

Reformed CELEBRATING GOD'S TRUTH

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PERSPECTIVE

SINCE 1982

**Sowing
our
tithe**



WHAT'S INSIDE?

Screens, readers' writings, and sowing our tithes

A lot of homes struggle with managing money and screens. These two topics get a special focus in this issue.

- 1) When we tithe, are we mindful of the impact that our giving will have in God's kingdom? If we sow sparingly or flippantly, we can expect to reap sparingly and erratically. Our writers' team has made the topic of money practical by looking at how we tithe: at the beginning of the month or end, 10% or something else? In the editorial, Marty VanDriel applies this to the world of business. Imagine the impact on God's kingdom if businesses tithed like individuals! Jeff Dykstra gives six ways to bring joy to our giving, and Jan Broersma provides five things she would like her kids to learn about money.
- 2) We tackled screen use and social media with a special issue in 2024, but we are circling back to it because of some fantastic new resources that have been developed for Christian families by a couple young men from within the Reformed community. *And be sure to note the **10-day screen fast challenge** that we have for your consideration.* Can you go 10 days without scrolling and watching? We would love to hear how this goes for you.

A big thanks to all those who responded to our "how to write for RP" article in the last issue. We have loved the submissions you sent in from both young and old alike. In this issue we are sharing some of those pieces, with articles on dating, writing your own biography, and what our political climate feels like for a Chinese family who recently immigrated to Canada. More will come next time. While we can't publish everything we receive, we sure value your submissions. Keep them coming to editor@reformedperspective.ca.

Finally, on the last page we have an announcement of what is coming down the pike...

Our cover illustration this month is by Stephanie Vanderpol.

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5 THINGS I'D LIKE MY KIDS TO LEARN ABOUT MONEY

by Jan Broersma
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READERS' RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR:

I wish that both Jon Dykstra (in his article "Tariffs are terrible economics: why Canada shouldn't hit back") and Marty VanDriel (in his article "Tariffs as a dressing down: if it is about drugs we should listen") would have done some serious research before writing articles about tariffs in *Reformed Perspective* (Mar/Apr 2025).

On March 27, 2025, the newspaper *Waterloo Region Record* reported that "Up to 23,000 local jobs are at risk, accounting for one in 12 jobs in the region, a study by the Institute for Research on Public Policy estimates." The same newspaper article also stated that "The study estimates the highest risks are in the automotive sector where 79 per cent of jobs are threatened." Kitchener, Waterloo, and Guelph have many plants that produce automotive parts. And then there are many other places in Ontario (such as Windsor, Oakville, Alliston, Oshawa, Cambridge) that manufacture cars (such as GM in Oshawa, Ford in Oakville, Toyota in Cambridge, Honda in Alliston) and automotive parts (companies such as Magna and Linamar).

Jon Dykstra suggests that Canada should not defend itself when a country declares war, this time being an economic war. Unfortunately, people in both countries are affected when a physical war or an economic war occurs. The USA has declared economic war on many countries, even with an island that is only occupied by penguins.

As per a government of Canada website: "According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, less than 1 per cent of the fentanyl and illegal crossings into the United States come from Canada." The website also reports that "The Government of Canada is making a strong border even stronger, and because of our work, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection has reported a significant decrease in fentanyl seizures from Canada, with a 97 per cent drop in January 2025 compared to December 2024."

I agree with Marty that there should be no drugs crossing the border, but Marty drastically blows this issue out of proportion.

Again, when trying to make *Reformed Perspective* a respected magazine, articles should be written by people who have experience or good knowledge of the subject, and Scripture texts should be used very carefully.

HANK JAGER
FERGUS, ON

DEAR EDITOR:

Many of your articles are relevant topics that give perspective on current issues. We find them very informative and helpful.

We do, however, have a concern with the movie reviews that are provided in the magazine. Our congregations have always been against Christians acting in movies. Drama always involves the identification of the actor with the person whose part he is playing. In the process, the actor always loses something of his own identity. In fact, the more he is able to suppress his own identity and become the other person, the better actor he is. Actors resign their personalities by this constant switching of roles. They destroy themselves in the depth of their being, and God's judgment is upon them. God wants us to be true and sincere as unique individuals.

I quote Charles Spurgeon on the topic of theaters:

"It is not the place for Christians, for it is best appreciated by the irreligious and worldly. If church folks fall into the habit of frequenting the theater, we shall soon have them going much further in the direction of vice and they will lose all relish for the ways of God. Theater-going, if it becomes general among professing Christians, will soon prove the death of piety. The theater has always been a school of immorality."

We therefore encourage you to promote the viewing of movies in your magazine.

May the Lord bless you in the work He has given you to do. May the Lord also remember us as a nation and give a true revival in our country and a turning back to His Word.

FRANK LES (CLERK FOR CHILLIWACK NRC)
CHILLIWACK, BC



What is our Readers' Response *for*?

We print most but not all of the "letters to the editor" that get sent our way. So why some and not others? And what's the RP's Readers' Response even for?

- Letters are for fostering dialogue. The Response page is so readers can have their say because dialogue is worth fostering (see Prov. 11:14, 15:22, etc.).
- We want letters to respond to articles, not other letters. We double and triple check facts, grammar, arguments and more in our articles, and are, consequently, happy to put them out for discussion and debate, and happy too, to stand behind them. So that's what we want to talk about.
- Letters should be constructive or in some sense trying to help RP, or help readers.
- Letters represent the particular reader, not us. We don't normally respond to letters – we try to let the letter-writer have the last word. But our lack of response shouldn't be understood as agreement.

We get lots of notes that aren't intended as formal letters to the editor, and we appreciate that too. So if you want to send us feedback about anything in this issue, please send an email to editor@reformedperspective.ca (and let us know if this is a private note or something you would want printed). Thanks!

JON DYKSTRA



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IF BUSINESSES TITHED...

by Marty VanDriel

Christians are familiar with the Biblical principle of tithing, and support many kingdom causes as a matter of course. They apply the principles of Galatians 6:10 with their talents, time and treasure: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Followers of Jesus Christ are known for their enthusiastic support of their local church, Christian education, organizations helping the homeless and poor nearby and in other parts of the globe.

We are giving, and we can see God blessing those gifts.

So, what might the Lord do if Christians who own their own businesses or are shareholders in a venture with others, found ways to apply these same principles in their business operations?

RETAINED EARNINGS

Often in the first years of establishing a company, funds can be tight, and any profits that are made need to be invested back in the business to pay down debt, or to purchase new equipment, or to hire more staff. (These profits that are not pulled out of the venture, but are used by the company are often called “retained earnings.”) Sometimes, a new firm can operate for years without paying out profits to its owners, but meanwhile, the company is growing, owns more assets than when it was starting up, and itself is now worth far more than it was when it was just an idea percolating in the minds of its founders.

When Christian owners or shareholders are rewarded with a dividend payout from the business, it’s relatively easy for them to make an individual decision about giving back to the Lord from these earnings, just as they would decide when receiving a regular paycheck. All these good gifts that we receive are really the Lord’s, and for us to “give back” from our first fruits should be a given. In Proverbs 3:9-10, Solomon reminds us to:

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”

But what about the wealth that has been building up inside the venture, the “retained earnings” referenced above? In Luke 12:16-21, the Lord Jesus warns against covetousness and greed with the story of the rich fool:

“The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things that you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

STEWARDS, NOT OWNERS

The rich man’s declaration of what he will do with “*my* grain and *my* goods” tells us how he thought of what he owned – it was all his, and not the Lord’s. That’s a point that the Lord Jesus makes again and again – not to think of the possessions God has entrusted to me as *mine*. All of it is the Lord’s, and all of it is only lent to us here on earth, to use wisely, and give back to Him (Luke 12:42-48, Matt. 25:14-30, etc.). And leading into this passage, He also warns us against thinking that one’s life consists “in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15).

Although it’s not an exact analogy, the retained earnings inside our companies can function like the grain and goods in the rich fool’s barn – our company’s growth can be a temptation to measure ourselves by what we have built – so we need to be very careful how we view them.

So, how can we resist that pull?

Firstly, we should consider all of it the Lord’s, to be used for His kingdom and His glory. This does not mean we can’t invest in new equipment, or purchase additional property for our companies, or keep a prudent amount of funds available for potential emergencies. All of these are good business practices. But we should

have in the forefront the idea that all of this is the Lord’s: just like the servants entrusted with the master’s property in Matthew 25, we will also be asked to give an account by our Master for how we managed what He lent to us.

Secondly, just as we financially support kingdom causes by giving from our paycheques and dividends, our companies could do the same with their retained earnings and with other resources they have built up. I was exposed to this idea of “corporate tithing” years ago by other Christian business owners. At their annual shareholders’ meeting, where they

I was exposed to this idea of “corporate tithing” years ago by other Christian business owners.

reviewed the past year’s performance, the shareholders were given an update on how much, and to whom the company had donated in the past twelve months, with the expectation that it would add up to a tenth of the retained earnings from the previous year. This built-in accountability helped the company’s management be intentional about their charitable giving, because there was a specific expectation around a measurable quantity – ten percent of last year’s retained earnings is a clear expectation, and one that can be easily communicated and measured.

So how about it, business owners? Could a principle like this be adopted in your business? Can you encourage the company you work for to consider more than nominal support of causes that promote the Kingdom of God?

May we be encouraged also by Paul who writes in 2 Cor. 9:6-7:

“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”


JUST IMAGINE

Business tithing brings with it all sorts of opportunities and possibilities.

- Imagine a business tithed from their profit of \$100,000: they could cover the cost of a part-time special needs assistant at their local Christian school.
- If they tithed from \$1M, they could provide the means for a church or non-profit to hire a full-time employee, or do a renovation, or fund a medical clinic in the third world for a year.

- Imagine doing this consecutively over 10 or even 40 years? It really adds up. It could cover the cost of an entire orphanage etc.
- Another way businesses can tithe, beyond money, is by hiring people who are otherwise not likely to get a job, or a great job. It might be people with special needs, or who are in a place in life where they really need help/grace. Employment is so meaningful. But if we are only thinking about the bottom line, we won’t be keen to take them on.

While this editorial focused primarily on the financial portion of a company’s giving back, there are many other ways that businesses can contribute to their community with their employees’ and owners’ time and abilities. If you have suggestions for good practices that encourage good stewardship in these areas, we’d be delighted to learn more!

Send your thoughts by email to mvandriel@trivan.com. 

Marty VanDriel is the chief executive officer of two small businesses in Washington State, voluntary treasurer for three non-profit organizations, and assistant editor of Reformed Perspective.

NEWS IN *Perspective*

PIERRE POILIEVRE: SOMETIMES ACCESS COMES WITH TOO HIGH A COST

BY JON DYKSTRA

During the English-language leaders' debate on April 17, the Conservative Party's Pierre Poilievre was challenged to explain why he hadn't gotten his top-secret security clearance. Prime Minister Carney noted that the other three party leaders on the stage had gotten their clearances, so why had Poilievre refused to do so too? The Conservative leader explained,

"...when the government made this recent offer, they said that if I got the secret security clearance briefings that I would be gagged under the security law and I could be prosecuted if I spoke freely about matters of foreign interference. Now, given that Canada has experienced Chinese interference by Beijing, the government of China, in two consecutive elections, I needed to do my job, to



speak freely without fear of prosecution, and that was not something I would be allowed to do."

He's presenting a principle – silence can be too high a price to pay for access – that Christians need to take to heart too.

It's safe to say that this magazine's readership has very little interest in the other three parties represented on the debate stage. The Bloc Québécois, NDP, and Liberals all ban pro-lifers from running for them – only the Conservative Party is open to Chris-

tian participation. But what does the Conservative Party expect of Christians when we join its ranks? During the campaign Pierre Poilievre made this pledge:

"I can guarantee you there will be no laws restricting abortion passed when I'm prime minister.... There will be no laws or other restrictions imposed on a woman's right to decide to do with her body as she wishes and that is something that I am guaranteeing to you and to all Canadians."

He's allowing more than 50 pro-life candidates to run for his party, but should he win, does he want any of his MPs, or any of their supporters, crying for justice for the more than 100,000 preborn children who are killed each year? He's offered us memberships in his party, and the chance to have our people run for elected office, but he certainly wants something in exchange: don't embarrass your party leader by demanding that the unborn's blood "be precious in his sight" (Ps. 72:14b).

But like Mr. Poilievre, we mustn't let our silence be bought.

What can we do instead? God's people can take a page from the persistent widow of Luke 18:1-8 who wouldn't stop presenting her pleas, even though the judge wasn't interested in delivering justice. Why did he eventually hear her? Because she would not be quiet. So if Poilievre wins, we need to be every bit as loud as we can be, no matter what access it might cost us. If God's people won't advocate for the unborn, who else is left?

Of course, the primary lesson of this passage in Luke is not about persistence in politics, but in prayer. We can try what we might, but God can do what He will. And God tells us we should never stop praying to Him, because unlike the unjust in positions of power, He is sympathetic to our pleas: "Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?" That's something Mr. Poilievre also needs to hear from us, lest he ends his days standing before this just Judge in blood-soaked robes.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE BECOMING MORE VISIBLE AT CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES

BY MARK PENNINGA



While big companies like Google and Walmart are quickly abandoning their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies, a new study reveals just how committed Canada's largest universities are to this woke agenda.

The Aristotle Foundation (aristotlefoundation.org) studied approximately 50 academic job postings from the largest public university in each province, and found that 98 percent of the 489 postings included DEI requirements or strategies to fill their positions.

DEI policies flow out of the critical theory worldview, which has become the dominant worldview influencing secular Canadian institutions, including schools and universities. Their goal is to raise up groups which they deem to have been disadvantaged or "oppressed," including LGBTQ+, visible minorities, and women, while putting down the "oppressors," especially heterosexuals, Caucasians, and males.

Just as Christian schools and universities want to ensure that their teachers and staff uphold their Christian values, these public universities are increasingly becoming open about their own doctrinal commitments. For example, a February job posting from the department of physics at the University of New Brunswick stated:

"...only applicants who self-identify as members of gender equity deserving groups (including cisgender women, transgender women, transgender men, two-spirit, and non-binary) and/or as racialized individuals will be considered for this opportunity."

Satan and his forces are constantly deceiving. They use positive words like diversity, inclusion, and equity, but then make them mean almost the opposite – a weapon for discrimination and against equal opportunity. In contrast, God calls on us to do



unto others as we would want done to us (Matt. 7:12). If we took this to heart, we would indeed care for the oppressed, while also offering a position to the person most qualified for it, so they in turn can be a blessing to others.

It's not all bad news, though. Just south of the border, we can see how God can reverse slides, with high-profile universities in the USA that push DEI initiatives having their funding cut or paused by the Trump administration. Harvard alone received funding cuts and freezes of over \$3 billion, and they responded with a lawsuit. To that, a White House spokesperson said: "taxpayer funds are a privilege, and Harvard fails to meet the basic conditions required to access that privilege."

COVID RESTRICTION ON OUTDOOR GATHERINGS DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

BY MARK PENNINGA



While many Canadians prefer to forget the era of Covid restrictions, the courts continue to do the important work of judging whether these restrictions actually align with Canada's constitution. And in the case of Ontario's regulations against outdoor gatherings, the province's highest court has overturned the lower court ruling and found the restriction to be unconstitutional.

The case was brought to the court by former MPP Randy Hillier, who was charged in 2021 with two offences under the "Reopening Ontario Act." His penalty could be up to \$100,000 and a year in jail for attending and helping organize several outdoor gatherings. Hillier argued that this was a violation of his freedom of peaceful assembly, protected in section 2(c) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court of Appeal unanimously agreed.

The judicial branch of government (the courts) is meant to serve as a check on the legislative and executive branches, which make the laws and enforce them. They hold these other branches of government to a higher law – the constitution. Although this process is marred in sin and weakness, we can be grateful that there remains a semblance of accountability in Canada's government.

ABORTION DEATHS REACH 10-YEAR HIGH

BY MARK PENNINGA

According to the Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI), the number of abortions reported in Canada increased to a staggering 101,553 in 2023, the highest number of deaths in the past decade. It is important to recognize that these are just the *reported* abortions. The real figure could be much higher, as abortion clinics are not required to report their data. The numbers also don't account for the fact that Canada has allowed "emergency contraceptive" drugs like Plan B since 2005, which can prevent a fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus, ending the life of a tiny human being. These drugs are now being handed out freely in parts of Canada.

Pro-Life group We Need a Law, a campaign of ARPA Canada, explained that the reasons for the increase are varied and not entirely clear. One reason could be the increased population in Canada. But the population has been growing for decades now, while the number of abortions peaked in 1997.

Another reason they cite is that CIHI has adjusted its methodology for how it reports abortion, leading to more accurate reporting. ARPA Canada was part of a successful court challenge in 2017, when a court ruled that the Ontario government was wrong to hide abortion statistics from public access.

Another possible reason We Need a Law cites is the turmoil pregnant women experienced in the past five

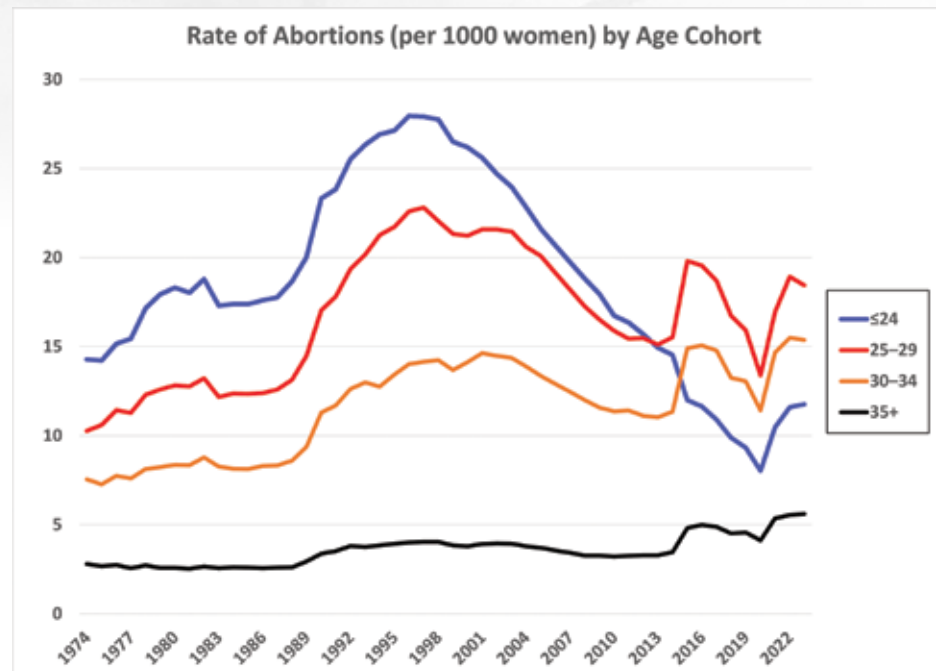
years, from Covid concerns to surging inflation.

There was one glimmer of hope. Until 2013, the most likely age group to have an abortion was women under 25. Their rate is now half of what it used to be. This gives hope that their increasing resistance to abortion will continue as they age. In contrast, as the chart shows, it is women over the age of 30 who are having more abortions.

Although the data remains murky, the matter itself is very clear. Whether they acknowledge it or not, many of the women we meet and know are liv-

ing through the pain and grief of their choice, or the choice that was inflicted on them, to end the life of their precious child. If they haven't already repented and experienced forgiveness and peace through the cross of Christ, there is a pressing need to share this message with them. And these preborn children, our neighbors, deserve the same love and protection that we all do. Simply acknowledging their death is a very small step in this direction.

Graph used with permission of We Need a Law (WeNeedALaw.ca).



UNANIMOUS PASSAGE FOR BC BILL TO PROVIDE GRIEF SUPPORT FOR MISCARRIAGE AND ABORTION

BY MARK PENNINGA

For the first time in more than 40 years in BC's legislature, a private member's bill received unanimous support in a recorded vote. The bill addresses prenatal and postnatal mental health care, and what's of note from a Christian pro-life perspective, is that the bill includes a call for grief counseling "for

those who have experienced or are experiencing miscarriage, termination of a pregnancy, a stillbirth or the death of an infant." If it becomes law, Bill 204 would require the Minister of Health to come up with a strategy within a year to provide universal access to mental health care for women during and after pregnancy.

According to pro-life group We Need a Law, the specific mention of grief counseling for abortion "recognizes the humanity of the pre-born child as well as the mental and emotional impact abortion can have on a mother."

The bill still has to be studied at committee and voted on a final time before becoming law.

ANCIENT BRITS (AND ALL OUR ANCESTORS) WERE DARK-SKINNED?

BY JON DYKSTRA

Brits were once known for trending towards pasty white – there just wasn't enough sun getting through the rain clouds to get anyone tanned. But a March 4 article in the UK's *Independent* newspaper reported that Brits might not have always been so fair: "Ancient Brits who built Stonehenge had dark skin, scientists reveal."

So, what sort of science are we talking about here? Well, the ages given range all the way back to 45,000 years ago, which is well outside the 6,000 or so year range the Bible provides. So that part of the science is off, and some evolutionary assumptions have been made.

But Creation.com's Andrew Sibley agrees that our ancestors were almost certainly dark-skinned. In his March 24 article, "Were the first Britons dark-skinned?" he notes that on the matter of changing skin tone, the main difference between creationists and evolutionists just comes down to timescale. We think the changes happened a lot faster than the evolutionists do. And what's true of these ancient Brits would be true of Adam and Eve too, both of them very likely much darker than they are usually depicted in any story Bible.



Picture is of a reconstruction of an ancient Brit, with the skin color based on DNA evidence. It is on display in the Natural History Museum, London, and this picture is by Werner Ustorf and used under a CC BY-SA 2.0 license.

MILLIONS DISTRIBUTED TO CANADA'S LEGACY MEDIA DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN

BY MARK PENNINGA



While the media was covering the federal election, the newly formed Canadian Journalism Collective (CJC) started its first handouts of cash from the enormous pot of \$100 million that it is now mandated to give to Canadian news outlets each year.

The funding comes from money that Google was required to pay in order to

comply with the Liberal government's Bill C-18, the Online News Act, which passed through Parliament in 2023. As revenue has dwindled for the legacy media, the Liberal government has been very motivated to step in with their own funding, both directly and

indirectly. In addition to its \$1.4 billion in annual funding of the CBC, it provided about \$885 million of other media handouts in the past five years.

The Hub (theHub.ca), a relatively new media organization which doesn't support government funding, reached out to Canada's largest legacy media companies to ask if they received any

of this money, how much they got, and whether they would be willing to disclose this during the election campaign. None of the organizations would commit to this.

Why does this matter? We can't serve two masters (Matt. 6:24) – if the media is supposed to be the servant of the public, holding the government to account, it can't also be in the employ of that government.

Last year, *Reformed Perspective* turned down an opportunity to receive substantial funding from the "Special Measures for Journalism" component of the Canada Periodical Fund. By God's grace, our readers not only covered all our bills, they provided the means for us to grow our circulation and expand our team. Thank you for being the means through which we can continue to celebrate God's truth, without being beholden to the government.

U.K. SUPREME COURT RULES THAT MEN AREN'T WOMEN (OR MIGHT THEY BE?)

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

In a unanimous ruling, the United Kingdom's highest court seemed to judge that if you were born female, you are a girl or a woman, and if you were born male, you are a boy or a man. The five judges issued this rather obvious proclamation in response to an appeal from "For Women Scotland." This group was protesting that men who carried a "Gender Recognition Certificate" were being permitted the same protections as real women under the country's Equality Act.

In 2022, the then Leader of the Opposition, Keir Starmer, stated: "...trans women are women, and that is not just my view, that is actually the law." In a very public reversal of his previous opinion, Starmer, now Prime Minister, called the judgment "a welcome step forward," and added, "It's real clarity in an area where we did need clarity, I'm pleased it's come about."

However, a reading of the 88-page ruling itself reveals less clarity than Christians would hope for. In introductory paragraphs, the judges wrote:

"it is not the role of the court to adjudicate on the arguments

in the public domain on the meaning of gender or sex, nor is it to define the meaning of the word 'woman' other than when it is used in the provisions of the EA 2010 (Equality Act)."

In other words, this judgment can only be used in a very limited way when interpreting the Equality Act. Further, the report states that it will:

"use the expression 'biological sex' which is used widely... to describe the sex of a person at birth, and we use the expression 'certificated sex' to describe the sex attained by the acquisition of a Gender Recognition Certificate" (emphasis added).

This mealy-mouthed meandering gives legitimacy to the idea that one can attain or acquire a different sex, as if one's chromosomes were altered by surgeries or makeup or feelings, or by carrying a certificate. While Christians may applaud the headline news that "women are women," this is far from a full return to common sense.

FLORIDA SNAKES EVOLVED "BLINDINGLY FAST"?

BY JON DYKSTRA

Back in 2010 a "mega freeze" killed all sorts of Florida wild-life and plants – there were orange trees encased in ice and frozen iguanas dropping out of trees. The fatalities also included much of the invasive Burmese snake population, leaving snake carcasses scattered on the roadways. That was because snakes don't generate their own heat and need heat from their surroundings to keep them warm.

So how did any survive the cold snap? Evolution of course. So says Stephen S. Hall in his April 22 *LiveScience.com* article: "An up-tempo version of Darwinian evolution: How a mega freeze in Florida may have caused Burmese pythons to evolve at a blindingly fast speed."

As evolutionary accounts go, this was one of the more honest ones in how many hedge words it used – *mights*, *suggests*, and *seemed to's*. The overall impression was still that the author was telling us something he knew to be so, but the hedges show how little they'd actually discovered. Researchers looking into the snakes' genome had merely found "clues" that "might" offer a "not de-

finitive" answer as to why they survived.

"...the survivors seemed to share genetic changes in areas of their genome known to control thermoregulatory behavior and metabolism."

So is this evidence for evolution, or does the snakes' instant adaptability make a better case for design?

Both creationists and evolutionists believe that "natural selection" can act on a species to select from among a broader pool of critters those that are best suited for an environment. But whereas creationists believe such natural selection has happened rapidly – we believe that in just a few thousand years the thousands of "kinds" on the Ark have become the millions of species we see today – evolutionists typically talk of things happening over hundreds of thousands and millions of years. Not "blindingly fast."

As the article notes, one of the researchers argued there was a lot of genetic variability among the pythons before the cold snap. That was greatly diminished by the freeze's "selection" of that one hardy subset. Consequently, a



more complex species has now been simplified to a degree by selection.

This simplification is akin to what happens via the artificial selection Man has done with dogs to produce both the Chihuahua and the Saint Bernard. Whatever wolf-like original they started with had the potential to diversify greatly in directions both big and small, and that *diversification* involved *simplification*. Both the Saint Bernard and the Chihuahua have lost the potential for variability that their great, great grandparent had. Now no matter how many generations you bred a Chihuahua, you could never get a St. Bernard because that potential has long ago been selectively eliminated.

The point is, such simplification, whether via natural or artificial selection, can't account for the *exponential growth in complexity* needed to explain how molecules could ever evolve into Man.

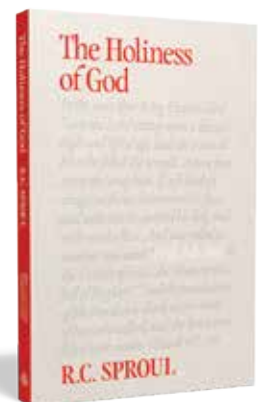


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Being Thrifty and Finding Hope

by Mark Penninga

In his “science of happiness” class at Harvard Business School, Arthur Brooks teaches that of the five things you can do with money, four *could* make you happy. What are these four, and what’s the fifth one that can’t bring joy? As Brooks explained on *The Ramsey Show*:

“You can buy experiences, you can buy time, you can give it away, or you can save it.... [But] your brain is telling you to do the one thing that won’t bring happiness, which is to go buy stuff.”

Although Brooks is generally correct, a recent visit to the Hope for Children Thrift Store in Langley, BC, taught me

that there is an important exception. There I experienced how buying and selling “stuff” can bring more than happiness. It can bring hope.

That isn’t because it is a bargain, regardless of how much that may make our heart sing at the till. Rather, it is because of the people and mission that drive the store. Peel away the surface and you discover that by buying “stuff” at this thrift store, you end up accomplishing all the other ways that Brooks says your money can buy happiness: buying experiences and time, saving, and giving things away. In other words, this thrift store reveals the secret to how our “stuff” can be used to bring lasting hope and joy.

SAVING A DOLLAR

Taking a few steps into the thrift store, the first thing I noticed was people. Everywhere. The place was hopping. Customers were swarming the clothing racks and the till. I watched as one lady, who appeared to be homeless, asked the volunteer at the till to show her a piece of jewellery that caught her eye in the display case. The item was only a dollar or two, and the would-be buyer was eager to try it on.

The store wasn’t entirely new to me. My mother-in-law has volunteered here for years and, when we visit the area, my family frequently shops at the store. Even when we aren’t in the area, my mother-in-law often has a list of items to keep an eye out for – things our family needs, like a pair of boys’ running shoes, or winter mitts.

Coming from a family of ten, I was raised on thrift store finds, and I became a thrift shopper myself when I moved out of the home and attended university. I have grown to love thrift stores, not just because of the cost-savings, but also because they accomplish so much more. That is why I went to Hope for Children – to pull the curtain back on the side to thrifting that so many don’t see.

SAVING VULNERABLE CHILDREN

I turned away from the till to be greeted by the store’s bright-eyed manager, Fiona



Some of the crew from a typical Thursday morning.

Jansen. She took me to the one small place in the building where there wasn't a bustle: the volunteers' coffee room.

Jansen explained why the thrift store was first started 10 years ago. About 17 years ago, Jeremy VanBeelen and Duane Visscher, two young men from the local Reformed community, had traveled to an orphanage in Mexico for a short-term mission project. The work pulled on their hearts so much that they stayed, devoting their lives to the orphanages. "We had a couple of families connected to the ministries that were serving in Mexico," Jansen explained. "The thrift store is a really great way to raise money...and so people got excited." With the help of some people who had experience running a thrift store, a core group got "Hope for Children Thrift Store" off the ground. The store was named after the organization overseeing the orphanages in Mexico.

Indeed, the thrift store has been a great way to raise money. Around seven years in, they had raised over a million dollars for Children of Hope, and the total is now well over \$1.2 million today.

"We don't support any day-to-day [expenses] or salaries... because if something were to go wrong, all of a sudden the children couldn't eat or a family wouldn't get their salary." Instead, they fund infrastructure projects, including dorms, solar panels, vehicles, and security walls at the nine orphanages and soup kitchens in Mexico.

Jansen was able to witness the impact of the support first-hand, joining a tour of the orphanages.

"I went as the thrift store representative, and then we toured all the different ministries that we were supporting. That Sunday we had a service at Pan de Vida and I was sitting beside a Mexican lady. I didn't know her, and I couldn't speak with her, but afterwards they introduced us. 'These are the members of the board from Children of Hope, and this is Fiona. She's from Hope for Children, the thrift store,' and this lady turned to me, and she was just crying. And she's [saying], *thank you, thank you.*

"It was quite amazing to see the grati-

tude, and then to see the good things that are going on there. God is doing amazing things there, and to hear the stories of the children: what they've been rescued from, how they're growing, and that they're safe and learning about the Lord. It's amazing."

THE JOY OF MEANINGFUL WORK

The thrift store blessings don't end with the recipients of the money. It extends to over 80 volunteers who keep the store running.

Jansen explained that they welcome volunteers from all walks of life, from high school students looking for volunteer hours on their resume, to adults who are seeking community and a chance to make a difference, and seniors who are eager to bless others with the skills and experience that God has given them through their lives. A core group of these volunteers has served with Hope for Children since its beginning.

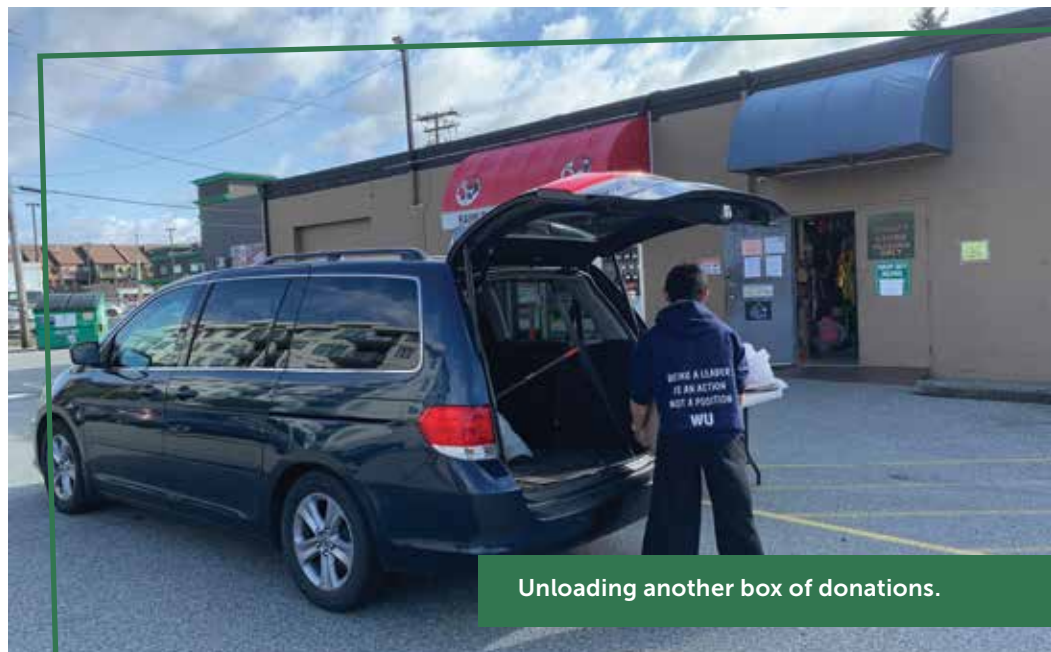
One of these volunteers is Jake Bredenhof, who stepped into the coffee room while Jansen and I were meeting. Bredenhof started working at the thrift store in 2015, as he was in the process of selling the family's chicken farm in the neighboring community of Cloverdale. Although Jake and his wife Lee later moved to Abbotsford, they both are happy to make the

25-minute commute to continue serving at the store.

Jake works in the back, where new donations arrive. "Every day is a little bit like Christmas because you don't know what is in the next box," he explained. He sorts the books, jewelry, bedding, clothes, appliances, and is "basically the front-runner of all the donations that come in." "You meet a lot of really nice people, who have been donating to the store for years already."

Jake and Lee aren't the exception in his congregation, the Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church, which has over 60 seniors. Some drive for the Cancer Society, others for Meals on Wheels, and others volunteer at the local food bank and other thrift stores closer to Abbotsford. "It is a stewardly way of giving back to the community," he reflected.

Jansen also pointed to a picture of a lady on the bulletin board of the coffee room, who recently passed away. "She was 80, and she was feeling blue, and her doctor said 'you need to find something to keep you busy.'" The answer was right around the corner. "She was walking home from the doctor's office, and she saw this store, and she said 'they do things to help kids. I love kids. I'm going to see if I can volunteer.' She volunteered here till she died."



Unloading another box of donations.



Some of the crew at Hope for Children, "at our 2024 volunteer appreciation dinner. The theme was wearing something thrifted."

I asked Jansen if there was anything surprising that she'd learned working at the store.

"I would say that I gained a whole new understanding of age. So many of my volunteers are well into their 70's and even 80's and yet here they are working hard and loving it. Retirement doesn't mean sitting on a rocking chair and watching the world go by. I have been amazed at how active and selfless volunteers are, at any age."

Jansen also shared that some of their volunteers aren't Christians, though they open the day with devotions. "But most of the time people sit there and participate, and we've had positive things come from that too." She gave the example of a girl who had drifted away from church but, through the fellowship at the thrift store, came back and was baptized. Bredenhof noted that allowing non-Christians to volunteer has "never been a problem."

When I asked Jansen what in particular the volunteers enjoyed about serving at the thrift store, she shared that some simply enjoy interacting with the community, being able to hear the stories of those who come in and even being able to share the Gospel with them. "People love to tell them about where the money's going, and then they can share stories about what's

going on in Mexico."

"WHEN I WAS IN NEED YOU FED ME AND CLOTHED ME"

The thrift store doesn't just provide for the needs of those in Mexico. The clothing and used goods provide critical relief for those in need in their own community of Langley, including some of the homeless who frequent the store.

"At certain times of the month they are coming and paying, and other times of the month they're not. There are times when people will ask [for free clothing] and I will always say yes." Jansen also explained that for those who ask frequently, she will only provide free clothing once a month.

"I've had a woman come, and she says 'I have to go to court. I have nothing. Can I have an outfit?' We gave her an outfit."

In addition to the clothing and merchandise, the thrift store has a shelf with free food.

"We have a guy who started on his own [initiative] picking up food. I think he saw it getting chucked at Safeway. So now he goes to a few different places every day, and then he brings it to us, and then we put it out on our free shelf."

Because of the free food, every day there is a lineup outside the door, waiting for the store to open.

That said, Jansen explained that the majority of the shoppers aren't in that kind of need. "We get a lot of crafters who come specifically for our crafting department because we have an exceptional craft department for our thrift store." To add to this, "we get young people who are just out having a good time together with their friends." Overall, there aren't as many low-income people as she expected.

LASTING HOPE

Arthur Brooks is correct that "buying stuff" generally won't bring happiness. God made us with hearts, souls, and minds, all of which were made for so much more than consumption. We were made to experience fellowship with God and our neighbors. My visit reminded me how that is exactly what Hope for Children, and so many other thrift stores, accomplish. Stuff fades and eventually is thrown out. But the relationships forged through service and generosity abide eternally.

So, if you want to buy happiness, visit your local thrift store. **RP**

Pictures graciously provided by Fiona Jansen.



A PRINCIPLED (AND PRACTICAL) GUIDE TO TITHING

by Levi Minderhoud

Twice every Sunday the offering plate comes your way. What do you do? Do you chip in whatever you have in your wallet, do you have a cheque already written out, or will you send an e-transfer later in the week? Do you abide by whatever tithing tradition your parents instilled in you, or look around to see what everyone else does, or do you have your own rationale of how to give?

How we tithe is an intensely practical question for everyone, but perhaps one that you've not given much thought. Here are some biblical principles for tithing, followed by some practical suggestions, from my experience as a deacon and as a manager of a personal household budget, of how to apply these biblical principles in our offerings.

1. GOD OWNS EVERYTHING

The first principle that we need to recognize when we consider tithing is the fact that everything ultimately belongs to God and not to us. As the Creator and Sustainer of all things and the Redeemer of His people, God not only is the ultimate owner of everything, but we owe Him everything. Like the servants in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-39), we are merely temporary stewards of the blessings that God has given us.

The tithe – 10% – is a reminder of that fact. Abram offered the first recorded tithe in Genesis 14, when he gave a tenth of the spoils from the defeat of Chedor-

laomer to Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High. Jacob also vowed to give God a tenth of everything (Gen. 28:22). This voluntary tithe was enshrined in God's law in Numbers 18:21-24, when God commanded the Israelites to give a tithe every year to support the Levites and the tabernacle.

The disposition of our heart should not be “how little of my hard-earned money do I have to part with” but “how much of God's blessings am I able to give back to Him?”

2. OUR HEART (NOT JUST THE %) MATTERS

We see cheerful and abundant giving throughout Scripture, whether it was the Israelites giving overabundantly for the construction of the temple (Ex. 35:20-36:7), the early Church freely sharing their possessions (Acts 4:32-37), and later congregations collecting for needy churches (Rom. 15:25-28, 1 Cor. 16:1-4, 2 Cor. 8:1-5, 2 Cor. 9:1-15).

It is entirely possible to give large sums of money to the LORD but without the right motivation. In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and gave some of the proceeds to the disciples. And yet they wound up dead because of their dishonesty. Instead, in 2 Corinthians 9:7, Paul famously reminds believers that

“each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

While it may be relatively easy to change our giving patterns, changing our heart from being a reluctant, to a cheerful, giver may be far harder. Yet we serve a God who delights more in a pure heart than external sacrifice, and we need to recognize that our giving should come from gratitude over God's grace delivering us from our guilt. So we must set our hearts in the right direction when we give.

3. FIRST FRUITS

The Bible also speaks to *when* we give. Men like Abel gave “the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions” (Gen. 4:4). Throughout the books of the law, God commands the people of Israel to bring to Him the first fruits – not their last fruits – of their field and their flocks. Calling upon His people to bring their first fruits was a way that God set the priorities of His people: give to Me first and provide for yourselves after.

This practice also fostered a trust in God's people that He would provide if His people obeyed Him and gave their first fruits to Him. In the days of Malachi, when the people of Judah were robbing God of their tithes and contributions (possibly because they thought that they were too poor to afford to tithe), God calls the people to:

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the

"... a poor widow comes in and gives two small copper coins"



windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need" (Malachi 3:10).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

With these general biblical principles established, here are some more practical suggestions of how we can live out these principles in our tithing.

A. HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE?

This is everyone's biggest question as well as the one that will impact our lifestyle the most. And the usual Christian response is to tithe (to give 10% of our income).

But, interestingly, most Israelites were commanded to give more than a 10% tithe. God also commanded a second tithe every year to fund ceremonial feasts and festivals (Deut. 14:22-27). And every three years, the people were to give a third tithe that was to go not only to the Levite but also the poor (Deut. 14:28-29). They were also to provide for the poor in other ways that would have a financial cost, such as allowing the poor to glean the droppings and corners of the field (Lev. 19:9). So, in reality, the Israelites arguably tithed as

much as 23.33% annually. (I say "arguably" because some theologians like John Calvin thought that the tithe to the poor every three years was simply a further explanation of how to spend the first tithe to the priests and Levites.)

We live in a different time period today. The civil and ceremonial law apply differently to the Church today. We don't support one thirteenth of the population of the Church with our tithes (as the twelve tribes had to support the tribe of Levi in the Old Testament). We don't have a calendar of feasts and festivals that require another tithe. Various institutions of society, such as the government, do a lot of the work of providing for the poor (through the taxes we pay). And so that strict command to give away 10% (or 20% or 23.33%) of our income may not bind us today.

But I still think that a 10% tithe is a good minimum for us all to strive to give. Even if you're a student working a part-time job, an unemployed man collecting EI, or a retiree living off a pension, aim to give at least 10% back to the LORD. In Mark 12:41-44, Jesus watched many rich people putting large sums of money into the temple treasury. We have no idea what percentage of their

regular income they brought. Perhaps some brought 5%, thinking that the sheer amount of money that they gave was more important than the relative percentage of the income they gave. Perhaps some brought exactly 10%, giving just as much as the law required, no more and no less. And perhaps some brought 15%, priding themselves on exceeding the demands of the law. But then a poor widow comes in and gives two small copper coins. Jesus says to His disciples:

"Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

In other words, the widow gave 100%.

While we may not be called to give every cent that we earn to the Church, in *The Ministry of Mercy*, Timothy Keller calls Christians to give "sacrificially, until their lifestyle is lowered." Following the call in Galatians 6:2 to bear one another's burdens, he suggests that "we must give so that we feel the burden of the needy ourselves." In support of this, he quotes Jonathan Edwards, who said,

"If we be never obliged to relieve others' burdens, but when we can do it without burdening ourselves, then how do we bear our neighbor's burdens, when we bear no burdens at all?"

Keller's book is a real challenge to Christians to give more than just 10%.

Those more well off could and should give more. In 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul commands the Corinthians "to put something aside and store it up, *as he may prosper*." Those whom God has prospered are in a position to give more than those who are struggling. To use an example, those of us who earn the median family income in Canada of \$98,390 and tithe 10% would give away almost \$10,000. Those who earn double that – nearly \$200,000 – and still give 10% would give

\$20,000. The rate of giving is equal. And the richer family gives away more. But who feels the impact of that tithe more?

The average family.

They might have to give up a vacation, live in a smaller house, or pass on enrolling their children in organized sports. The comparatively richer family probably doesn't have to give up these things and could give far more before they really began feeling it.

B. TITHING PRE-TAX OR POST-TAX?

If you do decide to give a certain percentage of your income regularly to the Church (say, 10%), some might ask, "should that 10% be pre-tax or post-tax?" Our response to this question may reveal where God and His Church are on our priority list.

Most of us don't get the full amount of our paycheck. Even before our earnings are deposited into our bank account or we pick up our paycheck, the government takes its share, roughly about 25% of our salary through income taxes, CCP contributions, and EI premiums. If we give 10% of our take-home paycheck, what are we implicitly saying? That the government is entitled to its share first and in full and God gets a tithe of our second fruits (and a lesser amount to boot).

So consider giving of your income pre-tax, before the government claims its share.

C. TITHING AT THE BEGINNING OR END OF THE MONTH?

Perhaps this isn't a significant question in your mind, but again it may reveal your heart. If you write a monthly cheque or pre-authorize any bank withdrawals to the Church on the last day of the month, what does that say about your priorities? Are your priorities to make sure that you have enough money to pay your rent, your grocery bill, and your credit card statement and then give some of whatever is left over to the Church? Might this be how you implicitly think about giving?

And so, consider determining, as soon as you get your paycheck, what you are going to give back to God and His Church, giving to God of your first fruits rather than your leftovers.

D. CAN I LET THE OFFERING BAG PASS ME BY?

This is another question that many people would raise an eyebrow at. As long as I give my 10%, who cares when I give it?

As a deacon, I saw some people would wave away the offering bag during a service, implying that they had nothing to give that service. Others would write a few (though substantial) cheques a few times a year but give little during the remainder of the year. When December rolled around, we would often collect three or four times our usually monthly donations in a single month, suggesting that some people only gave at the end of the year.

A handful of people in the congregation gave much smaller amounts every week. We as deacons often thought to ourselves that we'd save a whole lot of time if we didn't have to count as much cash, or input a lot of small cheques, from these frequent givers. But this attitude of giving a little bit every week again reflects a heart that always has giving back to the LORD written on it.

And again, there are Scriptural and confessional hints that we shouldn't let the offering bag pass us by each Sunday. As already quoted in part, 1 Corinthians 16:2, says, "on the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up [i.e. give to the Church], as he may prosper." Based in part on this passage, Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism, speaking of what God's will for us is in the Fourth Commandment, says

"that the gospel ministry and schools for it be maintained, and that, especially on the festive day of rest, I diligently... bring Christian offerings for the poor."

In the Old Testament, there are also a few warnings against appearing before the LORD empty-handed, even if these passages are not strictly related to tithing (Ex. 23:15, 34:20; Deut. 16:16).

So don't let the offering bag pass you by. Even if the total amount that you give in a year doesn't change, give often.


E. HOW CAN MY TITHING GO THE FURTHEST?

Finally, we can be good stewards of our money by taking advantage of charitable tax advantages. Our federal and provincial governments give significant tax credits (typically 40-50%) to encourage charitable donations. That means that you can get up to 40-50% of your donations back on your tax return every year. If you are the average Canadian family earning \$98,390, tithing 10%, and giving away almost \$10,000, that could mean a return of \$4,000-5,000. We are called to give taxes to whom taxes are due (Romans 13:6-7, Mark 12:13-17, Matthew 17:24-27), but if there are organizations that spend their money more efficiently or that labor more in the Kingdom of God than the government (and I'm sure we can think of many such organizations), making use of our charitable receipts is good stewardship. Through these tax benefits we can give even more generously to the most effective and godly organizations around us.

The key to getting that tax credit is that your donations need to bear your name so that your church can issue a tax receipt. So write cheques or donate cash in envelopes with your name on it. Cash tossed in the collection bag won't get you a tax receipt, but I've heard of some churches allowing congregation members to buy "tokens" through cheque or directed cash so that they can get a tax receipt. This allows parents and children to still donate via the offering plate while taking full advantage of charitable tax receipts.

CONCLUSION

However you decide to give to your local church, consider both where your heart is and what your hands are doing. As James 2:18 says, "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

That includes our tithing. 

Levi Minderhoud is a child of God first, a husband and father second, and a policy analyst for ARPA Canada third. In his spare time he loves all things hockey, tickles the ivories, and plays every board and card game imaginable.

5 THINGS I'D LIKE MY KIDS TO LEARN ABOUT MONEY

by Jan Broersma

The saver, the spender, the schemer – as my kids get older, it's interesting to see their “money personalities” develop. In the area of money, as in so many other areas of life, we don't all have to be the same – though each approach to money has strengths to be encouraged and weaknesses to be corrected.

As we acknowledge our natural and God-given differences, also when it comes to handling money, what principles are universal – and biblical? Here are a few I'd like my children to learn.

1. We're stewards, not owners.

“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property...” – Matt. 25:14

Our kids like to speculate about what they'd do if they were suddenly handed a million dollars. Although they assure me that they would of course “give a bunch away,” they (understandably) prefer to dwell on all the fun things they could buy.

I can't really blame them; as adults, we can easily find ourselves thinking along similar lines: “As long as I'm giving faithfully, I can spend the rest however I want.” But a steward mindset tells us differently.

If money is ours to *use*, on behalf of the God who entrusted it to us, then it's clearly not ours to spend mostly as we please. The more we internalize this foundational concept, the easier it will be to give generously – and to judge what's a wise use of money and what's not.

2. Material contentment is a choice.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain...” – 1 Tim. 6:6

Our kids also like to bemoan (with some glee) the fact that most of the technology in our home is older than they are. As fairly technologically-indifferent adults, my husband and I aren't bothered by our aging devices. We all have different areas, though, where we need to remind ourselves that contentment is a choice.

Choosing to “make do,” to defer or deny ourselves a purchase, or to refuse to try to “keep up” with others in terms of material belongings – and talking through our reasoning with our kids – are important ways to model the value of contentment. By doing so we help teach our kids that we can choose to be happy with what we have instead of constantly grasping for the next thing.

Practically speaking, we've found that the activity of shopping (physically or virtually) very quickly erodes contentment. Kids are very good at noticing when their parents don't practice what they preach, and ours are quick to point out if my husband or I start lingering a little too long on Marketplace or Amazon.

Yup, I guess I *can* just borrow that book from the library.

3. There are many things more precious than money.

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” – Luke 12:34

Our pre-teen boys think being a YouTube gamer, or maybe a McLaren car designer, would be great career choices. Having fun all day and making lots of money – what could be better?

We trust that as they mature, they'll refine their goals (and their motivations), and already we talk quite often about how to make life decisions such as choosing a career. Personally, I pursued a field of work (writing and editing) that typically doesn't pay well. But I loved what I did, and as I got older I increasingly appreciated how writing can also serve others and glorify God. Similarly, we encourage our kids to one day pursue something that they enjoy – and that is worthwhile and meaningful – whether or not they'll make a McLaren wage at it.

Besides job satisfaction, there are so many other things (faithful living, healthy relationships, physical and mental wellbeing) that are more precious, and will bring more joy, than just money.

4. Money is a good servant, but a terrible master – or god.

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” – 1 Tim. 6:10

It was our daughter who, at a very young age, requested a trip to the dollar store to buy Christmas gifts for her siblings with her very limited resources – starting a regular tradition. Our daughter loved the excitement of choosing, buying, wrapping, and presenting gifts to

loved ones. She recognized that money was a tool she could use to bring joy to others – not just a treasure to be hoarded for its own sake.

Money can buy a lot of things, experiences, and opportunities – many of which we can receive gratefully and enjoy as gifts from God (1 Tim. 4:4). It's the *love* of money, not money itself, that Paul calls “a root of all kinds of evils.”

Our financial choices need to reflect our true priorities. I know of a couple who recently canceled a planned trip so they could support a church expansion project. I know of another family who continues to live in a very modest home, though they could afford a significant “upgrade,” “so everyone feels welcome.” On the flip side, I know others who live in larger houses but have made a conscious commitment to use their homes for generous hospitality. Not everyone has to make the same choices, but we do all need to be thoughtful and deliberate about the decisions we make.

We might pass up a chance at a promotion (and a wage increase) to ensure we'll have enough time and energy for family and church commitments. We'll structure our budget so that charitable giving is a non-negotiable, not an afterthought, and try to thoughtfully align our spending with our prayer that “[God's] kingdom come.”

If we remember and prioritize what's really important in life, money tends to fall into its appropriate place as a resource and a tool.

5. Money is best held loosely.

“Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.” – Prov. 23:4-5

I was reminded of this rather vivid passage during a recent season when our formerly-trusty vehicle suddenly needed major repairs, our roof started leaking, and our hot water heater abruptly died. Resignedly, we had to wave goodbye to some carefully built-up savings. Money certainly can “grow wings and fly away,” no matter how careful we are – so it's best to hold it loosely.

Our kids certainly notice how we react to things. Is a financial setback a tragedy, or something that doesn't rattle us to our core because “it's only money”? Are our possessions the things we fixate on? Is losing them our greatest fear? Our kids will figure out how money fits into our world and worldview through the thousand small choices, actions, and reactions they witness from us.

We don't need to hold on tightly to

money because we know it's not what we depend on:

“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for [God] has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear...’” (Heb. 13: 5-6).

Instead, we hold tightly to the less tangible things that matter more – and to the God who is the Giver of them all.

Of course, there's much more our kids will need to learn about money as they grow up. But if we can help them start to grasp these five principles, they'll have an excellent foundation for more complex and more practical skills related to budgeting and handling money.

And as my husband and I teach them, I hope we'll learn these principles more deeply, and apply them more faithfully, too. RP

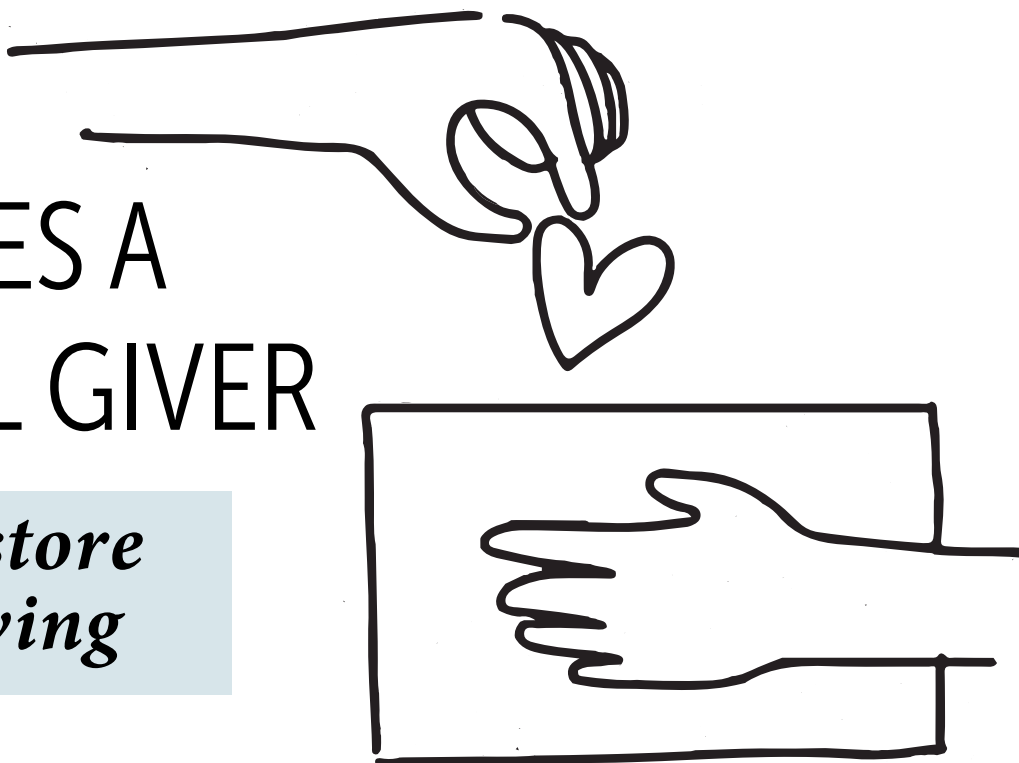
*Jan Broersma is the copy editor for RP.
Her iPhone 6 works just fine.*



GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER

6 ways to restore the joy of giving

by Jeff Dykstra



In one sense, the most faithful givers during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ were the Pharisees, as He Himself said: “you Pharisees... tithe mint and rue and every herb” (Luke 11:42). However, a fuller look at this passage shows that Jesus was not pleased with their self-glorifying and joyless giving: “But woe to you Pharisees! For you... neglect justice and the love of God” (Luke 11:42).

Christ wants us to give from the heart so we should never allow our generosity to become merely a dutiful routine. But it can easily happen. For example, one way to give responsibly to your church is to give by automatic or pre-authorized withdrawal. If you have a stable income, it’s an excellent way to commit to giving your first fruits each month... but it can also become almost invisible, to the point that you barely realize that you are giving at all.

Yet, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). So how can we be more heartfelt, God-loving, and cheerful in our giving? Be more intentional – if you invest your time and thoughts, your heart will follow. So here’s a half dozen ways to restore the joy in your giving.

1. See for yourself

While our giving shouldn’t be motivated by our pleasure, *it can be motivated by knowing the good it is doing*. Paul demonstrates this when he shares with the Corinthians the blessing their gift will be for those in need in Jerusalem, and also shares what glory it will give God (2 Cor. 9:12-13).

If you are giving faithfully to your congregation’s budgetary needs, invest some time as well. Read over the budget before the annual congregational meeting to see where your money is going. Focus carefully on the reports of the various committees in your congregation to see or hear what they have been doing and hope to be doing in the year ahead.

When giving to other Reformed and Christian causes, get informed about them, and be sure to sign up for updates on the work being done by any ministry you are supporting.

Visiting the building where an organization does its work can give you a better understanding of the value of, and the need for, its services. For example, when I recently visited Ed-

monton’s Hope Mission, Ryan Harding, the Mission’s manager of community engagement, told me of one client who had, more than a decade ago, actually threatened Ryan while high on crystal meth, but who was now ministering to others at the Mission.

While I was there I saw the Mission was putting up wooden barriers around one end and one side of each bunk, so I asked about it. Ryan explained that many of the men they served had felt a lack of privacy, being exposed on every side – the barriers fixed that, and they also lowered the level of conflict among their clients. However, Ryan stressed that these barriers come with a cost. There’s the financial cost of installing them, and also the expenses involved in the increased need for more supervision because the barriers block staff’s view of the men in the bunks – now it is harder to see if men are using drugs or might be having a medical emergency.

Being there, and being able to see and ask questions gave me a good sense of their need for funds and the careful use they are putting them to. And that certainly increases the joy in giving!

2. Let others know

Share your newsletters from Christian charities and ministries with your friends and neighbors. Promote those same organizations on social media, being sure to open your posts with acknowledgment that their successes are due to God's blessing and to His glory. If the leaders of the ministries you support have written a book or two about their work, request a copy, read it, talk about it, and pass it along to your nearest Little Free Library, or lend it to multiple interested people.

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* tells us, rightly, that "the chief end of man" is to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever," so *let the world know how the groups and people are bringing glory to God.*

3. Get your hands, or feet, involved

Consider *giving more than just your money*. Put in some sweat equity to, again, have a better idea of what your money is supporting.

In your church, volunteer to provide coffee and other refreshments on Sunday; buy supplies for your church's Little Free Library (see the sidebar); join your church's outreach to the neighborhoods around the church building; become a member of the church's Committee of Administration or sound crew; and either step up to allow your name to stand as a candidate for office-bearer or support your office-bearers with hospitality, or errands, or meals to support their families during the busy times of an office-bearer's term.

As far as spending volunteer time outside your own congregation, the idea of regularly volunteering for a particular organization may seem scary or impractical for you. Perhaps you are feeling a mismatch between your talents and the organization's needs, or maybe you have bigger commitments right now to your church and/or your family. If so, perhaps you can support others' efforts: encourage your kids to get involved (and commit to driving them if needed), or help make it possible for your spouse to free up some time to contribute to this

cause.

Getting together with others to support your favorite organization spreads the joy, and promotes the glory of God, that much more. For instance, if you only have time to make one visit to see what an organization is doing, you may still be able to bring others with you. Organize a group to tour the headquarters or the sites where the ministry does its outreach.

If you can only commit to one afternoon or one evening a year for the organization, see if you can help get a team together, or make a date of it with your spouse for the group's annual fundraiser. And if that fundraiser is a walkathon, it gets you into the fresh air, gives you exercise, and promotes your fellowship for a morning or afternoon together – win/win! When a number of Canadian Reformed school staff and students organized a team to walk for the Union Gospel Mission in Winnipeg, the competition to raise more funds than the other teams was just plain fun, but it also promoted God's glory by spreading around the knowledge of what God was doing through the Mission.

4. Follow the money

Another way to feel good about your giving is to know that the funds are being used in a stewardly way. So *check the accountability of the organizations you are contributing to.*

Visiting them might be the best way, but you can also look over their public budgets (especially comparing planned spending and revenue to actual spending and revenue), and their online ratings. For example, if the organization is American, you can visit the Ministry Watch 1000 Database to see the financial accountability and efficiency of the one thousand biggest Christian charities in the United States. Ministry Watch has tough standards for financial accountability, and a willingness to report on Christian organizations that are not living up to their Christian mission, or are even involved in actual abuse of those that they are supposed to be serving, but it also highlights Christian organizations

that combine Christian ministry with financial accountability.

5. Don't underestimate the urgency

Another way to restore the joy of giving is to *realize the ultimate purpose and the urgency of what you are doing*. In his article on ChristianStudyLibrary.org, Glenn D. Jerrell reminds us that:

"We are the church militant! Do not underestimate the enemy! After all, 'your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour' (1 Peter 5:8). The Scriptures also teach us to 'take every thought captive to obey Christ.' Your whole life is engaged in this struggle – and that includes your giving. Resources for gospel ministry are needed now!



Ryan Harding, Hope Mission's manager of community engagement

LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES CAN BE A BIG DEAL

If you have a (too) well-stocked home library of good Christian books, but you still want to keep stocking it, start passing along your already-read titles to a local Little Free Library, which invites users to “leave a book; take a book.” What a great opportunity to share your favorite Christian authors with the neighborhood!

And if you want to be subversive, the books you take when you leave a book can be the kind that you don’t want your neighbors to read. Take out the trash and leave them the treasure instead. It’s a service too, to put garbage into the garbage can. For instance, in my neighborhood’s Little Free Library, I gave up a copy of A.W. Tozer’s *God and Men*, in exchange for the bigger, but definitely not better, *The Origin of Species* – Charles Darwin’s kickstarter for the evolution movement – and dropped the latter into my little free wastebasket.

On the other hand, more positively, to be more clearly salt and light in your neighborhood, include a bookmark in each book you donate, with suitable contact information and an invitation to email you, or, even better, to talk with you over coffee, about the book.

If you want to start your own Little Free Library, check out LittleFreeLibrary.org.



“...The warfare between God and Satan should generate a life-and-death sense of urgency to support and sustain gospel ministry with all the means that God gives us and to do so from generation to generation.”

We are in the midst of spiritual warfare! Faithful giving equips our fellow warriors to proclaim how our God “has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13-14), and to help see others rescued as well.

6. Remember the chief part of our thankfulness

Finally, we need to remind ourselves of the spiritual dangers associated with giving: a sense of self-reliance and self-glorification. We may be tempted to think that we have done so much for God’s kingdom.

The best way to avoid those dangers is to *bring the organizations God has given us the resources to support before Him*, in both thankfulness and supplication for their work (Phil. 4:6). After all, the Heidelberg Catechism says that prayer is the chief part of our thankfulness, and thanking God for His work through Christian ministries, and seeking His help to make their work fruitful, kills our innate pride in our own generosity and brings glory to Him and joy in His work.

It is easy to lose track of the ways in which God is working in the world. One way to avoid that is to make a list of everything you are giving to, as well as other worthy organizations, and to put them on your own personal prayer calendar – for instance, intentionally thanking God for, and interceding for, specific ministries each day of the week.

Finally, in all your prayer, as the ultimate pride-killer and joy-giver, remember how much more God has done for you in Christ than you could ever do for Him: “Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!” (2 Cor. 9:15). RP

Tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord.

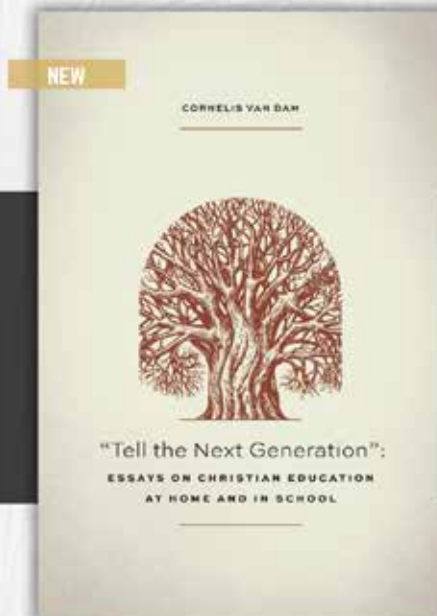
PSALM 78:4

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HOW TO LOCK YOUR PHONE FROM PORNOGRAPHY... 101

A taste of Into the Light Ministries' *TechSafe* series

by Nathan Massengill

“Always lock the doors.” As a boy, this teaching served me well. We lived in a place with frequent break-ins, so the danger was real and present. We only had four doors in our home so “Always lock the doors” was an easy command to follow. Teaching us this was part of what my parents did to *protect our home*. And protecting the home front is what loving parents do, right?

But in 2025, there are new kinds of dangers. The most dangerous doorway into your house is no longer through your front entrance – it’s in your pocket. It is in our children’s pockets and hands. And there are often hundreds of doorways to pornography on your phone. It takes time and energy to find, monitor, and lock all of these.

I’m here to help. In this article, I will show you how to lock down your

phones, protect yourself and your children, and live with a phone to the glory of God. Here are eight key steps that will make your devices far safer.

STEP 1: LEARN THE PHONE

Think about how often you use your phone. Have you ever asked *what* a phone is? Have you ever asked *how* information gets to your phone?

Simply put, a smartphone is an *infor-*

There are often hundreds of doorways to pornography on your phone.

mation machine. Any time you use your phone to watch a video, listen to music, or read an article you are receiving video and audio *information*. But information can come into a phone through Wi-Fi, data, Bluetooth, the phone's camera, and other means. Each one of these represents a unique doorway into your device and, therefore, your home. And since smartphones can fit in your pocket, they are designed to be personal and private. Statistics show that most pornography is accessed on a smartphone.

What does this mean? You need to get to know your device. You do not need to be a tech wizard, but you do need to be generally familiar with it.

STEP 2: CONTROL WI-FI

The main way information enters the phone is through Wi-Fi. Every app on your phone uses Wi-Fi to access the internet to obtain whatever information it needs, whether that's Spotify to stream music or Google to find a new recipe.

We sometimes think of the internet as something that is in our home, but it's not. The internet is way out in the wide world. We access the internet through our internet service providers (ISP), and we connect to the internet providers through Wi-Fi. How does that Wi-Fi get to our devices? A router.

A router makes Wi-Fi so that all your devices can connect to the internet. Without a router, your Wi-Fi could not travel from the wire in the wall, through the air, and into your phone. Your wireless devices couldn't connect to the World Wide Web. The router creates a Wi-Fi signal and carries the internet service through the Wi-Fi signal to every part of your house so that all your devices can connect to the internet.

This access to the internet can be used for good, such as searching for a new recipe or for a used car on Facebook marketplace. It can also be used for evil, such as searching for pornography. Nor-

mal routers carry all of this information to your phone indiscriminately of what is good and what is evil.

A smart router, on the other hand, will monitor, filter, and (if necessary) block this content before it even sends it out over the Wi-Fi. This smart router will let that recipe reach any device that searches for it, but it might block Facebook for some of the younger teens' phones while allowing it for the parents' phones. Best of all, it will block pornography for all devices, entirely. So your second step to locking doors on your phone is to buy a smart router like Bark or Gryphon to have powerful router-level monitoring, blocking and filtering tools.

If you want more information on routers, we have an entire video on this in the *TechSafe* series: **IntoTheLightMinis-**



techsafe.ca/techsafe/techsafe-routers

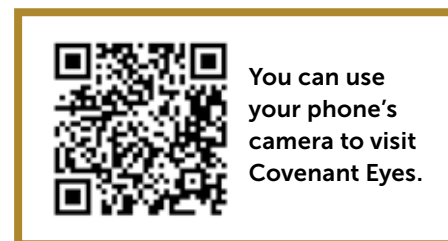
STEP 3: INSTALL COVENANT EYES

Wi-Fi-level router monitoring systems are amazing, but they only work while on Wi-Fi. When a phone is not in your home or not on your Wi-Fi network, these smart routers can't filter anything for you. This is why an accountability system that stays on the device at all times is essential. So step three is to install accountability software to monitor, filter, and block content on the smartphone device.

We recommend you install Covenant Eyes. This accountability software helps you keep your kids or yourself accountable to what is viewed online. It even sends reports to any ally of choice. Covenant Eyes enables you to block specific

websites or apps that you don't want your child browsing on, ranging from explicit websites to even benign websites that may waste time.

To learn how to set up and install Covenant Eyes on your phone, go to **CovenantEyes.com**, and they will walk you through the entire process. You can try it out and get your first month free



by using the code: INTOTHELIGHT.

STEP 4: ASSESS APPS

In steps one through three, you have increased your security for the whole house, but there are many doors still left open on individual devices. The most common danger points show up in a phone's apps.

Apps are just roads to get you to the information you want to view, receive, or send. While some apps can be monitored by accountability software, some cannot. An app with open access to the internet that is not monitored, filtered, or blocked is simply too risky to leave unattended.

It is vital to go through all the apps on the phone and delete any that are unnecessary or could be a road to access explicit content. If you see apps that you or your child don't need, then delete them! There are also app categories like social media, dating, or streaming services that are very dangerous to have on a device. Unless you or your child have demonstrated significant levels of self-control, these apps should not be on the phone. They often provide direct access to explicit material through their internal browsers.

Other app types like gaming or messaging can be dangerous for other reasons, like getting sent inappropriate pictures, being groomed by a predator, or seeing sexually provocative ads after a game. This is why every app must be



assessed and reviewed before leaving it on your or your child's device. It will take some serious time to work through each app, testing links, looking for chat boxes, watching for ads, and assessing any other potential danger points, but it is worth it!

STEP 5: SET UP PARENTAL CONTROLS

Finally, step five is to set up parental controls. Many apps and phones have parental controls *built into* the phone – these are good and powerful tools. See our video on smartphones to learn more about these parental controls and to find links to the websites of the specific devices you use at **IntoTheLightMinis-**



Many apps and phones have parental controls *built into* the phone...

tries.ca/techsafe/techsafe-phones.

What do parental controls do? Why are they helpful in protecting yourself and your home?

They keep you from losing all the work you did in step four. Without parental controls on the device level, lock-

ing down the app store or play store, the deleted apps can just be redownloaded!

Most phones have parental or screen time controls built in that allow you to disable the app store with a password that only you know. You can also set time limits for games or communication apps, set age-level content restrictions, block in-app purchases, and set device-specific downtime. For example, if you don't think that your children should be on their devices past 10:00 pm, you can set that up through parental controls on their devices.

Many of these parental controls can be found in the settings portion of the phone itself, or have their own accompanying app that can go on your phone, so you can monitor, block, and filter your child's phone from afar. Remember, these parental controls are not designed for tech wizards, they are made for you.

STEP 6: CONSIDER OTHER DEVICES

If you've not guessed it already, smartphones are complex and very difficult to lock down. They are very powerful devices, which make them powerful to accomplish good... but also evil. Because of this, you might want to question whether or not you or your child needs a smartphone. Step six, consider "dumbphones" and "child phones."

On the outside, dumbphones look very similar to smartphones, but their

operating system is hyper-minimalistic. They have black and white screens and only a handful of features like calling, text, GPS, and a few other basic functions. That's it.

Many adults love dumbphones because they are distraction-free. But because they are so limited, they are also a safe option for your child's first phone. It's literally impossible to surf the internet on a dumbphone, unlike some old-school flip phones. We recommend looking at the LITE Phone and the WISE Phone. A quick Google search will bring you to their website, and you can also get a small discount on your order when you use the code: INTOTHELIGHT.

If the temptation to pornography or to doomscroll Instagram is an active struggle in your life, then you should consider a dumbphone or child phone.

STEP 7: CHANGE RHYTHMS AND RULES

While all of these "tech" solutions are essential to making a smartphone safe to use, they are only one-half of the conversation. You need to think through household rhythms and rules that will bolster your ability to keep an eye on things and protect yourself. If your children want a particular app, allow them to make a case for it, and then evaluate together the dangers and benefits of the app.

Here is a list of ideas to get your brain working on the patterns you might want to put in place for your home. While this list isn't comprehensive, it is a good place to start.

1. No phones in the bedroom: personal devices need to be used in a common area in the house.
2. Device curfew: All devices in the home get turned off at nine or ten at night. You can also have all devices charging in the kitchen overnight, even friends' devices.
3. All apps, software, and media need to be approved by you, the parent, or your spouse before being downloaded or watched.
4. You, not your children, own the devices in the home, and you have the authority to check on those devices as needed. Let your children know that you might look at their apps or search history from time to time.
5. If there is a particular way you want your children to act with their smartphone, make sure you model that yourself.
6. If you have children, invite your older children into the conversation. These

ideas should just be a start to get your mind thinking.

Ultimately you know what's best for your home. Spend some time in prayer asking the Lord for wisdom as you set up rules for your house. If you are married, make sure you do this with your spouse.

STEP 8: RINSE AND REPEAT BECAUSE IT'S WORTH IT

Step eight is to rinse and repeat. Imagine if you only locked your house's doors one day in the year. You might say to yourself, "Alright, everything is safe and locked up!" Of course, this does not account for the other 364 days of the year or the regular unlocking that happens over time. The same is true for smartphones. This "how to" is not a one-time, fix-all solution. Rather, it's a roadmap to a lifestyle change. And thankfully, God addresses the very work you're doing here.

In Matthew 5, Jesus teaches us how to handle these temptations to sin – radical danger calls for radical measures. He says, "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your

members than that your whole body be thrown into hell." Of course, Jesus does not want you to literally tear your eyes out. Rather, He wants you to take the necessary steps to protect yourself from sin. Where temptation is present, radical measures are necessary. In fact, the way Jesus describes the dangerous result of indulging in sin – which is the eternal judgment of God – makes radical measures appear normal, even *necessary*. In fact, to Jesus losing an eye is *nominal* compared to *losing your whole body*. If you are tempted to sin with your phone, Jesus is calling you to tear out your right eye by locking down the doorways to sin on your phone.

Be encouraged, Jesus never calls His people to do something without providing the grace to do it.

CONCLUSION

Whew. That's a lot. We understand how overwhelming this can be, but be encouraged – the fact that you are reading this article shows that you have the desire to make changes and protect your family.

May God bless your efforts to secure your home, raise children of integrity, and glorify Him supremely. RP

WHERE CAN I GET MORE HELP?

This article is a taste of what we're doing at *Tech-Safe*, a tutorial series for protecting every device in your home. The help doesn't stop with just your phone; we've also tackled your computer, tablets, Smart TVs, gaming consoles, routers, VR headsets and more. And we have a separate tutorial for each one.

So now you don't have to be a tech wizard to protect your home! Whether you are a parent wanting to safeguard your family, a struggler seeking to cut off access, or a pastor looking to equip your church, this series is for you. These tutorials will equip you to safely live with and enjoy your technology to the glory of God.

Let us walk you through this complicated process on our website, where we will provide everything you need to know about every device that you own. It's all at **IntoTheLightMinistries.ca/TechSafe** – we will ask you for your name and email, but that's it. It's all free.



Jacob Valk is the knowledgeable, humorous, and very unintimidating guide parents need to keep up to pace with our high-tech world.



A CHURCH RESPONSE IS NEEDED TO STOP THE PORN CRISIS

Parental Controls Are Not Enough

by Jonathon Van Maren

Over the past several years, I have spoken in dozens of Christian communities to thousands of students and parents on the issue of digital porn addiction. Ten years ago, many parents thought the warnings about the digital porn threat were well-intentioned, but exaggerated. These days, most people are aware that porn use is swiftly becoming a norm in Christian communities. Not a single Christian high school I have spoken at did not have a *significant number* of students struggling with pornography.

PROTECTING YOUR HOME DOESN'T PROTECT YOUR KIDS

So, how do parents take steps to ef-

fectively porn-proof their homes? Many parents try to do just that. They install internet filters. They monitor the devices their children have or have access to. They use CovenantEyes.com, Qustodio.com, or other accountability software. But time and again, frustrated parents tell me that their children have been exposed to explicit content anyways, because the parents of the friends their children hang out with do not take these precautions. Additionally, parents who actively monitor the internet access of their children by not giving them a smartphone face constant fights with their children if they are among the few who do not have one.

The reality is that if Christian com-

munities are going to respond effectively to the crisis of porn addiction among the young, it will take a *community response*. Yes, it is essential that individual households ensure that internet access is both restricted and closely monitored. *But this is clearly not enough.*

In fact, secular governments are for the most part ahead of church leaders in recognizing this reality, which is why American state legislatures, the UK government, and other governments across Europe are grappling with the problem of how to keep pornography away from children. They recognize that this is a social problem requiring a robust collective solution, and Christian communities must recognize this, as

well. Christian communities are, for the most part, lagging behind secular leaders in recognizing this problem and considering collective solutions.

THIS NEEDS TO BE “ALL IN”

In a recent essay in *First Things* titled “Parents Can’t Fight Porn Alone,” in which they make the case for government restrictions on digital pornography, Clare Morell and Brad Littlejohn explain why communities need to work together:

“Pornography’s addictive properties raise the stakes. Not only are children ill equipped to make rational choices about whether to consume a product, but their developing brains are more likely than adult brains to become hooked, with lifelong consequences. Adults may abuse alcohol, tobacco, and porn (indeed, for porn, there is no good “use,” but the law cannot suppress every vice), but they are less likely to become addicted if the first exposure occurs after age eighteen, when their brains are more fully developed. And the addictive qualities of porn make a mockery of parental controls: Once a child has encountered porn for the first time (perhaps through a friend, or on a parent’s device, or before the parents realized they needed to put controls on the child’s device), his or her brain will be programmed to hunt for it again and again, so that any and every loophole or glitch is an opening to ongoing porn consumption.

“Too often, portals to porn come in the form of friends. For many American children, the dark journey with pornography begins on the school bus, at recess, or even at youth group. Even when parents set up content-filtering regimes for their own families, they cannot control what other families in

their communities are doing. With 95 percent of teens carrying around mini-computers in their pockets, it is all too easy for a peer with an unfiltered smartphone to expose another child to pornography. An Oxford Internet Institute study thus estimated that for a single child to be shielded from online pornography in any given year, at least seventeen households in his or her network (and possibly as many as seventy-seven) would need to be employing filters.”

PORN IS LOOKING FOR THEM

Re-read that for a moment: *At least seventeen households in the network of a single child need to be monitoring and restricting internet usage in order to protect him or her from online porn for a single year.* And as I emphasize in my presentations, it doesn’t matter whether your kids are looking for porn – if they’re online, porn is looking for them. As Morell and Littlejohn put it:

“Today, the average home has multiple internet-connected devices: smart TVs, laptops, iPads, gaming consoles, and smartphones for every member of the family, not to mention school-issued devices. Each of these ‘smart’ technologies may have hundreds of individual apps, many with their own in-app internet browsers, which means there may be thousands of points of entry to the internet in a single home. A minor using Snapchat, for instance, can reach Pornhub in just five clicks without ever leaving the app.

“The abundance of portals requires several different parental control solutions, few of which are intuitive or wholly reliable. Apple’s Screen Time filter, one of the best, requires seventeen steps to set up properly, has been known to stop working without warning, and even when fully functional

can be hacked by tech-savvy teens. Better-designed third-party parental control apps are barred from accessing and regulating many of the most popular – and dangerous – apps, such as Discord, Snapchat, and TikTok. And if a parent, recognizing that no one solution is comprehensive, tries to install more than one external control app on the same device, the apps will often conflict with one another.

“Parents thus find themselves losing the arms race against Big Tech and Big Porn. This is dire, since children do not need to go looking for pornography; it finds them on social media. The porn industry has adopted the social media influencer model, with porn performers promoting their content on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, X, Facebook, and Instagram, in order to entice users (many of them minors) to click through to their own sites.”

Unsurprisingly, many parents despair. Plenty of parents eventually give up, worn down by the begging and badgering of their children and the lack of community support for their decisions about smartphones and internet-capable devices. If all the other kids have them, they can’t be that bad, right? Porn has been around forever, and most people turned out okay, didn’t they? If we are taking this problem more seriously than our community leadership, we’re probably being paranoid or going overboard, aren’t we? It is far easier to cave, cover our eyes, and hope for the best – but this invariably has devastating consequences, many of which I detail in a comprehensive chapter in my recent book *How We Got Here: A Guide to Our Anti-Christian Culture*.

A GROWING PROBLEM

If we are to protect our children from being exposed to explicit content and developing porn addictions – and again, I emphasize that this is *a significant and growing problem in every Christian community I have visited* – we will need to work together. Christian communities should treat pornography addiction with

*Too often, portals to porn
come in the form of friends...*



"Christian schools should... ideally, cultivate a community with a collective standard that recognizes the dangers of giving teenagers smartphones..."

the same level of seriousness we would apply to a wave of addiction to other drugs. Pornography is more insidious because its effects, at first, are less visible – but they are no less destructive. They rewire and fundamentally transform the mind, alter our ability to relate to the opposite sex, and profoundly poison our ability to have healthy relationships.

Thus, community leaders should address the pornography crisis head on. Yes, parents should ensure that every internet-capable device is locked down and monitored. But we must also work with other parents and ensure that the networks we are a part of are pulling in

the same direction. (As the American psychologist Dr. Leonard Sax put it in a presentation I attended recently, it is the task of parents to find out if the household their child is visiting has unrestricted internet access.)

Christian schools should develop and enforce rigid policies on smartphone use at school and, ideally, cultivate a community with a *collective standard* that recognizes the dangers of giving teenagers smartphones to begin with. We are all in this together, and we cannot protect our children from pornography if other parents are not willing to do the same.

TIME TO CATCH UP

Again, secular experts are ahead of most Christian communities on this issue. Intellectuals such as Jonathan Haidt (*The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*) are driving a new consensus: Giving a child (and that very much includes teenagers) a smartphone (or device with unfiltered internet access) is one of the most damaging decisions a parent can make. Morell and Littlejohn are right: Parents cannot do this alone. But they shouldn't have to, either. Christian communities are lagging behind secular governments and experts on this issue. It is time we caught up. ^{RP}

This is reprinted with permission from TheBridgehead.ca where it was first published under the title "Parental controls are not enough: A community response is needed to stop the porn crisis" and where Jonathon Van Maren blogs and also hosts a regular podcast.



RP'S 10-DAY SCREEN-FAST CHALLENGE

How many times are you scrolling on your phone or tablet each day? Do you have any idea? What pulls in your children most: books, games, physical activity, or a screen?

Christian homes, including seniors, aren't immune from the addictive nature of screens. Although screens and digital technology can be a great blessing, we have a very hard time keeping them in their proper place. But we want what should be our priorities – family, friends, and faith – to remain our priorities, don't we?

SO ENOUGH TALK. IT IS TIME TO ACT.

Are you, or is your family, willing to go 10 days without screens and/or social media? Do you have the ability to function without them? It is one thing to say so, and another to do it.

A 10-day social media and screen fast will open your eyes to the power that our devices have on our lives, and on our family's lives. It will provide a window of time to experience what life is like without them. This break can also provide a fresh opportunity to very deliberately decide how you and your family will utilize these devices moving forward.

Here are some tips to help you fast:

1. Commit. Don't allow yourself to make exceptions, even if you are having a hard day. For example, just because you are at someone else's home doesn't mean you can enjoy screens again.
2. If your fast includes screens, but you still need screens for basic functions that are essential, ensure that you are only using your tablet and phone for those functions. For example, if you need a phone for directions, don't take the opportunity to scroll the news. If you need a computer at work, or to write a report for a committee you are on, don't let yourself go to other websites or play an online game.
3. Turn your devices off and hide them. Take the TV off the wall. Make them difficult to access.
4. Log out of your social media accounts so that it isn't easy to open them.
5. Move the icons of your apps so that the social media apps (including YouTube) are hidden.
6. Come up with a plan: whenever you find yourself wanting to reach for a screen or open your social media, what will you do instead? It doesn't have to be hard. Perhaps say a prayer, take a drink of water, try to memorize a verse (keep some verses on a piece of paper in your pocket), do a set of 10 jumping jacks, or read a couple of pages of a book you've been meaning to get to.
7. Have alternatives waiting and ready for you and your children: books, magazines, art supplies, a soccer ball, a walk to the park, etc.
8. Invite accountability: let loved ones know what you are doing, and ask them to check in on you regularly to see how it is going. Tell them not to let you off the hook!
9. Don't read this and conclude a screen-fast challenge is only important for youth or young adults. 😊

It may be fun to invite another person or family to do this with you. If you are willing to give this a try, encourage your friends, care group, or others to do the same.

We would love to hear how this goes for you and what impact it had on you and your family. Please send us a note by email at editor@reformedperspective.ca or send us a good ol' fashioned letter via Box 3609, Smithers BC, V0J 2N0. We look forward to hearing from y'all, and sharing the results!





A creative approach to boundaries in dating

(Galatians 5:16-25)

by Maggie Vandenberg

Several weeks ago, my fiancé and I sat down at a local restaurant with my aunt and uncle, where we enjoyed a good meal and a great conversation. That conversation, however, did not start in the most conventional way.

"Well, I'm looking forward to this free food," said Nathan, my fiancé.

"You've earned it," my uncle replied with a grin.

We had successfully completed our contract a few months prior, and were finally sitting down to the promised reward of a dinner out, paid for by my aunt and uncle. The contract had been written up by my uncle, signed by myself, and witnessed by a friend – all back on June 29, 2022. This makes it sound very official, but in truth it was spontaneously scrawled down on a loose piece of paper, borne of a somewhat harebrained conversation and spur-of-the-moment decision.

Let me explain.

A few years earlier I'd been in an unhealthy dating relationship. Despite the brief time frame, the physical side of the relationship had quickly escalated. Nothing about my actions had been God-honoring. I had been naive and impulsive and foolish, and it cost me much heartache. In the days that followed, I had many conversations with my parents, close friends,

and various other family members; they collectively blessed me with wisdom, listening ears, and reminders of God's grace and the sovereignty of His plans. I had repented, and knew I was forgiven, but with lingering hurt and shame I was struggling to move forward. I wanted to express that repentance in steps taken, but I didn't know what that could look like.

One night while visiting, my uncle suggested I take what I'd learned and apply it to the future – that I learn from my mistakes, and do my utmost not to repeat them.

"Easier said than done," I grumbled.

That's when he got a strange glint in his eye.

DOING THINGS DIFFERENT

What followed was humorous, bizarre, and one of the best things I've ever been involved in. We sat down and wrote up a rough draft, with my uncle setting the terms. The contract stated that I would "not kiss a man for at least 2 months after the start of a relationship." It also stated that, upon successful completion of the contract, my aunt and uncle would treat me and my significant other to dinner at the restaurant of our choice. I signed, my uncle signed, and a friend who was present signed as a witness.

I recognize that the specifics of this contract may not be for everyone. Some people may think the terms restrictive, while others may think they are not cautious enough. But what I want to draw your attention to, rather than the details, is the overarching purpose: seeking accountability which seeks to serve the Lord (1 Thess. 5:11-13).

FOUR REASONS TO SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE

A couple years passed, and I met Nathan. After a few months of long-distance dating, we decided I would travel to Alberta to spend the summer in his hometown and see if the relationship had a solid future.

Dating in-person would be different. It was time to tell him about the contract. I hadn't signed it as a joke – my commitment was sincere – but it had been easy to imagine becoming complacent down the road if I found myself again in a romantic situation.

Nathan took the news very well. Yes, he made a joke about it ("Free food if we pull this off? Sweet!"), but he recognized the value in it. We both saw wisdom in it, for multiple reasons.

First, it would hold us accountable to another person. As the third party, my un-



cle was at liberty to ask how the contract was going – and while I can't remember him doing so, the knowledge that he *could* was good motivation for us to stick to it. Occasionally, I texted over the summer to let my aunt and uncle know that things were going well. We did not want to let them down, or to let ourselves down by breaking the terms.

Second, it would teach us a lot about each other. *Is the person I am dating respectful of boundaries* (1 Cor. 6:12-13)? *Are they self-controlled* (Prov. 25:28)? 1 Cor. 13:4-5 reads, "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist upon its own way; it is not irritable or resentful." *So does the person I am dating value long-term love over short-term thrills, or are they manipulating situations to get what they want? How much do they value sticking to a commitment* (Col. 3:23-24)? *Can I trust them to navigate the relationship in a manner that seeks to glorify God and show Christian love to me, rather than to gratify themselves* (Phil. 2:1-4)?

We learned the answers to these questions, and more. We built teamwork, both striving to support each other in keeping the contract rather than making it difficult for each other.

Third, the contract helped us to focus on the emotional and spiritual aspects of our relationship, rather than the physical. We built a solid foundation of friendship, faith, and intellectual companionship, rather than a false foundation of hormones and desire (Phil. 4:8).

Fourth, it was practice – practice for not

giving in to stronger temptations further down the line in the relationship. Learning not to compromise each other in the "smaller things" has made it much easier to continue in the same way now; we learned to value each other's well-being and holiness early on, and that has been extremely beneficial as we grow nearer to marriage and temptations become more serious.

PLAN TO SUCCEED (PROV. 21:5)

We found a lot of value in having boundaries written down. There is something tangible about it, something more binding than a simple conversation. So, while still in the stage of "no kissing allowed," Nathan and I sat down and wrote up a list of boundaries for once the contract was done. I consider this to be our "contract after the contract."

I highly recommend this to any young couple; it is always easier to keep a boundary in place if you establish it *before*, rather than trying to make boundaries after you've already crossed lines.

And get detailed in your boundaries! If you're too embarrassed to talk about it, then you certainly shouldn't be doing it. Hard and fast rules are much easier to stick to than vague concepts. Don't allow yourselves loopholes – in the heat of the moment, you will be sorely tempted to take advantage of them, and almost always will.


Both Nathan and I asked a person outside our relationship to hold us accountable to our boundaries. This person is someone who can check in with us, ask

how things are going, and is someone we can go to if a boundary has been crossed and counsel or prayer is needed. Find someone you can trust with this; you'd be surprised how many people are willing. Many people want to see you do well – and many will have perspectives to share about their own experiences and mistakes, which you can learn from.

I've talked to quite a few people about this contract. While most see the benefit to it, there are a few who respond, "That doesn't sound very romantic." But here's what truly isn't romantic: Guilt. Regret. Selfishness. Carrying shame into a marriage together, or breaking up with someone you've gone too far with – which in turn affects your future marriage to somebody else. I've experienced it, and many of my friends have experienced it. Any of them would tell you how scarring and unromantic it can be.

In contrast, I cannot think of something that has made me more attracted to my fiancé than the effects of these contracts and boundaries. Seeing his care and dedication, his respect for me, his self-control, his leadership in holding to commitments – seeing how he loves me, respects himself, and above all, strives to honor God in his conduct – it all has made my love for him grow exponentially.

HELP YOURSELF... OR YOUR KIDS

If you are newly dating, or if you have kids who are dating; consider writing up a contract. It may feel embarrassing... but I am not asking you to shout it from the rooftops! It can be kept as private as you wish, a simple sheet of paper that can be tucked away in a drawer somewhere. I was initially a bit embarrassed to tell Nathan about my contract, and now I speak of it with much appreciation and a desire to recommend it to others. Remember the purpose, and that sheet of paper may become a treasured thing to look back on years down the road. 

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God with your body." – 1 Cor. 6:19-20



BECOMING CHINADA?

– a look at our country, from the eyes of a recently arrived Chinese family

by Ruth Tchobanian

"The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which."

Everyone should recognize this passage as the dreary finale of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. While it can be a slow journey from pigdom to humanity – from oppressed to oppressor – one who watches can see signs of the slide to where "some are more equal than others."

Liang and his wife Qi are uniquely positioned to observe this slide. They recently emigrated from China to Ontario.

My husband and I sat down with their family a few weeks ago and they opened up a page from their history. When I asked them, "So why did you come to Canada?" their 9-year-old piped up, "Because we had too much homework in China!" We all laughed, but in his own way, the kid was right on.

Liang was quick to explain, "We came to give our children a better future, and

some real options when they grow older." Options are exactly what the young Chinese person does not have. There is only one road to success: do well in school, go to university, graduate with good marks, wear a suit and live the Chinese dream. The one rule which cannot be broken is compliance. Students must answer the same, act the same, wear uniforms, sport the same hairdo and walk in lockstep with the regime. "It's like students walking into a factory and each coming out the exact same," Liang commented.

Critical thinking is shunned. Commands must be followed to the letter. These are the winners in Chinese society. And the losers? They become tradesmen, groveling in dirt, shame and dishonor. "Tradesmen often give up on themselves, use drugs, find mediocre jobs – and live the animal life," Liang said.

Why this big focus on compliance? Liang says it's because robot citizens are easily controlled. And control is what the Chinese government is all about. Liang's family experienced new layers of repres-

sion as the government's "social credit" system was rolled out, which brought with it closer scrutiny of individuals' behavior. Liang and Qi saw that coercion grow to stifling levels under COVID, being forced to spend months on end stuck inside their house. They wanted better for their kids. In 2020, they made the decision to move to Canada, but weren't able to actually leave China until a few years later. When the family did finally arrive in southern Ontario, they were ready for a fresh start, fresh opportunities and freedom.

The family began adjusting to Canadian culture. But Liang began to see little things about Canada that reminded him of China.

"The symptoms are the same," Liang explained, describing a concerted attempt to destroy freedom and democracy. He sees socialism as a train, with education and censorship pulling hard as locomotives. The ultimate destination? A place eerily similar to totalitarian China.

INFLUENCING WHAT'S SAID AND READ

Censorship of free speech and the media became abundantly obvious to the average Canadian during COVID. Then, as a result of Trudeau's 2023 *Online News Act*, Google and Meta (Facebook and Instagram) were told to either pay the government millions, or restrict users from sharing news articles. Google chose to pay \$100 million a year, and Meta decided to put a news ban in place rather than pay out. This ban has greatly decreased online discourse and hurt small news outlets across the country, which had already been on the cusp of shutting down.

Further restrictions were pursued in the 2024 *Online Harms Act* which has not yet been passed. In the name of safety, the Liberal government was seeking more control. Space doesn't permit getting into the details, but Jordan Peterson called it "truly the most authoritarian law conceivable."

And of course, there's the government's ongoing funding of the CBC, at \$1.4 billion a year, effectively cementing its role as a Liberal mouthpiece.

As Christians, we staunchly believe in the freedom to speak the truth. As Peter and the apostles responded to the high priest and council, "We must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). On a civil level, that manifests itself as freedom of speech. But when government doesn't acknowledge God, they start seeing themselves as the arbiters of what is true, and see for themselves an increasing role in suppressing speech they deem harmful. And so, socialism stifles free speech and the spread of truth, instead requiring citizens to pay homage to the government.

MOLDING THE NEXT GENERATION

Talking about education really got Liang going. His kids have been in the public school system for some time now, and it's "a different method for the same purpose" in Liang's books.

"They're trying to kill your thoughts... In China, they make education extremely hard. Here in Canada, they try to stupefy the kids!"

There's a strong focus, he said, on being nice, mellow and compliant. Critical thinking isn't taught, and students are expected to regurgitate what they're told. "Woke stuff," Liang said, "is the ultimate compliance test. We give you absurd things to go along with and then check – are you compliant?"

FOSTERING ANGER AND ENVY

Presenting a target of hatred is an important car in the socialism train. The most recent example of this is the *Elbows Up* campaign, and the increasing antipathy towards a nation who has been, by and large, an excellent ally for most of our history. This diversion tactic for the Liberal party has been shockingly successful with the vast majority of Canadians, who were once sick of Trudeau, now jumping on this bandwagon.

A more subtle element is creating artificial tension, or in Marxist terms, class warfare. Liang summed up Jagmeet Singh's campaign as a posed dichotomy: "Do you want a government for millionaires or for the people?" That's fair commentary, given Singh's comments that he doesn't work "for the rich and powerful," but for the people, and his putting the blame of soaring costs squarely on "corporate greed."

Singh is honing in on our inclination to covet our neighbor's stuff... and the big boss's position and power at work. Of course, the Bible condemns extorting the poor, and Christ calls us to avoid showing favoritism to the wealthy. But wealth in itself is not a sin – in fact, it can be the blessed result of hard work. Biblical "big bosses" like Abraham, Boaz, Job, and Joseph of Arimathea are honored as blessings to the community, and we, too, should honor those who administer well.

For Liang this is another cog in the wheel of socialism – there's a strong push to create division between groups who historically have worked well together. Where would Canadians be without economic drivers like capitalists, corporations and entrepreneurs? Unemployed, most likely.

SCARED AND POOR

In that train of socialism, Liang would add rising crime (which creates depen-

dency upon the police), and rising taxes and inflation, which creates – you guessed it! – more dependency.

When those fail, there is always force. The truckers going to Ottawa and having the Emergencies Act invoked on them? "That's very Chinese," said Liang. "After everything fails, they have the guns," he said, recalling China's silencing of whistle-blowers.


"Lazy education, censorship of free speech, government-owned news, rising crime, taxes, inflation... It's a master plan of socialism. The people in power remain in power, those in lower classes remain there. And everybody is supposed to be happy. You're like pigs on a farm."

Intentionally or not so, Liang has brought us back to George Orwell's pigs on a farm. Given the track we're on, is there any way to "Stop the train!"? Liang believes hope lies in providing options to our kids and teaching them to actually think. "As long as you have options, you have hope, and can choose wisely."

EVER PRESENT REFUGE

It's a troubling time, and hearing a piece-by-piece comparison of Canada and China from a veteran of communism is not encouraging. Will our nation continue its sprint towards becoming Chinada?

But there's one thing George Orwell didn't factor into his stories: God Himself. Our King reigns. As Psalm 2 declares, our King laughs in derision at the raging politicians. He will speak to them in His wrath and terrify them in His fury. So be wise, oh prime minister! Be warned, oh rulers of the earth! Serve the Lord with fear.

And for us – blessed are all who take refuge in Him. Amen. 

Names and some details changed to protect sources from reprisals by the Chinese government. Ruth Tchobanian lives with her husband and three kids in Hamilton Ontario. When not homeschooling, they love to hike, explore, adventure, read, and chase everything that squirms, wiggles, wriggles, and hops.

BEAR GOES SUGARING

BY MAXWELL EATON III

2020 / 32 PAGES



A coat and toque-wearing bear is going to show us how to make maple syrup from scratch, starting with harvesting the sap, and going step-by-step all the way through the process of boiling it down to syrup. He's got a couple of friends to help along the way (though for some reason this dog and squirrel don't need clothes to stay warm).

Our guide is quite the expert, showing us all the steps. Did you know not all maples are alike as far as sugar content? So, it begins with picking the right trees and then figuring out how deep to drill in. There are a surprising number of tools used: drills, hammers, buckets, and more. While the payoff is sweet, there is a *lot* of work involved. It takes forty gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup!

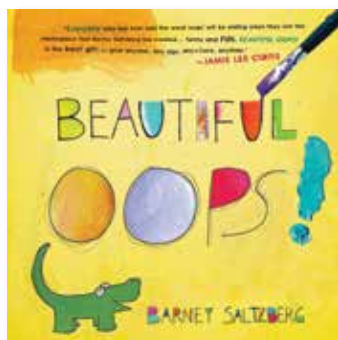
No cautions of note, but I'll mention that in some of Eaton's other books, he'll throw out an evolutionary reference here and there.

Everything is quite cute – pictures are drawn in a cartoon style complete with some word bubbles. What could be more Canadian than a picture book about making maple syrup? Well, they do make it down in the States too, but for the really good stuff, you need sap from the land of the maple leaf (and the Maple Leafs for that matter).

BEAUTIFUL OOPS!

BY BARNEY SALTZBERG

2010 / 28 PAGES



I play a "scribble game" with my girls. One person makes a quick jot on a page, and the other person has to turn these random lines into some kind of person, animal, or face. It's a cooperative game – the scribbler can't be too messy or it's impossible to play. And if you can't turn the scribble into something, then you can challenge the scribbler to show you how it could be done. In addition to being quite the portable travel game, it's a fun way for kids to work through any perfectionist impulses. Can't make a scribble perfect, can you?

Beautiful Oops! is another great tool to help whatever young perfectionists you know. Saltzberg highlights the joy that can come from running with your artistic mistakes. Clever foldouts show first a mistake – a couple of splotches of ink – and then how those "oops" can be turned into a pair of wheels for a jeep. A tear in the page can become the open craggy mouth of an alligator. Smudges and smears and coffee cup stains can all be turned into something fun.

This is for parents to read with their preschoolers. If you're looking to make this same point to an older 7 to 11-year-old audience, check out Corinna Luyken's **The Book of Mistakes**.

FERN AND OTTO

BY STEPHANIE GRAEGIN

2020 / 40 PAGES



Fern is a bear, and a best friend to Otto, the adventurous cat who shares her treehouse abode. Fern has authored a book, and naturally, it is about her best friend and the activities they get up to together, like eating lunch and napping in the sun.

While Otto likes napping, he isn't wild about being immortalized in a book as a napper. He wants the story to be about something more adventurous. And that means Fern and Otto need to head outside and find excitement. So off they head into the woods, two friends looking for some sort of heart-pumping happenings.

This already delightful book amps up the delight when Fern and Otto come across all sorts of fairytale events – they bump into the Tortoise and the Hare right as their race is about to start – only to have Otto insist they keep walking so they can find something more interesting. Kids will enjoy spotting familiar fairytale critters (like the Three Little Pigs shuttling their supplies) who show up in the background a few pages before Fern and Otto eventually bump into them.

The fractured fairytales are great fun, and I also appreciated this for the kid-level look it provides of the creative process – we get to see Fern write her book, work with feedback, and then rewrite it. Two thumbs way up!

5 ON OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

Stephanie Vanderpol takes a close look at the Bald Eagle in this issue's Come and Explore section, and we're jumping on the bird bandwagon here. Curiously, no matter what the target age range, bird book authors seem compelled to mention that birds used to be dinosaurs. As I was looking for books for littles still in the discernment-developing stage I tossed all the evolutionists and kept searching. Here's the very best of the rest arranged by age, youngest to older.

ODD BIRDS: MEET NATURE'S WEIRDEST FLOCK

BY LAURA GEHL
2022 / 22 PAGES

I've long been on the look-out for titles I could read to my kids that would interest me too. This board book is one of those kinds of twofers, with the first 16 pages talking about goofy birds, like the blue-footed booby, and a goggle-eyed "hoatzin" that "smells like poop" for the kids to enjoy, and then four pages at the back that get into the 8 featured birds in a bit more detail. Did you know the Oilbird can fly at night using echolocation like bats?



Every two-page spread features another bird and the amazing ability they have to either dig, dance, dive, stalk, jump, climb and pretty much everything else you could imagine... including just a smidge of flying too. This one is a whimsical treat!

GERTIE: THE DARLING DUCK OF WWII

BY SHARI SWANSON AND RENÉE GRAEF
2023 / 40 PAGES

As the Second World War was drawing to an end, millions were looking for whatever good news they could find. They settled on a duck momma protecting her eggs. This is the true story of Gertie, a duck who built her nest on "top of a tall post poking out of the Milwaukee River near a big drawbridge." When she made the local paper, the crowds really started coming. That seems to have gotten the attention of the international papers, and soon even our boys overseas were reading about this plucky duck. It was over the top, the amount of attention given to this momma and her ducklings, but it was about something more than just them. This was goodness untainted, a little spot of normalcy to focus in on, and something that people could celebrate no matter what else was going on.



HOW TO FIND A BIRD

BY JENNIFER WARD
AND DIANA SUDYKA
2020 / 48 PAGES

Got a budding birdwatcher in the house? Then this could be the perfect book for y'all, with tips and tricks on how to start seeing all sorts of different feathered fowl. The instructions are simple: kids are encouraged to try to blend in, "And move slowly." There are more than 50 birds depicted, and it is simply astonishing the variety of what God's all been up to. We get to peek in on birds that burrow and birds that splash, birds that can blend right in with the trees they are sitting on and birds that are arrayed in the most garish, gorgeous display. Lots to learn in this one, and so many pictures to appreciate.



THE BIG BOOK OF BIRDS

BY YUVAL ZOMMER
2019 / 64 PAGES

This is a big book indeed, a foot wide and almost one-and-a-half tall. That leaves plenty of room to get into more detail about the dozens of birds featured here. We learn about birds that eat snakes, how to bird-watch, why flamingos are pink, how many and how few feathers birds can have, which birds mate for life, and why bald eagles aren't really bald. This is encyclopedic in how much information is packed in here, but because it is shared in little nuggets all over pages just covered with birds, it's not an intimidating read. While I don't think it is a book that will be read front to back (unless your child is already orthinologically bent), a kid doesn't need to love birds to enjoy dipping into this repeatedly.



DIG, DANCE, DIVE: HOW BIRDS MOVE TO SURVIVE

BY ETTA KANER AND JUNE STEUBE
2022 / 40 PAGES

Birds can walk on water? Sorta. The pheasant-tailed Jacana has toes that are so long they can traipse across the lily pads, their weight so spread out that it keeps them from sinking. Birds can to-boggan down the slopes? You bet. Adélie penguins can get super-fast when they get low to the ground, sliding on their belly.





7,000 pages in, and now this?

Another popular tween series, *Keeper of the Lost Cities*, takes a turn... in book 11

by Jon Dykstra

For most of its run, *Keeper of the Lost Cities* has been a lightweight but generally “safe” book series – there’s no language, minimal violence, no sex (though quite a lot of flirting), and, up until the latest book, no agenda. But, on that last point, things changed with book 9.5, *Unravelled*. Author Shannon Messenger has decided that her readers need to know that homosexuality is “really cool.”

I’ve read about 9 of the, to this point, 11 *Keeper of the Lost Cities* (KOTLC) books, including this latest one, but have to admit to not being the biggest fan. I’ve been reading them because my girls were reading them.

“CANDY” BOOKS ARE ONE THING, “CANDY” SERIES ANOTHER

I don’t like KOTLC because I’m not wild about the premise: a lonely girl with no friends discovers she is super special. She’s an elf, hidden in the human world because she’s actually the most powerful, most important person (human or elf) in the world. She gets rescued by an

astonishingly handsome guy, taken to a world of incredible wealth where she’s famous, and three handsome guys are competing for her attention.

That is not the best message for young girls, all of whom will go through teenage struggles with popularity and loneliness. This updated version of the “Prince Charming” message – that something or someone will arrive to put you on the pedestal you’ve always deserved to be on – is unhelpful.

Still, silly isn’t all that big a deal in small doses – some kinds of silly can be absolutely wonderful in measured doses – so my main problem with these books is just how many of them there are and how much time will be spent in this fantasy. They average over 700 pages each, with 11 books in the series so far. A silly picture book or a less-than-fantastic standalone novel is like eating some candy. Having a chocolate bar now and again is no biggie... but if your main meal for days and even weeks is just candy? That’s something else. What we have here is more than 7,000 pages of sil-

liness (so far), so that deserves some care and attention.

To mitigate things, I made a deal with my girls to “supplement their diet.” They had to read a book or two of my choosing – something that would be a bit meatier (though still enjoyable) – before they could move on to the next in the KOTLC series. Oh, and they had to give me a verbal book report for the latest KOTLC they’d just read. We all know how much kids love giving book reviews, but I wasn’t trying to make this punitive. I’d been reading the books, too, and I wanted to see if they were astute enough to see through the silliness. Why’d I even let them read it? I’d have preferred they skip the series altogether, but I also wanted to teach them how to treat books appropriately. I didn’t want to make too big of something that wasn’t big. This series was candy, not poison.

SUBTLE AND DELAYED

But then came book 9.5. KOTLC has a confusing system of numbering, with 9 “main” novels, and then an 8.5 and a

9.5 that offer new perspectives on the story that's already been told to this point. In 9.5 we get to see things from the perspective of a handsome rogue of an elf, Keefe, who is hiding in the human world, which is where he runs into homosexuality.

It's only a few pages in another tome. On pages 137-141, a helpful jogger shares a trick he uses to stay mentally focused. And he also shares with Keefe that he has a "husband." Then, on pages 259-262, Keefe converses with a spunky waitress who makes mention of her "wife." Each time, it's just the one mention, and it might even slip past some readers unnoticed. But while Messenger seems to be trying to be subtle about it, she didn't want to be too subtle. So, on page 265, Keefe and his fellow elf Alvar talk about how humans have a variety of couples, including waitresses who have wives and men who have husbands. Alvar thinks, "It's really cool," and Keefe agrees, "it is."

That's it. Just a half dozen pages. But in a kids' series. And we also don't know – and we have no reason to trust – where the author is going to take our kids in the series' last, yet to have been published, title.

We live in a world in which increasing numbers of people "identify" with these sins, so parents shouldn't be surprised when gay and trans characters pop up in today's books. On my desktop, I have a booklet from Scholastic, purportedly the world's largest publisher of children's books for K-12, called *Read with Pride*. It features a 100+ "LGBTQIA+" book list of titles they are promoting to schools, librarians, and teachers. They've been pushing this booklist since at least 2017, and I've noticed a real increase in LGBT content in anything published since 2020. It's like there is a box that needs to be checked. And everyone is checking it. So this agenda is everywhere.

But it wasn't in KOTLC for the first ten books. This is another bait and switch like happened with the *Wings of Fire* series. The author pulled readers and parents in with an agenda-free opener, but once kids were hooked, Messenger could introduce her LGBT plug. If it'd started

A silly picture book is like eating some candy. No biggie. But what if your main meal for days and even weeks is just candy? What we have here is more than 7,000 pages of silliness (so far), so that deserves some care and attention.

that way, conservative kids and parents would have steered clear, but with it happening so late in the series, even Christian kids will want to keep reading to find out how it all ends.

GODLESS AS A GIVEN?


There's one more concern with Shannon Messenger's books, and with any secular series that'll have our kids living in it for days and weeks at a time. That'd include *Harry Potter* and *The Mysterious Benedict Society's* thousands of pages, and even something like the original 60+ title *Hardy Boys* series.

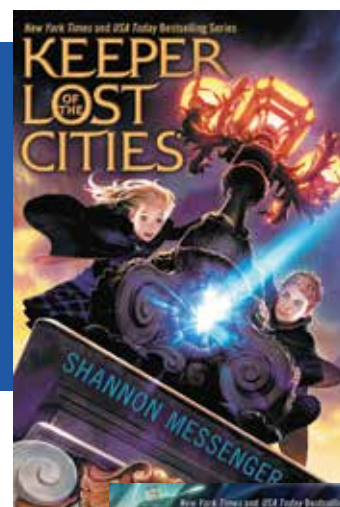
R.C. Sproul once said of the public education system:

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

His point is every bit as true for stories. If all our kids are reading are secular books, a statement is being made. Whether they recognize it or not, they are being taught "either that there is no God or that God is irrelevant." While we don't know yet whether Messenger is going to finish her series by upping the LGBT content, or by backing off it, we do know already that she's spent 7,000+ pages teaching our kids that God isn't.

So, what's a good supplement to all this candy? Some solid Christian fiction and biographies. Find all sorts of recommendations at

ReformedPerspective.ca/books. 





Write Down Your Story

Sharing your history is sharing *His* story

37 years of Bram Vegter's extended family's chronicles, bound in some 15 volumes, there for children and grandchildren to enjoy.

by Bram Vegter

*...things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.*
– PSALM 78:3-4

There are half a dozen people in my group of older friends who have written their autobiography, or who are working on completing their life story in print. When someone commented “you should write some of those stories down” they responded!

And that they did has benefits for both themselves and their children.

How so?

Writing might seem an artform slowly losing ground in a world of emoticons and AI-written essays. Fortunately, for some people, writing is still a joy to do, and an even greater pleasure to read again later. Young people who keep a

daily journal can attest to this (except perhaps on their wedding day, when someone roasts them with readings from their journal pages). Words are like pictures in that they tend to bring back memories; good and bad. We can enjoy our own writing.

And others' words can place you in the shoes of someone dear to you. Imagine reading a story that your grandpa or grandma wrote many years ago. It helps you to understand who they are, and how they lived their life in those days, and perhaps even why they are the way they are.

WRITING HISTORY

Writing your family history doesn't need to be a solitary effort. My Dutch family members started publishing our own chronicles in 1987 and kept it going (monthly, and later bi-monthly) until 2024. It was kept “in-house” which enabled us to write freely and openly, and we did. These 37 years of chronicles, which are bound in some 15 volumes(!), are wonderful to browse through and relive all the weddings, birth announcements, vacations, highlights and low points in the lives of my family members. These many years also cover the time when computers and phones were intro-

duced, and you can imagine how things changed because of these and other incoming electronic devices.

You can see the changes as you turn the pages, from the old typewriter font to a variety of new typefaces we could select from, and from photocopies to email. The printing press invented anew!

Now the grandchildren browse through the pages and are elated when they find the page where their birth was being announced with joy! “Look Mom – this is when I was born!” And Mom looks at a relieved and tired face in a bed... with a tiny newborn on her tummy.

YOUR STORY

If you don’t have a family chronicle, you can take up the quill yourself. It takes just one to start. And the writing you do for your autobiography is *your* story. How and where it began.

Someone who is reading your story sixty years later lives in quite a different era. To read about your younger years and how things were then, will partly explain who you are now!

Your story can be so fascinating and encouraging for others who may not have lived close to you, or perhaps even lived in a different country. Different times, different settings, even a different church maybe. You may tell how it was when you were growing up, and these are beautiful word pictures for your descendants. “The times, they are a-changing” Bob Dylan sang years ago, and he wasn’t wrong.

This is what makes a time capsule, in the form of an autobiography, so interesting.

And there is much to write about: your family, your siblings, your friends, your church activities, your school, your neighborhood, what it was like growing up there. And then of course, what you did after your studies: where you worked, or where you traveled to, what kind of things held your interest. And for those who got married, how did you meet your better half? Explain to readers yet to be born how that went, and what has the “I do” meant to you before your spouse, and before God? We often say so little about that, and these can be fascinating, fun and encouraging stories. Especially for



Some Vegter Dutch relations showing off their just-received copy of Bram’s own autobiography, *Overdrive*.

a new generation growing up in a time when marriage is becoming less common.

Then you probably want to write a bit about what you have done in life, how you have filled your time with work, perhaps some volunteer work and hobbies. Many of these move to the background as you get older, but they were once front and center in your life! They kept you occupied, and (grand)children want to read about them. What made you tick?

HIS STORY!

Ultimately, whatever you write will be *His story*, as God has put together your life.

In the beginning, when you were just getting started, it was perhaps a bit of a puzzle; maybe you had trouble seeing where He had you heading, and how all the pieces would fit in. Often later in life you recognize God’s hand more and more, and you begin to see how His plans for you came together... though when the picture of your life will be complete, only God knows.

It is so beautiful to pass on to (grand) children what you have gone through, how you trusted God in uncertain times, and how God often gave more than He promised you. His goodness, His grace, and His faithfulness are often more fully

understood later in life, so your story can encourage younger people still figuring it out.

It is also good to relate some of the foolish things you did when you were young, and how God forgives the sins of our youth (Ps. 25:7). Often, when people become older, they tend to reminisce and look back on their life. They may regret some of the things they did when they were young. Be honest about that (without sharing all the details) and tell your children you were once (and still are) far from perfect. Then rejoice together in God’s love and forgiveness!

In these days, it has also become much easier to share information with each other. Many families now share a WhatsApp account to regularly keep in touch with each other. This is beautiful, but it misses the rich spiritual heritage of the past. There is still nothing like really writing to help you reflect and remember.

I want to end with the first Bible verse I ever wrote on a card to a friend. It is from Proverbs 3:6 and it says: “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.” God was there, also in my early teens. May we acknowledge Him, even to our children’s children!

So, start your Word doc today, 8.5x11 will be just fine. Write your story down – for your family. RP

What kind of Prime Minister could he still be?

5 things you might not have known about Pierre Poilievre

by Jon Dykstra

Pierre Poilievre: a political life is a biography of the man who may not have won his first electoral go at our country's top job, but who might yet be the next Prime Minister of Canada.

While there's no blatant slant, the author has good reasons to like the man he is profiling. When he wrote this, Andrew Lawton was a journalist at one of the few Canadian news sources that wasn't being bought and paid for by the federal government, so how could Lawton not love Pierre Poilievre's pledge to defund the CBC?

Lawton stepped away from reporting on the news to try to be one of the politicians making it. He spent almost half a year campaigning, and running as a candidate for the Conservative Party of Canada in the Elgin-St. Thomas-London South riding. And he won his seat as part of the Poilievre team.

So, no this wasn't ever going to be a hit-job sort of biography. Lawton hasn't written a hagiography either, but his respect for Poilievre comes through on page after page. So, with that bias in mind, here are a half dozen highlights from Lawton's book that you might not have known about Pierre Poilievre.

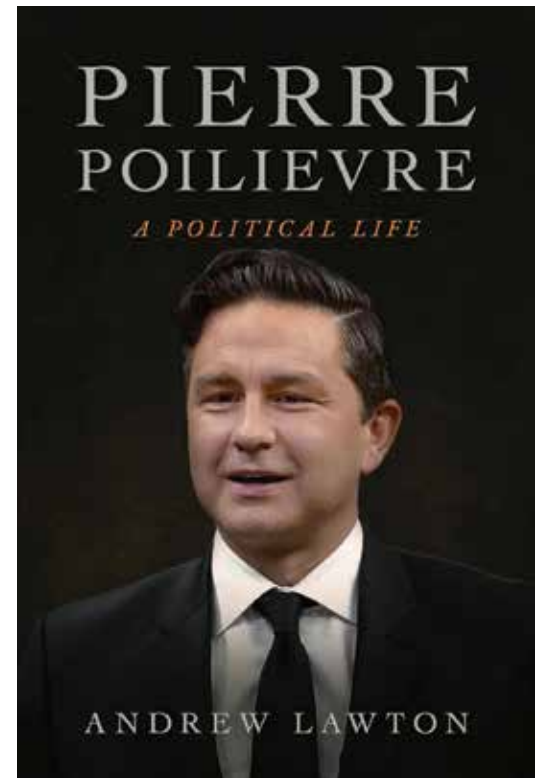
1. POILIEVRE'S ADOPTIVE FATHER IS GAY

Pierre and his biological brother were both adopted as infants by Marlene and Donald Poilievre. The couple separated when Poilievre was around twelve.

"Soon after, Donald came out as gay...[F]riends of Poilievre's say it was never a source of difficulty for him. He has always accepted his father and has a positive relationship with him and his long-time partner."

Why is this relevant? Because having someone close to you come out as gay or trans is uniquely impactful. That's even true in the Church. As Jojo Ruba noted in a recent Real Talk podcast (www.RealTalkpodcast.ca):

"Some of the Christian apologists I work with point out that almost every person that they know who grew up as a conservative Bible-believing Christian who changes their theology on sexuality and gender identity, do so because a family member or loved one, a friend, comes out as gay or trans, and then all of a sudden their theology has to change to accommodate this loved one."



2024 / 212 PAGES

Back in 2005 and 2006 Poilievre voted against the legalization of same-sex “marriage” but has subsequently called gay “marriage” a success, so we can surmise that his views in this area are deeply held.

2. HE READ FREE-MARKET ECONOMIC BOOKS AS A TEEN

As a teen Poilievre attended events put on by the BC-based free market think tank, the Fraser Institute. He also read Milton Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom*, which argues that free markets are effective, moral, and needed for political freedom. “Poilievre embraced this blend of philosophy and pragmatism...”

3. POILIEVRE HAS BEEN AT THIS FOR A WHILE

While he lost his seat on election night, he’d had a hold on it for two decades. First elected to Parliament in 2004, at the time Pierre was given the title “Baby of the house” for being the youngest MP, at just 25 years old.

4. PRO-LIFE ALLY TO OFFICIALLY PRO-CHOICE

Poilievre has worked for and with pro-life conservatives like Stockwell Day and Andrew Scheer, and that earned him an endorsement by the Campaign Life Coalition back in 2020. But in 2021,

“Poilievre voted against a private member’s bill by Conservative MP Cathay Wagantall to ban sex-selective abortions. By the leadership debates in May 2022, Poilievre was identifying explicitly as ‘pro-choice.’”

Where he differs from a Trudeau or Carney is in that he’ll allow pro-lifers to run for his party. But, as Lawton reports,

“He also told me in one interview during his leadership race that no abortion legislation would pass under his government. When I asked if he was saying he’d actively prevent a bill like that, he said it was ‘just an obvious fact’ that no bill restricting or banning abortion would pass.”

5. REASON TO THINK WE CAN “PERSISTENT WIDOW” (LUKE 18:1-8) HIM?

Poilievre is a genius at getting and using attention, and he is bold. As Stephen Harper’s chief of staff (2006-2008) noted, Poilievre would

“...lean into being on the attack rather than leaning backwards to be on the defensive. You could always count on Pierre taking the fight to the other side rather than letting the other side take the fight to him.”

But even as Pierre does a great job standing up, he’s also declared, “I’m not interested in starting fights I can’t win.” What that’s meant is that he was slower than some to take a stand on the Freedom Convoy. And he wasn’t quick to

take a stand on gender battles, but seems to have seen it as a winnable battle after Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, and most so, President Donald Trump, took the lead here. Now he’s come out saying he only knows of two genders.

This may show the way Christians can approach him. Justin Trudeau, and Liberal and NDP leaders have shown a real commitment to their rebellion – Trudeau hasn’t just wanted to legalize the murder of unborn Canadian babies, he’s helped kill them overseas too. In Poilievre we can see a firm fiscal conservative, but not a moral conservative. But on that moral front, he differs from Trudeau and Carney and whoever the next NDP leader will be, in that he isn’t putting much energy in his evil. He doesn’t hate the unborn so much as he doesn’t care for them. That is to his shame – God calls on rulers to protect the vulnerable (Ps. 72:12-14) – and if Poilievre does become prime minister one day and doesn’t change his ways, he will have answer to his Maker for the millions of babies who will die under his watch.

But this disinterested stand on moral matters leaves us with an opening. He might not have initially been eager to take a stand on gender, but he wasn’t committed the other way either... and then outside pressures swayed him. So we can pray that, like the persistent widow of Luke 18:1-8, a loud Christian voice – one that just won’t shut up until justice is done – may just get Poilievre to give in to some demands. RP

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UPHELD: A WIDOW'S STORY OF LOVE, GRIEF, & THE CONSTANCY OF GOD

BY CHRISTINE FARENHORST

2025 / 252 PAGES

Anyone who has ever loved is going to face loss, and what are we to do then? It's not a thought I like to dwell on. But as I age, and as I attend more funerals of godly men and women, I see whole families who are mourning, not as those without hope (1 Thess. 4:13), but as those assured that Christ's victory over death is our victory too.

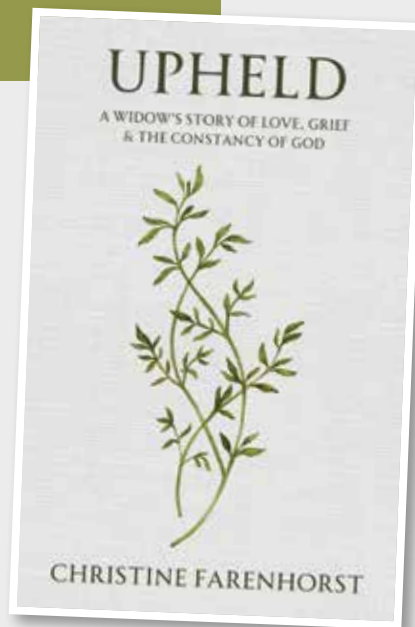
But what does that assurance look like in the day to day? Here is an answer.

Christine Farenhorst was married to her Anco for almost 53 years, and *Upheld* is the story of their life, and her loss after Anco died in 2022. Here we have someone wrestling with one of the greatest losses any will face, assuring her beloved readers that yes, it's really true "that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Roman 8:26). Or as she puts it:

"When we are pushed off a cliff, whether that cliff is war, cancer, a snub by a friend, the death of a mother, being maligned and slandered for standing up for the truth, or suffering a stroke – it is of prime significance to note that God has let this happen so that we can die to ourselves and live for Him. He only works for our good."

That assurance worked itself out throughout Anco and Christine's married life. She shares story after story of relying on the Lord, and looking for the good He was bringing. So when, for example, the Christian Reformed Church was slowly capitulating to women in office, and to a non-literal understanding of the opening chapters of Genesis, she could be grateful.

"Strangely enough, although the Word of God was watered down in many pulpits, this visible bruising of the church became a blessing to our family. It was as if Joseph said to us: 'Others mean this for evil, but God means this for your good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive So do not fear: I will provide for you and your little ones.' And God did provide for us. The slippery slope exhibited within the church proved to be the tilt that caused our family to climb up and study God's Word in such a way as we never would have done had there been no issues. Consequently, our children were taught male headship by both Scripture and by Anco's example; they were grounded in the



fact that God hates all sexual sin; and they were spoon-fed on the historicity and infallibility of the Bible."

When you understand that God is always working on you, and through you, then you start to see rightly that what's in front of you is always another opportunity to glorify your Creator. And throughout their lives together, Anco and Christine had quite some opportunities!

I could share one passage after another – there is so much to love – but I'll content myself with just one more. One of the benefits of reading biographies of godly men and women is that they have sometimes, in God's grace, triumphed over a pitfall we are still getting tripped up by. Today one pitfall

the Church has is an eagerness to be respected, or at least tolerated by society – we want to be liked. But in the Bible we're repeatedly told that we will be cursed because we love Jesus (Matt. 10:22, Luke 6:28, Ps. 109:28, etc.). And what does that look like, and how should we act when it happens?

"Anco was once asked by someone, someone who disliked him intensely, to come for a meeting in a Tim Horton's restaurant, so that she could speak with him. A very liberal woman, one who had wreaked havoc within the church community, she had also spread slander about him. He went and was reamed out in such a loud manner by this female, that people in surrounding booths turned their heads to look. It was embarrassing as well as demeaning. Anco listened quietly and let her go on and on. The woman ended the public diatribe by saying: 'You are a narrow-minded bigot. It's like you're in a box and you don't allow anything else in that box.' As she was sounding off this last statement, she drew the picture of a box on the booth table with her right index finger. Anco waited a moment to make sure she was done. Then he took his Bible and placed it in the box."

I don't know that I would give this book to anyone who has recently experienced the loss of a loved one. But it'd be a wonderful book later. And beforehand. I've bought ten copies, because I want all my daughters to have one, and I think it will be a much-appreciated present to other family members and friends.

– Jon Dykstra

Morning and Evening

A TEEN OFFERS UP A DIFFERENT SORT OF BOOK REVIEW FOR SPURGEON'S CLASSIC DEVOTIONAL

by Holly Braendlein

Sometimes, dead white guys make the perfect walking companions. Want to know who my personal dead white guy is?

Charles Spurgeon. If I'm in a rut, I'll go and take a walk with him. It's very therapeutic. And practically not weird at all.

I'm writing here as a teenage girl who has struggled with a lot of depression, and I'm hoping I can offer parents reading this some food for thought for their own teenage daughters. I'm sure you're watching your daughters as they curl up and cry, or just sit in their rooms doing nothing, or even scroll on their phones to numb the pain, and you feel helpless. What can you do? What *should* you do?

Have them read Spurgeon. Don't be afraid to corner them and offer them a stack of books by Charles Spurgeon to read, no matter how much they protest, because whether they acknowledge it or not, it's what they need.

I was introduced to Spurgeon through my mother. During specific seasons in my early teens, I would wake up each morning very depressed, and there was not a day that passed that didn't have me in tears, or giving up in despair. My mother started reading me quotes from Spurgeon's daily devotional, *Morning and Evening*. She kept egging me on to read them myself (ornery, brilliant creatures, mothers...), but I stubbornly refused. Stop telling me what to do! I wanted her to fix me with a snap of her fingers, so I could be my normal happy, contented self, but sadly, it doesn't work that way – a hard lesson God had in store for me.

I eventually came to the conclusion that my face was going to end up severely disfigured from all the crying

I was doing, and at the point that I had to wring out my pillow a couple times before going to bed, I decided I should maybe take Mom's advice and start reading Spurgeon's works. I knew that he struggled with depression his entire preaching career, and I had heard good reports on his works, but the last thing I wanted was to be severely preached at.

Boy, was I wrong. He was *exactly* what I needed.

Unlike what I was expecting (a mean pastor shaking his finger at my weakness), Spurgeon, through his writings, seemed to sit with me on my bed and wrap a loving arm about my shoulder, acknowledging the weakness and depravity I felt. What I needed was someone to walk the lonely road with me, listening to what I had to say, but also gently reminding me of the truth and mercies of God Almighty. By his care and compassion for my predicament, and his gentle correction, Spurgeon pointed the way to the Cross, where I should've been the whole time. The Word was even more precious the more I gleaned from Spurgeon, and I ran to God with open arms.

I continue to fill my bookshelf with Charles Spurgeon's writings, because sometimes, you need a companion to walk the lonely road of depression with you. Meeting him has meant introductions to his companions, the Puritan writers he turned to. The road grows ever more crowded with encouraging voices from the past. Anxiety, depression – shucks, being a teenager requires a companion.

Even if that companion turns out to be a dead white guy. 



Morning and Evening (400 pages) is a 365-day devotional with, as the title suggests, a verse and short reading for the morning, and then both again for the evening. First published in 1866, the copyright has long since expired, so it is available for free all over the internet in both daily doses and in e-book editions. But if you're handing this to your teen you may want to go with an updated physical copy, like Crossway's recent edition (pictured here) that's been lightly revised by Alistair Begg.

3 ON COMFORTING SUFFERING CHRISTIANS

by Sarah Wielenga

Christians are called to mourn with those who mourn. How can this be done well, when a comforter's experiences differ vastly in type and degree from the sufferer's? These three books can help.

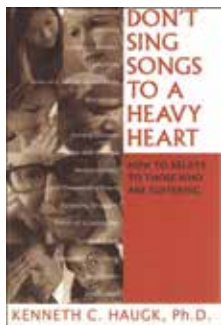
Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart offers advice and perspective for the close friend or spouse of a person battling cancer or long-term pain. *Someone I Know Is Grieving* educates all Christians in the art of comforting compassionately. And *A Small Book for the Hurting Heart* is a devotional for those grieving, gently pointing hurting hearts to God.

DON'T SING SONGS TO A HEAVY HEART: HOW TO RELATE TO THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING

BY KENNETH C. HAUGK
2004 / 154 PAGES

When we see someone suffering, we might tend to think of them as fragile as crystal, and see our own words as the proverbial bull let loose in the china shop. Author Kenneth Haugk explains why this is often the reality, but, thankfully, he also explains what the Bible calls us to say and do to comfort others well.

As a clinical psychologist (who is also a pastor), Haugk researched this topic for years, and also ran studies with participants who have experienced all sorts of trials. This book is reflective of what thousands of suffering people have to say on the topic. Thus, it is a great resource for anyone who is at a loss for how to



serve others through trials.

The title is taken from Proverbs 25:20, and like the title indicates, this book cautions us to speak carefully when comforting others going through trials. Haugk explains that our temptation in uncomfortable or painful conversations is to encourage people to look at the bright side – whether by reminding them of their future hope, or by simply refusing to share in their sorrow. Such talk tends to alienate sufferers. While we know that only “the heart knows its own bitterness, and no man shares in its joy” (Prov. 14:10), this doesn't excuse us from trying to be compassionate and faithful listeners. Haugk emphasizes that we share in Christ's sufferings by weeping with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). It is a command, but it is also a privilege, because as we meet other Christians in their sorrow, we can expect to find Christ there as well!

Haugk has done a great service in bringing in so many different voices to the discussion. Unlike many resources on suffering, this book is not tied to one person's experience of sorrow. Haugk's goal is to catalogue and then express how many people feel during seasons of deep pain.

This book is especially meant for Christians walking alongside a friend or spouse who is experiencing grief or facing death. However, it is also a beneficial read for all Christians, since we are all called to “mourn with those who mourn” (Rom. 12:15). Haugk's goal is to help Christians understand how their words can affect those who are suffering. The insights you gain from this book will give you confidence to face other people's grief and walk alongside them compassionately, giving words that build up, “that it may give grace to those who hear.” (Eph. 4:29).

SOMEONE I KNOW IS GRIEVING: CARING WITH HUMILITY AND COMPASSION

BY EDWARD T. WELCH
2023 / 80 PAGES

If you've ever been at a loss for words when comforting a hurting soul, you are not alone. *Someone I Know Is Grieving* is a short book (though part of a large, 14-book “Ask the Christian Counselor” series).

It was written to give direction to anyone facing the daunting task of caring and comforting a fellow Christian who is in a difficult trial or is grieving. Author Edward T. Welch is a licensed psychologist and a Biblical counselor serving at the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (CCEF.org). His goal here is to answer this question: “What can I say to my friend who is going through a painful trial or grief?”

His short book is rather closer to a booklet, but comes complete with questions to prompt deep thinking, and blank space where you can write down your answers and reflections. Within the 65 pages of instruction, questions, and tips, you will be asked to reflect on your own experiences of pain and hurt, so as to become more equipped to empathize. Welch, of course, turns to Christ for instruction – Jesus, as our sympathizing great High Priest, understands our suffering on earth, and it is His wisdom that equips us with the words and actions to show compassion to others.

While the first chapter considers our



calling to minister with compassion to those who are grieving— it makes the case that we are *all* called to comfort – the rest of the book teaches us *how* to do this work.

We are to proceed humbly, not relying on our own gifts, but relying on the grace of the Spirit. Humility teaches us to know when to refrain from offering advice – to not assume we have all the answers – because there are some things better left unsaid. Humility also teaches us not to shirk our responsibility to comfort and care for a suffering soul. Welch reminds us that we are not God, which is both a humbling and freeing thought.

Compassion helps us to ask wise questions in an effort to know someone better and thus care for them well. True compassion ultimately points the suffering Christian to their true hope: Christ. Welch reminds the reader that you will also be encouraged as you learn more about God in the way He relates to His hurting children. And in your comforting role, Christ's glory will be revealed to you as well, as He brings healing in His time to your friend.

While no book other than the Bible can fully counsel a hurting Christian,

this small book is a powerful tool that will leave you feeling more equipped and encouraged as you journey alongside others in their grief. The last page in the book includes recommended resources, so this is not intended to be the end-all be-all of grief counseling. That said, you will likely find it a very useful stand-alone resource, especially given its compact, easy-to-read form.

A SMALL BOOK FOR THE HURTING HEART

BY PAUL TAUTGES
2020 / 192 PAGES

Have you been asked by a friend who is suffering for some resources on grief? Are you looking to encourage a family member as they go through trials? While many books on suffering give advice and perspective for those supporting fellow believers in their trials, that's not the target audience for this book. This is a little



devotional you can pass on to the person who is grieving.

Small, and short, this book includes 50 brief devotionals, in no particular order, which replicates the ups and downs of grieving. Titles like “The Unsearchable Ways of God” and “How Long Does Grieving Take” address real fears and deal honestly with pain. The author is brief and direct, a useful quality when our minds are clouded with grief. Trials as well as grief take time, and this book is not attempting to bandage pain with biblical platitudes. Rather, it's intended as a companion for sufferers that directs their gaze to Christ as they digest their grief over time. At the end of each meditation, the author gives a Bible passage to read and reflect on, and a prompt for prayer.

Because this book addresses real fears followed by biblical counsel, this could still be very good for anyone who wants to be better equipped as a comforter. It would be a great resource for pastors, elders and deacons who are struggling to find the appropriate passage to bring encouragement or express sympathy on a home visit. Tautges offers wise and compassionate words that you can borrow so you can better respond to deep pain. **RP**

FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

THE MOON IS ALWAYS ROUND

BY JONATHAN GIBSON
2019 / 32 PAGES

This picture book is a beautiful catechism truth wrapped in a heartbreaking story of loss. Author Jonathan Gibson places his son Ben as the lead character. Through Ben, we look outside at the night sky and see the moon in its different stages. Sometimes it's sliced like an apple. At other times it's shriveled like an orange. But no matter what shape the moon appears to be, Ben knows that the moon is always round.

When Ben's little sister Leila passes away at 39 weeks' gestation, Ben must rely on faith, not sight. Although God does not appear to be good, His good-

ness extends even beyond Leila's death. God is always good.

Short, simple phrases leave room for the reader to pause and contemplate the story as it unfolds. Kids will love saying along with Ben's dad, “but the moon is always round” when Ben wonders if the moon has really changed. At the climax of the book, Ben's dad asks him what that means. It feels natural for kids and parents to answer with Ben that “God is always good.”

While this book deals with heavy topics, simple sentences for big truths are what make this book profound. The book closes on a sweet note – a family picnic, a beautiful sunset, a full moon, and the words from Psalm 100:5: “For the Lord is good; His steadfast love

endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.”

Children aged 4-8 will gain the most from Gibson's simple catechism. Younger readers will love

hunting for the yellow daffodils sprinkled inside the vibrant pictures. However, even older children and adults will be touched by this sweet, sad story honoring Gibson's stillborn daughter, Leila.

– SARAH WIELENGA



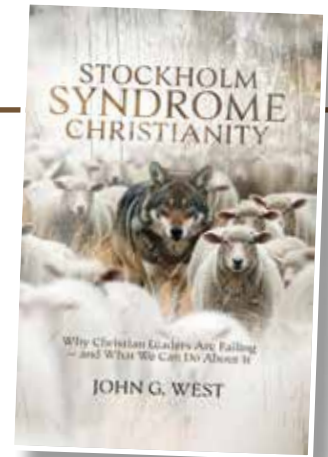


STOCKHOLM SYNDROME CHRISTIANITY

Why America's Christian leaders are failing –
and what we can do about it

BY JOHN G. WEST / 2025 / 348 PAGES

reviewed by Cornelis Van Dam



While it is common to blame atheists and agnostics for the current wave of secularism, author John G. West convincingly points out that Christian leaders are to their shame playing a key role in the demise of Christian influence in today's society.

The "Stockholm Syndrome" his book title refers to is "the psychological tendency of a hostage to bond with, identify with, or sympathize with his or her captor" (Merriam-Webster). West notes that most Christians are immersed or captive in a culture that is hostile to biblical Christianity. After being immersed in such an environment for years, it becomes easier for Christians to identify with the thinking of those who reject historic Christian norms and principles and eventually to actually adopt as one's view that which one first rejected. A recent example of this development is how the former Reformed

Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands, which used to belong to the International Conference of Reformed Churches, have over the last few years abandoned biblical norms and have most recently even welcomed those who practice a homosexual lifestyle to the Lord's Supper, and opened all the ecclesiastical offices to them. The leaders of these Dutch churches have succumbed to Stockholm Syndrome and adopted the views of those with whom they had first disagreed because they were against Scripture. But now the biblical norms are explained away and the views of those hostile to Christianity have been adopted.

EVOLUTION IS ACID

There is too much good material in this book to reflect on in a brief review. So let me simply mention two points to give a flavor of this publication. In the first place, West shows how this syndrome is at work in all areas of life, including one's views on sex, race, and liberty, but a pervasive underlying factor is the acceptance of the theory of the evolutionary beginning of creation and the worldview that results from it. When reality is seen through the lens of evolution the consequences are enormous and destructive for a Christian worldview. The biblical doctrine of creation is critical and abandoning it has disastrous results. Accepting current evolutionary theory of the earth and humanity's beginning means, to mention but two consequences, that there was no fall into sin and so no need for redemption and that moral standards are ultimately not from heaven but from nature. The morals have evolved over time as determined by the need to survive. There are no absolute moral standards. It is therefore hugely tragic that prominent Christians like scientist Francis Collins and the late theologian Tim Keller made concerted efforts to promote the acceptance of evolution among Christians through BioLogos, an organization that promotes evolution in Christian circles, and through other means. West details how these men have facilitated and contributed to the acceptance of unbiblical notions among Christians and the devastating consequences that followed.

APPROVAL OF THE (ACADEMIC) WORLD

A second area that West underlines is the need for Christian leaders and scholars to resist the temptation of seeking the acceptance of secular scholars and authorities. This urge to please can lead to compromising biblical truth. West takes the well-known evangelical historian Mark Noll as an example of the pitfalls involved. Noll famously published *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (1994) in which he berated evangelicals of shoddy scholarship and anti-intellectualism. West notes however that,

“some of the particulars of Noll's indictment were troubling. Take his identification of ‘biblicism’ (which he defined as ‘reliance on the Bible as ultimate religious authority’) as one of the obstacles to evangelical scholarship. Noll seemed to suggest that the only way ‘the life of the mind may have a chance’ among evangelicals was if they restricted the Bible's authority to ‘pointing us to the Savior and... orienting our entire existence to the service of God.’”

West goes on to note that “that may sound good, but it actually leaves out quite a lot. What about the Bible's accounts of God's actions in history, starting with the Old Testament,” including “his creation of the world and mankind and the particulars of the moral law?” (Noll, like Tim Keller and Francis Collins, supports the work of BioLogos). West observes that “perhaps the biggest problem with Noll's book was that it fed a lust for secular approval among many evangelical intellectuals.”



Prominent Christians like scientist Francis Collins, and the late theologian Tim Keller, have adopted the very evolutionary worldview that attacks Christianity.

WHAT IS STOCKHOLM SYNDROME?

In Stockholm, Sweden, in 1973, convict Jan-Erik Olson botched a bank robbery and ended up taking four employees hostage. He held them hostage for six days, and when they were finally released, none of them would testify against him. They instead identified with their captor, going so far as to raise money for his defense.

While it isn't a formal psychological diagnosis, this tendency for some to be won over by their captor is known as Stockholm Syndrome.

CONCLUSION

West's book is fittingly dedicated to Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) who indicted evangelicals for seeking to accommodate their Christian faith to the thought forms and teachings of secular culture. In his *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, Schaeffer warned that “Accommodation leads to accommodation – which leads to accommodation.” Not accommodation, but confrontation to unbiblical views is what is needed.

This is a most timely wakeup call and a must-read simply because West hits an issue that is vitally important for Christians, especially leaders. May his call to biblical faithfulness be heeded. **RP**

Cornelis Van Dam is emeritus Professor of Old Testament at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and author, among others, of “In the Beginning: Listening to Genesis 1 and 2.”

Get to know John Calvin

by Harma-Mae Smit

How can we get to know this beloved father in faith a little bit better? If you are Reformed you have heard the name of John Calvin and you know the basics of what he taught, but you might not know much about the man himself.

So what's the best way to learn about anyone? Well, you can read words written by the man himself, or if reading Calvin himself is a bit daunting, you can try reading books about Calvin instead. You can scan the QR code beside each book title for a longer review.

CALVIN'S INSTITUTES: WHICH EDITION SHOULD YOU READ?

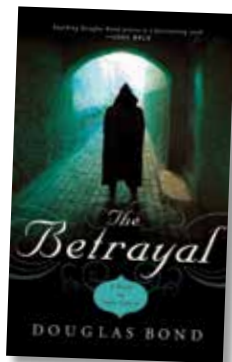
If you decide to take the plunge and read Calvin's *Institutes* (or at least some parts of it), what edition should you read? Here's some guidance! Ultimately layout is highly important for such a long work – since you'll be reading for quite a while.



THE BETRAYAL: A NOVEL ON JOHN CALVIN

BY DOUGLAS BOND
2009 / 383 PAGES

Novels can immerse you into a world in a way a nonfiction book can't, placing you right in the heads of people who lived in that world. Rather than taking the perspective of well-known John Calvin, this novel takes the perspective of an ordinary person. Jean-Louis lives through some of the hardships common in life at the time, and interacts with Calvin through the course of his life. Because this book includes some heavier theological dialogues, this book is best suited for adult fans of Calvin – but it is a fascinating read for those interested in his life.



THE LIFE OF JOHN CALVIN: A MODERN TRANSLATION OF THE CLASSIC

BY THEODORE BEZA
1997 / 148 PAGES

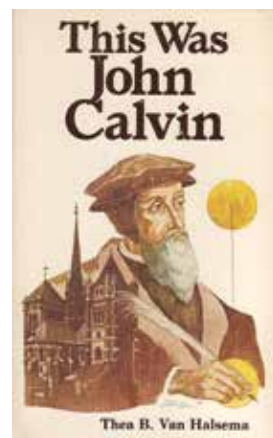
Theodore Beza wrote this classic biography of Calvin, and a modern translation makes it accessible to us. Its short length makes it more inviting to readers, and its biggest recommendation is that it is an eyewitness account by one of Calvin's friends and disciples.



THIS WAS JOHN CALVIN

BY THEA B. VAN HALSEMA
1959 / 224 PAGES

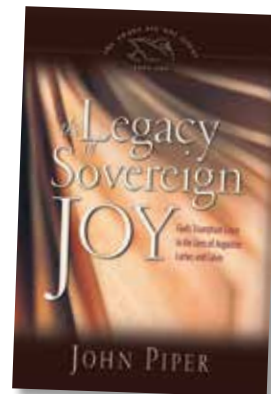
This is also a shorter biography of Calvin, but despite its length it contains extra details that make his life come alive. It also includes a helpful background on Calvin's interactions with Michael Servetus. Overall, this is a great, readable biography.



THE LEGACY OF SOVEREIGN JOY

BY JOHN PIPER
2000 / 160 PAGES

This book is a bit different, because it's not just about John Calvin but rather about three giants of the faith: Augustine, Martin Luther and John Calvin. It's also by well-known author and pastor John Piper. He tackles the flaws and shortcomings of each of these men, and how God used them in spite of their struggles. Since this book is short, it is primarily focused on encouraging the believer rather than being detailed biographies of these men. It might even inspire you to take a look at some of their original writings! And you can download the e-book version for free. **RP**



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

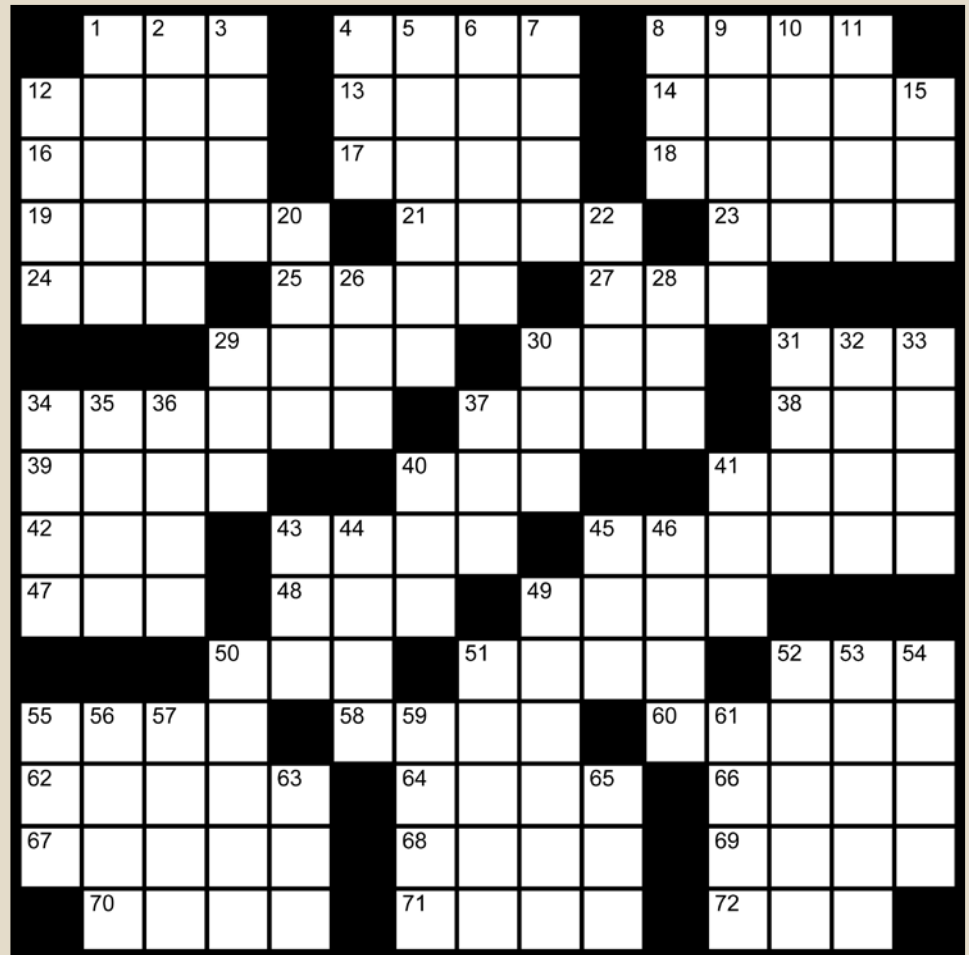
MAY - JUNE 2025

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 64

ACROSS

1. "the sound of a ____ whisper" (1 Kings 19)
4. Acronym for "Port out, starboard home"
8. We could all use ____ when we're lonely.
12. Father of a priestly tribe in Israel
13. Against, with Uncle, it sounds like
14. Country near Mount Kilimanjaro
16. One place to find a frog...? (Ex. 8)
17. Short-form nickname of past prime minister
18. "____ the third day rise." (Luke 24)
19. Scald; scorch
21. "____ needless quotes." (William Strunk Jr.)
23. Informal nickname for Grandma
24. Twisty race turn that's twity without it
25. ____ serif (simple typeface)
27. Shorter synonym of 20 Down
29. Chooses
30. What to break rather than your golf club
31. "Be quiet!"
34. Make a colorful t-shirt
37. "Bring your son ____." (Luke 9)
38. "He makes me ____ down in..." (Ps. 23)
39. Something you up to improve things
40. *Hee ____*: American variety TV show
41. "to seek and to ____ the lost." (Luke 19)
42. Abbreviation for chlorofluorocarbon
43. Happy as a ____
45. Personal digging tool (Deut. 23)
47. Exclamation of wonder or pain
48. Something you don't want to get into
49. John ____ (Puritan theologian)
50. "a tomb... ____ out of the rock" (Mark 15)
51. Idol material (Daniel 2)
52. 1, 3, 5, etc.
55. Any member of the Saudi royal family
58. "salvation in no one ____" (Acts 4)
60. Home of some people of the Plains
62. Old Testament prophet
64. Large widemouthed earthenware vessel
66. Pennsylvania founder William ____
67. U.S. Army acronym for fouled-up situation
68. "This they said to ____ him" (John 8)
69. Her name when you look her in the eye
70. Connect the ____ (children's puzzle)
71. Acronym for technical education program
72. What your computer needs to Zoom



DOWN

1. Belonging to 12 Across
2. Where they bake cakes
3. Left or right in politics or hockey
4. Apartment (slang)
5. They're great with sour cream in chips.
6. Stalks, shoots
7. Really great sound (abbr.)
8. Acronym meaning *alias*
9. Grandpa's price for your thoughts?
10. "____ one, ____ two..." (Lawrence Welk?)
11. Third largest city in France
12. "I ask you not to ____ heart..." (Eph. 3)
15. Santa ____ winds are dry, hot winter firestarters
20. (Notice a) TV network's sports award
22. Nicholas II: last ____ of Russia
26. "I ____ no delicacies..." (Dan. 10)
28. Prefix in the word *prefix*
29. ____ to Joy (Beethoven's Ninth Symphony)
30. Member's place during sermon
31. Old King Cole's favorite side order?
32. Where drones come from
33. "Walk beside me, Spot."
34. Popular Tuesday meal for one, perhaps
35. Intel; stats
36. What you do with "a-Sketch" (the toy)
37. What Dr. Seuss recommends with green eggs
40. "Home is where you hang your ____"
41. "David, the ____ of Jesse" (Ps. 72)
43. New name of Campus Crusade for Christ
44. Renaissance ancestor of classical guitar
45. Number of spies sent to Jericho (Joshua 2)
46. Alternative to mortgage payments
49. Ending of threat or ultimatum (two words)
50. Quilting or needlepoint, for example
51. Little island in your pancreas
52. *A Night at the ____* (Marx Brothers movie)
53. Jean's favorite fabric
54. Home of some people of faith (Hebr. 11)
55. They're in between the els and ens.
56. "I the LORD... test the ____" (Jer. 17)
57. International Civil Aviation Organization
59. Something Joshua cast (Josh. 18)
61. *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*, for example
63. John ____ (Czech theologian and reformer)
65. Acronym you can bank on?

FILMS

by Jon Dykstra

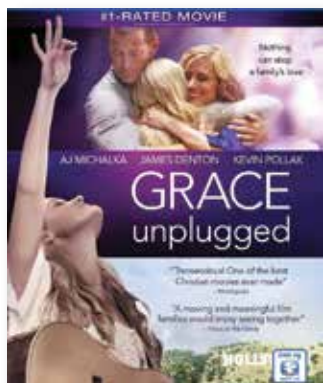
CHRISTIAN FILMS FOR FAMILIES

ReformedPerspective.ca/movies

GRACE UNPLUGGED

DRAMA

2013 / 102 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



Grace Trey is an 18-year-old who sings with her former-rock-star dad, Johnny Trey, in the church worship band. But when she busts out a solo performance in the middle of the church worship time, her dad gives her a hard stare.

Then Johnny's old agent, "Mossy," comes calling. An *Australian Idol* contestant has won singing Johnny's old hit, "Misunderstood," and that's got folks interested in Johnny Trey once again. But Johnny isn't interested in returning to his rock and roll life, and turns down Mossy's offer for a new album.

Grace is listening to all of this. When she gets in one more fight with her dad, she decides to send Mossy her own demo of the song. He likes it, and Grace takes off to LA to try to make it on her own.

Grace's prodigal turn is done with care. She does get drunk, but younger kids wouldn't even realize. The record label wants to play off her sexuality but she steers clear. Language concerns are limited to a few instances of "gosh."

A problem with prodigal stories is making the prodigal likable, and for too long Grace Trey is too bratty to really root for. But if she isn't always relatable, the whole rebellious teen versus parent bit is, making this a decently entertaining film that could also foster a good conversation with your own teens. Recommended for 12 and up.

SUE THOMAS: F.B.EYE

DRAMA / TV SERIES

2002 / 41 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



Twenty years back when it first hit the airwaves, this sure was a crowd-pleaser in Christian households. Based on the real life of deaf FBI agent Sue Thomas, it combined the intrigue of police investigations with the unique comic pairing of the courageous but somewhat naive Sue and her lovable but not-always-so-well-behaving hearing dog Levi. It was tame but not lame.

In the pilot episode Sue starts her new job in the FBI and concludes that she was just a diversity hire, and isn't happy about it. But her lip-reading abilities soon catch the attention of agent Jack Hudson who realizes that Sue has just the skill-set their surveillance team needs.

The only caution: when Jack Hudson first learns Sue can read lips, he challenges her to tell him what one of his colleagues 50 feet away is saying. It turns out he is making weekend plans with the woman he is sitting with. But, as Jack shares with Sue, that woman is not his girlfriend. This two-timing is a minor plot element, but makes what might otherwise be an all-ages show something better suited to older teens and adults.

I've only previewed the first episode to this point, but found it charming. Canadians and Americans will be able to watch it for free on RedeemTV.com.

SWITCHED

COMEDY / FAMILY

2020 / 104 MINUTES **RATING: 6/10**



In this Christian spin on *Freaky Friday*, Cassandra Evans is the brilliant nerdy girl who gets her wish, to have the most popular, and meanest, girl in school, Katie Sharp, learn what it's like to live a day in Cassandra's shoes. Yup, this is a body-swapping movie!

Cassandra makes her wish after getting pranked by Katie Sharp – the bully doused her victim with a bag full of sour milk and then posted the video for her 4 million social media followers to see. Cassandra goes home in tears and then prays to God that Katie could really understand what it's like to be on the other side of her videos. The next morning it happens, the two of them waking up in each other's beds... and bodies.

Now the two foes have to negotiate how to live out each other's lives while they're waiting for their bodies to swap back. Cassandra has an upcoming audition to get into the Juilliard school of music, and Katie has a daily schedule of videos that her parents force her to make.

Adult viewers will anticipate that the lessons are going to go both ways. Yes, Katie begins to learn how painful it is to be bullied, but Cassandra also learns that Katie's life isn't as idyllic as it seemed: bullies can have problems too. And it is no spoiler to say that by film's end, the two become the best of buddies.

UNSUNG HERO

DRAMA / CHRISTIAN

2024 / 112 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



This is the true story of the musical Smallbone family of Rebecca St. James and *For King & Country* fame.

The unsung hero of the title is matriarch Helen Smallbone who, in the early 1990s, is living the good life: big house, large family, supportive parents close by, and a husband, David, who loves her, and loves his job as a concert promoter for Christian acts touring Australia. But hoping to score a home run with an Amy Grant tour, David over-extends their finances just as Australia's economy takes a massive downturn. No one has money for luxuries like concert tickets and David is out a half million dollars. That also leaves him unemployable – who wants to hire a failed promoter? – so David takes a job in America. He arrives with his wife and five kids (and number 6 on the way), and his last dime. And then his job offer falls through.

So how are they going to get out of this mess? By sticking together. They can't be above scrubbing toilets or accepting help from their local church; God hasn't given them any room for that sort of prideful sin.

Unsung Hero has got some superb performances, a little bit of music, and even some grit, presenting David in far from airbrushed fashion, with his shortcomings for all to see. It was one of the best Christian films of 2024.

HIDDEN BLESSINGS

DRAMA / CHRISTIAN

2024 / 107 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



Gregory Davidson is the painter behind the series of "Hidden Blessings" canvases that were so popular not so long ago. These were paintings of a painting, but with the interior painting always somehow obscured – maybe a married couple was standing in front, or a whole crowd has gathered to see what we can never quite glimpse. It's a gimmick Davidson plays out innumerable ways, and while the public loved the series it left them with questions. *What was the painting in the painting? Was it the same one in each instance? Might it be a picture of his wife? What was the "hidden blessing"?* Then the paintings stopped coming, and Davidson stepped away from the public eye entirely.

Now, for the very first time in nearly two decades, Davidson has emerged. He invited a young filmmaker, Lydia Drake, into his house to do a documentary on his work. Davidson is a quirky, frantic oddball, bouncing across the room, breaking into song, doing impressions. He is *quite* the character, and you'll want to get to know him.

He is, however, entirely fictitious.

That is *not* clear at the start – this is a drama convincingly presented as a documentary. To the film's credit, it's about 50 minutes in before it really gives away that this is fiction rather than fact – the "tell" is when the storyline started aligning with some key points from the Prodigal Son parable.

CAUTIONS

Part of this story addresses the problem of pain: *why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?* That's the toughest of questions, and the answer here is in parts true, and in parts too Arminian by half.

Another caution would be for younger audiences – a character dies unexpectedly, which could be quite jarring to the under-ten set.

CONCLUSION

Star James Arnold Taylor, a long-time Hollywood voice actor, offers up a memorable performance. He's onscreen 90% of the time, and that's not even the limit of his involvement. He was also the writer, producer, and co-director, and he even created many of the dozens of paintings we see throughout.

Hidden Blessings will be too preachy for some. These kinds of *sermons-wrapped-in-cinema* stories always have their contrived moments. But if you can appreciate a Kendrick brothers' *Facing the Giants* then that a little subtlety is sacrificed for the sake of the sermon won't put you off.

I waffled between giving this a 7 or 8, because as much as I enjoyed it, it would have been better about 15 minutes shorter, and those cuts could have also helped it make its point more subtly. But I settled on 8 because it is just so creative. This is James Arnold Taylor showing us all his gifts... and they are a multitude. Seeing him offer up his best to the glory of his God is a delight to experience.

And, bonus, you can watch *Hidden Blessings* for free at RedeemTV.com.

COME +
EXPLORE

BALD EAGLE

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *HALIAEETUS LEUCOCEPHALUS*

COMMON NAME: BALD EAGLE

TYPE: BIRD

THERE ARE
60
DIFFERENT
SPECIES OF
EAGLES

THE BALD EAGLE IS
EXCLUSIVE TO
NORTH AMERICA!

EAGLES SOAR ON
THE RISING
PRESSURE
OF THE
AIR.

WHERE DOES
THE NAME
COME FROM?
(OBSOLETELY NOT BALD)

"BALD" IS TRANSLATED
FROM THE OLD ENGLISH
"BALDE", MEANING,
WHITE

DIVE AFTER PREY AT A SPEED OF UP TO
160 KM PER HOUR

EAGLES CAN FLY
UP TO ALTITUDES OF
10,000 FEET

CAN GROW UP TO
14
POUNDS
(6.4 KG)

Females
ARE LARGER THAN
males.

LIFESPAN OF:
20-30
YEARS

EAGLES DIVE IN USING
THE ANGLE OF THE SUN TO
BLIND THEIR PREY

TOP OF THE FOOD
CHAIN
APEX
PREDATOR

USA'S
NATIONAL BIRD

FUN EXPERIMENT:

SET A PHONE'S CAMERA TO
WIDE ANGLE

THIS IS WHAT AN EAGLE'S
VISION IS LIKE!

PLUS THEY CAN SEE THE
ULTRA VIOLET SPECTRUM!

FORGET ABOUT GOING FOR COFFEE;
TO GET TO "KNOW EACH OTHER,"
EAGLES LOCK TALONS TOGETHER (WWW...)
IN MID-AIR AND "CARTWHEEL" TOWARDS
THE GROUND!!

COFFEE DOESN'T
SOUND SO BAD :3

THEY MATE
FOR
Life

EAGLES CAN SPOT PREY
THE SIZE OF A RABBIT

5
KILOMETERS
AWAY.

THAT'S 4-7x FARTHER
THAN HUMANS!

MONOCULAR & BINOCULAR VISION
• they can move their eyes
INDEPENDENTLY OR TOGETHER

BEAK CURVATURE DESIGN

THEIR BEAK
NEVER STOPS
GROWING...
JUST LIKE OUR
NOSES!

USING THEIR WINGS,
EAGLES CAN SWIM!
(it looks rather odd...)

THE ROOF OF THEIR MOUTH
HAS SERRATIONS (like a *fin*)
TO HELP THEM HOLD ONTO
SLIPPERY FISH

WINGSPAN:

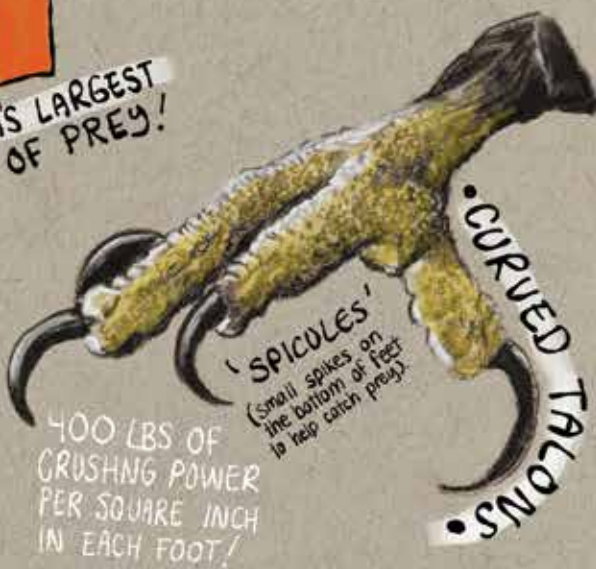
5 ft 11 in — 7 ft 7 in

DURING AN EAGLE'S PERIOD OF
"MOLTING" EAGLES WILL MOLT
THE SAME PRIMARY FLIGHT FEATHERS
ON EACH WING TO MAINTAIN
balance

shed old
feathers to
make way for
new feathers!



SCAN TO HEAR AN EAGLE'S CALL



400 LBS OF
CRUSHING POWER
PER SQUARE INCH
IN EACH FOOT!

UNSCRAMBLE THE
NAME OF A BABY EAGLE:

AGLEET

EAGLES WILL LAY 1-3 EGGS
ONCE PER YEAR.

35
DAYS
TO
INCUBATE

AT A TEMP OF 105°F

MOM & DAD TAKE
TURNS
SITTING
ON THE
EGGS, TO
KEEP THEM
COZY AND
WARM ♥

BABY EAGLES ARE
CAPABLE OF FLIGHT
AROUND 10-12 WEEKS

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler;
he will cover you with his pinions;
and under his wings you will find refuge;

his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night,
nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness;

nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

Psalm
91:1-6

EAGLES WERE CLASSIFIED AS
ENDANGERED

IN 1967 WITH A POPULATION OF
ONLY EIGHT HUNDRED
IN THE USA. IN 2020,
THE POPULATION NUMBERED

316,700



TRUE OR
FALSE

ONLY MALE EAGLES
HAVE WHITE HEADS;
FEMALES ARE SPECKLED.

1-3 DAYS
TO HATCH

THEIR NESTS
CAN WEIGH
UP TO

**1
TON!**

EAGLES MAKE THEIR NESTS IN HIGH PLACES:
TALL TREES, CLIFFS, MOUNTAIN SIDE CAVES,
TELEPHONE POLES - USUALLY NEAR LARGE
BODIES OF WATER.



MENU

- FISH
- RABBITS
- SQUIRRELS
- OTHER BIRDS
- CARRION

POP QUIZ:

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE
AN EAGLE'S TRADEMARK
"WHITE HEAD" TO SHOW?

- A THEY ARE BORN THAT WAY
- B 382 DAYS
- C 5 YEARS
- D 12 WEEKS

Words to ponder:

Drip. Drip. Rain is falling from the sky. You're a young baby bird alone in the nest as the rain keeps on falling. You've never experienced a storm before. The wet and cold are new to you. And you certainly don't like it. You begin to shiver. Your weak new little voice calls out for your mother, but she had left the nest to find you food. "Mama! Mama!" Suddenly a shadow casts over you. You look up and see your mother swooping down towards the nest. As she approaches, she slows, spreading her wings wide. Her body lands beside you and suddenly the rain stops. The cold turns to warmth, the rain stops, and the soft heartbeat of your mother's chest calms your worries. She has covered you with her wings, wrapping you in the comfort of her love. You are warm, dry and safe. The storm still rages but your mother is bearing the brunt of it all. And now you know that whatever storm may come, be it thunder, rain, sun, wind - you will always have her protection, and so, you sleep soundly.

Certainly you are not a baby bird high up in a nest. But there is no doubt that you have experienced storms of your own. Maybe you're experiencing one right now! Sure, there might not be a thunderstorm raging outside, and you might not even be getting wet from rain. Maybe the storms you are likely to face aren't natural storms at all! Maybe they're physical- an illness or chronic ailment. Maybe it's a storm relating to self-doubt or feeling unloved or misunderstood. Maybe the storm you're experiencing is a storm of faith - doubts that attack you, or maybe a sin that attacks you daily. Whatever it might be, whatever you are currently facing, we have THIS to be confident in. And that is that God has promised to be our protector, our refuge during the storm, our fortress. So while the storm may be raging, whatever it might be, remember to be like the baby bird and look to your heavenly father and call on him for comfort. Remember that he will cover you with the comfort of his presence, give you confidence with the sound of his words.



COLORING CONTEST



Use the QR code to download the coloring pages!
Exercise your creative talents to color the images as best you can!

Email your photo to contests@reformedperspective.ca to be entered to win!

Contest open to all kids aged 8-18.
Deadline to enter July 15, 2025.



AGES 13-18 PRIZE

ONE WINNER
PER
AGE CATEGORY

AGES 8-12 PRIZE
BUNDLE



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

HOW DO YOU WITNESS TO A JEHOVAH'S WITNESS?

In one of his many YouTube videos, Ray Comfort highlights a simple, biblical way to confront the JW at your door about their belief in salvation by works. He asks them what he could do to be saved if "there's a knife in my back." Can they tell him how he could enter the Kingdom of Heaven if he had just three minutes left to live?

Their answer? There is nothing to be done, because he doesn't have time left to do the good works necessary. So Comfort then asks:

"What about the thief on the cross? He was dying; he got saved. He just turned to Jesus. He couldn't go anywhere. And he was saved by God's grace, and that's how you and I can be saved. It's not by works of righteousness that we do – how can we earn everlasting life? It's a free gift of God."

DON'T MAKE BIG OUT OF LITTLE

While the Bible never names the "principle of proportionality," it does presume it, teaching us not to treat small things as big, or big things as small. In Matt. 7:3-5 Jesus teaches us not to correct a small fault in others, even as we overlook our own big sins. Then in Matt. 23:23, the Pharisees are taken to task for tithing mint, but neglecting the love of God.

Today our society also treats as unimportant what is big (God, the plight of the unborn, the sanctity of marriage, etc.) and treats the small as big. Psychologist Jonathan Shedler detailed some examples in a series of tweets:

"What psychologist [Albert] Ellis called 'awfulizing' and 'horriblizing' has become a culturally-accepted way to speak and think

It wasn't upsetting, it was *trauma*
I wasn't annoyed, I was *harmed*
They're not difficult, they're *toxic*
I wasn't uncomfortable, I was *unsafe*
It wasn't disagreement, it was *gaslighting*
It wasn't words, it was *violence*

"In this way, we transform life's unavoidable difficulties into the Most Important Thing in the Universe and ourselves into the Main Character in the Universe."

This sort of narcissism ignores that there are truly horrible and awful happenings in the world. Every time little is made out to be big, it makes it more likely that the truly wicked will be ignored. So Christians mustn't be like the boy who cried wolf.

GREAT HORRIBLE PUNS

- Class trip to the Coca-Cola factory. I hope there's no pop quiz.
- I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.
- Broken pencils are pointless.
- They told me I had Type A blood, but it was a Type O.
- It's hard to beat a boiled egg in the morning.
- The bride got a new name and a dress.
- It's hard to explain puns to kleptomaniacs because they always take things literally.
- Someone left a pile of plasticine on my doorstep. I don't know what to make of it.
- Never trust an atom. They make up everything.
- You want to know the key to being a successful mime? I'm not talking.
- Can you think of anything nice about Switzerland? Well, their flag is a big plus.
- While I usually refrain, I prefer to sing songs without their choruses.

TRYING TO HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO

A carving on a Cambodian temple built around 800 years ago seems to depict a stegosaurus. Christians know that dinosaurs and people lived at the same time, so this is no surprise for us. The artist might have seen a stegosaurus himself, or perhaps only heard a description passed on through the generations.

But evolutionists say that dinosaurs died tens of millions of years before man appeared, and if that's true then there is no way this artist could have seen a stegosaurus or had an accurate description of it passed on by word of mouth from one generation to the next – not if the span was millions of years! So evolutionists need to explain how this carving could have come to be. In an article on Smithsonian.com Riley Black offers two possibilities that can be summed up as:

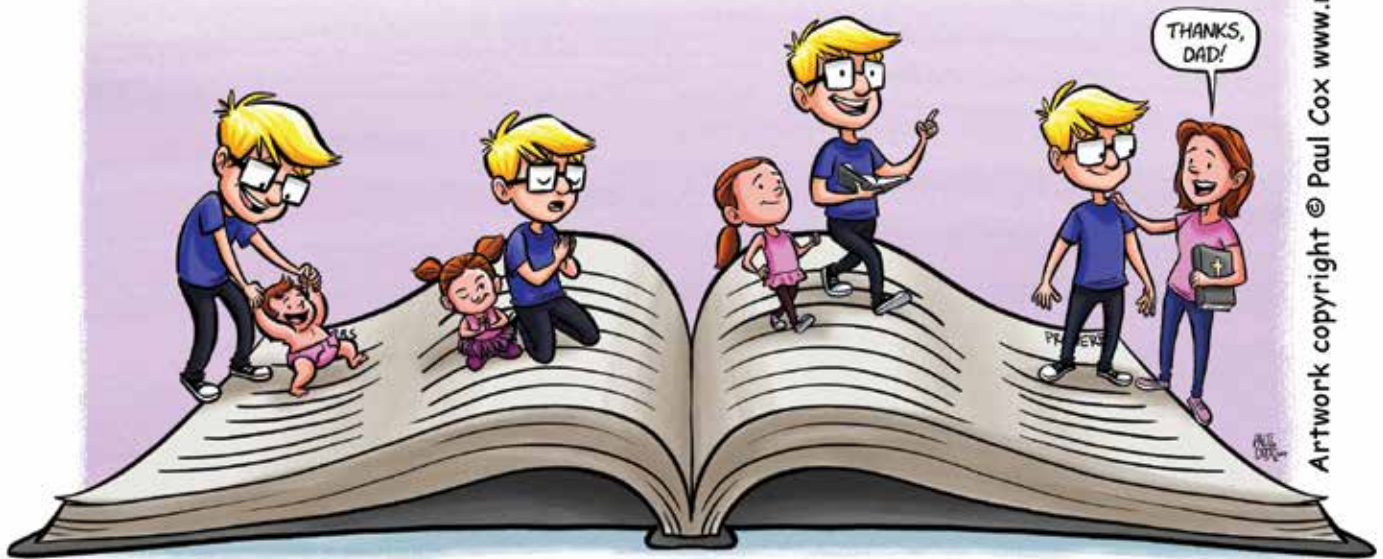
1. It doesn't really look like a stegosaurus

"If viewed directly, the carving hardly looks Stegosaurus-like at all. The head is large and appears to have large ears and a horn. The 'plates' along the back more closely resemble leaves, and the sculpture is a better match for a boar or rhinoceros against a leafy background."



"Train up a child in the way he should go
– but be sure you go that way yourself."

– Charles Spurgeon



2. It looks so much like a stegosaurus it must be a hoax

"There are rumors that it was created recently, perhaps by a visiting movie crew (the temple is a favorite locale for filmmakers), and it is possible that someone created something Stegosaurus-like during the past few years as a joke."

LET'S NOT WHINE

John Piper wants us to know that sins aren't something to complain about – whining isn't the proper response. No indeed. As Piper puts it:

"I hear so many Christians murmuring about their imperfections and their failures and their addictions and their shortcomings, and I see so little war! 'Murmur, murmur, murmur... Why am I this way?' Make WAR!"

WATTS WAS A WONDER

Isaac Watts (1674-1747) was a gifted poet and hymn writer, perhaps best known for *Joy to the World* and *O God, Our Help In Ages Past*. When he was a young lad, his gifts were already in full bloom, but they weren't yet fully appreciated by those closest to Watts. In fact, as Douglas Bond recounts in his biography *The Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts*, the poet's mother didn't even believe that the poems she was finding around the house were actually Watts' own compositions. Sure, the boy said they were his, but what seven-year-old child could write like this? She assumed they must be poems he had memorized and then written down as his own. So, to put him

to the test, she sat the boy down at the kitchen table and asked him to write her a poem. This is what he came up with.

I am a vile polluted lump of earth;
So I've continued since my birth;
Although Jehovah grace does daily give me,
As sure this monster Satan will deceive me.
Come, therefore, Lord, from Satan's claws relieve me.

Wash me in Thy blood, O Christ,
And grace divine impart.
Then search and try the corners of my heart,
That I in all things may be fit to do
Service to Thee, and sing Thy praises too.

After he showed it to his mother, she thought her suspicions were confirmed. This, clearly, was a copied piece, showing a theological depth far beyond the insight (let alone poetic ability) of any mere child. But then Watts told his mother to look at the first letter of each line for proof – the boy had crafted an acrostic that spelled out his own name, "Isaac Watts." As Bond writes,

"This was, no doubt, one of those moments that a mother cherishes and hides up in her heart. Imagine Sarah Watts' wonder at her son's gifting, but still more, the gratitude to God any Christian mother would have for so obvious a working of grace in her son's heart."

WHY WAS JESUS SILENT?

After He was arrested, Jesus replied to some of Pilate's questions, and responded to a question by the high priest, but to their many false accusations He gave no reply – He stayed silent (Mark 15:5). The late Dr. D. James Kennedy, a popular American Presbyterian pastor last century, had an unusual thought as to why Jesus didn't speak up.

"Why was Jesus silent? Is it not often the case that a person is silent because he is giving tacit consent? Could that be the case? Many accusations were made against Him, and yet He denied none of them. Was He perchance guilty? In the answer to that lies the very heart of the Christian faith, and we must uncompromisingly declare that Jesus was silent precisely because He *was* guilty! He was guilty of everything with which He was charged. And He was guilty of many crimes for which He was not charged. He was guiltier than any man who had ever stood before the Sanhedrin. He was guiltier than the vilest miscreant who shall ever stand before the judgment bar of God. He was the guiltiest man who ever lived! But the guilt He bore was not His own. It was yours, and it was mine. 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).' God hath made Him to be sin for us. Guilty – as charged (2 Cor. 5:21)."

OUCH! BUT...YEAH

"If any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him, for you are worse than he thinks you to be."

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon

CROSSWORD SOLUTION MAY-JUNE



G.K. CHESTERTON ON REPETITION

To a dad's distress, kids never tire of being thrown in the air. G.K. Chesterton thinks that, as we're in the midst of doing it again, and again and again, we might not be properly appreciating the wonder of it all. Might our son or daughter be reflecting something of God in their unending enthusiasm?

"...children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, 'Do it again'; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. 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."

POLITICS THAT ALWAYS WIN

In my small town they've proposed giving the local public library more money. In the voter's guide that everyone gets, they publish 200-word for and against statements, and I managed to get on the "against" committee simply by being one of the first three people to sign up. I don't know what will come of all this, but below is my first draft for why I hope people will vote no. Mine is quite a Christian town, so an explicitly Christian argument might actually win at the polls, but I'd want to give the Christian argument regardless. Then, whether or not we win at the polls, we've given our Creator the glory, which is the very purpose for which He created us.

In the opening chapters of Genesis we learn that God made us male and female (Gen. 1:27) and that sex is intended for marriage (Gen. 2:24). Our library system actively opposes these truths, which is why we shouldn't give them more money.

They oppose God in their teen section where *Beyond Magenta* can be found, which includes an account of oral sex with a six-year-old. Despite this being brought to the library's attention, they didn't pull the book.

That opposition is apparent in the picture book section. Your preschooler can pull *My Princess Boy* off the shelf and ask you whether boys should wear dresses too. *Being You: A First Conversation About Gender* will teach them that "it's okay to wonder: Am I a girl? Am I a boy? Am I both? Am I neither?" The picture book section also includes *Everybody is a Rainbow* with its depictions of naked genitalia.

What's hidden amongst the other books on the shelf comes front and center with June's Pride displays. Your tax dollars are being used to oppose foundational God-given truths, sowing confusion even amongst the littlest. We shouldn't give the library more money – we need to give them less.



DON'T FOLLOW YOUR HEART

When it comes to finding true happiness,
do the opposite of what culture says.

by John Stonestreet

Making the happiness crisis in America even worse, especially for young people, are completely wrong diagnoses. What's needed to increase happiness is not more money, more stuff, or more "authenticity." As Dr. Thaddeus Williams explains in his book *Don't Follow Your Heart*, at the root of our problem is the terrible advice about how to achieve happiness that's been repeated across our culture for over a decade now. Here's Dr. Williams to explain:

"For years my children and I have played a game together called Spot the Lie. If they can identify a false idea in whatever we happen to be watching, they earn one dollar. When she was nine years old, my daughter Holland ('Dutch' for short) came cheerfully bounding down the stairs, saying, 'You owe me another dollar!' 'What did you find this time, Dutch?' 'The commercial told me I should follow my heart,' she answered. 'Okay, so where's the lie?' I asked. Her answer, and I recall it verbatim, was, 'Daddy, I don't want to follow my own heart. My heart is fallen. I'd way rather follow God's heart.' Cue the proud daddy tears. Let's just say she earned five dollars for that one.

"Some may think, *What a shame – he's indoctrinating that poor girl*. The opposite is true. I'm trying to make a heretic out of her. I want her to question and ultimately rebel against the doctrines of our day. According to Barna, 84% of Americans believe the 'highest goal of life is to enjoy it as much as possible,' 86% believe that to be fulfilled requires you to 'pursue the things you desire most,' while 91% affirm that 'the best way to find yourself is by looking within

yourself.' It was Apple cofounder, black turtleneck enthusiast, and former Pixar chairman Steve Jobs who publicly declared, 'There is no reason not to follow your heart.'

"Let's resist the propaganda of expressive individualism of our day and answer the late Steve Jobs with four good reasons not to follow our hearts.

"First, *our hearts are too dull*. Validating our every feeling might be exhilarating at first. Yet we end up as what David Foster Wallace called 'lords of our tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the center of all creation.' Looking inside our hearts does not give us limitless freedom so much as a bad case of claustrophobia. Don't get me wrong, I have no doubt that our hearts are fascinating. But compared with following the heart of God, our hearts hold all the thrill of a prison cell.

"Second, *our hearts are too dithering*. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus famously said one never steps in the same river twice because it is always flowing. Our hearts, too, are in constant flux. Some hearts may be as turbulent as the Ganges in monsoon season, and others move like molasses on a cold day, but all human hearts are in motion. What God says is true about his image bearers is infinitely more trustworthy than whatever our fallen feelings say from one moment to the next. If we don't want to end up in a chronic identity crisis, we shouldn't take our flowing feelings at their word; take God at His. His joyous verdict about us is trustworthy and solid as stone.

"Third, *our hearts are too divided*. In *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis said,


"Telling us to obey Instinct is like telling us to obey people. People say

different things: so do instincts. ... Each instinct, if you listen to it, will claim to be gratified at the expense of all the rest.'

"Even Buddy Pine, the supervillain Syndrome from *The Incredibles*, gets the point. 'You always say, "Be true to yourself;"' Pine complains to his former idol, Mr. Incredible, 'but you never say which part of yourself to be true to!'

"Fourth, *our hearts are too depraved*. The call to automatic obedience makes sense only if we follow Rousseau in his dogma that 'there is no original perversity in the human heart,' or Joel Osteen in his teaching that the 'heart is right.' The Bible offers us a humbling dose of realism. Jeremiah said, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?' Ecclesiastes tells us, 'The hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live.' Given the sickness and insanity of our hearts, Proverbs 28:26 draws the blunt but correct conclusion: 'One who trusts in his own heart is a fool.'

"Want to be miserable? Follow your dull, dithering, divided, and depraved heart. Want to find real joy? Take the wise advice of a 9-year-old, and follow God's heart instead."

Dr. Thaddeus Williams is a professor at Biola University and author of numerous books on theology and culture, including *Don't Follow Your Heart* and *Revering God*. 

For more resources to live like a Christian in this cultural moment, go to Breakpoint.org. This is reprinted with permission from the Colson Center.

A word for a new mother

...as given at her first baby shower

by Barbara Braendlein

I feel singularly ill-equipped to offer an exhortation on motherhood at a baby shower to anyone, but especially to you Victoria, for a couple of reasons. The first is pretty obvious – what could I say to you about mothering that you haven't already gleaned?!? I mean, I guess I could tell you what I am doing: I watch your mother and try to do everything she does.

The second reason has more to do with my own journey of motherhood. Especially in their younger years, my children were well known for having obscure and generally terrifying medical issues (I guess technically they still do, but we were hospitalized way more back then). So I learned early on that when the young mothers would gather, as young mothers are wont to do, to chat about their young broods, I needed to keep quiet. If little Johnny is suddenly refusing to eat peas, which he loved just last week, hearing that one of my kids once did the same thing was like committing conversational homicide – I could knock a whole room into instant silence simply by participating! I was like the dread maternal specter of every mother's worst nightmares (because if it happened to my kids, it could happen to yours!!)... and now, here I am, speaking for your baby shower! That's what you call ironic.

In contemplating all this, though, it hit me that God has uniquely prepared me to speak to at least one facet of motherhood that you will face, that all of us do – be-



cause someday, sooner than you may realize, you are going to have to hurt your child. That's right, in the fast-approaching days before you, you are going to have to cut a newborn's fingernails.

There you are, with this bundle of perfection and magic in your arms, the joy that is set before you that got you through the pregnancy and the labor and the delivery – she finally came, and your life is not the life you had before. You have her fed and warm, fresh as a daisy and probably wearing one of the cute outfits you were given at a shower from people who love you, and you observe that those teeny tiny fingernails look alarmingly like the claws of a Bengal tiger and so you reach for the most cruel and inappropriately named of all baby accoutrements – the safety fingernail clippers. You have already conquered nursing, for Pete's sake, and you've been cutting your own nails for years! What could go wrong? And then you clip the first tiny

pointer finger claw... and blood flows everywhere.

And you are horrified. God gave you this absolutely perfect bundle of covenant joy and you broke it!!! She was so trusting and now, somehow, even with her little eyes squeezed shut, you sense that she is looking at you like the Benedict Mother that you already feel yourself to be.

And this is only the beginning.


Because it won't be the last time that you cause your child pain. Even if you are blessed to never have to hold her down for an IV insertion or a breathing treatment, you will still have to faithfully discipline, you will have to disappoint, you will have moments of holding her back or pushing her forward, of dealing with her sin... and dealing with yours. Sometimes you will be the cause of her hurt, because mothering sins creep in everywhere and they spill on everyone.

But your mother taught you well, and I know you will teach this sweet child well, also. In every hurt, you get to show her where to run. You are about to embark on a new existence, where it is no longer only you running to the cross of Christ with every wound, every disappointment, every burden, every fear – now you run with your hands full. Now, you bring her with you. The world will give you tips and techniques and affirmations, a million empty little ways to try and deal with what they call “mom guilt.” But you, beloved mother-to-be, you don't need that. Your guilt, and mine, has already been dealt with. Resist the temptation to try and pry that guilt off the cross, and instead, fall on Jesus. Every time. Look to Him for the courage to cause hurt when you need to, and the grace to repent and believe when you cause the wrong hurts.

In John 15:4, Jesus exhorts us to abide in Him. If I may, I'd like to close with a bit of Charles Spurgeon:

“Communion with Christ is a certain cure for every ill. Whether it be the woodworm of sadness or the smothering impact of worldly treasure, close fellowship with the Lord Jesus will take bitterness from the one and excess from the other.

“Live near to Jesus, Christian, and it is a matter of secondary importance whether you live on the mountains of honor or in the valley of humiliation. Living near to Jesus, you are covered with the wings of God, and underneath you are the everlasting arms. Let nothing keep you from the hallowed communion that is the unique privilege of a life hidden in Christ...

“You have a difficult road before you; Make sure, pilgrim, that you do not enter without your guide. You have to pass through the fiery furnace; do not enter unless, like Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego, you have the Son of God to be your companion. You have to storm the walls of your corrupt heart: Do not attempt it until, like Joshua, you have seen the Captain of the Lord's host, with His sword drawn in His hand... Keep close to the Captain of your salvation, lean upon His strength, ask Him to refresh you by His Spirit, and you will stand before Him at the end, without spot or blemish, and at peace.” 



Our family's trip to the Ark

Ken Ham's creationist organization Answers in Genesis has built a life-size replica of Noah's Ark in the State of Kentucky. These Christians are proudly leading with the Flood – one of the most ridiculed portions of Scripture – and attesting to the reliability of God's Word in this big bold way.

It is glorious!

by Jon Dykstra



A couple of neighbor friends, along with my Dykstra ladies, in front of the prow of the Ark.

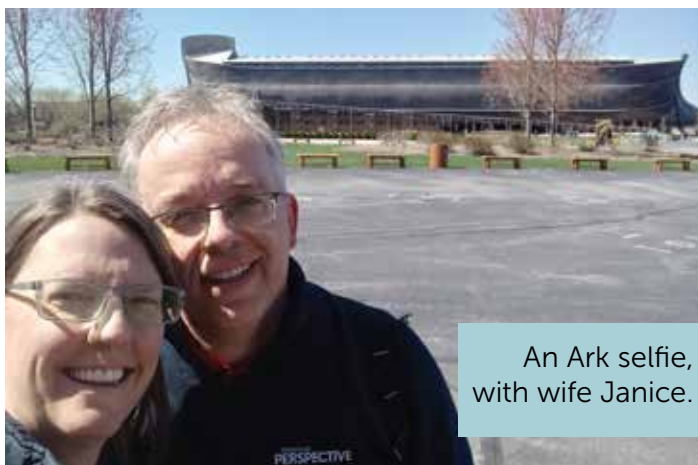
It started in the airport. We were picking up a rental car and the friendly agent asked why we were in town. I had a moment's hesitation, the mental blip I get when a stranger totally sets me up to talk about God and I'm wondering what the guy will think if I take him up on it. A fear-of-man moment. It helped that I was wearing my "Made in His Image" t-shirt so onward I plunged: "We're here to see the Ark."

"Oh that's great! I think half the people who rent a car from us are here to see it," and then he went on about his uncle – or maybe it was a friend of his grandfather – who had donated a biblical manuscript featured in the Ark's Bible Museum display. Not quite sure I got that all right, but what I do remember is the surprise of meeting a stranger who just started talking about things biblical. I come from a small town where there's about 5 churches for every coffee shop, and I was still struck, in this spot somewhere in Kentucky, that this might be the most Christian place I've been. And the airport was just the beginning. Shucks, even our Airbnb rental was bedecked in a full shopping cart load of Christian crafts and signs.

But what we came for was the Ark, and it is enormous. You can't see it from the parking lot because it's situated in the middle of 800 woodland acres – these folks are planning for all sorts of expansion possibilities (we could see the beginnings of their ancient Jerusalem walk-through exhibit). The Ark is set so far back you have to take a five-minute bus ride just to get there.

Then you see it! It is wonderful and just a bit surreal. A replica of the Ark, to try and reach a lost world? But the world thinks the Ark is a fairy tale, and kids' stuff! They'll make fun of anyone who takes it seriously, won't they?

Yes, they will. And worse too. When the Ark opened they had to have pretty intense security – there are still guards



An Ark selfie, with wife Janice.

everywhere – because they were getting all sorts of bomb threats. So, yes, the world will mock anyone who believes the Bible's Flood account, and that's what got me just a little *verklemt* as we walked up to the Ark. It kept getting bigger and bigger! I couldn't miss just how many people had to have been involved to plan and build it. And to keep it running there are more than 1,200 part- and full-time staff employed by Answers in Genesis across their three enterprises – the Ark, their Creation Museum, and their publishing arm (it had me thinking of 1 Kings 19:18). These are Bible-believing folk who are happy to risk the ridicule of the world to proclaim the gospel of their God. If that doesn't get you right in the gratitude, I don't know what will.

FAVORITES INSIDE THE ARK

Our family went to the Ark one day by ourselves, and a second day with our neighbors so we got to share our favorite sights with them, and see what you might skip if you just had the one day.

The first floor should be your last priority. It is still interesting – half the length of the floor is filled with bamboo cages showing how Noah and his family might have housed the smaller animals. How could just eight people feed and clean away the waste for thousands of critters? Well, the exhibit designers had some ideas: gravity-fed water and food dispensers that would only need to be filled every few days, and chutes that would also use gravity, this time to funnel the

waste away from the cages to where it could be easily collected and carted away. This is all "Arkistic" license (as one display puts it), since the Bible doesn't go into detail about the Ark's inner workings. But these cages show how a small crew could have taken care of thousands of animals. So the first floor is worth seeing, but all our kids' favorites were on the top two floors.

As you move from one level to the next, challenge your kids to spot Noah and his family. All eight members can be found on each of the three floors, caring for the animals, and doing other chores. That's 24 family members to spot in total.

We all had our favorite spots and exhibits.



Noah, and his wife, as he sends out the dove.



Gilgamesh's square "Ark" wasn't any sort of seaworthy vessel.

One of mine was the bookstore below the Ark. It's one thing to read online reviews of creationist books, but so much better to be able to page through a physical copy.

Another of my favorites were the two ten-minute films being shown on the third floor. It was just nice to take a break from walking, but these were also clever stories. They take place 4,000 years apart, but cast the same actors in both films, and in similar roles. The first is set right before the Deluge, with a hostile secular reporter scoffing at Noah, asking why he built his boat. The second story takes place today, and once again we have a hostile reporter, this time asking the Ark Encounter president, Noah Zomarsh (a Ken Ham stand-in) why they built the Ark. Street evangelist Ray Comfort, who might be familiar to some readers, makes an appearance via holography to issue a call to repentance, and offer up a gospel presentation.

My wife loved how *everything* was a gospel presentation. She also enjoyed

the science and engineering aspect, with Ark Encounter designers addressing the problems Noah's family would have had with pumping waste out, and bringing fresh air in. We don't know how they did it, but the designers showcase some pretty ingenious ways they *could* have done it.

Our neighbor Brian loved how he didn't have to correct the information for his kids, like we get used to doing whenever we go to a secular museum.

Everyone enjoyed the crew quarters. Again, a lot of imagination was involved, including names given to Noah's wife, and his daughters-in-law (the Bible doesn't list any). Since Noah's three sons probably all bore a resemblance to each other, the Answers in Genesis folk wondered if the differences we see today among the world's ethnicities came about via Noah's sons' wives. The three women are presented as the progenitors of the three "races" – one looked African-ish, another Caucasian-ish, and the third Asian-ish. It's an intriguing idea, so long as your kids understand it is more "Arktistic license" and just a guess, not a fact.

The third floor was tops among almost everyone, though for different reasons. My oldest was intrigued by the different Ark stories found in other cultures, and the mock-up models of their Arks. Bible skeptics will point to the Story of Gilgamesh and its flood account as the precursor for what we read in Genesis. They say Noah's Flood is just a rip-off. But if you work out the dimensions of

Gilgamesh's "Ark" you get a square that would get rolled over and over by the waves. The dimensions of Noah's Ark are the only realistic measurements among all these accounts.

The top floor also featured a teaser exhibit for the Bible Museum in Washington, DC.

My youngest liked the very last hall which features what was basically a comic book enlarged and thrown onto the walls. The plot revolves around a group of university friends who are wrestling with the purpose of life in very different ways. The story's got a bit of grit to it, and, again, ends with a gospel presentation.

FAVORITE ANIMALS

What would an ark be without animals? The zoo here isn't as large as you might find in some big cities – there's no lions or elephants – but when was the last time you've pet a kangaroo? (They aren't soft like a cat, but are maybe as soft as a Labrador.)

For just a bit extra, our girls got a short camel ride, and for free they got to pet goats named Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. We all got to see a Zorse – half horse, half zebra – and a Zonkey – half zebra and half donkey – which highlighted that these species might all be part of the same single horse "kind" that was taken on the Ark.

Janice and our girls caught a "creature feature" – a zookeeper bringing out an owl to speak about it and show it around – and Janice was struck again by how this too was a gospel presentation. They didn't want the audience to miss how amazing this owl was, and more importantly, how amazing its Creator was.

3 TIPS

Depending on when you go, there can be some pretty lengthy lines to enter the Ark. If you start with the crowds, it'll be slow progress all the way up. One way to skip the lines is to enter through the gift shop on the bottom floor at the front prow of the boat (on the far left end as you approach). Then take the elevator up to the third floor and start there where it won't be crowded yet.

If you do go through the entrance at



Our youngest next to a Zorse, with a Zonkey peeking in from the right.



More of the animals we met.



the back of the boat, they'll try to take your picture, which you can purchase as a souvenir later. It only takes a minute, but you can save your time and money by politely but firmly expressing that no, you don't want a picture.

Food, even snacks, are quite expensive, and they don't want you bringing in food. There are cheaper options nearby, but be sure to get a wristband before leaving so you can get back in.

ONE CAUTION

Before our visit, a friend suggested we read Genesis 6-9 for family devotions, to act as a refresher for what the Bible actually says about the Flood. It was a great idea.

And while you're there you'll want to encourage your kids not to take everything on display as fact. This is quite the counter to the Ark-as-a-children's-bathtub-toy, or as a fable likened to the Greek myths, but there is still a lot of imagination going on here – possibilities and maybes and might have beens. And our kids need to know it.

CONCLUSION

So who would enjoy the Ark Encounter experience, and how long should you go?

I can't really imagine a Christian adult not loving this. I could have stayed longer, even

after sneaking in part of a third day while my family was resting back at the rental. Some of my appreciation comes from remembering my youthful wrestlings with evolution, back when it disturbed me. I've long since settled that issue in my head and heart, but I still appreciate the encouragement and insight on offer in such a concentrated form at the Ark Encounter.

My kids and my wife loved going two days. That was, in part, because going two days meant we didn't have to race through the whole thing. We could meander, lin-

ger, and stop wherever we liked because we knew we were coming back to see the rest. That also meant we didn't have to make it a super long day. We didn't even get to the third floor on our first day.

Our neighbors went for just one day, and with a little help from us, were able to hit the highlights. If you skim through that first level, and focus on the last two, and the zoo, that's do-able, and a good way to save some money – tickets are expensive!

As to age, adults are going to be awed, and teens will find lots of little things here and there to pore over. It's more of a question of how young is too young? All of our kids – both the neighbors and ours – are ten and over and I suspect that's about how old you'd need to be to get a lot out of the experience. So if you have only littles, you might want to wait a few years yet before making it a family trip.

And then what a trip it will be! RP

Our family is so very grateful to the RP Board for sending us to the Ark and to the Creation Museum (which I might have to write about too!). It was the trip of a lifetime!



Sarah (pictured) might have had the longest beard of all the goats.

RUTH DE VOS

is quilting kids and creation

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman

Textile art is perhaps not the typical career choice for someone with both science and engineering degrees, but Australian artist Ruth de Vos says there are “surprisingly many engineers-turned-artists in the world!”

Ruth has enjoyed arts and crafts, particularly sewing, for as long as she can remember. It was in high school art class that Ruth was introduced to quilting as an art form, and she was hooked. She knew right away that this was something she wanted to pursue further. Ruth recalls, “I think I spent as much time on my art homework as on all my other subjects combined.”

But it wasn’t until she became a mother in 2003 that she began playing with quilting techniques more seriously. Children turned out to be a major inspiration and subject for her art as well.

“As a mother, I was privileged to experience my little children discovering this wonderful world for themselves, and it often struck me how much joy and wonder they experienced around the little things that we can so easily take for granted as adults. I have put many, many stitches into capturing and sharing that childlike wonder through my artwork!”


Ruth also loves to capture the uniquely beautiful Australian flora, where she finds “so much beauty in each leaf, nut and flower.”

It’s clear from the titles and descriptions of Ruth’s art that her view of the world is informed by her faith in Christ. A eucalyptus tree is a jumping-off point to consider fruit bearing in the Christian life. Vibrant blossoms remind Ruth of Scripture verses, and yet another piece reminds Ruth to “embrace the beauty and wonder of the world [God] has made and trust in His provision and care.”

Ruth lives with her husband and six children in the beautiful Perth hills of Western Australia, where they enjoy views of eucalyptus trees from every window. She works almost full-time in her home studio as a textile artist, quiltmaker, and illustrator. A drawing table is set up in her lounge. There is a vintage sewing machine, always ready to stitch, in the living room, and a “whole lot of sketching happens poolside while supervising my children during the summer months.”

On any given day, Ruth says there are a million ideas floating around in her mind, so the challenge for Ruth is not so much where to find inspiration, but how to decide which idea to run with next.

In 2007, Ruth won “Best of Show” at Western Australia’s QuiltWest. A year later, she held her first solo art exhibition. Some ten years after that, Ruth ran her first piecework workshop. More recently, Ruth launched Creative Piecework, a quilting class. Indeed, there’s no shortage of ideas and avenues for Ruth to share her work with others.

To find out more about Ruth and see samples of her work, and maybe learn more about quilting, visit her website RuthdeVos.com, or follow her at [Instagram.com/ruthdevosart](https://www.instagram.com/ruthdevosart). 



▲ **A New Thing** | 200 cm by 150 cm

The eucalyptus tree is known by its fruit. A Christian life, too, is one of growth, of maturing in fruit-bearing faith. How beautiful when the transformation from old nature to new nature manifests in ways that cannot be contained internally, like the vibrant eucalyptus blossoms that cannot be contained within their hardwood shells, and burst forth exuberantly for all to enjoy.

He Renews the Face of the Ground

| 94 cm x 73 cm

The title of this artwork is a statement of faith in the Creator God, who has promised to uphold and sustain His creation. I don't know what the future holds, but I do trust God with it! It was created during a particularly long and dry summer, when even the eucalyptus trees started dying. ▼



They Sing Among the Branches | 80 cm by 80 cm

...hand in hand... discovering together... There is so much to enjoy in the way that little children grow and learn together – holding hands, sharing little discoveries. ▼



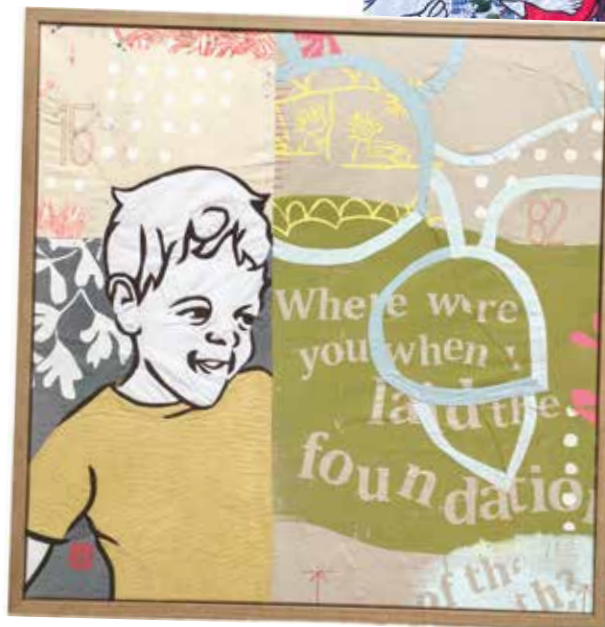
Not Even Solomon | 147 cm by 180 cm

These vibrant blossoms were dancing on their pale stems with no regard for the more sombre foliage surrounding them. The frivolity of the blossoms, contrasted with the line and form of the tough and sturdy leaves, displays the beautiful attention to detail in God's creation. ▼



Hesed | 200 cm by 200 cm ▶

I was invited to create an artwork for the foyer of our local, church-run aged care nursing home. I was asked to base it on the idea of *hesed*. "Hesed" is faithful love in action. As God shows His loving kindness to us, we have the privilege of showing kindness, or hesed, through the loyal, loving care of those who are older than us. Let's rejoice in the Lord always, also in this!



◀ The Foundations

| 80 cm by 80 cm

The last chapters of Job are one of my favorite parts of the Bible. God's majesty is contrasted to the smallness of mankind. For me, there is so much comfort in knowing that God is infinitely more wise and powerful than I am, and that He has the whole world in His hands. Some of the words from these chapters have made their way into this and other artworks in this series.



▶ Wind of His Words | 129 cm by 171 cm

This textile artwork is a response to the final chapters of the Book of Job, where God speaks from the whirlwind, reminding us of His sovereignty over all creation. The imagery of children playing in the rain captures the innocence and joy found in the natural world, even amid life's storms. Just as God sustains the rain, the clouds, and the wind, He sustains us through every season of life. This piece serves as a reminder to embrace the beauty and wonder of the world He has made, trusting in His provision and care.



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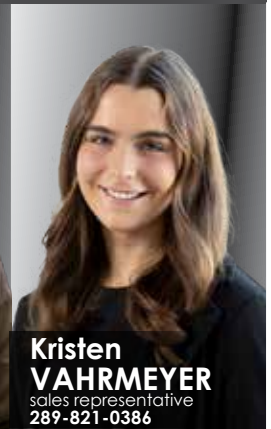
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WISE AND INNOCENT

by Christine Farenhorst

My children have often called me gullible and naïve. As a matter of fact, the word “Mom” often had an exclamation mark behind it. Perhaps they are right, and here’s an example to prove that.

In the 1990s I became friends with a young man who worked at the Owen Sound Public Library. He was an avid landscaper and had been designated to take care of the flower beds around the library building. He also maintained the flora inside the renovated Carnegie structure. Some of these plants stood in the rectangular windowsills of the rooms housing the books, while other plants lined the foyer.

The gardener and I became acquainted after my husband, Anco, and I donated a large Norfolk pine to the library. The tree was fingering the ceiling of our living room and we were anxious to find a good home for it. Our conifer species was received with enthusiasm and placed in the spacious foyer. I have forgotten the gardener’s name at this point, but remember that when I frequented the library, very often he would corner me to let me know how the pine was doing.

One day, when he was weeding outside, he called me over. “Christine,” he began, “I want to ask you a favor.”

“Sure,” I answered, smiling congenially.

“Well,” he went on, “I have some special flowers that need only a minimal amount of water. And I wonder ...” He paused and I encouraged him by nodding. “Well, I wonder,” he continued slowly, “because I know that your husband is a veterinarian, if you would be able to get me some syringes. You see I could put water in them and squirt just a tiny amount of fluid into these plants. It would be a great help!”

“Oh, sure,” I replied, immediately sympathetic to the presumed problem in his foliage kingdom, “I’ll ask my husband

and get back to you.”

“That would be great.” He beamed at me and I beamed back.

Upon coming home, I relayed the question to one of my sons. “Mom!!” he exclaimed, “Don’t you get it! That guy’s a druggie. He’s an addict. He’s trying to get his hands on some free syringes so he can inject himself with who knows what! You are so gullible!”

Later, upon hearing the request, my husband agreed with my son and, upon reflection, I came to the conclusion that they were probably right. When I met the man again, I gently let him know that I was unable to obtain the desired syringes for his plants. He shrugged and that was the end of it.

Last week I was shopping at Zehr’s. It was late afternoon on Friday, on Valentine’s Day. Generally speaking, Friday afternoon is not the time I usually shop but there had been warnings of an impending storm and I thought it would be wise to get some groceries before the weekend. There were a lot of people in the store. I

presumed that everyone wanted to get their shopping done before the storm hit and felt a common bond between myself and the other purchasers. There was a rather long wait in the line-up to pay as one of the customers had bought an item without a price tag on it. There were two gentlemen standing behind me, each with only one item in their hands. I noted them and briefly wondered why they were not going to the faster check-out, but it was only a passing thought.

After finally paying my bill, I pushed the shopping cart through the mall foyer towards the entrance. My car was parked in the first row across from the store and easy to access. As I had forgotten my cloth bags in the car, I had to transfer my groceries from the cart into the bags. Opening the front door, I deposited my purse onto the console between the front seats. Then the process of transferal began as I put the groceries from the cart into the cloth bags and into the back seat. Having done that, I brought the cart back to the sidewalk by Zehr’s and moseyed on back to the car. Opening the door and easing myself into it, I shoved

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

– Matt. 10:16



my purse over to the passenger seat and was about to start the motor when there was a knock at my window. Startled, I turned my head. There was a man, a rather short and squat man, beckoning with the fingers of his right hand that I should come out. He then pointed to the back wheel of the car, the wheel on the driver's side. Immediately I assumed there was something wrong with the back wheel – something which he had noticed while passing. I straightaway opened the door and hopped out. He walked over to the back wheel, and said something which I did not understand. You see, he was wearing a cream-colored scarf which hid his mouth. He was also wearing a big black hat. Consequently, I was only able to see the top of his upper lip and his chunky nose and rather small eyes.

"That man is cold," I thought, and it surely was cold. "Pardon me," I voiced politely, "but I didn't hear what you said."

He repeated himself, but honestly it was Greek to me and the scarf over his mouth didn't help his pronunciation. He squatted down, and touched the back tire with the index finger of his right hand.

"Is it going flat?" I asked, squatting down next to him, "Is that what you're trying to tell me?"

"Leak," he answered, as he lifted his finger off the tire before he reiterated, "Leak."

"Leak?" I repeated.

He then put the worried index finger back down on the tire, which to my non-mechanical eyes, looked very healthy. But then what did I know? He then lifted the finger off the tire, waved it about a bit before putting it back down on the tire.

"Is air coming out?" I asked. "Is it a slow leak? Will it be dangerous for me to drive, do you think?"

In a far-off time, before there were cars, Augustine once said that we should be "innocent as doves that we may not harm anyone"; and "cautious as snakes that we may be careful of letting anyone harm us." That is to say, we are not to be credulous, but we should be discerning enough to know that not all whom we encounter are who they say they are.

The man continued to put his finger on the tire a few more times and then stood

up. He looked at me above his scarf face.

"Is OK," he said, "Is OK."

"Are you sure? Because I have a drive of about fifteen minutes to get home."

"Yes, is OK." I thanked him for his care in stopping because he thought something might be wrong. I told him that I thought this was very kind. Then I said goodbye, got back into the car and drove home. But all the while I was worried that perhaps the tire might have a slow flat coming in, all the while I worried about how to turn the wheel if the car would begin to swerve.

Upon coming home, I told my daughter what had happened. She told me not to worry, that my son-in-law would look at it when he came in. However, as I was putting the groceries away, I noticed that my wallet (always in my purse) was missing. My daughter helped me look and look we did. After exhaustively searching everywhere, we eventually phoned Zehr's. Zehr's surveyed their area, spoke to the teller who had checked me out, and then informed us that they were unable to locate the wallet.

"Mom," my daughter told me, "I think you've been robbed."

We then proceeded to phone both my bank and the Mastercard company. The bank put a marker on my account and the Mastercard company told us there had been four attempts on my card in the last half hour and a fifth had been successful in withdrawing four hundred dollars.

It is a blessing that Mastercard is the only credit card I use. However, my wallet was also home to my Social Insurance Number, my library cards, my health card, and my driver's license. There was also more than one hundred dollars cash, postal stamps and photographs. That last item, though perhaps not much in the way of money, was important to me. Presently, I'm in the process of getting a new driver's license, and have bought a protection called Equifax which protects a person from identity fraud. It's all a far cry from Eden.

I think about the fellow wearing the cream-colored scarf. Was he poor? Had he just lost his job, as so many have lost theirs in the last year? Did he know the Lord? What partner helped him steal


my wallet out of my purse when I was hunkered down thankful that a stranger cared enough to stop and warn me about a possible leak in my tire? Were these two thieves the men who had stood behind me in the checkout line? Had they been watching me as I punched in the pin number of my Mastercard?

Believers do not have a life free from conflict. That is a fact. Jonathan Edwards said:

"Men that have their spirits heated and enraged and rising in bitter resentment when they are injured act as if they thought some strange thing had happened to them. Whereas they are very foolish in so thinking for it is no strange thing at all but only what was to be expected in a world like this. They, therefore, do not act wisely that allow their spirits to be ruffled by the injuries they suffer."

If Christians expect to be taken advantage of, they will not be depressed when it happens. We are called to bear our injuries with dignity and hope in the providence of God – even as Christ did. Jonathan Edwards went on to say:

"As love to God prevails, it tends to set persons above human injuries, in this sense, that the more they love God the more they will place all their happiness in him.... The more they love God, the less they set their hearts on their worldly interests, which are all that their enemies can touch."

There is no doubt that widows, widowers and all older and retired persons, should beware. There is also no doubt that it hurts to be taken advantage of. But Jonathan Edwards' words are encouraging and put things into perspective. The two robbers could only harm my worldly pleasures. They cannot, and never will be able to, take the inheritance that is laid up for me in heaven. With the help of the Holy Spirit, I will look to God and love and trust Him alone. And He is faithful and will help me. 

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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 introduce them with a dose of Reformed perspective. Get these Saturday Selections delivered each week 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.



10 questions to ask when evaluating a Christian college

While you could direct these at the admissions department, it'd be even better to ask them to a recent alumnus. As the author notes, college publications really put a spin on things, such that you can almost read in whatever worldview you are looking for. So you really need to ask someone who was there.



Carl Trueman on the tragedy of IVF

"While I do not deny the humanity of the child born by IVF or surrogacy, the procedures do.... Once IVF and surrogacy became realities, it was inevitable that the transformation of the baby in the womb from person to thing was bound to accelerate." – Carl Trueman

The slippery slope of theistic Darwinism

Howard Van Till was a physics professor at Calvin College who used to be "the pre-eminent example of an evangelical Christian scientist in the 1990s who defended Darwinian evolution." Until he stopped being Christian. Or even a theist.



The government is handing out more money to the media...

...but why aren't we hearing about it? Maybe it's because we know that typically he who pays the piper calls the tune – this is media being bought and paid for. That's why *The Hub* is donating the \$22,000 they've received so far to charity. (And no, *Reformed Perspective* wasn't sent any of this cash.)

Bonhoeffer's theory of stupidity

The German theologian thought that it is more dangerous for a nation to be stupid than wicked. The application is as suitable to our day as it was in Nazi Germany.



"In his famous letters from prison, Bonhoeffer argued that stupidity is a more dangerous enemy of the good than malice, because while 'one may protest against evil; it can be exposed and prevented by the use of force, against stupidity we are defenseless. Neither protests nor the use of force accomplish anything here. Reasons fall on deaf ears.'"

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:

#118 – Do we really love the lost?

NYC Pastor Paul Murphy discusses evangelism as a way of life, and why and how our (Dutch) Reformed Churches struggle to evangelize and do it well. We hope this episode encourages and inspires you to really think about your love for the lost and the importance of sharing the Gospel, for it truly is a matter of life or death.



#117 – Can hunting bring you closer to God?

BC hunter Jerry Pol joins Tyler to chat about hunting, its ethics and what it actually means to hunt as a Christian. Whether you're an avid hunter or have never hunted before, this episode may inspire you to consider hunting as more than a hobby, and as a way to better appreciate and steward God's creation.



#111 – It's time to make time for your devotions

One of those goals for Christians is often having a better and more consistent devotional life. Dr. Mark Kelderman and his wife Donna discuss the purpose of devotions, how it differs from Bible study, why doing devotions really matters and how to stay consistent in this vital practice.



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.





Connected + Committed

Our vision: we aspire to be a strongly connected community of learners, deeply committed to our faith and to continual growth, nurturing individuals to be their best in the service of God and to His glory.

Primary + Secondary Teachers for 2025 and beyond

Due to growing student numbers and the pursuit of ideal staffing levels, we'd love to discuss our current and future needs with suitably qualified and adventurous teachers or education students.

Our teachers must:

- be a member of the Free Reformed Church of Australia or any of her sister churches.
- overflow with joy at being a child of God and working with covenant children.
- be enthusiastic to share the gospel in word and deed.
- want to work in a collaborative environment that values unique skills and ideas.
- be able to use high impact strategies and cutting-edge resources and technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- be able to be registered to teach in Tasmania and work with vulnerable people.

Competitive salary and benefits recognising your qualifications and dedication are based on the Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020.

INTERESTED?

- Contact the Principal, Mr D Coote, to explore opportunities - cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Find application forms at www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment
- Send completed applications to Mrs K Wielstra - Assoc Sec wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au

Expressions of Interest or Applications welcome any time



COMING SOON:

RP's merch store!

by Mark Penninga

The clothing we wear can say a lot. One of the first impressions I had from meeting RP's editor, Jon Dykstra, was the T-shirts he wore, making a statement about the value of our preborn neighbors, God's creation, and even corporal discipline ("wooden spoon survivor").

The same is true for the chair of RP's board, Bruce DeBoer. I fondly recall when he did a speaking tour for ARPA, explaining to the crowds how they could make their faith "organic" also by what they wore each day.

But the potential impact really hit home about five years ago. The local ARPA school club did a contest to come up with merch for their school. One of those students, Jolene, used the line from our national anthem "God keep our land glorious and free" and put it into an attractive design on a hoodie. That summer, the ARPA Canada staff had a retreat where each of us was tasked with bringing one idea for how to mobilize the grassroots. My pitch was for "God keep our land glorious and free" merch, and I brought a couple of designs, courtesy of our designer Lynn VanEerden. The team agreed to give it a go, and we had no idea just how impactful it would be. Thousands of t-shirts and hoodies sold. It was so popular that the ARPA team had to

enlist numerous volunteers, use a school gym, and hire a U-Haul to package and ship the product.

That merch lit a fire from coast to coast. The message was impactful, God-honouring, and positive. But perhaps most of all, it was a message that our society needed to hear, given the many concerns about fundamental freedoms being eroded in Canada.

When RP's board met to discuss our 2025 plans last December, one idea we pitched was a merch store. After all, RP's mission is not limited to producing a print magazine. It is to equip Christians to think, speak, and act according to our confession. Reading matters. But we need to do something with what we learn. As the book of James says "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

After our board approved the plan, we hired Emma DeBoer, from southern Alberta, to oversee this new enterprise. For the past few months Emma has been hard at work developing an online merchandise store.

SHIRTS THAT SPEAK

Our goal is to develop merchandise that is tasteful, courageous, and beautiful. Our hope is that it communicates both grace and truth, as Christ modeled to us so well. Some designs will be simple and

Gospel-themed. Others will make a point about a pressing issue. And others are meant to spark a conversation.


We are working with designers and companies who already produce Christian merch, with the goal of having an online store open this summer.

One of the advantages of this coming from Reformed Perspective is that the store will be non-profit. We also won't be trying to raise funds from the merch. Our goal is simply to get these messages out there. So we will make it as affordable as possible – simply covering our costs.

AS FOCUSED AS EVER

Technology has made this far easier in recent years. Instead of needing to keep inventory, we can work with companies that print-on-demand. When you make an online order, it goes straight to them and they produce that exact product, shipping it directly to you. We don't even touch it. That allows us to keep our focus on our mission – producing magazine articles, podcasts, and more.

If you are a designer and have some merch designs to pitch, be sure to email emma@reformedperspective.ca.

And if you are looking for more clothing for yourself and your family, you may want to hold off on that order from Shein and wait for the RP store! 

RP's 2025 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: "... in the image of God He created them"

People are cool. Why? Because we're made in God's image. We are fallen, but that *Imago Dei* exists still (Genesis 9:6) so we want you to capture striking images of people doing people things, because God made us special.

UNDER 18: What's your favorite _____?

God has given us so much to enjoy, and we want you to find a way to share your favorites on film. Are you a basketball nut? Then what's the coolest basketball photo you can take? Do you really like bananas? I don't know how you are going to take a dramatic banana picture, but it sure could be fun trying. Just start clicking, and see what you can do, with whatever you love. And be sure to include a line or two explaining what about your favorite makes it so special.

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 contests@reformedperspective.ca before **Aug 1, 2025**

