

Reformed CELEBRATING GOD'S TRUTH

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2025
Volume 44 Issue No. 5

PERSPECTIVE

SINCE 1982

**RP'S PHOTO
CONTEST RESULTS**

"...in the Image of God He created them."



WAY TO GO SCREEN-FASTERS!

A whopping 900 of our readers registered for our 10-day screen fast over the summer, far exceeding our hopes. And we know that many others took part without registering. Because of the huge response, the full pledge of \$20,000, offered by a couple generous donors, will be shared by Word & Deed and the RP Foundation. Thank you!

We salute everyone who joined in, as it takes courage and strength to agree to a big change in how we live, and it takes stamina to stick with it for ten days. In this issue, we share some of the stories, tips, successes, and struggles from those who took part.

WELCOME NEW READERS!

A couple thousand extra copies of this issue were printed and shared with close to three hundred Anglican, Presbyterian, Reformed Baptist, and Christian Reformed congregations, all of which uphold a confessional Reformed basis. *If you are one of the new readers, we extend a hearty welcome!*

Reformed Perspective has been publishing for over 40 years, seeking to equip Christians to think, speak, and act to the glory of God. We are a Canadian charity and our donors allow us to share our print magazine, and online

podcast, daily devotionals, weekly email newsletter, and other resources free of charge (check us out at **ReformedPerspective.ca**). We plan to send you copies for three issues, and will await your decision if you would like to continue receiving the magazine through your church.

THE RP STORE IS NOW OPEN

And yes, as the back page shares, we are very excited, and a little nervous, to unveil our brand-new online merch store, with over 100 designs for shirts, sweaters, mugs, and more to help you think, speak, and act to God's glory. Canadian, non-profit, quality goods, and affordable – watch out Amazon!

PHOTO CONTEST AND COVER

Our cover photo was from too long ago – 2018 – to qualify for this year's "...in the Image of God He made them" photo contest, but was also too beautiful not to share. As photographer Christina Dokter explained:

"This is our son James, who has Down Syndrome. His arrival in our lives has given us new perspective on what being an image bearer truly means."

Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Published bimonthly by Reformed Perspective Foundation Inc.

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

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

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

reformedperspective.ca



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What if everything was about God?

by Jon Dykstra

It struck me, just recently, that I've been regularly promising to praise God's Name "among the nations." This pledge, to talk about God outside of church, out in the world, with non-Christians, comes up again and again in the songs we sing each service (Ps. 18, 57, 108, etc.).

And, just recently, God gave me an opportunity to talk about Him with more than a hundred thousand people, sharing His views on a local political issue.

GOD MADE IT HAPPEN

This year our public library system asked voters to approve a roughly 66% increase in taxpayer funding. The way things work here, an official "voters' guide" is sent out to everyone, and it includes both the reasons for and against every proposed levy. Who writes up those reasons? Whoever volunteers first. So, I recruited my wife Janice, and the two of us, along with one other gentleman from the area, became the three-person "Against Committee."

Why was I against more money for the library? It's because our solidly Christian town has a very unchristian library. The local branch is run by people who put on big Pride Month displays, even in the children's section. This Spring I bumped into a neighbor by the picture books section and as we were chatting, she started sifting through the shelves, looking for treasures. But what she kept discovering was one disgusting picture book after another. They were about sexual development, or pushed gender-confusion and other LGBT themes, and were intended for kids barely old enough to read. Neither of us knew what to do with her growing stack. I ended up checking them all out, not because I wanted them, but because, with no late fees being collected anymore,

I could at least keep these out of circulation for a good long while.

That's all I was thinking at the time. But I still had those books on my desk when this voters' guide opportunity popped up. Turns out, God had provided me just the ammunition I'd need for my write-up.

WHAT KIND OF WIN?

While I wanted to focus on how the library was opposing God and what He's said about gender and sex, the third person on our Against Committee wanted a focus on the money. Making it about the money could broaden the appeal to anyone in the county who cared about their pocketbook. Surely that was a bigger group than just the concerned Christians!

Asking for a two-thirds increase is significant, so he had a point. It's also a familiar point. When it comes to politics, Christians tend to bring forward fiscal issues, or other generally conservative points, rather than anything explicitly Christian. In this case, if more people care about money than God, isn't the winning strategy obvious?

The thing is, not all wins are wins. In 279 BC, King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Romans at the Battle of Asculum, but at a devastating cost to his own army. Ever since then the term *Pyrrhic victory* has been used to describe a win that leaves the victor weaker than before. In Christians' engagement with the world, we will, for the sake of some perceived short-term victory, overlook the long-term consequences that come with excluding God from the public square. We wonder why our culture is turning from God, but if, for strategic reasons, God's own people won't profess His Name in politics, who are we expecting will?

EVERY SQUARE INCH

The world is the LORD's, and consequently the Devil is always and forever trying to get us to overlook, downplay, or deny that. In this library skirmish, the real issue wasn't *how much*, but rather *Who* the library was opposing. So, what kind of win would it be if we had to shut up about our LORD to get it? If the Devil could choose to make us focus on either money or God, wouldn't he choose money every time? The devil's win is getting Christians to self-censor their praise and rob God of the glory that is His due.

Thankfully, while the third member of our committee wanted money mentioned, he was happy to keep God central. After some back and forth, this is what we sent out to 140,000 eligible voters:

Argument Against

In the opening chapters of Genesis we learn that God made us male and female (Gen. 1:27) and sex is intended for marriage (Gen. 2:24). Our library system actively opposes these truths, and wants more money to do so.

They oppose God in their teen section where *Beyond Magenta* shares an account of oral sex with a six-year-old. Despite this being brought to the library's attention, they

didn't pull the book.

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

A \$600,000 home currently pays about \$155 a year to this system – the library wants to up that almost \$100, to \$252. We have increasing food, electricity, housing, and gas costs – that's what we need our money for. We most certainly don't need to give more money to a library that's opposing God-given truths and sowing confusion, even among the littlest.

The voters' guide only allowed us 200 words, but the debate was also being had in the local paper. The paper published an article arguing for the increase, touting the library as somewhere safe to go. I got 300 words, in a letter to the editor, to share how God knows best what is best for us, and a library pushing transsexual confusion on little kids isn't safe at all.

THREE KINDS OF OBJECTIONS

Objections came in three sorts. Folks noted that, if it was about the money, borrowing from a library can save you a lot of money. That was a decent point, and it underscores the danger of what could have happened if we'd made this minor point our major one – we would have wasted all our energy on a matter that doesn't matter.


Another objection was along the lines of "Don't force your God or your views on me." But this objection applies better to their position than to ours. Christians don't want to be forced to pay even more money to support views our Lord opposes. Meanwhile the library and its supporters want to force us to cough up cash for their agenda. The irony was heavy.

The third objection was over the definition of words like "safety," "love," and "gender," and whose definition we were going to go with, the Left's or God's.

A REAL WIN

The vote went against us, and now we'll have to hand over even more money to a library that's shown it hates God. In the past that kind of result might have gotten me frustrated.

This time I'm just grateful. God gave me an opportunity to praise His Name in public, and He made it easy for me to do. He put the committee sign-up sheet in front of my face, and so pre-arranged things to get my neighbor to track down the obscene picture books I could cite as horrible examples. Then He got a couple hundred words about Him sent out by a State that hates Him to over one hundred thousand voters who don't normally hear about Him.

It was a political campaign with the focus on God. Because everything *is* about God. And He is amazing. 



NEWS IN *Perspective*

HOW FAR CAN CHRISTIANS GO TO DEFEND THEIR PROPERTY?

BY LEVI MINDERHOUD

Ontario premier Doug Ford recently remarked that “like down in the U.S., we should have the castle law” in response to an attempted theft of his car. He was also responding to the recent arrest of someone for firing his gun in the air to scare off thieves.

A castle law allows people to use force – even deadly force – to defend their property. The concept originated with

two enormously influential Englishmen from the 17th century. Jurist Sir Edward Coke stated that “a man’s house is his castle” (*Institutes of the Laws of England*). Political philosopher John Locke viewed property as an extension of the human person and thus also concluded that it is “lawful for a man to *kill a thief*, who has not in the least hurt him nor declared any design upon his life” (*Two Treatises of Government*).

But the Bible doesn’t go quite so far. Exodus 22:2-3 (NIV) says,

“if a thief is caught breaking in at night and is struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; but if it happens after sunrise, the defender is guilty of bloodshed.”

The logic of this command is fairly straightforward. In biblical times, there were no electric lights and even candles were few and far between. And so, if someone broke into your house in the middle of the night, it would be very difficult to identify the intruder, discern his intentions, and respond with appropriate force. Under these circumstances, if the homeowner happened to kill the intruder, he would not be guilty of murder.

But that did not hold true if the attempted robbery happened in broad daylight. Under these conditions, it would be easy to identify the robber, see what he was doing, and then respond appropriately. If the homeowner killed this thief in broad daylight, he would be guilty of murder.

Applying the principles of this passage today means that no Christian has the right to kill another person simply to defend his property by day. While he might be able to use lethal force at night, the modern conveniences of electricity mean that we have the ability to effectively make the night as bright as day within our homes. If you hear a noise in your living room in the middle of the night and you go downstairs, flick on the lights, and see a burglar there taking off with your stereo, you wouldn’t have the right to use deadly force.

And just to sum up, it is worth noting that Scripture (Romans 13:4) and our confessions (Belgic Confession, Article 36) recognize that power over life and death – the sword in days of old and the gun in the modern day – to punish or prevent wrongdoing is given primarily to governments rather than private citizens. Just as we don’t want the government to overstep its authority, private citizens should be careful not to take the law into their own hands either.



BANK CANCELS REFORMED PERSPECTIVE AND ARPA CANADA

BY MARK PENNINGA

In mid-August, *Reformed Perspective* received a coldly-worded letter from Canadian Western Bank (now the National Bank) informing us that it would be closing our bank account by the end of the month. No further explanation was given, and our follow-up request for an explanation was ignored.

The bank sent a similar notice to our friends at ARPA Canada, and we have heard of another pro-life organization that received the same treatment. *Reformed Perspective* and ARPA have banked with Canadian Western Bank for many years and always appreciated their service. There has never been an issue with our accounts, nor have any concerns been raised about the organizations or our activities.

Debanking – where a bank closes an account – usually occurs in response to an organization perceived as being involved in money laundering, funding terrorism, or other crimes. In the United States, there have been concerns raised in recent years about banks debanking causes simply because they don't agree with them. But that hasn't been a concern in Canada to date.

Now it's a bit strange in a news story to quote myself, but in this case we are part of the story. So, in my role as *Reformed Perspective's* Executive Director, I want to note that, given that both *Reformed Perspective* and ARPA have stellar reputations, as a charity and non-profit respectively, it is difficult to conceive of any motivation for this apart from old-fashioned opposition to God and His people. Both ARPA and RP exist to apply a Christian perspective to culture and society, and Satan and his allies can't stand that.

On March 1 of this year, Canadian Western Bank and the National Bank of Canada amalgamated, and have decided to continue under the name

of National Bank of Canada. Like most large financial institutions, National Bank takes pride in "an inclusive, diverse and equitable culture." Actions like this speak volumes as to how sincere they are about their values.

It isn't my place to tell others where to bank, but banking decisions, too, should be guided by our faith commitments. I think these banks have sent a loud and clear message. I'm hoping it isn't only ARPA and RP who hear it and do something about it.

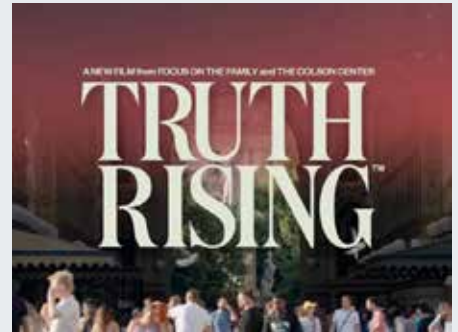
Reformed Perspective is deeply grateful to the many donors who stand behind our mission of equipping Christians to think, speak, and act in line with our confession. We respectfully ask for grace if the changes to our banking cause any inconvenience.

Although this is a concerning wake-up call, it is also a comforting reminder that our eternal inheritance is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us," and that no power can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Editor's note: *As this issue went to press, Mark Penninga received a phone call from Jamie Comstock, Alberta Head of Commercial Banking at National Bank, acknowledging that this should not have happened, and asking us to stay on as a client. In a follow-up email he acknowledged:*

"Upon further, more thorough review, we are now confident in maintaining our business relationship with you. We recognize that this situation may have caused you concern, and for that, we sincerely apologize."

Although we will likely never know what transpired behind the scenes, we are grateful for the reversal. At the same time, we will continue to work on transitioning our account to an institution that we trust.



NEW FREE-TO-SEE CHRISTIAN DOC

BY JON DYKSTRA

The 83-year-old Christian author and apologist Os Guinness has assembled quite the cast for his new documentary *Truth Rising*, which will be free to see online, starting on September 5. The thesis is that civilizations have turning points, and ours is at one now. And we can watch it fall, or we can choose to start speaking up for the truth courageously. To that end, Guinness, along with co-host John Stonestreet, talk to all sorts of cultural warriors, including:

- Ayaan Hirsi Ali – Somalia-born, former Dutch MP, former Muslim, former atheist, and now a grateful Christian.
- David Berlinski – an agnostic intellectual, but best known for his devastating critiques of evolution.
- Jack Phillips – the baker who said no; Phillips would not bake a wedding cake for a gay couple because he knew God wouldn't want him helping celebrate sin.
- Seth Dillon – CEO of *The Babylon Bee*, a Christian satire site targeted by Twitter for saying that a guy in a dress is still a guy.
- Konstantin Kisin – known for his YouTube clips, where he takes down the Left quickly and sharply.

While all the guests have demonstrated courage, and all of them are eager to defend the Judeo-Christian foundations of our culture, not all of them are actually Christian. Some, in effect, seem to be arguing for the fruit of the Christian religion without seeing a need for the actual tree. Still, the documentary is fascinating, highlighting how all that's good about the West can be traced directly to God and His Word. You can watch it for free at TruthRising.com.

GOVERNMENT QUIETLY DISBANDS INQUIRY INTO RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL GRAVES

BY MARK PENNINGA

Allegations of “mass graves” of indigenous children at residential schools in Canada was one of the top news stories of 2021, making ripples around the world. Those same allegations have inspired annual “every child matters” community events. They may also have triggered the vandalism of over 100 churches since.

In response, the federal government established the National Advisory



Committee on Residential Schools, Missing Children and Unmarked Burials to investigate the allegations. Three years, and 216.5 million dollars later, the committee has quietly been disbanded.

The CBC’s coverage of the decision provided extensive criticism of the decision but failed to mention that not a single grave has been verified in the years since the “discoveries.”

To add to this, reputable reports have been published which question the “findings” that sparked the allegations of mass graves. But due to the political narrative that has evolved, seeking the truth could have you labeled a “residential school denier.” A private member’s bill was even introduced in Parliament last year that would have made it an offence to “downplay” the harms caused by residential schools.

There is no doubt that inexcusable harms were done at residential schools. Scripture speaks strongly in defence of the vulnerable. The young boys and girls at residential schools, separated from their parents, and under intense pressure to abandon their culture, definitely qualify as vulnerable. And Christians of all kinds now publicly recognize that it was wrong, even wicked, for the government to forcibly separate children from their parents.

But the fact that evil was committed at these schools does not mean that the only appropriate response to new allegations can ever be an assumption of further guilt and evil at these institutions. Justice can only be achieved when built on truth. When truth is verified, trust is built, and then a foundation exists for genuine justice and reconciliation.

CANADA’S POPULATION ALMOST SHRINKING

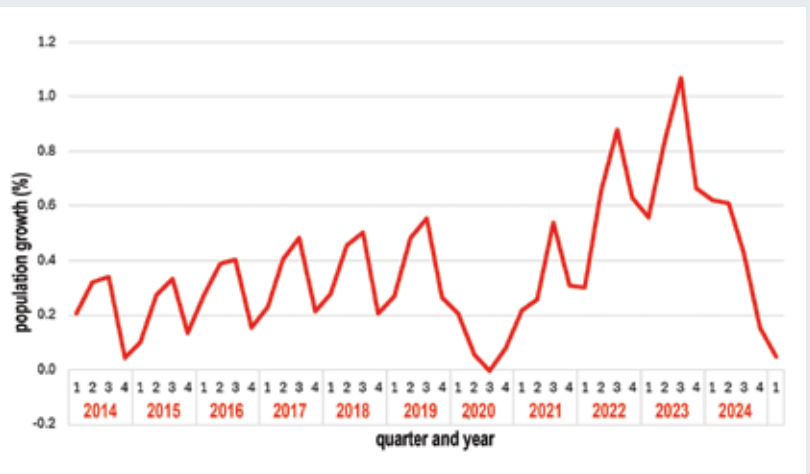
BY MARK PENNINGA

The latest population estimation from Statistics Canada is revealing a startling change: Ontario, Quebec, and BC all saw population declines in the first quarter of 2025.

The country as a whole grew by only 20,107 people, which, as a percentage, amounted to a 0.0% increase, the second-slowest growth rate in Canada since records began in 1946. The record prior was the third quarter of 2020, when border restrictions from the Covid-19 pandemic prevented immigration. The decrease has been attributed to announcements by the federal government in 2024 to decrease temporary and permanent immigration levels, with targets of 436,000 for this year, which is still well above the 250,000 level prior to the Liberal government taking office in 2015.

So, in the first quarter of 2025 we lost 17,410 people via emigration to other countries, and there was also a drop of 61,111 in non-permanent residents – people on temporary work or student visas, along with their families. The data also shows that there were 5,628 more deaths than births in the first quarter, largely due to Canada’s quickly declining fertility rate. That’s a collective loss of population of 84,140 people.

Then, going in the other direction, we had 104,256 people immigrate to Canada, for that small net increase of 20,107.



While it is a blessing that people from other countries are still willing and able to move to Canada, it is sobering to note that two-thirds of the world’s populations are now below replacement rate and the world’s population is projected to start declining later this century.

God’s first command to humanity was to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). Imagine what the world could look like in a few generations if Christians continued to fulfill this cultural mandate with enthusiasm while the rest of the world continued on its course.

YOU NOW LIVE ON šxʷməθkʷəy̓əmasəm STREET

BY MARK PENNINGA

"911, I need an ambulance at 232 šxʷməθkʷəy̓əmasəm Street, and quickly please!"

"Sorry, I didn't get that. Can you repeat the address?"

"The first letter is an s with a hat on it, followed by an x with a w above and to the side of it... BUT CAN YOU PLEASE COME? WE NEED HELP NOW!"

This exchange may sound like something from a bad dream, but it is a new reality for about 100 residents who live on what was once called Trutch Street in Vancouver. Vancouver's city council made a unanimous decision in June to change the name to this indigenous word, which means "Musqueamview," even though it recognizes that there are no fluent speakers of the language remaining in the world today.

Trutch Street was named after Joseph Trutch, BC's first Lieutenant Governor. Trutch is now seen by many as a colonialist oppressor, particularly because he didn't recognize aboriginal land title.

Those who work for emergency services shared their concerns that the new name will make it difficult for people to get help when they need it, but the city decided that it is sufficient to add "unofficial" signs that read "Musqueamview St."



When the English version is used in writing, city staff clarify that it should include a footnote that says "Musqueamview St is a translated name available for use while colonial systems work to accept multilingual characters." The city also provided a QR code in a letter, which residents can scan to hear the proper pronunciation.

The decision also means that those who live on the street will need to update their licences, insurance, registrations, land titles, credit cards, and more. The city of Vancouver is planning "education opportunities" and invited residents to a "community celebration" to commemorate their decision.

Yes, this is another example of woke activism and critical theory at work: stepping on those whom we deem to have been oppressors while justifying today's oppression as deserved. But it is more than that. It serves as a very clear example of how a secular system,

divorced from God, is so enthusiastic about its own religion that it is willing to descend into absurdity. It isn't enough to remove a name they don't like, nor to replace it with a name that is politically correct today. It has to go one step further by adopting a language that we aren't actually capable of speaking or understanding, and then asking the public to celebrate this.

Like changing the pronouns "him" or "her" to "them," the secular worldview is demanding that we ignore logic, truth, and reality, and simply conform to whatever we are told is justice today, even if that changes next year. If others don't like this, the strong-arm of the state is used to coerce and fine transgressors and celebrate those who conform.

What a contrast this is to God's unchanging will for our lives – it is based on the truth, and our lives are blessed when we live accordingly!

WHEN THEY WANT YOU TO WEAR THE RAINBOW... SOMETIMES YOU SHOULD?

BY JON DYKSTRA



In June 13, the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team celebrated "Pride Night" and wore baseball caps with their LA logo in rainbow colors. Pitcher Clayton Kershaw wasn't going to just go along with it, and decided he'd point folks to what God has decided the rainbow really stands for. Kershaw used a white sharpie to write "Gen 9:12-16" right next to the logo on his hat which reads:

"God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it



shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

How's that for being brave and brilliant? Is this what Jesus meant when He told His disciples to be both "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16)?

CANADA JUST ABOUT HAD A BALLOT AS TALL AS YOU

BY JON DYKSTRA



n August 18, voters in the riding of Battle River–Crowfoot went to the polls to elect one of the 214 candidates on the ballot. This was the largest number of candidates in Canadian history to compete for a single parliamentary seat, far surpassing the previous record of 91, which last occurred in the Carleton riding during the 2025 election.

Why were so many people running? Well, 201 of the candidates shared the same official agent, Tomas Szuchewycz, and seemed to be part of a protest group, the “Longest Ballot Committee” (LBC). While the LBC may have some connections with the old satirical Rhinoceros Party (best known for its pledge to repeal the law of gravity), this time they were at least pretending to make a serious point.

I say *pretending* because if they had wanted to make a serious point, you’d think they would have tried to get the word out. But only 24 of their 201 candidates bothered to submit a website to Elections Canada, half of which linked only to YouTube music videos about the candidate. Another candidate’s page stated, “I’m doing this out of spite” and said little else. Only a half dozen or so attempted a policy statement. And the LBC’s Bluesky page vaguely stated they wanted “decisions on election law” passed on to “an independent, non-partisan body, such as a citizens’ assembly to decide.” And how might someone get onto such a body? Appointed? If so, by who? Or elected? By what process? No ready answers could be found.

The real reason for this flood of candidates can be traced to a 2017 ruling that struck down the \$1,000 deposit requirement. The government defended the deposit requirement as a way of heading off frivolous candidates, but Justice Avril Inglis rejected that argument. She pointed to the 27 Rhinoceros Party candidates who had run in the 2017 federal election and “apparently caused no harm to the integrity of the electoral process.”

But 27 joke candidates spread across the country is very different from 200 running in one. The 2025 Carleton riding ballot, with 91 candidates (see picture), was one meter long. With the prospects of a two-meter-long ballot this time, Elections Canada has gone with a write-in ballot. As a *National Post* article put it, “what would have been Canada’s longest-ever ballot has become its shortest-ever.”

Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre, running in this riding and now up against Long Ballot Committee candidates for a second time this year, made three suggestions that would stop the LBC from running hundreds of candidates again:

1. Raise the bar for candidate nominations by requiring 0.5% of the population in any given riding to sign, not just 100 people (that would work out to about 400 people on average)
2. Require that each signature in support of a candidate be exclusive, with no signatory permitted to endorse more than one candidate in the same election
3. Restrict official agents to representing only a single election candidate at any given time.

While the LBC’s fuss is worth reining in, we shouldn’t want a lot of limits on who can run – too many restrictions could become a means for already organized bigger parties to squelch any smaller challengers from getting off the ground (like the Reform Party back in the late 80s). The third suggestion could hurt the Christian Heritage Party, which has a serious message to share, but not a lot of staff to go around.

So, what’s the smallest change that could be made and still be effective? What could help, but not squelch? All that would be needed is Poilievre’s second suggestion. The 201 LBC candidates likely used the same 100 voters’ signatures again and again, but



Pierre Poilievre was one of the 91 names on the 2025 Carleton riding ballot.

this change would have required them to get a total of 20,100 different people to nominate their candidates from a riding in which there are only 85,000 eligible voters.

Ballot photo is adapted from a photo by Harry Kusumah Hidajat, and is used under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license.



PROFESSING GOD'S NAME UNASHAMED AT THE STANLEY CUP

BY LEVI MINDERHOUD

If you're a keen hockey fan, you probably watched the last game of the Stanley Cup Finals between the Edmonton Oilers and Florida Panthers. And while there are many unchristian parts to the game – unsportsmanlike penalties, cursing, sports betting – if you watched long enough, you would have heard one player praise God after lifting the iconic silver trophy.

As each player took his turn hoisting the cup, the various broadcasters were interviewing players on the ice. Florida goalie Sergei Bobrovsky used his minute and a half on Canadian sports broadcaster *Sportsnet* to say this:

"I want to thank God for everything that I have and everything that I don't have... Over my career, I've had so many ups and downs, you know. And one of the last downs I was probably... not many people believed in me that I can come back, you know. Yeah, and again, that's why I thank God for this experience. I couldn't even dream about [this], but now I'm here winning it twice, you know. And again, I couldn't be more humbled and appreciative. And again, I am nothing, you know. It's all God."

On the American broadcaster *TNT Sports*, the Russian goaltender, who identifies as Russian Orthodox, said:

"I want to say glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. You know, I dedicate again... and am humbled and appreciative for everything I went through. And I want to give that glory to God. I want to thank Him for everything I have, for my parents, for my family, my wife Olga, my daughter – my two daughters – for this family [motioning to the Florida team behind him]. Like this family is amazing. I am blessed with everything, and I want to thank God for that."

Although NHL players tend to be fairly private about their faith, Bobrovsky isn't the lone Christian in the game. The Staal brothers – Eric, Marc, and Jordan – are well known for their Christian faith. Winnipeg Jets forward Mark Scheifele helps organize chapel services for his teammates. (Former) San Jose Sharks goalie James Reimer and current Philadelphia Flyers defence-man Ivan Provorov have recently refused to participate in their team's

pride celebrations out of their Christian convictions. Each of these players is a refreshing and encouraging example of Christians trying to live out their faith in all areas of life.

We could certainly use more of that.

ELITES' ACTIONS SHOW THEY DON'T BELIEVE THE PLANET IS FACING A CLIMATE CRISIS

BY JON DYKSTRA

- Oprah Winfrey
- Bill Gates
- Leonardo DiCaprio
- Orlando Bloom
- Ivanka Trump
- Jeff Bezos
- Lauren Sánchez

Is this a list of the rich and famous who have made strong public statements about the pressing need for us all to reduce our CO₂ emissions?

Or are these among the 200 who jetted into Venice in June for a destination wedding, using more than 90 different planes, which together emitted hundreds and perhaps even thousands of tons of CO₂?

They are one and the same.

CAN YOU TRACK ALL THE WAYS YOU'RE TAXED?

BY JON DYKSTRA

Each year the Fraser Institute tracks a “Tax Freedom Day” – this year it happened on June 8 – that tracks Canadians’ total tax burden when you add up all the municipal, provincial, and federal tax burdens. Across the country, the average Canadian spent up until June 8 earning money to cover their taxes, and it was only June 9 going forward that what they earned was what they could keep. So Canadians need to work nearly half the year just to pay our taxes. The average Canadian family with two or more individuals (i.e. this isn’t tracking individuals living on their own) is said to earn \$158,533 a year, and pay \$68,266 in taxes, or 43% of their income.

This Tax Freedom Day differs from province to province, depending on their tax burden. In Manitoba it arrives May 17 (37.5% of their income), the very earliest date in Canada, with the latest occurring in Quebec, on June 21 (47%).

Do those figures strike you as higher than expected?

They did to me, so I dug a bit deeper. The biggest tax we’re all hit with is income tax, but it is far from the only one. The government taxes us all sorts of niggling ways, which has the result of hiding from us the cumulative total of all these taxes. Just consider all the different ways you get taxed when you earn a dollar. The amounts below are based on the Fraser Institute’s purported \$158,533 average family income.

- **Payroll taxes: \$16,199** – Before you even get your cheque, both you and your employer will have to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, and some provincial Health Taxes.
- **Income taxes: \$23,100** – The federal and provincial governments each have their own income tax on the money you take home.
- **Sales taxes: \$10,091** – When you spend any of your remaining income, both the federal government, and all provinces except

Alberta (and the territories) will charge you a sales tax.

- **Capital gains tax: \$6,656** – If you invest your money hoping to make it grow, you’ll be taxed on any gains you make.
- **Property taxes: \$2,310** – If you used your money to buy property, then every year you’ll be taxed on that too.
- **Sin taxes: \$2,310** – All taxes make things more expensive, but sin taxes are specifically geared to do so, to discourage consumption. They are placed on alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis. Tariffs and fuel could fall under this category too – both are meant to punish consumption – but the Fraser Institute placed them in other categories below.
- **Fuel/vehicle/carbon taxes: \$2,267** – There are additional taxes placed on gas, and while the Trudeau carbon tax is now hidden from consumers, it is still applied to industry, which will, of course, have to then pass it on to their consumers.
- **Other miscellaneous taxes: \$1,136** – These include import duties (i.e., tariffs), amusement taxes, natural resource fees, etc. and etc.

So, that’s how it all adds up. And, to make matters worse, the Fraser Institute figure doesn’t even include what we should call the **hidden inflation tax**. Over the last 4 years, prices in Canada have risen, cumulatively around 17.5%. If our average Canadian family spent what income remained, that rise in inflation would amount to another **\$13,000** worth of impact from this “tax” – their \$90,267 of remaining income would now have only \$77,000 worth of purchasing power, compared to just four years previous. But to a fiscally-profligate government

that’s piled up a huge debt, inflation can be attractive. It not only deflates the value of the dollar, *but deflates the value of the country’s debt too*, easing the pressure on the government to curtail their spending. In other words, inflation really is a tax, raising revenue of a sort for the government, at the expense of citizens.

And we’re still not done tallying yet, because our governments are planning on spending more than they even collect, which, if that additional sum had to be paid now, would require another **\$5,500** from our average Canadian. Instead, our federal and provincial governments are borrowing it to a cumulative projected deficit of \$84.9 billion in 2025, saddling future generations with repayment, making this **a tax on our children**.

Why so many different and even hidden taxes? Well, if everyone knew just how much we’re paying, would we stand for it? The more important point might simply be the enormous amount. God says that where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also (Matt. 6:21), and the amount of treasure we’re investing in our government – half of everything that families make – shows where Canadians’ hearts are turning. We’ve made a god out of government, and that needs to stop (Ex. 20:3). So next election, when the politicians come knocking, we need to demand less from them. And we need to explain why they don’t need nearly so much money, because, after all, God has called on other levels of government, including the Church, families, and even self-government, to fill so many of the roles that our political leaders have tried to take over.



SUPREME COURT OF CANADA UPHOLDS PROSTITUTION LAW

BY MARK PENNINGA

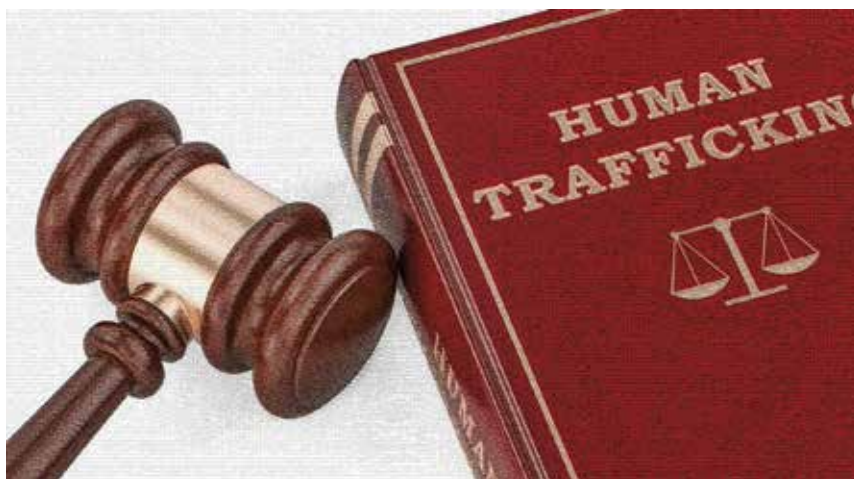
In an important decision that didn't get covered by the mainstream media this July, Canada's highest court made a unanimous decision to uphold key parts of the country's prostitution laws.

The law, passed in 2014, went after the Johns rather than the prostitutes, making it illegal to *purchase sex*, but not penalizing the *selling* of it. Why? The goal was to reduce the demand for prostitution while making it possible for those trapped in prostitution to leave without prosecution.

Mikhail Kloubakov and Hicham Moustaine worked as drivers for a sex-trafficking business and were charged under sections of the prostitution law relating to procuring people for prostitution and benefitting from the prostitution of others. They appealed this all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, and also asked the court to declare the entire law to be unconstitutional, which could have left Canada with no restrictions on prostitution.

ARPA Canada teamed up with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) in a joint intervention before the court, arguing that the law be maintained to uphold human dignity and equality, and to expose the harm that results from commodifying sexual intimacy.

Lia Milousis, a lawyer who worked on behalf of the EFC and



alongside ARPA's lawyer John Sikkema, expressed gratitude for the decision. As she noted in *The Acacia Arc* newsletter,

"The Court notes that Parliament views profiting from the commodification of another human being's sexual activity as inherently involving exploitation.... It deferred to Parliament, which I would say and the EFC and ARPA argued, is the correct approach."

The law is also being challenged separately in an Ontario case, which ARPA is also intervening in.

ALBERTA'S NATURAL GAS KEY TO REDUCING THE WORLD'S CO₂?

BY JON DYKSTRA

Given that our government is scared of a climate crisis, and presuming it doesn't want Canadians freezing in the dark, what's to be done?

Well, a new Fraser Institute study says we can have cheap abundant energy and reduce our CO₂ impact all at the same time. That might sound too good to be true, but *Exporting Canadian LNG to the World* argues Canada doubling our natural gas production is the key. Not all fossil fuels produce the same amount of greenhouse gases (GHG).

Dried dung, used as a traditional heating source around the world, is one

of the highest GHG producers per unit of energy created. While coal is better than dung, natural gas is better still. However, as the report's authors Elmira Aliakbari and Julio Mejía note,

"Coal, a major source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, remains a leading energy source in many Asian countries, especially China and India....natural gas, with its lower carbon footprint, offers a promising alternative to coal."

So, if Canada exported its increased natural gas production to Asia to reduce

their reliance on coal, that could reduce the world's overall global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 630 million tonnes – it'd be the equivalent of us reducing Canada's GHG emissions by 90%.

That's amazing, but it's also a complete reversal of where the Liberals have been taking us. As the *Toronto Sun's* Bryan Passifiume put it, "Liberal energy policy has largely consisted of leaving Canada's energy resources in the ground..." Will they chart a new path going forward?

MP says: No MAiD for the mentally ill

BILL C-218 PROPOSES TO SCRAP EXPANSION OF EUTHANASIA FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

by Levi Minderhoud

Reformed MP Tamara Jansen has introduced a new bill that would repeal the expansion of euthanasia to those with mental illness. Four years into the conversation about euthanasia for mental illness, we can be incredibly happy that there is another proposal to eliminate one of the most egregious parts of Canada's euthanasia regime.

HISTORY OF THE PLANNED EXPANSION OF EUTHANASIA FOR THOSE WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

Euthanasia for those with a mental illness was first raised in Bill C-7 in 2021, which originally set a date of March 17, 2023 when euthanasia for those with mental illness would be legalized. After a report by a committee of the Quebec legislature recommended *against* euthanasia for mental illness and an expert panel report on euthanasia for mental illness noted significant risks, the government passed Bill C-39, which delayed the expansion of euthanasia for mental illness until 2024.

As that date approached, former Member of Parliament Ed Fast introduced Bill C-314, *An Act to amend the Criminal*

Code (medical assistance in dying). If passed, that bill would have repealed the expansion of euthanasia to those with mental illness as the only condition causing their request. Although that bill received unanimous support from the Conservative, NDP, and Green Party, along with 8 Liberals, it failed to pass by a vote of 150-167.

As ARPA noted at the time, such a close vote, especially on a social issue dealing with a matter of life and death for those with mental illness, sends a message that Canadians have serious reservations about expanding MAiD further. If only nine more MPs had voted in favor instead of against, the bill would have passed 2nd reading and advanced to committee for further study.

In response to the close defeat of the bill and in light of concerns raised by nearly every provincial government that they weren't prepared, the government decided shortly after to delay the expansion of euthanasia for mental illness for a second time, this time until 2027. In the wake of the vote, the Conservatives – who had unanimously voted in favor of entirely repealing the expansion – were

riding high in the polls, were expected to form government, and promised to repeal the expansion of MAiD to those with a mental illness. But Trudeau's resignation and Carney's ascension led to a different outcome in April's election.

With no Conservative government in charge of things and no commitment from the Liberals to revisit the issue, MP Tamara Jansen used her opportunity to introduce a private member's bill on the issue. Her Bill C-218 is identical to the previous one introduced by MP Ed Fast and intends to permanently eliminate – rather than just delay – the expansion of euthanasia for the mentally ill.

THE TRAGEDY OF EUTHANASIA FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

Every case of euthanasia is a murder. And every case of euthanasia in our health care system is fundamentally at odds with the central premise of health care of doing no harm. But extending MAiD to those with a mental illness is particularly tragic.

Simple logic dictates that MAiD isn't appropriate for people with mental illness. People who have a mental illness are not

able to give fully informed consent to MAiD. By definition, their reasoning isn't entirely sound, and so they should not be put in a position where they could choose to end their life. We should be providing suicide prevention – not assisted suicide – for those who are suicidal because of a mental illness.

As a nation, we have poured resources into suicide prevention across the country, particularly for people with mental illness. Canada has a suicide crisis hotline to help people escape suicidal ideation. We should continue to support suicide prevention rather than encouraging suicide assistance through MAiD. Indeed, offering suicide assistance undermines suicide prevention efforts.

As a country, we raise awareness around mental illness and encourage people to seek help or treatment. For example, Bell Let's Talk Day is all about reducing the stigma around mental illness and getting people the mental health care that they need. MAiD for mental illness entirely undercuts these efforts. Rather than encouraging people to access mental health care, legalizing MAiD for mental illness encourages people to end their lives instead.

To really drive home the tragedy of euthanasia for mental illness, consider this story that we shared with young people at ARPA Canada's "God & Government" conference a few months ago:

It's February, and as you've experienced it is cold, and snowy. Just behind Parliament Hill the wind howls across the Alexandra Bridge.

It's just after dinner time, and a man originally on his way home from the corner store is now standing on one of the struts that hold the bridge in place. Emergency vehicles have begun swarming around, the bridge has been cordoned off, and traffic is being redirected to the Portage Bridge further up river. A camera crew from Ottawa CTV station, craving a good story, hover just off the bridge, attempting to see what the commotion is all about.

Paramedics prepare warming blankets and pull out supplies. Police officers and other personnel chat to

MP Tamara Jansen has introduced a bill identical to former Member of Parliament Ed Fast's bill to repeal euthanasia in the cases of mental illness.



each other through earpieces. They're waiting for someone. A moment later, an officer jumps out of a police car that pulls up just a few feet away from where the man clings to the buttress of the bridge.

"What's your name, son?" the officer hollers over the whistle of the wind. "Can we talk about this right now?"

"I just don't think I can do it anymore," the man shouts back. "I'm done with everything. My depression is simply too much to bear. I don't have any desire to live anymore."

"I see," the officer shouts back.

"Well, if that's the case..."

The officer jogs up to the side of the bridge, snow crunching under his heavy boots until he stands near the railing where the man is just within reach.

He hoists himself up onto the railing, reaches over and stretches until he has a hold of the bottom of the man's heel. With a sudden jerk, he wrenches the man's right leg high into the air. The man disappears into the darkness below. "We're good," the cop chirps into his radio, "it's what he wanted."

The following morning's headline

This is a homeless encampment in downtown Regina. Back in 2024 a University of Calgary meta-analysis study reported that of those experiencing homelessness, mental illness is common – two thirds of those studied were presently experiencing some kind of mental illness. Doctors killing their patients is already being treated as medicine, and if such medical murder is legally extended to the mentally ill, then what ethical or logical reasons will the government have to withhold offering such a "treatment" to people in these circumstances?



Picture credit: JHVEPhoto / istockphoto.com

in the *Ottawa Citizen* reads, "Heroic police officer supports a young man's right to Die with Dignity, in the face of overwhelming and debilitating depression."

Virtually no Canadian wants to live in such a country. And yet, legalizing euthanasia in any form but especially euthanasia for mental illness, functionally puts our health care system in the exact same position.

THE ROAD BEFORE US


Bill C-218 again offers Canada the opportunity to step back from the euthanasia ledge and onto firmer ground that respects the value and dignity of very human life. We are grateful that another MP has taken up this issue and is pushing the government to repeal further expansion of euthanasia.

The new Parliament after the spring election has a fairly similar makeup in government as when Bill C-314 – the previous proposal to scrap the planned expansion of euthanasia for mental illness – was voted on. Prime Minister Carney has not expressed where he stands on the issue of MAiD. Perhaps he will whip his caucus to defend the previous government's law, but perhaps he will allow a free vote among his MPs on the issue.

The fact that this is still a live issue and that now four separate pieces of legislation have arisen on this topic in just four years is a testament to your continual advocacy! ARPA groups across the country have worked hard to email and meet with your MPs, talk with your neighbors, and deliver nearly 250,000 flyers to spread the message of caring, not killing.

This has contributed to the ongoing conversation, but with another bill on

the table, we need to get back at it. Take a few minutes to email your own Member of Parliament expressing your support of Bill C-218 and ask them to support it as well. Copy Prime Minister Mark Carney, Minister of Justice Sean Fraser, and Health Minister Marjorie Michel on that email, encouraging the government to support the legislation as well.

As Christians, we can continue to advocate for caring, not killing, in all circumstances. And we can continue to put pressure on our elected officials to do the same. 

Levi Minderhoud is a policy analyst for ARPA Canada (ARPACanada.ca) where this post first appeared. It is reprinted with permission. Picture credit: office of MP Tamara Jansen.

Faith-based addiction recovery.

Through the truth of Scripture and the freedom found only in Christ, we guide individuals toward healing from addiction. Our mission is to see lives restored and renewed by the power of God for His glory.

01

OUTPATIENT PROGRAM

Beginning **January 2026**, certified counsellors will walk patients through a 10-step outpatient program focused on individual recovery and family support for addiction-related challenges.

02

INPATIENT DEVELOPMENT

With the Lord's blessing, Agape Recovery plans to develop a site for an inpatient care facility and reintegration support, offering 30-60-90 day programs for men and women.

03

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

We aim to expand our addiction services with integrated mental health care. This will support individuals facing a range of psychological conditions and challenges.

Support this initiative.

Contact us to learn more – agaperecovery.ca



LESS SCREENS = MORE LIFE

What we learned by stepping away from our phones for 10 days



We were hoping for 200 to sign up. Turns out a *lot* of us were ready for this – more than 900 registered for RP’s July 21-30 screen-fast challenge, and we heard about others who joined the fast without signing up. Safe to say, over a thousand people across the country came together to put our screens in their place.

That is amazing!

But maybe it shouldn’t have been surprising. God’s people know He wants us to make good use of the time He’s given us, and we know that our phones too often have us wasting moments that turn into minutes, which can add up into lost hours each week. We needed to hit the reset and get back control.

So how’d we all do? Of the 160 responses we received, three quarters managed to stay away from their screens for 9 days or better. They also shared stories, tips on what worked, what they found toughest, suggestions on how we could do this even better next time, and, what got them most excited about the fast.

And we’re very excited to share their thoughts with you.

EYE OPENING

One term kept popping up in the feedback – “eye-opening.”

“It was a very humbling experience for me. I am a fairly busy person as it is, between nursing school, 2 kids, and running a household, but I will say that the amount of hours I still managed to waste away doing mindless scrolling or pointless video-watching was disconcerting, to put it lightly.”

“I thought I was pretty good about staying off my phone, but I really had to remind myself not to pick it up. I’ve only had a phone since October, and already it has become such an integral part of my life.”

“The screen-fast started while we were away on vacation, and what a blessing this was! At first, I thought it would be easy; after all, I had books to read, family to visit with, and a beach calling my name. I had deleted all of my social media accounts a couple of years ago. I thought I barely used my phone in comparison to others. Boy was I wrong. I never realized how often I was reaching for my phone, oftentimes for no specific purpose other than to fill time or cure boredom! Looking at the weather, reading the news, playing games – my phone sucked me in even without social media being present! The screen-fast has truly been a blessing. It reminded me of the value of

being present, of shared experiences, of all the little moments that I would have missed out on had I been scrolling on my phone. I learned that it’s okay to have moments of quiet, stillness, and even boredom! Sometimes, it is in these quiet moments of being in creation that God speaks the loudest: His power in the wind and waves, His beauty in the flowers, His tenderness, care and grace towards me in that He used these moments to calm any anxieties that were lurking within me.

Thank you, *Reformed Perspective*, for encouraging this experience!”

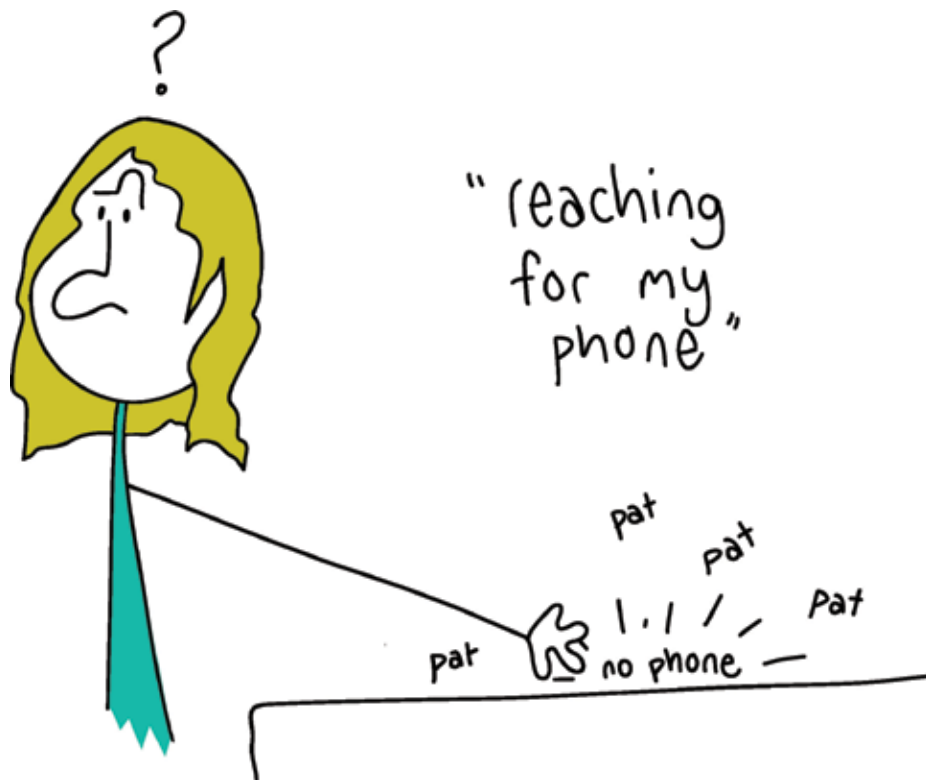
“My oldest (11) had a hard time sticking to the screen-fast and caved 3 times. Hard to believe how much of a pull a screen has on a person! Makes me want to live in the *Little House on the Prairie* times where screens just weren’t available and outside play was their entertainment.”

“I just itched to check social media and would find myself comforted by just holding my phone close even though there was nothing to look at. I realized that I don’t like this about myself.”

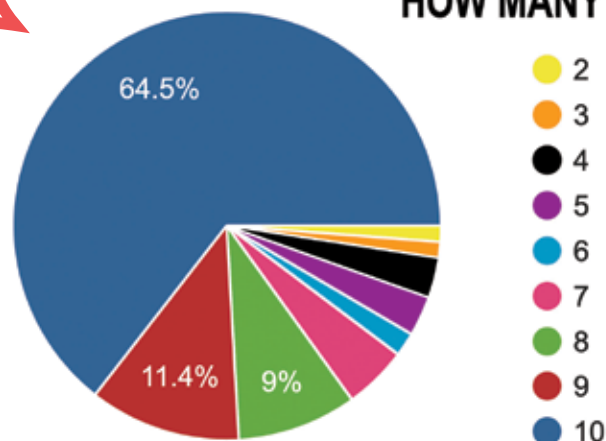
“It was well needed and brought my screen time down to about 15-30 minutes a day from my usual 2-2.5 hours. I hope to keep my screen time down as much as I can because I’m so much more productive and observant of the world around me when I’m not on it.”

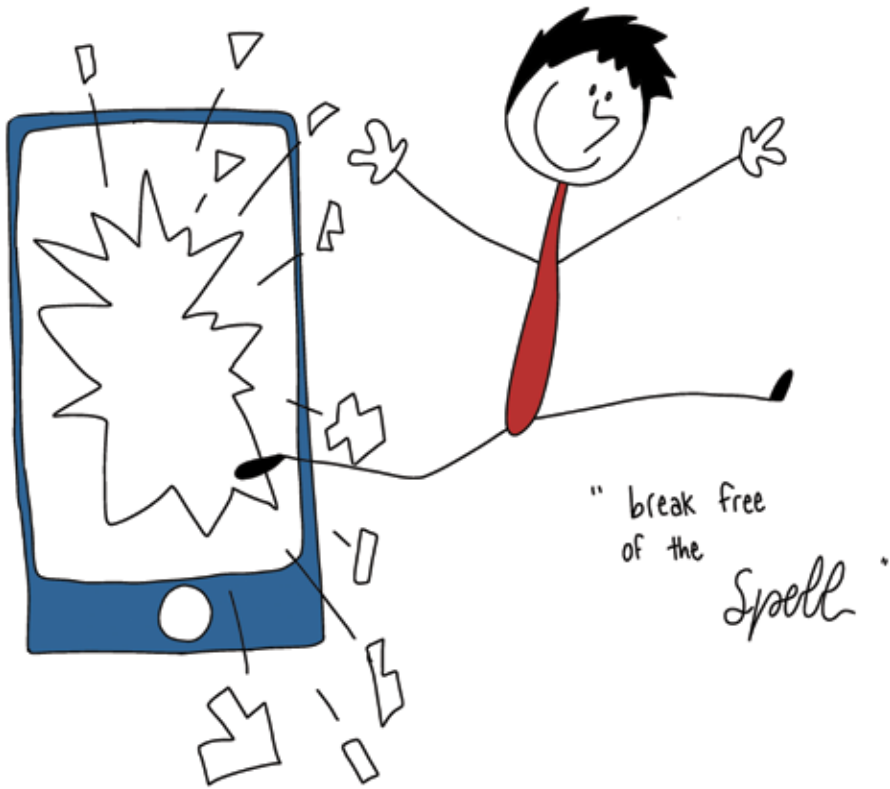
TOGETHER IS EASIER

Some participants didn’t know anyone else doing it, even with a thousand across the country involved. Those with friends and family joining in found it much easier.



HOW MANY DAYS?





"My sister and I challenged each other and we both finished (almost) successfully. We both started reading again after having lost the habit of reading and gained the habit of scrolling. I'm very happy to be reading again and I noticed how much I can get done with the time I used to waste. I will definitely be more careful with my screen time in the future."

"I found since my family didn't participate it was hard to maintain self-control when others were using their devices."

"I did it with my wife – we found that especially when we were both free in the evening we would be more productive, but also, we spent more quality time with each other. It made me realize how often I would just reach for my phone when I was bored or between tasks; it feels great to have kicked that habit."

"We had family come for summer holidays and they willingly partook (kids too)! Fishing and bike rides at 7 am rather than cartoons...win! We enjoyed

creation so much more, especially in the evenings. I loved having it as a challenge; it kept me more accountable and successful. Thanks for doing this for us!"

DON'T ALWAYS NEED INSTANT ANSWERS

"I have a tendency to google everything as it comes up in a conversation, and not being able to was refreshing, and kept me more focused on the person instead of the topic."

"The thing that surprised me was how often I had the compulsion to Google a question that popped into my mind, or research the proper way to do something, or make a quick purchase of something I remembered I needed. I realized that technology is very helpful, but also there is benefit in taking pause, making a shopping list, or asking a friend rather than Google when I have a gardening question. My 10-year-old said that she found more space to be creative when the computer and TV was off. "

"My kids didn't miss their own screen time, but they realized how much they

asked me to look things up for them. Not having immediate access to information is not such a bad thing."

FAMILY LIFE

Less screens = more life was evident on the home front.

"We had meals at the kitchen table instead of in the living room while watching YouTube."

"I noticed our kids really improved in playing for longer periods of time. If they complained they were bored I would suggest they try an activity for 20 minutes and often 1 hour later they would still be busy."

"We did do more different things together when we didn't spend as much time playing games or watching videos on the tv or computer. It forced my kids, in particular, to stretch their imagination a bit to come up with more different things to do. The intermittent cries of 'I'm bored!' were met with, 'Well, then you need to find something to do!' My kids had always been good at keeping busy, but it was good for them to exercise those creative muscles, and remind us all of all the options that we have, both on and off the screen."

"The main things I've been struggling with were not wasting time on my phone (e.g., games, videos), not using my phone during time with my toddler, and not using my phone in bed, so I focused on those and was able to significantly improve in those areas. It definitely helped with spending quality time with my son without distractions so that I was more focused on him and his needs."

"It helped me reconnect with my wife. Instead of sitting on the couch consuming content in the evenings, we went for more walks and had more time to talk about what was going on."

"There was a lot more interacting happening throughout the family, and everyone seemed happier. It felt like a lot less fighting happened."

"It was easier to connect and interact with my kids, I realized how much I used my phone when they were awake even though I thought I was being conscious of not using it while they were awake."

"My children (4 and under) appeared less needy, and I think it is because I was more focused on what was going on around me."

"Because I was screen-free, my kids didn't even ask for screen time. My 18-year-old daughter loved it. She noticed she was far more creative and read more books (which is her natural habitat) than when she had a screen to distract her."

"It was harder than I thought it would be. Especially right before bed. But not being on screens before bed allowed more time for my wife and I to spend time together."

WANTING TO BE AN EXAMPLE

"Helped me to realize that in a screen-filled world, as a parent and adult, I am an example to my daughter and the younger generation as to how much a phone has a hold on me."

"It was better when the children are around not to have YouTube on in the background; I could be more present with them, even while doing dishes. I think I will continue to try to save my Podcast/YouTube listening for when the children are in bed."

"I am disappointed that I didn't do this sooner. My oldest kiddo is 7 and I feel like my phone has been a large part of her life. It's my job now, as it was before, to teach her along with my other kids how to use this technology properly and not to use and abuse it. I am striving to use it less and less, and more for emergencies, or for the free time that I've allowed myself to use it."

DEVOTIONS

Many mentioned how helpful the fast was for their devotions, making sure time with the Lord didn't get crowded out by inconsequential.



"Just made me realize I need to read my Bible FIRST.....not after the morning's scroll!"

"I found I actually had time to do my devotions in the morning, even if my kids were up. Before I had been grabbing my phone if I wasn't going to have perfect uninterrupted time for devotions."

"My morning devotions improved immediately! When you don't have your phone in the morning you really do need to replace it with something. "

READING

In addition to the Bible, many, many other books (and at least one magazine) were read too. One person shared: "More reading in 10 days than the last 3 years!"

"I definitely did more reading! I haven't picked up a fictional book in a long time because as a busy mom I found it a 'waste of time' to read fiction.... somehow scrolling on my phone every evening to have some mindless down time was better?! I don't think so. I enjoy that time in the evening to relax for a bit, but it is much better spent reading an engaging book!"

"I read the whole RP magazine front to back in the moments that I would pick up my phone when I was bored."

"The biggest difference for me was dedicating more intentional time to read. I managed to finish 3 of Jane Austen's novels. I'm thrilled to add them to my recommended reading list!"

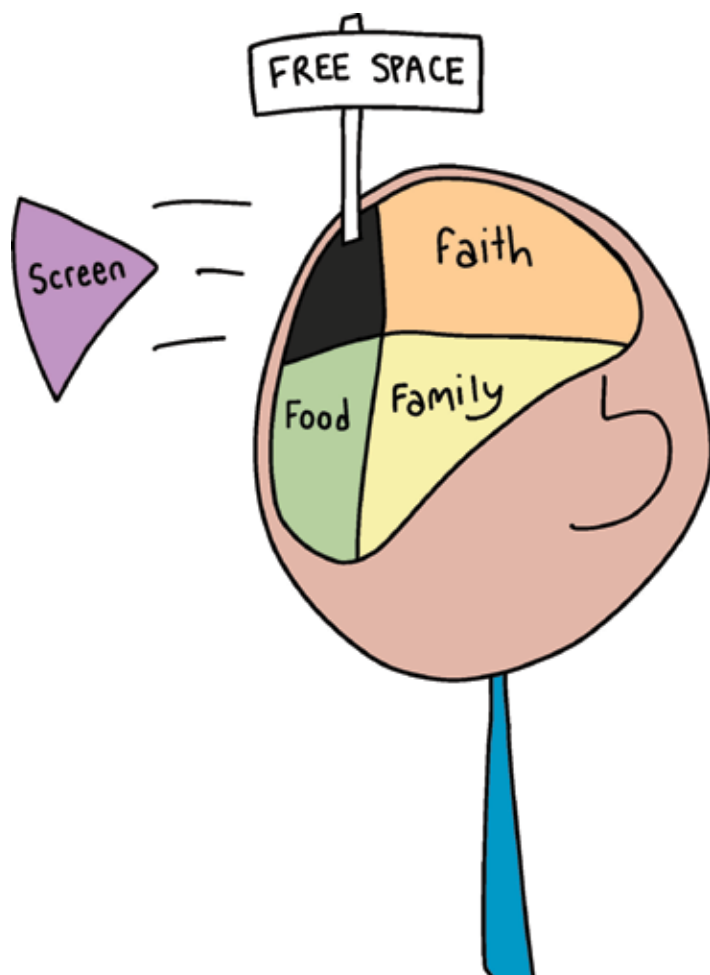
"...relearned how to read a book in under a day. Been through so many books."

"...for downtime, instead of watching a show every night like I normally do, I read more and had more conversations with my family as well."

BETTER MENTAL PLACE

Sociologist Jonathan Haidt is convinced that social media is fueling this generation's teen mental health crisis, but doing without Facebook and Instagram isn't just good for the kids.

"In regards to social media particularly, the fast made me realize that while social media can be enjoyable and good, it's also almost like a subconscious burden to try



to ‘keep up’ with everyone and everything all the time. Being off of it for 10 days was really freeing and refreshing.”

“I... learned that when I’m anxious, instead of running to Google to try to ease my anxiety, I should run to God in prayer.”

“It felt good, in the sense that my brain didn’t feel distracted by useless information coming in at a fast pace. I found I could spend time on my screen sorting photos, but I didn’t scroll Instagram. It took a few days to notice that my brain felt a little less full, and I felt totally focused on my life, instead of having a 20-minute binge session after lunch to be inundated with strangers’ lives. I did read more, during that after-lunch quiet time, and also before bed. My screen time didn’t interfere with family time, it was just something I would do to ‘wind down’ or ‘relax’ once kids were napping or in bed for the night. I didn’t miss it.

One evening I did log on to find a recipe I’d saved on Instagram and ended up scrolling...I felt gross. It felt like I had to re-join the real world when I finally put my phone down, and it became very obvious to me how little value it adds to my life for the amount of time spent on the app.”

“One of the biggest things for me was not checking my work email on my phone. I didn’t realize how much head space that had been taking up! It was a big relaxant to have set hours to check only on my laptop.”

“My brain felt quieter. All those little moments where I would have quickly checked Facebook, or scrolled, to ‘relax’ were removed from my day and I didn’t realize how much they cluttered my mind. The screen-fast really helped me to be more aware of that, which will hopefully give me more control over those impulses to reach for my phone

moving forward. My husband and I both did it and found ourselves going on more evening bike rides, having more chats, and just doing more quality time things than we did before. It was so refreshing, and I think we definitely feel more connected. I also had more focused time for devotions, and because I deleted many apps from my phone, I had no reason to pick it up and get distracted. I’m hoping to keep a lot of the habits enforced by the fast because I definitely need them, and life is better when your phone has less time in your hand!”

“What a beautiful challenge! My experience was that I suddenly became much more present: in my home life, my church life, and my friend life. It brought me closer to God in my devotional time, provided time for reflection, enabled me to read most of a book, and granted me a peace that I didn’t even realize was missing.”

“I also felt less stress because I was not being inundated with news.... Although a person never thinks they are spending ‘that much’ time on their phone, it’s not just the physical act of scrolling or being on social media. It occupies mental space after you put the phone down. Your attention is divided and things you see and do on your phone inadvertently affect your mood and ability to focus throughout the day. You may be worrying about something you saw in the news and it will affect how you treat people around you, even if you cannot do anything about it, or it doesn’t even really affect you. You may be in the habit of checking your phone for notifications every few minutes (you’d be surprised how often you may do this) and it can make the simplest tasks take much longer than required, which will in turn make you feel frustrated. The less time you spend on your phone, the more wisdom you will use when you do pick it up. I noticed I was much less likely to scroll Instagram and more naturally inclined to listen to a sermon in the evening after the children were in bed. I was always feeling stressed about the time I thought I was spending on my phone,

and appreciate the push to try just being on it less. It has certainly been an eye opener for me!”

“I found myself more content with everything, and could easily enjoy hobbies I had long forgotten. I found myself thanking God for the little moments and was reminded of the blessings He has given me.”

“I listen to a lot of podcasts and audiobooks while doing housework, and not doing that for 10 days made me realize that always having something on to listen to does not help me be present with my family. It was good to have the quiet space, and engage in some spiritual warfare by taking thoughts captive that are not obedient to Christ. I’m not going back on any social medias because I’ve broken the spell that says I will miss out or not be in-the-know.... They take up too much brain space that is needed for more important things.”

BETTER SLEEP

“I feel I slept better because of no screen time before bed, and I read a biblical book in the morning instead of going on Facebook.”

“...I had to get used to sleeping without going on my phone right before bed. I had dreams that I could remember in the morning!”

MORE PRODUCTIVITY

Ten minutes here, and ten minutes there, can really add up in time wasted, but also in time put to good use.

“I somewhat reluctantly signed up for the screen-fast, as my wife and kids were participating, but reflecting on it now, I can see God’s hand working through them and the screen-fast. I spent more time reading the Bible and additional study material, and more time in prayer and reflection. I was able to think more clearly after the first few days, as the cheap distraction of screens was gone. This gave me time and focus to think through issues at work which I’ve been contending with for around

a year, and come to difficult decisions there that I had perhaps been avoiding.”

“I am working on a baby blanket for my son (knitting) and I was able to set a minimum for how much I wanted to complete on it daily, a minimum that seemed impossible to me before, and I was actually able to meet the minimum no problem.”

“My husband participated as well, and has continued to not go onto social media. I found it most difficult to not pop onto social media when waiting for the mundane things, like water to boil/meat to cook. I would often go onto social media in these moments; at first it felt odd to not scroll but I quickly would start to tidy the kitchen in these moments, so the result is a

cleaner house :) and I did spend more time in God’s Word, and reading short devotions here and there instead of picking up my phone.”

“The first few days I noticed a significant amount of improvement in my productivity. Without doom-scrolling on my phone, I was able to head out for a walk, dust off my book, and go to bed on time. I was able to spend a little more time with family and friends. Rather than watching a movie with my girlfriend after a long day, we decided to head out for a drive to enjoy the summer weather, which was awesome! I was able to spend more time reading my Bible before bed by keeping my phone in the kitchen, and used a good old-fashioned alarm clock to wake me up.”



LASTING IMPACT?

How can we apply the lessons learned? Some are planning on “having periodic screen-fasts in the future.”

“...our family has decided to do a ‘modified fast’ for the rest of the summer and this was initiated by our children. Our stage of life (everyone working and/or attending post-secondary) means we don’t often have large blocks of time together but it was nice to spend more time in the evening sharing about our days and chatting.”

“Going forward, I’ve used the settings in my phone to limit my time on certain apps. I’ve also cut out around half of the influencers I follow on Instagram so that I’m only following people I learn from (news, DIY, Christian content etc.)”

“Now that I’m done, I’m way more okay with leaving my phone in a bag or even at home.”

“Going forward, I will be deleting social media apps from my phone. Thank you for prompting us to give this challenge a try! I think that it’s fair to say that it will be life changing.”

“I intend to do this screen-fast again in the future and strongly encourage anyone who has not done it to do so, and aim to grow in service of our gracious God.”

“I enjoyed the screen fast, and hope to do it again, and include more of my family members.”

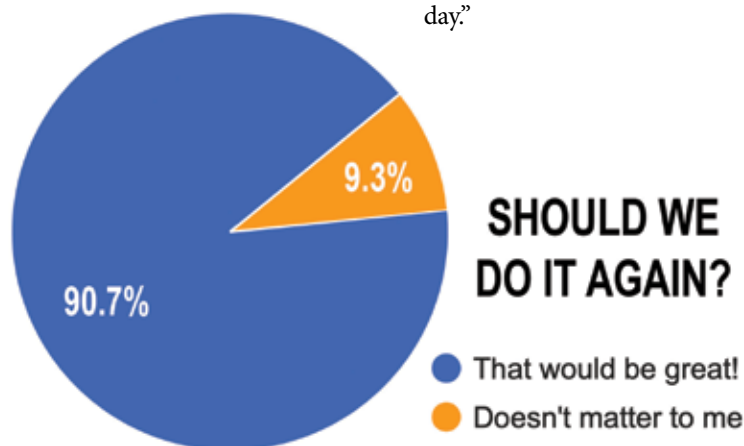
“From the get go, I decided not to try 10 days but figured I could do 5. And you know what? It was easy! And it was good for me. I know I spend too much time on social media and playing games on my phone. I plan to do it again on a regular basis.”

TIPS

The most common tip mentioned was to delete social media apps from our phones. Another idea was to buy an alarm clock instead of using your phone to wake up. Here’s more...

“...eliminate phones from your bedroom. Reading my Bible nightly is way more likely to happen when Instagram is more than a click away. That Christian influencer’s advice might be insightful, but God’s Word will not return empty (Isaiah 55:11).”

“I ...have continued a few habits I built, like delaying the first phone check of the day.”



SCREEN-FAST STRICTNESS – HOW TOUGH IS TOUGH ENOUGH?

The screen-fast sign-up form had a space for “My listed exceptions” where people could list the important but limited screen-usage that their life and job required of them. Unfortunately, after the screen-fast began, we started hearing from people who didn’t sign up because they thought no exceptions were allowed.

Shucks. I wish we’d managed to be louder about the possibility of exceptions, since we wanted to give everyone every reason to participate. For many this was more about turning away from social media than screens. Some listened to podcasts instead of watching videos, even if that meant they were using their phone. Exceptions maybe, but good ones. So, come next time, your screen-fast could look like this:


“We didn’t do any internet browsing (I searched for recipe inspiration via *books*!), or anything that could become a time waster/rabbit hole. We did have to order some needed items that came up (quick order and done), checked email once a

day in case there was committee work that needed attention (unlikely but possible this time of year). I spent more time in real books (loved that!) and no browsing/scrolling in bed before lights out (probably my favorite part), and used messaging as needed for necessary communication (though for extended chats, phone calls happened too, more than usual). I didn’t open Facebook or Instagram (my biggest time wasters) at all. My husband didn’t open Facebook Marketplace or Varagesale (his scrolling vices).”

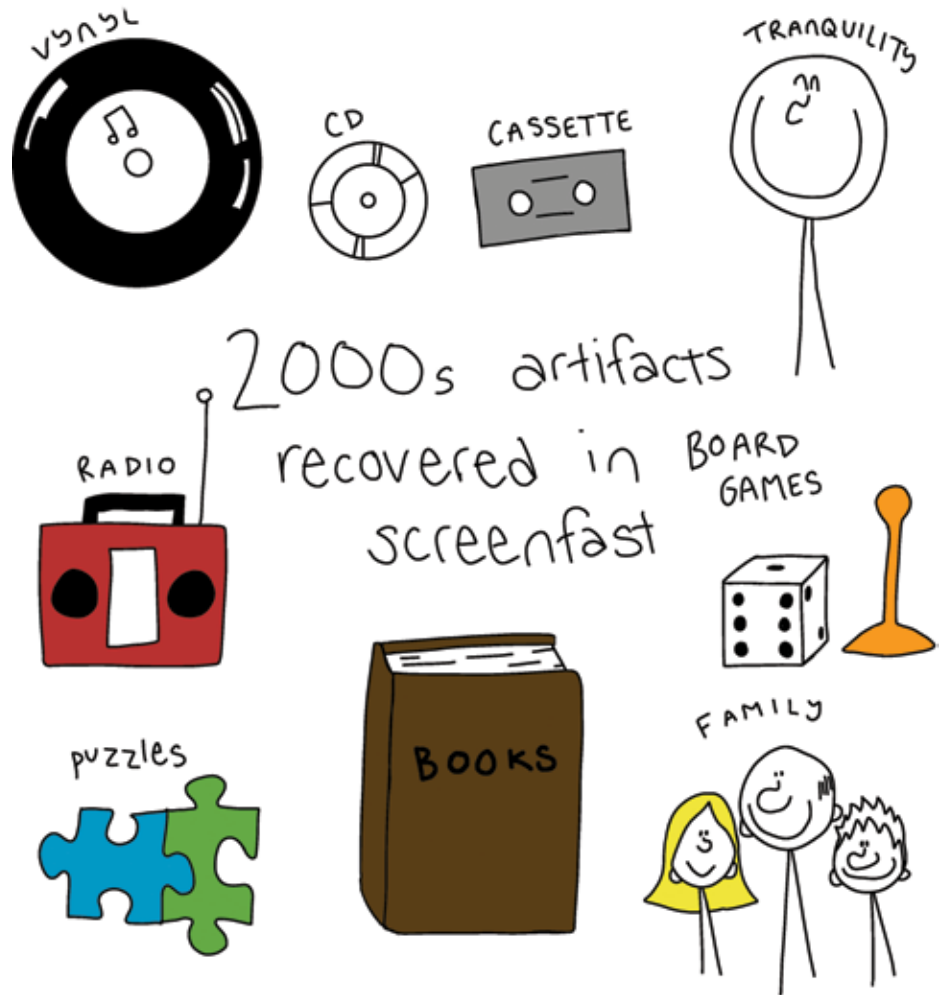
Some also thought the “the ‘rules’ were vague, and left too much for interpretation so creating an excuse...was easy at times.” Good point – the exceptions might allow some of us more flexibility than we should take. For example, I fully planned for my family to go just 9 days, because part way through the fast we had a 5-hour plane flight. I thought that would be too long to be stuck in one seat without a video to pass the time. But my wife encouraged the kids to read, play

"I found freedom also in separating my phone from bed time and wake time. This led to more prayer time. I think I was allowing the phone, instead of faith, to ease me into my day and I'm looking forward to continuing [my new] practice."

"We realized that phones are still an essential part of our lives but that the 'social media' part of it doesn't need to be so extensive. A regular phone call to someone can be so enjoyable and truly connecting. I have since called many people and just had a good chat. Hoping to keep this method up. I will keep my notifications 'OFF'."

"I made a rule for myself a couple years ago, that at the start of every day, I may not look at my phone until after my breakfast devotions were finished. It really helps to be very disciplined about not falling into bad habits. Make rules and stick to them. I also tell myself that it's okay to be bored." 

Cartoon illustrations by Hannah Penninga.



card games, chat, and watch the scenery out the window, and they all did just fine. It was wonderful that we didn't just wimp out.

Here's how some fasters used creativity and determination to keep their screen usage to an absolute minimum.

- "Went camping with the family.....Had to get out our old GPS to find where we had to go. Left the phone home."
- "Early on the kids kept coming up with reasons to go online – a recipe they needed, some piece of music they wanted to play, and we got a little Pharisaic, letting them ask their neighbor friend to help download whatever. It still meant that, instead of turning to a screen, they had to interact with a friend."
- "I did take the opportunity to sift through some of my parents' CD collections and listen to music that way..."
- "We found it very helpful to become aware of our instant gratification culture in the family. Suddenly Amazon shopping was off the table and if somebody needed something they had to wait until we went to town."

- "The hardest thing for my wife and I is that about twice a week we would watch a show in the evening together. Otherwise, I found it freeing but not super difficult."
- "I was in the kitchen and realized I was missing an ingredient for dinner. Usually, I would just grab my phone and Google substitutes or a recipe for what I'm missing. During my screen-fast I had to thumb through a cookbook, or just wing it."
- "...we had a 4-hour drive during the challenge where they would normally get a tablet to watch shows. Instead, we picked out a couple fun fidgets, coloring books and new crayons, and I read them a chapter book. On the way home... even though the 10 days were past, the kids didn't ask for a tablet once!?"

So how hard is too hard? When it's so hard you don't think it's possible to do it. When is it too easy? Maybe it's like weight training – if you don't strain, what's the gain?

– Jon Dykstra

"...in the image of God He created them."

RP's summer photo contest results, adult division

For this year's contest we gave the adults one challenge and the under-18s another. We wanted adults to consider Mankind, and the many different ways we, even in our fallen state (Gen. 9:6) still reflect our Maker. People are cool, after all, so we asked you to capture people doing people things, to highlight the genius of our God who has made us in His very own *Imago Dei*.

We were once again blessed to receive a lot of very fun entries, and what follows are the best of the best in the adult category (and you can find the Youth category further on, covering pages 38 to 45).

RUNNER-UP



In December 2024, we were blessed with the opportunity to be able to travel as a family to the Big Island, Hawaii. One evening we drove up the Mauna Kea Volcano and stopped at the Visitor Center, which is 9,200 feet above sea level. We drove the winding road, passed through the cloud level and hiked all together to a rocky peak to observe the sunset. I took this picture of our 4 children admiring so many beautiful aspects of creation: volcanic landscapes, drifting clouds, the sunset and stargazing afterward.

– Dave Koning



WINNER

"Oma's Refuge" – This photo quietly captured the blessed view I take in every time I visit my dear Oma. Daily, she sits here for hours, reading the Word and studying it with multiple concordances, study books and notebooks surrounding her. There is always a *Clarion* article, catechism, devotional or music book open as well. And, without exception, we talk about what she's recently been studying, pondering, or is intrigued about. She inspires me to do the same and I love each and every visit! Her refuge is clearly in the LORD.

– Vanessa Smeding



In God's creation, mankind was given dominion over all animals. Caleb Radsma shows us we are called to be good stewards of livestock as well. Caleb (12 years old) loves the goats he takes care of on his parents (Kerri and Adam Radsma) hobby farm in Beamsville, Ontario.

– David Van Dyke



Hand fishing! Our grandchildren "trying their hand" at the age old sport of fishing!

– Anne VanStraten



"The Harvest" – We are blessed to live in the rural area of West Lincoln. This year we could witness the grain field behind our home being harvested. The mighty combine rolling through the field, the tractors following along with the chaser bin as well as the hay baler, was a beautiful sight (especially for two young boys).

– Nicole Boerema



"I Love to Tell the Story" – Our son-in-law was reading a story to his children (our grandchildren) while we were on vacation together. It's important to read the Bible and good stories to our children, starting at a young age, especially in this day and age of social media. As Proverbs 22:6 reads "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

– John Verbinnen



So small, and yet so perfect, with every part of him made in the image of God. "You knit me together in my mother's womb."

– Angelica Dekker



In Isaiah 41:13 we read:

"For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you."

We are created in God's image. God cares for us and as His children we care for each other, through the generations of blessings God has given us.

– Cathy Kieneker

"Friendship" – God is a Triune Being who dwells in fellowship with Himself, and with His people. And He created us to enjoy companionship with one another as well. These three young friends love to spend time together, whether they're playing, walking, or just sitting and talking. Their joy and delight in each other's company is beautiful to see.

– Frances Baars



This photo embodies a whole lot of emotion – more than can be put down in words.

It captures a surprise visit to a loved one living provinces away from us. A moment of reuniting, after a long time away from one another, and after a very difficult diagnosis. An intense love and joy amidst a tough time of trial and uncertainty. The LORD created us to need one another: We need connection. We need to love, support and uplift one another. And, sometimes, we just need a huge bearhug!!

– Vanessa Smeding



God took pleasure in His creation, and called it good.
Even children can see and enjoy His creativity!
- Wilco Westeneng

This past fall my husband donated a kidney to our 13-year-old son. This picture captures the first time that they are seeing each other after surgery. This is what love is all about!
– Anne Lenting



So once in a while, especially in these turbulent times, we all should sit down in a quiet moment reflecting on what we have accomplished in the past, issues, practices which went badly off the rails, and, where, and when, we praised and glorified the Lord for His leading in fruitful endeavors and learned He is still in control no matter what!
– Hans Steensma



I took this portrait earlier this year on a mission trip. This photo captures a Guatemalan woman in colorful clothing that contrasts with the poverty visible around her. It's a striking reminder that though our circumstances differ, all of our needs are the same. Made in the image of God, but like all of us, she lives in a broken world shaped by sin. Her lack of material resources doesn't diminish her deepest need: the hope and redemption found in Jesus Christ. It's both humbling and powerful to see that, across different countries and cultures, every human heart will only be complete with the Savior's love inside of it.

– Reuben Keuning



This is a common sight when we go to the beach – tractors pulling boats out of the water. We were created to help each other!

– Anne Lenting

This is our adopted son Silas, who also has Down syndrome. He was born in Eastern Europe, where his status as an image bearer was not recognized. We are thankful to have been blessed with him in our family.

– Christina Dokter



"Biking to Church" – On a recent trip to Europe, our family briefly visited the city of Kampen, Holland in between our church services. We were pleasantly surprised that most shops were closed. While we were walking the quiet streets, dozens of folks young and old, biked by us on the way to church. Although it created a fond memory and a charming picture for me, they were just going about their Sabbath day as usual.

– Monica Miguel



Like clay in the hands of the potter...

"Can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel." (Jer. 18:6)

The potter has a plan and a purpose in what He is doing with each one of us. Do we trust the potter?

– Em Slaa



"Soaking It In" – It's refreshing to slow down and soak in the beauty of the world around us. Take some time to sit with a loved one and watch a sunset together.

– Rachel Vanderdeen

What's your favorite _____?

RP's summer photo contest results, under-18 division

This time we were asking youth to showcase their favorite, well, anything! Based on the submissions, animals of all kinds rate high – pigs, dogs, horses, and bugs, with cats and chickens the most popular of all. We might even have had a penguin picture, if one young photographer could have figured out a way to head way, way down south.

Regardless of what, or who, it was they loved, these camera bugs knew to thank the God who made it all. So check out the best of the best of their efforts!

WINNER



"You been farming long?" – My favorite thing to do is farming and I love going outside with my little sister Marie. It was God's will that I'm growing up on a farm.

– Kayla, 12



RUNNER-UP

I took this picture at Manning Provincial Park, when I went camping. Camping is my favorite thing to do in the summer, especially when I'm surrounded by my family and friends.

– Elise, 16

"Mama Merganser and her babies" – I have always loved babies of any kind but the babies of wildlife are extra special because we don't get to see them as often as the babies of tame animals and human babies. Looking at these little ducklings and seeing how intricate God made them, as well as how protective the mother was of her babies I couldn't help but praise God for His wonderful creation and thank Him for the amazing opportunity to watch them.

– Melissa, 16





Nothing better than a cup of hot chocolate on a cold rainy day. It's even better if you top it with whipping cream and marshmallows!

– Alexis, 12



"Beautiful bug" – One of my favorite things to do is to wander around outside, enjoying all the beauty. After this dragonfly was hit by a car, it landed on the road near me. And after this photo was shot, it promptly bit my finger.

– Jasyne, 15



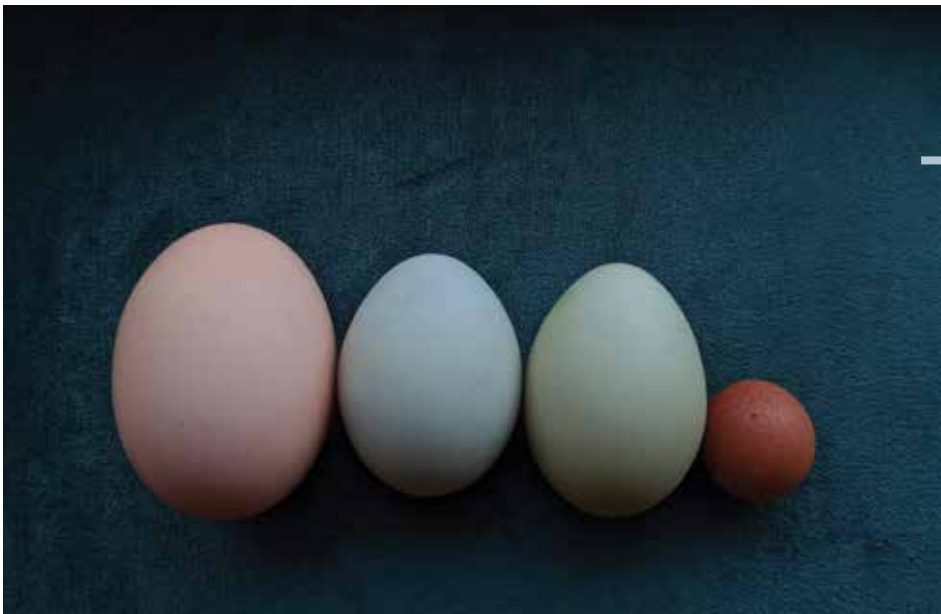
My favorite animal is a dog. I love how they give those cute expressions even though they did something they weren't supposed to do. This our puppy with my shoe.

– Samantha, 13



This is a picture of me putting a piece of plywood through the table saw in our garage. My favorite summer activity this year has been woodworking and making birdhouses and other things in the shop, and I sell them at the side of the road.

– Stephen, 12



"All shades and sizes" – I love seeing how God makes all shapes, sizes and colors in His creation, even in little chicken eggs! It's a joy for me to collect my eggs each day!

– Ryan, 14



I love horses, my big sister, and life on the farm! So I got a close-up picture of my sister and her horse. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands," Psalm 19:1.

– Tess, 7



"Checkmate!" – I love cats. I love chess. I love that my cat is able to play chess...sort of. One of my favorite parts about this picture is that Cleo looks like she is contemplating her next move. The hardest part was getting her to stay still for the photo. I am so proud of my cat!

– Jonathan, 12



"Chicken selfie" – My favorite part about chickens is how curious they are.

– Emily, 15



Dragonflies have always been some of my favorite animals. It amazes me how God has created animals so intricate and complex. The mix of yellow, orange, and red on this one, makes it a beautiful animal!

– Josiah, 13

"Trio of donkeys" – We have beef cattle, and we got donkeys to help protect the herd. The donkeys are special to me for they each have a different character that God made. Luna (back) has an easy loving personality, Elmer (middle) has a sassy attitude but is loving, and Jack (front) is a stubborn but loving donkey.

– Mishayla, 17



I spy a turtle,
A cactus, a car,
A small, squishy monster,
A big pickle jar

Some leaves and a lime,
Three circles you've seen
A brush, and my favourite color:
"Green"!

– Arielle, 8

"In the garden" –
Penguins! My favorite
thing is penguins!
Unfortunately, I don't
live anywhere near
them, so I enjoy
studying other details
of God's creation.

– Linnea, 10





"A little lovely lake" – I absolutely love exploration and discovery whether it's the forest near my home or another country. This year I was able to explore my Dutch heritage by traveling to Holland and visiting relatives who brought us to a revival museum (where this photo was taken). It was an incredible experience where I got to walk through perfectly preserved farmhouses, apartments, and windmills dating from the 1600s to the mid 1900s. It was truly amazing. Not only was I exploring another culture and country, but my grandparents' culture and country. I'm so thankful that I am able to travel and explore and it's something I will never take for granted.

– Loria, 17



"The sun's embrace" – One of my favorite things to do in my spare time is to go out into God's creation and take pictures of it. It really shows that God is such an amazing God and that He makes all the beauty around us and no one can ever make anything as beautiful.

– Kaitlyn, 17



"A curious clucker" – One of my favorite pastimes is checking in on the animals on our farm. Turns out this hen was as curious about me, as I was of her! I like seeing that the animals are happy and healthy.

– Audrey, 14



"A glowing light" – This picture was taken when we had a campfire, and I love campfires! The piece of wood we were using was hollow and I love how it glowed!

– Naomi, 10



I love dirt biking because I love the feeling of wind on my face. I feel I could go forever. I took this picture of my cousin.

– Matthew, 9



"Family Colors" – Beads are a big part of who we are: most of my maternal family has had beads around their wrists or ankles for as long as I can remember – and this photo of my mom and Oma captures the treasured moments of creation and family fun!

– Kaycie, 17



"Triple yolk egg" – One of the things I love most is eggs. My chicken laid a triple yolk egg – one in 25 million!

– Mayva, 8

STRIVING TO BE GODLY MEN

by Clarence Bouwman



Rev. Bouwman shares the highlights of Ontario's *Strive 2024* conference to show what you missed, and why you don't want to miss out on *Strive 2025*, coming this November.

I don't think I can quite grasp the measure of tension that must have seized the hearts of those three young men on the morning of November 2, 2024. Months before they'd hatched the concept of a conference pitched to encourage men to provide support to one another in the abundant strife of this mortal life. They'd cobbled together a web presence to push out the concept, had highlighted the featured speakers, and invited expressions of intent to join the effort.

Slowly momentum for the event grew. A few dozen said they'd come... then a hundred, two hundred... five hundred – and ultimately more than 750 men from across Ontario (and beyond!) raised a finger to commit to coming to Smithville to attend the 2024 Strive Conference! But the venue could only seat 550; the three spearheading the initiative had to tell more than 200 men that they were placed on a waiting list.

Why would three family men expend the effort to organize a men's conference? Why seek to capture its purpose under the term *Strive*? And why would so many men give up their normal Saturday routines to seek encouragement to *strive together*? What was this huge interest *saying*?

This was autumn 2024. For months and years, males, and especially if they

were straight and white and Christian, had been told to sit down and shut up; it was time for people of color to stand up, for women to give leadership, for people of alternate sexual orientation to shine. How were the sidelined meant to respond to that signal? The three men who birthed this Strive Conference saw the need to encourage men to push back against this effort to emasculate Christian men. As the autumn of 2024 unfolded, awareness grew across our civilization that men needed to dare to be *men*. Instead of sitting down placidly and passively, men should boldly *strive* to be the men God created us to be. More than 750 men from some 14 denominations understood the need and sought encouragement in the battle.

But planning a conference is one thing. Making sure it runs smoothly is another, especially when attendance demonstrates the *Strive* concept hit a nerve. Would the plans deliver? I dare say that Scott, Dan, and Kevin had to be *men* to handle the nervous tension that must have dominated their collective persona that morning.

STRIVE

The term “strive” appears in numerous passages of Scripture in the context of encouraging Christians in the battles of faith. The passage that featured in this

Strive Conference was Phil 1:27f, where the apostle Paul instructs his readers:

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.”

The concept of Christian men *battling alongside each other* in the face of serious opposition lies at the heart of God's will for his people as we live in our present world. Such striving needs encouragement, equipping, arming. Three speakers had been lined up to open the Word of God for us listeners eager to understand better how we can best strive side by side to be the men God wants us to be.

SPEAKERS

Dr. Will den Hollander, professor of New Testament at Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, started us off with an address under the promising title: “Be Complete: the Word of God for the Man of God” (asking our attention for 2 Tim. 3:16f). On the basis of that Scripture, he drew out that the “man of God” has all the resources he needs to “be complete, equipped for every good work” – for the



Lord God has given us a God-breathing Bible that prepares us to handle all the hard questions of our day.

The obstacle we face is not a lack of resources to handle the battles of life, but it is rather that we too often choose to give some other activity greater priority over reading and wrestling with God's divine Word in the face of today's challenges. So, we end up floundering in the dark in the midst of those challenges, unable to function as the *men of God* we otherwise can be. The speaker's public admission to his own personal struggles added considerable credence to his encouragement to us to be *men of the Word* – both personally and side-by-side.

Dr. Ian Wildeboer, pastor at Mercy Christian Church in Hamilton, followed with an address that could not help but hold the attention of today's men: "*Men in covenant with God: Guarding our hearts, and those we love, from Sodom.*"

He ably laid a finger on the fact that Lot *chose* to live in Sodom and made his decision on the basis of present-day comforts. The potential price to his family did not seem to play a role in making the decision or in sticking with it. We cannot get out of our world, but we can certainly take responsibility for how living in our world impacts our families. Here was a challenge to us to have our eyes wide open to see the abundant attacks on our families, and see too how we men can best strive side by side to protect those whom God has entrusted to our care, so that in turn they flourish in God's service.

After a hearty lunch of pulled pork on a bun capably served by a number of ladies from the John Calvin Christian School in Smithville (and the bonus of lots of valuable heart-to-heart conversations among the attendees), a third talk followed; Rev. Al Besuyen, pastor

of Zion United Reformed Church in Sheffield, encouraged us to "Strive for Godliness in our leisure time." Speaking from personal experience, he pressed on us that misuse of leisure time can become a trap that takes us to places where we cannot strive side by side as men of God. He urged us to recognize that the time we receive has purpose: it's not for self and personal preferences but is an opportunity to serve others, in service to the Master of all time. In service to others, we're also making ourselves available for others to encourage us.

A panel discussion followed the speeches, under the capable leadership of Rev. Rolf den Hollander from Living Light Canadian Reformed Church of Grimsby. As he pulled the materials of the day together with the assistance of the three speakers, perhaps the most unforgettable moment was when a brother, once a slave to alcohol, expressed the



fervent hope that soon he could drink the wine new in the kingdom of God with Christ Himself. Till then, total abstinence. Yes, it's a fight, one in which we need one another. His public testimony was distinctly an inspiration to many.

SINGING

Interspersed throughout the day were multiple opportunities for the assembled men to sing the praises of the God in whose service we battle. 550 men on their feet, under the leadership of capable musicians using various instruments – it truly was momentous, stirring, most heartening. And then the accompaniment ceased..., and 550 men were on their own, side by side leaning into the privilege of raising voices and hearts to God Most High with eager abandon, each line building on the previous in volume and joy and enthusiasm – as here and there men reached up

a hand to dry an eye at the sheer beauty and majesty of *together* delighting in the God whose servants we may be. To so many of us Ps. 150 will never be sung the same again.

EXAMPLE

In concluding remarks, a grateful participant made mention of the fact that God's first words to the man Adam was the instruction to guard and keep the garden – for God knew there was an enemy out there intent on hijacking God's world. Where Adam failed, Christ Jesus did not. Now the task still to guard God's

world remains. Dan and Kevin and Scott set us an example in doing precisely that, striving side by side to pull off an excellent conference!

The 550 men then headed out in all directions. I dare say the conference sparked in every participant a renewed determination never to sit down and shut up, but instead to stand tall together in the battle, striving side by side in struggles against pornography, gambling, alcohol misuse, drug abuse, slothfulness and countless other vices seeking to emasculate men of God.

May *Strive* 2025 be just as successful. RP

You can register, starting on Sept. 15 at 6 pm (Eastern Time), at www.strivemensconference.com. That's where you can also find all three of last year's speeches available to watch or listen to.

Yea, *all* things

come not by chance but by His fatherly hand

- *LORD'S DAY 10*

by Christine Farenhorst

The lot is cast into the lap,
but its every decision is
from the Lord.

– Proverbs 16:33

The *Heidelberg Catechism* is both a confession and a summary of the doctrines of Scripture. The words of the *Heidelberg* can be easily understood, even though they convey the deep truths of the Bible. Two men, Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, were commissioned by Frederick the Pious (III), Protestant ruler and devout Calvinist, Elector Palatine of the Rhine (1559–76), to write this catechism for the people. Ursinus was a timid scholar, who preferred study to the limelight, and Olevianus was an eloquent preacher. Both were uniquely gifted and were providentially brought together by God to write the wonderful questions and answers in the *Heidelberg*.

When our children were younger, my husband Anco and I spent much time in teaching them the *Heidelberg Catechism*. We considered Lord's Day 10, dealing with the providence of God, an important section, and we took our time with its questions and answers.

Question 27: What do you understand by the providence of God?

Answer: God's providence is His almighty and ever-present power,

whereby, as with His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things, come to us not by chance but by His Fatherly hand.

At the close of breakfast each morning, even at the risk of missing the school bus, we would recite the phrases in unison. These words were a spiritual intake that contained the past, the present and gave much confidence in the future.

ODD BUT TRUE

The truth that God is totally in charge of all things, things that occur each day, has been a comfort throughout my life. There is a rather odd, and simultaneously humorous, story which I heard from my sister some forty or more years ago – a story which illustrates God's providence. Because she is a truthful person, I believe it happened. It runs like this.

A retired preacher was living out his days of retirement together with his wife in a two-story condo somewhere in the States. On Saturday mornings he was wont to take a bath in preparation for Sunday. One Saturday, as he was soaking in the tub, his wife let out a blood-curdling scream in the living room. It chilled him to the bone and he hopped out of his bath. In the altogether, he raced through the hall, into the living

room, only to find his wife standing on a chair, totally upset.

"What is it, Mary?" he asked, alarmed by her loss of composure.

She pointed to the couch. "A snake," she finally managed, "there is a snake under the couch."

"A snake?" he responded, slowly turning his head, searching the room.

"Yes," she went on, "I was watering the flowers and suddenly it crawled right by me and crept under the couch." She again pointed to the couch.

Cautiously Stan, the preacher, walked over and knelt down to take a peek. He couldn't really see much as it was dark under the couch. As he was investigating, their dog came up behind him, nudging the pastor's posterior with his cold nose. Thinking it was the snake, Stan promptly fainted, face-down, on the carpet. Mary, brave woman that she was, got down off the chair and hastened over to her husband.

"Stan!" she called out, "Are you all right?"

Stan, however, was out cold. Thinking that he'd suffered a heart attack, Mary ran to the phone and dialed for help, calling for an ambulance.

The ambulance arrived just as Stan was recovering consciousness. Two men raced up the stairs, introduced themselves and skillfully maneuvered the pastor onto the stretcher they had brought with them. Gently and carefully covering him with a blanket, they took his blood

pressure, finding it high.

“Sir, it is possible you suffered a heart attack,” they explained, “and we’re just going to take you into emergency to make sure you are not in trouble.”

Reassuring him and his wife in this way, they calmly carried him out of the room into the hallway. Standing at the top of the staircase, one of the two ambulance attendants began a slow descent, holding onto the foot end of the stretcher. The other man, also beginning to descend the stairs, suddenly dropped his carrying end. The snake, who had left the nether region of the couch, had quietly slithered into the hallway across his shoes. It startled the latter attendant to such a degree that he lost control over his end of the stretcher. Stan, the preacher, tumbled down the steps, breaking his left leg.

The providence in this little story lies in the fact that two ambulance attendants were immediately on hand to give first aid to an aging preacher in a rather unfortunate, strange chain of events – events orchestrated by God. The attendants were there to help the preacher in his time of need as God intended.

Our heavenly Father is One who not only sees everything beforehand, which is what providence essentially means, but He also brings about all He determines. Knowing and accepting the fact that God sees everything and brings events about can be a scary thought because it demonstrates that sinful man cannot hide anything from God. But providence is also comforting because it illustrates that God knows and cares for His people.

GOD HAS US IN THE LITTLE THINGS TOO

Last week I had an unanticipated dental appointment. An infection in a bottom molar caused sudden and painful



swelling in my left cheek. Resembling a chipmunk, I could barely open my mouth. The dentist immediately prescribed an antibiotic to take care of the infection. After the antibiotics had run their course, I had a second appointment – a consultation about what to do about a tooth that would very likely require an extraction. Like many people, I have anxiety, concern and wariness about sitting down in a dental chair. Yet, the morning of that second appointment my morning devotional had the heading of Psalm 81:10 which read: “I am the Lord your God, Who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”

Our God is a God of not just the things we consider huge in life (such as cyclones and world wars), but also of the little things, the mundane and ordinary. The given text, prior to my dental appointment, made me grin. But the reality

is that it also greatly strengthened and encouraged me.

The truth of it is that we may be encouraged to ask God to bless us in all matters pertaining to our daily life. We may open our mouth as wide as we can and request whatever is needful. Spurgeon, in his *Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith*, gives the example of baby birds being fed by their parents. Squawking away, beaks open so wide you’d think they were going to split their little mouths, they are sustained. Spurgeon says:

“God is ready to fill us if we are only ready to be filled. Let our needs make us open our mouths; let our faintness cause us to open our mouths and pant; yes, let our alarm make us open our mouths with a child’s cry. The opened mouth shall be filled by the Lord Himself. So be it unto us, O Lord, this day.” RP

Caleb Fuller, author of *Mere Economics*, on

WHY FREER TRADE IS BEST

by Jon Dykstra

The following is based on Real Talk's episode #126, "Mere Economics and the Issue of Tariffs," with host Lucas Holtvliwer talking to economics professor and author Dr. Caleb Fuller about the only four ways that people can get the things they need.



We might not be medical experts, or have a law degree, but we all know a lawyer, and a nurse or two. But how many of us know an economist? Not too many, and I think that's why economics can seem an intimidating field. But it doesn't have to be complicated.

When it comes to how we can best get the things that we want and need for ourselves and our families, Dr. Fuller boiled things down:

"...there's only actually four possible ways for me to get what I want. And these four ways are logically exhaustive."

What he means by "logically exhaustive" is that these four are it – there are no

other possibilities.

So what are these four ways? And more importantly, why should we know? To answer the second question first, this is vital information because only one of the four ways will actually work for a society. So it is key we pick the right way.

1. GET GIFTS

One way we could get the food, clothing, and shelter we need is to simply receive it from someone else. That's what we do for our kids, after all. But there is a problem, as Dr. Fuller explains:

"I could rely on gifts from someone else. But if you think about that for a couple seconds, you realize that if everyone was doing this – if you kind of *systematized* that way of getting what you want – the world would be incred-

ibly poor. It also pushes the question back a step. You know, where did the gift-giver get what he's giving?"

2. STEAL WHAT WE WANT AND NEED

A second option is chosen by some, but we'd all starve if everyone did the same.

"You could steal from others. Ethical problems aside, if you universalize that means of getting what you want, you also live in a world [where life will be] 'nasty, brutish, and short,' to quote Thomas Hobbes. And, also, just like the first option pushes the question back, where did the person who's being stolen from...get the goods in question?"

3. MAKE IT ALL OURSELVES

So, that leaves us only two more possibilities. We can either make everything we need ourselves, or, instead, use our particular skills to make something others want, and trade with them for what we want. So, our options are make or trade, and one of the reasons President Trump instituted his tariffs is he wanted less trade with other countries, and more of the making done in the US. Dr. Fuller highlights the problem with this approach.

"Let's think about *make* for a second. There's a great book called *The Toaster Project* by a guy named Thomas Thwaites. Thwaites chronicles his attempt to build a very simple toaster from scratch, that is, without cooperating with anyone else. So he's not going to engage in buying, he's not going to engage in exchange, he's just going to make, okay?

"And it takes him *about nine months*. He does cheat a little bit along the way. And after this nine months of full-time work on this toaster, he plugs the toaster in, and five seconds later it shorts out.

"There's a small fire that melts it down. After nine months of work, that was the consequence. And that is a little vignette of what our lives would be if we systematized or universalized this third means of getting what we want – just making everything that I want to consume."

4. SPECIALIZE/TRADE

And as Fuller shares, that "brings us to this fourth option, of specialization." Few of us will be any better at making toasters than Thwaites was, but we might have other skills we can offer. One person might be a great nurse, another a very good farmer, and a third might be a skilled high school teacher.

We all have our specialties, and it doesn't take a lot of imagination to recognize how much worse off we'd be if we didn't specialize. Then the nurse would have to build her home, the farmer would have to teach his kids high school physics, and the teacher would have to fix his son's broken leg. Specialization helps us do and make more.

Dr. Fuller specializes as an economics professor producing lectures and books that others value, and he trades those away for money and then uses that money to buy what he wants.

"That's why I say that the ability to exchange is not optional if you want to observe 'mass flourishing,' to use economist Ed Phelps' term. And so that's why economists are so obsessed with specialization..."


CONCLUSION

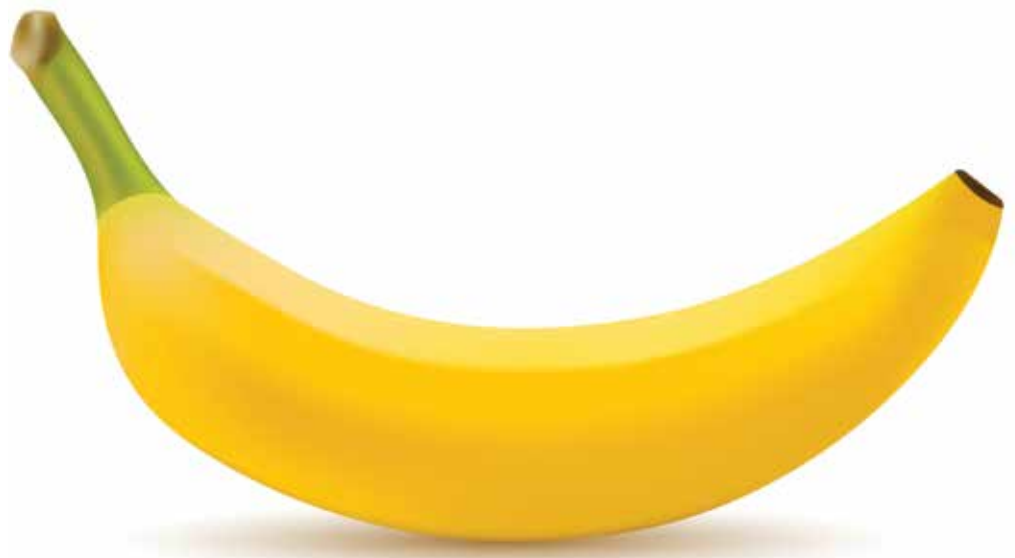
Of these four ways of getting what we need, God's commandment against stealing rules out the second. His call to be

fruitful (Gen. 1:28 and in the Parable of the Talents, Matt. 25:14-30) eliminates the first as an option – we can't just live off of our parents, even if they were willing. A fruitful life would also address the third option. It doesn't make sense for us to try to do everything ourselves. If everyone did, we'd all be not simply poor, but quite likely dead.

What's true for individuals is true in large part for countries too. The US is currently trying to use tariffs on foreign goods to drive companies to produce in-country more of the goods that Americans consume. But even the US can't be better than everyone at producing everything. So, for example, in a June 3rd House Appropriations meeting, Rep. Madeleine Dean questioned Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick about the tariff being imposed on bananas. The US grows less than a tenth of one percent of the bananas that Americans eat. The other 99.9% are imported. And, as Secretary Lutnick noted, the tariff is "generally 10%."

Lutnick defended the tariffs, arguing that as trade deals are made, the tariffs will eventually be eliminated. But he also argued that "if you build in America and produce your product in America, there will be no tariff." To which Rep. Dean pointed out, "You can't build bananas in America."

Free trade remains best, and not simply for banana lovers. 



Created and called to be **MEN AND WOMEN**

The Church needs to know what God teaches us about gender and sex.

And we need to be able to confidently share that truth with our very confused world.

by Levi Minderhoud

What is a woman? Some of you might be familiar with the Matt Walsh documentary *What is a Woman?* that investigates this question. While we might have enjoyed Walsh's witty responses to gender ideology promoters, his strictly secular arguments don't suffice. Christians need to understand, act, and speak up from a biblical perspective on one of the most controversial issues of our day. Reformed Christians should ultimately consider sex and gender in light of the biblical narrative of:

- 1) Creation
- 2) the Fall,
- 3) and Redemption.

ACT 1: CREATION

The basis for our understanding of sex and gender is found in the account of how God created human beings.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27).

Most of this article is going to focus on the *differences* between males and females. But before delving into the differences, it is worth highlighting the essential *similarity* between men and women: both are made in the image of God.

The fundamental similarity between Men and Women

To start with similarities is critically important for two reasons.

First, many civilizations throughout human history have not thought that men and women are equal. For example, in the creation story of the ancient Greeks and Romans, women were created as temptresses of men, as a form of punishment for man's misdeeds. Because of this mythology, women were considered inferior to men and in many ways were even considered the source of evil. We may not see this perspective much in western culture anymore, but it is still alive in some quarters, such as the misogyny of social media personality Andrew Tate or even in its reverse form with radical feminists insisting that male patriarchy is a fundamental source of evil in our society.

Secondly, and of more importance to the Church, the biblical model for sex and gender teaches the principle of male headship in the home and in the church. Many non-Christians (and sadly some Christians as well) have misunderstood this idea to mean that men are better than women. But a hierarchy of *authority* does not mean a hierarchy of worth. Men and women are both made in the image of God and are equal before God.

*... a hierarchy of authority
does not mean a hierarchy of worth.*



As the French say, *Vive la difference*, but let's not overlook the fundamental similarities between men and women either. Most importantly that includes being made in the image of God, but common interests and passions are no small thing, as any older couple will tell you.

Sex differences between Men and Women

But, of course, there are differences between men and women.

Let's start with sex differences. Sex differences begin with *genetics*. From the moment of fertilization, God designed every human being to develop either as a male (primarily determined by the presence of a Y chromosome) or as a female (primarily determined by the absence of a Y chromosome). As the cells of a zygote divide and multiply, each cell in that human body bears the chromosomal markers of the person's sex. Throughout a person's entire lifespan, those genetic markers remain the same. They are fixed. Thus, sex is not "assigned" at birth. It is simply a biological reality.

Throughout our lives, our sexual development continues with hormones. As a human body develops *in utero* and through puberty, chromosomes play a dominant role in the production of sex hormones. While estrogen and testosterone are both present in males and females, greater levels of testosterone

are present in males and greater levels of estrogen in females. These hormones become especially important during puberty, when they spur the development of reproductive systems.

The *reproductive systems* are generally considered in biology to be the key differentiators between males and females. Males produce sperm. Females produce eggs and can bear children.

Men and women also have different *secondary sex characteristics*. In males, that includes facial hair, relatively thicker and darker body hair, thicker and tighter skin, a deeper voice, a larger face, a more prominent brow, nose, and chin, and an Adam's apple. Females are characterized by an absence of facial hair, relatively sparse and light body hair, a smaller face, a higher pitched voice, and breasts.

Sex differences extend beyond genetic sex, sex hormone levels, reproductive capacity, and primary or secondary sex characteristics.

A burgeoning body of literature reveals all sorts of subtle and not so subtle differences between the sexes, including

differences in *stature, strength, percent-age of muscle mass and fat tissue, hearing ability, susceptibility to diseases, learning styles, and patterns of brain activity*. God designed these sex differences in His creation of men and women.

In modern discussions around sex and gender, conservatives have often honed in on these sex differences as what differentiate men from women. That is hardly surprising as these differences are obvious, they are manifested in general revelation, and are empirically verifiable. Sex differences are powerful rhetorical arguments for a biblical view of sex and gender.

But Reformed Christians should be careful not to boil down all created differences between men and women just to *biological* differences.

Gender differences between Men and Women

The clearest biblical gender difference between men and women is the difference of authority in the home and

“The male figure skater and the female figure skater are different. The man uses his greater strength to perform lifts and tosses while the woman uses her greater flexibility and poise to pull off more spins and twirls. Both perform beautifully in their own way, though there is a strength to the man’s beauty and a grace to the woman’s beauty that differentiate them. Together, the figure skaters are more than the sum of their parts.”



the church. This difference is already apparent in the Garden of Eden. The man gave the woman her name (Gen. 2:23), an act that many commentators suggest is an act of authority. It is the man who is supposed to take initiative to “leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife” (Gen. 2:24). And even though it was Eve who first fell into temptation, Scripture tells us that the man Adam was responsible for the first sin, as the husband, the covenant head in marriage, held ultimate responsibility for their collective action (e.g. Rom. 5:12-14, 1 Cor. 15:21-22).

Dealing with authority in the Church, Paul commands that women have a symbol of authority on their heads, be silent in the church, and not exercise authority over men (1 Cor. 11:10, 1 Cor. 14:34, 1 Tim. 2:12). Even though these commands come well after the creational story, in two of these passages Paul grounds these patterns for men and women in creation. Because “man was not made from woman, but woman from

man,” because “neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Cor. 11:8-9) and because “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:13), these gender differences are appropriate. The biblical requirements for elders and deacons require them to be males (1 Tim. 3:2,12), likely building on the familial headship that was present in the Garden of Eden at creation.

And so, there are creational differences of authority between husbands and wives in the home and for office-bearers and congregants in the church.

The connection between Sex and Gender

Now, if you’ve been paying close attention, you’ve probably noticed that I switched from talking about *sex* to talking about *gender*. Much of the confusion around these concepts today revolves around what words mean. And as much as we might like to give new definitions to old words – or jettison some words

entirely – we have to work in an environment (both a Church environment and a broader world environment) where words already have meaning and certain connotations.

The word *sex* usually carries biological or physical connotations. Sex is associated with the body, our identity, and *what we are*. Sex generally refers to how God *created* us.

The word *gender* usually carries sociological, cultural, and social connotations. Gender refers more to *what we do*. The synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America put this very well when they described gender as a *calling*.

Although the words *sex* and *gender* carry different connotations, they are inextricably linked. They are two sides of the same coin, with biological sex being the foundation for gender. Our identity (sex) and our calling (gender) cannot be separated. Indeed, for most of human history, the concept of gender (at least in the English language) simply did not ex-

ist. Let us make sure that “what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:6).

This is why, for example, the URCNA report on human sexuality speaks of gender as the “aspect of our identity as image-bearers of God that expresses the biological maleness or femaleness of our sex.” Q&A 6 of the *New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality* also emphasizes the connection between the concepts of sex and gender. The two are tied together.

And so, going forward I will use the conjoined term sex/gender in recognition of the fact that, although both words have different connotations, they are inseparable and refer to the basic distinction between men and women.

The complementarity of Men and Women

God designed men and women to be equal in dignity and in worth as they reflect the image of God. He also designed them to be different in certain respects, both in their bodies and in their callings. He designed them to be complementary.

After God created man, He said “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen. 2:18). God created a woman out of Adam’s rib to be his helper. Some biblical scholars interpret the original Hebrew in the creation of Eve to mean that God didn’t just take one little bone from Adam to create Eve, but that He took half of Adam to create Eve as his complementary half. Whether that’s the right interpretation or not, Eve really did complete Adam. This is apparent in our very biology. By themselves, the male and female reproductive systems are useless. It is only when they are joined together that they fulfill the function that God gave to them.

In his introduction to *In God’s Image*, Tom Hilpert uses the beautiful analogy of pairs figure skating to envision this complementary nature of men and women. The male figure skater and the female figure skater are different. The man uses his greater strength to perform lifts and tosses while the woman uses her greater

flexibility and poise to pull off more spins and twirls. Both perform beautifully in their own way, though there is a strength to the man’s beauty and a grace to the woman’s beauty that differentiate them. Together, the figure skaters are more than the sum of their parts. The act would be nowhere near as good if the male figure skater skated on one half of the ice and the female skated on the other half. It is only when they come together and use their differences to complement each other that the full beauty and capacity for pairs figure skating is presented.

ACT 2: THE FALL

But of course, humanity didn’t remain in a state of sinless perfection. When Adam and Eve sinned, sex/gender didn’t escape the consequences of this Fall.

In fact, God’s curses on humanity at the Fall are gender specific. God’s original design for woman was her capacity to bear children and her status as a helper for her husband. Because of the Fall, God promised that women would have pain in childbirth and the desire of wives would be contrary to those of their husbands (Gen. 3:16). God’s curse of the ground for Adam’s sin seems less gender specific. After all, both men and women experience the toilsome nature of work and equally struggle to cultivate the ground. But this curse is addressed to Adam. And since God created men with a body more suited to hard manual labor and a calling to provide for their families, this curse would primarily impact Adam and the rest of his male posterity.

Our sworn enemies – *the Devil, the world, and our own flesh* – all deny or rebel against God’s creational norms for sex/gender. Because of their efforts, hundreds of thousands of people reject the bodies God has given them.

The Devil rejects God’s creational norms

As the great deceiver and the instigator of the rebellion against God, the Devil wants to undermine God’s good creation at every turn. He did this in the Garden of Eden when he tempted Eve to disregard God’s command not to eat of the

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and he continues to do this today in the modern war around sex/gender.

For those of you who are familiar with C.S. Lewis’s *Screwtape Letters*, imagine how the elder devil Wormwood might coach his nephew Screwtape on how to deceive his human patient today.

“The central thing, my dear Screwtape,” Wormwood might say, “is to implant in the mind of your patient the idea that he or she – even better, they! – find something else to tether their understanding of sex or gender to. It can be anything. Their own feelings and desires are preferable. That will cause so much chaos and confusion in the world. But cultural stereotypes work too. And I must say that this human invention of doctors ‘assigning’ a sex at birth is ingenious. (Why didn’t we think of that?) As long as it undermines His designs.”

The world rejects God’s creational norms

The western world also rejects God’s creational norms for sex/gender. With an increasing number of people identifying with no religion and even more accepting the theory of evolution, our western culture rejects the very idea of divine creation. Instead, there is only random chance and purposeless evolution.

As such, there are no creational norms found anywhere, much less when it comes to sex/gender. For the atheistic evolutionist, there is no *ought to be* in the world around us. There is only what *is*. And so, our modern world promotes each of the growing number of genders as equally legitimate, equally good, variations of the diversity of human experience. It doesn’t – indeed it can’t – take the Fall into account.

The world also rebels against God’s various *callings* for men and women. Many of the writings of modern feminists and queer theorists call for the abolition of the patriarchy, particularly the concept of male headship in marriage or male-only office-bearers in church.

Some go so far as to openly call for an androgenous or gender-neutral world, where every possible difference between

men and women is erased. One of the lines of argumentation for the legalization of abortion and contraception is to bypass the created differences between men and women and to “liberate” women from the consequences of an unplanned pregnancy.

Christian efforts to point people back to God’s creational standards of sex/gender attract hostility and even censorship. A few years ago, Parliament banned conversion therapy, forbidding Christian counselors from applying a biblical view of sex/gender in their work. The legislation declared it a:

“...myth that heterosexuality, cisgender gender identity, and gender expression that conforms to the sex assigned to a person at birth are to be preferred over other sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.”

The Justice Minister in charge of the legislation routinely compared efforts aimed to help people embrace the sex/gender that God has given them to “torture.”

Our own flesh rejects God’s creational norms

Even our own flesh rebels against God’s creational norms.

One way this happens is through various disorders of sexual development (DSDs). Earlier, we described how God designed our chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive systems to differentiate between men and women. Men and women were good prior to the Fall. But, because of the Fall, imperfections now exist. Some girls are born with congenital adrenal hyperplasia, a condition that causes girls to produce high levels of androgens (e.g. testosterone) that make their genitals resemble those of males. Some boys have an extra X chromosome (XXY instead of XY) in their genetic code, a condition known as Klinefelter syndrome. Both disorders – and there are many others – affect how a person experiences their sex/gender.

As a person (with or without a disorder of sexual development) grows up,

they may also experience gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is a diagnosable mental condition that involves the distress that may arise from a perceived incongruence between sex and gender. There is no single generally accepted cause for gender dysphoria. Our own flesh (disorders of sexual development) or the world (e.g. childhood sexual abuse, and peer interactions) can be causal factors.

Adopting a transgender identity leads to suffering

Identifying as transgender leads to a life of suffering. It is well documented that Canadians who identify as transgender are more likely to report poor quality of life, poor mental health, higher rates of substance use, higher rates of sexual harassment, lower wages, and higher poverty rates.

The most common phenomenon that is talked about, however, is suicidality. Studies frequently show that people who identify as transgender are many times more likely to consider, attempt, and commit suicide.

While many scholars and most Canadians blame this suffering on transphobia (and some of this suffering is undoubtedly due to the mistreatment of people who identify as transgender), it shouldn’t surprise Christians that rejecting the body God gives you causes suffering. Just as heavy smoking greatly increases your risk of lung cancer or drunk driving increases your likelihood of a car accident, so too adopting a transgender identity increases the odds of suffering in a variety of ways.

One of these ways is the physical effects of medical transitioning. Medical transitioning includes taking puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones or undergoing a “gender-affirming” surgery. Cross-sex hormones increase the risk of all sorts of conditions, including cardiovascular disease, brain tumors, osteoporosis, and infertility. When it comes to surgery, once a healthy organ is removed, a person can never get it back. It might be possible for a surgeon to create something like what was removed, but it

will never function again in the way God designed.

ACT 3: REDEMPTION

In light of the brokenness of sex/gender, true redemption in this area of human life is sorely needed. Many counterfeit redemptions have been suggested.

- A gender transition – whether social or medical – is a false form of redemption from gender dysphoria.
- Modern feminism offers a false redemption in its goal of liberation from patriarchy.
- Gender ideology views transphobia as an original sin and suggests redemption is simply accepting whatever gender a person picks.

A better form of redemption is needed. Thankfully, we have such a Redeemer. And He doesn’t leave us in the dark about how we are to live out our sex/gender in a fallen world.

Biblical commands of how not to live out our sex/gender

Deuteronomy 22:5 says that “a woman shall not wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man put on a woman’s cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.” John Calvin addresses this verse in his *Commentaries*:

“Garments are not in themselves of so much importance; but as it is disgraceful for men to become effeminate, and also for women to affect manliness in their dress and gestures, propriety and modesty are prescribed, not only for decency’s sake, but lest one kind of liberty should at length lead to something worse.”

Today, we might add, that something worse might be a medical or social transitioning.

Likewise, Paul denounces “effeminate” men in a list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9. While there are arguments around how to interpret this Greek word (with many English translations combining two separate words describing effemi-

nacy and homosexuality into just a single prohibition against homosexuality), Robert Smith, in *The Body God Gives*, argues that this verse also points toward the imperative not to blur the boundaries between masculinity and femininity.

Finally, there is the broad command to abstain from covetousness in the Ten Commandments. While most Reformed Christians' minds might not relate this command to sex/gender, some Christian thinkers have framed transgenderism as a form of covetousness: coveting the body, the identity, or the role of the opposite sex.

Biblical commands for how to live out our sex/gender

There are gendered differences between men and women found in Scripture, though some are less clear than we might wish them to be.

For example, Paul's discussion around head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is difficult to interpret. Some Reformed churches require women to wear hats in church and some do not. Some Reformed Christians think that women should have long hair and men short hair. Others think that men and women can have whatever hair length they want. The precise roles that women (particularly mothers of young children) have in the home (e.g. Titus 2:5) and outside of the home (Prov. 31:16, 18, 24) are also live topics of discussion. Paul's statement that women "will be saved through childbearing" (1 Tim. 2:15) might make many of us scratch our heads. And while the Bible forbids cross-dressing (Deut. 22:5), what counts as men's clothes and women's clothes has changed over the years. Some Reformed denominations have stronger opinions on whether women and girls should be wearing pants today. Indeed, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, pants were decidedly unfeminine.

Two of the most explicit treatments of how we are to live out our callings as men and women are found in Titus 2 and 1 Timothy 2. In those verses, Paul commands that "Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound



WHY ARE WE EQUAL?

The world says the unborn aren't our equals because they can't *do* what we can. They're claiming our worth comes from our abilities – it's about what we can do. But since we all vary in size, speed, smarts, charisma, and more, what exactly is equal about any of us? The only argument the world can make for equality is to pretend men and women are interchangeable – to pretend we can do all the same things – which is nonsense. Levi Minderhoud shares God's better understanding:

"God designed men and women to be equal in dignity and in worth as they reflect the image of God. He also designed them to be different in certain respects, both in their bodies and in their callings. He designed them to be complementary."

Our equality comes not from sameness, but rather in Whose Image we are made (Gen. 9:6) – that's the only basis that exists for equality.

in faith, in love, and in steadfastness... Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled" (Tit. 2:2, 6). "The men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling" (1 Tim. 2:8).

Paul gives more detailed instructions to the women in these passages.

"Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at

home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled" (Tit. 2:3-5).

Likewise,

"...women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness – with good works. Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness" (1 Tim. 2:9-11).

Women may look to the example of an excellent wife in Proverbs 31, which praises industriousness, trustworthiness, beneficence, strength, dignity, wisdom, and fearing God.

Perhaps the best summary of all of this – and the antidote to gender envy – is Paul’s exhortation, “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him” (1 Cor. 7:17). Let us live as we were called, male and female.

The full redemption of our sex/gender

This side of glory, we will never be able to live out our sex/gender perfectly. The devil, the world, and our own flesh will continue to pull us away from God’s good designs for us.

But this won’t continue forever.

In the new heavens and new earth, we will once again enjoy a perfect understanding of what it means to be male and female. This won’t be a simple return to

how things were before the Fall. Before the Fall, men and women lived together within the bounds of marriage, with the husband as head of the family, and with men and women going around unclothed.

However, this will not be the norm on the new earth. Jesus is clear that there will be no marriage and thus no authority of husbands over wives in the resurrection (Matt. 22:30). This is likely because the thing that marriage was meant to signify – God’s relationship with His Church (Eph. 5:32, Rev. 21:1-3) – will have come to ultimate fulfillment. And even though there will be no need to hide our shame with clothing, Revelation speaks of the saints being clad in clean, white robes.

The uncertainty, misconceptions, and even outright falsehoods in some areas about how men and women are to live out their gender on this side of glory will all pass away in the world to come. Although today we often depend on fallen stereotypes about what is masculine and

feminine, in the New Jerusalem we will have perfect archetypes to follow.

Christians should celebrate God’s creational norms and plan of redemption

While I hope that this piece clarifies how we are created and called to be men and women, there is still much that needs to be done.

First, we as Christians need to continue to search Scripture for truths of how we are to live our calling as men and women. The Christian community has done an excellent job in recent years clarifying through the lens of Scripture and science how men and women ought to *identify*. But we are less clear about how men and women ought to *act*, particularly outside the spheres of the family and the church. We should do our best to make sure that our understanding in these matters is rooted in Scripture and not patterned after the world.

Second, we also need to share these truths with the world around us. Despite the beauty and hope that we have in God’s design for males and females, sometimes we apologize for our beliefs more than we defend them. Perhaps you’ve been somewhat ashamed to tell your evangelical neighbor that your church doesn’t allow female office-bearers. Perhaps you’ve apologized for not using someone’s preferred pronouns. Perhaps you feel bad about objecting to a boy claiming to be a girl playing in your girls’ basketball league. Perhaps you’re uncomfortable talking about this issue at all.

There might be all sorts of reasons behind these hesitations, but we need to fully understand and affirm that God’s plan is the best plan. God’s creational norms for sex/gender – that men and women simultaneously share the image of God, have differences in their bodies and callings, and complement one another – are truths that Christians should celebrate and share. We must take God at His Word. Men and women will best flourish when they follow God’s original design and will for sex/gender. RP

In *What is a Woman?* Matt Walsh showcased how the world can’t answer the documentary’s title question. But while Walsh is Roman Catholic, his documentary is deliberately secular and, consequently, he doesn’t do much better. The best answer Walsh could offer came from his wife: “An adult human female... who needs help opening [this jar].” We want better. And to get better we need to turn to God, and to His Word.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

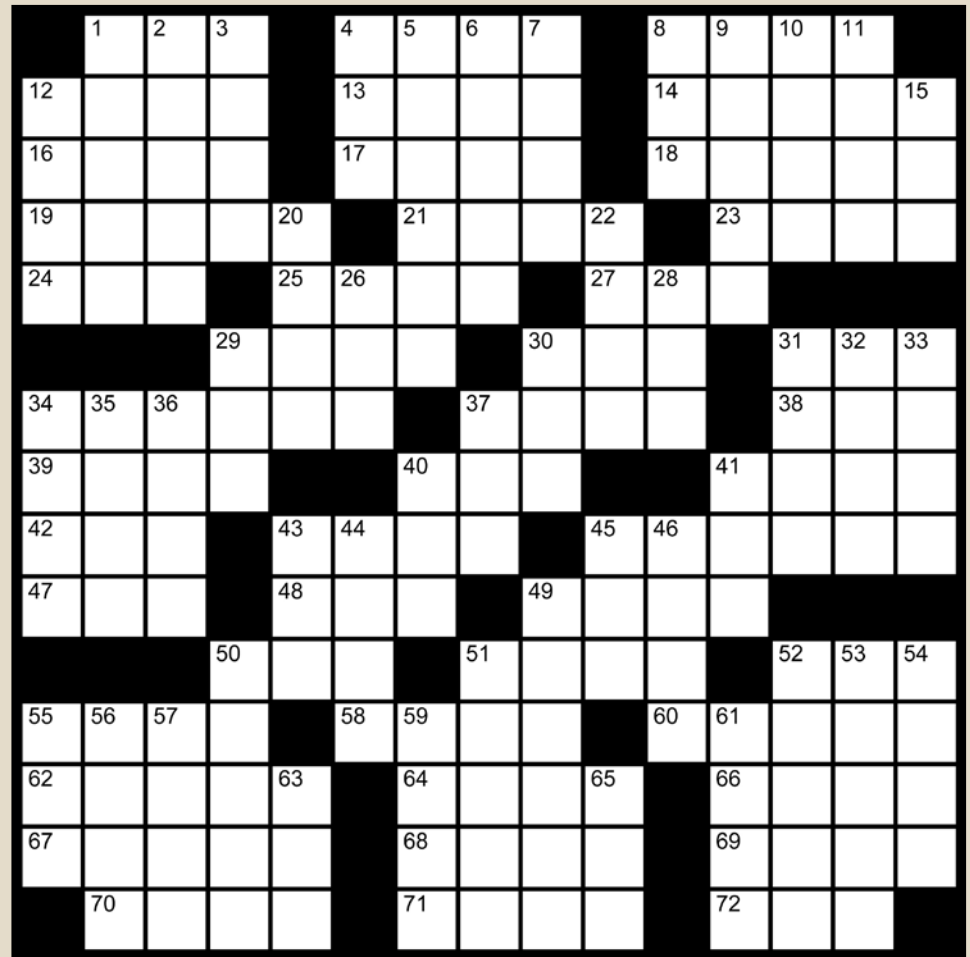
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2025

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 72.

ACROSS

1. Weep
4. Trait shared by Abraham and Job
8. What gossip calls a celebrity couple
12. Facts; statistics
13. Dull lingering pain
14. "...like a _____ in the desert" (Jer. 17)
16. Prefix for a negative attitude
17. Stare intently (at)
18. "This little _____ went to market..."
19. "_____ expectations" - performance review
21. Catty greeting
23. Hard workers put it to the grindstone.
24. Make a mistake
25. Withdrawn plant growth chemical
27. "A ____ is worth a thousand words."
29. "Show me a _____ of your favor" (Ps. 86)
30. Cartoon cat who chases Jerry
31. It's in between the mike and the speaker.
34. He plays baseball in Baltimore.
37. "ravens... neither sow nor _____" (Luke 12)
38. "____ death do us part"
39. Sad-sounding, poetic start to the day?
40. Feel ill
41. Sport played in the pool or on horseback
42. "____, ____, lama sabbachtani?" (Matt. 27)
43. "And now _____ men to Joppa" (Acts 10)
45. "He who _____ the eye..." (Ps. 94)
47. National Library Service
48. Time zone for Toronto and Miami (acronym)
49. "ten men of the elders of the _____" (Ruth 4)
50. Alternative to solid food for babies
51. Part of carrot you don't put before the horse?
52. "rather not write with pen and _____" (3 John)
55. "yet he _____ the sin of many" (Is. 53)
58. Basic unit of Chinese currency
60. Big donation to a church?
62. Open; obvious; observable
64. "the _____ and one-half tribes." (Josh. 14)
66. "there is salvation in no one _____" (Acts 4)
67. "Good sound in that _____?" "____, fine _____!"
68. "by paths his feet have not _____" (Is. 41)
69. It can be false, high, low, or sour.
70. Major character in *Wind in the Willows*
71. "Hold ____ Me" (Lauren Daigle song)
72. Plaything



DOWN

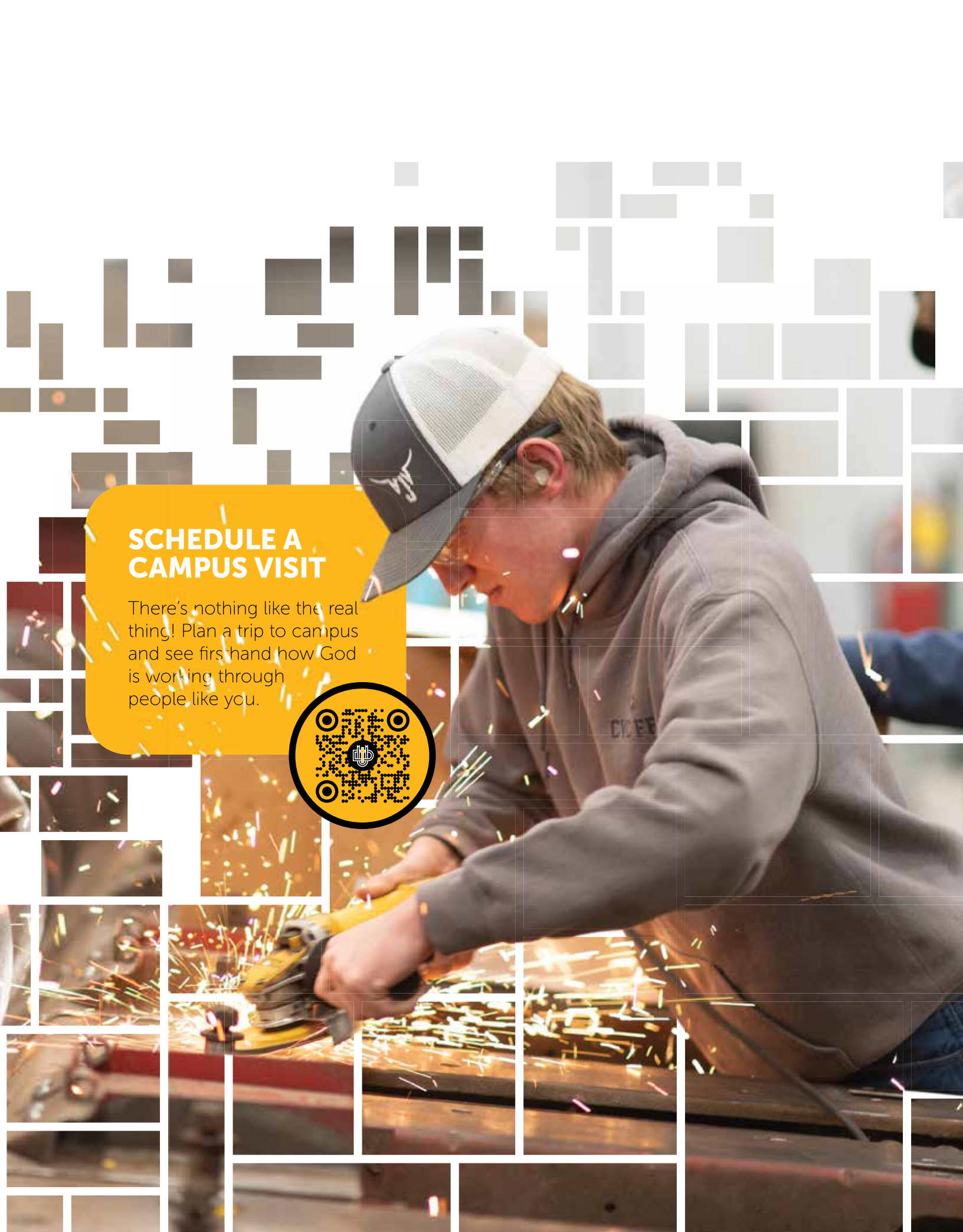
1. Less crazy
2. Minor character in *Wind in the Willows*
3. "A little _____ catches a large fish."
4. What you take when you take the blame
5. Occupation made obsolete by refrigeration
6. "let your heart _____ you" (Eccl. 11)
7. "Unsung _____" (For King and Country song)
8. Provider of internet service (acronym)
9. "Why, this is an amazing _____!" (John 9)
10. "Cogito, _____ sum" - I think, therefore I am.
11. Mr. _____ - English sheepdog in schoolbook
12. Title of honor for British woman
15. See ya later!
20. "So, setting _____ from Troas," (Acts 16)
22. Apt rhyme for "slow" for a horse rider
26. Bigger than sm or med
28. The equivalent of a ref in baseball
29. "...and she bore a _____" (Ruth 4)
30. Abbreviation for contact info heading
31. Two or more needed for a molecule
32. Roughly 1.6 kilometers
33. Trudge; slog; tramp
34. Not a good 29 Across
35. "let justice _____ down like waters" (Amos 5)
36. Flower, or part of how you see it
37. "What's that on your head?" "Get _____ of it!"
40. "Go to the _____, O sluggard" (Prov. 6)
41. "I don't mean to _____, but..." - question intro
43. "like the sand of the _____" (Hosea 1)
44. Notice (a sports award) from afar?
45. "The _____-Tree" (1844 fairy tale)
46. _____ Frank (father of Anne Frank)
49. "and we _____ deny it." (Acts 4)
50. Danger; jeopardy
51. Heap of stones set up as a landmark
52. Snowy home
53. "A _____ Story" (Dostoevsky story)
54. "To me every _____ shall bow" (Is. 45)
55. Long, fluffy (constricting?) scarf
56. Egg cell
57. Try, try, again!
59. "For _____ you is born this day..." (Luke 2)
61. "Come live in my heart, and pay no _____."
63. Kind of a drag in hockey?
65. Former name of Tokyo

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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HOW TO STOP TAKING THE BIBLE FOR GRANTED

by Casey Hordyk

“Scripture has never been easier to obtain, and Scripture has never been more difficult to absorb.”

Let that sink in for a minute.

I read that quote the other day in *The Me I Want to Be* by John Ortberg, and was struck by that sad truth. It reminded me of a recent discussion around our dinner table, when Pop told us the story of Mary Jones. She was a poor young Welsh girl who saved and saved for a Bible, and when she finally had the funds she needed, she walked 26 miles to buy one (just a heads up that is 42 kilometers – a literal marathon!). So, after a long arduous trek barefoot through the countryside, Mary arrived at the house of the

clergyman Thomas Charles to make her purchase... only to discover there were no Bibles left! She burst into tears. Her heart was broken, because she could not buy her own Bible.

Do not worry though, the story does not end there! There is a happily ever after! Mary ended up with a Bible (one set aside for purchase by someone else, but a Bible nonetheless). And God used this interaction in the push for more Bible translations! What a beautiful chain of events. Now, as we contemplated this story at home, Pop asked a question I would like to pose to you: How many Bibles do you have?

Most of us probably have a few Bibles, either from our school days or due to

the changing translations within our churches. And that does not even take into account the access we have through the internet! But with all this access, all these Bibles... do you ever desire to read Scripture like Mary?

Satan knows the Word has power. Saving power (John 5:24; 1 Cor. 1:18; Rom. 1:16). So any time you even *think* about opening the Bible, you may well find yourself faced with temptations and distractions placed there by the devil, the world, or simply your own sinful flesh. Suddenly there is something else that requires your immediate attention, or there is a notification on your phone, or you just do not feel like it. And once the first battle has been waged and won



and your Bible is open... the spiritual war resumes! You are once again distracted, or start skim-reading, or your brain just goes numb.

The sad, unspoken truth is that many people find the Bible boring. The length and strength of our attention span has been weakened by our dependence on external stimuli. The overconsumption of short and shallow content through social media has decreased our capacity to focus. Therefore, in a world with so many *easy* options to amuse or distract our minds, we all have to learn to be fed by the Bible.

So, how can we do this? How can we make sure we are truly listening when we hear the Bible all the time? How can we

make sure we are still looking for God's Word when it is right in front of us?

John Ortberg had a few suggestions for improving our engagement with the Scriptures, and I would like to share them with you.

1. Read with expectancy

Sometimes people bring energy to a gathering. Sometimes they just show up.

Consider this: when you spend time in the Word of God, you get to spend time with the God of the Word (James 4:8; Jer. 29:13). If I really understand that, then when I open up my Bible, I do not just "show up." My mind is awake. I am building my relationship with my Father. It is His turn to talk. I am expectantly waiting to hear what He has to say!

2. Read with an active mind

Satan loves to paint a mental glaze over the familiar words of the Bible. So break through it! Use your critical thinking, voice your musings, and ask questions! Read the way you watch a movie. Nobody "tries harder" to watch a movie, but everybody is engaged. Everyone has something to say.

However, when it comes to the Bible, the conversations become stilted. People are so concerned with making sure they get the "right" answer, that everyone backs out. The good-natured revealing of different perspectives creates much more learning than just anxiously filling in the blanks with the right answers.

3. Memorize the Word

I can't emphasize how much I believe in hiding God's Word in your heart (Ps. 119:11). I know it can sound hard, or tedious, or time-consuming, but you can start small! Just start! The words we carry in our minds are available to transform any moment. Memorize the encouragements or warnings that you need most. When God's Word pushes out lies and resides within us, we will reach for truth, and it will be ours to have.

4. Don't just read. Do something!

It is easier to be smart than to be good.


*...in a world with
so many easy
options to amuse
or distract our
minds, we all have
to learn to be fed
by the Bible."*

”

In all our love of debating what we need to do, sometimes we just need to do what we already know (James 1:22)! Practice loving a difficult person (Luke 6:27-29; Col. 3:12-14). Give away some money (Deut. 15:10-11; 2 Cor. 9:7). Be patient with your siblings (1 John 3:16-18; Ps. 133:1; Eph. 4:31-32). Respect your parents (Deut. 5:16; Ex. 20:12). Confess your sins (James 5:16; 1 John 1:9-10; Prov. 28:13). Trust God's plan (Ps. 37:3-5; Rom. 8:28; Prov. 3:5-6; Matt. 6:25-34).

Now I cannot promise this is the perfect recipe for engaging with the Scriptures. Reading God's Word is part of a relationship we cannot build on our own. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work within you, daily transforming your heart and your desires. If you truly love God, then His Word will never be boring.

I'll leave you with a short text to hide in your heart.

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:1-2). 

A version of this article first appeared in the June 2025 issue of "Contender, the FRCA Youth Magazine" under the title "Boring Bible" and it is reprinted here with permission.

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BOOKS

CHAPTER BOOK CLASSICS, AND CLASSICS-TO-BE

by Jon Dykstra

ReformedPerspective.ca/books

THE COBBLE STREET COUSINS

BY CYNTHIA RYLANT

1998 / 400+ PAGES TOTAL



In *Aunt Lucy's Kitchen*, the first book of this 6-title series, three nine-year-old girl cousins are staying with their Aunt Lucy, and wondering what sort of fun they can cook up. When Lily comes up with the idea of a cookie company, Rosie and Tess are quickly on board.

It's this enthusiasm, right from the start, that most appeals in this "Cobble Street Cousins" series. The series is low on the drama – no fights or conflict – but high on the creativity, with the three girls always eager to build on each other's ideas.

Their first cookie delivery is to a young man stuck on his couch with his leg in a cast. The outgoing Tess just has to know how it happened, and before long the girls have learned the man's name, and his occupation, and they find out that he has visited their aunt's flower shop but been too shy to really talk with her. That, of course, gets the girls thinking, and before long they've figured out a way to have the two of them meet!

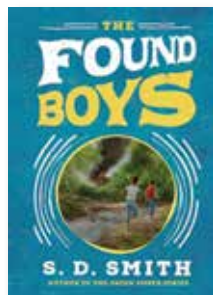
The one caution concerns the cousins' parents – professional dancers doing a year-long tour. My kids didn't notice that this was a lame reason to leave your kids behind for a year. In addition, Tess only has a mom, and her dad's complete absence – no explanation offered – is odd.

These will be great bedtime reads for Grades 2 to 4, to inspire pleasant dreams!

THE FOUND BOYS

BY S.D. SMITH

2024 / 172 PAGES



Set in the US south of the 1980s, *The Found Boys* is the Hardy-Boys-meets-the-Ku-Klux-Klan... except these boys have a black friend, they're all around 12-ish, and everyone goes to church.

Tommy's and Scott's parents never left their Valley Baptist Church early – they loved to chat – so the boys had plenty of time to explore the creek behind. Further back is an old junkyard, complete with a lost treasure the boys left behind when their exploration was cut short by a couple of junkyard dogs. The boys have made plans to recover their treasure, but the plans always fall short, often because Scott gets a stomach ache at just the wrong time. It ain't just the dogs he's worried about – the junkyard is owned by a wizard!

But *this time* they've got a new friend to help them – Dooley from the black Baptist church on the other side of the creek. I won't give more away, but to say we discover the wizard isn't the magical sort the boys imagine, but the KKK kind.

A section recalling how the Klan burned a cross in the black pastor's lawn could be scary stuff for the 10-year-old target audience. But some grit makes it the perfect boy's book (though my girls love it too). The world has villains, and our boys need to learn what it looks like to stand up and defend what and who God has entrusted to them.

IN GRANDMA'S ATTIC

BY ARLETA RICHARDSON

1974 / 144 PAGES



When Arleta was a little girl she would visit her grandma, where she'd play up in the attic. There Arleta would find old treasures that she'd bring to her grandma, who would share stories about them, and about when she was young.

The first story is about how Mabel (Grandma) and her friend Sarah-Jane get into trouble with hoop skirts. They want to wear the wiry hoops to make all their friends jealous of them, but they are not old enough yet. Then Sarah Jane finds out that her cousin, who can wear hoop skirts, has two old ones that she is going to give up. Sarah-Jane's mom says that they can wear them for play, but Sarah-Jane thinks it is a good opportunity to make a big entrance at church. And then Mabel can wear one of the hoop skirts too!

The one thing that they don't know is how to sit down with hoops. When they walk down the aisle and sit in the front seat, the hoopskirts spring up, which make their dresses fling up onto their faces! That is super funny! This is embarrassing for the girls but they also learn a lesson, how pride can go before the fall.

All of the stories are funny and also teach the reader the lessons that the mischievous girls gained while growing up. This book is great for readers who are comfortable with reading chapter books. And if you like these stories there are three more books.

– Sophia Dykstra

SNOW TREASURE

BY MARIE MCSWIGAN
1942 / 196 PAGES



In 1940, shortly after the Germans invaded Norway, a Norwegian freighter arrived in the US city of Baltimore carrying \$9 million worth of gold bullion. This cargo had been smuggled out of the country to keep it from the Nazis, and as a news account from the time noted, children on their sleds had been used to slip it past the invaders.

Snow Treasure, published two years after these events took place, expands on those scant details to give young readers a story that should be understood as much more fiction than fact: 12-year-old Peter Lundstrom, and all the other children are made-up characters, as are all the events and details.

But what's true about this tale, and the reason it is worth reading is the bravery of not just the children, but the parents too in putting their children at risk to keep this wealth out of the hands of men who would use it only for evil. It's this celebration of courage and conviction that's likely kept this continuously in print since it was first published 80 years ago! (It was awarded the Young Reader's Choice Award back in 1945 when winning it meant something.)

Snow Treasure will be best enjoyed by children in Grades 2 and 3, and might be a quick fun read for those even a little older. Over the decades it has been published with all sorts of covers, both terrible and terrific, so be sure to get a good one.



THE BOXCAR CHILDREN: GREAT ADVENTURE

CREATED BY GERTRUDE CHANDLER WARNER LLOYD & ABHI ALWAR
2017 / 687 PAGES TOTAL

The Alden children – Benny, Violet, Jessie, and Henry – aged 6 to 14, are orphans who ran away and found an abandoned railway boxcar in the woods which they turned into their new home. The very first book in the series, *The Boxcar Children*, published way back in 1924, is all about how their grandfather searches for them, and how they hide from him, thinking him to be a mean man. Grandfather Alden is actually wonderful (and rich too). Eventually, all the misunderstandings are cleared away and the children go to live with him in his big house.

That first Boxcar book spawned 200 more, with this *Great Adventure* series published almost 100 years after the original story. Great Adventure is really just one story, 687 pages long, that's been divided into five books (each 129-145 pages) for the sake of making it a lot less intimidating for the intended 8- to 10-year-old audience. The setting is modern day, and the mystery that starts it all takes the children around the world to retrieve lost treasures. It turns out there are two groups after the treasures: a good "Reddimus Society" that wants to restore the items to the museums where they belong, and a bad Argent group that just wants to keep the treasures for themselves. The children are allied with the Reddimus Society and use the group's plane to fly from one place to the next. But how is it, that the Argents always seem to know

where the Aldens are heading?

To badly paraphrase Chesterton, it is good for children to read about evil, not to learn about its existence, which they already know, but for them to realize that evil can indeed be fought. But at the same time, there is a time and place, particularly when they are young, for some nice safe books. It is that safety that makes these a favorite among Christian families and even sold in some Christian bookstores. It's worth noting, though, that there isn't a Christian to be found anywhere in any Boxcar book.

Overall, this 5-book series is a fun, simple adventure that has enough suspense to keep its young target audience on edge. It's also an educational travelogue, with readers learning at least a bit about each country they visit, which include Egypt, England, Italy, India, China, Thailand, and even Antarctica. Kids just learning to read will feel a sense of accomplishment in tackling all five books, and if a little one finds working through it a bit tough, the audiobook is well done. Most boys and girls under 9 will really enjoy this, whether it is being read to them, or they are tackling it themselves. But while a little is great, you might not want your kids immersing themselves in dozens and dozens of books from this secular 200-book series because, as Chesterton also noted, too much safety isn't a good thing.

THE PEARL PRE

come and
EXPLORE!

"I don't want to do it, Sally; we will get in SO much trouble."

"Aw, come on—it's not like she'd ever know! We'll put it straight back when we are done! Haven't you ever wondered how glorious it would feel to wear a string of fancy pearls?"

"I mean, yea, but we really shouldn't. You know Mom's told us never to play with her jewelry."

"Well," Sally said in her I'm-always-right-and-I'm-the-eldest-so-you-must-listen voice, "if you're going to be the queen of the realm, a queen NEEDS pearls. Mom won't be back for hours; we have lots of time to put it back. So go get the chair and grab them."

"I suppose you're right..." Kate stepped on the chair and reached as far as she could to grab the pearls. She hopped down, took a breath and got into her character, "AHEM! Handmaiden! Dost thou takest my pearls and put them upon my uhhh... neck?"

"Indeed, your grace." Sally carefully fastened them around Kate's neck. The light from the window hit the pearls and they glistened hues of blue and purple. It made Kate look regal, like a real queen, just like Sally said.

"Handmaiden, I requestest that you do put-eth towards me a cup of tea that is ever so delightful."

"Yes, madam." Sally bowed the lowest bow that was ever bowed and left the room to retrieve the cup of tea for Kate. Kate sat in her chair before the mirror and admired the string of pearls around her neck. They were beautiful. She had seen her mom's pearls before, but had never been allowed to touch them, and now there they were, decorating her neck. They almost made her eyes look sparkly. A stark contrast of the feeling of guilt stirring in her heart.

Sally and Kate played all afternoon. Queen Kate, the Queen of the Realm of Fairies, had done a marvelous job of getting the delinquent stuffed animals back into their proper jobs. It was a task and a half, but her handmaiden was a commanding officer of the castle and provided appropriate force where needed. The kingdom was set right in order when Sally realized suddenly that their mother was due back soon.

COME AND EXPLORE IS WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY STEPHANIE VANDERPOL WHO LIVES WITH HER HUSBAND AND 4 KIDS IN SMITHERS, BC. SHE OWNS A PEARL NECKLACE BUT HAS WORN A FROOT LOOP NECKLACE MORE OFTEN THAN PEARLS. (YOU CAN'T EAT PEARLS.)



D I C A M E N T

"Kate! The pearls! We must put the pearls away! Mom will be back at any moment!"

Kate reached for the pearls. They were gone. Frantically, the girls searched high and low, in and out, and all over the playroom for the pearls. But it was too late. The front door screeched open and they heard their mother's footsteps as she came inside.

Sally leaned over to Kate, both of them frozen in position, and she whispered harshly, "Just pretend nothing happened and that we never even touched the pearls and let's just act like we were playing and Mom won't know because hopefully we will just find them while we are playing and sneak them back, okay?"

Kate nodded, "Marvelous job, handmaiden, uhh, why don't we go back to the castle and um, review, uhh... things and stuff."

"Indeed, your highness, that is a swell idea, thou art..." Mom stepped down into the playroom.

"Oh, hello girls! How was your time while I was gone? It looks like great fun down here." Kate froze while Sally piped up, "Yea, it was good, Mom! Kate's just saved the realm from ultimate chaos!"

"Well then, I'm going to get dinner ready. You two have fun!" And she turned and left the room.

Kate felt like fainting. Her tummy was in knots and she didn't know what to do.

"Sally, I don't feel like playing anymore. I'm going to go and read a book... or twenty." Kate stood, removed her crown and her robe, and went upstairs to her room. Both the girls were awkwardly quiet at dinner, and more obedient than usual. Mom could tell something was up, but when pressed, both girls just said they were tired, or hungry, or didn't really have an explanation at all.

One day turned into two, and two turned into five and though they searched and searched, the girls weren't able to find the necklace. Turns out, they didn't have to search. The necklace just showed up! In the washing machine, in pieces, all the beautiful pearls, scattered among wet laundry.

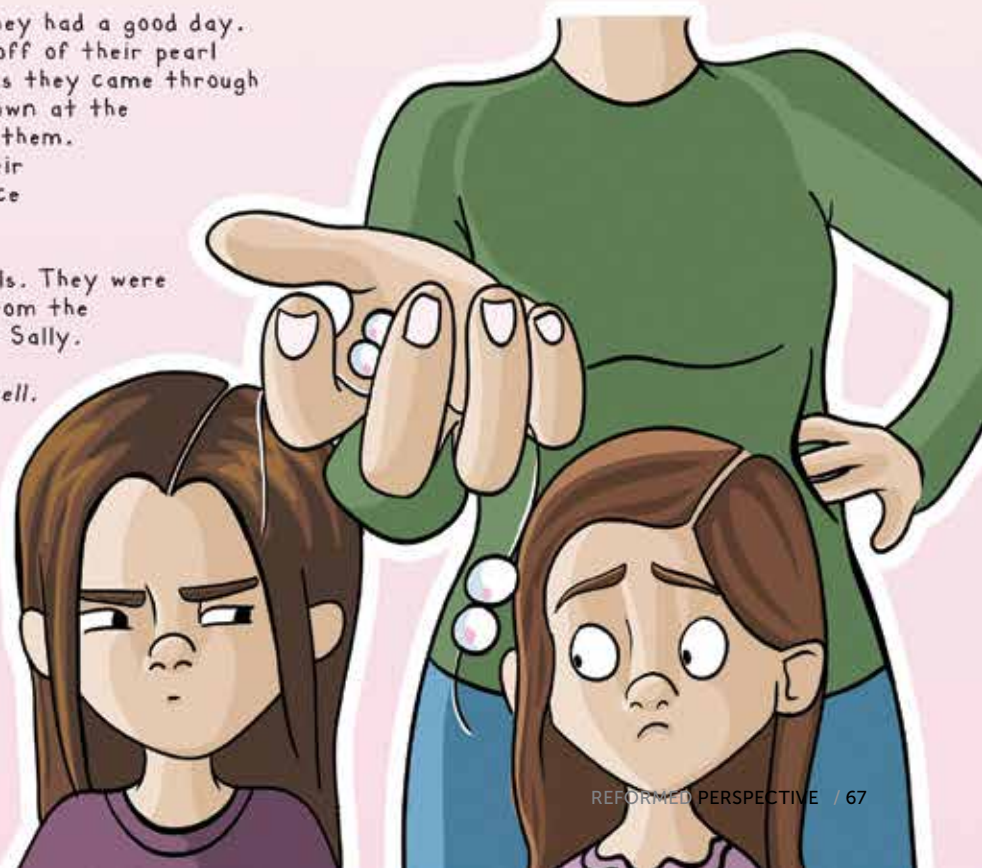
Kate and Sally skipped home from school. They had a good day. A bit of math and socials took their minds off of their pearl predicament. "Hi Mom!" they said cheerily as they came through the door. Mom didn't reply. The girls sat down at the table. Mom had set out tea and cookies for them. They started eating and chatting about their day when mom came in. One look at her face and they just knew.

Mom set down the pearls in between the girls. They were dulled, not as shiny as before, and falling from the string. Sally looked at Kate. Kate looked at Sally. Sally nudged Kate under the table, her face bearing the expression of *don't-you-dare-tell*.

"Is that your pearl necklace?" asked Sally, trying hard to sound shocked. "Why is it all broken?!"

"The washing machine," Mom replied, "and I think you two owe me an explanation of how they ended up there."

Kate nudged Sally again. Sally dropped her eyes and stayed quiet.



"Maybe you wore it and took it off and it snagged on your dress and ended up in the wash," Sally said very matter-of-factly. Mom looked at Sally with a questioning, almost probing, look.

"Perhaps a mouse came and got them from your room and carried them to the laundry pile and made a nice nest in the pile, and you threw it in the wash like that," said Sally, hoping the fib would work. It didn't.

"Hmm..." Their Mom sat down across from Kate. "Kate, do you have any far-fetched ideas about how my necklace ended up in the wash? Or perhaps you could tell me the truth."

Kate began to cry. Sally nudged her under the table (again) but it was of no use. Kate admitted between sobs:

"We were playing fairies and I was the queen and Sally told me to take it; she said it would make me look like royalty."

Sally piped up with a very dramatic, "I ever! You didn't say no!"

"Yes I did! But you're so bossy!"

"I'm not bossy! You just need to be told what to do or you are no fun!"

Mom took a deep sigh, "That's enough. You know, girls, it hurt when I realized you had taken the necklace without asking me, knowing that you weren't allowed, especially since now it is broken and I don't even know if all the pearls are there. But what hurts even more than that is the lies you've been feeding me instead of taking responsibility and saying sorry. You're trying to cover one sin with another sin."

"So this is what is going to happen. You both are going to sit in your rooms and write down what your actions in this were and what you could have done differently."

Sally and Kate took a piece of paper and went to their room. Sally took a long time to get it out on paper but Kate's words flew out of her like the tears coming down her cheek. Finally when an hour passed, both girls came out and handed the papers to their mom. She knelt down and took their hands and prayed with them, having them confess what they wrote on the paper, and asking God to forgive them for their sins. Both Sally and Kate were crying when their mom said "amen" and she took them in her arms and gave them a big hug.

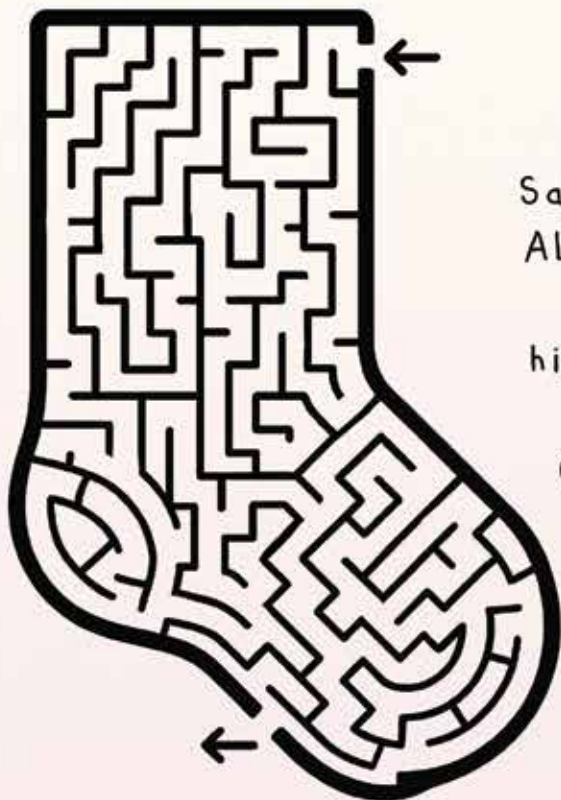
"I am happy to forgive you both. And that's true for God too, you know. He sent Jesus to take our sins away as far as east is from the west! But sin does carry consequences, girls, even when we are forgiven, so that we can learn to obey God's commands. You are going to fold the laundry this week in search of any missing pearls, and you are going to pay for the repairs for the necklace. But know this - this didn't change my love for you even slightly."

Sally and Kate dutifully folded the laundry that week, finding 6 of the missing pearls from the necklace - one even tucked snugly in a sock! When the time came for the necklace to be fixed, they broke open their piggy banks and helped pay for the repair. They still played in the Realm of the Fairies, but from then on they recognized that the queen didn't really need a fancy necklace. After all, a necklace of Froot Loops suited just fine.



Bible Verses

Can you figure out the SOCK MAZE?



RP's PEARL PREDICAMENT

Sally and Kate found ALL BUT ONE pearl.

The last one is hidden somewhere in this magazine. Can you find it?



*It looks like this
(but it is not this one)*

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Sally and Kate wrote on their respective papers? What could they have done differently?
2. Sally was pretty bossy, especially when Kate said "no" to taking the necklace in the first place. What can you do when someone asks you to do something that you know is wrong?
3. God offers forgiveness, but that doesn't mean that there aren't consequences for our actions. Can you think of different consequences that our justice system carries out?
4. How do you think the story would have played out if they told their mom right away what had happened?
5. Peer pressure doesn't always come from friends - sometimes it is within our families. Remember that if a sibling asks you to do anything that goes against God's law (lying, stealing, cheating), you do not have to do it!

DO NOT LIE.
LEVITICUS 19:11B



THE LORD DETESTS LYING LIPS, BUT HE DELIGHTS IN PEOPLE WHO ARE TRUST-WORTHY
PROVERBS 12:22



WHOEVER WOULD LOVE LIFE AND SEE GOOD DAYS MUST KEEP THEIR TONGUE FROM EVIL AND THEIR LIPS FROM DECEITFUL SPEECH. THEY MUST TURN FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; THEY MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.
1 PETER 3:10-11



KEEP YOUR TONGUE FROM EVIL AND YOUR LIPS FROM TELLING LIES.
PSALM 34:13



TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT AND JUST IS MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE LORD THAN SACRIFICE.
PROVERBS 21:3



NO DISCIPLINE SEEMS PLEASANT AT THE TIME, BUT PAINFUL. LATER ON, HOWEVER, IT PRODUCES A HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY IT.
HEBREWS 12:11

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

ROSES ARE RED...

They come in red,
Also yellow.
For the right gal,
Risk red, fellow.

OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD

In the May 31 issue of the Free Churches of Australia's *Una Sancta*, Rev. Dirk Poppe shared the amazing response he got when he asked a missionary how he'd first come to know Christ.

"He burst out laughing. 'You will never believe it! The Holy Spirit can use whatever means he wants in order to convert his people.' ...Many years earlier, he was an unbeliever working at a regular day job. On the weekends, he liked going out for drinks with one of his workmates. Now after he had been working there for a bit, his workmate warned him about Brian. Brian was another workmate of theirs. 'He's a born again Christian. You got to steer clear of him, because he will try to convert you.' My friend didn't really know Brian, or think anything of it.

"But then a few days later he and his friend went out drinking on a Friday night. His friend got really drunk. And in his drunken state, he started warning him about Brian. He went on a long diatribe. 'Whatever happens, you really don't want to talk to Brian. He's a piece of work. If you ever talk to him, he's going to tell you that you are a sinner. God is a holy God and you are a sinner. And if you don't repent, you are going to go to hell. Eternal condemnation. He's going to tell you that the most important thing in life is that you need to know Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only one who can save you.' And then as he kept drinking, he went on to say: 'Brian is going to tell you that you need to be born again. He's going to tell you that you need to read your Bible to know Christ, become alive to God and share in eternal life.'

"My missionary friend summed it up with a beaming face. 'As the man was going on, I was convicted in my heart that I was a sinner in need of God's grace. I was converted by a drunk atheist! On Monday morning I went off searching for Brian and asked him to explain the gospel to me.'"

CATERPILLARS ARE CRAZY COOL

The wonder of how caterpillars become butterflies is so mysterious that in 2009 zoologist Donald Williamson suggested, in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, that butterflies and caterpillars were, basically, two different organisms that at some point in their evolution accidentally mated. His theory was ridiculed by others, and the same journal published a rebuttal soon afterwards, but it highlights just how wonderfully

weird caterpillar/butterflies are – evolutionists are left grasping at straws to explain them.

When a caterpillar undergoes metamorphosis, the caterpillar parts of its DNA are described as being "turned off" and the butterfly parts are then turned on – it undergoes a complete remodeling. In fact, if a caterpillar were to lose a leg, it would have no impact on how many legs it would then have in butterfly form. There are two complete and utterly different bodies, wrapped up in one amazing creature.

Our God is amazing...and fun!

Source: Ted Olsen's "Are Butterflies a New Creation" posted to *ChristianityToday.com* on Feb 19, 2014

DEEP THOUGHTS FROM COOKIE MONSTER

- "It weird that we cook bacon, and bake cookies."
- "Cookie dough is the sushi of desserts."
- "Surely if tomato is fruit, that make ketchup a jam."
- "What was the best thing before sliced bread?"

FACING INSULTS: I

When Jesus told us to turn the other cheek in the face of personal attacks (Matt. 5:39) He gave us a very powerful witnessing method. One of the most effective ways to respond to ad *hominum* attacks (or in plain English – insults) is to simply absorb the insult. Don't get angry, don't strike back, just absorb it and go on.

This approach can be incredibly effective. For example when Roseanne Barr, the infamous comedian, stated that pro-lifers were all a bunch of perverted old men who just wanted to force women to get pregnant so they could molest their kids, the proper response was not indignant rage (although that is an understandable response). As pro-life speaker Scott Klusendorf demonstrated, the proper response is to absorb the insult and get back to the main point:

"Yes Roseanne, the pro-life movement is just a bunch of perverted old men – even all the pro-life women – and all we want to do is molest your kids...but what does that have to do with whether or not the unborn are human?"

Someone might call Christians stupid. Turn the other cheek, absorb the insult, and respond: "Maybe I am stupid...but can you show me why I'm wrong?" Insulting you is simply a way for unbelievers to avoid dealing with the rather uncomfortable truth you are confronting them with. So let them denigrate you, and keep the focus on God and His truth.

ROSES ARE RED II

Violets are blue
So we are told
Are they lonely
Or simply cold?

HOW DO YOU WITNESS TO A JEHOVAH'S WITNESS?

In one of his many YouTube videos, Ray Comfort highlights a simple, biblical way to confront the JW at your door about their belief in salvation by works. He asks them what he could do to



be saved if “there’s a knife in my back.” Can they tell him how he could enter the Kingdom of Heaven if he had just three minutes left to live?

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

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

ADAM’S RIB

Since Eve was created out of Adam’s rib there is a popular but erroneous misconception that men today have one less rib than women. Interestingly, even Adam might not have been short a rib: this bone, if carefully removed leaving the surrounding periosteum membrane intact, can grow back.

SO GOOD SOMEONE SHOULD HAVE SAID THEM

Some of the very best quotes may never have been said. Or, at least, not by the folks they are linked to. For example, Luther, when asked to recant his writings, declined, and is said to have told the Emperor, “Here I stand. I can do no other.” While the sentiment is certainly Luther’s, whether this verbiage came from his lips is up for debate. What follows are quotes whose origins are disputed, but whose awesomeness is certain.

- “Comparison is the thief of Joy.” – *attributed, but disputed, to Theodore Roosevelt*
- “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.” – *attributed to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, but seemingly never sourced*

- “If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.” – *commonly attributed to Martin Luther, it is by Elizabeth Rundle Charles, in her novel The Chronicles of the Schonberg-Cotta Family*
- “You don’t have a soul. You are a soul; you have a body.” – *attributed to C.S. Lewis, but seemingly not found in his writings*
- “When people stop believing in God, they don’t believe in nothing – they believe in anything.” – *attributed to G.K. Chesterton, but likely originating as a summary of his thoughts by biographer Emile Cammaerts*

FACING INSULTS: II

Another very effective way of responding to insults is to ask for a definition.

“Umm... you just called me a homophobe – I’m not quite sure what you mean by that. Could you explain?”

“It means you’re scared of homosexuals!”

“But I’m standing right here talking to you. Do I seem scared of you? If that’s the proper definition it doesn’t seem to apply to me, does it?”

“Well, then you’re an intolerant bigot!”

“I’m sorry, but I’m confused again. Could you explain what you mean by ‘intolerant?’”

“It means you hate anyone different than you.”

“Well, I do disagree with you but I hope I’m not coming off angry or hateful. Is disagreement the same thing as hate? Because if it is, well, then since you disagree with me, you must be hateful, and consequently an intolerant bigot as well. Is that right?”

CHRISTIAN STUDENTS CHEAT TOO?

With ChatGPT and other AI tools freely available, it's getting even easier for students to have someone else do their homework for them. Of course, cheating has always happened. And I don't think I'm going too far out on a limb here to say that boys seem to be the more inclined. Whether it was a chemistry quiz, or even reciting a Heidelberg Lord's Day answer to the pastor, some of the guys found ways to get the marks without doing the work. But what a notion, to cheat on a test while attending a Christian school... or a church catechism class? AI makes the temptation all the more pressing, and while teachers will have to do their part with more in-class assignments or requiring homework written by hand, they are outnumbered. Let's not be naïve – dozens of students working together have the combined brainpower to outsmart even the sharpest teacher. So the answer can't just be sharper teachers. It's going to need to be students being challenged to live out their love for the Lord in their work and tests. John Barach Sr. issued that sort of challenge some years ago, via a very unusual exam, as he explains:

“As a teacher, you often wonder if you are really getting through to your students. One year I taught a course in Ethics. The final exam had a few pages with a number of tough questions. On the top of the first page, I had the instruction:

“Examine all the questions and determine what grade you would get if you completed them by what you know. Then write that percentage in the top corner of the first page and hand in the exam without actually doing the questions.”

CROSSWORD SOLUTION SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER



“As the students began handing in their exams, I looked at their grades. They ranged from 60% to 80%. But one student (I'll call him Zeke) wrote 100%.

“A few minutes later, Zeke returned and asked, ‘Mr. B, can I change my grade?’

“I let him change it to 70% and I asked, ‘Why did you want to change it?’

“He said, ‘I just realized that this was an Ethics exam and you were testing my ethics.’

“Ahh,’ I thought, ‘I got through to him.’”

ROSES ARE RED III

If you believe
Violets are blue,
What color are
Oranges to you?

DOMINATION, NO. BUT DOMINION, YES.

One key difference between secular environmentalism and biblical stewardship is the role they see for Mankind. While environmentalism is a broad movement with differing views, secularists will see Man as merely a part of Nature – and a potentially disruptive, destructive part at that. Meanwhile, God has placed us at the pinnacle of His creation, and given us a role in managing it. Art Caden and Caleb Fuller give a great summary in their Christian economics primer, *Mere Economics*:

“‘Filling’ and especially ‘subduing’ might sound aggressive, but it’s the language of Genesis 1, where God issues his first command:

‘Be fruitful and multiply and 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.’

God’s first command to humanity, believe it or not, is ‘reproduce.’

“This Creation Mandate establishes people as God’s stewards on earth, dispelling a host of fashionable economic misconceptions about creation along the way. That humanity is to ‘fill’ and ‘subdue’ suggests that creation is not a museum where only the daintiest white-glove treatment is permitted. From the beginning, God told people to develop and cultivate creation’s potential....

“Genesis 1 also shoots down the opposite error, that we can do whatever we please. God calls his creation ‘good,’ which means earth mustn’t be stripped bare or treated as a cosmic trash heap, as in 2006’s *Idiocracy* or 2008’s *Wall-E*. Humanity is to exercise ‘dominion’ – stewardship that cultivates creation’s nascent possibilities for the good of the creature and the glory of God. We are not permitted to exercise ‘domination,’ whereby one’s gain is another’s loss. The fundamental question for mere economics becomes: How do we avoid stumbling headlong into either a refusal to cultivate or a drive to dominate creation?”

SOME IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE

“If you’re a young person, it might be hard to really understand this but the whole world used to smell like cigarettes.”
– as spotted across the web



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

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY

ANIMATED / CHILDREN'S

1991-2003 / 17 EPISODES X 27 MIN. EACH

RATING: 7/10



Back in 1987, Focus on the Family started a radio drama series for Christian families called *Adventures in Odyssey*, and it is still running today. It also spawned these 17 animated episodes.

Viewers are expected to have some familiarity with the radio original, as main characters grandfatherly inventor Whit and his assistant Eugene aren't really introduced. In this first episode, some bad guys have stolen Whit's "Imagination Station" invention which Whit designed to allow people to travel back in time, at least in their imaginations. However, the bad guys have turned it into a "Manipulation Station" so they can use it to control people's minds and get rich.

This is a Christian series, but with some tension – in the first episode our hero has to contend with a crocodile, a giant boa constrictor, and a smooth-talking, and iron-mace-swinging, evil knight. And in the third episode a boy, Dylan, in an attempt to make up for past mistakes, risks and almost loses his life to save some bird eggs. This is presented as brave, but in treating his life as of no more importance than that of a bird, Dylan is actually being *irresponsible*.

These instances underscore how, even though this is a Christian show, there is a real need for parental guidance and discussion – they can't be treated as "hit play, and walk away."

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES: THE ANIMATED SERIES

ANIMATED / TV

2003 / 26 EPISODES X 25 MIN. EACH

RATING: 7/10



As always, Anne means well – it's just that sometimes her exuberance gets the best of her! From her quest for puffy sleeves, to her first exposure to head lice, whatever Anne does she learns valuable lessons...though usually the hard way.

In the three episodes I checked out, episode #1 sees Anne comes to accept her red hair, then in #2 she helps Gilbert babysit, and in the third, Anne realizes that she needs to try to return the stray dog she's fallen in love with. As we'd expect, there's loads of hijinks, and just as much heart!

The only caution would concern Anne's imagination, which has her seeing a quintet of dryads – mythical tree spirits – in the first episode that assure Anne that her red hair, now turned green, is a part of who she is, and she should accept it, and enjoy it. So, good message, but some weird messengers for it. And kids might get a bit confused here about whether the dryads are real or something in Anne's head. Anne's flight of fancy is more clearly just in her head in the third episode where a couple of trees, and a bunch of flowers, also give Anne a brief talking to.

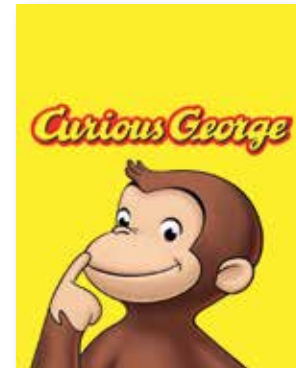
So, nothing all that problematic. See this review at ReformedPerspective.ca to watch the series for free.

CURIOUS GEORGE: THE TV SERIES

ANIMATED / TV / CHILDREN

2006-2022 / 198 EPISODES X 24 MIN. EACH

RATING: 8/10



Curious George is a monkey – or is he? As I learned from Larry the Cucumber in an educational VeggieTales Silly Song:

"If it doesn't have a tail it's not a monkey, even if it has a monkey kind of shape ...If it doesn't have a tail it's not a monkey, it's an ape."

George does not have a tail, so, despite everything you might have thought you've known all your life, George is not, in fact, a monkey, but an ape. Mind blown, right?

Regardless, George *is* curious, and his energetic investigativeness gets him bounding out into the world, making friends, seeing sights, and just generally making the most of every day. His curiosity can also get him into some trouble, but George is a good-hearted little ape, so if he makes a mess, he'll do his very best to clean it up. And he also has a best friend/owner – the fellow mysteriously known only as "the Man with the Yellow Hat" – who is always looking out for him too.

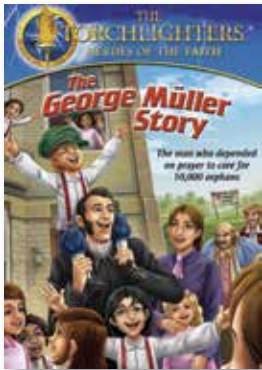
This is a decidedly pleasant show that models attitudes we'd love our kids to imitate, which isn't always true in children's fare. It's also not dumb – kid stuff, sure, but clever enough to keep an adult mildly entertained as well. Some episodes can be streamed free on YouTube.

TORCHLIGHTERS

ANIMATED / BIOGRAPHY / DRAMA

2019 / 23 EPISODES X 30 MIN. EACH

RATING: 6-8/10



The George Müller Story is one of 23 *Torchlighters* episodes that cover Christian heroes like Corrie ten Boom, Jim Elliot, and William Tyndale. George Müller (1805-1898) ran orphanages that helped thousands of children, and yet he never sent out an appeal letter or solicited donations. Instead, he went to the Lord to ask for help. And again and again the Lord delivered what Müller and his orphans needed.

One of the most extraordinary examples of God's providence – an account that made it into this fantastic animated biography – is the morning that there was no food for the children for breakfast. So, Müller and the children prayed, and shortly thereafter a baker showed up with fresh bread for the children that, as he put it, God had put it on his heart to donate. And a milkman came knocking, wondering if the children might like his milk, since his truck had broken down nearby, and the milk would spoil anyway. Müller's orphanages served 18,000 children over the years, all of them helped without a request being made to any but the Lord.

While I've liked 10 of the 12 *Torchlighters* episodes I've seen, some are definitely better than others so be sure to check which are recommended at ReformedPerspective.ca/200.

THE INBESTIGATORS

CHILDREN'S SHOW / TV

2019-2020 / 40 EPISODES X 15 MIN. EACH

RATING: 9/10

Ava, Maudie, Ezra, and Kyle are four fifth graders with a knack for solving crimes. Or, rather, the brilliant and hyper-observant Maudie has a real knack for solving crimes... and she couldn't do it without help. Maudie is smart, but her weakness is social awareness – she'll sometimes blurt out something that is certainly true, but might not be appropriate or polite. The other girl on the team, Ava, is the more emotionally-aware one, and the most compassionate and bubbly, always raising money for this charitable project or that.

The two boys could be summed up as geek and dumb jock, and while that's a bit simplistic, it isn't far off. Ezra is very smart, particularly with computers, but smart like you or me can be – he's still not the Sherlock Holmes kind of smart that Maudie is. His best friend is the energetic, athletic, and easily distracted Kyle, who likes every sport and is the best at all of them. He's the biggest comedic factor, but he's not really dumb. He's probably the most age-accurate of the bunch – he doesn't get things that the watching kids wouldn't get either, so when he asks questions to clear away his confusion, that helps the elementary-aged viewers too.

After coming together to solve a mystery in the first episode, the four friends decide to start a detective agency to help solve cases around their school and neighborhood. They call themselves The InBESTigators, and after each crime is solved they record their thoughts on a vlog which turns into the episode we watch. It's a little bit like a faux reality-show, though we get to see much more than what their video camera records.

There's loads of humor here, and all of it the good clean goofy sort.

Language concerns in the six episodes I watched were limited



to one instance of "oh my goodness." Of the half dozen episodes, five were easy to recommend without reservation. The one episode I had issue with was the fifth, called "The Case of the Sleepover Secret," which had a classmate's parental divorce as a subtext. Divorce is common, so I understand why the writers might have thought it no big deal to have as an element in the story. But as divorce is also one of the most worrisome things that could happen to a child, it's not something I want to introduce as concern for my own kids. But, quizzing my family on the other 34 episodes, they can't recall any other material that, like this, is too heavy for this otherwise light-weight carefree show.

The InBESTigators is the kind of show that could get big laughs from kids 8 to 12, and smiles from everyone else – mom and dad really won't mind checking out an episode or three. My kids have watched them on repeat, seeing each episode probably three or four times. Part of the appeal for me is that each episode is just 15 minutes long, which makes this easy to watch for just a short time – you don't have to commit to the 90 minutes a movie would take. It seems to move around on the various streaming services, but as of writing is available on BYUtv.org.

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St. Albert, AB - **THURS, NOV 27**
Aldergrove, BC - **FRI, NOV 28**

MORNING WORKSHOPS & PANEL DISCUSSION
Flamborough, ON - **SAT, NOV 22**
Aldergrove, BC - **SAT, NOV 29**

For more information email:
ADMIN@CRWRF.CA

CRWRF.ca

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- Grade 5 teacher (FT)

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- Part-Time Teacher for Second Semester (French and Humanities beneficial)

Educational Assistant:

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COME JOIN OUR TEAM!

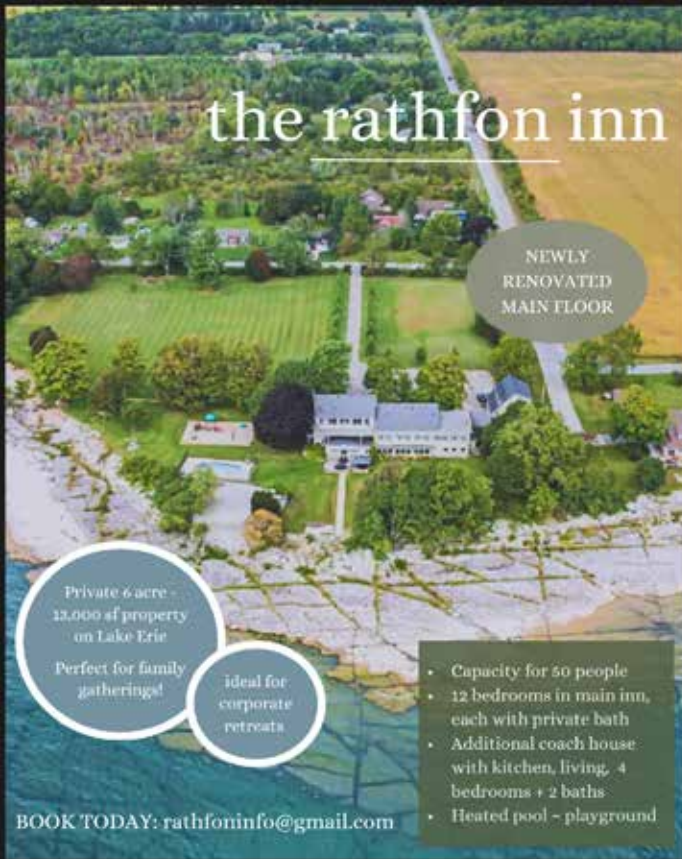
We are looking for passionate, committed and professional applicants who seek to serve Jesus Christ in Reformed Education and are a member in good standing of a NAPARC church. Due to growth within our school, we are looking to fill the following positions for the 2025/2026 school year.

Interested applicants are asked to submit a statement of faith, philosophy of teaching, and references (including their pastor) along with their resume to:

Mr. J Kikkert, Principal
principal@hopercs.ca
 519-448-9913
www.hopercs.ca



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



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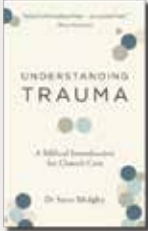
Union with Christ
 Sinclair Ferguson
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Wiser with Jesus
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Freedom from Sin's Dominion
 John Owen
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 Dr. Steve Midgley
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 Helen Thorne & Dr. Steve Midgley
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A Million Tiny Moments
 Emily Jensen & Laura Wifler
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ESV Holy Bible: Dyslexia-Friendly Edition
 by Crossway
 \$34

A CHRISTIAN BOOKSTORE FOR CANADIANS www.reformedbookservices.ca

REFORMATION RALLY 2025

THEME

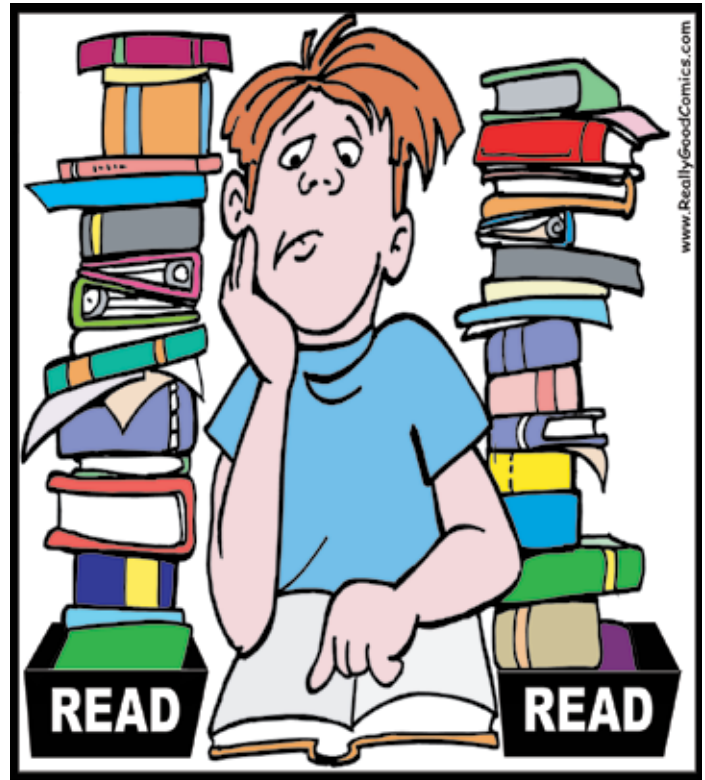
Children of the Reformation:
Why the Reformational Life
is Good Family Life.

Friday October 31, 2025
Starts at 7:30pm

Rehoboth United Reformed Church
77 Glancaster Road, Hamilton



Speaker:
Rev. Bill Boekestein



THE STUDENT'S IN AND OUTBOX

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

PSALM 78:4



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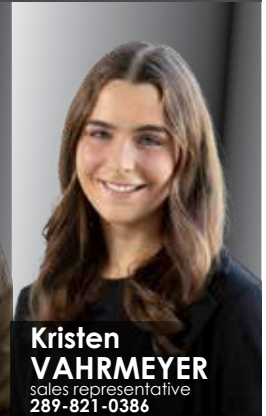
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September 27th - Toronto Ontario



Join us in standing up for children. Check out <https://arpacanada.ca/event/let-kids-be-rally-and-march/> for more details.

More Than the Magazine

Our print issue isn't all we do — we have devotionals, a podcast, and online exclusives.
So scan the QR codes to take you right to the best of the rest!

Best of *Saturday Selections*

Every Saturday we publish the *RP Roundup*, an email newsletter that shares the 6 articles we've published that week. The last article shares links to a half dozen great pieces from other publications, introduced with a dose of Reformed perspective by editor Jon Dykstra. Use your phone to scan the QR codes below to visit some of the highlights from the last couple of months, and then get the newsletter delivered to your email inbox by signing up at ReformedPerspective.ca/RoundUp

SATURDAY



Chip and Joanna Gaines defend normalizing homosexuality

After Chip and Joanna Gaines (of *Fixer Upper* fame) got criticized for featuring a gay couple on one of their shows, Chip pulled out the most popular verse in the Bible, "Do not judge," while ignoring all the rest of what the Bible has to say. As Franklin Graham noted:

"While we are to love people, we should love them enough to tell them the truth of God's Word.... God loves us, and His design for marriage is between one man and one woman. Promoting something that God defines as sin is in itself sin."

Parks Canada staff privately doubted Kamloops "graves" claim

"\$12M spent by [the government of Canada] to find purported 215 children's graves at Indian Residential School was instead spent on publicists & consultants with no graves found to date..."



Tim Challies with 4 good questions to ask your tech

1. Why were you created?
2. What is the problem to which you are the solution, and whose problem is it?
3. What new problem will you bring?
4. What are you doing to my heart?

The massive lies ChatGPT might be telling you

A longer read, but this real conversation with ChatGPT takes increasingly bizarre turns. Even if you've already been regularly catching ChatGPT lying to you, this'll be the eye-opener!



So ridiculous, it has to be God

A husband whose wife has had to endure 98 surgeries shares how, in the midst of the craziness, they've been reassured that,

"God is good. Christ is near. Grace is sufficient. Even when nothing else makes sense. Maybe especially then."

Best of *Real Talk*

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



#125 – What are deacons for?

Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, author of *The Deacon*, answers all of Tyler's deacon-related questions: what's the biblical basis for this ministry, what about deaconesses, and how can we support the work of the deacons?



#126 – Mere economics & the issue of tariffs

One of the major conflicts of the 20th century was an economics one – communism vs. market economies. So you can imagine that for an issue that big, God is going to have lots to say. So what does the Bible have to say about economics? And tariffs? What about the best way to be a maker, and not a taker? Join Lucas and economics professor Dr. Caleb Fuller, author of *Mere Economics*



#127 – Prophets for the preborn

Every year 100,000 Canadians lose their lives to abortion. In comparison, in 2022, its deadliest year, 20,000 Canadians were killed by COVID, and in 2023, 85,000 Canadians died of cancer. So is it possible to make abortion unthinkable? Tyler is joined by Nick and Maaïke Rosendal from the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform to discuss what CCBR is, why they believe graphic abortion images and apologetical arguments are important tools, and what reasons there are to be hopeful in the pro-life fight.



Daily Devotionals

If you haven't already, you'll want to check out RP's two daily devotionals.

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

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

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





Connected + Committed

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

Primary + Secondary Teachers for 2025 and beyond

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

Our teachers must:

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

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

INTERESTED?

- Contact the Principal, Mr D Coote, to explore opportunities - cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Find application forms at www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment
- Send completed applications to Mrs K Wielstra - Assoc Sec wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au

Expressions of Interest or Applications welcome any time

WANT TO SHARE THE GOSPEL MORE?

by Mark Penninga

You care about your neighbors, but how can you get beyond the weather and talk about what really matters – salvation in Jesus Christ? The answer starts with prayer: for God to open their hearts to Him, and for us to see opportunities to love our neighbors with our words and actions.

When I have been deliberate with this prayer, I have also been encouraged to see how quickly the LORD provides opportunities. And then the question is whether I care enough to do something, even if it requires some courage and awkwardness.

Another small thing that can help instigate a conversation with our neighbor is the clothing we wear, the bags we carry, or the sticker on our water bottle. If you wonder what difference it makes, consider the impact of seeing a cross on a necklace of the nurse who is helping you in the hospital. A small symbol can speak volumes.

HERE TO HELP

As you may have noticed from our ad on the back cover, the Reformed Perspective store is now open, featuring well over a hundred clothing designs for children, youth, and adults (as well as stickers, mugs, and more).

SPEAK AT YOUR OWN VOLUME

We strive to combine grace and truth in all of the designs, though some have bold messages about sensitive topics like abortion, and others have more soft-spoken messages of grace and forgiveness. There are different “collections,” including designs for kids from the “Come & Explore” section of the magazine, as well as some very creative doodles from artist Jason Bouwman, who is behind our popular “Interview with an artist” section found in most issues. We even have some designs that feature QR codes on the back, so that people can scan them with their phone and learn more,



RP SPEAK

Designed to spark meaningful conversations.



COME AND EXPLORE

Designs inspired from the kids' section of the RP magazine.



SCRIPTURE

Scripture based designs.



'JUST THINKING'

J. Bouwman's delightful doodles and deep thoughts.



DAYS'PRING DESIGNS


Feminine designs created to spread the gospel message and hope.

SMALL STEPS

Small, practical measures can help, like giving ourselves a little more time so that we aren't always in a rush. Or we can leave our phone off, and earbuds out, when we are waiting for the bus or plane.

No, we aren't trying to make money. Our goal is to simply break even with this store. Rather, our goal is the very same mission that drives our magazine, podcast, and other resources: *to equip Christians to think, speak, and act in line with our confession.*

perhaps without you even noticing.

If it is time for a new sweater, or you have a birthday gift to buy for that special person, why not skip Amazon or the Gap and give **Store.ReformedPerspective.ca** a try. 

Reformed **PERSPECTIVE** *Store*

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CANADIAN, NON-PROFIT, AND DEVOTED TO HELPING YOU

THINK · SPEAK · ACT

FOR *God's glory*



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