's dowager empress was persuaded to issue an imperial decree waging war on the foreign powers, which also emboldened violence against all foreigners.

In the long run, an Eight Nation Alliance – consisting of Germany, Japan, Russia, Britain, France, the United States, Italy and Austria-Hungary – fought against and defeated the Chinese Imperial Army. It has been estimated that 136 missionaries were killed during this two-year time period and that 33,000 Christians were murdered.

One of these Christians was a man by the name of Chang Shen.

A BLIND HEART SEES

Chang Shen was a man who lived in Manchuria, in north-east China during the mid to late 1800s. Although married, he treated his wife brutally, was unfaithful, and eventually drove his wife and his daughter from their home. He also gambled, and stole whenever he could, and was not liked by many in his neighborhood. When he was stricken blind in his mid-forties, his fellow villagers told him it was a judgment of the gods, because he obviously deserved to be blind.

Despite being sightless, the reborn man traveled from village to village...

Miserable and dissatisfied, Chang traveled hundreds of miles to a missionary hospital, because he had heard that people who went there had received their sight back. When he arrived at the entrance to the hospital, however, he was told that every bed was occupied. In God's mercy, the hospital evangelist took him in and gave him his own bed. Chang's eyesight was, in God's providence, partially restored. When he heard the Gospel story for the first time in his life, the eyes of Chang's heart were also opened and he received Christ with joy.

"May I be baptized?" he pleaded.

"Go home, and tell your neighbors the Good News of Christ," the missionary replied, "and tell them that you have changed because of Him. I will come and visit you where you live, and if you are still following Jesus, I will baptize you then."

When the evangelist arrived at Chang's home about five months later, he found that there were hundreds of people who wanted to hear the Gospel. Consequently, he baptized Chang with great joy.

When Chang went to see a local native doctor to continue care for his eyes, that doctor, not being skilled, undid what the missionary hospital had been able to partially remedy. Chang became blind – and this time permanently.

Despite being sightless, the reborn man traveled from village to village, and God granted that his words did not fall upon the ground empty. Hundreds of hearts were won for the Lord. Chang praised God even when dogs were set upon him and when hateful mouths spit on him. He learned much of the New Testament by heart, and was able to cite many chapters from the Old Testament as well, and other missionaries following in his tracks were able to establish many churches.



WILLING TO DIE

When the infamous Boxer Rebellion began, Chang was spreading God's Word in Taipinggou, Manchuria. Because local Christians were worried that Chang would be one of the first to be targeted by the Boxers, they hid him in a mountain cave. As they were doing this, a city close to Taipinggou was overrun by the militant Boxers who immediately rounded up fifty Christians.

"You are simpleminded to kill these fifty men," a resident of the city told them, "because for every one you kill, fifty more will rise up as long as Blind Chang is alive. But if you kill him, then you will truly kill Christianity."

"All right," the Boxer leader replied, "take me to this Blind Chang and we will spare the fifty men here."

There was a long silence. No one wanted to be the Judas to betray Chang. Finally, when it appeared that the Boxers would kill the fifty Christians, one man slipped away and went to see Chang in the cave where he was hidden.

Hearing the man out, Chang responded: "I'll gladly die for these men. Please take me to the Boxers."

When Chang arrived in the village, the Boxers had left for another village but had vowed they would return. Chang was bound by the village leaders and was taken to the temple of the god of war. Then he was commanded to worship this pagan god.

"I can only worship the One living true God," he testified.

"Then believe in Buddha," they insisted.

"I already believe in the one true Buddha, even Jesus Christ."

"Then at least bow to the other gods."

"No, I cannot do that. Turn my face toward the sun."

Blind Chang said this because he knew that at this time of the day the sun was shining toward the temple and his back

would be to the idols. Obliging, the village leaders did turn him around, and he knelt down and worshiped God.

When the Boxers came back three days later, Blind Chang was put in an open cart and driven to the cemetery outside the city wall. As he passed through the crowds of people who lined the road, he sang.

*Jesus loves me, He Who died
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let His little child come in.*

*Jesus loves me, He will stay,
Close beside me all the way;
If I love Him when I die,
He will take me home on high.*


The blind man's voice rose and reached not only the hearts of the people he passed, but also the throne of God's grace.

At the cemetery, he was led to a place where he had to kneel. Three times Blind Chang cried out before he was decapitated: "Heavenly Father, receive my spirit."

Refusing to let the Christians bury his body, the Boxers forced them to pour oil on his remains and burn them. Fearful that the blind man would rise from the dead, they were certain that he would take revenge on them. Afraid, they fled the scene of their horrific crime and left that village. In this way, the Christians in that place were spared further persecution.

CONCLUSION

Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is bound to face some sort of harassment or trouble in his life. 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Charles Spurgeon said, "Christians are not so much in danger when they are persecuted as when they are admired." A good point to ponder. Whereas admiration and prosperity cause us to forget that all we have comes from the hand of God, distress truly causes us to rely wholly on God, to grab hold of the corner of His garment, and to hide in His Word. 

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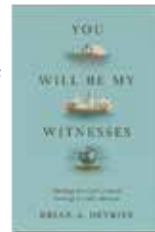
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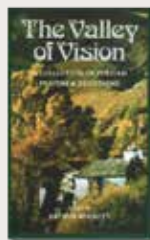
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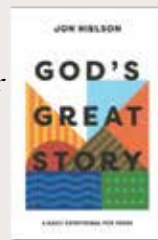
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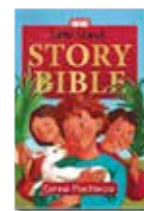
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- Intermediate Level (FT)

Secondary Teachers:

- FT or PT Teacher (all areas with Humanities, Science and French beneficial)
- High School Vice Principal

Educational Assistant

- Five days a week

Special Education Resource Teacher



"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord...that they may set their HOPE in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."
Ps 78: 4, 7



Dufferin Christian School invites applications for full-time openings at the **ELEMENTARY & HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL** for the 2025-2026 school year.

Both B. Ed and CCRTC graduates are encouraged to apply.

DCS is a K-12 Reformed school with over 285 students in the beautiful prairie town of Carman MB, a short 45-minute drive SW of Winnipeg. It offers a highly supportive community, attractive facilities, competitive wages and a friendly atmosphere. DCS serves three local congregations in the communities of Carman and Elm Creek with their combined 1000 members.

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Applications should be sent to Dufferin Christian School
boardsecretary@dufferinchristian.ca

For more information, please contact:
Principal: Dr. Chris deBoer at 204-745-2278 principal@dufferinchristian.ca
Chairman: Mr. Jon Dewit chairman@dufferinchristian.ca

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Colossians 3:17

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IN A NUTSHELL

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY JON DYKSTRA

CHRIST OR CHAOS

Whether it's folks on the cusp of becoming Christian, like Jordan Peterson seems to be, or outright atheists, like Richard Dawkins, there are a lot of people who like the notion of being "culturally Christian." That's the trappings of Christianity – the order, work ethic, inherent human worth, equality of the sexes, do-unto-others-as-you'd-like-done-to-you morality, and more that are the fruits of Christianity – but without having to actually bow at the feet of Jesus as Lord and King. Canadian apologist Wesley Huff took on this notion in a recent appearance on *The Joe Rogan Experience*.

"I have a friend, Andy Bannister. He's out in the UK, and he says if you take Christ out of Christian, all you're left with is Ian. And Ian's a great guy but he's not going to save you from your sins."

AGAIN! AGAIN! AGAIN!

A child never tires of being thrown in the air. In *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton wondered if, in this endless sense of wonder, they were more God-like than somber adults.

"It might be true that the sun rises regularly because he never gets tired of rising. His routine might be due, not to a lifelessness, but to a rush of life. ... It is possible that God says every morning, 'Do it again' to the sun; and every evening, 'Do it again' to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we. The repetition in Nature may not be a mere recurrence; it may be a theatrical *encore*."

THERE ARE NO ATHEISTS

In his book *Choosing My Religion* R.C. Sproul argues that

"...I don't think too many people who have a firm hold on reality can technically be called atheists. Recently a man came to believe in God at a meeting of atheists. The speaker declared that he was going to give God three minutes to prove Himself by striking him dead. The man stopped speaking and stared at the clock on the wall. In perfect silence one minute passed, then two and at least three. As the deadline passed there was an audible exhalation of air throughout the room. People had been holding their breath. 'I knew in that moment that we were a bunch of hypocrites. There wasn't a real atheist in the place,' the man said."

ARE THERE LITTLE GREEN MEN?

While there seems no biblical reason to preclude finding simpler life on other planets – plants and even animals – Christians have good reason to doubt we'd ever find intelligent life. It'd be hard to fathom how they would have fallen in Adam's fall, and how they could be saved in Jesus' crucifixion, if they don't share the same human nature both shared.

So, then, what are we to make of the many claims of alien encounters? In his book *Alien Intrusion*, creationist Gary Bates makes the case that some of these were probably demonic encounters instead, with the fallen angels masquerading as aliens. Bates makes a good case, noting how many of the "abductees" were heavily into the occult at the time, which may have opened them to demonic possession.

In a recent article, a secular writer, Ron Unz makes a very different case, also compelling, that it is all, or at least largely, pure bunk. He writes:

"Sightings of UFOs and aliens have been reported for decades, but the only solid evidence provided usually consisted of a few blurry photos, unable to convince anyone except true believers and sometimes even plausibly accused of being faked.

"However, that situation would have completely changed in 2009 with the release of the Apple iPhone 3GS, which introduced the feature of video recording. So for the last fifteen years, the vast majority of Americans have always been carrying those sorts of smartphones, which double both as still cameras and easy video recording devices. If a noteworthy UFO or some strange alien creature suddenly appeared, within seconds a powerful photographic or video record could be produced, documenting that reality in extremely convincing fashion.

"Consider, for example, that immense UFO – larger than three football fields – that allegedly hovered over the heads of those five solid Maryland citizens at their dinner-party. If smartphones had existed in 1976, three or four of those individuals would surely have produced a convincing video record of that remarkable encounter, and with exactly the same scene captured from several different angles by such camera footage, a fabrication would have been impossible. Those Maryland eyewitnesses could have sold their collection of videos to our television stations for tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the reality of UFOs would have immediately become accepted worldwide. Yet although [Richard] Dolan claims that America alone has 'something like 10,000 genuine UFO sightings each year,' absolutely nothing like this has ever happened."

His take? "I personally regard this argument from silence as absolutely conclusive evidence against the reality of such UFOs."

THERE ARE NO ATHEISTS II

Romans 1:18-20 says that there are no true atheists; everyone, at some level, knows there is a God. As Paul puts it,

"since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen... so that people are without excuse."

Sye Ten Bruggencate gave an illustrative example of this deep-down knowledge by sharing a conversation he had while doing street evangelism.

"This fellow, in his fifties, he comes up on his bicycle. And he tells me that two of his brothers committed suicide. He said that after his brothers committed suicide, he swore at God. He was angry with God.

"He happened to have a book on Hinduism on his bicycle that he had picked up at the dollar store just a day or two before. And you could tell that he'd read through it, because he wanted answers, or so he said. He said, 'You know this Brahman, this oneness of being, I can get into that. I like it. This makes a lot of sense to me; I could get into Hinduism.'

"So I said to him, 'Tell me, is *that* the God you were angry at when your brothers committed suicide?'

"He started crying.

"People know... they know God exists."

CHOOSING TO BE BLIND

A question every creationist has to confront at some point is, "How can so many very smart people be wrong about evolution?" One answer is provided in Ezekiel 12:2 where God describes Israel as a rebellious people that "have eyes to see but do not see, and ears to hear but do not hear." We've all been this willfully blind and deliberately blind sort at some time, and if you don't recall it in yourself, you've surely seen it in kids – your son, standing there with a cookie in his hand, *insisting* that he doesn't, in fact, have a cookie in his hand.

Richard Lewontin once explained how this choice to be blind has also been made by secular scientists when it comes to evolution. To be clear, this is no creationist talking here:

"We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment

to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door."

LIMITED RAM

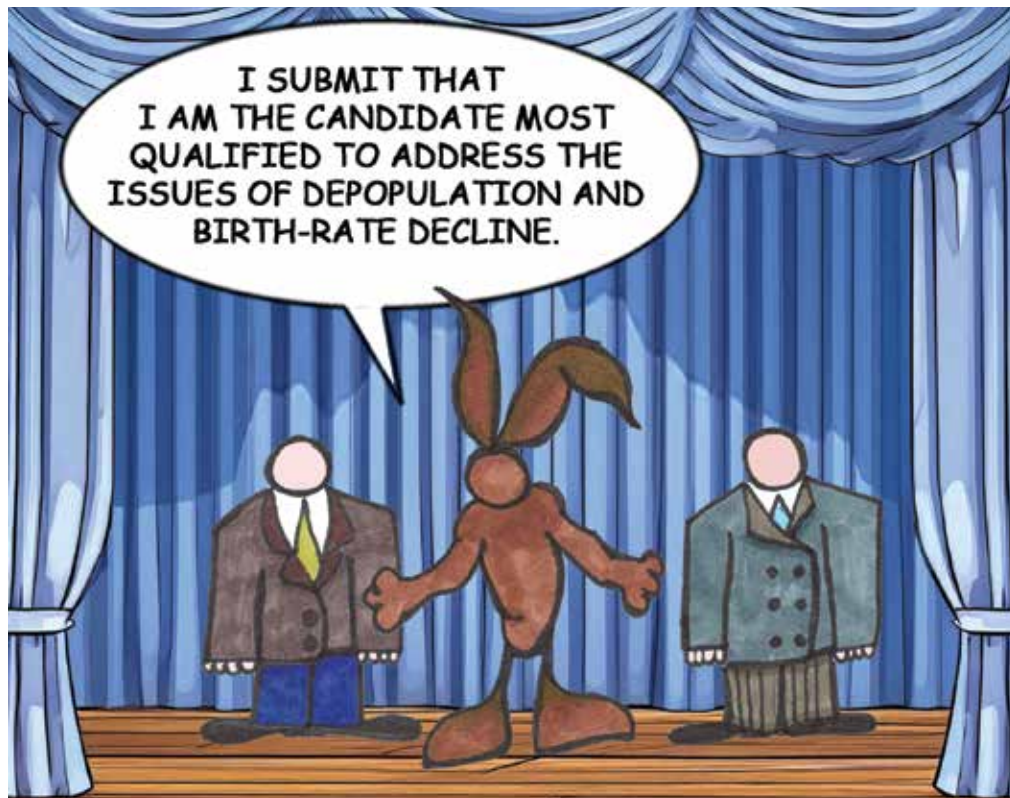
I was recently talking to someone who explained that they knew quite a bit about the Middle East, though "I can't recall most of it right now." I loved the way he put that. It's one thing to have just the right response stored away somewhere in our brain, and quite another thing to be able to pull it up at just the moment we need it. I think many of us have this same problem – we might have an adequately-sized "mental hard drive" but it seems most of us have limited RAM storage.

"BANNED" BOOKS

Cartoonist Eddie Eddings made this provocative suggestion on his blog:

"When you see a display of 'Most Banned Books' at a bookstore or online – ask them why they didn't include the Holy Bible. It is not only the best selling book of all time – it is also the most banned."

SOURCE: <http://calvinisticcartoons.blogspot.com>





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Come + explore

GOD'S MAJESTIC MICROVERSE



The saying goes "stop and smell the roses" and it's usually used when going for a walk. Often we want to get to the destination and see vast scenery, and we forget to stop and appreciate the beauty of God's microverse along the way.

But what about when we're not going on a walk or a hike? What if we're just at home? Well - then we should say "make time to stop and marvel at God's majestic microverse!" There are SO many beautiful, intricate designs and things to see in God's creation even in and around our own home! In the busy schedules that our lives often hold, how often do we take time to just marvel at God's beautiful creation?

Slow down for a few minutes and come and marvel with me!



All the microscopic images on these pages were taken with this handheld "pocket microscope" at 1000x magnification!

In the beginning,
God created the
heavens and the earth

Genesis 1:1

'AH, LORD GOD! IT IS YOU
WHO HAVE MADE THE
HEAVENS AND THE EARTH
BY YOUR GREAT POWER
AND BY YOUR
OUTSTRETCHED ARM!
NOTHING IS TOO HARD
FOR YOU.'
JEREMIAH 32:17

For his invisible attributes,
namely, his eternal power
and divine nature, have been
clearly perceived, ever since
the creation of the world, in
the things that have been
made.

Romans 1:20

NO TWO
SNOWFLAKES
ARE ALIKE!

Ever looked closely at a seed from a
POMEGRANATE? This fruit is readily available
at the supermarket and is a real example of
God's creative design! It's kind of weird.
But they sure do taste good!

It's bumpy!

MARVEL MOMENT

Take your index finger. Lift it up in front of your face and examine the unique fingerprint God gave you. Look closely at its swirls and curls. Just like a snowflake, no two people have the same fingerprint! Just like the DNA that runs through your body, every inch of you was created unique according to God's design that would make you, YOU! Increase the fun by using a stamp pad to make prints of your fingerprint!



LOOP WHORL ARCH

What kind did God give you?

"all things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful:
The Lord God made them all.
Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
And made their glowing colors,
And made their tiny wings ..."



"ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL"
TPM # 252



Hello Reader!

Do you like **BOOKS**? Do you **REALLY** like books? Do you also like **HIDE and SEEK**? Well, I'm going to hide somewhere in this magazine and your job is to find me! When you do, use this QR code to let me know **ALL** the places I'm hiding. You will be entered to **WIN** these great books!



ENTRY DEADLINE:
MAY 15, 2025

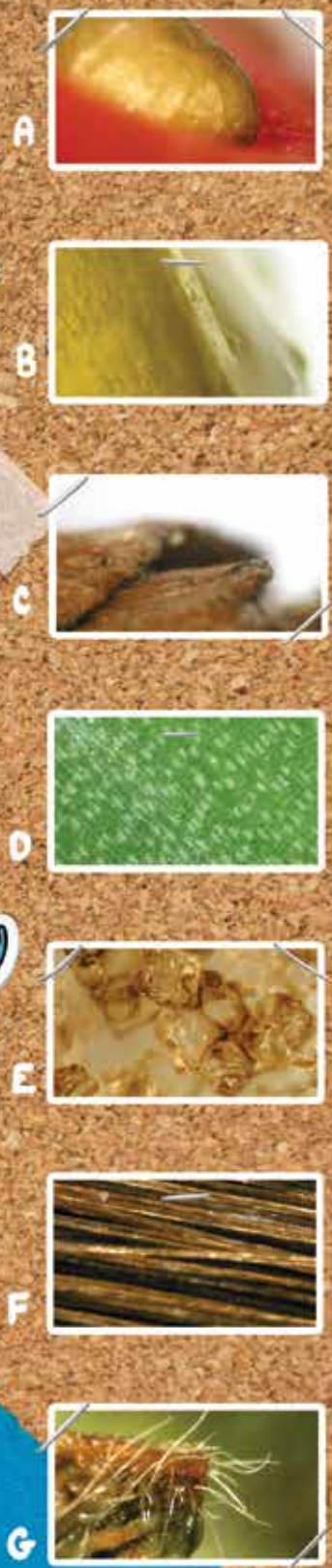


Come and Explore is created by Stephanie Vanderpol (and in this case, with her son!). She lives in Smithers, BC, Canada with her 4 children and husband. Her favourite Bible verses related to God's amazing, unique, creative work are Job 39:13-18.



WHAT'S THIS?!

can you match the microscopic images to their proper description?

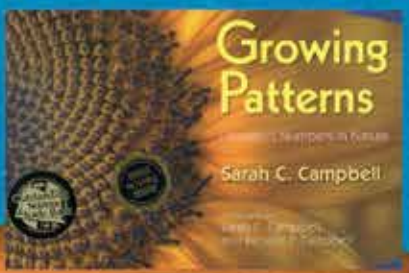
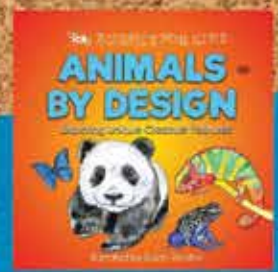


- ★ skin of a pickle
- ★ human hair
- ★ tip of a pinecone seed
- ★ veins of a leaf
- ★ brown sugar crystals
- ★ strawberry seed
- ★ tip of a strawberry leaf



Put "pocket microscope" on your birthday list!

FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF





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Would you consider supporting the Lord's work in this region? Our building project has been paused due to a need for more funds. Please pray for us and consider if you can help with a donation!

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Hope Reformed Church is a Free Reformed congregation (FRCNA) worshipping in the Powassan area since 2009.



Updates & Info: hopereformed.ca/building

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invites applications for the following positions for the 2025-2026 school year:

- FULL OR PART TIME JUNIOR TEACHERS**
- FULL OR PART TIME PRIMARY TEACHERS**
- FULL OR PART TIME EDUCATIONAL OR TEACHERS ASSISTANT**

ACRES is on a 100-acre property in a beautiful rural area in Niagara/Haldimand.

We serve several Reformed churches in the area, and are blessed with a close-knit staff, a supportive community and a student population of over 200.

Please send all applications, questions, or comments to the principal, Mr. Clarence Blokhuis, principal@acreschool.ca
 Applicants should be members of the Canadian Reformed Churches or of a sister church.

- Applications for teachers should include a resume, statement of faith, philosophy of education and two letters of reference.
- Applicants for Educational Assistants should include a resume, statement of faith, and two letters of reference.

Grief Support Group:

Grieving with Hope:

A grief support group is a facilitated group of people who are experiencing grief. Our grief support group offers a safe, compassionate and faith-centered space for those who have experienced loss. Over the course of eight weeks, we will come together to share feelings, experiences and explore coping strategies.

This group will be led by 2 of our Registered Psychotherapists (Qualifying). Ana has training in Thanatology including Bereavement, Grief supports, and Gioconda has been involved in leading many different groups including: Anxiety, Healthy relationships and Dealing with loss.

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- Mr. Rob Lanting
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Board Chair
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MORE More Than the Magazine

If you're only reading our print issue, you're missing out on what else we have online.
Scan the QR codes to take you right to the best of the rest!

Best of *Saturday Selections*

Each Saturday we link to a half dozen great pieces from other publications. If they're secular articles, editor Jon Dykstra will insert a dose of Reformed perspective by way of short introduction. You can get these Saturday Selections delivered each week to your email inbox by signing up for our email newsletter at 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.



Who will you believe about spanking?

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



Why true charity can only blossom under capitalism

This article starts with some \$10 words, but makes the point that:

"If a pickpocket robs Peter to pay Paul, the pickpocket is not being charitable. And neither is Peter, because he had *no choice* in the matter."



It is not care if the government does it – it is compulsion. And if the government has to do it because no one else will, that only shows the extent of that uncar-ingness.

As a single man, I felt little pressure to get married. I wish I had.

Not all are called to marriage. But in a culture that hates marriage, marriage needs its defenders... and nudgers.

Also important here is the idea that Christians can defend one thing without then becoming guilty of denigrating the other – ie. that marriage is being defended does not mean that those who are single are being attacked or shamed. Some singles are being called out, but only those who are being passive about it. Life passes us by – we bury our talents (Matt. 25:14-30) – when we don't make choices.



Your cells are constantly being repaired...even as they keep running

Every day your DNA experiences 10,000 lost letters of code in every single cell of your body. Your body is like a library of information... that's constantly on fire. As fast as the environment burns down your DNA, a host of DNA "librarians" in your cells build back what was being burnt down. That means, right from the begin-ning, our DNA needed these repair mechanisms. But these mechanisms need all sorts of DNA for them to be crafted in the first place – it's a chicken and egg dilemma. So which came first? Both need to have been in place from the beginning, and couldn't have evolved one at a time. This is a fascinating 12-minute video, done in a cartoon style you could watch and discuss with your teens.

– JON DYKSTRA

Best of *Real Talk*

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



#116 – You're Fired: The AI Takeover

Is AI all bad? Is it actually taking over? How should we engage with it? Join Lucas and Tyler as they chat with the good guys at Faith to Film all about AI. They cover what AI is, the ethical dilemmas it presents and what this ever-changing technology means for the Church.



#112 – Books to bring revival: Reformed Book Services

Books and pamphlets fueled the Reformation, and in this episode Reformed Book Services' (ReformedBookServices.com) Jennifer deBlieck and Jed & Trudy Schuit talk with Lucas about their store's history, and the hunger for solid Christian books across Canada.



#114 – Is university worth the time and money?

Building off the Nov./Dec. issue of *Reformed Perspective*, Lucas is joined by Mark Penninga and Jon Dykstra to discuss and debate post-secondary options. Is formal education still worth it? Is the work force better? What are some key questions you should ask of any Christian colleges you are investigating?



Daily Devotionals

If the Real Talk episode on devotionals has you inspired, you might want to check out RP's two daily devotionals.

Manna is audio, 7-15 minutes each, and the fruit of a Christian radio program called "Voice of the Church" that ran for four decades up until 2022. Now old episodes have been transformed into this daily podcast available at MannaPodcast.ca.

Nearer to God is text, with a different Reformed pastor providing a month of devotionals built on a Bible book, or topic, like the Holy Spirit.

Access both on the front page of ReformedPerspective.ca or through the RP App, downloadable at ReformedPerspective.ca/App.



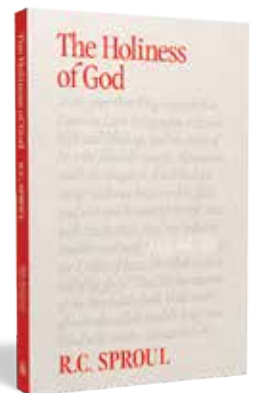


Encounter the God Who Is *Holy, Holy, Holy*

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HONORING OUR PRINTER (AND FOUNDER)

by Mark Penninga

Companies are proud to state that their products are made in Canada or the USA. The magazine you are holding isn't just printed in Canada. It is also printed by siblings in Christ. And very special ones at that.

Premier Printing, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, has printed every issue of this magazine, going back 44 years. Their value and service have always been outstanding. But their contribution to *Reformed Perspective* and the Christian community runs far deeper than a good business relationship.

Premier Printing was founded by Gerry Kuik. As a teenager, Kuik was trained as a printer and typesetter in the Netherlands. In his off-hours, he used his printing skills to print material for the Dutch Resistance. In August of 1944, Gerry and two of his brothers were arrested by the secret police. Gerry survived the war, but his older brother died in a concentration camp.

In the 1950's, Gerry and his family moved to Canada, where he worked hard in the fields before working again in the print trade at the *Carman Dufferin Leader*. After moving to Winnipeg in 1962, he started Premier Printing. The company flourished, and was later passed on to his son-in-law Bill Gortemaker. And today it is run by three of his grandchildren: Dave, Ted, and Will Gortemaker.

Not only did he use his entrepreneurial talents to grow a for-profit company, Mr. Kuik was also one of the founders, and the first Executive Director of *Reformed Perspective*. Last summer, I was entrusted with the hand-written minutes of the *RP* board, going back to the very first meetings in 1980, when Mr. Kuik and a small team laid the groundwork for this magazine. The minutes testified to his vision for a magazine that would bless Christians of many denominations throughout North America. Mr. Kuik wasn't one to sit still either – he traveled throughout Canada and the USA to promote *Reformed Perspective*.

Premier Printing went on to bless RP year after year.


Premier Printing went on to bless *RP* year after year. *RP*'s first editor John deVos' office was in Premier Printing's building. And, unfortunately, there were many years where *RP* was literally indebted to Premier because the magazine struggled financially and couldn't pay its printing bills. It even got to the point where Premier offered to let volunteers come in the evening to



print the magazine to keep the costs as low as possible.

Thankfully, *RP* is in a very different place today and is able to pay our printing bills. But we remain no less indebted to the company that has faithfully stood by our side all these years.

I first got to know Mr. Kuik in 2008 when, at the age of 84, he rolled up my driveway and offered to volunteer for ARPA Canada. He had time, still enjoyed driving, and wanted to bless this new organization. He proceeded to drive across Canada multiple times, putting on over 20,000 kms, introducing ARPA to pastors and prospective donors. Elsewhere in this issue we make the case that God created us to work through our entire lives. Few people have demonstrated this to me like Mr. Kuik, who lived such a full and faithful life, passing away just a few years ago at the age of 96.

As an entrepreneur at heart, it fills me with gratitude to witness Christian business leaders whose lives testify to their conviction that “kingdom work” isn't just done by churches and non-profits. It is done just as much by companies like Premier Printing, who steward their work for God's glory. 

RP's 2025 "Double the fun; two challenges in one" Summer Photo Contest

This summer we're doubling up on our photo contest with one challenge for the adults and a completely different one for the under-18 set.

ADULTS: God's people might object to the term "human exceptionalism" because it sounds a little braggy. But when you remember that we are the pinnacle of creation not because of anything we've done but because of what God has done, creating us in His own Image, then this exceptionalism is clearly worth celebrating. Abortion, euthanasia, racism, sexism – they are all denigrations on what God has raised up. We are fallen, but that *Imago Dei* exists still (Genesis 9:6) and we want you to capture striking images of it.

UNDER 18: What's your favorite icy dessert, body-warming soup, camping spot, indoor sport, pair of shoes, furry stuffie, furless pet, library book, sandy playground, forest hike, or ocean view? What do you *absolutely love*? Ice cream? Small puppies? Large bugs? Monster trucks? God has given us so very much to appreciate and enjoy, we want you to capture one of your favorites on film, so you can share it with the world. And be sure to include a line or two explaining what about your favorite makes it so special.

As always, this theme is meant as a springboard for your creativity and not any sort of limitation on it. Just try things, have fun, and share what you capture with all of us! Get out there and start clicking!

CATEGORIES:

- Children and youth (under 18)
- Adults (18+)

RULES:

- Maximum 2 entries per person
- Must be an original photo, taken in the last 12 months
- Include a line to explain how the photo relates to the theme (max. 100 words)
- Provide permission to RP to publish your photo online and/or in print if selected
- Include the name of the photographer and photo title, and for the under 18 entries, the photographer's age

PRIZES:

- Winner and runner-up, and a selection of other entries, for both categories will be printed in *Reformed Perspective* this Fall.
- Winner of each category will receive a \$150 for books from Reformed Book Services or Providence Books and Press; runner-up will receive a \$75 gift certificate.

DETAILS:

- Send your photo (high-resolution) to admin@reformedperspective.ca before **Aug 1, 2025**

