

Reformed

PERSPPECTIVE

Volume 44 Issue No. 4
JULY - AUGUST 2025

Can you go
screen-free
for 10 days?

If 200 RP
readers
succeed,
\$20,000
will be
donated
to charity!



WHAT'S INSIDE?

Screen-fast, sports betting, & environmental stewardship

SCREEN-FAST SIGN UP



Our 10-day screen-fast challenge we presented in the last issue is getting traction. Marty VanDriel has a story that shares how the fast went for him and others who gave it a try.

But that was just the start. Some generous supporters have recognized how important this issue is, so they are offering up a little extra motivation for us all. **They have pledged to donate \$100 to two fantastic kingdom causes – Word & Deed and Reformed Perspective – for every person who commits to and completes a 10-day fast from their screens from July 21-30** (to a maximum of \$20,000 split between both causes).

Screens aren't evil, but as the cover illustrates so well, screens can keep us from seeing reality – from seeing God's loving hand upholding creation, this world, and our lives. Here now is your opportunity to join with some family and friends and maybe your whole church community to put screens aside and see the rest of the world unfiltered. Check out page 19 for more details or click on the QR code above to sign up.

Since sports betting was legalized in 2021, it has taken Canada by storm. If you watch any hockey you've noticed a lot of betting ads, and they bring with them a growing temptation for Christians to make some money while enjoying their favorite teams. But as Jeff Dykstra explains, we have good reason to steer clear of sports gambling.

In this issue we also do a deep dive into the topic of environmental stewardship by sitting down with two Christian women who work for an environmental group in the middle of a logging community in northern BC.

If you are an adult who tends to skip over the Come & Explore kids' section, we encourage you to give this one a read. It will be sure to make you smile.

*Our cover illustration this month
is by Stephanie Vanderpol.*

Reformed **PERSPECTIVE**

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Published bimonthly by Reformed Perspective Foundation Inc.

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or to change your address, contact:**

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Template Design (2013): Compass Creative Studio Inc. compasscreative.ca

Contact Address for Australia:

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

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If you are interested in the work of Reformed Perspective Foundation and in the promotion of Reformed principles in all spheres of life, especially in your local area, and you need help, contact us at admin@ReformedPerspective.ca.

Registration: ISSN 0714-8208

Charitable Organization under Canada Income Tax Act

Registration No. 118929272RR0001

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WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE?

Join the 10-day screen-fast challenge!

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Are you still able?

A nation-wide challenge to experience life without screens

by Mark Penninga

It used to be different, not all that long ago.

- Carrie is a teen who always had the kind of contagious smile that would get her friends smiling right back, no matter their mood. She used to shoot hoops with her younger sister after dinner. She enjoyed heart-to-heart chats with her mom while doing her hair. And she treasured many of the devotionals that her dad read to her by the glow of her small bedside lamp.
- George, a mechanic and all-around handyman, has always counted himself blessed to be married to his wife of 26 years. He was the kind of dad who'd get down on the ground to play with his kids. While three of his kids have moved out, his two youngest children still live at home. George has served as a deacon in his church, where his love of tinkering was a help not only to his own family but to some of the older couples in his ward.
- Liz's life changed after losing her husband eight years ago. But she did an amazing job doting on all five of her children, her 23 grandchildren, and the seven great-grandchildren. She'd always make it out for every one of their milestones to give out hugs, and to remind her growing clan of God's goodness and love.

Then, not right away, but over the weeks and months and years, things changed.

- Carrie's sister, mom, and grandparents now don't see much of Carrie. OK, they see her, but not her eyes. Carrie is mostly head down, scrolling on her phone and messaging with people they don't even know. Her mom has a hard time remembering when they last shared a good chat, or when she last saw her daughter's beautiful smile. Dad's devotionals were replaced by someone Carrie follows on Instagram who posts short reflections... which Carrie reads when she has time.
- George's wife knows that her husband is still committed to their marriage. But she is having a hard time competing with the attention he gives to his various YouTube subscriptions. His

ward doesn't see him much outside of church, and he seems to spend more time watching clips about fixing cars than actually fixing them. And lately his scale seems to be out by at least 10 pounds.

- Instead of dropping by with a card, Grandma Liz now sends a WhatsApp message when her children and grandchildren celebrate a birthday. She has become very hesitant to head out her front door. It's all the nightly news she's been watching, which is making the world look like an ever-scarier place. Even when she makes a grocery trip, she stays out for as short a time as possible.

Carrie, George, and Liz all go to the same church, and share this in common too: they have all slowly become dominated by their screens. None of them think it's a real problem, but, if pressed, they will agree that they spend more time on their screens than they did a couple of years ago. But isn't that just life today?

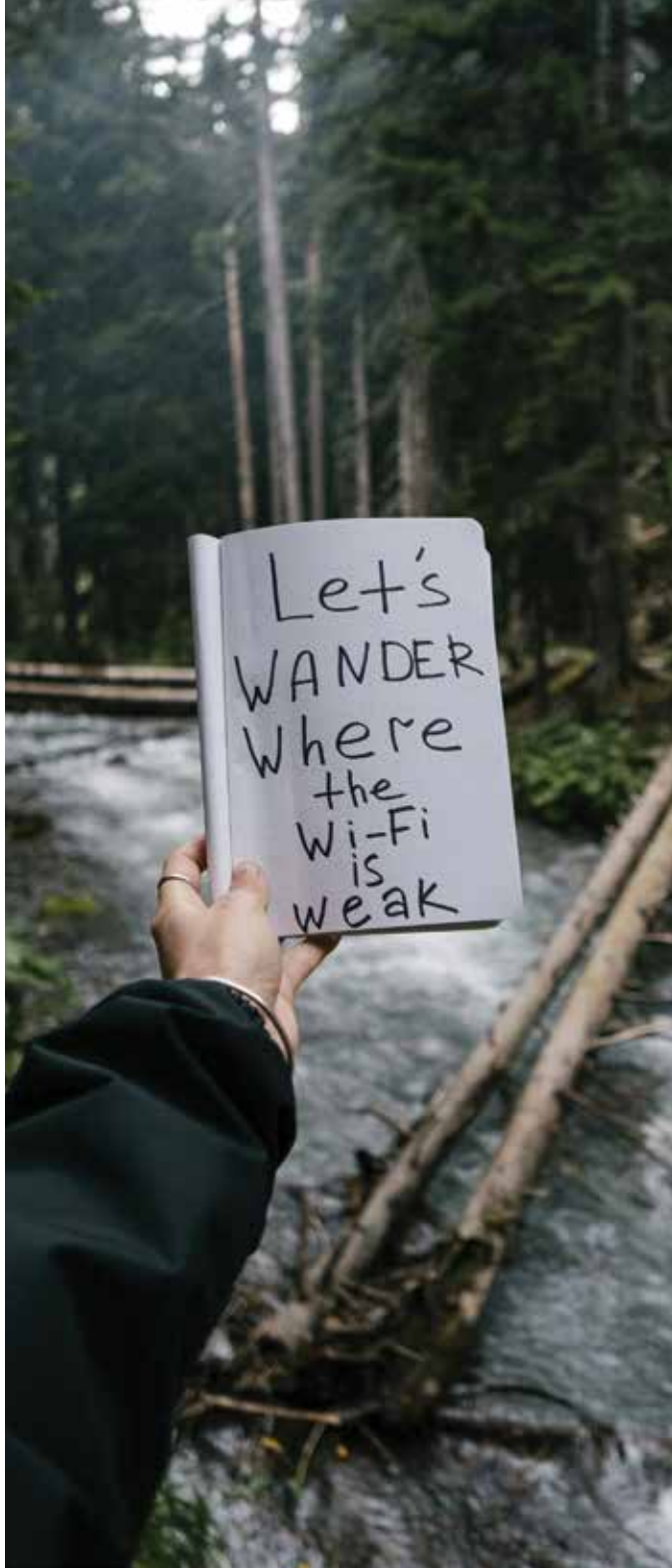
Increased screen time may well be one of the biggest changes our world has experienced in the past half-century, with one estimate putting the global average for daily Internet usage at 6 hours and 38 minutes.

The correlation between screen time and anxiety, mental health challenges, and weight gain is well-known now. What isn't so well documented, or discussed in church, is the impact that screens are having on our pace as we "run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus" (Heb 12:1-2).

PUTTING SCREENS IN THEIR PLACE

When *Reformed Perspective* did a deep dive into this topic last spring, we promoted *The Tech-Wise Family* by Andy Crouch. Crouch correctly shifts the focus from whether a particular type of technology can or can't be *allowed*, to instead how these technologies can be put in their proper place, so that priorities like family, friends, and faith remain priorities.

But how is this going for you? Screen time, like money



and sex, has become a sensitive topic – okay to talk about in generalities, but don't get personal! We're all quick to be defensive and shut down the discussion if anyone dares raise the topic of our own usage.

That's why we challenged our readers to a 10-day screen fast in the last issue. The goal of such a fast isn't to eradicate screens from our lives. But don't we all see wisdom in implementing a reset? Let's test it out, to determine just how reliant we are on our devices, and what sort of impact this dependence may be having on our relationships, including with our LORD. Last month our Assistant Editor Marty VanDriel gathered a group and gave the challenge a go, and further on in this issue you can

read about how their screen fast went (see page 20).

Now we're issuing the challenge again because some generous supporters have presented us with quite the offer. For every person that commits to, and completes, a ten-day screen fast from July 21 to 30 they will donate \$100, split between two charities (Word & Deed and Reformed Perspective). They will give up to \$20,000! And even if you don't go all 10 days, these businesses are happy to donate \$10 for every day you succeed. 8 days? That's \$80. Just 1 or 2? \$10 or \$20 still.

COULD YOU DO IT?

So do you have what it takes to put your screens aside for 10 days? (The screen challenge allows exceptions for necessary activities, like your job and making a phone call.)

It may be hard to do this by yourself, so would you consider asking some of your family, friends, and siblings in the LORD to join you? If you can get a group of 10 together, that can serve as a great accountability and encouragement. Plus, it will lead to \$1,000 going to two very good causes.

And if you don't think screens are much of a challenge for you, we encourage you to ask your loved ones if they think you should give this screen fast a try.

This challenge isn't so much about saying no to screens as it is about saying yes to other priorities. That's why we've put together 35 ideas for fun, productive, and meaningful activities you can challenge yourself to do during these 10 days (see page 24).


ENJOY SOME TIME TRAVEL

Can you remember not having your phone in your pocket, or not hearing the ping of a new message on your tablet?

Although we think screens are essential, we have the power to make necessary changes in our lives. A screen fast can serve as an important reminder to yourself that you don't have to keep living the way you have.

Instead of scrolling, Carrie can shoot some hoops with her sister again. George can go for a walk with his wife, and drop by the home of the young man in his ward who hasn't been coming to church much lately. And Liz can write a card and deliver it in person to her granddaughter.

Yes, you can ignore this screen fast, and hope that your family members and friends don't bring it up either. But before you brush it aside and reach for your phone, consider for a moment what you want your legacy to be at your funeral. Which Carrie, George, and Liz do you want to be? The one before the screen addiction, or the one after?

Use your phone's camera on the QR code here or go to **ReformedPerspective.ca/screens** to register you and your family for the screen fast. Let's do this together! 



NEWS IN *Perspective*

by Mark Penninga

90 PRO-LIFE MPS ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT

Post-election analysis by pro-life group *Right Now* reveals that Conservative Party winning candidates who were pro-life received, on average, approximately 5,000 more votes than those who were pro-abortion. Even among the losing Conservatives, candidates who were pro-life received 4,000 more votes than those who were pro-abortion.

As a result, according to *Right Now's* calculations, the number of pro-life MPs in the House of Commons has increased from about 70 in 2019 to 90 in 2025.

Although the Conservative Party of Canada allows pro-life MPs to run, the party itself is resolute about not supporting any laws that would restrict abortion.

Conservative MPs PRO-LIFE vs. PRO-CHOICE



T-REX LEATHER COMING TO A STORE NEAR YOU?

According to the Interesting Engineering news site, three companies have joined forces to develop “the world’s first T-Rex leather made using the extinct creature’s DNA.” Reporter Mrigakshi Dixit noted that the first product could be available for sale already this year.

The leather is made from “ancient protein sequences.” Already back in 2005, soft tissue was found in a T-rex femur and since then additional soft tissue has been found in a variety of fossils. According to Answers in Genesis’s founder Ken Ham,

“the companies working together to make this ‘leather’ plan to use fossilized dinosaur collagen (a protein found in skin) ‘as a template’ to ‘generate a complete collagen sequence for the T-Rex to cultivate new skin. The collagen sequence will be translated into DNA and introduced into Lab-Grown Leather’s cells.”

Although it remains unknown if the plans will come to fruition, one thing it has accomplished is to perplex evolutionary scientists since soft tissues like this shouldn’t survive for millions of years. As Ken Ham commented:

“If these researchers can create *T. rex* ‘leather’ in the lab, they can only do so because of the global flood that rapidly buried billions of creatures, preserving them – sometimes including soft tissue – for only thousands of years.”



642 CANADIAN BABIES WERE BORN ALIVE AND LEFT TO DIE

A Canadian pro-life researcher has found that, in the past five years in Canada, 642 babies were born alive after a failed abortion attempt. The data comes from the Canadian Institute for Health Information and doesn't include statistics from Quebec.

When news of live births after abortions first broke over ten years ago, abortion proponents justified it by saying that it simply meant that the fetus exhibited a heartbeat or signs of motion after delivery, even if it had no chance of survival.

Although three Conservative MPs called on the RCMP to investigate these deaths in 2013, nothing public has been done. Even sadder, when the statistics are updated each year, it hardly gets noticed.

Canada's Criminal Code defines a human being as "a child that has completely proceeded from the body of its mother in a living state, regardless of whether it has breathed, has independent circulation, or the umbilical cord is severed." It follows that up with "A person commits homicide when he causes injury to a child before or during its birth as a result

of which the child dies after becoming a human being." In other words, even Canada's lax law – which offers no protection for the unborn – does declare that these born babies have been murdered.

Regardless of what stage an abortion occurs at, a life has been taken, and over that same 5-year time period somewhere around a half million Canadians were murdered in the womb. But they had no protection under the law. What's different here is that these 642+ deaths prove that our Criminal Code definition of a human being can be tossed aside if it gets in the way of our choices.

1 IN 10 WOMEN WHO TAKE ABORTION DRUG EXPERIENCE SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS

The largest study ever done on the abortion drug mifepristone has found that 10.93 percent of women who were given the drug experienced a "serious adverse event," such as sepsis, infection, or hemorrhaging, within 45 days. This is 22 times higher than the "0.5 percent" figure reported for clinical trials, as noted on the drug's label. Unlike clinical trials, the Ethics and Public Policy Center (EPPC) study's new data is based on what actually happened to 865,727 women who took the drug between 2017 and 2023.

The EPPC also found that the "failure rate" of the drug was 5.26 percent, double the rate from the

clinical trials. This was evidenced in how one in 19 women resorted to another abortion method within 45 days of taking the drug, proving that the drug didn't accomplish what they hoped it would. It might seem strange for a Judeo-Christian group like the EPPC to critique an abortion drug for not killing as well as advertised, but they are using this as ammunition against the use of mifepristone overall. It'd be wonderful if this drug could be banned or limited in any way, because 18 times out of 19 it is horrifyingly effective at killing the baby.

In Canada, mifepristone has been legal since 2015, and is provided for free in most provinces and territories.



ONTARIO SHOWS WHY EUTHANASIA "SAFEGUARDS" CAN'T WORK

BY JON DYKSTRA

A lengthy article in the Winter 2025 edition of *The New Atlantis*, titled "A Pattern of Noncompliance," shows how Ontario isn't strictly enforcing its euthanasia regulations. The provincial "Office of the Chief Coroner" is in charge of monitoring how euthanasia killings are committed and from 2018 onward they have,

"...thus far counted over 400 apparent violations — and have kept this information from the public and not pursued a single criminal charge, even against repeat violators and 'blatant' offenders."

Ontario's Chief Coroner, Dirk Huyer, admitted back in 2018 already that:

"we see a pattern of noncompliance, we see a pattern of not following legislation, a pattern of not following regulation, and frankly we can't just continue to do education to those folks if they're directly repeating stuff that we've brought to their attention."

So what penalty have the "non-compliers" had to face? As journalist Alexander Raikin reports, one of the most severe cases of non-compliance involved a euthanizer who brought the wrong poisons, which didn't work, but did, according to Huyer, cause tremendous suffering. What penalty was imposed? The euthanizer will no longer be allowed to kill people, but he maintained his medical license. And the case was never referred to the police.

The lack of compliance was evident even early on. In a report on Ontario's first 100 euthanasia killings, 39 percent of the euthanizers skipped a notification requirement. They were supposed to notify the

pharmacist of the purpose intended for the drugs requested, and they just didn't. Euthanizers either didn't understand the regulations or couldn't be bothered with them, but either way it underscores the ineffectiveness of such regulations.

The point Christians need to highlight is that it doesn't matter what "safeguards" are included with euthanasia legislation, they won't work. They *can't* work, because the only real line that can be drawn is the God-given one, that our lives are *not* our own, but are entrusted to us by God, and that the taking of any life is a violation of His command, "Do not murder."

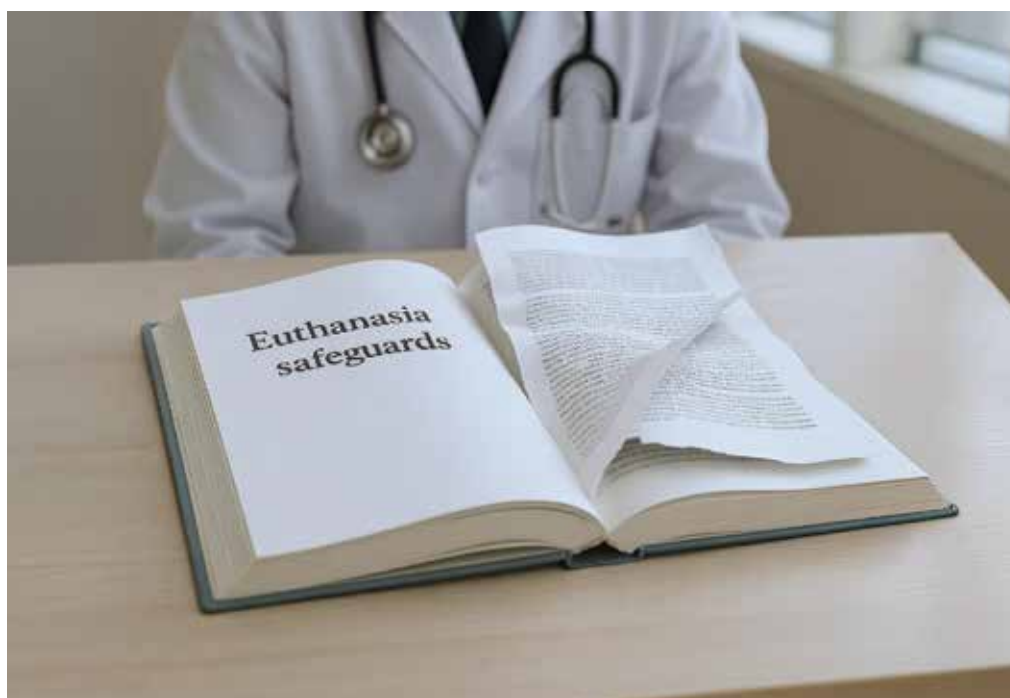
Our culture has tried to draw other lines, but they are drawn in shifting sand and are constantly being ignored or wiped away by the next cultural shift. So yes, our legislators have made a distinction between the *unlawful* killing of a human being, codified as murder, and the *lawful* taking of a human life, described as euthanasia (and abortion). But what would it be then, if someone

committed euthanasia *unlawfully*?

It's hard to avoid the conclusion that any unlawful taking of a life must be a murder. But that's *not* a conclusion they are willing to come to.

Why? Well, how many doctors do you think would be willing to do a procedure that, if they ever didn't do it quite right, would send them to jail for murder? Not many, right? Which means that whatever the regulations or "safeguards" in place, if they were strictly enforced, it would have a chilling effect — doctors would be reluctant to consider killing for their living if it could cost them their freedom. That, then, could put an end to euthanasia altogether: it wouldn't matter if it was legal if there was no one willing to inject the poison. So, for euthanasia to be both legal *and available*, the government will always be motivated to overlook irregularities or neglected safeguards. And since the victims are dead, there isn't going to be much of an outcry either.

Careless with matters of life and death — that's the natural outgrowth of a godless culture. It's only when we turn to God's unchanging law that we can find a standard that can't be bent and can't be ignored with impunity.



PAPUA NEW GUINEA AFFIRMS GOD'S AUTHORITY OVER THEIR LAND

This spring, Papua New Guinea (PNG) amended the preamble to its constitution to make it very clear Who has authority over their nation. The preamble now states that they:

"acknowledge and declare God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit as our Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe and the source of our powers and authorities, delegated to the people and all persons under the geographical jurisdiction of Papua New Guinea."

PNG's Parliament voted 80 to 4 in favor of the change, and also declared the Bible to be one of the national symbols of the country. "Christian churches precede government in many areas," explained PNG's Prime Minister James Marape.

"Where government is absent, churches are there. Churches and missionaries have been here well before 1975, the first one of them more than 150 years ago, and



Pictured above, the PNG Parliament building.

they continue to be here to this day, and will continue to work and help our people."

He added that "we are now placing God in His rightful place." The constitution continues to allow freedom of conscience, thought, and religion.

FADED ROAD LINES SYMBOLIZE FADED CHRISTIAN VALUES

Having a hard time seeing the lines on the road? You aren't alone. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is lobbying for changes to a rule from the federal government that has resulted in road lines that wear out after just a few months.

The edict, which first came from the federal government in 2012, and was updated by the Minister of "Environment and Climate Change" in 2023, pronounced that chemicals in the paint called volatile organic compounds (VOCs) had to be significantly reduced. They made this decision because VOCs contribute to smog. Smog can irritate eyes and throats.

But decreasing the VOCs meant that the paints simply don't work like they used to. "It doesn't stick as well, it's not as reflective, and you can only paint in certain temperatures," explained Tim Tierney, the chair of the city of Ottawa's Public Works and Infrastructure Committee. And as Clark Somerville, councillor for

the Town of Halton Hills explained to the *Globe and Mail*:

"As the road painting is disappearing quicker, we are now spending taxpayers' dollars to go out and repaint the roads more than what we had to before."

But it isn't just a matter of money. The current rules "create a dangerous, dangerous situation – not only for drivers, but pedestrians in intersections" noted Tierney.

In 2012, the year that the change took effect in Canada, the BC trucking indus-



try saw a spike in complaints about line visibility. "Drivers reported more difficulty finding roadway centre and edge markings — not a great situation for a loaded semi weighing up to 35,000 kilos," explained John Ducker, writing for the *Victoria Times Colonist*. He also noted that the faded lines became the top complaint from motorists in the province.

So why is this being covered in *Reformed Perspective*? Because it is another example of how everything is fundamentally a worldview issue. God entrusted the civil government with the duty of restraining lawlessness and promoting good order (Belgic Confession, Article 36). Keeping lines on the road keeps vehicles on the road and protects human life. But our federal government doesn't have any objective standards for what constitutes justice and good order. Reducing smog, even in the majority of the country where smog isn't an issue, trumps safety on the road.

In many ways, the faded lines are an apt symbol of the faded Christian norms that this country isn't interested in reviving, even to our own harm.

As God is restoring His good creation,
He invites us into the story—
to live, to learn, and to work together
with joyful purpose in all of life

UNTIL
ALL IS
MADE
NEW



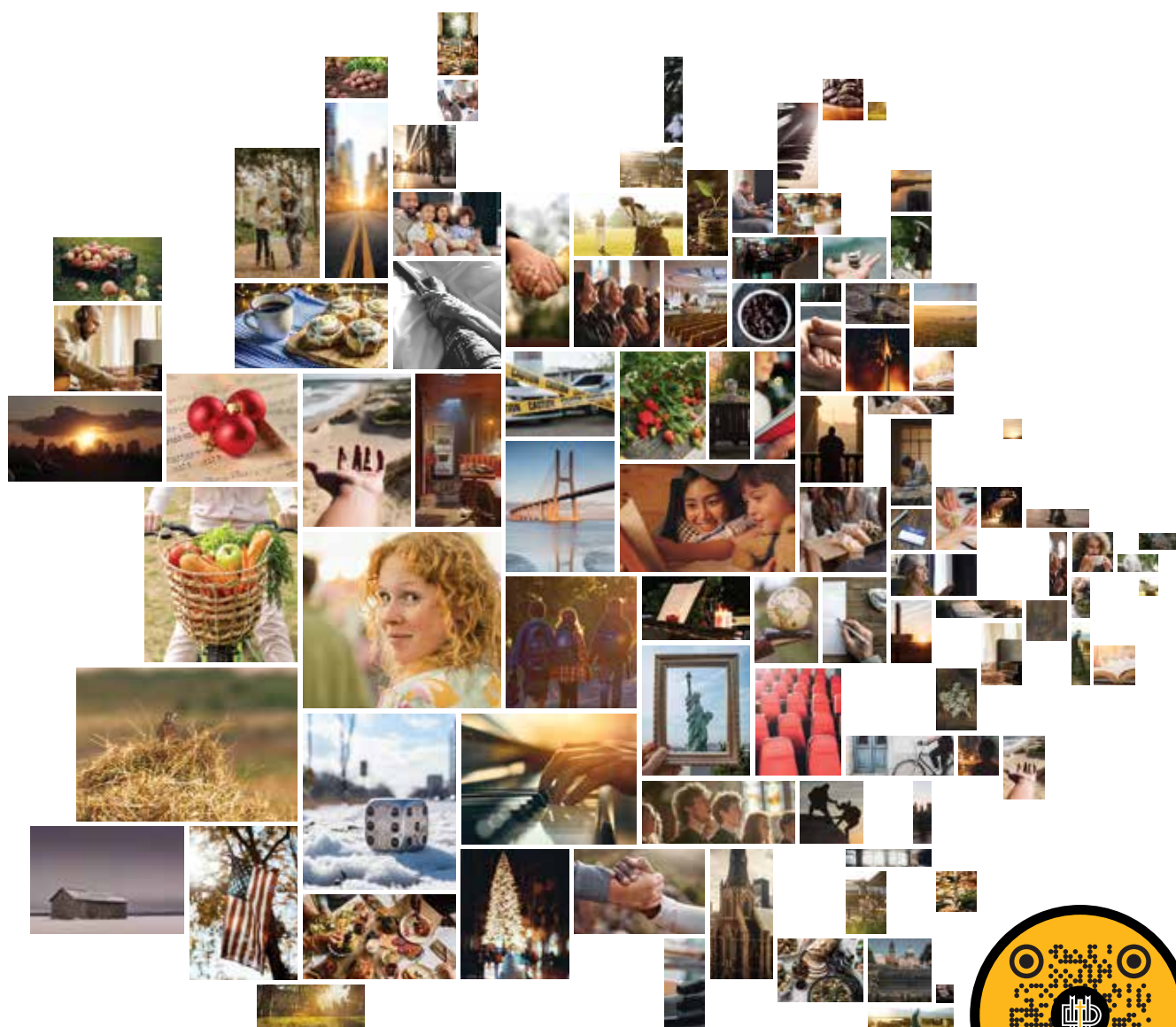
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CREATION STEWARDS IN A LOGGING TOWN

by Mark Penninga

Coho broodstock capture happening on the Upper Bulkley River.



My little blue Kia Soul didn't quite fit in, as I drove through the industrial section of the small forestry town of Houston, BC. Not only are trucks the dominant mode of transport, the industrial lots were filled with massive machines used to cut down and transport trees, some with tires the size of my car.

I pulled into a property that also seemed out of place for this community, let alone the industrial neighborhood: a conservation center and fish hatchery. I stepped inside the Buck Creek Hatchery and Nature Centre, and, in a space about the size of a typical classroom, I was surrounded by God's amazing creation on display. Animal hides and mounts, rocks, fossils, shells, bird nests, antlers, eggs, and aquariums had me looking in every direction.

Like many other Christians, I have often felt a tension in my heart and mind over our role in ruling over and subduing the earth (Gen. 1:28), while caring for it (Gen. 2:15). I ask my children to not deliberately stomp on an ant, but I also don't struggle with removing an anthill that is becoming a problem for our home.

As I have grown older, I see many more examples of tension woven through life and the Scriptures. It means we need to take the time to

listen, and to act with wisdom. So, I figured that agreeing to an invitation to meet with two Christian environmentalists in a resource-dependent town could be a good way to help me grow in navigating this tension over creation care.

Marjorie Lieuwen and Cindy Verbeek welcomed me to the center and took me into a "hands-on" classroom, meant for teaching students about creation. The two shared how at different times, and through different means, the LORD had guided their steps to serve as nature stewards in the middle of a logging town.

A COMMON DENOMINATOR

As a young adult, Cindy spent a summer doing environmental studies at a field school in Michigan. It was during a time of prayer in the forest there that she was convicted to dedicate her life to this work. She then got involved with *A Rocha*, a Christian conservation organization that was started in Portugal in the 1980s. Her husband and she volunteered there in 1996, and she has served with the organization through various means since then. The couple moved to Houston in 2002, and Cindy began serving on staff with *A Rocha* from there.

Promoting environmental care in a



"... in a space about the size of a typical classroom, I was surrounded by God's amazing creation on display. Animal hides and mounts, rocks, fossils, shells, bird nests, antlers, eggs, and aquariums had me looking in every direction."

Picture credit: Mark Penninga



Cindy Verbeek standing in front of the Buck Creek Hatchery's salmon mural.

town that owes its existence to the development of natural resources, particularly logging, comes with challenges. Cindy explained that she started with efforts like a community garden, recycling committee, and farmers' market. "But none of the things really fit. It didn't fit me. It didn't fit the context." For example, she noted that people in Houston already had gardens that were larger than the community garden, and they already shared.

Things changed when she got involved with the Pacific Streamkeepers Federation, introducing her to work with salmon. She floated the idea of a salmon hatchery in Houston "and all of a sudden people were coming out of the woodwork." She explained that,

"...salmon are a common denominator in our valley, in Western BC. We are all connected to salmon somehow. We either fish for them, or we love seeing them. We love eating them...."

Everyone just loved salmon, and it took me a long time to understand the language of this community."

She and Regina Meints started a pilot hatchery in a shed in Regina's backyard, raising 4,400 coho salmon. The experience made them decide they wanted to do this full-time and long-term, so they started making plans. "It started as a salmon hatchery," said Cindy. "But I am an environmental educator. I love sharing and teaching people about creation, and so I wanted the nature center aspect added to it as well."

In 2017 the hatchery was built and in 2021, amidst Covid, the nature center was added on. But that also meant the expectations grew. "I was very quickly realizing that this project was way bigger than myself," explained Cindy. Provisionally, that was also the year that Marjorie Lieuwen landed in northern BC.

FROM THE PRAIRIES TO THE MOUNTAINS

Marjorie grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Although the landscape is nothing like northwest BC, her dad is a birdwatcher, so their family got outside a lot. "Even when I was in Grade Four, I made this plan to start a burrowing owl sanctuary because I heard they were endangered in Manitoba." That said, Marjorie didn't expect her love of nature to translate so directly into a career. She completed a degree in biotechnology at the University of Manitoba, followed by a master's degree at the Health Sciences Center at the same school, focused on finding cures and therapies for Rett Syndrome, a genetic disorder.

Part way through her master's degree, she made a trip to Houston to attend a wedding. On that trip she met Jason Lieuwen, who grew up in Houston, was a friend of the groom and had recently moved back to Houston after studying forestry in Prince George. Marjorie

Some may find it ironic that Marjorie, a self-described environmentalist, married Jason, a professional forester...

and Jason started dating long-distance, and then Marjorie decided to move to Prince George in 2021 to do some more schooling. They got married that June. That summer, she saw a job posting for the nature centre in Houston. It was a perfect fit.

Marjorie's education fits well with her role in overseeing the fish in the hatchery as well as stewarding the salmon in the Upper Bulkley River, which flows through the community. She works with local farmers, First Nations, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and others to monitor salmon numbers and promote a flourishing population, specifically for coho and chinook salmon.

In the 1970s, the salmon numbers plummeted in the Upper Bulkley and the river was closed to fishing. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans started a program that involved releasing coho and chinook hatchery fish, but the coho program was stopped in the early 2000s. "So, for about 10 years or so, there was no coho enhancement being done," explained Marjorie. That changed when Cindy and other locals decided to start a hatchery.

The Buck Creek hatchery is considered a "stewardship hatchery" because it is small, raising only about 9,000 salmon, and includes a special focus on educating and involving the community. They grow coho specifically because they are more robust and can better tolerate being handled by volunteers. Most hatcheries in the province are much larger, focused less on education and more on getting large numbers of salmon into the rivers and oceans.

A NOT-SO-UNLIKELY PAIR

Some may find it ironic that Marjorie, a self-described environmentalist,

married Jason, a professional forester who worked for Canfor, the local mill in Houston which also happened to be the largest sawmill in the world at one point.

But those who live in resource-based communities like Houston will testify that many of those involved in trades like forestry and mining care a great deal for the environment, as they see it up close and personally every day, and their lives are dependent on it. In other words, they are very much in touch with God's creation, unlike the many who claim to be "green" but whose environmental care doesn't go much further than virtue-signalling with their vote or through social media.

"I think it's been really good for me to have that window into that [forester's] world and to see how there are a lot of requirements that they have to fulfill," explained Marjorie.

"I was looking at a map once in Jason's truck, and there were these marks in a logging block. I asked what they were. 'For critter piles' he said. So I asked him 'what are critter piles?'"

Jason proceeded to explain how they make piles of sticks and debris for fishers, squirrels and other critters.

"They aren't legally required to do this, but this is an example of how forestry professionals implement recommendations from biologists to reduce the impacts of logging to the local ecosystem."

This also helps explain why the property where the hatchery and nature center is built is owned by the Canfor sawmill. Canfor pays for the taxes, and



Marjorie Liewen with quite the coho salmon during a broodstock capture for the hatchery.



Regina Meints finds volunteering for the hatchery brings her a lot of joy.

Picture credit: Cindy Verbeek



Marjorie Liewen working in the back, making sure things are just right for the little fishies.



Coho salmon are captured for hatchery broodstock using seine nets.

Picture credit: Cindy Verbeek

charges \$1 per year for the lease. Indeed, through its history, the community relied on the economic engine of the sawmills to keep their residents working. And although many in urban areas don't witness it, the same applies to Canada as a whole. About 20 percent of our country's GDP, and 1.7 million jobs, come from natural resources development. This development also opened up most of the country, creating the infrastructure (roads, railways, pipelines, hydro), that the rest of the population now depends on for daily living.

But tension can quickly become unhealthy when the two sides (in this case resource development and care for the earth) aren't united in an underlying ethic of respect. That is being felt in Houston today, as Canfor recently had to shut down the sawmill, unable to remain feasible under a NDP provincial government. Businesses like Canfor see the ever-growing list of red tape in BC and decide that they are better off investing in provinces or states that appreciate them.

In contrast, a Christian ethic allows

for civil discussion and listening. Cindy shared that:

"it actually took a long time in this community to convince people that I wasn't going to chain myself to their logging truck. I wasn't going to tell them that they needed to quit their jobs in logging or mining or whatever. I personally think that we can do more good by working within the industry than by alienating the industry."

She shared that there were plenty of times in the past when she organized something like a bird walk, with nobody coming out. "I feel like I'm on the other side now. We're at a point in the community where I feel like people finally understand what it is that we're doing and embrace it."

CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

There is no shortage of environmentalists in BC, but so many are radical and secular. These sort vehemently oppose resource development, and

sometimes even prioritize nature over humanity. But as Marjorie and Cindy exemplify, creation stewardship can go hand-in-hand with resource development.

"We don't hide that we're Christian," explained Cindy. "We're scientists. This is who God has called us to be. This is our outworking of our faith in doing conservation and creation care work."

This aligns with the opening chapters of the Bible, where God gave clear instructions to our first parents about how He wanted us to live on this earth. He called them to:

"fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

He also said that this creation was made for humanity, including as a source for food. As Art Carden and Caleb S. Fuller explain in their book *Mere Economics*,

"that humanity is to 'fill' and 'subdue' suggests that creation is not a museum



Staff and volunteers working with BC provincial staff to relocate 50 adult steelhead during the drought back in 2023.



Beaver dams have many ecological benefits, but can become barriers for salmon spawner migration. Hatchery staff and volunteers remove just enough material to make an opening for the salmon.

Picture Credit: Sarah Sutton

where only the daintiest white-glove treatment is permitted. From the beginning, God told people to develop and cultivate creation's potential."

In the next chapter of Scripture, we read how "the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). Our dominion over creation is to exemplify cultivation and protection. As Cindy explained,

"There is definitely something different about humans as created in the image of God. We definitely have a different role in creation. But we are also made from the dust, and we also share that with the creatures.... You can't care for people without caring for the creation that supports the people."

She saw this first-hand in Uganda and Kenya, where creation had been severely degraded, hurting some of the poorest people in the world.


"What they're doing to be able to feed their families is coming back in alignment with how God created that place to work rather than using European farming technology and techniques on a tropical ecosystem. They're going back to how God created that ecosystem to work in that location. Then, they're healing the soil, and they're healing the land, and they're feeding their families."

Cindy also referenced 2 Chronicles 7:14:

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

The last words of that verse have had a big impact on her, as they convicted her that the healing is not just personal, but also extends to creation. "In Colossians

it talks about how creation was created for, and in, and through Jesus, and that His death and resurrection were for the reconciliation of all things. It's all of creation."

Reflecting on my visit to the hatchery and nature center, I can see how this reconciliation explains why two environmentalists, and a nature center, can fit so well amidst a town devoted to harvesting trees and minerals from the earth. The tension between care and dominion is a healthy tension that God called us to in His very first words to us in Genesis 1 and 2. We can both care and exercise dominion. These can work in harmony when we recognize that God has purposefully put us where we are – be it Houston, or Winnipeg, or Halifax – and calls us to steward our lives and this world for His glory. 

Uncredited pictures supplied by Marjorie Lieuwen.

WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE?

RP'S 10-DAY SCREEN-FAST CHALLENGE

to help us all look up and see the wonder of the world around us



Count me in!

I'm up for the July 21-30, nation-wide 10-day screen fast challenge

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.

And for a little extra motivation, a couple of businesses will donate \$10 – split between *Reformed Perspective* and *Word & Deed* – for every day from July 21-30 that you successfully go without your screens. Go all 10 days, and that's \$100. Manage just 8, and that's still \$80. Go just 1 or 2 and that's still \$10 or \$20... and an important insight into dependency. So challenge yourself. *How long can you go?*

To take part please take a minute to register. You can do so by sending an email to contests@reformedperspective.ca, by calling **250-643-8114** (BC time), by using this link ReformedPerspective.ca/screens, or by using your phone's camera to scan the QR code on this page.



Details:

- Please put your screens aside July 21-30, 2025 (to be part of a nation-wide fast).
- You may allow your own exceptions (allowing screens for important uses you may have, such as at work or to make phone calls).
- There are no age limits: kids and seniors can fast no less than teens and young adults.
- Please find an accountability person who is willing to check in with you to make sure you see this through.

Tips to help you fast:

- Power your devices down and put them out of sight (including phones, computer screens and TV's). If someone really needs to reach you, you can always turn your phone on each day to check for messages. People survived this way in the past :)
- Log out of social media accounts (including YouTube) and let people know you are going to be offline.
- Prepare some activities that you want to do instead of being on a screen: find some good books, dig out some craft supplies, plan for a hike, dust off your tackle box, go on a date (or two), schedule a visit (and see pages 24-27 for more ideas).
- It would be wonderful if you can find a group to do this with you, to encourage each other and learn from each other. For example, invite your church family to take part with you – send a note on Church Social and ask others to join you.





WE TOOK THE **NO SCREENS CHALLENGE** ... and now we're changing our habits

by Marty VanDriel

Do you remember the last time you were without your phone for a day? Maybe you left it at your friend's house, and couldn't retrieve it till the next day, or maybe you misplaced it on your camping trip and it never showed up. How unsettling was that feeling? "What if someone

needs to get a hold of me? How can I contact my friends about our schedules for tomorrow?" You likely felt very disconnected.

Even more unsettling might have been how much you missed your constant companion. First thing in the morning, you had nothing to scroll on

in those minutes between waking up and leaving the warmth and comfort of your bed. When you sat to wait for the meeting to start at work, you had nothing to distract you from the waiting; you might (shudder) even have had to start a conversation with someone! Gasp!

VERY DIFFERENT NOT LONG AGO

Just twenty years ago, none of us carried an electronic device with us at all times, or at least, not one as capable as today's iPhones and Androids. As of 2020, 96% of Canadians aged 15 to 44 owned such a device, and 87% of citizens aged 45 to 64.

So how are we being influenced by our phones? What habits have we developed that distract us from real life? Theologian David Wells summarizes the influence of smartphones in Tony Reinke's book *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*:

"There is no doubt that life is more highly distracted, because we get pings and beeps and text messages. We are, in fact, living with a parallel, virtual universe, *a universe that can take all of the time that we have*. What happens to us... when we are almost addicted to constant visual stimulation. What is this doing to us?"

Think about that phrase – "a universe that can take all of the time that we have" – how sad it would be if Christians allowed all of our time to be essentially squandered.

A CHALLENGE PERSONALIZED

A few weeks ago, inspired by the *Reformed Perspective* "Screen Challenge" in the May/June issue, I joined a small group of Christians of varying ages in putting aside our screens for ten days. Our goal was to see how we could cope without them, and to discover if there were any habits we had developed that we would like to change.

Each of us had slightly different, self-imposed regulations – only one of us was able to go entirely screen free, since his work didn't need a phone or screen, and a flip phone sufficed for his needs. For my own rules, I still used my phone's communication tools (phoning and texting), but I gave up any entertainment or passive consumption through screens – no Netflix, no TV, no YouTube, no Facebook, no Internet browsing, no Craigslist, not even electronic books. I didn't even watch the Leafs get eliminated in the NHL playoffs, but I figured

I can always watch that again next spring (sorry, I couldn't resist!).

SURPRISES

Ten days is not very long – but it was long enough for most of us in our group to realize that we had developed some poor habits.

At first, my hands would reach instinctively for my phone when I had a few leisure minutes, particularly in the evening, or first thing in the morning.

For some of us this screen fast was an opportunity to build up some better habits. One of our group said that she was able to start each day with a lot more energy, because she jumped out of bed as soon as her alarm went off, instead of "mindlessly scrolling" for a time. Another decided to make his Bible the first thing he reached for in the morning instead of his tablet, reading an extra few chapters each day, and catching up to the schedule of his "Bible in a Year."

Almost all the participants said that they read many more printed books than they normally would have. Some visited a library for the first time in a few years, and some enjoyed "Books on Tape" in the car on their commute, rather than a podcast. (Remember when you used to stop in the driveway a few extra minutes because you just couldn't wait to find out what happened next?) One Mom said that she stopped listening to podcasts, and didn't really miss them, especially the ones with alarmist views, or fear-instilling content:

"Instead, I found myself pulling out my CD collection and listening to uplifting music – so much more relaxing!"

I was surprised at how much extra time I found in each day. I love watching soccer and hockey highlights, but it is amazing how watching just one set of highlights that should take about 10 minutes leads to a very interesting video about Nissans (they are amazing!), and then to a technology review, and then to coverage of an outrageous political statement, etc., etc.! My conscious decision to watch highlights of the Canucks game often leads to a lot of time wasted – I'm

not making an active choice about what I want to watch next, but instead the YouTube algorithm keeps feeding me more and more and more, while I just watch passively. As one screen fast participant said,

"This made me think about my time, what that should look like, even down time. It's so easy to scroll and watch but it takes a lot more brain power and creativity to be productive (even conversation!)."

A small number in our group did not complete the challenge: after less than 24 hours without screens, they dropped out. Perhaps they hadn't fully realized what they were committing to, or perhaps it was the wrong time to make such a radical change. (I hope they will be inspired to try again!) Most of us, however, were able to last the ten days, and all of us seemed to be glad that we did, because it forced us to look more closely at the relationship we have with our screens and devices.

BEING THE BOSS

It is difficult to "get by" in modern society without some kind of internet connected device. (Imagine trying to get on a "Swoop" flight without a phone!) But how can we make these devices better servants, and not allow them to become masters of our time? Here are some ideas to consider:

- 1) Delete apps that you know are time-wasters for you. Many of these will be apps that continue to "feed" you content based on their knowledge of your viewing preferences – Instagram, Facebook and YouTube are probably the top three for many adults. If you look up after 45 minutes on one of these apps, and can't remember where the time went, or even what you watched, that's an app you should delete!
- 2) Put a timer on your phone to restrict data usage first thing in the morning, or after your evening meal. You can have a friend or sibling or spouse have the password so that you stick with your schedule.

I was surprised at how much extra time I found in each day.

- 3) Don't take your phone into your bedroom! Leave it to charge on the kitchen counter – you might have to invest in an old-fashioned alarm clock, but you will not regret it!
- 4) Set a reasonable goal for how many minutes of “screen time” you are allowed per day, and monitor it daily.
- 5) Practice a new household rule – we won't watch screens alone; we'll only watch content together (as a family, or as a couple).
- 6) If you acknowledge that you too are spending too much time on your screens, and none of these ideas work, maybe you should trade your iPhone or Android for a flip phone, or a

phone with no internet data. It's radical, but why would you let that phone be your master?


LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER

In Ephesians 5, Paul tells the believers at Ephesus to:

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

The RP Screen-Fast Challenge is an opportunity to encourage one another

to “make the best use of the time.” And, if we fill the time that was being wasted with better reading materials, including our Bibles, we will indeed better understand what the will of the Lord is!

Good habits take time to develop, while it sometimes seems that bad habits stick to us instantly, like ticks embedded in our skin. (Can you picture your phone as a tick, engorged on your blood, and infecting you from outside?) If you haven't taken the 10-day “No Screens” challenge yet, you should! Better yet, challenge your friends and family to join you, so you can encourage each other along the way. Your walk before the Lord will be less hindered by the cares and temptations of the world, and you will progress in godliness and virtue. If you don't believe that statement – if you think I'm overhyping this – then try the challenge and see! 





Pass Down *the* Christian Faith

Growing in God's Word is a new curriculum from Ligonier Ministries to help churches and families guide elementary-age children through an overview of the Bible in 52 lessons. Available this fall, each lesson in this curriculum reinforces the truths of Reformed theology and Scripture's unifying covenantal framework.

Request a free sample lesson and join the preorder waitlist.



GrowingInGodsWord.org

What can I do anyways?

by Jon Dykstra

35 screen-alternative ideas

You can't beat something with nothing (as Eph. 4:28, Matt. 12:30, and Matt. 12:43-45 make clear).

That means it isn't realistic to expect to go 10 days without your phone if you haven't made plans for what you'll do the next time you're tempted to reach for it. So here are ideas for what you and your family can do with your screen-free moments, minutes, hours, and days.

PLAN AWAY

- Short-term - Using the list below and a brainstorming session with family or friends, create a list of activities for your 10 days of screen-free time.
- Medium-term - pull out a big piece of craft paper and along with your family create a list of items you'd love to do this summer.
- Long-term - Spend an hour writing out a list of 50 goals, big or small, for your future. Share and refine it with input from family and friends.

TODAY	
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

THIS WEEK	
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

THIS year	
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____



ON THE HOMEFRONT

- Clean one room at a time – you have 10 days, so what if you took on one room a day, and gave it the “clean, organize, and de-clutter” you’ve been meaning to do just about forever?
- Honey-do list - make your better half happy by fixing something.

HOSPITALITY

- Host a dinner for friends and do it up with candles. Make meal prep part of the entertainment by learning to make something new. Sushi anyone? How about calzones?
- Put on a games night, and invite your friends to bring along their favorites. Invite someone you might not normally interact with. Focus on games that allow for conversation (the less intense sort). Search for “board games” on ReformedPerspective.ca for our suggestions.

RECONNECT

- Is your family spread across the continent, or around the world? Pick up the phone and chat away – phone one person a day.
- Everyone loves a letter – make a package to mail away to grandma and grandpa.

READ SOMETHING AWESOME

- While your local library likely has too much weird stuff to want to take your kids there, you can reserve books to pick up. Before you turn off your computer to start your screen-fast, be sure to check out RP's recommendations for picture books, graphic novels, biographies, and novels for all ages. We have hundreds of nominees for you: **Reformedperspective.ca/books**. Remember to take a book with you wherever you go to fill in those spare moments when you used to play a phone game.
- New Testament Bible reading challenge anyone? If you read for a half hour each day, starting at Matthew, you could make it through most of the gospels in 10 days.
- Listen to a dramatized audiobook like the Chronicles of Narnia.



START (OR SHARE) A HOBBY

- Always wanted to learn to crochet, draw, or play the guitar? Get yourself prepped to give it a real go by either finding someone who will teach you, or finding a book or maybe even a video series (maybe that's one of your exceptions?).
- Teach your kids, or a friend's kids, how to sew, whittle, sketch, paint, or hit a baseball.



INTERVIEW SOMEONE

- Interview your grandparents or parents or an inspirational someone you'd like to learn from... but first, alone, or together with friends or family, come up with a list of 20 questions to ask them. How did they meet their spouse? Was there an important lesson they learned the hard way? How have they seen God acting in their life? If they could go back in time, what would they tell their 15-year-old self? Etc.
- Interview your cat, dog, or even your favorite book, and imagine the answers they'd give. Be sure to write it all down, so you can share it with your family!





GET SOME EXERCISE

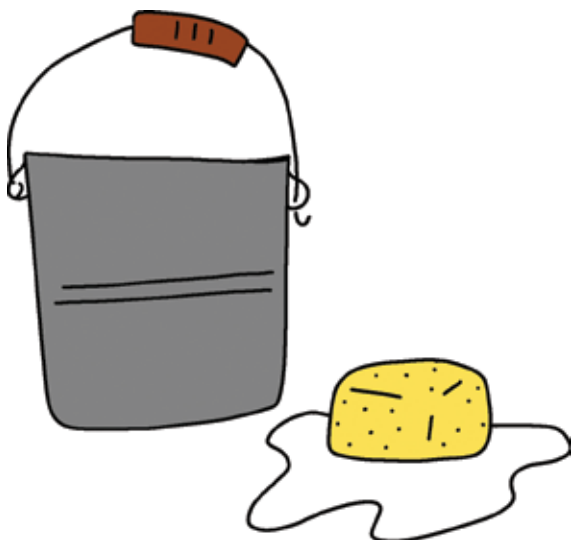
- Go for a long walk each day or head out on a hike with your spouse, family, a friend or two, or take the time alone to talk with God.
- Try something new. Pickleball anyone? Rock climbing? How about swimming? Or what about a program to help with your achy knees?

VOLUNTEER

- Babysit for a couple so they can have a nice evening out.
- Ask your oma if she needs any help around her house or yard.
- Deliver some Let Kids Be brochures door-to-door for ARPA Canada.

STAYCATION

- Become a tourist in your own backyard and check out your local attractions – museums, zoo, historical sites, hiking and biking trails, playgrounds, thrift stores, and more.
- Build a fire in your backyard, roast marshmallows, make s'mores, stargaze, and swap tall tales.

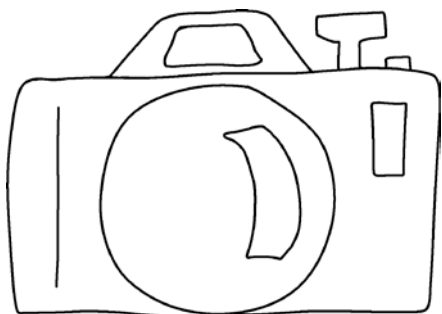


REBOOT YOUR GRATITUDE

- Start a gratitude journal and journal daily – God has given us so much that we can easily overlook the blessings all around. Give Him glory by taking the time to see it all.
- Make it a family challenge to come up with 5 (or more, or less – see how hard or easy it is) events, people, or things that made you happy today. Write each one down on a notecard, accompanied by some related artwork, and post them to a hallway wall. For motivation's sake, come up with a small reward (a Hershey kiss?) for each notecard, and a small penalty (one push-up per) for whatever each participants falls short of.

CLICK AWAY

- Create a photo scavenger hunt for your friends – a list of 10 items for teams to search out and find in the great outdoors and take a picture of to prove they found them. Items can be anything, but they should be possible, but hard, to find like a four-leaf clover, or something in nature shaped like a Z, etc.
- Take pictures for RP's summer photo contest. Rules are on the back of the last issue.



AN EVENING INSIDE

- Read the same book together, out loud with one copy (taking turns, and maybe while doing a puzzle) or quietly with multiple copies. Be interruptible so you and your kids can share your favorite parts.

- Create your own game together. It can be whatever you like, but two easy and fun possibilities involve variants on Pictionary and charades. The first step is to create a “deck” of 100 things you’ll either draw or act out with every player contributing ideas. You can now divide into teams, or just take turns being the drawer or actor, with everyone else guessing. Mix it up by giving the option of acting or drawing the card. Play a round and get everyone to offer up a new twist on the rules and then vote on your favorite and play again.


WRITE

- Write about your experiences doing the screen-fast and think about sharing it with RP!
- Write a letter to your younger self and share the 10 pieces of advice you’d want him to know.

FALLING ASLEEP

- Fall asleep to a devotional. If you find it hard to get to sleep at night without a screen, try reading a devotional. Prayer, and then a few minutes reading can help you hand off your concerns to God. If you’re married, take turns doing the reading.
- Couples can use the undistracted time at the end of the day to be fully present with their spouse – emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Turn off the screens and turn toward each other.

CHALLENGES

- Everyone loves a competition so create a challenge a day and recruit your family and friends. Examples could include doing 100 of anything (push-ups, squats, etc.) over a day. Or going 24 hours without saying anything negative (do a pushup/squat when you blow it). Track how many times you reach for or pine for your screen using a communal tick – maybe a sheet of paper on the fridge. See how you compare to your friends, and how your first day compares to day 10. Challenge your kids to find 10, 20, or even 100 things in their room (or the house) to throw out or give away.
- Plan out the next challenge that *Reformed Perspective* should do. 



can't decide?

SPIN the wheel!



Is TikTok the ultimate contraception?

*The social media app that's
convincing youth that babies
are boring, and other such lies.*

by John Stonestreet
and Shane Morris

A hundred years before the invention of the television, Danish theologian and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard wrote:

“Suppose someone invented an instrument, a convenient little talking tube which, say, could be heard over the whole land ... I wonder if the police would not forbid it, fearing that the whole country would become mentally deranged if it were used...”

The prescient comment was part of his criticism of the daily press, specifically how the constant stream of news inflates the importance of momentary events in people's minds. Imagine what he might have said about the evening news on television, once a literal “tube,” which Neil Postman criticized for making us all dumber.

In the end, it is the smart phone, along with social media platforms like TikTok, that has finally fulfilled Kierkegaard's nightmare. The ultimate “talking tube” that goes everywhere with us, the smart phone has proven to be particularly detrimental, especially to young people. The connection between social media use and depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems is now well-established, for all the reasons Kierkegaard foresaw.

YOU, YOU, YOU, LEAVES LITTLE INTEREST IN LITTLES

And now, as it turns out, social media platforms also make users less interested in having children. Recently, Finnish sociologist Anna Rotkirch published an article in the *Berlin Review* entitled, “The TikTok Baby Bust.” In it, she explains how the introduction of the app coincided with a rise in “anti-natalist values [and] memes,” worsening mental health (especially for girls), and degrading social skills. Specifically, TikTok users became “more likely to embrace the idea that ‘I want to do other interesting things in life besides having a child.’”

One way that TikTok discourages fertility is by portraying the childfree life as more fulfilling than parenthood. Another way is by portraying single-

ness as more fulfilling than marital life. The combination of the device, the platform, and the messages broadcast on them have, as sociologist Brad Wilcox remarked, “. . . proven to be the ultimate contraception.”

Though few influencers will outright proclaim, “don’t get married or have babies, it’ll ruin your life,” the platform rewards certain messages. So, consumers consistently hear, subtly and quietly, that “life is about self-expression and public performance,” and “you need to be pretty at all costs,” and “sex is only for pleasure,” and “your fertility is an obstacle to your happiness,” and “there are already too many people on this planet.”

A CREEPY OLD MAN

I often ask parents and teachers what they would do if a creepy old man were walking around the school whispering awful messages in the ears of their daughters and students. Well, that’s TikTok in a nutshell. The messages common to the platform are damaging enough, and the medium only adds to its power and influence.

In *A Practical Guide to Culture*, Brett Kunkle and I talk about the importance of *artifacts* in a culture. Any idea that influences or transforms a culture, for good or for bad, requires tangible things to enable the message. The Protestant Reformation would have never happened without the printing press. The sexual revolution would have never happened without the pill and porn. In the same way, the anti-natalism of our age is made possible by the smart phone equipped with social media.

Platforms like TikTok make it possible to think about ourselves in radically disembodied ways, with a business model that relies on envy and addiction. The constant, unapologetic demand for screentime catechizes users to reject personal relationships, as if the opinions, experiences, and values of distant strangers selected by an algorithm matter more than the people in their own, real lives. So-called “influencers” are put on a pedestal, where they not only champion bad ideas but reward follow-

*In his book **The Anxious Generation**, Jonathan Haidt urged parents and educators to get smart phones out of kids’ hands.*



ers who imitate their lifestyles with the promise that they too can be famous. No wonder that over half of millennials report that their ultimate career goal is to be an influencer.

WHAT FATHER GIVES HIS SON A SCORPION? (LUKE 11:11-12)

In his book *The Anxious Generation*, Jonathan Haidt urged parents and educators to get smart phones out of kids’ hands. Exposing young people to the messages common on social media, on a limitless basis, behind closed doors, or during school is simply insanity. A cultural revolution as deep as the TikTok baby bust requires our cooption.

Had Kierkegaard seen the smart phone, he would have warned of it as well. He understood, as too few philosophers in his day did, that human beings are not

brains on sticks. We are creatures of habit, body, and relationships, which means what we believe has a lot to do with *what we do*.

If we are to effectively make the case for why marriage and family matter, why children are gifts from God, and why young people should prioritize these real-life relationships, it will require more than words. In this battle of ideas, we must grasp that the “convenient little talking tube” in each of our hands is one of the things deranging young minds today. ^{RP}

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.

Reconnect information and action

HOW TO STAY SANE IN AN OVERSTIMULATED AGE

by Brett McCracken

In today's hyperconnected world, information comes at us fast and furious, from every direction, 24-7. We wake up to news alerts about a major earthquake in Japan or a political assassination in Ecuador. We open our social media feeds and, within the first minute of scrolling, see the latest grim headlines about war or rumors of war, the latest anger-inducing missive in this or that culture war debate, and the latest foolish oversharing from this or that uncle or college friend.

Because we are human and emotionally wired, it's natural that these things provoke us and inflame our hearts to want to *do something*. Yet what can we do with this abundance of troublesome information aside from being informed about it? We are overstimulated but underactivated. Information bombards us but action is elusive. I'm convinced this dynamic is one of the major sources of anxiety and mental unhealth in today's information age, and it's something Neil Postman warned about.

MORE INFO THAN WE CAN DO ANYTHING WITH

Postman talked about it in terms of what he called the "information-action ratio." For most of human history, there was a high correlation between the information that filled human brains and the tangible actions they could take in response. "News of the world" was inaccessible to most people. The information that concerned them was closer-to-home

...what are we to do with all these alarming headlines and triggering dings of "breaking news"?

realities of family, farm, or community: information with direct bearing on the actions of everyday life.

But this all changed, Postman argued, with the invention of the telegraph. Suddenly, the "news of the world" was much more accessible to average people, who found it an amusing novelty. The problem, however, is that this influx of far-flung information "gives us something to talk about but cannot lead to any meaningful action." As Postman observed, "For the first time in human history, people were faced with the problem of information glut, which means that simultaneously they were faced with the problem of a diminished social and political potency."¹

If Postman's observations about "information glut" were accurate forty years ago, how much more are they today, when we're speeding down the "information superhighway" faster than ever via our ubiquitous smartphones and ever-present Wi-Fi? And the resulting problem of impotence is even more pronounced than it was in Postman's era.

In today's world, it's not just occasional televised traumas that burden our souls; it's the constant feed. "Breaking news" is no longer the alarming verbiage that

signals a rare calamity; it's the everyday parlance of twenty-four-hour news and social media publishers skilled at the art of clickbait. These media publishers are eager to garner eyeballs by any means necessary. Another school shooting. A salacious scandal. An election "shock poll." A helicopter-filmed police chase. An Amber Alert for a missing child.

But what are we to do with all these alarming headlines and triggering dings of "breaking news"? Media outlets don't care about this question. Their only interest is that we have tuned in, clicked, and fallen for the pseudo urgency of the Important Information they've put on our radar. Making audiences "aware" – at best, helping them become "informed citizens" – seems to be the chief value proposition the news industry can offer in its defense. But awareness to what end? Is this tidal wave of chaotic information informing us merely for the sake of us "being informed"?

AWARENESS AS AN END UNTO ITSELF

We've come to a point where, yes, the primary goal of most information mediated to us is that we should be informed and aware of it. Not *educated* or *activated*

about important things happening in the world, mind you; merely *aware*. The benefits of an informed citizenry have long been trumpeted as a valorous purpose of the free press (and indeed, the benefits are real). But we also need to talk about the liabilities that come with an *overinformed* or *trivially* informed citizenry.

In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Postman argued that TV had altered the meaning of “being informed” by “creating a species of information that might properly be called disinformation.” This is not the same as outright misinformation, he said. It’s rather *misleading* information, which “creates the illusion of knowing something but which in fact leads one away from knowing.”²

In Postman’s view, mass media (led by television) created a world of dilettante experts whose absorption of vast amounts of information – packaged to them as entertainment – gave them a false sense of know-how about the happenings of the world. Referencing this

know-how (e.g., “I saw this news story about ____” or “I read this *Atlantic* article about ____”) became status markers.

Information *awareness* took on a cultural cachet quite apart from its actionability.

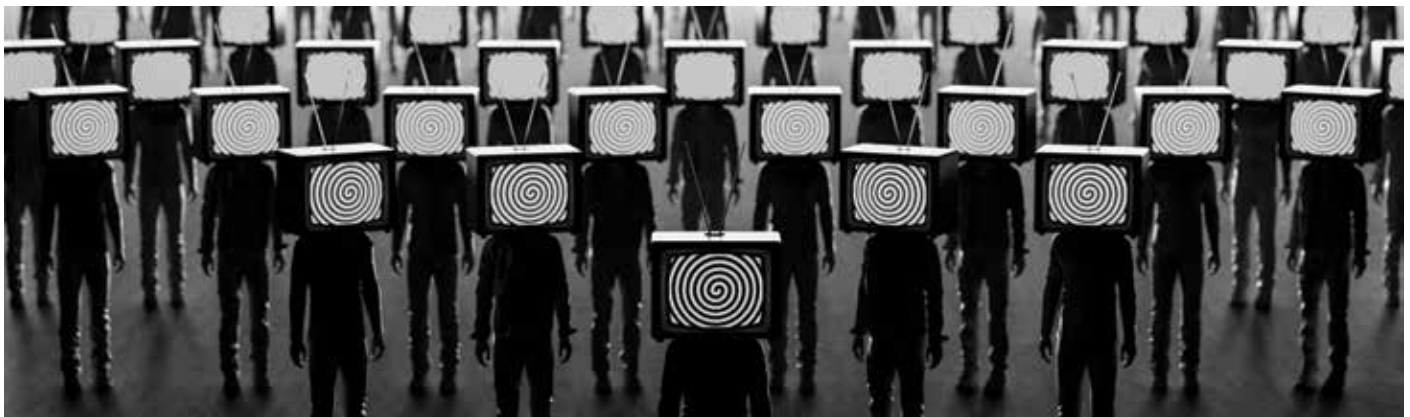
Fast forward four decades, and we now take it for granted that “awareness” is a value in its own right. The conversation starters might be different today (“I saw this TED Talk on YouTube about ____” or “I saw this TikTok about ____”), but the status it brings has only increased. Our ability to cite, allude to, or summarize secondhand information about a breadth of things (even if our grasp of the “thing” is actually wafer thin) turns information into a means of signaling our claim on that most coveted virtue, *relevance*.

For digital natives who’ve lived their whole lives in a hyperaware, globally connected information ecosystem, it’s understandable that a word like *woke* would come into prominence as a shorthand for social justice. In the twentieth century,

social justice “activism” involved tangible actions like volunteering or picketing in a real physical place; in the twenty-first century, someone can be an “activist” without ever getting off his or her phone. Activism (or “slacktivism”) moves from being primarily about *doing* to largely about *saying*: participating in the correct lingo, hashtags, and accepted speech (e.g., preferred pronouns) becomes the means of activism more than, well, *actions* offline. “Doing justice” becomes a discursive activity more than a tangible one.

In this upside-down world, people can – and often are – accused of apathy and inaction for being silent (“silence is violence”) on social media, even if their offline, unpublished activities are thoroughly oriented around addressing the injustice they’re being accused of ignoring. So it goes in a world where discourse about a problem (talking about it publicly) occupies a higher social standing than actual efforts to solve the problem.

This is problematic.



WOKE IS ENOUGH

“In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Postman argued that TV had altered the meaning of ‘being informed’ by ‘creating a species of information that might properly be called disinformation.’ This is not the same as outright misinformation, he said. It’s rather *misleading* information, which ‘creates the illusion of knowing something but which in fact leads one away from knowing.’

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TOO³

"The information crisis we face is at least threefold: *too much* information that moves *too fast* and is algorithmically tailored to be *too focused on me*."



PROBLEM OF BEING OVERINFORMED

Five years after publishing *Amusing Ourselves*, Postman gave a speech to the German Informatics Society that elaborated on the information-action ratio. In the talk, titled "Informing Ourselves to Death," Postman described how, for the average person in 1990, "information no longer has any relation to the solution of problems." The way he described it could just as easily describe the average person in 2025:

The tie between information and action has been severed. Information is now a commodity that can be bought and sold, or used as a form of entertainment, or worn like a garment to enhance one's status. It comes indiscriminately, directed at no one in particular, disconnected from usefulness; we are glutted with information, drowning in information, have no control over it, don't know what to do with it.... Our defenses against information glut have broken down; our information immune system is inoperable. We don't know how to filter it out; we don't know how to reduce it; we don't know how to use it.³

Remember, Postman observed this "information glut" problem in the pre-internet era. How much more are we glutted with information today? If we didn't have good "information immunity" defenses back then, we're even worse off now – especially in the age of ChatGPT, deepfakes, political misinformation campaigns, and the resulting epistemological crisis. The information crisis we face is at least threefold: *too much* information that moves *too fast* and is algorithmically tailored to be *too focused on me*.⁴ In a sense, "being informed" is more of a liability than an asset in today's world. The quality of digitally mediated information is simply too untrustworthy.

What happens to us when we're over-informed but underactivated? From my experience and observations, some common side effects occur.

- *We become anxious* – When a world's worth of "breaking news" calamities, injustices, and apocalyptic headlines steadily feed our souls, we naturally feel anxious and on edge.
- *We become angry* – Rising blood pressure and seething anger follow when

we're constantly exposed to partisan clickbait, triggering troll provocations, and other forms of foolish talk.

- *We become addicted* – Algorithms easily figure out what types of information each of us can't resist. Soon we're scrolling and clicking like addicts, unable to resist the intoxicating allure of our favorite genres of "news," trivia, or juicy gossip.
- *We become numb* – A diet of information disconnected from tangible action makes information abstract and surreal, disconnected from our real life. Eventually, headlines about a horrific mass shooting become things we scroll past as casually as we glance at a friend's vacation photo.
- *We become lonely* – When we spend large segments of our lives binging on digital information far removed from local, embodied communities – even if it's information we debate or discuss with others online – we become lonelier. The online influencer we listen to, or the interlocutor avatars we fiercely debate, are hardly substitutes for the

know-and-be-known community we really need.

- *We become delusional* – Because of the algorithmic shape of information today, no two of us live in the same information universe. We all see things differently, in ways tweaked to please our preferences and biases. Naturally, this further entrenches us in echo chambers, deepening our confidence in our own rightness (however wrong we are).
- *We become detached from reality* – The cumulative effect of all the above is that an overinformed life becomes a pseudo real life. When awareness trumps action and we're more compelled by narratives than by reality, our sense of the world becomes ever more surreal.

Perhaps C. S. Lewis sums it up best in this letter to a friend, when he laments the dynamics of an information-action disconnect:

It is one of the evils of rapid diffusion of news that the sorrows of all the world come to us every morning.

I think each village was meant to feel pity for its own sick and poor whom it can help and I doubt if it is the duty of any private person to fix his mind on ills which he cannot help. (This may even become an escape from the works of charity we really can do to those we know.) A great many people do now seem to think that the mere state of being worried is in itself meritorious. I don't think it is.⁵

Not only is Lewis right to challenge the social merit attached to “the mere state of being worried” (i.e., the social capital of *awareness*), but he hits the nail on the head when he says we should avoid fixing our minds on problems we can't solve. This not only burdens us in all the ways described above but tends to distract us from the local problems we *can* help fix.

NEGLECTING THE LOCAL

With all the energy we devote to keeping up with the goings-on of the world, we might neglect the people we can love and the problems we can address in our own backyards. For Christians called to love our neighbors and tangibly pursue mercy and justice, this is the crux of what's wrong with an imbalanced

information-action ratio.

Such is the state of our mass-mediated information environment that your average twenty-first-century young person can tell you far more about national politics than local politics. He develops strong opinions about presidential candidates and Supreme Court cases but couldn't tell you the name of the mayor or a city council member in his city, nor identify the most pressing challenges facing his proximate community.

Of the millions of Gen Zers who posted a blank black square on Instagram in June 2020 (#blackouttuesday) to protest police brutality, how many have ever had a conversation with a police officer in their own neighborhood? Of the millions who changed their social media avatars to the Ukrainian flag in February 2022, how many have tangibly helped refugees or immigrants from war-torn nations in their own cities?

Online hashtag actions are well intentioned. And maybe the viral power of such “collective online action” makes some difference. But as Lewis points out, the danger is that such actions “become an escape from the works of charity we really can do to those we know.” There are many reasons why everyone should



COMPASSIONATE BUT COUCHBOUND?

“[Lewis] hits the nail on the head when he says we should avoid fixing our minds on problems we can't solve. This not only burdens us in all the ways described above but tends to distract us from the local problems we *can* help fix.”

strive for a more balanced information-action ratio. It'll help your mental health and ground you in local life and embodied community. For Christians specifically, it'll remind you of your creaturely limits and deepen your trust in a sovereign God who is omniaware in ways you can never be. And it'll present more fruitful avenues for loving your neighbor and being a faithful witness in the particular place where God has situated you.

BRINGING BALANCE TO THE RATIO

Christians should be countercultural by striving to reconnect information and action, modeling a healthier way of living for a world out of balance. How can we do this? Here are ideas for individual Christians and ideas for churches and leaders.

For Individual Christians

- *Audit your news and information diet* – Make intentional efforts to reduce your intake of national and global information while increasing your intake of local information (which has more potential to be actionable). Don't turn your ears off to the cries of the world. But listen more eagerly to the cries closer to home.
- *Embrace your limits* – As you become more “unaware” of the steady hum of information in the news that might be making others anxious, angry, and stressed, see this as an opportunity for resting in God's sovereignty and praising him for his power. A world's worth of burdens is too much for you – but not for God. Contemplating our limits in contrast to God's unlimitedness is a fruitful path toward wisdom (see Ps. 90).
- *Rejoice in how God designed you* – You are an integrated mind and body. What comes into your brain has a natural outlet in your physical activities. You weren't made to just be aware of faraway problems and global chaos about which you can't do much. You were made to bring

order to the chaos in your immediate vicinity. You weren't made to be a gawker but a gardener (Gen. 2:15).

- *Pray* – Prayer is an important action we can take. When you inevitably encounter information about an injustice or tragedy in some far-flung part of the nation or world, don't let the information sit idly in your troubled brain. Take it to the Lord in prayer. As much as our secular culture demands more than “thoughts and prayers,” Christians know prayer is actually potent and crucial. If we can't do anything else in response to troublesome information, we can pray to the one who can.

For Churches and Church Leaders

- *Disciple people in media habits* – Information intake should be a subject addressed in discipleship – not in a legalistic sense but as part of wisdom. Help the people in your church think through the amount and type of information they consume and how it's shaping their souls.
- *Promote localism* – Church leaders should lead people (especially Gen Z and Gen Alpha) to prioritize the local, proximate, and offline as much or more than the distant, disembodied goings-on of the online world. Make the case for why a balanced ratio of information and action is not only a recipe for improved mental and spiritual health but conducive to a more effective Christian mission.
- *Gather people for prayer* – When some national or global calamity does occur, in such a way that most in your Christian community will be aware of and troubled by it, prayer is an appropriate communal response. Both in the regular church gathering and in impromptu meetings, the church can and should take the action of prayer. It's an “action” in the truest sense, and one we should never neglect.

- *Call people to take action* – Churches should regularly organize opportunities for people to tangibly solve real problems in the community. Often this works best by establishing long-term partnerships with organizations already doing specific work that aligns with biblical neighbor love: crisis pregnancy centers, foster and adoption agencies, homeless shelters, food distribution centers, and so forth. There is no end to the needs in your own backyard. And if a national news headline happens to be about something happening in your city or community, then your church should spring into hands-on action. This is a rare opportunity for burdensome information about calamity to directly translate to tangible community service, in partnership with local organizations and civic authorities.

BEAUTY OF ACTIVATED CHURCH

For much of my adult life, I was an overinformed news junkie. The onset of social media amplified this addiction – and my soul suffered as a result. Thankfully, I found a healthier way to live, in no small part because I rediscovered the beauty and necessity of the local church.

Once I gave myself wholeheartedly to local church life, I came to see that the burdens and griefs of ten people in my small group were far more important for me to carry than the burdens and griefs of countless sufferers on social media. Not only could I see the actual tears on actual faces as they shared, but I could hug them and know them in their suffering – and help them *through* it.

I also came to see that the *tangibly activated* local church is a far more satisfying and functional community than the *virtually aware* community of social media. Whether they're distributing food in partnership with local food banks, mobilizing volunteers for a local foster and adoption agency, or simply rallying the congregation around the needs of the community (single moms, meal trains for sick families, house cleanup for elderly members, and

so forth), a church's localized, tangible action is beautiful to behold.

And when troublesome news from distant places does reach our corner of the world – as it invariably will – the local church is where I go first to process and pray through it, even if no other “action” is possible in response. For centuries, the church's “prayers of the people” liturgies have borne witness to the fact that in those instances where we can't “do” anything with our hands to help, we can always drop to our knees and pray.

Christians can model a different mode of living in an over-informed, underactivated world. It's a mode that isn't numb or ambivalent to the countless problems that plague our world but realistic about our limited scope and where we can best be used. It's a mode that leads to calmer minds, more focused souls, and more engaged bodies. It's a mode that syncs up with how we were created and resists the digital era's many temptations toward god-like limitlessness. **RP**

Content taken from “Scrolling Ourselves to Death” by Ivan Mesa and Brett McCracken, ©2025. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, crossway.org.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 20th anniversary ed. (1985; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 68.
- ² Postman, *Amusing Ourselves*, 107.
- ³ Neil Postman, “Informing Ourselves to Death” (address to the German Informatics Society, Stuttgart, Germany, October 11, 1990), <https://web.williams.edu/Hist-Sci/curriculum/101/informing.html>.
- ⁴ I devote chapters to each of these three challenges in my book, *The Wisdom Pyramid: Feeding Your Soul in a Post-Truth World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), chaps. 1–3.
- ⁵ C. S. Lewis, letter to Dom Bede Griffiths (1946), quoted in Paul F. Ford, ed., *Yours, Jack: Spiritual Direction from C. S. Lewis* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 119.

DEFEATED BY DISTRACTION

This article is an extract from the 2025 book *Scrolling Ourselves to Death*, which was an updated tribute to Neil Postman's 1985 *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. If you don't know Postman's classic then there is no better introduction than this extract where the author talks about the past century's two most influential dystopian novels, George Orwell's *1984*, and Aldous Huxley's *Strange New World*, and the different dangers each author was trying to warn us about.

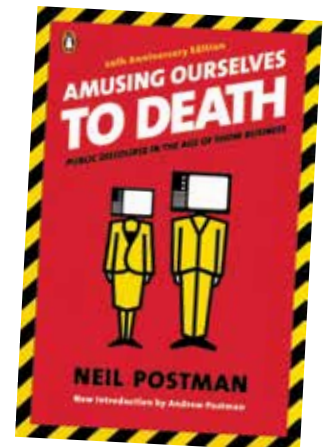
“What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy. As Huxley remarked in *Brave New World Revisited*, the civil libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny ‘failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions.’

“In 1984, Huxley added, people are controlled by inflicting pain. In *Brave New World*, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure. In short, Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us.”



SCROLLING OURSELVES TO DEATH

EDITED BY BRETT MCCrackEN
AND IVAN MESA
2025 / 256 PAGES



HOW TO USE AI LIKE A CHRISTIAN BOSS

by Valerie Vandenberg



Imagine you're the boss of your own company. After months of searching, you've just landed the most brilliant assistant in the country. He's lightning-fast, top of his class in every subject, and available 24/7. He never sleeps, never complains, and never forgets a deadline. You can ask him for ideas, outlines, editing help – even technical research – and he'll give you an answer in seconds. Best of all? He's already sitting at your desk.

His name is AI.

Now here's the catch: he's not human and doesn't share your values, or know right from wrong, and he always speaks with confidence even when he's completely wrong.

If you hand over your work to him, he might give you something that sounds smart, even impressive. But he might also serve up something misleading, shallow or just plain false. And because *you're the boss*, it's your name – and your integrity – on the line if anything goes wrong.

Most of us aren't bosses of our own companies...but every Christian has a calling to steward time, talents and resources. From the beginning, God made man to rule over creation (Gen. 1:26), and that includes ruling – rather than being ruled by – technology.

There are valid reasons to approach AI with caution (as we've seen in previous *Reformed Perspective* articles like “Will AI Replace Reading?” and “Is AI Just Another Tool – or Something More?”).

Even so, AI is here to stay, and it's already reshaping the job market, communication, and everyday life for many people. One global management group says AI has the potential to be as transformative as the steam engine.

AI is a tool unlike anything we've seen before, but at its core, that's what it remains: a tool. And like any tool, it can be used for good or evil, depending on the people designing and directing it.

Used wisely, AI can be an excellent assistant, capable of drafting hundreds of words in a short time. However, not all that AI produces is wise, relevant or true. That is why it's important to think critically and test everything it says. Proverbs 14:15 reminds us,

“The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.”

Just as it would be unwise to operate heavy machinery without proper training, Christians should not use AI without preparation and thoughtfulness. Quick answers can be tempting, but Proverbs 21:5 reminds us:

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.”

Rushing to use AI without wisdom or careful review can lead to shallow or even dangerous results.

I work as a project coordinator for a company that produces curriculum and I use AI almost daily in my work. It's helped me draft content, edit writing, brainstorm ideas, and even develop Christian material (it does know a thing or two about Reformed

theology). But I've also seen how quickly it can go off course.

Used wisely, AI can be part of faithful stewardship. If you're considering AI – or already using it – these seven principles can help you use it to the glory of God without compromising convictions or integrity.

*AI is here to assist, not lead.
Think of it like a new
apprentice: helpful, fast, and
tireless – but not wise.*

1. BE THE BOSS – NOT THE BYSTANDER

AI is here to assist, not lead. Think of it like a new apprentice: helpful, fast, and tireless – but not wise. AI can draft an article, summarize a report, or give you a list of ideas, but it doesn't know whether those ideas are any good. That's your job. Use AI to boost your productivity, not replace your discernment.

If you're an engineer or electrician, you know how this works already. An apprentice can be a huge help – they might prep materials, run calculations, or handle basic wiring to save you time. But when it's time to sign off on the plans or certify the work, it's your name that's on the line. If the apprentice makes a mistake and the building collapses or catches fire, *you're* the one held responsible. That's why every detail needs to be carefully checked and approved by the licensed professional. AI is no different. It's an assistant – not the one who signs the final plans.

2. THINK CRITICALLY AND WATCH FOR MISTAKES

AI tools are designed to sound convincing – but convincing doesn't always mean correct. Sometimes they generate information that looks polished but is actually shallow, misleading, or outright wrong. This is known as a “hallucination.”

For example, a US lawyer who used AI for legal research is now facing his own court hearing after using false AI-generated information in court. The lawyer didn't realize that several of the legal cases that AI had cited for him didn't actually exist. He passed them along unchecked.

I've experienced many hallucinations myself, such as when I asked AI to clarify a punctuation rule and it said one thing in the rule and presented the opposite in the example it gave.

That's why you can't just copy AI's response and hit “send.” You need to review the results carefully. If you're using AI to explore a topic you don't know well, make sure you double-check the facts, confirm the logic, and – if possible – ask someone with more experience to give it a second look.

AI has saved me significant time researching unfamiliar topics, but before finalizing anything, I verify the sources or have someone with expertise review it.

Ideally, you should have at least some grasp of what good work looks like in the area you're using AI for. If not, treat the AI's

output as a starting point, not a finished product. Use it to learn, refine, and check your thinking... but don't assume it's right.

3. TRAIN AI LIKE AN APPRENTICE

What AI gives you after your first prompt is often just a rough draft. The result might be serviceable, but it's rarely great unless the task is very simple. After all, apprentices need training. Here are some key tips for getting better results from AI:

- Tell AI the role it should take on (math teacher, history professor, writer, business expert, travel agent, event planner, etc.).
- Outline as many details as possible – task, tone, purpose, websites it can research, intended audience, length.
- Provide examples.
- Ask AI what questions it has for you.
- After reviewing the output, point out how AI can improve the results.
- Do a few edits of your own and let AI know what you did for future reference.

For example, a first prompt for writing could look like this – you would tell ChatGPT:

“Assume the role of an expert copywriter, familiar with Reformed theology as taught by John Calvin and R.C. Sproul. You are deeply familiar with the Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort and Belgic Confession. Your job is to write articles for Reformed Perspective magazine. Here are some writing guidelines for this magazine...

[Insert writing guidelines as outlined on the Reformed Perspective website, which include explanation of audience and recommendations for tone.]

“I'd like to write an article for this magazine titled 'How to Use AI Like a Christian Boss.' In it, I'd like to compare AI to a smart apprentice. You can use what they come up with, and it might be very good, but before an engineer or architect can put a stamp on it, they have to go through every detail and make sure that they stand behind it...

[Continue for several paragraphs with further details and instructions.]

“Write this article in prose, but structured with numbered points for how to use AI like a Christian boss. Start with an outline. But before you do that, what questions do you have for me?”

The first prompt is just the beginning. After that, a “Christian boss” process would look like:

- Answering AI's questions.
- Instructing it to draft the outline for the article.
- Carefully reviewing the outline, making some refinements yourself and/or telling AI to make refinements.

- Instructing AI to draft the article.
- Doing a detailed review and editing.

The edits can be done on your own or by prompting AI (see the next point for some tips on that). I usually do a mix of both personal and AI-prompted edits. With refinement, specific instructions, and key edits, working with AI can turn a mediocre first result into a solid piece of writing.

Note that because getting an excellent AI response often requires multiple rounds of prompting and giving feedback, it's not always faster to use it for a task that you only need to do once.

4. USE AI LIKE A CREATIVE SIDEKICK

AI can be a great help when you need a creative boost. You might ask it to:

- Rewrite a sentence five different ways so you can choose the best version.
- Give practical examples to strengthen a concept you're trying to explain.
- Help you generate ideas for starting or improving a project.
- Reword a section of text for clarity, flow, or tone.
- Give feedback and ideas for improvement on something you've written.
- Ask you questions to help you think about something in new or deeper ways.

Sometimes AI comes up with something surprisingly helpful. Other times it completely misses the mark. The key is to use it as a creative partner, not a crutch. Be prepared to write things yourself if AI just doesn't give you what you need. (Yes, AI can have an off-day too.)

5. PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY – AND YOUR MIND

AI tools aren't generally private. What you type may be stored or used to train future models, depending on the platform. That means anything personal or sensitive might not stay confidential.

So be cautious. Don't share anything you wouldn't want repeated or misunderstood.

Because it can mirror your tone and affirm your ideas, AI can start to feel personal, to the point that some people have started treating it like a friend, therapist or romantic partner. However, hearing exactly what you want from a machine can pull you away from real, God-given relationships.

God calls us to grow in community, where we can be encouraged in our faith and held accountable when we wander. Proverbs 27:17 says, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (ESV). AI can echo your own voice, but it will never call you to repentance, speak truth in love, or walk alongside you in genuine discipleship.

6. TRAIN FOR DISCERNMENT BEFORE YOU USE IT

Just as students need to understand what 2 + 2 means before using a calculator, Christians need foundational knowledge before turning to AI. Skills like reading, writing, theology, math,

and logic help us recognize when AI is inaccurate, shallow, or biased.

AI is trained on massive amounts of data, and although it can recite the Heidelberg Catechism, most of its data likely didn't come from a Christian perspective. One English teacher shared that when her students used an AI tool to give feedback on their writing, it consistently flagged Christian content as "too one-sided."

Romans 12:2 warns:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

God calls us to use discernment. Without a strong grounding in Scripture, truth, and general knowledge, we won't have the tools to spot harmful ideas or use AI wisely.

7. DON'T LET AI REPLACE REAL MENTORS

AI *can* be a useful support for learning, without replacing skill development. It can offer feedback, generate ideas or ask helpful questions to deepen your thinking. But it should never replace the guidance of real people.

For Christians, learning isn't just about improving skills or producing results. It's about growing in wisdom and character. AI can't be trusted to help you think biblically, challenge you in love or walk you through real-life decisions. That happens best in relationships.


God commands, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). That is not a task we should trust to AI.

If young people are going to use AI, they need a strong biblical foundation and wise guidance. Without that, AI becomes a shortcut rather than a tool – and we can't shortcut godly wisdom and discernment.

CONCLUSION

Used wisely, AI can strengthen our work and spark new ideas. But as Christians, we don't just care about what works, we care about what honors God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). Faithful stewardship isn't measured by cleverness or creativity, but by our trust in Christ and obedience to His Word.

AI reflects the priorities of the person using it. So let's bring ours under the lordship of Christ. Take responsibility. Stay alert. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (Col. 3:23).

Whether you use AI or not, let this be your aim: to honor God in all things, rule over creation, and never let created tools rule over you. 

P.S. In case you're wondering, I did use AI like a Christian boss to write this article.

WHOSE SPEECHES WERE THEY?

On AI, and others, writing for us

JON DYKSTRA: The one question I know readers will be asking, so let's give them an answer, is, approximately what percentage of the article is AI written? Or is that even something you can put a percentage on?

VALERIE VANDENBERG: That percentage question is a tough one. My process with AI involves a lot of back and forth.

To give some more details, by the time AI drafted the article, I had already given it about 1,500 words of my own instructions (including the ideas I had for the article and answering AI's questions for me) in addition to giving it your writing guidelines from the *Reformed Perspective* website.

JD: Can you get into the process just a bit more?

VV: My first prompt included my ideas for the article and detailed instructions for my vision for it. Then I had AI draft an outline, which I adjusted until I was satisfied. After that I instructed AI to draft the article itself, which was followed by detailed editing (sometimes done by me, sometimes prompting AI to edit a section, and usually a mix of both). I often have AI write things a few different ways so I can glean the best ideas from the list. Or I just write it myself if I think my idea is better than what AI suggested.

JD: This is something *Reformed Perspective* staff have been wrestling with, trying to think through the extent or limits we'd want to use ChatGPT or other AI. To this point I haven't used it to generate text, but that's been more a hesitancy – I'd like to listen in on the debate some more before coming to a firm conclusion – than any specific principled objections. Your article is a part of that debate, and I'm grateful for it.

My initial take is that using AI to generate text, as in this article, is akin to a president using a speech writer. The writer crafts the words, but the president sets the direction, and adds in his own tweaks and orders rewrites, such that at the end he will so completely own these words, that we will fully attribute this speech to him, and not the writer.

VV: Yes. The key Christian boss part of the process is that by the time I hit send to submit the article, every aspect of it (tone, content, structure, wording, etc.) is something I can stand behind, and as good as I could do alone or ideally better.

The Way

Jesus told his disciples,
"I am the way, and the truth,
and the life. No one comes to
the Father except through Me"
(John 14:6)

by Christine Farenhorst

Many years ago, my husband and I, plus some of our children, traveled from Owen Sound, Ontario to Michigan, USA. We attended the wedding of a close friend and had a wonderful time. It was late afternoon when we left Michigan and I was assigned the task of holding the map and marking out the route we were to take back to Ontario. It was in those ancient days before cars were equipped with GPS.

The beginning of our way home was fairly easy. The children were quiet and relaxed, and no one had yet attained the "Are we there yet?" syndrome. However, as it grew darker and the small print on the map became more and more difficult to read, things grew a little trickier. Eventually, as the hours drifted by, questions from my husband, such as: "Are you sure we turn left here?" and "Things don't look familiar," and "I don't recall this town at all," waxed stronger and stronger. Truth be told, it totally altered the atmosphere in the car from cheerfulness and unconcern to one of uncertainty and skepticism as to my abilities to be a pilot.

The climax of this trip was reached when we drove under a blue, overhead sign which welcomed us, in large white letters, not to Ontario, but to Indiana. We, consequently, arrived home a little late, but our marriage was intact.

Pope Francis, the 266th pope of the Roman Catholic Church, went on the last lap of a journey in April of this year. He died. His journey, like the journey of all living souls, had been woven throughout his life with many twists and turns. He had been equipped with a map as well.



However, the map he chose to carry was a trifle skewed. Consequently, his direction resulted in being a little lopsided, a trifle off kilter and amazingly crooked.

There were a number of turns Francis should have totally avoided. When he came to the "Sola Scriptura" sign, he wrongly headed toward "Scripture and Tradition." When there was a clear indication that no tolls would be required at the "Sola Gratia" causeway he calmly swerved off into "Grace and Cooperation." At the neon lights proclaiming "Solus Christus" he shrugged, turned his steering wheel the opposite way, repairing to "Christ and the Church." At the roundabout, which clearly pointed to the fact that the first right, "Sola Fide," should be taken, he took the left turn, pushing for "Faith and Good Works." And when he came to a flashing yellow light indicating "Soli Deo Gloria," he braked, scratched his head and sighed. Then, although he took

the flashing yellow light into account, he turned back and took the alternate route of "Glorification of the Saints."

Francis' driving ability was almost certainly hampered by his bound hands. They had a rosary wrapped around them. Or perhaps the pallium he wore – the sleeveless cape bearing six black crosses and made with the wool from two lambs – somewhat hindered his arm movements. Or, most probably, the white cloth draped over his face, weighed down with a collection of medals and coins from his reign as pope, blinded and handicapped his capacity for sound judgment.

Jesus told His disciples in the specific map instructions of John 14:6 (and He is also telling us): "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." ^{RP}

This is an excerpt of a devotional chapter from an upcoming book by Christine.

Besides being our new prime minister, *Who is Mark Carney?*

by Levi Minderhoud

After winning the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada, and then leading his party to victory in April's federal election, Mark Carney has become Canada's 24th Prime Minister. So, who is he?

Mark Carney may well be the most credentialed Prime Minister in Canadian history, despite never having held elected office. His CV includes:

- Graduate of Harvard (1988) and Oxford (1993)
- Analyst at Goldman Sachs (1990-2003)
- Senior associate deputy minister for the Department of Finance (2004-2007)
- Governor of the Bank of Canada (2008-2013)
- Governor of the Bank of England (2013-2020)
- United Nations special envoy for climate action and finance (2020-2025)
- Special advisor and chair of the Liberal task force on economic growth (2024)
- Vice chairman at Brookfield Asset Management (2020-2025)
- Board member of the World Economic Forum (2010-2025)

Most Canadians know Mark Carney as “a central banker/climate change guy,” but we want to explore Carney's political, religious, and moral beliefs that will likely guide him as Prime Minister.

MARK CARNEY'S POLITICAL BELIEFS

In his 2021 book *Value(s)*, Carney isn't shy about what he thinks is the duty of the state: “The most fundamental duty



of the state is to protect its citizens.” That sounds reasonable, but the question is: protect citizens from what?

He elaborates further:

“An expansion of state duties has occurred over the centuries. The government's role as protector now extends well beyond shielding citizens from violence and direct injury to cover areas as varied as promoting financial stability, protecting the environment and maintaining data privacy. Much of this growth has been a response to risk-averse populations that expect ever greater protections from government authorities. Moreover, the duties of governments today reach well beyond their traditional roles as protectors to include the provision of basic services, the promotion of welfare and the fostering of culture.

Compare this with a Reformed view of the duty of the state. With Article 36 of the Belgic Confession, we confess that God “wants the world to be governed by laws and policies so that human lawlessness may be restrained and that everything may be conducted in good order among human beings.” These twin responsibilities can be boiled down to *public justice* and *public order*. Although both concepts could be stretched to include all sorts of activities like providing education, welfare, or healthcare, Reformed Christians usually maintain that public justice and public order are relatively narrow responsibilities.

A third of Carney's book is dedicated to discussing the “triple crises of credit, Covid, and climate.” In each of these cases, he frames the government's responsibility in terms of protection. When it came to the financial crisis of

2008, the government's job was to protect people from financial instability. In 2020, the government had to protect citizens from a pandemic. Today, the government needs to protect its populace from climate change.

Carney uses just these three examples, but there is hardly a hint in the book that he considers there to be many limits to what the state can or should do.

That doesn't necessarily mean that Carney thinks the state needs to be huge or swallow up the other institutions in society. At numerous points in his book, Carney recognizes that businesses and markets are efficient and indispensable in a modern society. He recognizes that markets – not the state – are the engine of the economy.

But if businesses and markets are the engine of the economy, Carney believes the state should be the steering wheel, guiding the generative potential of the economy in what it perceives is the right direction. As he puts it, governments must “use regulatory policy to frame the future direction of the economy.” Carney gives this power to the state because only “the state embodies collective ideals such as equality of opportunity, liberty, fairness, regional solidarity and caring for future generations.” In his view, business and other private institutions will always be selfish and self-seeking. Only the state is selfless and altruistic.

RELIGIOUS/MORAL BELIEFS

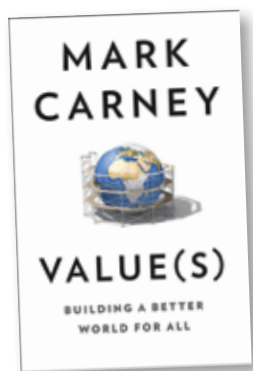
Carney is Roman Catholic. In 2015, a British newspaper called *The Tablet* called Carney the most influential Catholic in Britain. A 2021 *Wall Street Journal* article noted that Carney “goes to Catholic church at least once a week.” He also sits on the Steering Committee of the Council for Inclusive Capitalism at the Vatican.

Although he didn't write *Value(s)* from an explicitly Christian perspective, his faith does peek through in his writing. For example, the book begins with a story of his interaction with Pope Francis at the Vatican when various Catholic leaders gathered to discuss the future of the market system. The book ends with quotations from a New Year's Day service that he attended in 2021. Sandwiched between these stories are occasional references to Scripture, such as Jesus'

warning that “everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48) and “as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them” (Luke 6:31).

Carney uses religious worldview language to describe faith or beliefs in markets. He also discusses medieval Catholic canonists like Thomas Aquinas as they attempted to incorporate their faith into their economic thought. Sprinkled throughout the book are words related to Christianity, such as faith, vocation, divine coincidence, meditation, the common good, and the unborn.

But perhaps where his faith is most on



display is in the overarching theme of his book, in how government, markets, and society must do more than assign economic value (in the sense of worth) to everything but also recognize the importance of values (in the sense of virtues) in building our society. Carney recognizes that the moral foundations of our society are critical and highlights seven principles that he believes public policy needs to take into account:

- “*Dynamism* to help create solutions and channel human creativity;
- *Resilience* to make it easier to bounce back from shocks while protecting the most vulnerable in society;
- *Sustainability* with long-term perspectives that align incentives across generations;
- *Fairness*, particularly in markets to sustain their legitimacy;
- *Responsibility* so that individuals feel accountable for their actions;
- *Solidarity* whereby citizens recognize

their obligations to each other and share a sense of community and society; and

- *Humility* to recognize the limits of our knowledge, understanding and power so that we act as custodians seeking to improve the common good” (8-9).

A CATHOLIC IN NAME ONLY?

Having a Catholic as Prime Minister will likely raise the hopes of some Reformed Christians that the federal government might finally take action on social issues. After all, the Catholic Church is opposed to abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, and medical transitioning. Wouldn't it follow that a Catholic Prime Minister would follow the teachings of his own church?

Unfortunately, that isn't likely. Ten of Canada's preceding 23 Prime Ministers have all claimed to be Catholic. Yet, their Catholic faith didn't guide their political decisions. Catholic Pierre Trudeau legalized abortion and homosexuality. Catholic Paul Martin legalized same-sex marriage. Catholic Justin Trudeau legalized euthanasia.

With respect to Mark Carney, the *Catholic Register* concludes that:

“his track record betrays a stronger alignment with the mores and allegiances of global markets than with Catholic sensibilities... Carney is undoubtedly a Catholic of a different stripe than the Trudeaus and all the prime ministers who came between... but the wait for a prime minister who will address some of the more glaring divergences of Canadian culture from a culture of life may yet be a long one.”

FORWARD WITH HOPE

As Mark Carney takes up his task, Canada will be watching. As Christians, let's also be praying for him during this transition, and for all our leaders that they would have wisdom and strength, and ultimately that they would recognize their place under the God of heaven who gave them their position. RP

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What if we said what we mean?

– *political party edition*

by Jon Dykstra

Another election campaign has come and gone, and one of the bigger disappointments might simply be, did anyone defend anything that really mattered?

The Conservatives ran a slogan promising "Canada First – For a Change," but the changes party leader Pierre Poilievre promised were practical, more than principled. What did he *stand* for? Change and Canada? The Liberals could have run with that too – Carney, after all, ran on the platform of *not being Trudeau*. And that seemed change enough for the

electors, who gave his party yet another term.

But where were the unborn left in this campaign? And what about the many vulnerable elderly or disabled Canadians who, in our culture of death, are now seen as having lives not worth living? Who is going to stand up for them? The mainstream parties weren't going to go there.

There's a trend working its way around the web asking, what if companies had to use "brutally honest slogans" that told the truth about their products? What might

that look like? Some of the suggestions include:

- IKEA: Come for the meatballs. Stay 'cause you can't find your way out.
- Facebook: Come procrastinate
- YouTube: Don't let your kids read the comments

What if political parties had to do the same and say what they actually meant? If they had to be blunt and truthful, what would their slogans look like? I'd suggest they might look something like this:

LIBERALS:

- Vote for us and get the government you deserve
- Pitching you a bright future, hoping you'll forget our seedy past
- Abortion...done! Gay marriage...done! Euthanasia...done! Transgenderism...
- Swaying Fourth Estate coverage with your tax dollars
- We listen; We care; We pass out your money everywhere.
- At least we aren't the scary Conservatives!
- Proudly aborting the next generation of voters
- UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT!!!! Serving the same old menu.

CONSERVATIVES:

- When it comes to moral issues...that's all we have to say
- Christian voters should be seen but not heard
- With Trudeau gone, we'll have to focus on the CBC
- Money matters. Unborn children don't.
- Still the lesser of two evils!
- Fiscally? Conservative! Morally? *Well...*
- At least we aren't the scary Liberals
- Christians welcome...at the back of the bus

NEW DEMOCRATS:

- The 10th commandment was only meant for rich people.
- More government is always the answer
- Every child deserves two loving... daycare workers
- Liberals delivered euthanasia, *but we thought of it first!*
- We deny the unborn are people. We won't deny Steve is a girl.
- When we say "free" we mean your grandkids pay
- On-call Liberal lapdog
- We spell "Compassion" M-O-N-E-Y.

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE PARTY:

- We're not in it to win it.
- Your vote is your voice, what are you saying with it?
- As long as "lesser evil" is enough, you'll never get better
- When you vote pro-choice, you aren't pro-life
- Our goal needs to be volume, not victory... but we keep forgetting
- *C'mon!* How bad do the Conservatives have to get?
- Keeping quiet about God to win is a bad trade
- The only wasted vote is for something you don't believe in

AM I LAZY OR JUST RELAXING?

What does Proverbs say?

by Meaghan Diek



After a long and hard day at work or school, the last thing someone might want to do is more work. So, sometimes we don't. Instead, maybe we'll sit around on our phone, scrolling social media, catching up on the latest news. Then, when the weekend rolls around, doing house chores can be the last thing on our minds. So, sometimes we don't. Instead, we've sat on the couch and binge-watched our favorite TV series to waste the day away. Taking a *break* isn't a problem, but how much is too much? Relaxation can be good, but laziness isn't.

What exactly does the Bible say about laziness and how can we fight against it? And how do we determine whether we are being lazy or just relaxing?

LAZINESS MEANS EXCUSES

While the dictionary defines laziness as "the unwillingness to work or use energy," the Bible has a more applicable explanation. Solomon, in Proverbs

26:13-15, pictures it in this way:

"A sluggard says, 'There's a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!'

"As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed.

"A sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth."

In *A Warning Against Laziness*, Alistair Begg says of verse 14:

"He can turn to his left, or he can turn to his right, but that's about it. He absolutely loves it. He makes movement but no progress. Where you found him at seven in the morning you can find him later at eleven in the morning, and perhaps at three in the afternoon."

And what of the lion? The sluggard is happy making excuses for reasons not to leave his house. He becomes a procrastinator. As Begg notes:

"And the longer they go on filling their mind with that kind of thing, they have imaginary reasons for their inactivity, and these imaginary reasons finally convince them of the fact that they can rationalize the fact that they don't get up. Of course, the real danger is not the imaginary lion in the street. The real danger is the roaring lion, the devil, who loves to come and lull people into indolence and defeat."

The more excuses we come up with for avoiding tasks, the more we begin to think it isn't a problem.

A STRONG TEMPTATION

Throughout the book of Proverbs laziness arises repeatedly. If God repeats a warning, we know that it matters for our spiritual lives and that it's a tough temptation to overcome.

Proverbs 24:30-34 gives us an image of how detrimental laziness is for our souls. We are given a description of the



“Throughout the book of Proverbs laziness arises repeatedly. If God repeats a warning, we know that it matters for our spiritual lives and that it’s a tough temptation to overcome.”

vineyard of a sluggard and as expected, it is overgrown with weeds, full of thorns, and the walls are in ruins. It is a testimony to his laziness. When challenged with the work and upkeep of his vineyard, this is someone who’d prefer “a little more sleep, a little more slumber.” He or she would rather have 5 more minutes of sleep than do the tasks God has asked of them.

Laziness affects more than just vineyards. A few chapters earlier, in Prov. 21:25, we read that “The cravings of the

sluggard will be the death of him because his hands refuse to work.” Laziness keeps the heart empty and provides opportunity for the devil to enter an open door. Laziness occurs when we do nothing productive for the soul and the mind.

The truth of the matter is that we were made *to work*. Even in the Garden of Eden, Adam was given work to do, to tend the garden and name the animals (Gen. 2:15-20). We work to glorify God, and God has so created us that when we live out our purpose, it is good for us to work too.

When we fail to obey the command to work hard, we are more susceptible to other temptations as well. We need to be working hard, whether that is in the home caring for our children, providing an income for our family, or doing our best in school so that we aren’t easily tempted.

We need to be aware of laziness as a sin. It isn’t a joke because sin, left unchecked, separates us from God. It affects the wholeness of our lives, and it needs to be dealt with.

Those hours spent on Instagram or TikTok are times that you could be enjoying communion with others, doing the tasks God’s set out for you, spending time with Him in His Word, and more. The point is that if you don’t discipline yourself to be diligent in your work, studies, in practicing hospitality, and in the reading of the Bible, as well as prayer, you will become lazy. Laziness is the default; it’s the result of not trying.

Remember the Parable of the Talents, with the servant who buried his talent – the master took it from him and gave the talent away to someone who would actually do something with it (Matt. 25:14-30). God is not happy with the bare minimum from us.

We need to make the most of every opportunity lest laziness hinder us from serving God wholeheartedly.

FIGHT LAZINESS WITH PRODUCTIVITY

What can we do to ensure we don’t fall into this temptation? We can ask ourselves one simple question: *Have I been productive today?*

If you can list off a number of things, then a break might be just the thing. If you ask this same question to your parents, or your spouse – “Have I done anything productive today?” – you’ll likely get an honest answer. Another good starting question could be “what does productivity look like in your home?” Learn from others what it means to be productive. Each individual has their own happy medium so there is nothing wrong with asking around.

And if you are struggling with laziness here are some other tips that have helped me:



"Rest will feel good, it will be enjoyable, and it's God-given. When I find myself being lazy, I notice that it stinks. I feel sluggish. A sluggard does not enjoy being lazy. In contrast, a busy man enjoys a day of rest."

- 1) Pray – Ask God to show you when you aren't putting in a good effort
- 2) Read what Scripture says about laziness and work
- 3) Listen to (or read) Alistair Begg's "Warning Against Laziness"
- 4) Go for a walk when you can – keep yourself in shape
- 5) Call a friend whom you haven't talked to in a while – put effort into your relationships

FIGHT LAZINESS BY RESTING

On the other hand, burning out isn't godly either. Just because God calls us to work hard doesn't mean we should work to a point of pure exhaustion at the end of the day. How can we ever thank Him if we're too busy to see what He is doing?

Jesus reminds us to rest, "And He said unto them, 'come away by yourself to a desolate place and rest awhile'" (Mark 6:31). He says rest *awhile*. He tells his apostles that even the most active servants of Christ cannot always be upon the stretch of business and work. They too need some time to recharge.

Christ understands how weary our lives are. He went through it every day during His ministry. We can turn to Him knowing He's experienced exhaustion too. So He provides those free afternoons or evenings when there's no homework taking over. He gives us the weekend for

a change of pace from our daily work, and to go out with friends. He has even set aside a day every week where we can step away from our obligations and come praise Him in His house with fellow believers.

We have an obligation to serve Him wholeheartedly and always, but this doesn't mean working 6 days a week for every waking hour. It's just that having a break doesn't have to mean pulling out your phone to doomscroll. It might be as simple as taking a moment to consider every blessing that God has given, and express gratitude for them. It means being present with your family, teaching them the ways of their Maker and training them up in His Word.

When you feel deflated, read Psalm 23. God leads us to the still waters, not the raging sea. He restores our souls and gives us quietness of mind.

HOW DO I KNOW IT'S REST?

The difference between rest and laziness might come down to its purpose. Laziness is an avoidance – avoiding the laundry piling up, the lawn that needs mowing, the taxes that need doing, the kids that need engagement, whatever it might be. Rest is about restoration, to make yourself ready again to do the work God has prepared for you.

Rest will feel good, it will be enjoyable,

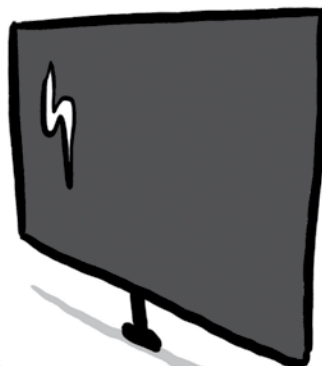
and it's God-given. When I find myself being lazy, I notice that it stinks. I feel sluggish. A sluggard does not enjoy being lazy. In contrast, a busy man enjoys a day of rest. He is satisfied because he has completed the task to which God called him.

Keep this in mind as you go about each day. Serve the Lord wholeheartedly with your hands and with your rest. We must be good stewards with the time we've been given glorifying God in our work.

Laziness is serious; it is incredibly dangerous – the Bible has nothing good to say about the fate of the sluggard. So, when that snooze button is tempting you, think through who God is calling you to be, and how much more important obedience to Him is, than 5 more minutes of sleep. And because we aren't alone in this race, we can be an encouragement to one another, reprimanding each other gently to stop putting off things until tomorrow. The difference between laziness and rest matters!

God has saved us. He sent his Son to die for us, and we have only a limited time here on Earth to express our gratitude towards Him. So let's repent from the opportunities we've wasted, and ask Him to help us take up "the good works which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10). ^{RP}

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whose TV



is **BIGGER** than their
BOOKSHELF.

-emilia clark's dad

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Attention: Mr. Jon Dewit
OR EMAILED TO: chairman@dufferinchristian.ca

For more information, please contact:

Principal: Dr. Chris deBoer Ph. 204-745-2278 Email: principal@dufferinchristian.ca
Chairman: Mr. Jon Dewit Ph. 204-750-1394 Email: chairman@dufferinchristian.ca



GET OUT OF THE GAME

Christians need to steer clear of sports gambling

by Jeff Dykstra

When I was a kid, I remember my aunt asking, whenever we were traveling somewhere, “Are we having fun yet?” Of course, we usually said “Yes!”

However, by the time I reached my teens, I thought (briefly) that my leisure activities needed just a little bit more to really be entertaining, so I came up with a way to make a pinball game at the neighborhood arcade more interesting – bet on the outcome. My idea was that whoever had the lower score would pay the other player a certain amount, based on the difference in the scores. Math must not have been my strongest subject at the time, and I wasn’t any better at pinball, because after just one game, I owed my friend six hundred dollars. Thankfully, he was a generous soul, and

never did make me pay up.

That is not the case for sports betting online. Countless commercials play up the excitement of being more involved in what’s happening out there on the ice, or field, or track. We’re told we can “get in the game” if only we put money down on the score, or how many points or penalty minutes a player will get, or what minute the first goal will be scored – there are dozens of betting possibilities for every game. But the company on the other end of your bet is not going to forgive you if you get in over your head.

Still, what if you’re not as foolish as I was? What if you bet small, and you even use apps that restrict how much and how often you can bet? Is “just a little” sports gambling online still a problem?

Yes it is. And God’s Word gives us several reasons to stay away from any sports gambling.

1. CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO PRODUCTIVITY

An article on ARPACanada.ca titled “Gambling: Value or Vice” points to several risks of gambling, based on Lord’s Day 42 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Among other reasons, the article notes that in the unlikely event that you do happen to be successful in betting online or any other form of gambling, you are making money without creating anything of value – the exact opposite of the creation mandate of Genesis 1 – and at the expense of others. Any money you won could only come because many others lost. Your gain is their pain.

2. LOVE YOUR WEAKER BROTHER

And that pain can be of the life-destroying kind. Saagar Enjeti, an American anti-gambling activist, notes that online sports betting companies make about half of their revenue from about five percent of their clients, because they are targeting the problem gamblers: the addicts. Enjeti cites the notorious example of a man whose wife is suing a sports betting company, because her husband gambled away his salary, his wife's retirement account, and even the money he got by selling a baptism present for his children.

For a Christian, if you know of any brothers or sisters in the Lord who are gambling addicts in your congregation, this is even more serious, since your (extremely unlikely) success is made at the expense of someone who is not only going into debt, but destroying their family, and even possibly endangering their relationship with God by making money, that next win, their god instead.

In 1 Cor. 8:13 Paul writes, "Therefore if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." When Paul makes this commitment, it is in regard to an activity – eating food sacrificed to idols – that is not wrong in itself. How much worse it is when you continue to indulge a sinful habit that destroys your brother!

3. DON'T BE A FOOL

The same ARPACanada.ca article shares how gambling is just plain old unwise, since "the house always wins." Saagar Enjeti notes that as foolish as gambling in a casino is, since the odds are stacked against you, sports betting generally offers much worse odds. Our provincial governments look to betting as a major revenue source – they've got billions dependent on you losing... and that you'll eventually lose is still the only sure bet in all of gambling.

4. DO WE REALLY NEED TO "GET IN THE GAME" MORE?

When I asked an Edmonton-area pastor about sports gambling, he could, thankfully, share that the young people he worked with most (from the pre-

confession class) are not, by their own account, involved in any online or sports betting.

However, he did address another, related, issue. In his preaching and catechism classes, he warns against the potential for idolatry in viewing sports. If your team is heading to the NHL finals, there's a vibe in your city that is hard to describe as anything short of a *religious* devotion. If you don't have God, a winning team becomes a stand-in for many. For them, "Hockey is life," as one t-shirt proclaims.

Obviously, if you are tempted toward an obsession with watching professional sports, the opportunity to bet on them is not going to help you overcome that.

ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?

As I am writing this, "my team" is winning in the second-last round of the NHL playoffs. Obviously, I will not be betting on the results, but the games will be just as exciting.

Just how enjoyable is watching sports when there is money on the line anyway?

Just how enjoyable is watching sports when there is money on the line anyway? Even the sports betting companies themselves are, ironically, admitting how corrosive betting is to the real enjoyment of rooting for your team. Slogans like "Your loyalty is real, but so are the odds" and "Sometimes it pays to be a bad fan" speak to how, in the world of sports betting, money is the only thing that many fans now care about. *Are we having fun yet?*

In a recent broadcast of *The Agenda* on TVOntario, entitled "Is Business Ruining Sports?" Morgan Campbell, from CBC Sports, notes,

"We've seen coaches like J.B. Bickerstaff saying that they open up their social media, ...their email, and there are these angry fans in here berating them about, 'You made me

blow my parlay'.... And... the specter that's overhanging all of this is match-fixing.... And so what we don't want is this idea that this match is fixed, that the outcome is predetermined."

With all of the problems that we could criticize in professional sports, there is inspiration in seeing "your team" play with heart. Paul even uses sports as a metaphor for the Christian life, exhorting the Corinthians to emulate the athletic virtues of self-control and self-discipline (1 Cor. 9:24-27), just as the writer to the Hebrews commands them to "run with endurance" (Heb. 12:1). With proper discernment, we can admire honorable, excellent (Phil. 4:8) sports competition, but not if we are focused on the financial payoff for ourselves.

CONCLUSION

ARPA Canada has more articles on its site about recent provincial responses

to sports betting (in Alberta and Ontario), but we do not need to wait for the government to react (wisely or unwisely) to the rise in sports betting to make up our minds. We do not want to test God by placing even small bets, thinking that we can beat temptation. We also shouldn't want to take advantage of the weakness of others by gaining their money without working for it. Instead of trying to make the game more interesting – whether pinball or polo – let us "flee youthful passions" (2 Tim. 2:22) and follow the example of Christ:

"We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself..." (Rom. 15:1-3a). **RP**

MAN UP:

ARPA LEADERBOARDS AND THE CALL TO COURAGEOUS ACTION

by Paul Lawton and Naomi Meerstra

We live in a time of deep confusion about truth, morality, identity, and even the basic purpose of life. Many young people today are unanchored, unsure of what faithfulness looks like in the world around them. As Francis Schaeffer noted, “Modern man has both feet firmly planted in mid-air.” But following Christ is not just about holding the right beliefs in private. It means living those beliefs out boldly, in public, and without compromise.

God calls His people to bear witness to the truth in every sphere of life, including the political realm, where laws are made, values are shaped, and the vulnerable are either protected or ignored. Young people are not exempt from this calling. Scripture gives us examples like Daniel in Babylon, David facing Goliath, and Timothy in the early church – young men who stood firm in the face of pressure, hostility, or fear.

That same spirit of faithful action is exactly what ARPA’s Leaderboards competition aims to cultivate. Over the past school year, students across Canada have stepped up by writing letters, hosting events, engaging with elected

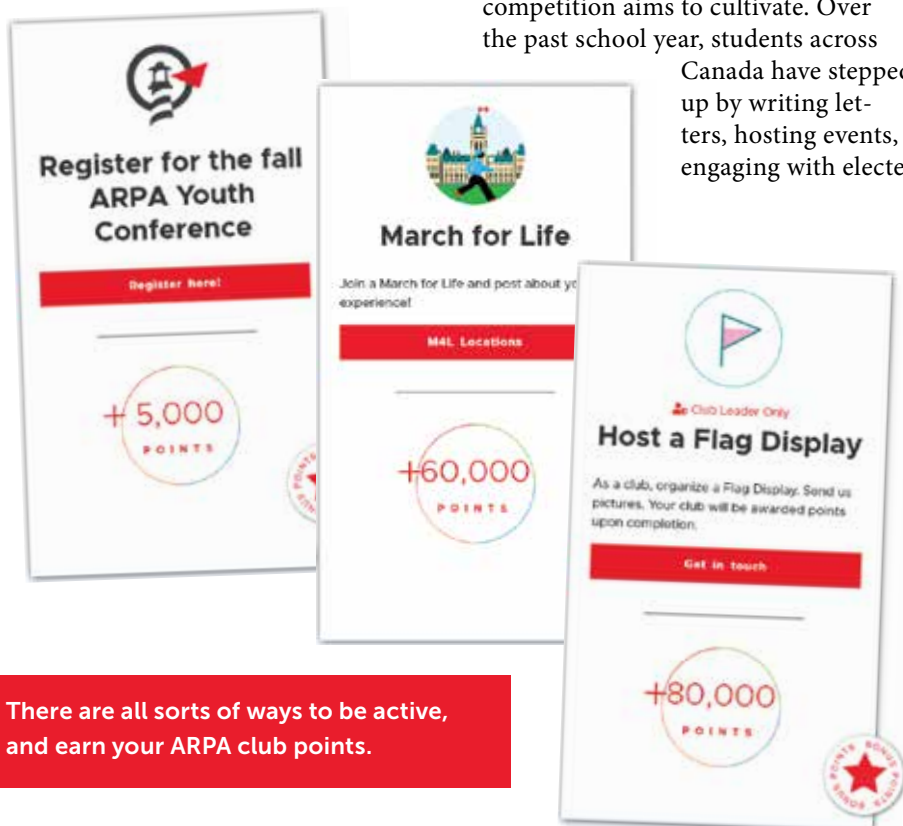
officials, and standing for life and truth in their communities. Their efforts are a reminder that Christian youth can be courageous, creative, and committed to something far greater than themselves.

This article highlights what they did and why it matters. In particular, it takes note of a striking feature from this year’s competition: the individual winners at the top of the Leaderboard were all young men. In a culture where male leadership is often dismissed or diminished, that’s worth celebrating. More than that, it invites us to consider what godly leadership actually looks like, and how we can raise up the next generation to embrace it.

WHAT IS ARPA LEADERBOARDS?

ARPA Leaderboards is a national student competition that turns political action into a hands-on, community-based challenge. It’s designed to encourage Reformed high school and homeschool students to bring a Christian witness into the public square, and not just in theory, but in practice.

Throughout the school year, students form ARPA clubs – these are usually based in Christian schools or homeschool co-ops – and then choose real-world political or cultural actions to carry out together. These actions include things like organizing pro-life flag displays, writing letters to MPs or editors, meeting with local representatives, collecting donations for pregnancy care centers, or educating others through public events. Each completed action earns points,



There are all sorts of ways to be active, and earn your ARPA club points.



Speaking up for the unborn in Ottawa, Toronto, and Smithers.

and photos and reports are posted on the Leaderboards website. There are prizes both for individual students and for school clubs, but the real reward is learning how to serve Christ with courage and clarity in public life.

While Leaderboards encourages competition, its deeper goal is to encourage young people to take initiative and speak with clarity in the public square. By combining teamwork, creativity, and accountability, it helps young people gain confidence and conviction as they speak out on issues of justice, life, and truth. And it makes political engagement less abstract – less something “for us adults later” – and more of a concrete expression of public obedience to Christ here and now.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS YEAR

From September to May, students across the country took action that was thoughtful, bold, and often outside their comfort zone. What began for many at an ARPA Youth Conference (where they learned about pro-life advocacy, wrote

postcards, and distributed flyers), soon turned into a steady stream of public witness in their own communities.

One of the most visible efforts was the all-pink flag display in Burlington, Ontario, drawing attention to the injustice of sex-selective abortion. Students from TEACH Home Educators of Brant and Emmanuel Christian High School of Fergus came out to plant flags, engage with passersby, and take down the display afterward. Emmanuel Christian High School went on to host not one but four flag displays throughout the year!

Some actions were deeply relational. Several clubs, including Immanuel Christian School of Winnipeg, organized visits to seniors’ homes, singing, encouraging, and reminding elderly residents of their value and dignity in Christ. Others gathered resources for local pregnancy care centers or raised funds through school-wide initiatives.

Some students stepped into more

direct engagement with public officials. Emmanuel Christian High School met with both their Member of Parliament and newly elected Member of Provincial Parliament to talk about key issues. Mia Vandermaarel of TEACH Home Educators of Brant wrote letters to the editor that were published in the *Toronto Sun*, *Winnipeg Sun*, and *Hamilton Spectator*, helping shape public conversation from a Christian perspective.

Many clubs also came up with entirely original projects. One group from Coaldale Christian School hosted a student-led apologetics night, where students taught their parents the basics of pro-life argumentation... and even cooked dinner for them! Another group, involved in ARPA’s Let Kids Be campaign, set up a roadside sign warning about the harms of gender transition for minors. When the sign was vandalized, students from Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School returned late at night to repair and re-install it.



Immanuel Christian School students singing at a seniors' home.



Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School students getting the message out with a "Let Kids Be" sign.



Emmanuel Christian High School students meeting with their local Member of Parliament.

In a time when many young men are uncertain about their role or place, we saw a few step forward – not perfectly, but faithfully.

Not every action was large-scale, but each one mattered. Students wrote pro-life messages with sidewalk chalk for people to see along public pathways. Others knit baby hats (each one representing a life lost to abortion) and sent them to Parliament. Stickers with clear, hopeful pro-life messages appeared on cars, lockers, and backpacks.

Taken together, these efforts showed that faithfulness isn't about age, comfort, or platform. It's about showing up, speaking out, and putting your beliefs into action – even when no one is watching.

THE MEN ON THE LEADERBOARD

"The world cries for men who are strong: strong in conviction, strong to lead, to stand, to suffer."

– Elisabeth Elliot

One of the most striking details from this year's competition was the individual leaderboard. At the top were three young men: Evan Roth, James Thalen, and Asher Vandermaarel. These weren't just occasional contributors; they were consistent, committed, and quietly courageous.

Evan registered for an ARPA Youth Conference in the fall, participated in the *March for Life*, visited a seniors' home, handed out *Let Kids Be* flyers, and used sidewalk chalk to spread the

We Need a Law message. He also wrote postcards to MPs and MLAs, took part in several flag displays, and repeated most of these actions more than once. James and Asher took on similar efforts, showing the same kind of persistence and dedication over the course of the school year.

In a time when male leadership is often absent or dismissed, these young men modeled something countercultural: initiative, responsibility, and public conviction rooted in their Christian faith. They didn't act alone. Like most students in the Leaderboards program, they had guidance from a teacher or club leader, and encouragement from the ARPA staff along the way. But what set them apart was their willingness to take initiative. They followed through, again and again, often going beyond what was expected. They acted faithfully, consistently, and with conviction, because they believed it mattered.

This kind of leadership matters. In many of our churches, we're seeing fewer men entering the ministry and fewer desiring to serve as elders and deacons. And while ARPA's local adult chapters across the country continue to thrive, many still see greater involvement from women than men. That's not cause for despair, but it is a reminder of how valuable it is to see young men stepping into public responsibility with clarity and courage.

Evan, James, and Asher are reminders that faithfulness doesn't require a title or a platform. It requires conviction, courage, and the willingness to be counted.

A BRIEF BIBLICAL CASE FOR MALE LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC LIFE

The Bible presents a consistent pattern: men are called to take initiative, accept responsibility, and lead with humility and courage – not just in the home and church, but also in the broader public realm. From the beginning, Adam was placed in the garden to “tend and keep it” (Gen. 2:15), a charge that includes cultivation, guardianship, and stewardship. That calling – to bear responsibility for the world God made – echoes throughout redemptive history.

Again and again, we see God raising up men to stand in the public square and confront injustice, call rulers to account, and proclaim His truth:

- Moses stood before Pharaoh, not merely asking for Israel's release, but declaring the sovereign rule of God over kings: “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let My people go’” (Ex. 5:1).
- Nathan confronted King David after his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba, saying, “You are the man!” (2 Sam. 12:7), a courageous act of public accountability.
- Elijah boldly rebuked Ahab for Naboth's murder and Israel's idolatry (1 Kings 21).
- Isaiah stood before kings like Ahaz and Hezekiah, urging trust in the Lord rather than foreign alliances (Is. 7; 37–39).
- Jeremiah warned Zedekiah and the officials of Judah, saying, “O house of David! Thus says the Lord: ‘Execute judgment in the morning...’” (Jer. 21:12), even as he was imprisoned and persecuted for his message.
- Amos condemned Israel's ruling class: “They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly” (Amos 5:10), calling out systemic injustice.
- Micah declared, “Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel... who hate good and love evil” (Micah 3:1–2), directly confronting civic corruption.
- Daniel, serving under pagan kings, boldly interpreted dreams and declared divine judgment: “You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting” (Dan. 5:27).

These men were not grasping for personal gain or prestige. They bore public responsibility because they feared God more than man. Whether they held office or spoke prophetically to those who did, they understood that political power is not evil in itself – it is a tool to be used in submission to God's authority and for the good of others. They spoke with clarity, even when it cost them dearly.

The New Testament carries this same vision of principled courage. Paul exhorts believers: “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). Though the church is not a political body, it is called to form men who will lead well in every sphere of life, including the public square.

This is not a call to control others or seek power for its own sake, but to take initiative with conviction, courage, and a willingness to bear responsibility for the good of others.

What we saw this year in the Leaderboards competition was a glimpse of that calling. In a time when many young men are uncertain about their role or place, we saw a few step forward – not perfectly, but faithfully. And that is something to thank God for, and to build on.

MORE THAN POLITICS: PREPARING FOR LIFELONG ENGAGEMENT

Leaderboards isn't just about winning a prize or checking off action items. It's about planting the seeds of long-term involvement – helping students gain the confidence, skills, and motivation to be engaged Christian citizens well into adulthood.

We often hear from ARPA chapter leaders that they wish more men were actively involved. That gap doesn't close by accident. It closes when young people are shown early that political action is a normal and necessary part of Christian responsibility. Leaderboards helps do exactly that. It gives students a framework for understanding the issues and a place to start acting on them.

The hope isn't just that they participate for a season. It's that they carry these habits into the rest of their lives by joining ARPA chapters, meeting with elected officials, and encouraging others in their church community to speak up. If we want faithful, engaged adults tomorrow, we need to invest in opportunities for them to participate today.

That's the kind of momentum we want to carry forward – not just into next year's competition, but into a lifetime of public faithfulness.

THE WORK ISN'T FINISHED

This year's Leaderboards competition gave us a glimpse of what's possible when young Christians take action. Some wrote letters. Others planted flags. A few stood in front of MPs or in front of their entire school. And at the top of the individual leaderboard, a handful of young men took initiative, showing maturity, discipline, and a willingness to lead.

But this isn't just about one season or a few standout students. It's about what comes next.

Canada doesn't just need more political activity. It needs principled, faithful leadership – rooted in truth and directed toward the good of our neighbors. It needs Christians who understand that public responsibility is part of their calling and who are prepared to act accordingly. As André Schutten and Michael Wagner write in the Second Edition of *A Christian Citizenship Guide*:

“When it comes to political action, if not we, dear Christian citizen, then who? Who else would have the courage? Who else would know what to do? Who else would know how to fix the problem? We are a nation lost, without any sense of reality or morality. Canada needs a compass and a guide. The compass exists: it is the Word of God. The guides to read the compass are the faithful members of the church, scattered like leaven (Gal. 5:9) throughout all the institutions and spheres of Canadian culture and society and applying the truth and beauty and goodness of the Word of God in every sphere of life.”

Leaderboards will return in September, Lord willing. Until then, we celebrate those who stepped up and we invite others to join them. The competition may end each spring, but our calling as Christians does not. ^{RP}

Paul Lawton is ARPA's Director of Grassroots Action, while Naomi Meerstra is ARPA's Eastern Grassroots Coordinator. Pictures provided by ARPA Canada.



Emmanuel Christian High School students busy putting on another flag display.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

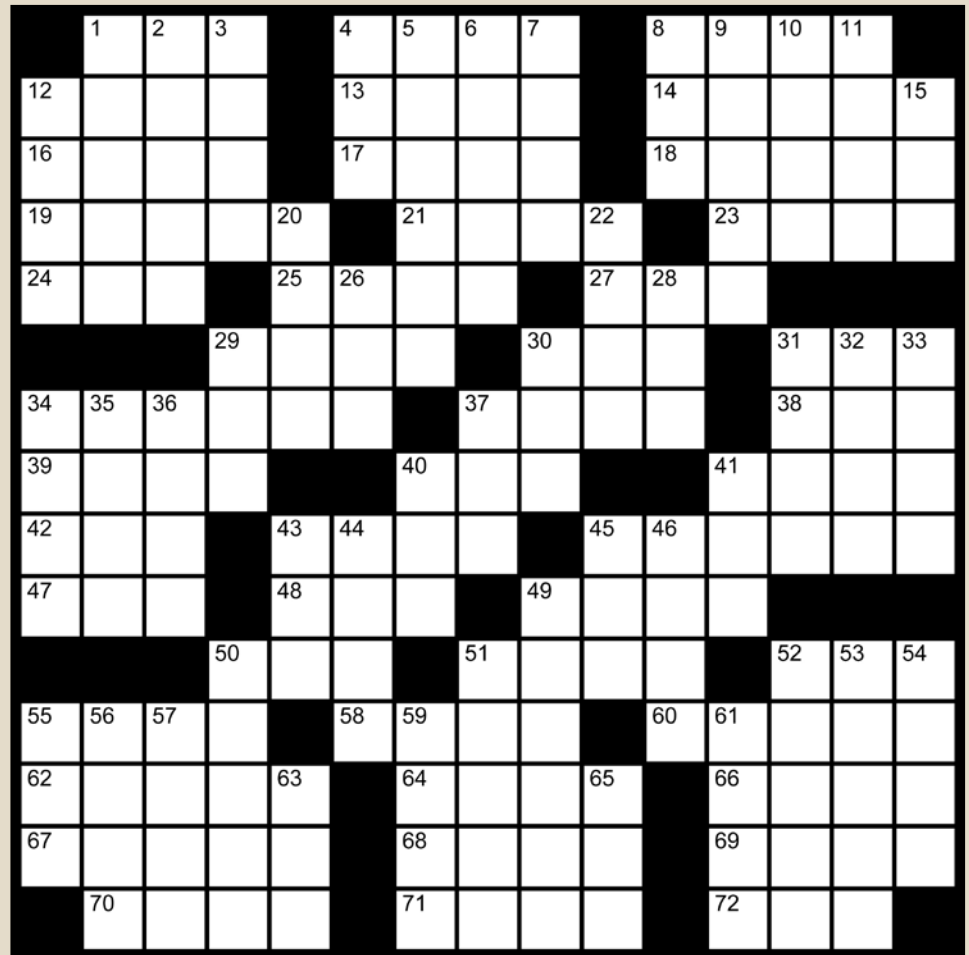
JULY - AUGUST 2025

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 72.

ACROSS

1. "ever full of ____ and green" (Psalm 92)
4. Calendar abbreviation
8. Disfigurement; discoloration; defacement
12. Green "superfood" vegetable
13. Connection between pair of wheels
14. One of 70 working with Moses (Ex. 24)
16. "who had practiced magic ____" (Acts 19)
17. Carpe ____ (Latin for *Seize the Day*)
18. "I trust __ ____, not even myself." (Stalin)
19. Web portal named from *Gulliver's Travels*
21. "Everyone who ____ the water" (Judges 7)
23. ____ on a log (celery-based snack)
24. An exclamation of surprise
25. "when you ____ trials" (James 1)
27. Material for idol or fuel for fire (Is. 44)
29. Abbreviation in engine performance facts
30. Sports league acronym with a World Series
31. Acronym on driver's license
34. "A ____ on duty has no friends."
37. What a pigeon or dove does
38. Aggregate; raw material; unrefined earth
39. "Are you impressed?" "I'm all ____!"
40. "Are you impressed?" "____!"
41. Indigenous people in central Canada
42. The kind of bark a dachshund makes
43. "they took ____ from the kiln" (Ex. 9)
45. What Churchill had to be in World War II
47. What 31 Across tells someone about you
48. Edmonton CFL player
49. "...saying, 'What does this ____?'" (Acts 2)
50. "He is not afraid of ____ news" (Ps. 112)
51. How to get a living or your stripes
52. Cereal grain that a Quaker would love
55. It's coming back to me now...
58. Animal droppings; random verbal droppings
60. Gray/brown cat streaked with dark stripes
62. Wavering cry of sheep, goat, or calf
64. "Johnny Got ____" (Tom Paxton song)
66. "____ with those who ____" (Rom. 12)
67. Pack animal in the *Grand Canyon Suite*
68. Very dry, scrambling through part of *desert*
69. Capital city of Norway
70. "we... are one ____ in Christ" (Rom. 12)
71. "like a ____ planted by streams" (Ps. 1)
72. ____ Paul (name of guitarist—and guitar)



DOWN

1. "and ____ shall have a son." (Rom. 9)
2. But (in short form)
3. Mexican currency
4. "Why is your face ____?" (Neh. 1)
5. "sojourners and ____" (1 Pet. 2)
6. Fold in a curtain or dress
7. Short-term replacement worker (short form)
8. "Joel, the ____ of Pethuel" (Joel 1)
9. "let him have your ____" (Matt. 5)
10. Hebrew for "lord" (root of *Adonai*)
11. Tenant's big budget item
12. Decisive defeat (boxing slang)
15. Abbreviation for where you live
20. Bad sign
22. Music or song for one
26. "____ of Destruction" (1965 protest song)
28. Abbreviation for stomach muscles
29. Fix something in a bad way
30. Fix the lawn in a good way
31. Name of a Synod and a Church Order
32. Cookie with something in the middle
33. Christian Arthur Guinness's main product
34. Indigenous people in Mesoamerica
35. King executed by Samuel (1 Sam. 15)
36. James Stewart movie from Alfred Hitchcock
37. Possible sleeping place of a 34 Across
40. Bowl-shaped frying pan
41. "I ____ do anything you ____ do better!"
43. "had sailed across the open ____" (Acts 27)
44. Town between Calgary and Edmonton
45. Poetic contraction to get over with
46. What raving people also do
49. Sensible; responsible; levelheaded; reliable
50. It's suitable for messages or bulletins.
51. "like a lion ____ to tear" (Ps. 17)
52. Dangerously overweight
53. Belonging to Cain's brother
54. Mistake
55. Diminish; dwindle; decline
56. Weapon wielded in Jesus' arrest (Mark 14)
57. Someone homegrown, tragic, or unsung
59. "for my clothing they ____ lots" (Ps. 22)
61. Military acronym for unauthorized vacation
63. Ball, doll, remote-controlled car, or yoyo
65. Expression before someone's maiden name

CHRISTIANS DON'T PRAY

by John Barach Sr.

Who says that Christians don't pray? Of course, Christians pray, don't they? Isn't prayer one of the essential characteristics of Christian life? Every time the family sits at a meal someone prays asking God to bless the food. When they go to church, the preacher prays and people bow their heads and join him in prayer, don't they? What kind of nonsense is this to say that Christians don't pray?

Wow, what a way to start an article! Let me see if I can explain.

It is Friday evening and a missionary has come to your church to present the situation in Upper Castelia. He says that the national leaders are in some distress, the people are poor and mistreated, the missionaries are understaffed, and the government is refusing to grant visas to new missionaries. They are also having difficulty with their financial support. The people need Bibles, food, medical help, and national pastors. But his main concern is the need for prayer for the people. He asks the congregation to pray for him and his family as they will be returning to Upper Castelia next month.

The appeal strikes a chord in your heart and mind. You say to yourself, "By God's grace, I will pray."

As the pastor closes the service, he mentions the need to pray for "our sister Martha" in the hospital with cancer.

After the service you shake hands with the missionary and give his wife a hug. You whisper to them, "I'll pray for you."

You get into your car and drive through traffic rehearsing in your mind the words of the missionary. You are a careful driver but there are so many bad drivers who speed or forget to signal. And some guy seems to be glued to your back bumper. Aloud, you say, "Why aren't there any police around to arrest him for tailgating? Drivers these days need to take a refresher course on driving courtesy."

When you arrive home a little frustrated, you have things to do. The kids have to get to bed on time because Saturday is a busy day. After you tuck them in you can relax. This will give you some time to check a few things on Facebook.

A few hours later, you pull yourself away from the computer and turn on the television evening news. Looks like taxes are going to increase. Cost of living is up. There was an accident on the major highway. An offender was released on parole after serving only half of his sentence. The fire crews were called out to a blaze on Main Street. There's a hint of some impending scandal in the government. The sports scores show that your team is not doing nearly as well as it should. Ahh, here's the weather. Tomorrow is going to be pretty much the same as today with the slight possibility of precipitation.

After the news you tidy up the place, put the few empty snack dishes into the sink, yawn, and get into bed ... too tired to pray.



Saturday is another busy day. The children are up early. Bob needs a ride to sports practice and Barb needs to go to swim class. The Thompsons are coming over for the barbecue. You're too busy to pray.

On Sunday morning you rush around getting the family ready for church. During the service, your pastor mentions the good meeting last Friday with the Upper Castelia missionaries. Yes, you silently agree, "We need to pray for them." Apart from church, Sunday's routine doesn't differ significantly from the other days.

You said you would pray for the missionaries, but you haven't. You are irritated by bad drivers, but you don't pray for them. You are disturbed by what you hear and see on the news, but you don't pray. You complain about the government, but you don't pray. Since Martha wasn't in church, you forgot all about her.

And I say, "Christians don't pray."

I hate to say it (having been a pastor, now retired) but even some pastors don't pray. They lead in prayer in church services, they pray at the bedside of suffering people, and they promise to pray for you. But with all the cares of the church, they don't spend time praying in their offices or in their homes.

Again I say, "Christians don't pray."

Jesus prayed. Many times He went off alone to pray. The disciples watched the Lord pray and came to the realization that compared to Him they really didn't pray. They heard the self-righteous prayers of the Pharisees, but Jesus prayed differently. They came to Jesus with a simple request: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). They wanted a life of prayer.

The Lord's response was just as simple as their request. In the Sermon on the Mount, He told them to avoid the way that their leaders prayed. Then He gave them a template for prayer. You have probably memorized it. "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not

lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matt. 6:9-13, NKJV).

The ancient Greeks argued about which was more important: form or content. To a thirsty person, form without content is like a cup with no water. Content without form is like a splash of water in the face. Both form and content (cup and water) are necessary. When it comes to a life of prayer, the same is true. The words and requests are the content, but the structure is the form.

A prayer list needs some structure. The Lord's answer to the request of the disciples provides us with a very comprehensive structure.

- 1) "*Hallowed be Your name.*" Begin with exalting God. When Jesus died on the cross, "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matt. 27:51). And now we who believe in Jesus Christ have free access to God. We can approach God's throne of grace boldly to "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Prayer, therefore, begins with adoration of God as your heavenly Father who invites you into His presence.
- 2) "*Your kingdom come.*" Pray for the extension of the Lordship of Christ in the lives of your relatives, friends, and neighbors. Pray for missionary work around the world. Be specific.
- 3) "*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" God has set leaders over us so that His will might be done here. He has given the church pastors and elders to give spiritual guidance. Pray for them. We are to be subject to the civil authorities, too. Pray for teachers, police, firemen, wardens, medical people, employers, and political leaders.
- 4) "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" Notice that our needs are not first in the list and it is not "my" need but "our" need. What are the daily needs of your family, church, friends, co-workers, and neighbors? The elderly need safety and health. Parents need wisdom.
- 5) "*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*" In the same way that we

forgive others, we want God to forgive us. Remember the story of the steward who would not forgive the man who was under him although he himself had been forgiven a vast amount (Matt. 18:23-35). The man who has truly been forgiven cannot help but to forgive others. "Lord, forgive me for my sin."

- 6) "*Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*" This is a prayer for spiritual safety as well as physical safety for you and all those you know. We ask to be kept from temptation, including the temptation to waste our time that keeps us from our prayer time. Your temptation may be different from mine, so ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance for spiritual victory.

Early in our marriage, we spent a few days with my wife's parents. Her father was a successful pastor. I asked my mother-in-law, "What is Dad's secret?" She said, "I have patched the knees of his long johns many times, but I have never patched the seat."

On a personal note, every day for the 60 years of our marriage, we have spent at least 30 minutes each evening as our devotional time. I will read about two chapters of the Bible aloud and my wife will follow along in her Bible, then she will pray aloud. The next night it's her turn to read two chapters and I pray. We have read the Bible through cover-to-cover many times in many versions. We have several pages of prayer requests. Each page follows the pattern of the Lord's prayer. May I encourage you to turn off the computer and the TV half an hour before bedtime. Dedicate that time to reading aloud and praying.

I started this article with the words, "Christians don't pray" but after reading what I have written, I hope you can say, "Some Christians don't pray, but with God's help, I pray." RP

John Barach has been a pastor and Bible college professor and still runs a biblical Greek tutorial website at GreekDoc.com. He and his wife look to celebrate their 60th anniversary in August.

OUR FOREVER HOME

Reflections on finding permanence from someone who has lived in 27 homes.

by Barb Bergmann

*Home is Where the Heart Is.
God Bless Our Home.
Home Sweet Home.*

Have you seen or heard these slogans lately? Maybe on a plaque or as an embroidered craft on your grandmother's wall? Maybe on a hand-painted sign? Or how about this. You're searching real estate online and a beautiful property is described as "your new forever home!" Recently, I heard a Christian podcaster use that term – *forever home* – in reference to where she was living. It made me think a little deeper about how we bandy those words about. Perhaps a little carelessly?

GOD UNDERSTANDS

Although the idea of finding the perfect place to live is universally appealing, what should our perspective as Christians be? We're all going to die one day so the concept of finding a permanent place on this planet is fundamentally flawed. So where is our *forever home*? As believers we know that "our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

And yet God understands our earthly desire for home here and now. He promised the Israelites that one day they would enter a land flowing with milk and honey. They would build houses and dwell securely.

Psalms 132:13-14 says, "For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place; 'This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it'" [emphasis added].

If God desired an earthly dwelling place, then surely, He understands our desire for one. How do we live with our own

intense longing and need for an earthly home, knowing that this planet ultimately is not where we will spend eternity? The conundrum set before us is to create loving spaces where we can raise families, practice the art of hospitality, and honor God... all the while remembering the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-21:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Did you catch that last part? Sounds a lot like *Home is Where the Heart Is*, doesn't it?

My parents did an amazing job of keeping the tension between our earthly and heavenly homes foremost in the hearts and minds of their five children. Whenever we drove home from an afternoon of shopping, a visit to another family, or our annual camping trip, my mother sang an old-fashioned song...

*'Mid pleasures and palaces though we
may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like
home.*

But she always followed that up with...

*There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar.*

To an impressionable, often sleepy young child, sitting squished between her older siblings in the backseat, that

balance struck home. The yearning for a safe place at the end of a long tiring day became permanently intermingled with the conviction of knowing this world isn't our final abode.

CITIZENSHIP?

Fast forward through the years and I'm in a car again. Over our 40+ years of marriage I've moved many times with my husband and have given a lot of thought to this subject. Each time we moved into a new place, I prayed for God's hand of protection to cover us. Each time we moved out, I learned to hold our earthly possessions lightly, letting go of material things and clinging ever more tightly to heavenly treasures.

My car is parked beside a booth. A uniformed guard perches on a stool inside. "Citizenship?" he asks brusquely.

I'm at the border. Crossing the invisible line between two nations. On my way to visit our daughter who married an American and moved there fifteen years ago. Every time I'm asked that inevitable question, I want to answer "my citizenship is in heaven." But then I remember that the agent posing the question has the authority to lawfully detain me or send me on my way. I dutifully answer "Canadian."

How much more can God, who has the ultimate authority, welcome us one glorious day into His everlasting kingdom... or banish us from His presence. Our forever home is not and never can be here on earth. One day, at the brink of eternity, we will all stand before His judgment throne, and our citizenship will either be in heaven or hell. Let's be diligent to lay up our treasures where they rightfully belong. In our true forever home. **RP**



With my parents and siblings on the driveway of my second home in Virgil, Ontario in August, 1974 just before heading out on a road trip to visit relatives in Alberta. Singing was a favorite pastime along the way! (I'm the little girl in red standing next to my mother in the green dress.)



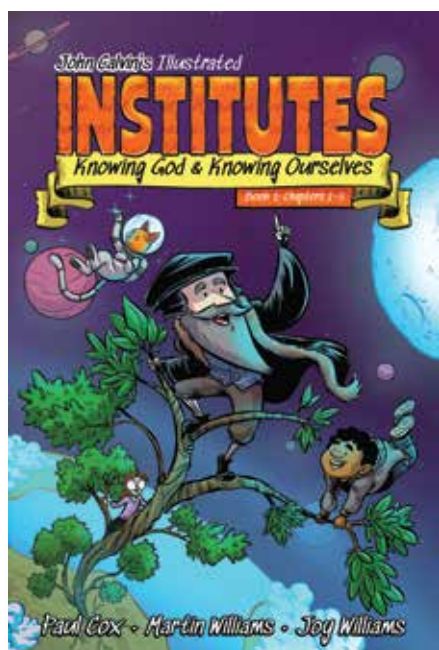
In front of my first earthly home in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Little did I know back in June of 1968 that this would be the first of 27 homes I would live in!



In 1984, as a newlywed living in my third earthly home, I embroidered this slogan which has hung in every place we've lived in since then.

by Jon Dykstra

CALVIN AS



JOHN CALVIN'S ILLUSTRATED INSTITUTES: KNOWING GOD & KNOWING OURSELVES BOOK 1 – CHAPTERS 1-5

BY MARTIN WILLIAMS AND JOY WILLIAMS
ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL COX
2025 / 82 PAGES

Have you always meant to read Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and just never gotten off the starting blocks? You're not alone, and help has arrived! Calvin's weightiest work has been transformed into a much more accessible, but still substantive, comic book. Or, rather, a good start has been had.

Husband and wife writers Martin and Joy Williams have teamed up with illustrator Paul Cox (one of his Reftoon comics can be found on page 71) on this ambitious project. In their first book they've covered the *Institutes'* first 5 chapters... which leaves them with 75 more chapters to cover in future editions.

Our guide is John Calvin himself, along with three companions: Theo is a boy, Geneva a girl, and the cute cat tagging along is named Luther. There isn't a story, exactly. Theo comes across Calvin (and cat Luther) while studying on his computer. And somehow Calvin steps right out of the computer screen and they start talking about the nature of "true knowledge."

To give you a taste of what's discussed, here's Calvin explaining that a true knowledge of God – *really knowing God* – is more than knowing facts about Him:

"Think about this: Satan knows a lot about God and even trembles (James 2:19)... [but] he doesn't love God. That's why fear without love isn't true piety and love without fear isn't true piety either. God's children, however, both fear and love Him at the same time."

This is a mighty abridgment of what Calvin says in his original, but it does cut to the heart of it. And each of the five chapters ends with 10 questions to aid in reflection, and with an encouragement to read the original to dive even deeper.

A few of the other issues covered include:

- How we can only really understand ourselves when we know God
- How a just God can judge people who have never heard of Him
- Why there are no true atheists but there are so many idols



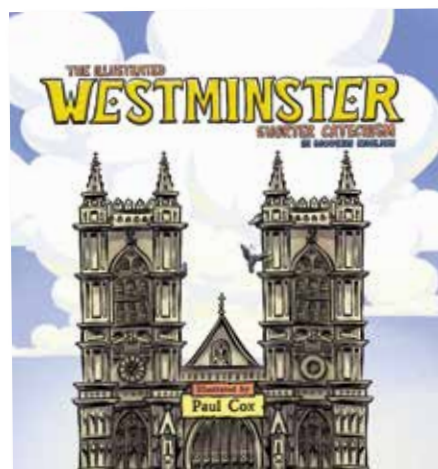
A COMIC

So who is this for? Anyone who's wanted to study the *Institutes* – because we all know there is gold about our God to be mined there! – but who is understandably intimidated by the 1700+ page original. This is a way to start. And there is gold even here too. The nuggets are smaller, but Calvin loved our Lord, and that comes out even in this abridged form. These *Illustrated Institutes* really are for everyone... and for some it is going to be the perfect on-ramp to tackling the much bigger version (and for you, we've got recommendations on exactly what version you should get here: ReformedPerspective.ca/Institutes).

That said, even as this does a fantastic job of simplifying and illustrating deep truths about God, it still isn't kiddish. The cartoon pictures might give the impression that this is aimed at young teens, and inside of a Bible or catechism class, 12 and up *could* tackle it. But this is still Calvin – meaty rather than milk – so not a lot of 13-15 year-olds are going to work through this if they aren't being made to.

But an older crowd? Oh yeah. For all the well-meaning Reformed folk out there who've bought a copy of the *Institutes* but it's lying on the “to be read much later” pile, this will be such a fun way to learn what all the hype is about. It's been almost 500 years since Calvin's first edition of the *Institutes* was published, and there is a reason it is still being read today. Now we can all find out why!

And if you enjoy this effort, you'll be interested to know that Paul Cox has also crafted *The Illustrated Westminster Shorter Catechism*. The illustrations are Cox's same friendly style, though this is more picture book than comic – there are no characters taking us from one page to the next, and no dialogue – and the Catechism's original 17th-century English has been lightly modernized. This could be a great tool for a family to work through the Catechism's 107 Questions and Answers together. ^{RP}



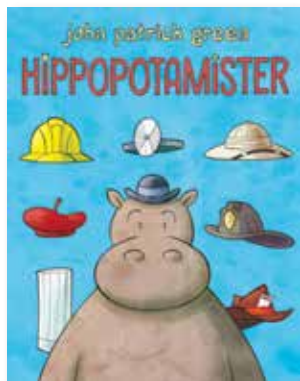
BOOKS

THE BEST COMICS FOR KIDS

ReformedPerspective.ca/books

HIPPOPOTAMISTER

BY JOHN PATRICK GREEN
2016 / 88 PAGES



Hippo and Red Panda live in the City Zoo, which is falling down around them. So Red Panda decides to leave the zoo and get a job among the humans. Every now and again he comes back to the zoo to tell Hippo that "Life outside the zoo is great!"

While Red Panda is always enthused, he's also always holding a different job whenever he reports back. When Hippo joins him on the outside we discover Red Panda is great at lining up new jobs, but not so great at keeping them. Every day it's a new job, and a new and funny way for Red Panda to mess up and get himself and Hippo fired again.

Hippo, though, turns out to be quite skilled at all sorts of jobs, and after trying on all sorts of hats, realizes that he might be just what his failing zoo is looking for. Maybe *he* can run it!

The only caution: Red Panda catches a mermaid that may or may not be topless – we can't tell because she has her arms tightly crossed. However, this is the only picture that is even remotely risqué.

Any child in the early grades will enjoy this. Also good are Green's *Kitten Construction Company* and *A Bridge Too Fur*.

LEMON BIRD CAN HELP!

BY PAULINA GANUCHEAU
2022 / 112 PAGES



Lemon Bird is a lemon who is also a bird, and if you think that's odd, you ain't seen nothing yet.

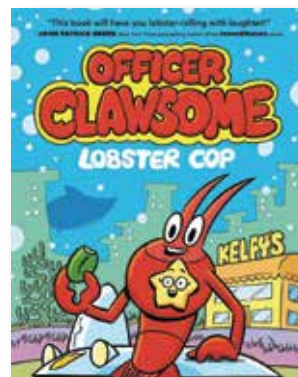
Her adventure begins when she comes to the aid of a "pupkin" – a puppy pumpkin – who needs some looking after. This is a wonderfully bizarre tale, with all sorts of fruit critters, some of which are "people" in that they can talk like Lemon Bird, and some of which are just yipping animals like the pupkin.

The few humans that show up are of mostly peculiar hues – purple, green, and blue. While the rainbow hues, and blue hair, had me wondering if there was going to be something LGBT-themed, nothing like that happens. This is just good, clean, incredibly-colorful fun. While the humans talk, they do so in a language that Lemon Bird can't understand... which makes sense, since animals don't much understand us either.

The main theme of the story is about how Lemon Bird helps out another citrus bird, Keylime, even though Keylime had just been making fun of her. It's an example of how kindness can sometimes turn a bully into a friend. A valuable moral, for a unique book, though parents may also want to discuss with their kids what to do with bullies that don't respond to kindness. Ideal for ages 5 to 10.

OFFICER CLAWSOME

BY BRIAN "SMITTY" SMITH AND CHRIS GIARRUSSO
2023 / 238 PAGES



In the opening scene a fish peddler (the fish is the peddler, not the goods) calls out "Fresh fruit here! Get your fresh..." only to have something "ZOOOM!" past and purée all his oranges and apples. Momentarily at a loss, the peddler looks down at the soupy mess, only to, one panel later, start smiling again calling out, "Fresh fruit juice here! Get your fresh fruit juice."

Comic genius? Not on its own, but just like a good dad-joke (are there any other kind?) the hilarity builds with every one you layer on top. And there are oodles here, including some awful/awesome puns, starting with the hero of our story, the lobster cop "Officer Clawsome," called "Clawful" by the villains he arrests.

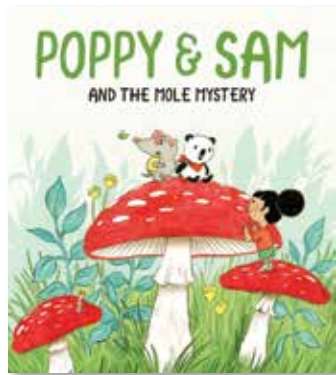
Like any good cop/buddy flick, Clawsome has a partner, the starfish Stariana who serves as both his badge of office, riding around on his chest, and as his ninja throwing star when needed. When the town's favorite bakery goes missing – the whole building, staff and all, are just gone – the twosome have to take on a whole host of underwater villains.

This is good clean, very silly fun. The sequel, *Officer Clawsome: Crime Across Time*, has some *implicit* evolutionary assumptions that might be reason enough to get the first and hold off on the second.

POPPY & SAM AND THE MOLE MYSTERY

BY CATHON

2019 / 42 PAGES



A little girl, Poppy, and her talking panda friend Sam are either very tiny, or they live in a land of giant people-sized mushrooms and strawberries. Whatever the answer, this is a charming book, with the twosome setting out to find their friend mole's lost glasses. Along the way they discover all sorts of other lost treasures, start a "lost and found" and provide a happy ending for mole and the many others who now have what they were missing. It is a kind, whimsical story.

Two sequels are fun. *Poppy & Sam and the search for sleep* (2020, 42 pages) and *Poppy & Sam and the hunt for jam* (2023, 44 pages) both deal with hibernation, the first with falling asleep, and in the second Sam waking up early with an urge for some rosehip jam but the ingredients are still hiding under the snow. He gets a little help from some friends, including a full-size bear – why is the bear the right size, and panda Sam the size of a mouse? Only caution: Sam wonders where his "darn pot" got to.

Another sequel, *Poppy & Sam and the leaf thief* is a bit too peculiar for me – the twosome are trying to track down which animal is eating their friend, Basil, a basil plant (friends really shouldn't eat friends).

SUPER PANCAKE

BY MEGAN WAGNER

LLOYD & ABHI ALWAR

2023 / 170 PAGES

Every character here comes from the most important meal of the day.

Our humble hero is Peggy Pancake, who begins our story by missing the school bus. Not the best start to a day. When she gets to Winifred Waffle Elementary, a new kid, a croissant, is getting picked on by the "bacon bullies" and when Peggy stands up for him they become friends.

Things take a dramatic turn when Dr. Egg, the town's leading scientist, gives a lecture to the kids, and the bacon bullies snag a vial from his backpack and put it in Peggy's lunch. What they meant for ill, gives Peggy superpowers. But she didn't see what the bullies did, so Peggy doesn't know *why* she can suddenly fly.



Eventually she has to face off against the villain of the piece, Dr. Breakfast Sandwich and his henchtoast. Fortunately, she has a sidekick to help her, Luc, the croissant.

Cautions would be a little breakfast food violence as Peggy beats back the bullies, and Peggy not being as forthcoming as she should be with her parents about her superhero identity. I don't like the idea of kids keeping any secrets from their parents. Still, it is a minor element, as she did tell them right away when she first got her powers; they just didn't believe her.

A 2024 sequel, *Super Pancake and the Mini Muffin Mayhem*, has Peggy taking on a babysitting gig. But even with the help of two friends, she's still outnumbered by her five mini muffin charges. And when a mad – or at least madly curious – scientist invents a mega laser that turns one of the mini muffins really, really big, it'll take a Super Pancake to set things right. It's another goofy, innocent adventure.





FUN IS SOMETHING YOU MAKE

11 tips for family road trips

by Holly Braendlein

"Bored" is a curse word in our house. Say that word, and my mom is liable to wash your mouth out with soap.

Because here's the thing: boredom is just a socially acceptable word for *ingratitude*, for being discontent with the things God gives us. Your kids have plenty of toys and activities to occupy themselves, so why are they coming to you looking for something to do?

Maybe it's because we tend to think the toys are the ones doing all the work, the ones keeping kids from getting bored, when in reality, the child is the one bringing the fun. As with everything else, this is a heart issue. This is an attitude that needs changing.

And that is all well and good if you are in your home, surrounded by possibilities during a normal day. But let's say you're in a situation where you literally have nothing to do, like waiting in the waiting room of the hospital, or driving six long hours to visit relatives, or standing in a long line at the grocery store. How do you teach them to occupy

themselves? How do you ban boredom from your family?

It is fair to say that my family and I have done a lot of driving. We have always been the one family that is farther away from relatives, from town, from church, and from practically everything, so we have had to learn how to pass the time well!

It bears repeating, so I'll say again that with the tips and suggestions I have for you the key to the success of all remains gratitude. Without gratitude, without recognizing that God has given you the exact moment you are in and equipped you to delight in it, you are waiting for the game to entertain you, which almost always ends in boredom. But if you enter everything with gratitude, it's like sitting with your hands outstretched, just waiting for God to bless you with that present you know you're getting. And the gift is ten times better when received in thankfulness.

With that said, here is a list of things that have helped my siblings and me numerous times.

WOULD YOU RATHER?

A simple game where one player makes up two scenarios, and each of you say aloud which you would rather do if given the choice. Questions can be as wild or as ridiculous as can be! Encourage the players to explain the pros and cons of each situation, and the hows and whys.

I have played this very recently, and my brother gave the following scenario: "Would you rather be on the very top of a skyscraper, or below the earth approximately the same height as the skyscraper?" Personally, I'd choose the skyscraper, because there's no oxygen the deeper into the dirt you go, but my brother was assuming there would be air. See how many digressions there can be within one topic?

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS

A classic that is highly underrated! Play multiple rounds high speed, and your kids will dissolve into giggles. (Maybe it's only me...)

We have learned a trick to the game from watching YouTuber Mark Rober.

You have rock, paper and scissors in a row in your head. Let's say you start with rock. If you win with rock, you move to right, which would be paper. If you win with paper, you continue with scissors. Now, if you lost with rock, you go to the left, which would mean you would play scissors. If you lose with scissors, you play paper. This is a tested strategy by Mark Rober that, if followed, will help you win a disproportionate percentage of time. But if you want to have plain fun without all the technical junk, just play the game as you normally would. It's still fun either way.

20 QUESTIONS

Definitely a go-to for us, because each person comes up with the weirdest things to think about! Each person has 20 questions to ask the one who has the topic in their head. If I'm thinking about spiders, well, you have 20 questions to find that out. No cheating! No giving hints!

And make your topic as clear as possible. I once picked "oblivion" as a topic, and my siblings were infuriated because they couldn't figure it out. It's literally nothingness! You *can't* guess that! (Which is why I chose it.)

MAKE EVERYTHING A COMPETITION

I cannot begin to relate how many things my siblings and I turned into a competition! Who can leave their bare hand on the icy car window the longest? Who can hold their water bottle at arm's length the longest? Who can make the silliest face? Who can hold their breath the longest? And the list goes on! (All of those examples are real competitions that have been hosted in our van on long drives, and all too recently. I participated in them all. In fact, I came up with them. Mad skills, anyone?)

BUGGY FINGERS

What an odd name for such a simple game that can be played anywhere, because everybody I know possesses fingers! Many long hospital stays granted us ample opportunity to play Buggy Fingers. You stick your pointer finger out, and this becomes the head and face of "Buggy," while the rest of the fingers on that hand

act as the legs. Now, the original character, made by my father, was named Artie, and Artie would eat everything in sight, but finding it inedible, would spit it out and grunt, "Needs salt." The future generations of Artie broadened their horizons, and tales were spun surrounding these little misbehaving fingers.

STUFFED ANIMAL ADVENTURES

Grab those stuffed animals, because you'll be needing them here. My older sister and I would place our stuffed animals on the ledge of the windowsill of the car, and pretend they were on a motorcycle. The motorcycle would travel along the scenery that rushed past our windows. Was Kitty Cat about to collide with a barbed wire fence? Well, for pity's sake, JUMP! Once you were over that obstacle, you might have to navigate through a field of smelly cows, and end up on the other side without getting caught by the farmer. So many stories and exciting adventures are at your fingertips here!

SING HYMNS

My whole family loves to sing around the piano, and in fact our parents are trained musicians, so a love for singing runs deep in our veins. We enjoy bringing our church hymnal, the *Cantus Christi*, into the car, and singing in harmony to the various hymns selected, especially the 4-part melodies. It is much like caroling, but not in winter. And not to an audience. So feel free to warble your way through a song. We won't laugh.

COUNT CARS

Who hasn't done this, seriously? My brother is an avid vehicle enthusiast, and he and my little sister began counting how many Teslas they would see on any given drive, because we live in the Seattle area, and Teslas seem to be popular there. There were so many Teslas, we soon got tired of counting them, so we have now moved on to cool and unusual cars, as well as vintage vehicles.

MAKE LANDMARKS

We have driven across Washington State many, many times, and we have come to recognize familiar landmarks

along the way. There's the lonely tractor that's always sitting at the base of a hill; there's the bicycle that is parked by a street sign; there's the company that Grandpa used to work for years ago, before we were born; there's the blue bridge with the American flag mounted on it; there's the train yard, where we count how many trains' lights are on. I have such happy memories of those drives, and the excitement of searching for the "landmarks."

MAKE TRADITIONS

As a child, my older sister and I were forever going to the children's hospital in Seattle, and those doctor trips were depressing and no fun in and of themselves, but we made the time fun. There are a couple of tunnels you have to drive through on your way to that specific hospital, and my sister and I, as soon as we entered the tunnel, would suck in our breaths and hold them until the car emerged out the other side. Of course, Dad would slow down on purpose and see how purple he could make our faces by the time we finally could draw a breath.


Another tradition we had was ducking under tunnels, overhead signs, and traffic signals. To signify this, we would shout "Duck!" To signal that it was clear, we would shout "Peacock!"

The point is, make your own fun. With a bit of prodding, and a dreary situation to be placed in, you can come up with a lot of great games and memories that will be treasured for decades, and will hopefully help you survive those long relentless hours with nothing to do.

COUNT IT ALL JOY

I'll say again, how much fun your kids have with these will depend largely on the gratitude they bring. They might not like you for reminding them of this, but they should take even boredom as an opportunity for joy, like the Apostle James says in James 1:2;

"My brethren, count it all joy, when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."

God has given you so many gifts; you just have to use them. 

Mr. Morose went to the doctor,
His check-up was overdue.
He brought all his pills
For his many ills
And waited for the doctor to come through.

A pill for this, a pill for that
He looked at all of them and sighed.
I'm glum, I'm weak
I've got spots on my feet...
Then the doctor came inside.

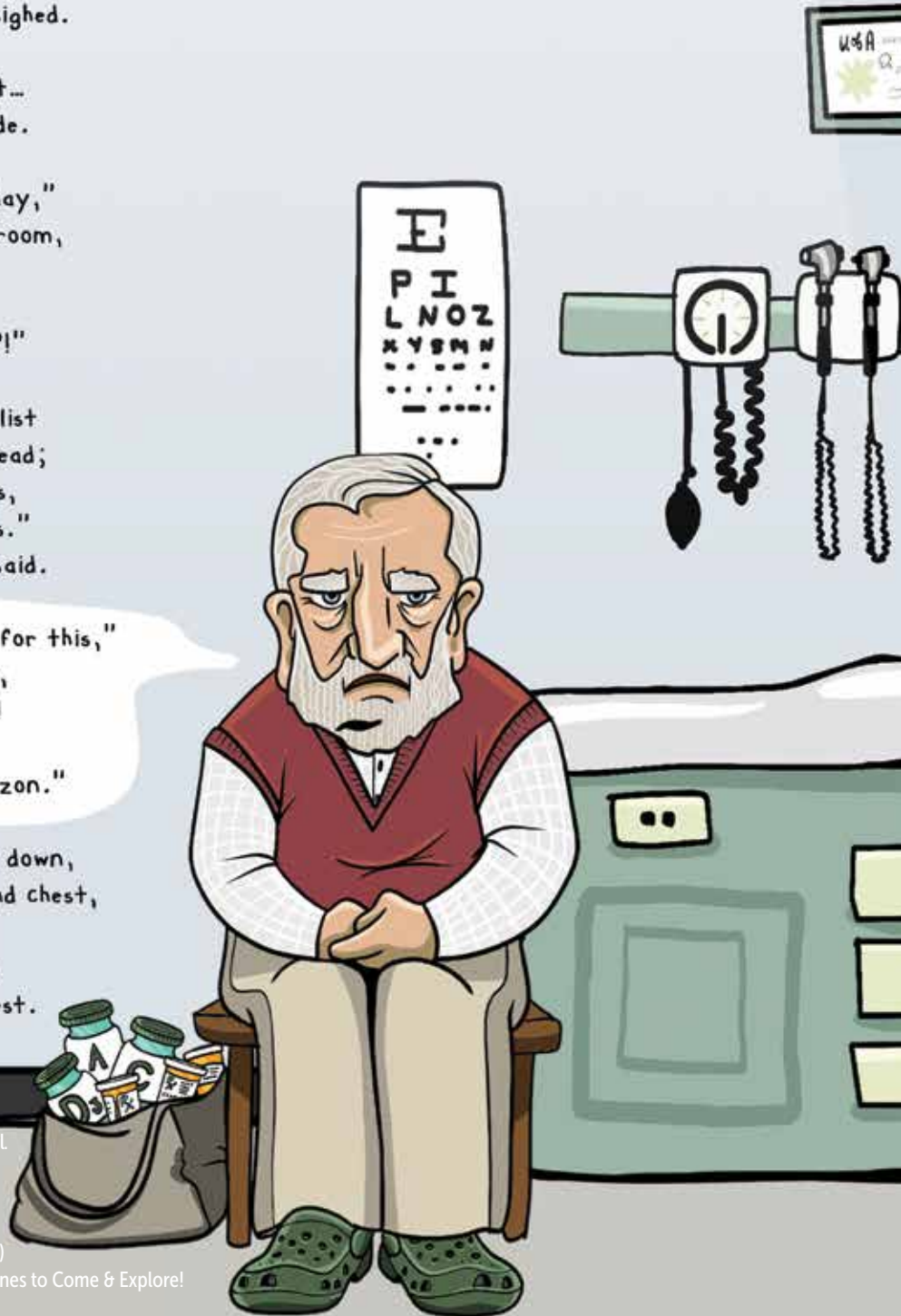
"Ah, Mr. Morose, yes, good day,"
He said, as he settled in the room,
"What things seem to
Be putting you
Into this state of gloom?!"

Well, Mr. Morose began to list
His ailments from feet to head;
"My feet have these spots,
I keep having sad thoughts."
"I see, I see," the doctor said.

"I've got this for that and that for this,"
Mr. Morose continued on,
"Vitamins, every letter!
But I feel no better,
I need a new body from Amazon."

The doctor checked him up and down,
All good - Ears, throat, eyes and chest,
Blood pressure - great
Blood work - first rate
He had one last thing to test.

MR. MOROSE GOES



Come and Explore is written and illustrated by Stephanie Vanderpol.
Her favorite joke is this:
Why did the chicken cross the road?
Becauuuuse!
(You have to say it like a chicken, otherwise it doesn't really work.)
Visit @stephanielorinda on Instagram to see behind the scenes to Come & Explore!

TO THE DOCTOR

The doctor scribbled upon his pad,
Then looked up at him and asked
"And when, would you say
Is the very last day,
You've had a hearty laugh?"

Mr. Morose sat there befuddled
"I think it's been many weeks
Since a laugh or a giggle
Or even a nose wriggle
Has exercised my cheeks"

"I thought so," the doctor said,
Still scribbling with his pen,
"Here's my diagnosis,
A simple prognosis,
Follow these instructions - all ten."

He handed Mr. Morose the paper,
"I'll see you in three weeks, alright?,
Good day, take care!"
He got off his chair
Went through the door, out of sight

"Oh, and by the way," he stopped as he left,
"About your feet, the weird spots?
They'll go away
On their own in a day -
They're from the holes in your cros."

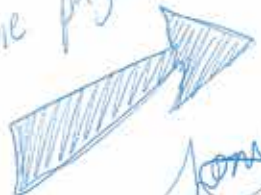


DR. JOVIAL
SMITHERS, BC
555-6782

Date August 28, 2015
Patient S. Morose

Rx
PRESCRIPTION

Flip the page.





DR. JOVIAL
SMITHERS, BC

DATE August 24 2025
PATIENT Mr Morose

P R E S C R I P T I O N

DIAGNOSIS Melancholy, "Under the weather"

PROGNOSIS Treatable; lifestyle changes as noted below.



or run, jog, hop.
Skip vacuum vigorously,
dance, JUST MOVE!

Might I recommend
a nifty thing called
→ BOOKS →



IMPORTANT DETAIL



EVERY DAY, WRITE ③ THINGS YOU CAN BE THANKFUL FOR



Make a card bake
Some cookies, help
mom with the dishes...



As note: 30 seconds of
Smiling (even forced)
reduces stress by releasing
happy hormones in your brain



TAKE THE CHEERFUL HEART CHALLENGE!

SIGNATURE

Dr. Jovial



When's the last time you've had a hearty laugh? When's the last time your sides hurt from "busting a gut" (appendix doesn't count here)? Laughter is an underrated gift from God! All of the suggestions laid out from Dr. Jovial over there on the left of the page are scientifically proven to improve your mood but plain old laughter takes the cake!

Here's some jokes to get you started!

Why do cows have hooves instead of feet?
Because they lactose!

Why do chickens always join bands?
Because they have great drumsticks!

**Why did the lamb cross the road even though his momma said not to?
Because he was being baaaaaaad!**

*Why did the math book look sad?
Because it had too many problems!*

What do you call a dinosaur that never gives up?
Try-try-try-ceratops.

*I can't keep up with the abbreviations kids use these days and my daughters are no help.
When I asked what "IdK" stood for, they all pretended not to know.*

*Why did the cookie go to the doctor?
Because it felt crumbly inside!*

WHY DID THE DONUT CROSS THE ROAD? - I DONUT KNOW.
Broken pencil? Pointless.

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

WHY GOVERNMENTS MISMANAGE THE ECONOMY

You'd be hard-pressed to find, in the Bible, a role for the government in "managing" the economy. And you'd find plenty of texts warning against arrogance (Prov. 26:12, Rom. 12:3, etc.). Along those lines, one argument against big government is the capabilities of the people it puts in charge of billion- and trillion-dollar decisions. It's a task that's beyond any man, and all the more obviously so in recent instances. Was Justin Trudeau ever an astute businessman? Joe Biden? Canada now has a prime minister who has an extensive economic background, but with other people's money. In contrast, an entrepreneur has his own skin in the game, and when he blows it, he pays the price. A politician is playing around with others' money, and if his plan doesn't work, the politician can hide the impact by saddling the next generation with the cost of his failure. That leaves politicians with a motivation to take risks that businessmen never would.

Here's three more reasons that government is prone to economic mismanagement.

- "The first lesson of economics is scarcity: There is never enough of anything to satisfy all those who want it. The first lesson of politics is to disregard the first lesson of economics."
– Thomas Sowell
- "What our nation needs is a separation of 'business and state' as it has a separation of 'church and state.' That would mean crony capitalism and crony socialism could not survive."
– Walter E. Williams
- "One of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programs by their intentions rather than their results."
– Milton Friedman

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Two cars were waiting at a stoplight. When the light turned green, the man in front didn't seem to notice. The woman in the car behind him did though, and she started pounding on her steering wheel and yelling at the man to move. But he didn't. The woman began to go ballistic inside her car, ranting and raving at the man and pounding on her steering wheel and dash. When the light turned yellow the woman let out a long blast on her car horn, flipped him off, and screamed something out her window about "male drivers." This finally got the man's attention and, looking up, he saw the yellow light so he put his foot on the gas and scooted through the intersection just as the light turned red. This left the woman practically beside herself with rage – the man had made her miss her chance at getting through the intersection!

In mid-rant, she heard a tap on her window and looked up to see the barrel of a gun held by a very serious-looking policeman. He told her to shut off her car and "keep both hands where

I can see them." She complied, speechless at what was happening. When she got out of the car, the policeman quickly cuffed her and hustled her into his patrol car. Too bewildered by the chain of events to ask any questions, she was driven to the police station, fingerprinted, photographed, searched, booked and placed in a cell.

After a couple of hours, a policeman approached the cell, opened the door, and escorted her back to the booking desk, where the original officer was waiting with her personal effects. "I'm really sorry for this mistake," he said, "but when I pulled up behind your car you were blowing your horn, flipping that guy off, and cussing a blue streak at the car in front of you. When I noticed your 'Choose Life' license plate holder, the 'No Jesus, No Peace; Know Jesus, Know Peace' and 'Follow Me to Church' bumper stickers, and the chrome-plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk I naturally assumed you had stolen that car."

Source: Adapted from a joke winging its way around the Internet

DID YOU HEAR THE ONE...?

- ...about the three-legged dog who walked into a saloon. He sidled up to the bar, pulled out his gun and fired a shot in the air to get everyone's attention. Then he barked, "I'm looking for the man who shot my paw!"
- ...about the bear who rumbled into a saloon and said, "I'd like a grilled..... cheese."
The bartender asked, "Why the big pause?"
"I'm a bear."
- ...about the world's worst thesaurus? Not only is it terrible, it's terrible.

ATHEISTS ARE LIVING IN THE WRONG WORLD

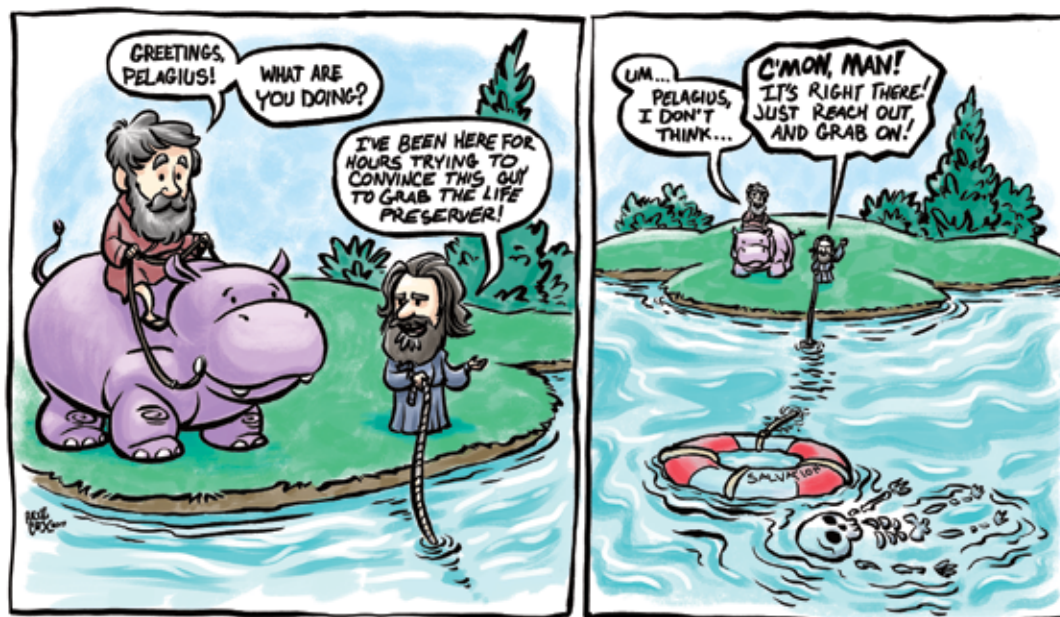
Every met a *morally outraged* atheist? What's that about? That's akin to... well, it's akin to a flat earther taking a vacation trip round the world.

In the Spring/Summer 2025 issue of *Barnabas* magazine, Owen Pikkert told a story about a flat earther who wanted to go on an exciting holiday. When his travel agent pitched the idea of polar circumnavigation – crossing both the North and South Poles – he had objections: *The trip was too long. It was too expensive. Parts of the trip would be cold.*

His travel agent could have tried to solve these objections, perhaps by finding a discount rate, or providing blankets.

"Or she could observe that the flat-earthier is living in the wrong kind of world. For his objections presuppose that the world is spherical. In other words, he is borrowing from the spherical world in order to critique some aspect of the spherical world. Surely he should not raise such objections. Or, better yet, surely he should give up on a flat earth."

Debate can be a powerful way to discover the truth; so notes Prov. 18:17. But debate can also be a tool of obfuscation (as can the use of big words) by bringing up what's irrelevant to hide what's important. Parents experience this downside when a teen caught out past curfew starts asking why his brother gets away



"BEHOLD, I WILL CAUSE BREATH
TO ENTER YOU, AND YOU SHALL LIVE."
-EZEKIEL 37:5

with so much more than he does. His parents shouldn't go there, should they?

When an atheist starts attacking God we shouldn't go there either. Instead we need to demand the atheist explain on what basis he's condemning anything or anyone at all. The purposeless pitiless universe his worldview proclaims doesn't have wrong or right – it doesn't care. So he needs to either live out his worldview and stop complaining, or admit to atheism's shortcomings and reject it. But in the meantime we shouldn't treat his moral objections seriously – it'll only make him think he has a point (Prov. 26:4-5).

HOW MANY DID YOU KNOW?

By one estimate there are 170,000 English words in common usage. Here a baker's dozen of some that our kids probably don't know, but you might. How many can you define? Answers are on the next page.

Agog	Flibbertigibbet	Lollygag
Dawdle	Gobbledygook	Malarky
Defenestration	Hullabaloo	Skedaddle
Discombobulate	Kerfuffle	Snollygoster
Verklempt		

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE BEAT

About a dozen years ago, around 2012 or 2013, I went through the year's top 100 songs with a group of college-age young people. Someone had excerpted clips from each hit and then strung them all together, and the challenge I pitched the group was to identify how many songs were clearly attacking God's truth, and how many weren't. Each clip was only something like 10 or at most 20 seconds long. Yet in just that blink of time, of the first 10 songs

we heard, something like 8 were clearly wicked, I think one might have been an instrumental, and one was okay... at least for the ten seconds we heard. At least 8 out of 10 were simply evil. What is it about Pop/Rock that has it trending in this direction?

And lest you think that's a recent turn, Jamie Soles shared on his blog (jamiesoles.substack.com) that the top 10 nearly a half century ago weren't any better.

"1979 was a bad year for the Canadian and American public. The number one song, the song they loved the most, was a guy lusting after an underage girl (My Sharona – The Knack); the number two song was celebrating prostitution (Bad Girls – Donna Summer), number three was a mindless dance song (Le Freak – Chic), the number four song was Rod Stewart hitting on everybody (Do You Think I'm Sexy?), and Gloria Gaynor got dumped by some guy in the number six song, and she is ANGRY about it (I Will Survive). In number seven, Donna Summer is back, declaring how she will sleep with any man who is warm (Hot Stuff), and in song number ten the girly-voiced Robert John is sending his illicit lover out the back door while his wife is coming in the front, all the while encouraging her to remember with fondness the good times they had (Sad Eyes)."

Might it be better now? If you run your own experiment with this year's hits, I'd love to hear about your results.

BEST DAD JOKE EVER?

When does a joke become a dad joke?

When the punchline becomes apparent.

HOMESCHOOLING: THE WHY AND WHY NOT

One objection to homeschooling is that homeschooled children may not fit in with the world around them. One reason parents choose to homeschool their children is so that they won't fit in with the world around them.

NO ONE EVEN KNOWS HOW TO BAKE BREAD

Our new Prime Minister is very sure he has just the right recipe to get the country's economy going, and his plan involves more governmental control. But what if an economy is too complex for such top-down control? That's the case Walter E. Williams (1936-2020) makes when he highlights how no one, on their own, would even have the know-how to bake a loaf of bread:

"We're all grossly ignorant about most things that we use and encounter in our daily lives, but each of us is knowledgeable about tiny, relatively inconsequential things. For example, a baker might be the best baker in town, but he's grossly ignorant about virtually all the inputs that allow him to be the best baker.

"What is he likely to know about what goes into the processing of the natural gas that fuels his oven? For that matter, what does he know about oven manufacture?

"Then, there are all the ingredients he uses – flour, sugar, yeast, vanilla and milk. Is he likely to know how to grow wheat and sugar and how to protect the crop from diseases and pests? What is he likely to know about vanilla extraction and yeast production?

"Just as important is the question of how all the people who

produce and deliver all these items know what he needs and when he needs them. There are literally millions of people co-operating with one another to ensure that the baker has all the necessary inputs. It's the miracle of the market and prices that gets the job done so efficiently. What's called the market is simply a collection of millions upon millions of independent decision makers not only in America but around the world. Who or what coordinates the activities all of these people? "Rest assured, it's not a bakery czar."

HOLLYWOOD ROMANCE AIN'T RIGHT

Hollywood tells us that there is one special someone, one soulmate, just one person out there who, as Jerry Maguire put it, *completes us*. Blogger Matt Walsh sums up the Christian position in one sentence: "I didn't marry my wife because she's The One, she's The One because I married her."

SCREEN-FASTS SEEM TO BE TRENDING!

A CRC publication called *Christian Courier* asked readers to go on a screen-fast, and in the May 5 issue editor Angela Reitsma Bick reported on the results. Her volunteers went one day to three days without their phones. That's not a lot of time, but they still learned some lessons.

One gentleman, Dan DeBruyne, a physiotherapist, went just one day, and was anxious about all the unanswered texts he assumed must be piling up. At day's end he realized, yes, there were 16, but only a couple were actually important. He shared, "It was an exercise in humility. To think I am required to be reachable 16-18 hours a day has an air of pride about it." He also noticed that setting his phone aside, even for that one day, allowed him "quiet moments of daydreaming." He was able to be "fully engaged playing with my daughters and making more eye contact during conversations." His brief digital detox also allowed him to "realize how frequently I look to my phone to fill silence. How frequently I try to drown out any 'still small voices' with news-feeds, friends' photos or memes."

So how about it? Are you up for RP's own social media screen-fast? See the details on page 19.

ANSWERS FROM PAGE 62

Agog – very eager and curious to find out what's what

Dawdle – to lollygag

Defenestration – tossing folks out a window (happened so often in Prague during the Reformation that they had to come up with a word for it)

Discombobulate – to confuse or disconcert

Flibbertigibbet – a flighty, silly chatterbox

Gobbledygook – nonsense speech, coming from babies or intellectuals

Hullabaloo – quite the kerfuffle

Kerfuffle – a commotion or goodly amount of fuss

Lollygag – to move slowly, especially when speed is required

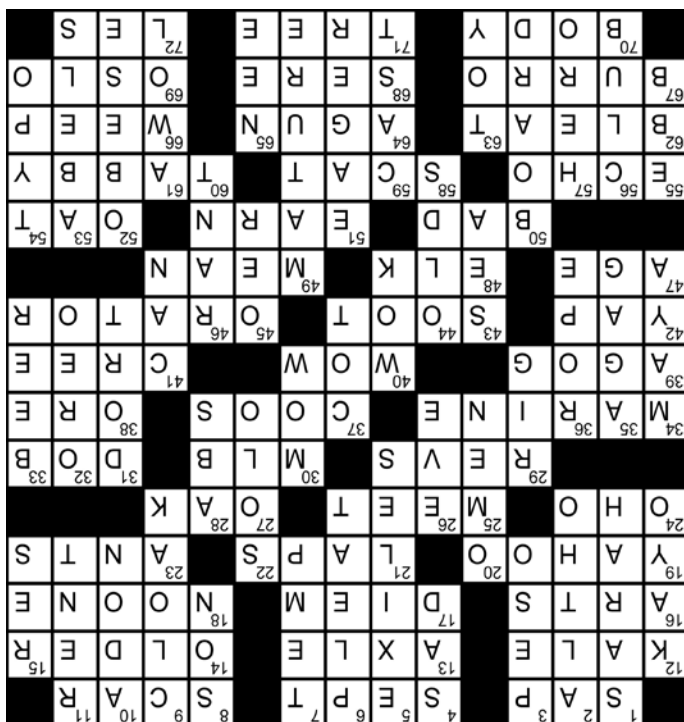
Malarky – complete and utter nonsense

Skedaddle – to leave, quickly

Snollygoster – an unprincipled politician

Verklept – to be overcome with emotion

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RACHEL VANEGBMOND

is exploring God's General Revelation

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman

Artist Rachel VanEgmond attributes her love of nature to her childhood experience of growing up on a rural property near Grimsby, Ontario. Sharing time with loved ones in the great outdoors both nurtured her spiritual growth and cultivated artistic ideas. Raised in a Christian home and community, Rachel was the youngest of three siblings. She says her faith deepened when she started to “appreciate God’s love through Creation.”

Her younger self was a “crafty child,” so it was natural that in high school she was drawn toward art as her favorite subject. That passion led Rachel to pursue a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting at OCAD (Ontario College of Art and Design) University in Toronto, which she successfully completed this spring.


Rachel says of the experience at OCAD U:

“It was a blessing to be able to learn technical skills and also decide what content I want to make and what message is worth expressing.”

Rachel’s thesis for her Bachelor’s explored God’s “General Revelation,” the Christian belief that God reveals Himself in the natural world (see Rom. 1:18-20, Ps. 19:1-4). What interests VanEgmond the most is, in her words, “How the indescribable intricacy of the natural world speaks to attentive and diligent love.” The result of her study is an impressive collection of paintings featuring the lush interior of Canadian forests.

Working on recycled wood with various types of paint, VanEgmond capably utilizes color and value and brushwork to illustrate light and depth and space. Viewing the series is like accompanying Rachel on one of her walks in the forest. As of writing this, the entire collection has almost sold out.

Even though her own schooling is behind her Rachel is planning to head back to the classroom again in the fall. This time she’ll be a high school teacher, at King’s Christian Collegiate in Oakville, Ontario. Here Rachel hopes to share her enthusiasm for art with her students. “Teachers have such a massive impact on their students, and it is really exciting to be able to spark some passion for art.” Teaching will be a dream come true for Rachel, who has always been a keen art student herself and who “absolutely loves working with youth.”

In addition to teaching Rachel is looking forward to completing a few private commissions along with building her personal collection. Follow Rachel at [Instagram.com/what_evenis_art](https://www.instagram.com/what_evenis_art) to see more of her work. 

*If you have a suggestion for an artist you’d like to see profiled
email Jason Bouwman at studio@jasonbouwman.com.*



Be Still and Know ▲ Oil on wood, 11" x 14"
March 2025

Bright, confident sky cuts through rough vegetation, like reassurance reaching out. The sky serves as a reminder of stillness in the textured beauty of our world. “Be still and know that I am God” is not a suggestion, but an instruction – an instruction that brings unparalleled peace.



General Revelation ▲ Oil on gessoed panel, 20" x 24" | November 2024

Vivid radiance, impossible complexity, awesome love. Creation sings the praise of its Creator to all who witness it.



Abundance ▲ Acrylic and Oil on plywood, 12" x 24" | January 2025

There is such an overwhelming abundance in the natural world around us, and often we fail to soak it in. All is created so intricately, and upheld so constantly, that we must stop and cherish the love and diligence of our God.



Still, I Know ▲ Oil on wood, 15" x 17" | March 2025

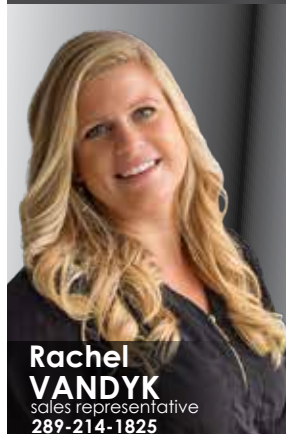
When we take up the assurance in God that is vital for us, we are rewarded with peace and vibrancy. Creation not only reveals God, but shines all the more brilliantly when we love Him.



Untitled ▲ Oil on panel, 11" x 14" | February 2025

The same landscape that glowed in confidence can wither with doubt. Uncertainty can cause this beautiful testimony to feel dull for a time.

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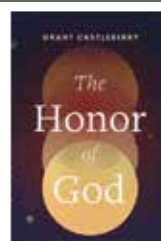
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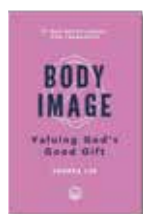


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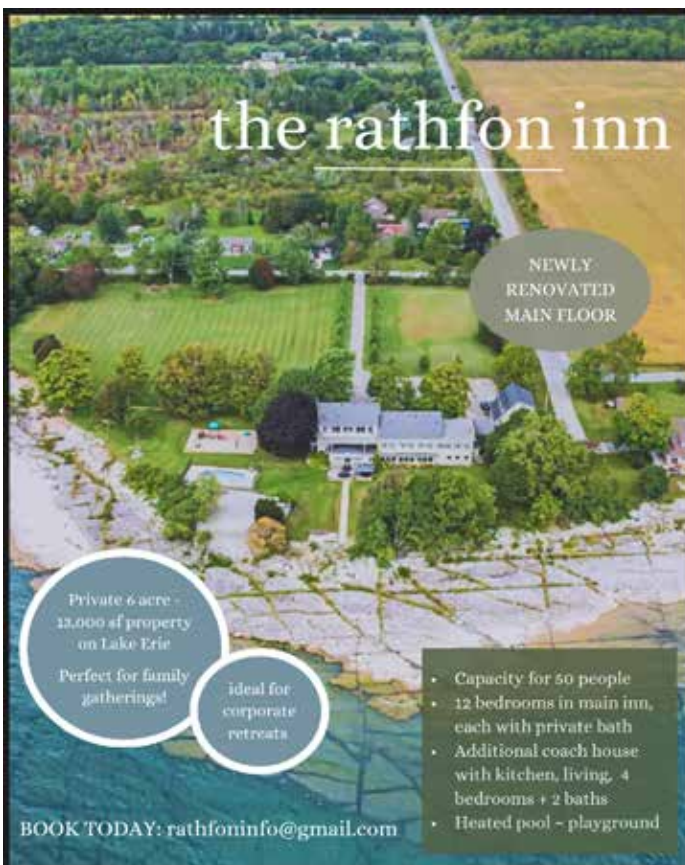
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Ps 78: 4, 7

MORE More Than the Magazine

If you're only reading our print issue, you're missing out on what else we have online.

Scan the QR codes to take you right to the best of the rest!

Best of *Saturday Selections*

Each Saturday we link to a half dozen great pieces from other publications. If they're secular articles, editor Jon Dykstra will 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.



Stop listening to your lies, and start preaching truth to yourself

"In his book on spiritual depression, the late Welsh minister, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, wrote:



'Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?... The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself.'

Jeff Durbin on Christianity and global warming (10-min. video)

Some Christians think global warming is a scientific, and not a theological, question. To that, Jeff Durbin replies:



"I'll approach it as an atheist...As an atheist with an atheist worldview that believes that all of us are cosmic accidents and that our ancestors were bacteria and then into fish and then to African apes into where we are now, I have a question: Why should humans care? Right? Not a theological question? Really?"



What should Christians think about anti-conversion laws?

"...now is the time for faith based schools to remind their students and their key stakeholders – government and well-heeled parents – that the gospel is actually all about conversion. Always about conversion."

Your phone habits aren't just about you

"...if I decide to stubbornly hold out as the one person in the room not bending over my phone, I'll only have the pleasure of looking at the tops of everyone else's heads."



A bro in a skirt doesn't care about biology (or logic)

God's people too often seem intent on *logic-ing* our culture into the Kingdom. We address sins like abortion and transgenderism with arguments that are common sense but not specifically Christian – we channel Ben Shapiro and Pierre Poilievre but we don't talk about God. And how's that working out?

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:

#121 – Be strong and act like men!

Lucas is joined by Pastor Al Bezuyen and Tyler Witthoef to offer up some gospel-centered advice for young men. The trio chat about the struggles young men will face, and the discipleship they need to develop into godly men who are equipped to lead well in the home and in the Church.



#122 – Money doesn't heal poverty

If you go to the doctor with a headache and he just hands you a couple Tylenol, what he's doing is treating a symptom and not necessarily understanding the underlying problem. Similarly when we diagnose poverty we need to diagnose it correctly in order to know how to help in the situation. Tyler talks it through with Rick Postma of Word & Deed Ministries.



#123 – Christians don't retire

The world wants Freedom 55. Christians want "Well done, good and faithful servant," so that means we should never bury the talents God gives us, even when they might be diminishing some. Tyler talks with Bruce Bruinsma from Retirement Reformation about: how retirement is different when you're a Christian, why young people should prepare now, and how there is purpose in every stage of life.



Daily Devotionals

If you haven't already, you may 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.

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RP'S COMING TO A CHURCH NEAR YOU

by Mark Penninga

There are times when we may feel like Elijah when he lamented to the LORD at the mouth of a cave where he was hiding: “I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too” (1 Kings 19).

God proceeded to tell Elijah to go back where he came from, anoint two new kings, and anoint Elisha as his replacement. Then God added, “Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

Elijah wasn’t as alone in his zeal for the LORD as he may have thought.

When some Reformed Christians immigrated to Canada in the mid-twentieth century, they too felt alone. They established churches and schools and were understandably cautious about interactions with others who identified as Christians, and even as Reformed. I write “understandably” because many churches, even those who identify as Reformed, were – and still are – blatantly undermining God’s Word and conforming to the world.

Yet we are mistaken if we develop an Elijah-like “I am the only one left” mentality. Too easily we speak of “our churches,” forgetting that they aren’t “our” churches. This is Christ’s church, and He gathers His flock from many places.

We should rejoice when we hear and see reformation happening in and be-

yond “our” circles. And it definitely has been happening. Some years ago already, *Time* magazine picked up on this by ranking “the New Calvinism” third in a list of “10 ideas changing the world right now.” By God’s grace, many pastors and church leaders embrace God’s Word in its entirety, sharing it with their flocks, which are hungry for the nourishment.

We also rejoice when we hear how the Christian Reformed Church’s past two synods have made courageous decisions to uphold a biblical perspective of sexuality, doing so even in the face of fierce opposition.

So it is with gratitude that I report that the board of Reformed Perspective recently approved a proposal to share this magazine with over 300 more congregations across Canada. Beginning with our next issue, our plan is to send 7 complimentary copies to each of these churches, to do this for the next 6 months, and then to give them the option of continuing to receive the magazine at no cost if they appreciate it and let us know that they do want it.

Our plan is to send the magazine to:

- **Christian Reformed** churches (over 200);
- **Reformed Baptist** churches (45 that identify as confessional);


- **Korean Presbyterian** churches (those that we can find addresses for);
- **The Anglican Diocese of Canada** (over 40 churches that have strived to be biblical).

This is on top of the 200+ churches and 15 denominations that currently receive the magazine.

Although we aren’t motivated by numbers, we are excited by the prospect of over 500 churches in this country having a publication that equips and challenges its parishioners to think, speak, and act to the glory of God.

And no, a broader audience does not mean that we will change our message. Like you, our desire is to be faithful to God’s unchanging Word, also as it is faithfully explained in the historic Reformed confessions.

We don’t know how many of these churches will welcome this magazine. But we are very grateful for the means to share it with them. That is only possible because over 900 people, businesses, and churches made a donation to Reformed Perspective last year. If that includes you, we pass along our hearty thanks for making this work, and this expansion, possible.

Let us continue to pray, and work, for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom. 

To-Do

- Register for screen-fast (July 21-30.)



DON'T FORGET

- Enter photo contest (before Aug 1)
- Kids' coloring contest from last issue (due July 15)