

Reformed CELEBRATING GOD'S TRUTH

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2026  
Volume 45 Issue No. 1

# PERSPECTIVE

SINCE 1982

JOIN THE

**RPB**  
**LBC**

Make this the year you  
start reading again!





# YOUR TURN!

Inspire Christians to think, speak,  
and act for God's glory



Have you been inspired by a video to defend your faith or be in awe of God's amazing creation? Has a podcast empowered you to improve your marriage or manage your finances better? And have articles in this or other magazines and websites helped you serve as a friend, elder, teacher, or mom?

Almost every hour of the day we are being blessed directly, or indirectly, by godly resources that others have developed.

### ***Now it's your turn!***

*Reformed Perspective* respectfully challenges you to turn your passion, creativity, story, and ideas into something that can bless others. A generous sponsor is offering **\$7,000 in cash prizes**, and *RP* will platform some of the entries with our magazine, website, podcast, and social media channels so that they can bless tens of thousands of people.

Perhaps you have training and education that would be a huge help to others, or you have experienced a trial and have learned lessons that may help others. Maybe you have a story to share to encourage or warn your siblings in Christ. This is your calling and opportunity to bless Christ's church!



## Categories:

There will be the three main categories below, with each of them subdivided into **YOUTH (UNDER AGE 19)** and **ADULTS**, resulting in 6 categories overall.



**VIDEO:** make your message come alive!

**AUDIO:** speak, or even sing, from your heart!

**WRITTEN:** whether it is an article, comic, or maybe even a script, get it from your mind onto “paper”!

*Teachers and home-schooling parents, this could be a great way to challenge your students!*

## \$7,000 in cash prizes

A generous donor has allowed us to offer:

- \$1,000 for the winner of each of the 6 categories.
- \$1,000 for the overall fan favorite.

We will ask our readers to vote for their favorite in the May/June issue. **The judging criteria is to inspire and equip your brothers and sisters to think, speak or act to God’s glory.**

## Entry criteria:

- Content must be original (and not published elsewhere). You are welcome to make use of resources like books, friends, and AI to help you (but please credit sources when relevant).
- Entries must be faithful to God’s Word and bring glory to God.
  - We welcome any topics that are suitable for a Christian audience. Mechanics, art, philosophy, theology, relationships, mission, sports, mental health – or anything else. After all, every square inch belongs to Christ. But we ask that submissions be focused on inspiring your audience.
  - Quality: must be good enough that it can be shared with our audience without us needing to edit or improve it (so, bounce it off friends and family first, and ask them to help you hone it – what could you do to make it as good as it can get?).
  - Although you will keep the rights to your content, by entering the contest you give *Reformed Perspective* the right to publish it in the magazine if we decide to, and also on our social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.), and on our *Real Talk* podcast.
  - Entries must be submitted through the form on **[ReformedPerspective.ca/YourTurn](https://ReformedPerspective.ca/YourTurn)** by **February 28, 2026**.





## Note from *RP's* Board:

In early December, our board had the privilege of meeting in person in the beautiful facilities of Reformed Book Services in Brantford.

As we reviewed 2025, we were humbled and amazed by God's gracious provision through so many of you.

Our heartfelt thanks go to hundreds of you who receive a box or package of magazines and distribute them in your churches every issue again. We also thank all those who worked hard to write an article and pitch it to us to be published in the magazine, as well as the many guests willing to share their story or expertise on our Real Talk podcast.

As we write this in early December, 855 families, churches, businesses, and individuals have made a donation or contributed monthly this year. Through their generosity, the combined "reach" of our resources has gone beyond 2 million, and we were also able to introduce the magazine to 292 more churches. On behalf of all those blessed through your generosity (including ourselves), we sincerely thank you.

Because of the LORD's provision through your support, we were able to make ambitious plans for the next ten years, including adding a new Managing Editor position in 2026, and reaching many more people who desire to walk with the LORD. We will be sharing details in the coming issues.



We'd also like to extend a special thanks to Lucas Holtvluwer on the completion of his two terms on RP's board where he served so faithfully.

We look forward to walking this path alongside you all through the year of our LORD 2026.

Soli Deo Gloria!

### Reformed Perspective Board of Directors

(from left to right) Marty VanDriel, David Visser, Aubrey Vandergaag, Lucas Holtvluwer, Bruce DeBoer, Mark Penninga, Sharon DeBoer, Rebecca Poppe

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

Published bimonthly by Reformed Perspective Foundation Inc.

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

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

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

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

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

**Art Direction, Design and Layout:** Annelies Veurink; Vanessa Appleyard

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

### Contact Address for Australia:

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

**Copyright statement:** Copyright in letters, articles, cartoons and any other material submitted to Reformed Perspective and accepted for publication remains with the author, but RP and its reciprocal organizations may freely reproduce them in print, electronic or other forms.

*This periodical is owned and operated by the Reformed Perspective Foundation Inc., a Canadian charity whose mission is to promote a Biblically Reformed perspective in all spheres of life by equipping and encouraging Christians to think, speak, and act in a manner consistent with their confession.*

*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





# Make this the year you start reading again!

PAGE 6

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>2 <b>RP CONTEST: Your Turn!</b></p> <p>6 <b>EDITORIAL: Join RP's Bucket List Book Club</b><br/>- Jon Dykstra &amp; Mark Penninga</p> <p>8 <b>NEWS IN PERSPECTIVE</b><br/>- Levi Minderhoud, Jon Dykstra, Mark Penninga, Marty VanDriel</p> <p>14 <b>If Grade are Dropping, Should We Drop Grades?</b><br/><b>A new trend in Canadian schools</b><br/>- Christina Park</p> <p>20 <b>BLESSED ARE THE BUSY?</b><br/><b>Should we be trying to be less busy or be busy better?</b><br/>- Jan Broersma</p> <p>26 <b>You Can Save Pre-born Lives This Summer</b><br/>- Quiana Casamayor</p> <p>28 <b>When God Goes to War: Holiness, Judgment &amp; Hope</b><br/>- Rob Schouten</p> <p>32 <b>"We Believe..." 1,700 Years Ago</b><br/>- Erika Wildervanck</p> <p>34 <b>Moth and Rust Resolutions</b><br/>- Christine Farenhorst</p> | <p>36 <b>Created to Create: a practical person's thoughts on creativity</b><br/>- Holly Enter</p> <p>42 <b>IN A NUTSHELL: Tidbits relevant, and not so, to the Christian life</b><br/>- Jon Dykstra</p> <p><b>NOT TRASHCANS:</b></p> <p>45 <b>FILM REVIEWS: 12 Free Must-See Docs For Christian Families</b><br/>- Jon Dykstra</p> <p>48 <b>COME &amp; EXPLORE: You might be eating candy for dinner</b><br/>- Stephanie Vanderpol</p> <p>52 <b>We Are Not Trashcans: How to analyze stories</b><br/>- Lucia Wilson</p> <p>56 <b>Do You Realize What You're Listening To? Looking at those lyrics...</b><br/>- Levi Minderhoud</p> <p>59 <b>BOOK REVIEWS: Christian Fantasy After Lewis &amp; Tolkein - a Top 10</b><br/>- Jon Dykstra</p> | <p>62 <b>8 Errors Parents Make and How to Avoid Them</b><br/>- reviewed by Arend Witten</p> <p>64 <b>CROSSWORD PUZZLE</b><br/>- Jeff Dykstra</p> <p>73 <b>The Lifelong Battle (A Poem)</b><br/>- Frances Baars</p> <p>74 <b>Will AI Replace Reading? - Empty libraries &amp; human-less humans</b><br/>- John Stonestreet &amp; Shane Morris</p> <p>76 <b>Navigating Failure</b><br/>- Harma-Mae Smit</p> <p>78 <b>The Evil of Simplicity</b><br/>- Barbara Braendlein</p> <p>80 <b>More Than the Magazine</b></p> <p>82 <b>RP CONTEST: Can You Build It Better?</b></p> <p>83 <b>E.D. UPDATE: A Home To Grow In - Introducing our new Real Talk studio!</b><br/>- Mark Penninga</p> |
|---|--|--|

# Join RP's Bucket List Book Club

**Make this the year you start reading again!**

by Mark Penninga  
& Jon Dykstra

**W**e live in a world of answers – billions to be found on TikTok, Twitter, and via your favorite AI bot. What's more, some of those answers are even true.

But the Devil is clever, and instead of opposing the truth straight out, he's set on trying to bury it under a glut of gossip, hot takes, memes and clips, half-truth gotchas, and outright (sometimes convincingly AI-generated) lies.

God has given us a firm foundation to stand on, so we're not getting tossed to and fro by every attempted redefinition of *marriage, justice, love, equality, gender, personhood, mercy, privilege*, and more (Eph. 4:14). But we can't help but be impacted by the sheer volume of lies being directed at us. If the storm outside our homes and outside our church doors isn't exactly changing our thinking, it's probably, at least, shaking our confidence... and consequently crippling our witness.

That's why RP is doing a book club.

Because, in addition to His Word, God has also given us teachers (Eph. 4:11) to equip us to grow in maturity, and some of those teachers have written *fantastic* books. The counter to the world's trivia and noise is to dig deep and to fill our minds and delight our eyes with what's true, praiseworthy, beautiful and un-

changing. Although this can be done alone, we are a part of a body, and are meant to assist and encourage each other. And as we learn to see the world as it really is, we can grow in confidence again, and praise our Creator all the more loudly in our homes, and then also proclaim His Name to the culture around.

\*\*\*

**MP:** Why should we join the Bucket List Book Club?

**JD:** One big reason is just to make better use of the "talents" God has given us (see Matt. 25:14-30), and I'm thinking here specifically of our brain, discernment, and wisdom. Even for those of us who were gifted a Christian school education in our youth, some – maybe more so us guys – may not have taken full advantage of what our parents and teachers were offering up to us. And even if you did your best in school, learning shouldn't stop when you leave Grade 12. This book club is all about learning from the brightest people and best writers on the planet. We can learn from them via their books, and we can do so together, iron sharpening iron (Prov. 27:17). But how would you answer the same question?

**MP:** Whether university is realistic or not at whatever stage of life we find ourselves in, thanks to books and the internet we can now learn from teachers who are both brilliant and godly for a fraction of the cost of a traditional education. And we can do it from anywhere in the world. For example, I recently had to make a 12-hour drive with my wife Jaclyn. Since we both enjoy learning, I tried listening to a book I had never heard of before, by Steve Cuss, called *Managing Leadership Anxiety*. Before the drive was done, we finished the book. But this wasn't just another book read and forgotten - it was transformational. It is proving to be instrumental in helping me with my long-standing battle with managing stress and anxiety. I have since joined an online course to learn more from the author and am experiencing the fruit in my roles as husband, father, elder, and Executive Director.

**JD:** And it all started with a book. You were also listening along with your wife, and I think that's significant. With the book club, it was your idea that everyone has to sign up in pairs. Why is that?

**MP:** Good intentions only get you so far, but by adding someone to come alongside you in this, it brings a degree of accountability. Having a reading buddy – your spouse, a sibling, friend, maybe even

our kids – is a great way to set things up to encourage us to keep at it (Eccl. 4:9-10). Plus, a lot of the learning comes from the discussions we have about what we read.

**JD:** So why are we calling it the “Bucket List Book Club”? You were originally thinking “RP Academy” to highlight the educational aspect, and I pitched “RP Foundations” because I thought we should tackle really important titles. So why'd we settle on the BLBC?

**MP:** Because these are books Christians would do well to read for our journey here on Earth. We've picked some of the most *impactful* books we know. But we've also emphasized *accessible*. I think a book club might sound like it is something only for people who already love reading. But the point isn't the reading, but the learning together. Sure, reading is involved (or you can listen to it on audiobook) but this is about learning, and growing in wisdom, and that's an activity we all need to be active in, right up until the day we die. That is also why there's quite a mix: biographies, business books, and books that tackle grief, apologetics, parenting, and more.

**JD:** The variety is definitely a feature. But it might also have some wondering, if they'd never want to start a business, why they would ever want to read a business book. And if you don't have kids, why would it still be valuable to read *Tech-Wise Family*, about best managing the tech in your house?

**MP:** We've picked these titles because they all have broad application. *The Tech-Wise Family* is, at its root, all about using tech as a tool, and managing it, rather than being managed by it – we've all experienced the pull of each ping. Author Andy Crouch's very deliberate Christian focus will help everyone.


**JD:** And as to the business books, you're much more the entrepreneurial sort, but even for me, I've never read a business book that didn't teach me something valuable. We all have to manage our own lives, and our limited resources of time, money, and creativity – the business books

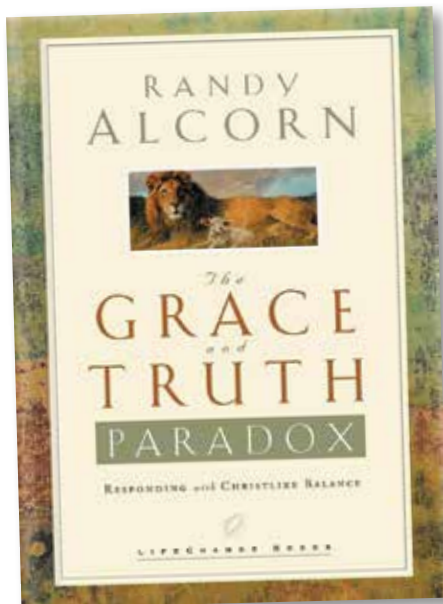
we've picked have the sort of applications and insights that extend into non-business life too.

**MP:** What will it actually involve?

**JD:** All you need to do is register by scanning the QR code to go to [www.ReformedPerspective.ca/BLBC](http://www.ReformedPerspective.ca/BLBC) and then fill in the form, and you are in! There is no cost, but you will need to order these books yourself. We'll be reading one book a month and then meet via a video call with everyone else in the book club on the last Saturday of each month at 8 AM PT which is 11 AM ET. That means our first call is on January 31, 2026. As we noted above, we are asking you to sign up in pairs – grab a friend, spouse, sibling, or one of your kids. Your BLBC partner doesn't even need to be local, but they do need to be someone you chat with regularly, so you can keep each other on track. Mark, can you share some of the books, in the order we expect to tackle them?

**MP:** We wrestled with which to pick, and settled on these. That said, it is possible we change it up a little, as we go along :)

1. *The Grace and Truth Paradox* by Randy Alcorn
2. *Necessary Endings* by Henry Cloud
3. *Tech-Wise Family* by Andy Crouch
4. *Factfulness* by Hans Rosling
5. *Just Do Something* by Kevin DeYoung
6. *Upheld* by Christine Farenhorst
7. *Mission Drift* by Peter Greer and Chris Horst
8. *Cost of My Faith* by Jack Phillips
9. *Tactics* by Greg Koukl
10. *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* by Rosaria Butterfield
11. *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom 



Our first one up!





# NEWS IN *Perspective*

## GOVERNMENT LEAVES RELIGIOUS AND PRO-LIFE ORGANIZATIONS ALONE IN 2025 BUDGET

BY LEVI MINDERHOUD



**P**ro-life Christians can breathe a sigh of relief. Actually, you can take two. The 2025 federal budget unveiled on Tuesday leaves the charitable status of religious organizations and pregnancy care centers alone.

### 2024 – THE THREAT

Both of these concerns were raised late in 2024 when the Standing Committee on Finance reported on its pre-budget consultations. This is a standard practice, where

the government gives Canadians the opportunity to share what they want to see in the upcoming federal budget. The report made a whopping 462 recommendations, but two caught the eye of pro-life Christians:

- Recommendation 429 suggested removing the charitable status of “anti-abortion organizations.”
- Recommendation 430 proposed removing charitable status for religious organizations.

The latter recommendation came out of left field. Organizations like the BC Humanist Association have long lobbied for the government to give religious activities less time, less money, and less recognition. But no mainstream political party or figure had seriously entertained the idea until this federal finance committee recommendation. Even after this recommendation was made, Karina Gould, the new chair of the Finance Committee, wrote the following to the Canadian Executive Director of the Christian Reformed Church:

“Charitable status for religious organizations is not under review, and this government has no plans to change that. Any suggestion otherwise is false. We respect the role faith-based organizations play in communities across the country, and religious organizations continue to enjoy charitable status under the same rules that apply to all charities in Canada. There have been no policy or legislative changes proposed that would revoke charitable status from religious groups including churches.”

### ROOTS IN 2021

The idea of revoking the charitable status of pregnancy care centers, however, has a longer history. In their 2021 election platform, the Liberals explicitly promised to remove the charitable status of “anti-abortion organizations (for example, Crisis Pregnancy Centres).” This recommendation not only betrayed their pro-abortion stance but also accused pro-life organizations of providing:

“...dishonest counselling to women about their rights and about the options available to them at all stages of the pregnancy.”

Of course, they entirely ignored the material, emotional, and relational assistance these pregnancy care centers provide.

Then last fall, the federal government announced its intention

to introduce legislation to require pregnancy care centers to either disclose that they do not provide abortions or else lose their charitable tax status. Thankfully, gridlock in Parliament, the resignation of Justin Trudeau as prime minister, and the spring federal election prevented such a bill from being introduced.

## 2025 AND ONWARD

These attacks on pregnancy care centers were dropped from the Liberals' 2025 election platform. Though there is no mention of the revocation of charitable status for religious organizations or "anti-abortion" organizations in the federal budget, and though the current government seems to have different priorities than the last one, this isn't necessarily the end of the story.

Given that tens of millions of Canadians identify as religious and that revoking the charitable status of religious organizations would be a massive departure from four hundred years of charitable status tradition, this change seems unlikely to be implemented in the near future. Not only would this be bad policy, it would also be bad electoral politics for the government.

However, the Liberal Party has firmly set its face against the pro-life cause. They've done so in every recent vote on abortion legislation, and in the change they made in 2017 to the Canada Summer Jobs program which required applicants to declare support for abortion, and in their continued funding for abortion. So the government may well set pregnancy care centers in their sights again in the coming years. A good test of the government's intentions will be whether this recommendation reappears in the final consultation report before next year's budget.

We need to continue to remind our Members of Parliament of the benefits that both religious organizations and pregnancy care centers provide, so as to fend off attacks on their charitable status.



## PARENTS DISROBE TO MAKE THEIR POINT

BY JON DYKSTRA

**I**n what seems to be a bit of a trend, parents have gone to school board meetings and, while presenting to the board, proceeded to disrobe to their underwear or bathing suit. Why? To protest school policies that tell girls they need to be okay with boys in girls' locker rooms – changing in front of them, and watching them change – when those boys say they are girls.

On September 18, 55-year-old mother Beth Bourne wanted her Davis, California school board to feel some of the discomfort they were forcing on the girls in their schools. So, during the public comment section of the school board meeting she spoke while disrobing to a bikini swimsuit. As the *LA Times'* Nathan Solis reported it:

"Right now we require our students to undress for PE class, and I'm just going to give you an idea of what that looks like while I undress," Bourne said while she stood behind the lectern and removed her shirt.... 'So right now, this school district is saying that depending on a child's transgender identity, they could pick which bathroom they want. Right now we have children self-identifying into different bathrooms,' she said as she removed her pants..."

At that point the board's vice president gavelled the meeting to recess, making Bourne's point for

her: if the board can't deal with this discomfort, why are they subjecting girls to it?

Then, in October, a man and two women did the same, undressing to their underwear before changing into other outfits. This time it was in Maine, and the spokesman for the group, Nick Blanchard made sure their point was understood:

"You feel uncomfortable? Because that's what these young girls feel like when a boy walks into their locker room and starts undressing in front of them."

Awkward? Certainly.

But is it a sinful way to make a point? After all, God calls us to modesty (1 Tim. 2:9-10). But God has also used immodesty to make a point, having Isaiah walk around naked (or, like these folk, in no more than his underwear) for three years (Is. 20:2-4). God also calls on us to defend our children and take the hit for them (2 Cor. 12:14, 1 Thess. 2:7-9, John 10:11). The school was set on humiliating children, and these parents were willing to be humiliated instead. That's admirable, and while neither school seems to have listened, these educators' lack of concern for their girl athletes was now exposed for all to see. Hopefully these brave parents, and the many more they alerted, took matters even further and pulled their kids out.

## ARCTIC SEA ICE REMAINS STEADY FOR PAST TWO DECADES

BY MARK PENNINGA

**I**f you've ever fallen for the "Heads I win, tails you lose" trick, the mainstream media's climate change reporting might strike you as familiar. Whatever the latest news might be, the spin is in just one direction: the planet is in crisis. It happened again, just recently, with what should have been good news for all.

Based on data from the US National Snow and Ice Data Center, Arctic ice decreased to 4.602 million square kilometers on September 10th, the low point for the year, corresponding with the warmer temperatures of summer. The number is 1.2 million square kilometers greater than where it was at in 2012, and close to half a million more than 2007 levels. In general, the ice trend has been close to flat over the past two decades.

Hurrah, right?

Where the mainstream media did cover the story, the data didn't change their long-standing climate alarmism. As EuroNews.com reported it:

"Scientists say this is a temporary slowdown that may continue for a further five to 10 years. When it ends, it is likely to be followed by faster-

than-average sea ice decline."

The spin goes beyond the media. "While this year's Arctic sea ice area did not set a record low, it's consistent with the downward trend" reported NASA. And the World Wildlife Federation still warns:

"Polar ice caps are melting as global warming causes climate change. We lose Arctic sea ice at a rate of almost 13% per decade.... If emissions continue to rise unchecked, the Arctic could be ice-free in the summer by 2040."

What isn't being publicly acknowledged is that the projections of the leading scientists and their spokesmen have often been wrong. One example: the former US vice president Al Gore, while accepting a Nobel Prize for his climate advocacy back in 2007, spoke



of a study saying the North Polar ice cap could be gone during summer months just 22 years from then (or 2029). He went on to add, "Another new study, to be presented by U.S. Navy researchers later this week, warns it could happen in as little as 7 years" (i.e., 2014).

This doesn't mean that the Arctic ice won't decrease further, or that the climate isn't changing (it has been changing since creation). But it does mean that we need to humbly acknowledge our finite and limited understanding of this world, in contrast to God's sovereign hand over His creation, including Arctic sea ice.

## FEWER YOUNG PEOPLE IDENTIFYING AS "QUEER" OR "TRANS"

BY MARK PENNINGA

**A** recent research report based on polling tens of thousands of American college students each year shows a significant decline in those who identify as "Trans" or "Queer."

The poll, conducted by the Centre for Heterodox Social Science, found that the number of students who identified as transgender peaked in 2023 at 7 percent but has since nearly halved to under 4 percent.

Not quite as steep a decline, those who simply identify as being "not heterosexual" declined by 10 points

from approximately 28 percent to 18. Of this group, those who identify as homosexual has remained stable, but those who identify as "bisexual" or "queer" has decreased. The report's author, Eric Kaufmann, reflected in a post on X that:

"The fall of trans and queer seems most similar to the fading of a fashion or trend. It happened largely independently of shifts in political beliefs and social media use, though improved mental health played a role."

While identifying as trans or queer may be less socially popular today, the underlying search for identity and meaning remains. This can only be satisfied when we understand who we are: human beings made by a loving and powerful God, who has a good plan for our lives, including our sexuality. Far from being repressive, conforming our lives to God gives lasting joy and freedom. "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).



## BC PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS IN QUESTION AFTER COURT RULING

BY MARK PENNINGA AND JON DYKSTRA

**T**he City of Richmond, a suburb of Vancouver, sent out a letter in October to some of its residents, informing them of a recent BC Supreme Court decision which “has declared aboriginal title to your property which may compromise the status and validity of your ownership.”

The court decision, by Justice Barbara Young, is found in an 863-page ruling, resulting from what is claimed to be the longest trial in Canada’s history. She ruled that the Cowichan First Nations “have established Aboriginal title” to about 800 acres in the city, because the ancestors of the Cowichan once had a seasonal fishing village in the area centuries ago. The court ruled that the Crown’s granting of land to settlers was not valid because it infringed on the Cowichan Nation’s title.

The decision is causing understandable unrest among property owners in the area and around the province. If the Cowichan Nation still has title, what does that mean for their ownership? And if this is true for these 800 acres, what does it mean for the rest of BC, given that as much as 95% is claimed to be “unceded traditional First Nations territory”?

The BC government and City of Richmond are appealing the court ruling, though the NDP government has been promoting First Nations land title extensively in recent years. This included recently handing over title to the entire Haida Gwaii archipelago of 10,180 km<sup>2</sup> to the Haida Nation (or just over 1 percent of the province).

“I think this is one of the most significant rulings in the history of the province, and maybe the country,” Malcolm Brodie, the Mayor of Richmond, said to the *Globe and Mail*.

“I think it potentially could dismantle the land title system, certainly in our province, with ramifications across the country.”

This is the logical outcome of “land acknowledgements” being read out before meetings, sporting events, and university classes across the province and across the country. The Left kept accusing us all of living, working, and playing on stolen land, and it was only a matter of time before someone with power realized that if property has indeed been stolen then it needs to be returned – that only makes sense.

But so much of this doesn’t make sense. Do the Cowichan own this land because they hunted and lived on it some of the year, hundreds of years ago? If so, then wouldn’t it make sense to apply that same standard towards the Indigenous peoples who did so before them? If we are going to restore property said to have been stolen 100 years ago, why not restore it to whatever tribe or nation owned it 200 years, or 500 years ago? Where does it stop? If my great-grandparents stole \$10 a hundred years ago, should I feel any obligation to pay it back to the great-grandchildren of the guy whose wallet they took?



6911 No. 3 Road  
Richmond, BC V6V 2C1  
www.richmond.ca

### NOTICE TO REGISTERED OWNER

Please take note that the recent BC Supreme Court decision of *Cowichan Tribes v Canada*, 2025 BCSC 1490 made some very important decisions which could negatively affect the title to your property. A briefing paper prepared by City of Richmond staff is attached for your reference.

If you look at the draft map attached to the briefing, your property is located within the Claim Area outlined in green. For those whose property is in the area outlined in black, the Court has declared aboriginal title to your property which may compromise the status and validity of your ownership – this was mandated without any prior notice to the landowners. The entire area outlined in green is claimed on appeal by the Cowichan First Nations.

Given the serious implications of this Court decision and the pending appeal, The City is hosting an information session to be held on Tuesday October 28, 2025, at 7:00pm at Richmond City Hall. We hope that you can attend to learn more about this important situation.

Please phone us at 604-276-4123 or email us at [mayores@richmond.ca](mailto:mayores@richmond.ca) to confirm your attendance.

Yours truly,

  
Malcolm D. Brodie  
Mayor, City of Richmond

Lots of questions here, and there are plenty of biblical texts worth exploring for insight (Num. 5:5-8, Matt. 7:1-2, Lev. 6:1-7, etc.) but for now let’s consider just one. A theft is said to have occurred one hundred years ago, and the 8th Commandment, *do not steal*, is the basis of the Cowichan complaint. But to hand over this land, as it is today, wouldn’t be righting a wrong, but perpetuating another. If my great-grandparents had invested \$10 they stole into starting a business that, through the work of our family’s next three generations, became a multi-billion-dollar enterprise, would I be responsible for returning everything that \$10 became? Because that’s what’s being considered today: were the Cowichan to take over this chunk of Richmond, they would be taking developed property worth thousands of times more than the open land that existed there before.

The 8th Commandment, *do not steal*, is the basis for private property rights and, as economist Barry Asmus and Bible scholar Wayne Grudem have explained, it is

“the necessary foundation for all human flourishing on the face of the earth.... Whenever this commandment is ignored, entire nations remain trapped in poverty forever.”

It’s easy to see how that is so. If this ruling stands and this becomes the new normal in Canada, who would invest here? Who would want to put money down if a judge can decide with a stroke of their pen to give over everything they’ve developed? It’ll be impossible to build an economy without a stable foundation of private property beneath it.

## AUSTRALIA AND DENMARK RESTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY CHILDREN

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

**I**n at least two western countries, children under the age of 16 will soon be barred from using many social media sites and apps. The Australian government passed the “Online Safety Amendment Act” back in 2024 to raise the age requirement for many popular social media sites from 13 to 16 – that change is scheduled to take effect December 10 of this year. The Australian ban includes nine of the popular, time-wasting and culturally-influential apps: Facebook, X, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Threads, Reddit, and Kick. The government can fine companies up to \$50 million (Australian) that don’t take “reasonable steps” to remove current accounts and prohibit new ones for children under 16. That’s a hefty penalty, even for these extremely profitable companies.

In Denmark, Prime Minister Mette

Frederiksen announced similar restrictions in her opening speech to parliament in October of this year. Caroline Stage Olsen, Denmark’s Minister for Digital Affairs, said that 94% of Danish children under the age of 13 have profiles on at least one social media platform. The legislation still has a few hurdles to cross before becoming law, but indicates a clear turning away from unregulated use of social media by children.

The Bible tells us that the primary responsibility for raising children is given to their parents, not to kings or princes or governments. No doubt then, that Christian parents are already seeking to guide and guard their children’s access to internet resources that can be damaging to young hearts and minds. But just like the government bans on liquor, tobacco, and pornography access



for children, it does seem appropriate for the State to restrict social media use by youngsters, since, along with the very little good, there can be very much harm that comes from exposure too early to matters inappropriate for children.

## PEANUT ALLERGIES PLUNGE ... AND THEY COULD PLUNGE EVEN MORE

BY MARK PENNINGA



**N**ot that long ago it was thought that young children shouldn’t be exposed to peanuts, to prevent a dangerous reaction. But, as Prov. 18:17 notes, “The first to put forth his case seems right, until someone else steps forward and cross-examines him.” That cross-

examination first began in 2015, when a ground-breaking study found that introducing peanuts to young children actually reduced the risk of getting food allergies by about 70 percent or more. In response, many doctors started changing their advice.

An *Associated Press* piece noted that

“About 60,000 children have avoided developing peanut allergies after guidance first issued in 2015 upended medical practice by recommending that caregivers introduce the allergen to infants starting as early as four months.”

Now a 2025 study has reviewed the data. According to the *AP* account, peanut allergies in children aged zero to three decreased by more than 40 percent since the recommendations were expanded in 2017.

In spite of the findings from the 2015 study, the *AP* reported that only about 29 percent of pediatricians and 65 percent of allergists say they follow the newer guidelines, suggesting that there could have been far fewer allergy cases still if more children were introduced to potential allergens at a younger age.

Dr. Derek Chu, Canadian Institutes of Health Research chair in allergy noted to the *AP* that this guidance extends to all common allergens, including dairy, soy, wheat, egg, shellfish, and nuts.



## BIBLE LABELED AS HATEFUL BY GOVERNMENT MP

BY COLIN POSTMA

**L**iberal MP Marc Miller serves as the chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. On October 30, 2025, he made these comments about the Bible during a committee meeting:

"In Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Romans – there's other passages – there is clear hatred towards, for example, homosexuals... I mean, clearly there are situations in these texts where these statements are hateful. They should not be used to invoke or be a defense."

The committee was studying Bill C-9, which the Liberal government is calling the *Combating Hate Act*. When a government leader publicly calls passages of Scripture clearly hateful, it reveals something far deeper than a policy debate. It shows a government forgetting its duty before God. Civil authority is not ultimate. Scripture teaches that those in power are ministers of God, called to uphold

justice and protect truth. From the very book Minister Miller referenced, Romans 13:1 reads,

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."

And in Psalm 2:10-11, we are told,

"Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling."


John Sikkema, Legal Counsel and Director of Law and Policy for ARPA Canada, had the opportunity to present to the same committee a few hours after Miller's comments. As Mr. Sikkema said in his statement before the committee:

"...today in Canada, people are being accused, often by government officials, of promoting hatred simply

for expressing moral or political views. Earlier this month, the British Columbia Legislature condemned ARPA as hateful... A B.C. government MLA even told a story... [that] defamed and vilified Reformed Christians as criminal harassers, which seems like a way, frankly, to stir up hatred against this group, while at the same time accusing these Christians of promoting hatred for the views that they hold."

When leaders begin labeling parts of the Bible as dangerous or hateful, they place themselves above the very law that gives their authority any meaning. Our concern is not merely for Christians, but for Canada itself. A nation cannot claim to pursue justice while rejecting the standard of the One who defines it. Government serves under God's authority, and it has a duty to ensure that His Word and those who live by it remain free to speak. This gets to the heart of Christian concerns about Bill C-9.





# If grades are dropping, should we drop grades?

## A NEW TREND IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

by Christina Park

Imagine a student who has struggled academically for several years. In the past, their grades would have alerted teachers and parents that intervention was needed. But this student is at a school where there's been a shift from A's and B's to something called a "proficiency scale." Parents understand percentages and letter grades, but this proficiency scale uses terms that aren't at all clear.

- Emerging
- Developing
- Proficient
- Extending

The result? Our imaginary student falls through the cracks in the system instead of being noticed early on.

This scenario isn't just imaginary. I talked to Joanna DeJong VanHof, Education Program Director at Cardus, a Christian think tank, and she explained that this is what's happening under British Columbia's new method of assessing students. In 2023, B.C. abolished letter grades for Grades K-9 and adopted a Provincial Proficiency Scale with those four categories. The scale was introduced amid concerns that grades stressed deficits – they emphasized where the student fell short – whereas, with a scale, learning would be regarded as an ongoing process.

B.C. is not an isolated case. Their shift was part of a broader trend in Canadian schools away from traditional teaching and grading methods. Schools are replacing *quantitative* assessments – letter grades and percentage scores – with *qualitative* approaches, like observations, narrative

feedback, and ongoing conversations about student learning.

VanHof says this shift is problematic because qualitative assessments measure student performance "relative to their peers" rather than against "actual content." While intended to support struggling students, the approach raises questions for educators. Is compassion for students being confused with lowered expectations?

### THE BC PROFICIENCY SCALE: A CASE STUDY

Victor Brar, a University of British Columbia professor with expertise in K-12 education, has written on the rationale behind B.C.'s proficiency scale. In an article on *The Conversation* news site, he made a case for the change. He noted that while grades "highlight the deficits of underperforming students," the scale focuses on the *process* of learning itself and encourages teachers "to assign equal value to all the learning that happens between tests."

However, eliminating letter grades has left parents confused with what their child's progress has been. According to the *National Post*, only 36% of parents could correctly interpret what an "emerging" grade meant. Similarly, educators needed to interpret and translate what the criteria meant, raising concerns around subjectivity.

"There's always a sense in which grading is subjective," said VanHof, but when that subjectivity is taken to the extreme, there are unintended consequences. One of them, VanHof said, is grade inflation

where students may have high marks on paper, but "the actual content knowledge that has happened isn't at the same level as it has been in previous years."

### DE-STREAMING: EQUITY OR EROSION?

VanHof drew a parallel between B.C.'s proficiency scale with Ontario's 2021 "de-streaming" policy, which eliminated separate Grade 9 academic and applied courses for a single course. Previously, the applied math courses focused on the math we need in our every day, like balancing our household budget, while academic courses prepared students for the university level.

The goal of de-streaming, like the proficiency scale, was to promote an equitable learning environment. According to Ontario Educators, streaming reinforced economic disparities and racism, disproportionately placing Black and Indigenous students in applied courses and creating a "class system" that perpetuated a "self-fulfilling prophecy" of lower academic achievement.

However, Michael Zwaagstra, Senior Fellow at Fraser Institute said that while de-streaming policy "sounds fair," it does not serve students who may be disinterested in academic coursework, or may be choosing other paths like trades.

On the other hand, VanHof criticized de-streaming for the demands it put on teachers to accommodate to a much wider spectrum of abilities. It's like teaching two classes at once, and to do it properly would require additional resources, like

TA assistance, in the classroom.

"You can implement a policy. But the capacity and the resources that you have to implement it well is a totally different question," VanHof said. Since educators were not given additional time or support, the result was that no one was receiving the "targeted instruction and time they needed."

John Wynia, League Coordinator at League of Canadian Reformed School Societies echoed the perspective.

"The standards have been lowered in the grade nine class to allow for equity, but then that results in reaching the lowest common denominator."

### THE BIGGER PICTURE: DECLINING TEST SCORES

VanHof's concern that students are learning less content has been reflected in declining test scores, as seen on the international PISA test (Programme for International Student Assessment). PISA, administered by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), assesses reading, math, and science skills of 15-year-olds.

Although Canada has ranked among the top ten countries, since the 2000s its scores have consistently declined. The 2022 PISA test was on mathematics, with Canada's score falling by 35 points compared to 2003, roughly equivalent to a drop of two whole grade levels according to the Fraser Institute.

Some attribute the decline to the COVID school closures, and to the increased screen time kids have had in the last decade. However, B.C. has been restricting phone usage in schools since September 2024, so if phones were a big part of the problem, there should have been a rapid increase in student performance after the phone ban, right? The results are still out on whether that has happened but it will be interesting to see. In the meantime, Canada has experienced a statistically significant decline in all three subjects for over a decade (2012-2022). And that raises questions about our educational policy in the last decade. Is what we're doing different causing the decline?

### MATH METHODS MATTER: WHAT QUEBEC GETS RIGHT

John Richards, emeritus professor at SFU's School of Public Policy says that the problem extends beyond the shift from numerical assessments and includes a change in teaching methods. For instance, Quebec outperformed other provinces on the 2022 PISA test, and Richards said this was because of how teachers in that province are trained and taught.

"Probably the explanation of Quebec is that the math teachers who want to be math teachers in secondary schools have to do a lot more math courses than most teachers."

Richards also referenced Anna Stokke, a mathematics professor at University of Winnipeg. She is a strong critic of "discovery-based education," where students find solutions on their own instead of being directly instructed. For example, in discovery-based math, a teacher presents students with rectangles drawn on grid paper and ask questions such as, "Is there a relationship between the number of squares in a row and the total number?" Under direct instruction, the teacher explicitly states, "Area = length x width."

Discovery-based learning was introduced with the goal of helping students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills over rote memorization of mathematical formulas. However, Stokke says the approach fails to provide students with the solid foundation students need so they'll be able to apply critical thinking to complex problems later on. Without sufficient instruction or practice building on concepts – without enough time just memorizing the basics – Stokke says students become confused and fall behind.

In response to concerns among educators and parents, the Ontario govern-

ment promised reforms in 2018 and began implementing a "back-to-basics" curriculum, including direct instruction in math for kindergarteners. Changes are officially in effect since September 2025.

However, Fraser Institute has criticized the new curriculum for "doubling down" on its DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) focus, including Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in math where students "work collaboratively on math problems—expressing their thinking, listening to the thinking of others, and practicing inclusivity." This does not go back to the basics as promised.

Meanwhile, declining math scores continue to sound alarm bells for a return to fundamentals in teaching methods.

### QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT: IS IT ALL BAD?

Progressive reforms in Ontario and British Columbia have reshaped both teaching methods and assessment practices like B.C.'s elimination of letter grades. But have all these changes been harmful?

Unlike British Columbia which com-



Tom's parents took him out for dinner whenever he got a B, but his new report card had them all wondering whether or not they were staying in.



pletely eliminated letter grades, Ontario's 2010 Growing Success policy retained letter grades but expanded qualitative assessments such as observations, portfolios, and self-assessments. The policy also introduced a "no-zero" approach, discouraging teachers from failing students or giving late penalties.

Jack Huizenga, Academic Dean at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College, sees benefits with Growing Success. The policy sees "assessment as not something for the end of learning," with grades providing a one-time snapshot of student performance. Instead, it regards assessment as "something along the way to help improve learning" with formative and descriptive feedback.

"So, then assessment can't just be about a multiple-choice question or true and false question or short answer questions," Huizenga said, describing how the new approach communicates a fuller picture to parents on the student's progress. Nevertheless, Huizenga said grades were indispensable since colleges and universities also look for those numbers.

"That pendulum has to be somewhere in the middle. I think there's room for proficiency type scales to measure. But there's also going to be the need for grades to communicate where students are at."

## INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS: A CALL TO HIGHER STANDARDS

The declining international test scores that accompanied the national trend to remove academic benchmarks would seem to suggest this removal doesn't serve students. And that challenges independent school educators to balance measurable standards with empathy and support.

The Cardus Education Survey has studied schools with a focus on the independent sector in recent years. According to VanHof, the question for independent schools was how they would translate policy "into something that is meaningful for parents," and even "exceed the standards" of the policy. For example, within B.C.'s proficiency framework, she saw independent educators engaging in

meaningful conversations with parents around the criteria.

"What does an 'emerging' student, what does that actually mean in terms of real objective standards of learning?" VanHof asked. She noted how Christian and independent schools had the "ability to be nimble and to make changes that are in line with their mission and vision."

John Wynia's time at Hope Reformed Christian School is an example which exemplifies this. He shared how students thought of him as a tough teacher because they had to work hard to achieve good grades. "But they often thanked me for that," Wynia recalled, "because when they went to university, they were very well prepared." Within the Growing Success framework, Wynia also continued to assign late penalties, though he was lenient around extensions.

"There's a lot of research and a lot of evidence that shows that if you have high expectations for your students, your students will rise to meet those expectations."

Wynia cited the No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2002 under George W. Bush, which targeted the "soft bigotry of low expectations" that assumes some groups are incapable of meeting high standards because of their background or socioeconomic status. No Child Left Behind measured school progress with standardized testing in reading and math and coincided with higher student performance – especially among low-income students.

Wynia added that teachers should tell students honestly where they are at – it's not at all compassionate to hide the truth. VanHof echoed this view.

"I think we disservice children by saying policies like this will make learning less stressful," she said. "It sounds kind and considerate, but we all know that's not what learning actually is."

VanHof maintained that qualitative feedback has value, but "quantitative assessment has to form the backbone of any education system."

## EDUCATION AS A "FORMATION OF PERSONS"

Education shapes the society we become, underscoring the critical role of assessment methods in that process. VanHof said that education is more than about ensuring students can enter the workforce.


"It is much more than that. It's about the formation of persons," said VanHof. From a Christian worldview, it is about enabling students to know their Creator and to "help them to live within that world to glorify Him." To elaborate on this, VanHof referenced Romans 12:2:

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will."

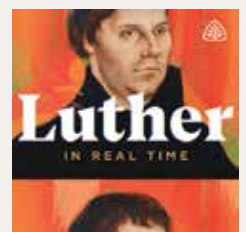
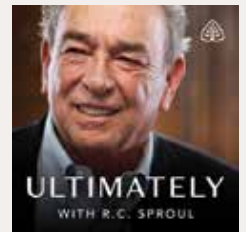
As she explained:

"That to me speaks so clearly about the fact that education is about the joy of learning, renewing our mind, about being transformed, about understanding who God is, and learning for learning's sake."

But without measurable benchmarks, she said, students were missing out on the sense of accomplishment which comes from hard work, progress, and learning new things. VanHof also referenced Jonathan Eckert, Senior Fellow at Cardus Education who served in the US Department of Education in both the Bush and Obama administrations, and who coined the phrase, "gritty optimism." "I love that phrase because I think it really captures the fact that education done well is education in which there's hard work involved," said VanHof, which she said involved both student and teacher.

While Canadian schools have adopted models like de-streaming and the proficiency scale to promote equity, they fail to meet students who need the most support. By combining qualitative feedback with measurable standards, clearly communicating with parents, and providing teachers with proper training and resources, schools should help students grow academically and in character, equipping them for real-world challenges. 





# Listen to Truth

The free Ligonier Ministries podcast library brings the truth of God to your devices throughout the week. Discover your Christian heritage on *5 Minutes in Church History*, reflect on edifying weekday devotions with *Things Unseen*, or get answers to your theological questions on *Ask Ligonier*. And pursue daily spiritual growth with *Renewing Your Mind* as you listen to in-depth Bible teaching from R.C. Sproul and others.



Scan the QR code to explore Ligonier's podcast library and hear truth today.



[Ligonier.org/podcasts](https://ligonier.org/podcasts) | 800-435-4343

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.**



Sioux Center, Iowa



## SCHEDULE A CAMPUS VISIT

There's nothing like the real thing! Plan a trip to campus and see firsthand how God is working through people like you.





# BLESSED ARE THE BUSY?

*Should we be trying to be less busy or be busy better?*

by Jan Broersma

It's not really the worst problem to have: too many good things to do, and not enough time to do them all. Maybe that's why, when I talked to so many women about busyness, they admitted to stress and struggles around their busy schedules, but also expressed gratitude for all the things that fill up their days.

The question for most of us isn't whether or not we're busy (and sometimes too busy). Rather, we wonder if we're always busy with the right things, and for the right reasons. We want to figure out how to cope with the reality of busyness, and maybe find a way to bring a little more balance and sanity to our lives.

## BUSINESS: A HEART ISSUE

*"I don't want to miss out on opportunities, mess up relationships by disappointing people, or misstep right out of God's will. I struggle with keeping some sense of balance in my life. I struggle with worrying about what others think of my decisions..."*

— Lysa TerKeurst, *The Best Yes*

For better and worse, busyness is as much a heart issue as it is a physical one, and maybe that's why it's such a hard one to grapple with. It's difficult to untangle our motivations for the choices we make with our limited time and energy.

Sometimes our busyness is driven by the wrong things, like a desire to please or earn admiration, or by misplaced priorities. Often, though, we're acting out of a sincere desire to serve God and others, and to be good stewards of the

time and opportunities God has given us. We feel keenly the weight of others' needs and expectations. At the same time, we constantly fight the temptation to compare – and judge.

These struggles of the mind and heart lead to a lot of soul-searching. And, as was made clear by some of the thoughts that were shared with me, they are the cause of very real distress for many Christian women.

*"It can be really quite hard to assess if I am truly called to a new thing or if I should stay the course on what I am doing. It's hard to assess my motives. And even when I make a decision, I easily second-guess myself."*

*"Do we make ourselves busy to avoid judgment from others who look at us and think we should be doing more? I feel that sometimes."*

*"Too often we connect our personal worth and value to the stuff we are busy with."*

*"... this is what drives me: If I don't do it, I'll disappoint someone who matters – or even who doesn't really. If I don't do it, I'm lazy... or I'm unsteady: I can save money by canning and baking and freezing. I'm failing my kids: if I don't bake, and can, and preserve, I'm feeding them cancer or other diseases. I'm not letting them grow to their fullest potential by taking their sports and music from them... Will I fail my calling and deny my promises at baptism if I don't do all these things? ... [but] where am I trusting God in all this?"*

We really do want to be "Proverbs 31 women," capably accomplishing all our tasks (and then some) with a godly heart and a serene smile on our face, but there just isn't enough time for everything. We're only human, but sometimes feel guilty about our very natural weaknesses and limitations. When can we legitimately say that we are "busy enough"? As Kevin DeYoung puts it in his excellent book *Crazy Busy*, we're constantly told that:

*"we should pray more, give more, show hospitality more, share our faith more, read our Bibles more, volunteer more.... Where do I start? Where do I find the time? How can I possibly meet all these obligations?... I think most Christians hear these urgent calls to do more (or feel them internally already) and learn to live with a low-level guilt that comes from not doing enough.... That's not how the apostle Paul lived (1 Cor. 4:4), and it's not how God wants us to live either (Rom. 12:1-2). Either we are guilty of sin – like greed, selfishness, idolatry – and we need to repent, be forgiven and change. Or something else is going on. It's taken me several years, a lot of reflection and a load of unnecessary busyness to understand that when it comes to good causes and good deeds, 'do more or disobey' is not the best thing we can say."*

## PRIORITIES

*"I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer."*

— attributed to Martin Luther

When the author to the Hebrews encourages God's people to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us," he doesn't just tell us to throw off "the sin that so easily entangles," but also urges us to lay aside everything (or "every weight") that hinders. These "weights" aren't necessarily bad in themselves – they're distinct from the "sin" that's also mentioned – but they draw our attention away from the race that's in front of us.

At its most simple, figuring out a way forward comes down to priorities. If we're not able to do everything (and we're not!), we need to identify and prioritize the most important things, the things that *can't* be left undone.

I think, at heart, most of us know what those most important things are: our relationship with God, our relationships with those closest to us, the daily calling God has put in front of us in our different roles, our own wellbeing (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual). But sometimes taking time for devotions can feel like a leap of faith ("How can I sit down now if I hope to get everything done this morning?") or, worse, like just another chore; and it's easy to brush off "relationship time" or adequate sleep when other things feel more urgent.

The women I talked to also pondered the importance of well-ordered priorities in their lives, and how to stay focused on the things that really matter. Their helpful suggestions included asking ourselves some pointed questions.

### ***"How does my time use match, or not match, what I've identified as my priorities?"***

If God is number one in my life, does my daily and weekly schedule reflect that? Or do things that are far less important, but feel more urgent, keep crowding out Bible study or church activities?

### ***"What are my personal non-negotiables?"***

For one woman, these daily must-do's are "devotions, going outside into God's creation (even if it's just for a short

time), and making a good dinner. These are non-negotiables for me because they're all very important for my physical, emotional and spiritual health as well as my family's." Others' lists are different, but making conscious, deliberate choices about our priorities is key.

### ***"Is any one part of my life drastically out of balance?"***

We're complex beings, and the different parts of our lives and selves – mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, social, work – affect each other. A Christian counselor shared with me that the biggest cause of stress, in her experience, is an imbalance between these areas. We need regular sleep, exercise, and healthy food. We need relationships that rejuvenate us (especially when other relationships in our lives are more difficult or draining). We need Sunday rest, breaks, and times of quietness.

### ***"Am I minimizing 'artificial busyness'?"***

Some of the things that make us feel busy actually lack substance. Social media is a big one for many of us. As one woman commented, "This isn't natural human connecting and working on relationships, this is a substitute" – so

we're better off focusing on the people in front of us, rather than on the virtual relationships and conversations that can divert so much of our time and energy.

### ***"Am I too worried about what others think?"***

Peer pressure, and others' expectations (real or perceived), are a huge factor in keeping us busy – sometimes with the wrong things. Maybe if you're willing to raise some eyebrows by challenging or resisting an unhealthy trend, others will gratefully follow.

### ***"Am I bringing my decisions, and my struggles, to God?"***

Many women emphasized the key role of prayer and time in God's Word in their decisions around time use, and their struggles with feelings like guilt, discouragement and inadequacy. Making time for personal devotions actually *is* a leap of faith – one that not only honors God, but also grounds us, reminds us to trust God (and humbly recognize our own limits), and helps us make wiser decisions.

So how can you have a Mary heart when you have a Martha to-do list? Start by knowing your priorities, focusing on them first, and trusting



As Kevin DeYoung puts it, 'the reason we are busy is because we are supposed to be busy.' We are blessed to be busy.

God to help you sort through the rest. As Kevin DeYoung put it, “The antidote to busyness of soul is not sloth and indifference. The antidote is rest, rhythm, death to pride, acceptance of our own finitude and trust in the providence of God.”

## WHAT DOES GOD REALLY WANT FROM US... AND FOR US?

**“It is extraordinary how little the New Testament says about God’s interest in our success, by comparison with the enormous amount it says about God’s interest in our holiness, our maturity in Christ, and our growth into the fullness of his image.”**

– J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*

We all want to be faithful and fruitful... but this desire can easily veer off course. What is it that God most wants from us, and for us?

The fact that He made us with very real weaknesses and limitations tells us something. He created us to need sleep, and in fact a substantial number of hours of it. He sometimes gives us extended, enforced periods of waiting and inactivity. These realities can be very frustrating for us. Couldn’t we accomplish so much more for Him if we didn’t have these limitations?

But evidently – and amazingly – God is more interested in us, and the sanctifying work He’s doing in us, than simply in our raw productivity. We’re not merely servants with long and burdensome lists of tasks; we’re loved children. What a freeing thought, and what an undeserved honor!

When we start evaluating ourselves (or others) based on how much we can accomplish, we’re using a skewed measurement – and not the one God uses. On a personal level, we may be showing Pharisaical tendencies, trying to earn the favor of God and others. On a larger scale, we’re starting down a very dangerous path, as we buy into a worldview that equates worth with ability, leading to devastating social consequences.

By all means, let’s do our best to be faithful stewards of the time, energy, resources, and opportunities God has

given us, and let’s be busy with many good things for Him. But let’s not forget His priorities for us, since “we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12).

## STEWARDING OUR TIME

**“Stewarding my time is not about selfishly pursuing only the things I’d like to do. It’s about effectively serving others in the ways I’m best able to serve and in the ways I’m most uniquely called to serve.”**

– Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*

Sometimes we live at the pace of craziness because of unconsciously wrong priorities or confused expectations; other times it’s because of factors that really are outside our control, and we just have to hang on for a season that’s busier than feels ideal. (Often we learn a lot in these seasons, and God certainly uses them too.) But sometimes we bring the craziness on ourselves, and change is needed.

It takes mature self-discipline, planning, and some self-denial to be good stewards of our time. But, by God’s grace, these things are within our reach. So let’s take the steps needed to curb our bad online habits. Let’s stick to a reasonable bedtime, or maybe meal plan (I know that makes some of us shudder), or say a polite “no” to something good so we can say “yes” to something better – whatever it takes in your particular life and circumstances. (See the sidebar article “Taming busyness” for more practical tips from other women.)

One helpful but sometimes hard-to-implement principle is to leave room for “margin” – defined by Christian author Dr. Richard Swenson as “the space between our load and our limits.” For most of us, there’s rarely a week or even a day without some unexpected interruption, need, or crisis – a fender-bender, a lost pair of glasses, a washing machine malfunction, an unwelcome visit from the flu bug – and if we don’t have any “wiggle room” in our schedule, these unexpected problems can quickly

derail us and cause disproportionate stress. Again, knowing our priorities helps us in this area too; if our secondary to-do’s don’t get done because of a sudden change of plans, we’ll be less fretful if we know we at least made time for our key tasks or goals.

We also need to realize that using our time well doesn’t always look like we think it should. As Kevin DeYoung points out, caring for people – which should be a priority for all of us – is “often wildly inefficient. People are messy, and if we are going to help them we will wade into a lot of time-consuming messes.” Many of the most important things we’re busy with don’t fit nicely on a to-do checklist.

Finally, being stewardly with our time means making constant choices, big and small, based on our priorities and on other factors. We may care about a lot of things, and be concerned about a lot of things (and people), but that doesn’t mean God is calling us to meet every need. So how do we decide if a new commitment should be a “yes”? Here are a few questions that other women have found helpful to consider:

### **“Have I counted the cost?”**

Like the builder in Luke 14, we need to “count the cost” before we start a project. As one woman commented, “The task itself is always only a fraction of the commitment”; but too often we aren’t realistic about what something will require from us. Most activities involve not only a time cost, but also a mental/emotional energy cost – which affects both you and the people in your life.

### **“Does this fit with my strengths – or, if not, will it stretch me in a positive way?”**

It’s okay to play to our strengths. One woman I know dislikes making meals for other families, but enjoys cleaning and organizing. For years she would feel stressed every time a church meal request came out – and either sign up and dread the whole experience, or not sign up and feel guilty. Now she offers to help in other ways: “I often will say



'what is causing you stress right now?' – and then see if I can help in that area. I've done anything from researching and buying an iPad for someone to re-organizing a pantry or cleaning out a shed." Another woman agreed, "When we use our strengths, things tend to go more smoothly and with less stress."

Of course, there are times when we might be ready for a helpful "stretch," so it's good to keep an open mind – and a prayerful heart – about new opportunities as well.

### **"Do I feel passionate about this?"**

Although some things aren't particularly exciting and simply need doing, we're naturally drawn to some tasks more than to others, and it's okay to factor that into our decision-making. *Do I believe this activity is really worthwhile? Does this activity "fill me up" or drain me? Do I feel energized when I think about doing this?*

## **BLESSED TO BE BUSY**

**"Lay your life down. Your heartbeats cannot be hoarded. Your reservoir of breaths is draining away. You have hands, blister them while you can. You have bones, make them strain – they can carry nothing in the grave."**

- N.D. Wilson, *Death by Living*

Busyness means life – the blessings of relationships, of talents, of energy, of opportunities, of good tasks to do. As

## **BUSYNESS IN THE HOME**

If you have a family, you know that your loved ones are greatly affected by your decisions around time management – and your children are watching and learning, too. Here are a few insights from wise Christians, including the women I talked to.

### **EMOTIONAL IMPACTS OF BUSYNESS**

As Kevin DeYoung shared in *Crazy Busy*, "Busyness attacks joy.... When our lives are frantic and frenzied we are more prone to anxiety, resentment, impatience and irritability." The stress that busyness can bring affects the emotional climate in our homes – and our relationships.

- "I would say the negative effects are usually not obvious, but subtle. Even when I'm too busy, I can usually keep all (most?) of the balls in the air, but it comes out in things like impatience or grumpiness. A child will ask a question and instead of patiently responding back, I will snap back a quick response.... I also find that in these too-busy times, there is no 'wiggle room.' We are managing to get by, but if something pops up like a lost PE shirt or a forgotten band instrument at home, then it's not handled in the most loving way!"

### **IS BUSYNESS THE BEST CHOICE FOR OUR KIDS?**

A lot of our busyness at certain stages revolves around our kids' needs and activities. This is a tricky area to navigate; yes, extracurriculars add busyness, but they also add richness and joy. So where's the line of sanity?

In *Crazy Busy* Kevin DeYoung has a lot to say about the "second-hand stress" that we often inadvertently expose our kids to. He shares that most kids wish "their parents were less tired and less stressed" and he concludes, "By trying to do so much for them, we are actually making our kids less happy. It would be better for us and for our kids if we planned fewer outings, got involved in fewer activities... and made parental sanity a higher priority."

### **REASSESSING OUR HABITS – AND OUR THINKING**

The good news is that we can, of course, make changes. Maybe it's a good time to sit down with your spouse and reassess your family commitments and their effects on everyone?

- "For me, Covid was a huge blessing because it forced many things off of our plates and we consciously chose not to automatically add them again afterwards."
- "We constantly need to re-juggle/prioritize."
- "'Capture your thoughts.' Why are you really feeling stressed or anxious today? Are you truly acknowledging that God is in control of your life?"

### **OUR KIDS ARE WATCHING US**

For better or worse (hopefully better), our kids are watching and learning from our day-to-day decisions and attitudes.

- "Is our life 'all about us' – our fun, our activities? It's important for our kids to see that things like service and hospitality (done with love) are priorities too."
- "I have to be careful how I talk about 'another night out' for a church activity (especially when it's about my husband, who is a busy elder). If I sound negative or resentful, my kids will certainly pick up on that, and it will shape their attitudes toward church and church commitments too."
- "I'd like to think my kids notice how we prioritize so that they follow suit. I'd hate for them to chase after money, be a workaholic, etc."
- "If I have FOMO ('fear of missing out'), I am teaching [my kids] that they need to have their best life now. And if they miss an experience, it is a great cause for alarm. They need to see restraint in me, that my peace and satisfaction come from God and from the gifts He has given, and that we have an eternity to experience many amazing things."

Kevin DeYoung puts it, “the reason we are busy is because we are supposed to be busy.” We *are* blessed to be busy.

It’s okay to work hard; the Bible has nothing good to say about “the sluggard.” It’s okay to be tired – as long as we recognize the line between healthy fatigue and unhealthy exhaustion. It’s okay to be stretched; often it’s how we grow.

So let’s be busy carefully and deliberately, prayerfully and peacefully – not taking on burdens we were never meant to carry, and not because we find our self-worth or our life’s meaning in the things we’re busy with.

And let’s give grace to ourselves and others – the same grace God extends to us in our weaknesses. We can never truly know what our neighbor is dealing with, or what limitations he or she grapples with, so let’s be careful about judging, pressuring, or comparing. “For each will have to bear his own load” (Gal. 6:5).

A quick note to the married and mothers among us: don’t add to the strain of your single/childless friends by assuming they have all kinds of time you don’t. They may not have a family to take care of (though they may well be caring for parents, without the help of a spouse), but they also aren’t sharing the daily tasks of cooking, shopping, car maintenance, and so on. Let’s “bear each other’s burdens,” not add to them.

“Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls.... So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:4, 12).

**“So let’s do what needs to be done with a happy heart, thankful for each of these opportunities and the evidence of life they represent. Whistle while we work. Do a great job.... Just remember not every responsibility can be your responsibility.”**

- Lysa TerKeurst, *The Best Yes*

RP

# TAMING BUSYNESS:

## PRACTICAL TIPS

by Jan Broersma

*“If I’m caught up on my laundry, does that mean I’m not doing enough for the church?”*

*“Am I allowed to fit in time for exercise, or only if it’s between 6 and 7 AM?”*

*“Can I say ‘no’ to the women’s Bible study if it’s the only night this week that my husband and I are both home?”*

Even when our hearts and minds are in the right place, there are still to-do’s and deadlines, crises in our life, and decisions to be made (and, occasionally, goofy questions that cross our mind). Here are some of the tips women shared with me (quoted and paraphrased) to help tame the inevitable busyness of life.



**Be deliberate about the complications you add to your life...**

### BE DELIBERATE ABOUT THE COMPLICATIONS YOU ADD

Our gadgets, our wardrobe, our extracurriculars, how we celebrate holidays – can we simplify? How busy are we with details that don’t really matter, or that add more stress than joy?

Every commitment or complication you add to your life (joining a sports team, getting a pet, opening an Etsy shop, growing a garden) adds busyness – often more than we anticipate. Embrace these kinds of good opportunities, by all means, but choose the ones that will truly enrich your life and that fit in with your other priorities.

### START YOUR DAY RIGHT

What do you reach for first in the morning: your phone or your Bible?

### IDENTIFY YOUR BIGGEST TIME-WASTER(S)

Where or how do you get most distracted and waste the most time, without any significant benefit to yourself or others? Reclaim some of this “lost time”: set time limits for yourself, ask for accountability from a loved one, or remove the source of a temptation.

### KNOW WHAT “FILLS YOU UP”

Some things deplete us (and we can’t entirely avoid these things), while other things recharge us. Recognize the things that energize you, and find opportunities to do them: coaching a school team, baking cinnamon buns for a stressed-out friend, bringing flowers to shut-ins, writing an article?

## KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Don't cheat your body – it really does need sleep, healthy food, and exercise (and maybe not quite that much caffeine). Recognize not just your limits of physical busyness, but also of being mentally/emotionally "used up."

- "I used to 'push through,' but there's always a payback time eventually."
- "Develop healthy habits and trust God to care for you."
- "When I cross the line to too busy, I start to take myself too seriously, I lose joy in my task, and the people that I presumably love the most in the world become burdensome to me. That is *always* my sign that I have to slow down."
- "If I can't help with something I can always pray for that person, activity, situation. I'm saying no but I trust that God is already there providing."

## KNOW WHAT'S IMPORTANT

You will miss out on some good and worthwhile things – and so will your kids. If you know you're saying "no" to something because you're committed to what you're saying "yes" to, it's easier to let opportunities pass you by.

- "I decided that, at this stage of life, healthy meals are more important than a perfectly clean house. Maybe one day I'll have time for both... or, maybe not."
- "Sometimes 'done' is better than 'perfect.'"
- "Accept a bit more chaos."
- "There are times when I suddenly realize that all the kids are overdue for haircuts again, and the boys' pants are showing a bit too much sock. But they're all loved and fed so I try not to stress too much."

## TREASURE SUNDAYS AND BREAKS THAT REFRESH

Sunday can bring its own busyness. If you're not refreshed and refocused by your Sunday habits, does something need to change?

Breaks are good, but sometimes

they're not truly rejuvenating. The last time you let yourself mindlessly scroll on your phone for a mental break, how did you actually feel afterwards? What if you took a short walk or picked up your devotional instead?

## DO THE SMALL THING WHEN YOU CAN'T DO THE BIG ONE

No time for that visit? You can send an encouraging note. Never seem to make it to the gym? Find a ten-minute online workout. Something is (almost) always better than nothing.

- "Do a little and trust that God will use it."

## SPREAD THE LOAD

If you're a mom – kids and chores: how well acquainted are yours? Your investment of time in teaching your kids helpful skills will pay off for everyone, not least for your kids themselves.

Do you have a friend or sibling with different strengths than you? Could you swap some tasks in a way that benefits you both?

## GET EXTRA MILEAGE OUT OF YOUR TIME

- "I listen to the Bible on audio while driving, or cooking."
- "We use our dinner times to intentionally check in with our kids, try to have meaningful conversations and stay connected."
- "Turn all those driving times (sports, appointments, etc.) into one-on-one 'dates' with your kids. Often great conversations happen when it's just the two of you in the car."
- "If you're running an errand, always take one child along."

## RECOGNIZE THERE ARE DIFFERENT SEASONS IN LIFE

Although balance is a good overall goal, there are seasons that will feel out of balance. There are also times when certain things we'd love to do just aren't possible because of the pressing needs of the moment.

## Kids and chores: are yours acquainted?



One mom shared with me that she used to get frustrated because it was hard to find quiet time for devotions with her young kids around. So she started doing devotions with them instead – reading and praying out loud, and letting her kids "take notes" in their own little notebooks while she journaled. It's been a good solution for this stage of her life.

- "Looking back, the time when my kids were small and were all at home was so short. Why was I so impatient to try to fit in all kinds of other things?"

## COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

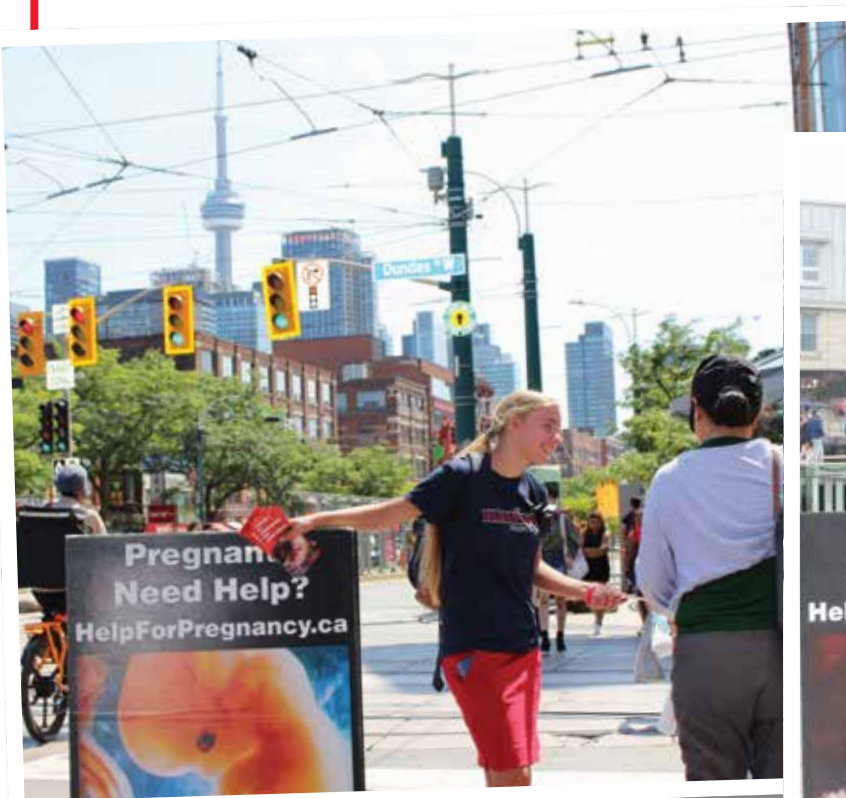
- "Sometimes when I feel complain-y about all the things I have to do, I think about my immigrant grandmothers. I have choices and conveniences they never would've dreamed of. It's a good reality check."

*Jan Broersma loves good writing and making good writing better. She lives on the beautiful West Coast of BC with her husband and their three children (and Bruno the dog).*



# YOU CAN SAVE PRE-BORN LIVES THIS SUMMER

by Quiana Casamayor



Intern Jessalyn Byl, speaking up in downtown Toronto...



... and doing work in the Halifax harbor.

## YESTERDAY

I stood on a sidewalk holding a sign. It read, *Pregnant? Need Help?*

I watched as the crowds hurried by and saw, on our other signs, what abortion does to a pre-born child.

I asked a young woman what she thought of abortion. Without slowing her pace, she said “I just had one last week.”

Every day, three hundred pre-born children are killed in Canada. A staggering number which, we too easily forget, isn't just a number. That number represents children – children who were killed.

Yesterday, I met the mom of one of those little boys or girls. I almost cried as I watched her walk away. I have cried since. I cried for the mother who lost her greatest gift and for the child who was mourned only by a stranger.

## TODAY

As I think about this child, I see lack. The lack of advocates – we need more people standing up on behalf of these little ones. The lack of time – we'll never get last week back; we don't get another chance to save that precious child. The lack of education – Did she know there were resources available and people willing to help? Did she recognize what the abortionist was going to do? Did she know what “her choice” cost?

It's not that we did nothing. We were on the street last week and the week before. We've been out week after week, month after month. Yet somehow, the something we did was not enough. We missed this mother.

With approximately 300 pre-born children killed every day, we are living in the midst of one of, if not *the*, single greatest human rights violations in human history, with the victims entirely reliant on people like us to advocate on their behalf. With no legal restrictions in Canada protecting pre-born children, their lives may be extinguished through all 9 months of pregnancy, with little or no explanation required.

We must engage every Canadian on the issue of abortion. Every pro-lifer must recognize their responsibility to help. Every pre- and post-abortive woman and man must understand the value of their

sons and daughters. Every pre-born child must be safe in their mother's womb.

The hard truth is, it's too late to prevent that mother from choosing abortion; too late to save her little boy or girl. But it's not too late to mourn for them. It's not too late to share the truth. It's not too late to protect others like them.

This is the least we should do.

## TOMORROW

Another little girl will be killed. She'll be all alone with no one to advocate for her, no one to protect her.

Another little boy will be killed. No one will mourn. No one will cry. No one will bury his little body.

Unless we act.

We cannot change yesterday but we could change tomorrow.

## JOIN US

The Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform (CCBR) is a national, educational pro-life organization committed to ending the killing of pre-born children by proactively engaging Canadians with the visual reality of what abortion does to pre-born children, together with compassionate and compelling conversation skills to change minds, save lives, and transform our culture.

We are excited to partner with churches, pro-life groups, and individuals to equip pro-lifers with the conversational tools and experience they need to have productive conversations with their friends, family, and members of their community. You can learn more about how to bring members of the CCBR team to your community by contacting us at [email@endthekilling.ca](mailto:email@endthekilling.ca)



Intern Catharine Jordan talking truth about the unborn in Halifax harbor.

Additionally, CCBR will be hosting our world-renowned paid internships where pro-lifers can join for either four months (May-August) or two months (July-August) this upcoming summer to receive expert training from global pro-life leaders, before joining CCBR's team of experienced activists for daily outreach, changing hearts and minds of men and women throughout the Greater Toronto area. This incredible program will provide you with the confidence you need to engage in your own compassionate and compelling conversations about abortion with all those in your sphere of influence, all while making some of the best friends you will ever have as you serve shoulder-to-shoulder with like-minded men and women committed to ending the killing of pre-born children in our country. **RP**

For more information and to apply, go to [endthekilling.ca/internships](http://endthekilling.ca/internships).

*Quiana Casamayor is a CCBR staff member. Pictures graciously supplied by CCBR.*

# WHEN GOD GOES TO WAR: HOLINESS, JUDGMENT AND HOPE



"Will not the Judge of all  
the earth do what is just?"  
– Genesis 18:25

by Rob Schouten

**W**e don't deny God's wrath. We just don't talk about it. In Reformed churches, we still hear faithful preaching and clear teaching about sin. But if we listen closely, we might notice something missing: the weight of divine judgment. Grace is front and center – as it should be. But grace without judgment turns sentimental. If we never tremble before God's justice, how can we truly stand in awe of His mercy?

Even in Reformed worship services, one can notice unease – or even embarrassment – when the congregation is asked to focus on the flood in the days of Noah, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues on Egypt, or the conquest of Canaan. At Bible studies, it's common to steer around the "hard parts" of the Old Testament and gravitate instead toward the Gospels. And even there, we prefer the tenderness of Jesus – His compassion, His

welcome, His healing – while downplaying His rebukes and His holy severity. The Jesus who weeps is familiar. The Jesus who judges is quietly set aside.

This discomfort isn't new. But it is deepening. We live in a culture at ease with sin and increasingly hostile to judgment. And when the world forgets God's wrath, the Church often grows shy about declaring it. In some circles, it's simply assumed that most people already feel guilty and only need comfort. But what if that's not true? What if the deeper need is not reassurance, but repentance?

Few topics unsettle modern readers – especially younger believers and those exploring the faith – like the violence

found in the Old Testament. Why did God command Israel to destroy entire cities like Jericho? Was this true justice – or religious brutality?

We must approach these questions with care. Scripture never portrays God as the one on trial – we are. The Judge of all the earth is holy, just, and astonishingly patient. He does not owe us an explanation. Yet in His Word, He reveals enough of His character and purposes that we may speak of Him with reverence, and defend His ways with confidence – even when we cannot fully comprehend them. Before we begin to talk about God's judgments in history, it is wise to bow our heads in worship.

*Few topics unsettle modern readers... like the violence found in the Old Testament.*



## THE STORY THAT TROUBLES MANY

Nothing in the Old Testament provokes modern objections like Israel's conquest of Canaan. The books of Deuteronomy and Joshua tell of entire cities "devoted to destruction," of swords raised not only against warriors but against entire populations. Jericho, Ai, Hazor – the battles pile up – and so does the bloodshed.

To many ears today, it sounds merciless. Unjust. Even barbaric.

But we must not read these accounts in isolation. They are not about ethnic hatred or military conquest. Nor were they Israel's idea. The command came from the LORD – the covenant God who had rescued His people from Egypt and was now bringing them to the land He had long promised. The conquest was part of God's own design – not just to give Israel a homeland, but to cleanse a land steeped in corruption.

If we want to make sense of these difficult texts, we must begin where the Bible itself begins – not at Jericho, but in the promises and warnings spoken hundreds of years earlier. Only then can we understand the justice, the gravity, and the long patience of God.

## A LONG PATIENCE BEFORE JUDGMENT

The story begins in Genesis 15. God tells Abram that his descendants will live as strangers in a land not their own for four hundred years. Why such a delay? "Because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen. 15:16).

God does not rush to judgment. He gives time – generations of time – for repentance. Yet while He waits, sin accumulates. The wickedness of Canaan grows darker, not lighter.

Leviticus 18 lays bare the moral degradation that had taken root in the land: incest, adultery, homosexual acts, child sacrifice, and even bestiality. God declares, "By all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean" (Lev. 18:24). These were not minor cultural quirks. They were systematic, institutionalized violations of God's created order – acts of defilement practiced and celebrated on a societal scale.

Deuteronomy 12:31 adds, "They even

burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods." The cult of Molech demanded child sacrifice. The shrines of Baal and Asherah were built on ritual prostitution and sexual exploitation (Deut. 23:17–18). Deuteronomy 18:9–12 catalogs even more: sorcery, divination, necromancy, and attempts to summon the dead.

This was not an innocent land. God's judgment was not arbitrary or reactive. It was measured, deliberate, and just.

And still, He waited. Four centuries passed while the sin of the Amorites ripened. When judgment finally fell, it was not a sudden outburst of wrath – but a long-deferred reckoning from the God who is "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ex. 34:6), yet who "will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:7).

## JUDGMENT THAT ANTICIPATES THE END

The reckoning that fell on Canaan was never only about Canaan. It was not merely the clearing of one territory for one nation. It was a signpost – a concentrated preview of something far larger. Jericho, Hazor, and Ai were early eruptions of the judgment that will one day encompass the whole world.

In those historical events, God allowed the final verdict to break backward into history. What normally waits for the last day – when every nation will stand before His throne – was, for a time, enacted on the ground. This was not genocide, nor personal vengeance; it was holiness revealed, justice enforced, and a warning sounded to every generation, as we read in Nahum 1:3:

"The LORD is slow to anger and great in power;  
the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished."

Reformed theologians Meredith Kline and Michael Horton call episodes like this "intrusion ethics." At rare points the future Day of the Lord intrudes into the present: the flood (Gen. 6–9), the fire on Sodom (Gen. 19), the plagues on Egypt (Ex. 7–12), and the fall of Jericho all follow this pattern. Each is real judgment in

history, and each foreshadows the greater judgment still to come.

These events are sobering. They are meant to wake us up. God does not always wait until the end; sometimes He judges now so that the world will tremble – and perhaps repent – before it is too late.

Yet even in judgment, mercy shines. Rahab proves it. As her city braced for destruction, she placed her hope not in walls or weapons but in the God of Israel: "I know that the LORD has given you the land" (Josh. 2:9–11). She tied a scarlet cord in her window, and when Jericho fell, she and her family were spared. Scripture later honors her in Christ's genealogy (Matt. 1:5) and lists her among the heroes of faith (Heb. 11:31). Her story reminds us that the door of mercy is never shut to those who call on the Lord.

The conquest, then, points in two directions: forward to the final judgment and forward to the gospel. Judgment and salvation stand side by side. The God who brings down walls also opens the way of life – and that way is still open today.

## GOD JUDGES HIS PEOPLE BY THE SAME STANDARD

The judgment that fell on Canaan was not an isolated case – it was a warning. And that warning echoed forward into Israel's own future. From the outset, God made it unmistakably clear: if His own people defiled the land with the same evils, they would face the same fate.

"You shall keep My statutes and My rules and do none of these abominations... lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you."  
– Lev. 18:26,28

This was no metaphor. The land was holy because the Lord Himself dwelled there (Lev. 25:23). It had been entrusted to Israel not as a birthright, but as a gift of grace – a sacred space conditioned on covenant faithfulness. But holiness cannot coexist with moral rot. The very sins that condemned the Canaanites – sexual immorality, idolatry, child sacrifice, and occult practices – were explicitly condemned in Israel. Leviticus 20 drives the point

**"Even in Reformed worship services, one can notice unease – or even embarrassment – when the congregation is asked to focus on the flood in the days of Noah, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues on Egypt, or the conquest of Canaan..."**



home with even more urgency, spelling out specific punishments and warnings.

Belonging to the covenant did not exempt Israel from judgment. On the contrary, it intensified the call to holiness. As Amos would later declare,

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2).

Being God's chosen people does not mean immunity. It means accountability.

And so God waited again. Just as He had waited for the sin of the Amorites to reach its fullness, He waited while Israel wandered. But He would not wait forever. When corruption set in, the land responded just as it had before: it "vomited out" the unfaithful – this time not Canaanites, but the covenant people themselves.

## THE PROPHETS ECHO THE COVENANT CURSES

The warning in Leviticus 18 is no isolated threat. It belongs to an entire covenant framework spelled out in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28–32. These chapters list blessings for obedience and curses for rebellion: prosperity if Israel walks with God; famine, disease, invasion, and finally

exile if they do not.

- "If you will not listen ... I will set my face against you ... lay the land desolate ... and scatter you among the nations." – Lev. 26:14,17,32-33
- "If you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God ... you shall be plucked off the land ... and the LORD will scatter you among all peoples." – Deut. 28:15,63-64

The prophets did not invent fresh threats; they applied these covenant curses to their own generation. When Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel announce judgment, they are activating the very sanctions Moses described. Listen to their words:

- Hosea 8:1 – "Sound the trumpet! An eagle hovers over the house of the LORD, for they have broken my covenant."
- Jeremiah 11:8 – "They would not listen ... therefore I am bringing upon them all the words of this covenant."
- Isaiah 24:5-6 – "The earth is defiled by its people; they have violated the laws ... therefore a curse consumes the earth."

- Ezekiel 5:5-8 – "This is Jerusalem ... she has rebelled more than the nations ... I will execute judgments in her sight."

These are not poetic exaggerations; they are covenant enforcement. The same holiness that expelled the Canaanites now rises against Israel – on identical grounds. The land that once "vomited out" its former inhabitants is about to do so again.

The lesson is unmistakable: God shows no partiality (Rom. 2:11). His covenant is never a license to sin; it raises the bar. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2).

## EXILE: A REVERSE CONQUEST

The conquest began with walls falling and cities burning; the land changed hands under God's command. Yet, generations later, the story ran in reverse. Israel – the nation that once expelled the Canaanites – was itself driven out. The sword that had cleared the land now turned against the covenant people, exactly as the Lord had warned:

"Just as the LORD once rejoiced to make you prosper, so He will now rejoice to ruin and destroy you. You will be plucked off the land you are entering to possess." – Deut. 28:63

That warning came true.

- 722 BC: Assyria erased the northern kingdom.
- 586 BC: Babylon leveled Jerusalem and burned the temple.

The exile was no tragic mishap; it was the covenant curses in motion. Israel had filled the land with idolatry, bloodshed, and injustice. God's patience, as in the days of the Amorites, finally reached its limit. The biblical record is blunt:

- 2 Kings 17:7-8, 18 – Israel adopted "the customs of the nations... therefore the LORD removed them from His sight."
- 2 Chronicles 36:14-17 – They mocked God's messengers "until there was no

# God's justice is not narrow. It is global. His concern is not confined to His covenant people – it extends to all peoples.

remedy.”

- Lamentations 1:8 – “Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy.”
- Ezekiel 36:17-19 – “They defiled the land... so I poured out My wrath upon them.”

Israel had become indistinguishable from the nations it replaced, and the land “vomited them out” just as Leviticus had warned.

In that sense, exile is a mirror image of conquest. What Jericho tasted, Jerusalem tasted. The covenant verdict had been on the books for centuries; the sentence was finally executed. God’s holiness shows no favoritism: what was true for Canaan was true for Israel – and what was true for Israel is true for every nation on earth today.

## THE NATIONS ARE NOT EXEMPT

One of the most striking features of the Old Testament prophets is how much attention they give to the fate of foreign nations. These are not passing mentions or political footnotes. They are extended oracles – whole chapters – declaring that the God of Israel is also the Judge of every nation. Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, Edom – the prophetic message is clear: no kingdom is above God’s moral law.

This was revolutionary in its own time. In a world that believed in tribal gods and local deities, Israel’s prophets proclaimed something astonishing: Yahweh reigns over all. His authority is universal. His holiness is not a private code for His covenant people – it is the moral fabric of creation. Every people, every government, every culture is accountable to Him.

The scope and weight of these oracles is remarkable:

- Amos 1-2 opens with judgment not on Israel but on six surrounding nations – Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab – condemned for

brutality, betrayal, and injustice.

- Isaiah 13-23 includes a sweeping sequence of prophecies against Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Cush, Arabia, and Tyre.
- Jeremiah 46-51 announces God’s sentence on Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Elam, and Babylon.
- Ezekiel 25-32 warns Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt in vivid, terrifying detail.
- Obadiah, Nahum, and Jonah are wholly focused on foreign nations: Edom, Nineveh, and Assyria.

What sins are condemned? Not ceremonial infractions – but moral evils: violence, greed, pride, idolatry, cruelty, exploitation, and the shedding of innocent blood. These are not violations of Israel’s covenant – they are violations of God’s image in humanity. As Paul later affirms in Romans 2:14-15, even those without the written law are accountable to the law written on the conscience.

In other words, God’s justice is not narrow. It is global. His concern is not confined to His covenant people – it extends to all peoples. When the strong crush the weak, when kings exalt themselves as gods, when nations corrupt His good creation, He sees, He warns and He judges.

This truth helps us understand not only the judgment on Canaan but every judgment throughout redemptive history. It is not about divine favoritism. It is about divine holiness. And when we read of God’s acts of judgment in Scripture, we should respond not with suspicion or defiance – but with reverence and awe. As we read in Isaiah 33:5 & 22:

“The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high;  
he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness...  
For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver;

the LORD is our king; he will save us.”

He is the Holy One of Israel. And the Holy One of all the earth.

## JUDGMENT FELL ON HIM

The covenant story does not end in ruin. Judgment is never God’s final word.

The exile to Babylon, devastating though it was, pointed beyond itself. Like the conquest, it foreshadowed something greater. The curse of the covenant would not only fall on a rebellious people – it would one day fall on the faithful Son.

Jesus Christ did not come to avoid the curse but to bear it. He, too, was “cut off from the land of the living” (Is. 53:8). He suffered “outside the camp” (Heb. 13:12). He was handed over to the Gentiles and condemned under Roman power. In Him, the fire of Jericho and the desolation of Jerusalem converged. The judgment that Israel had earned and that all humanity deserves, fell on the sinless one.

And yet death could not hold the Holy One.


His resurrection was the true return from exile – the beginning of a new covenant, a new creation, and a new land.

“He has caused us to be born again to a living hope... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

All who belong to Christ are welcomed back from exile and secured in a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

But the warning remains. God’s holiness has not changed. His judgment is not a thing of the past.

To the church in Ephesus, Jesus says, “If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (Rev. 2:5).

The lesson is as urgent now as it was then: God is patient – but He is not indifferent. And judgment still begins at His house. 



# "WE BELIEVE..." 1,700 YEARS AGO

## Redeemer University conference celebrates the Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed

by Erika Wildervanck

In times past, scholars and theologians may have found themselves traveling across countries and continents to attend meetings about doctrines of particular importance to the Christian faith. One of the most famous of these occasions was the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, when bishops from all over the Mediterranean gathered to address heresies about the nature of Christ.

More recently, theologians met once again in discussion of these same issues – not to write new creeds, but to affirm and celebrate the council and the creed which

it produced. They met at Redeemer University, a Reformed Christian university in Southern Ontario, which hosted the conference: "Defending Christ: Celebrating 1700 Years of Nicaea." Historians, theologians, pastors, and laypeople attended this conference to glean knowledge from one another and re-immense themselves in the rich theology of Nicaea. What follows are a few of the highlights.

### ON THE HISTORY OF THE COUNCIL


The council was called by Emperor Constantine, not primarily to address

doctrine, explained Dr. Stefana Laing, but to find solutions for a divided church and empire. The result of the council, however, is evidence of the providential work of the Holy Spirit, and even Constantine recognized it as such. He referred to the council as "great and holy" and "a complete blessing from divine providence." "It cannot be other than the doctrine of God," he said.

### THE WOMEN OF NICAEA

A presentation by Reanna Lingley investigated the women behind the Council of Nicaea. While no women were in attendance, figures like Macrina the Elder and Macrina the Younger (respectively the grandmother and sister of brothers Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa) and Nonna (wife of Gregory the Elder) embodied the vision of the Christian life and were active shapers of the theological tradition that raised up the men who participated in the council.

Macrina the Elder survived in hiding for seven years during Emperor Diocletian's persecution and was described as a vessel of theological continuity. Nonna's persistent faith led to the conversion of her husband, and she spurred her husband and sons on to holiness and service. Instead of regretting the absence of women at the council, Lingley argued, we ought to recognize the tremendous but quiet influence that women did have on the theological landscape of the Early Church.



**Athanasius taking it to Arius** – Emperor Constantine I (272-337 AD) called the Council of Nicaea so the Church could deal with the dispute these two were having over the nature of Christ. Athanasius proclaimed Christ as coeternal and of the same essence as God the Father, while Arius claimed Jesus was created by the Father and therefore not fully divine. While the Nicene Creed we have today probably wasn't completed at the Council of Nicaea (and not for another 50 years) it is named after that council, because it professes the truth defended there. – J.D.

## A NICENE AI?

Another interesting presentation evaluated the most theologically sound large language models (LLMs). If that's an unfamiliar term, it's what makes AI chatbots go, and you can think of the term as almost a synonym for the chatbots. Studies show that increasingly more young people are turning to AI for important questions, so an organization called ChristianBench tested the biggest AI chatbots on their theological stances. Commonly these bots will refrain from giving a pointed answer – they will present all the options as equally valid. But, of course, that sort of relativization of the truth is a strong stance of its own.

However, depending on how a question to the chatbot is framed, the LLM can anticipate what kind of answer the prompter is looking for and give an individualized response. (For example, a question about the “natures of Christ” will generate a theological answer that could be solidly in line with the Nicene Creed, whereas a more general question about “Who is Jesus?” will usually result in a more all-options-on-the-table response that provides the user with a variety of answers to consider.)

The only chatbot that scored exceptionally high for adherence to the Nicene Creed was a Catholic LLM called Magisterium AI, an AI chatbot that aims to provide answers to questions about the Catholic faith.

## ART AS THEOLOGICAL TESTIMONY

The conference's main presentation was by Dr. Megan DeVore, and was centered on Christian art during the time of Nicaea. Early Christian artists used pagan motifs which they adapted and redefined to reflect the gospel story. After the Council of Nicaea, depictions of Jesus began to showcase the artists' understanding of His divinity. Jesus also started being portrayed in Old Testament scenes, like the story of creation, reflecting a trinitarian understanding of God's work throughout all of Scripture.

Christian art in catacombs show something noteworthy about the Christian faith and the doctrines of Nicaea: Jesus's divine nature provided early Christians

with eschatological hope. The depictions of the deceased in Christian catacombs were of hopeful and prayerful believers, in stark contrast with the mournful depictions in pagan catacombs. The art shows that Christians found real, impactful, and lasting hope through the doctrines they believed.

Dr. DeVore outlined how early Christian art was characterized by theological declarations rooted in intricate Christological hermeneutics. She asked whether modern Christians are perhaps missing out on a key aspect of theological understanding by overlooking the value of faithful creative expressions through the arts.

## THE USE OF THE CREED

The Nicene Creed formalized for the church the doctrine of Christ's divinity. Written in Greek, almost all of the words in the creed are found in the New Testament. The handful that are extrabiblical nevertheless convey strongly biblical ideas and were necessary to clarify the biblical concepts that were debated at that time.

The Nicene Creed is especially helpful for interfaith conversations today. It lays out a “mere Christianity” that distinguishes orthodox Christians from Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Latter-day Saints. The classical trinitarianism expounded in the creed, argued a paper presented by Matthew Waddell, is the only trinitarian view that can provide proper responses to scrutiny from Islamic apologists.

But while encountering Christianity may begin with the Nicene Creed, it cannot end there. Interestingly, as passionate as these scholars at the conference were about the Nicene Creed, all of them agreed that it cannot even be compared to the riches of Scripture. The formal doctrine laid out by the creed is meant to lead us toward biblical doxology (see Jude 24-25). The creed can be seen as a Cliffs Notes summary of biblical doctrine; it was never meant to be a substitute for the original text and cannot match its force and power. One scholar likened the creed to a beautiful doorway with magnificent engravings. It may be wonderful, but it is merely meant to provide access to something much greater: the full extent of the biblical witness. <sup>RP</sup>

## THE NICENE CREED

*We believe in one God, the Father  
almighty,*

*Maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-  
begotten Son of God,*

*begotten of the Father before all ages;  
God of God, Light of Light, true God  
of true God;*

*begotten, not made,  
of one substance with the Father;*

*through whom all things were made.  
Who, for us men and our salvation,  
came down from heaven*

*and became incarnate by the Holy  
Spirit of the virgin Mary  
and was made man.*

*He was crucified for us under Pontius  
Pilate;*

*he suffered and was buried;*

*and the third day he arose, according  
to the Scriptures,*

*and ascended into heaven, and sits at  
the right hand of the Father,*

*and he will come again with glory to  
judge the living and the dead;*

*whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the  
Lord and Giver of life,*

*who proceeds from the Father and the  
Son;*

*who with the Father and the Son is  
worshipped and glorified;*

*who spoke through the prophets.*

*And we believe one holy catholic and  
apostolic church.*

*We acknowledge one baptism for the  
forgiveness of sins;*

*and we look forward to the resurrection  
of the dead,*

*and the life of the world to come.*

*Amen.*

# MOTH AND RUST RESOLUTIONS

by Christine Farenhorst

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

- MATTHEW 6:19-21



I'll wait to have a child, she said,  
Until this year, next year,  
Is past. The winters whiled away.  
But when she craved a son,  
The day was gone. The day was done.  
And when the evening stole  
Across the sky. She heard God say,  
I need your soul. Your time's passed by.  
You cannot stay.

I'll marry me a farm, he said,  
And insulate it well  
With rustic country charm, he said.  
But when he'd drawn his plans,  
Borrowed the money, read the banns,  
The evening sunset stole  
Across the sky. He heard God say,  
I need your soul. Your time's passed by.  
You cannot stay.

I'll juggle with my tax, he said,  
No need to call it cheat,  
For everyone is lax, he said.  
He filed his neat return,  
But did not get it back. The burn  
Of sunset evening stole  
Across the sky. He heard God say,  
I need your soul. Your time's passed by.  
You cannot stay.

Tomorrow I will play, he said,  
But father's busy now,  
I have no time today, he said.  
His child walked out the door.  
A glance, a twinge of guilt, no more,  
And soon the darkness stole  
Across the sky. He heard God say,  
I need your soul. Your time's passed by.  
You cannot stay.

Please hold your twilight, Lord, for I  
Am not quite ready yet to



The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 23:21-23 that we should be careful to do what we say and do what we believe. We demonstrate our reverence, respect, and love for God by a daily walking in His path. However, the sad truth is that promises are often broken, not just by our neighbors who might not attend church, but also by Christians who have made a public profession of faith.

Our lifespan is short and we do not know how many days are left in which we may serve God; we do not know how many days will be given to us to acknowledge openly the love we say we have.

### LINCOLN'S MOM

There is an anecdote about Abraham Lincoln and a vow. Lincoln, who was the 16th president of the U.S. (1861-1865), once drove a lengthy distance in a carriage with one of his colonels. During the drive, this colonel took a bottle out of his pocket and offered the president a drink of whiskey. Lincoln politely refused. Reaching into his shirt pocket, the officer then offered Lincoln a whopping, beautiful cigar.

Smiling, Lincoln responded by telling a story. "When I was nine years old," he began, "my mother was extremely ill. She was on her deathbed and called me to her side. Some of her last words asked me to promise that I would never drink or smoke. I said that I would not and I have kept that promise. Would you advise me to break it at this time in my life?"

Abraham Lincoln's response was a godly one. At that time, he had no idea that he would be assassinated soon and that his soul would be required of him by his heavenly Father. Had he broken his word to his earthly mother, it would also have been a broken word to his heavenly Father.

To turn to our patient God, and to do His will, is a requirement for all those endowed with the breath of life. It should be a daily prerogative. God gives to everyone on earth many chances to turn from earthly ways to heavenly ones.

### SINATRA'S WAY

Frank Sinatra (1915-1998) was a popular American singer and actor. Humanly

speaking, he was quite famous. Many people hummed along to his signature song, a song by which he was known and a song which claimed that he was in charge of his own life, his own decisions. Entitled "My Way," the song appealed to the self-assertive. Some of its words were:

*Regrets, I've had a few,  
But then again, too few to mention.  
I did what I had to do and saw it  
through without exemption.  
I planned each charted course,  
each careful step along the byway,  
And more, much more than this,  
I did it my way.*



Frank Sinatra's life, his moth-and-rust way, by the grace of God, lasted a little longer than eight decades. He'd been married four times, had three children, and had an adoring public before God spoke and said, "This is now the end of your way, Frank. I need your soul."

Frank died of complications associated with dementia, heart and kidney disease and bladder cancer. Before he died, he summed up his way, his personal faith, in these words:

"First: I believe in you and me ... I believe in nature, in the birds, the sea, the

sky, in everything I can see or that there is real evidence for. If these things are what you mean by God, then I believe in God. But I don't believe in a personal God to whom I look for comfort or for a natural on the next roll of the dice. I'm not unmindful of man's seeming need for faith; I'm for anything that gets you through the night, be it prayer, tranquilizers or a bottle of Jack Daniel's ... Well, I believe that God knows what each of us wants and needs. It's not necessary for us to make it to church on Sunday to reach Him. You can find Him anyplace. And if that sounds heretical, my source is pretty good: Matthew, Five to Seven, The Sermon on the Mount."

Frank Sinatra's last words, spoken to his wife, were: "I'm losing."

God, in His love, gave Frank Sinatra plenty of opportunities to turn to Him for salvation during his long, four-score plus, earthly travel. Not being God, we cannot judge the final moments of the singer's life. But this truth is sure, once he died, blue-eyed Frank, ready or not, faced God in final judgment and God rendered a verdict on him, as He will render it to each human being. He will render each judgment with holiness and justice. But there are no second chances and there are no other ways than God's way.

### JESUS IN 2026

Although it is appointed for man to die once, and after that face judgment, as it says in Hebrews 9:27, it is also good to remember the comfort of John 5:24.

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."

Perhaps this coming year of 2026 will be the year in which we will hear God say to some of us, "I need your soul. Your time's passed by. You cannot stay." It is good to reflect on this and to contemplate seriously whether or not our daily resolutions will pass muster; whether or not they are infused with love for and faith in Jesus. RP

# Created to Create:

## a practical person's thoughts on creativity

by Holly Enter



I can vividly recall one spring afternoon many years ago when I came across an unexpected sight in the woods near my childhood home: an apple tree in full bloom, its delicate pink-tinged petals drifting down like snow. It was a moment of wonder, not only at the magical scene I had unexpectedly entered, but because I was the only one there to see it. All this beauty seemed wasted in its hiddenness. Why would God lavish such loveliness on a place where no one would notice?

### WHAT DOES UNDISCOVERED BEAUTY SAY ABOUT GOD?

Many similar moments since then have made me ponder what this reveals about God: a Creator who cares about beauty for its own sake. He fashioned a world that is not only functional but beautiful. When one reads the detailed specifications for the temple and its articles, it's clear that God values craftsmanship and artistry. Further reading reveals how He cares about skilled musicians and beautiful lyrics, good storytelling, and lyrical poetry (How differently we'd feel about the Psalms if they were written in prose!).

All throughout creation, we see beauty for the sake of

beauty, often with no apparent practical function. We marvel at this truth on clear nights when we look at the stars. "And He made the stars also," the creation account tells us (Gen. 1:16), nearly in afterthought, as though the spontaneous flinging of innumerable flaming orbs throughout the universe by just a word requires no further elaboration. We wonder at the purpose of this vast universe, much of it unseen and unknowable. The Psalmist hints at a reason:





“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place... what are human beings that you care for them?” (Ps. 8:3)

This Creator, Artist, Designer – the one who brings all this wondrous, breathtaking beauty into being so effortlessly – cares about insignificant you and me. Clearly, all this impractical, creative beauty reveals something about God’s character that we are meant to discover in the midst of our practical, everyday lives.

### MADE IN THE IMAGE OF MY CREATOR

I am, by nature, a practical person. My background is in nursing, not art. I only recently took up painting as a hobby during Covid lockdowns when my usual routines slowed. But practically speaking, I struggled to find purpose for creativity. The impetus behind creating sometimes feels uncomfortably more like drive than pleasure. But even without outside motivation or practical reasons, I’m not alone in simply pursuing creativity for its own sake. Though this drive may reveal itself in a variety of ways, it all points to being created in the image of a Creator who loves to create.

There are other reasons to lean into this drive to create. Andy Crouch in *Culture Making* reminds us that it is easy to slip into the role of consumer (and critic) of culture, rather than putting effort into a counter-cultural offering of our own. Christians are called not only to reject what is false, but also to offer something better. When we write a song, paint a picture, cook a delicious meal, cultivate a garden, craft a story, or build something skillfully, we have the opportunity to reflect goodness, truth, and beauty.

### PRACTICALITY: A GOOD TOOL BUT A LOUSY MASTER

Practicality, for all its advantages, has its faults. At times, it can blind us to things important and valuable. Jesus’ followers and disciples were (relatively) concerned about practical things: feeding hungry crowds, keeping pesky children out of Jesus’s way, staying afloat on stormy seas, managing the household and hostess duties. Jesus gently rebukes this way of thinking; not encouraging neglect of the practical necessities, of course, but reminding them and us that there were important things to see and learn in those moments that could be missed if focus was only on what was practical.

When a woman poured out expensive oil on Jesus, the disciples were aghast. It seemed a waste; surely there were more pragmatic uses for the money spent on this costly, fragrant oil. But Jesus does not rebuke the woman for this extravagance; rather,



#### Flower Girl:

Her flower girl duties over, my young daughter explores the wedding venue, an old barn.



From my watercolor sketchbook: taking in the view during a family hike in Sedona, a landscape so vastly different than what we see at home in Ontario.



**After the Storm:** A storm rolling through Destin, Florida, left behind waves that were perfect for one of our family's favourite beach activities, boogie boarding.



He rebukes the disciples, saying, “She has done a beautiful thing to me.” This beautiful act continues to be told “as a memorial to her” ever since, just as Jesus said it would (Matt. 26: 10, 13).

Beauty has that ability to linger on in hearts and minds, inspiring others for generations to come.

It's easy, like the disciples, to get caught up in all our cares and concerns, the toiling and spinning of everyday. What will we eat, wear, and how will we get everything done? Jesus points out, “Life is more than food, the body more than clothes” (Matt. 6:25).

### BEAUTY PUSHES BACK THE DARK

For those of us whose tendency is to focus solely on these practical things, He encourages us to consider the lilies of the field: “they neither toil nor spin, yet not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these” (Matt. 6:29). All this created beauty not only points to a creative God who loves beauty, but has the further purpose of reminding us of His great care and love for us. He adorns even the grass of the field with such beauty, which is “here today and gone tomorrow.” He creates beauty that is fleeting, unnoticed, even unseen, like

trees in full blossom in a forest or galaxies far away. How much more will He not care for us? Truly, the business of life can steal from our sight the beauty of these truths if we don't take time to seek them out. Creativity encourages us to open our eyes to new perspectives, drawing us into new moments of awe and wonder. We find ourselves not only seeking beauty in a new way, but also finding it in unlikely places.

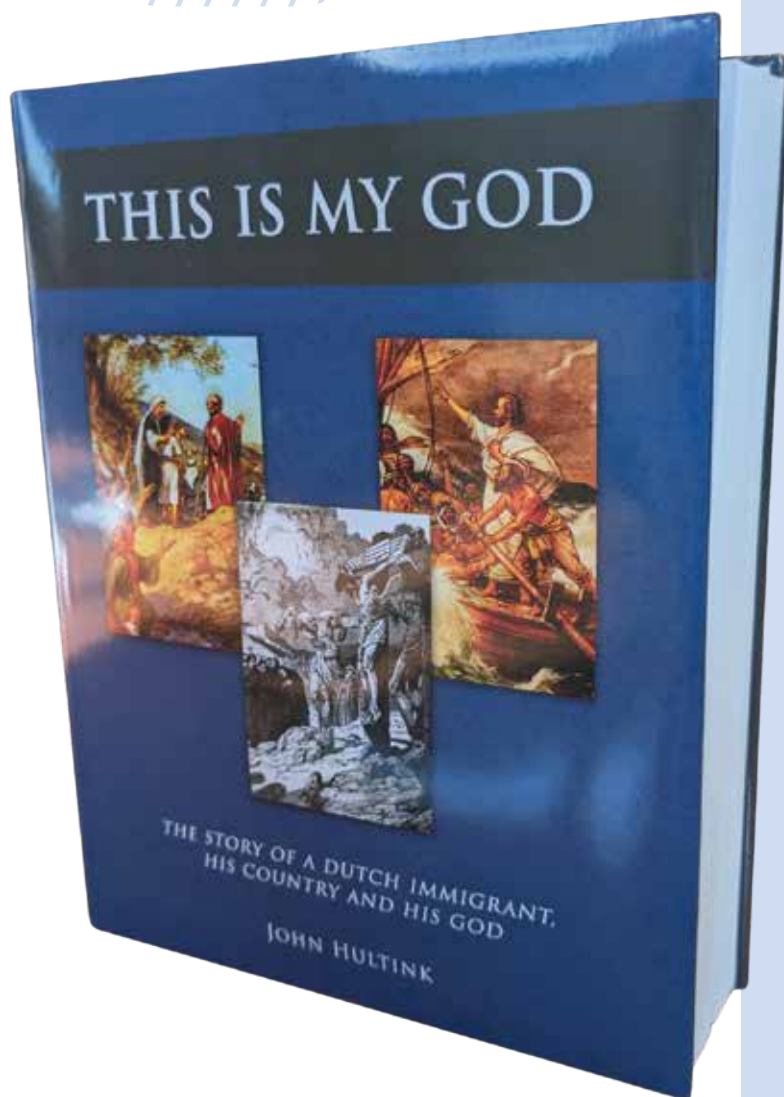
Jesus made the startling announcement that “The kingdom of God is at hand” (Matt. 4:17), then spent His ministry years fixing the broken, teaching the ignorant, reversing the curse, lighting the darkness. In the “already, but not yet,” we too can offer glimpses of this Kingdom. Andrew Peterson calls it “adorning the dark.” I love the picture portrayed by this phrase: giving words to how we push back darkness through our creative endeavors; motivation to spur us on when inspiration fades. We offer our gifts of creativity and beauty to the Creator Who doesn't see it as wasted effort. We dive into this opportunity to reflect the creativity of God, Whose image we bear. We accept His gracious invitation to create, knowing that though it may not always be practical, it is not without purpose. <sup>RP</sup>

*Artwork provided by the author. Find more of Holly's art, and details about her new novel for young teens, at [Instagram.com/holly\\_enter](https://www.instagram.com/holly_enter) and [hollyenter.wixsite.com/canvasandpage](https://hollyenter.wixsite.com/canvasandpage).*



**Last Light:** Evening paddle for my daughter on a beautifully still Lake Erie.

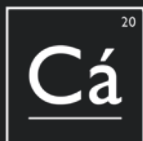
# PRE-ORDER TODAY



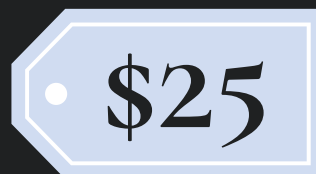
*A 650-page, 8.5 x 11" coffee table book  
with colour throughout.*

*"This Is My God: The Story of a Dutch Immigrant, his country and his God is a remarkable 650-page life story and testimony to God's faithfulness. In these pages, John invites us not only into his own journey but into the greater story of the God who shaped it. I have witnessed firsthand his candor, conviction, and Christ-centered heart: qualities that shine through every chapter. His testimony to God's sovereign grace, from his Dutch roots to decades of faithful service in Canada, is both inspiring and deeply moving. More than a memoir, this book stands as a living witness to the power of the gospel and a heartfelt reminder that our lives find their truest meaning only when lived *coram Deo* (before the face of God). *This Is My God* will surely bless, encourage, and draw every reader nearer to the Lord."*

— Rev. Dr. Brian G. Najapfour,  
Heritage Reformed Congregation



Pre-Order your copy at  
**[cantaroinstitute.store](http://cantaroinstitute.store)**



Adventure  
awaits.

## Come join our team at John Calvin School Launceston, Tasmania!

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.

We have exciting opportunities for full-time and part-time positions:

### Primary & Secondary Teachers

#### Applicants must:

- Be a member of the Free Reformed Church of Australia or any of her sister churches.
- Have a genuine commitment to Christian education and student growth
- Have a relevant teaching qualification and Tasmanian registration (or eligibility)
- Want to work in a collaborative environment that values your unique skills and ideas.
- Possess the ability to use cutting edge resources and technology to enhance teaching.
- Demonstrate strong communication, planning and classroom management skills
- Hold (or be able to acquire) a Working with Vulnerable People registration

#### What's in it for you?

- A supportive, Christ-centred school community
- Small classes and a collaborative teaching team
- Professional development opportunities
- A fulfilling role in beautiful, peaceful Tasmania
- Competitive salaries cover all award entitlements as listed in **Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020** and more.

***Sign me up!***  
***How do I apply?***

- For more information contact Mr D Coote - Principal [cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au](mailto:cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au)
- Find application forms at [www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment](http://www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment)
- Send completed applications to [board@jcs.tas.edu.au](mailto:board@jcs.tas.edu.au)





# Conviction in *Christ*. Courage in *Culture*.

AUGUST 4–28, 2026 | OTTAWA | AGES 18–25

Challenge your mind. Strengthen your faith. Shape culture. Join ARPA Academy in Ottawa for a month of Scripture, policy, and purpose with fellow young Christians.

Applications open December 1, 2025 - February 28, 2026. For more information visit [arpacanada.ca/academy2026](https://arpacanada.ca/academy2026) or email [academy@arpacanada.ca](mailto:academy@arpacanada.ca)



COMING THIS FALL...

## FOUNDATIONS 2026 CONFERENCE

Think more biblically.  
Stand more confidently.

An event to equip Christians with a deeper understanding of how faith shapes public life, exploring what it means to pursue justice, order, & the common good in a culture that often misunderstands or marginalizes biblical convictions.

For more info visit [arpacanada.ca/foundations2026](https://arpacanada.ca/foundations2026)

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

## WHY PUBLIC EDUCATION CAN'T BE NEUTRAL

"Obviously the [public] schools are not Christian. Just as obviously they are not neutral. The Scriptures say that the fear of the Lord is the chief part of knowledge; but the schools, by omitting all reference to God, give the pupils the notion that knowledge can be had apart from God. They teach in effect that God has no control of history, that there is no plan of events that God is working out, that God does not foreordain whatsoever comes to pass.

"Neutrality is impossible. Let one ask what neutrality can possibly mean when God is involved. How does God judge the school system, which says to him, 'O God, we neither deny nor assert thy existence; and O God, we neither obey nor disobey thy commandments; we are strictly neutral.' Let no one fail to see the point: The school system that ignores God teaches its pupils to ignore God; and this is not neutrality. It is the worst form of antagonism, for it judges God to be unimportant and irrelevant in human affairs. This is atheism."

– Gordon H. Clark

## THE (HONEST) RICH GET RICH BY MAKING US ALL WEALTHIER

God told us not to covet, but there are many, particularly in the government, who want to assure us it's fine to demand what the rich have. They tell us it's only fair to make the one per cent pay way more because when we look over the fence at all they have we can't help but notice that it is quite a lot. Sure, God told us to stop looking over the fence (Ex. 20:17), but the world insists that all this ogling is okay because our neighbor's wealth, well, a lot of it is really ours in the first place. The way they tell the story there is only so much wealth to go around, so our rich neighbor could only become wealthy by taking from the poor folk like us. And it's about time he gave some of it back.

That's what they say ...but as you might suspect, folks who tell us it is okay to do what God forbids often don't have their facts straight. The truth of the matter is that, so long as our rich neighbor didn't get their money from piracy, bank robbing or lobbying the government, he likely got his money by earning it. And if his money was earned, then this neighbor of ours didn't take anything from anyone, but actually gave more than he got. As commentator John Stossel explains:

"It is instinctive to think of life as a zero-sum game – if I win, you lose. Politicians think that way because that's how their world works. And lawyers who sue people think that way – you either win or you lose.

"But in business, you only win if you give your customers something they want. If you make a big profit, it doesn't

mean you took it from the customer. The customer voluntarily gave you his money. He felt he gained something too. It is why you get the weird double thank you moment when you buy anything. If you bought a cup of coffee this morning, you gave the cashier a buck, and she said, 'Thank you.' She gave you the coffee, and you said, 'Thank you.'

""Thank you.' 'Thank you.'

"Why both? Because you both felt you won.

"But that's just not intuitive. It's intuitive to think Bill Gates made \$50 million because he took \$50 million from other people. If that's the case, how come there is so much more wealth in the world now with all these billionaires? They didn't take a big piece of the pie. They baked lots of new pies and then took a big piece."

## GREAT WARNINGS I

Sign in store: "Unattended children will be given an espresso and a free kitten."

## DEEP DAD THOUGHTS

Leonard Read was a free-market advocate who had (at least!) a couple very good thoughts about debating:

- Do not argue – first present a better idea.
- No bad idea is ever overcome by attacking those who believe it.

## ILLUMINATING HUMOR

Q: How many actors does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Only one. They don't like to share the spotlight.

Q: How many aerospace engineers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. It doesn't take a rocket scientist, you know.

Q: How many visitors to an art gallery does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: Two: one to do it and one to say "Huh! My four-year-old could've done that!"

Q: How many Dutchmen does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Change?



## THE DENIERS

"If anyone could rationally be labeled a climate-change denier, it would be one of those who hold the absurd view that our climate was tranquil until we started to emit significant amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>."

– Tom Harris, executive director, *International Climate Science Coalition*

## DON'T JUST THINK ABOUT IT

"The smallest good deed is better than the greatest good intention."

– unknown

## ARE CREATIONISTS PITTING SCRIPTURE VS. SCIENCE?

We who hold to a recent (in the last 6,000 years or so), six-day creation are sometimes accused of pitting Scripture versus science. After all, doesn't mainstream science tell us the universe is billions of years old? Now, if that's what we're calling "science" then it is true, us six-day sorts do know we've got a problem.

But when mainstream scientists hold as their *a priori* assumption that only *naturalistic* explanations are valid, they're the ones picking a fight. After all, Romans 1 and Ps. 19 affirm (as do our own eyes) that all of creation testifies to its *supernatural* origins.

And that's not the only Scripture vs. *secular* science conflict.

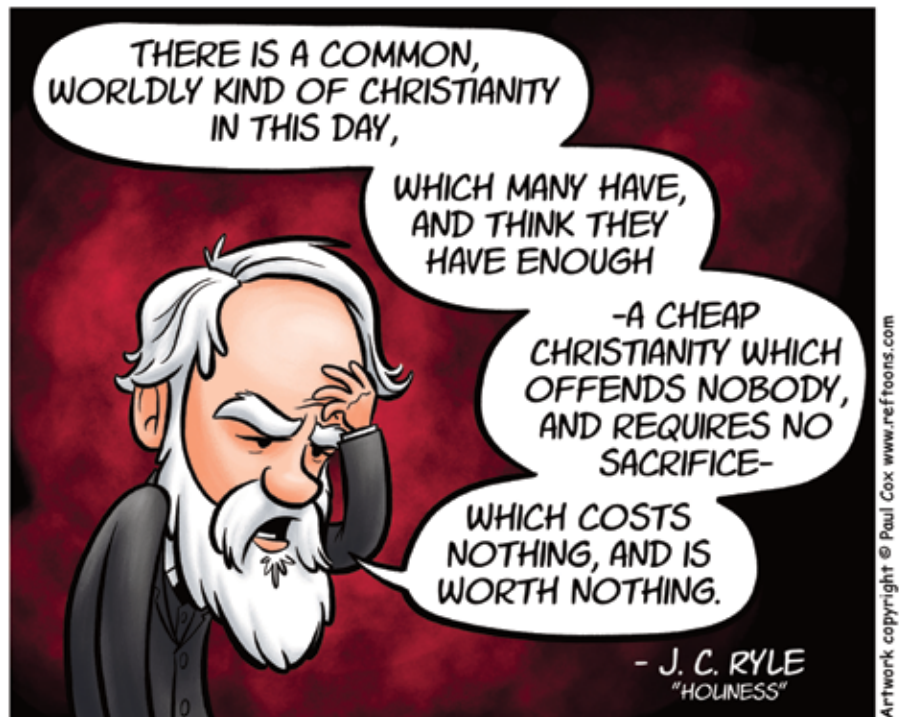
- Genesis 1:27 declares "male and female He created them" but the medical and psychological experts won't stand for such binary bigotry.
- The Bible says children are a blessing but we've got experts lamenting each new addition's carbon footprint.
- While God presents life-long monogamy as best, mainstream science says it simply isn't natural...though homosexuality is.

Yes, this is science – of a sort – pitted against Scripture, but the conflict isn't of our doing. If we are troublemakers it is only because, standing as we are on the firm foundation of God's Word, we refuse to be moved. As Douglas Wilson put it: "The Bible teaches that Adam produced death. The opposing view has to say that in some manner death produced Adam." Those are the two sides, and there is no reconciling them. We who follow a God/man who died and rose, can't avoid a fight with any and all who say dead men don't rise and the supernatural isn't. That's the fight to be had. So let's rise to it!

## GREAT WARNINGS II

In Sigmund Brouwer's *The Lies of Saints*, the hero, Nick, is helping out his friend Kellie who is laid up in the hospital, the victim of a particularly nasty car crash. Nick is a good friend, and the perfect gentleman – he knows she has a boyfriend, so he would never think to act on his attraction. Or so he thinks. But a pastor who knows both of them – the eighty-something Samuel Thorpe – is more than a little concerned. He knows that what a man intends can change quickly, given the wrong sort of circumstances. So when Nick pops by the pastor's office for a visit, Pastor Thorpe decides this is the time for a needed, awkward conversation.

"It's a ticklish business to be friends with a woman," Samuel said, 'particularly one like Miss Kellie. She's fine-looking, and



smart and of good character. I'm certain you're not blind to that. I doubt for that matter, that it's escaped her notice that a woman could do worse than land a man like you. But as you mentioned, she's in a committed relationship, Nick.... Now I'm not suggesting that you have or intend to do anything inappropriate. But it's like driving a car. Good drivers aren't the ones who can handle a car in a skid and keep it on the road. Good drivers are those who recognize when conditions are bad and take action not to get into trouble in the first place.'

"'Kellie's in trouble,' Nick said. 'She needs help. That's all I'm doing.'

"'You don't have to justify your motives to me. Just beware of them yourself. All I'm saying is if there's trouble way up the road, it'd be a lot better for you to see it coming and slow down before you reach it.'"

## "OKAY THEN, IF YOU CROSS THIS LINE..."

Two aged orthodox Anglican priests knelt side-by-side in the trendy new diocesan cathedral, waiting for their bishop's Easter service to begin. It commenced with a lonely, eerie wisp of Tibetan bells wafting through the rafters. Then a chorus of plucked hand-harps took up the icy harmonies. After the bell ringers and harpists came a dancing troupe of young men in red speedos, streamers flying from their wrists. Then something new – six women in purple robes shouldering a litter which bore a larger-than-life-sized Buddha. The bishop brought up the rear, her tresses plaited with white and red ribbons hanging from the edges of her mitre, her brocaded cassock matching the thurible in her hand.

One of the aged priests turned to the other, his finger wagging: "Just one more thing, and I'm outta here!"

SOURCE: an abbreviated version of a joke on Tim Bayly's blog baylyblog.com



## THAT SILVER LINING

Father: "Well, son, with marks like these, at least we know you're not cheating."

## MATTHEW HENRY WOULD HAVE HATED THE HUNGER GAMES

On the night that the author of *Matthew Henry's Commentary* was robbed, he purportedly prayed a prayer that showed his understanding of just how blessed he was, and how, when it comes to harm, it is much better to receive than to give.

"I thank Thee first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse they did not take my life; third, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed and not I who robbed."

SOURCE: Chris Craig's *Becoming a Person of Prayer*. There is some question if this really is a quote from Henry. Wikiquote says no, but several other sources, including Chris Craig's book, say yes.

## CAN YOU PUT THAT IN WRITING?

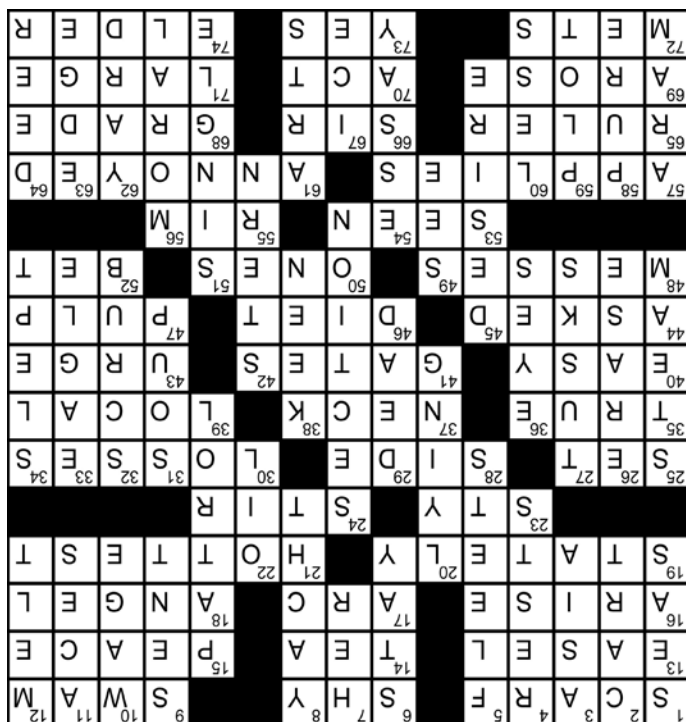
In a recent issue of Focus on the Family's magazine, parent Renae Green shared how she was teaching her 11-year-old to stop tattling. "I told my children that I would only accept and review written complaints." Implementing this new policy has her daughter thinking twice – is her brother's behavior annoying enough to warrant working through the paperwork? And most of the time, her answer is, no.

## ON "NEUTRAL" EDUCATION

"Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil."

– C. S. Lewis

## CROSSWORD SOLUTION JANUARY-FEBRUARY



## TOO PROUD TO SEEM WEAK

Walter Dean Myers is a children's author I haven't read, but his own story sticks with me. Money was tight, and his mother was an alcoholic – when he was 14 she stole the money he'd been saving up to buy a typewriter. His janitor dad, not rich by any means, stepped in and bought the typewriter for Walter instead. But that was the last time his dad showed any interest in his son's writing. Walter went on to write over 100 books, and, as he told his own son in an NPR interview, Walter's dad "never said anything good about my writing.... And that really, that really hurt, that really bothered me."

Walter tried to get his dad's attention by turning some of his dad's own stories into published work. "I would show them to him, and he would never comment on them. So, when I did that, then I said, he hates me. You know, he hates me." When his dad was dying, Walter brought him the book he'd just published, "And he picked it up and he looked at it, and then he just laid it down." It was only after his dad died, and Walter looked through his papers, and saw they were all signed with an X, that he realized his dad didn't know how to read. And that's why he'd never said anything about his writing.

So here was a son too hurt to ask why his dad wouldn't read his work, but, hitting closer to home, a dad, too proud to let his son see his shortcoming.

Parents, we've all learned lessons the hard way, and while those might be embarrassing moments, if we want our kids to sidestep some of the troubles we blundered through, we will need to share our weaknesses. There is such a thing as sharing too early, or too much, but, as this sad story shows, we can be tempted to share too little.

## NOW IT ALL MAKES SENSE

Johannes Gutenberg is best known as the first man to print a Bible using movable metal type. But did you know he kept his metal letters in drawers, called cases, with all the capital letters stored in an upper case, and the small letters stored in a lower case? That is the reason that even today, capitals are known as "uppercase" and small letters as "lowercase."

## REAGAN'S PRINCIPAL, ON PARENTING

Ronald Reagan remembered his high school principal fondly, recounting how he had his priorities in place. And as principal he was standing *in loco parentis* and so there is a reminder here how parents should prioritize:

"I was in the principal's office once in Dixon High School, and I wasn't there just to pass the time of day. Well, at one point he said to me, 'You know, I don't care what you think of me now. I'm only interested in what you think of me fifteen years from now.'"

## WHY WE DON'T HAVE M&Ms EITHER

"The worst thing about Oreos is that you can try to be sneaky and spell it, but even kids who can't read yet know exactly what you're talking about."

– Kona Slater

# 12 *FREE* MUST-SEE DOCS FOR CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

by Jon Dykstra

Documentaries aren't your thing? Then you haven't seen these. We've got brilliant scholars and scientists sharing, in just a line or two, all their study, and the many books they've read or written. And we get videos and pictures of birds, planets, or our own insides, that we'd never see like that on our own.

There are six categories in all, each with two "winners" for a Top 12 list. All can be watched for free online by checking out this article at [ReformedPerspective.ca/12freedocs](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/12freedocs) for all the links. The online version has 5 "honorable mentions" that are also worth your time.



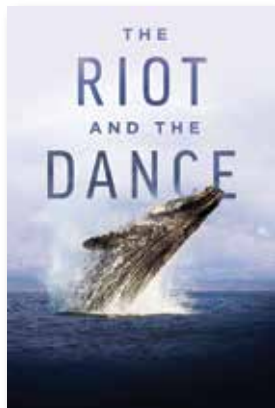
## 6-DAY CELEBRATED

Some creationist videos limit themselves to beating up evolution, and while that can be fun and valuable – we are called to destroy false arguments (2 Cor. 10:4-5) – the best sort celebrate the truth of God's Word and the genius of His design.

### THE RIOT AND THE DANCE: THE TV SERIES

2022- / 30 MINUTES  
RATING: 9/10

The folks who brought us *Riot and the Dance: Earth* and *Riot and the Dance: Water* now have a TV series, and you can watch the pilot episode for free. It's God's creation viewed through the eyes of a poet and an adventurer. Narrator Dr. Gordon Wilson shares that while he teaches a marine biology class, he "needed to go back to school for this film – scuba school!" Why? "I don't want to just sit back and narrate over some pretty picture. I wanted to get as close as I can to as many divinely crafted underwater miracles as possible." Dr. Wilson can't help but gush: "I love turtles, their eyes, their beaks, their scales like tiles on a fancy floor. What hilarious cartoon characters they are, and what a fantastic cartoonist God is." This is just *geeky cool!*



### IS GENESIS HISTORY?

2017 / 100 MINUTES  
RATING: 8/10

Del Tackett is best known for his excellent *Truth Project* video series, and this is every bit as good. He interviews PhD-holding scientists with various areas of expertise, all of them happy to share why their field of study backs a literal understanding of the first few chapters of Genesis.

This is among the best creationist documentaries ever made, filled to the brim with heartfelt, concise, *deep* discussion! When it leaves you wanting more, be sure to explore their YouTube channel and [IsGenesisHistory.com](http://IsGenesisHistory.com) for extras they just couldn't fit in the film.

## INTELLIGENT DESIGN

Intelligent Design (ID) proponents celebrate a Designer but purposely won't mention who He is. It's a familiar enough strategy for Christians in the public square: the world demands we leave God out of it, and for some reason we listen to them rather than Him (Ps. 96:3)! But while ID is afraid to go much beyond toppling evolution, that shouldn't stop us from taking their findings and going further, giving credit to the Brilliant Triune Engineer.

### THE MASTER DESIGNER: THE SONG

2014 / 76 MINUTES  
RATING: 8/10

I appreciated this documentary's patience, keeping to just a half dozen animals to allow the time to explore each one in some depth. It begins with the bee and its amazing ability to make honey. Did you know "It takes 556 bees flying a total of 55,000 miles to gather nectar from an astounding 2 million flowers to make a single pound of honey"? Though a bee has a brain the size of a seed, it's a brilliant architect, with a hive's hexagonal honeycomb structure maximizing storage capacity. Weirder and more wonderful, the bee communicates through the language of dance – yes, really! – wiggling



this way and that to tell the other bees where the nectar is to be found. And we shouldn't forget that honey itself is amazing in that it never spoils! And that's just the first of the six critters we get to meet.

## REVOLUTIONARY: MICHAEL BEHE AND THE MYSTERY OF THE MOLECULAR MACHINES

2016 / 60 MINUTES

RATING: 7/10

*Revolutionary* is about what a quiet professor did to get Darwinian evolutionists very, very upset with him. Michael Behe seems to believe in an old earth and that some sort of evolution may well have occurred. So why would Darwinians be so very disturbed by him? Because Behe doesn't believe the world came about by chance. While studying the human cell he realized the microscopic machines within it are so intricate and complex it's inconceivable they could have come about via only random mutation and natural selection. This is, in part, a history of the ID movement, which Behe had a big hand in beginning. But the real "star" of the show is one of those "micro-machines" that so fascinated him: the bacterial flagellum motor that can manage 100,000 revolutions per minute. Behe is too quiet to keep kids' attention, but for adults he's an ID giant worth knowing.

## ECONOMICS

Economics is a bigger spiritual battlefield than maybe most Christians realize. Just consider how, while God commands us not to covet our neighbor's goods, those on the Left make envy out to be downright virtuous, peaking over the fence at what the millionaires and billionaires have. So this often-neglected sphere is worth further study.

## THE PURSUIT

2019 / 77 MINUTES

RATING: 7/10

*The Pursuit* is the story of one man's search for the best way to lift the world's poorest out of their poverty. And what the former French-horn player and current globe-trotting economics professor Arthur Brooks discovered is that it's the free market that did this; capitalism lifted literally billions out of extreme poverty.

So why would a Buddhist/Catholic former French horn player make a good guide for Christians interested in learning about economics and the benefits of the free market? It's because, as much as he might differ from us in big ways and small, his case for free trade is built on principles that line right up with Scripture. He doesn't quote it, but his foundation is the Second Greatest Commandment (Matt. 22:36-40) – Brooks is clearly motivated by *a love for his neighbor*.



## LOVE GOV: BREAKING UP WITH GOVERNMENT IS HARD TO DO

2015 / 25 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10

An economic argument for small government presented as a comedic romance? Hmmmm... Alexis is thinking of quitting college to start her own business, but then she meets the strangely charming Scott Govinsky (known as "Gov" to his friends). Gov is so very caring and supportive. And eager to help. And he never seems to run out of advice. Perfect material for a boyfriend? Alexis thinks so...at first. The problem is, Gov's advice isn't nearly as helpful as it seems.

Alexis' new boyfriend Gov is a stand-in for our government, which wants to mind our business because it cares for us *so* deeply. But as much as the politicians and bureaucrats might mean well, that doesn't mean they are doing well...which is what *Love Gov* tries to show. That's a point worth sharing with our kids, and this series of five short 5-minute videos makes for quick viewing. But these are libertarians, not Christians, teaching the lesson here, so parental guidance is a must.

## THEOLOGY

Theology is the study of God, and as the earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Ps. 24:1), so, in a very real sense, all the other documentaries are theological too. But here we get to learn more about God without anything distracting from our focus.

## THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

2018 / 92 MINUTES

RATING: 9/10

*The God Who Speaks* makes the case that God still speaks to us today like He did with His prophets, doing so through Scripture. Alistair Begg, R.C. Sproul, Albert Mohler, Frank Turek, Kevin DeYoung, and Norman Geisler are some of the names here, all speaking to how the Bible attests to its own Divine origin. Really worth checking out!



## THE MARKS OF A CULT: A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS

2005 / 115 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10

How would you define a cult? What this documentary focuses on are religious groups that have some connections to biblical Christianity but which have departed so far from it that they are worshipping another God. *Marks of a Cult* offers Christians an easily understandable way of spotting those departures by using the four common math operations. As the host explains it, "A group can be classified as a cult when they:

1. **Add** to the 66 books of the Bible...



2. **Subtract** from the triunity of God by either denying the personhood or the deity of one or more members of the God-head...
3. **Multiply** works necessary for salvation...
4. **Divide** the loyalties of their followers from God..."

These math symbols are then used as the documentary's four "chapters" and serve as logical breaks for any who might prefer to digest this two-hour documentary in chunks.

## PRO-LIFE

Is there a bigger tragedy in our age? Are there any victims more vulnerable, and more in need of someone to speak up for them? Here's some help to get you ready.

## BABIES ARE MURDERED HERE

2014 / 54 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10

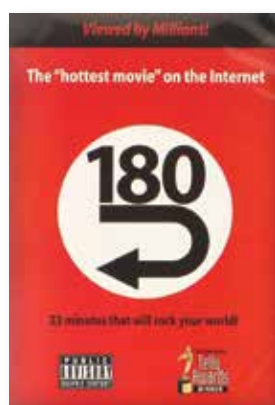
This is a must-see for anyone sitting on the sidelines. Where the film gets controversial is in the producers' argument that we must name the sin that is going on behind clinic doors, using stark, clear terms, like "murder." Do they want us shrieking it as women enter abortion clinics? Not at all. The men and women we see here witnessing are carrying large signs that read "Babies are Murdered Here," but there isn't a hint of self-righteousness about them. They are clear, and generally pretty winsome too; truth is being coupled with grace. Their approach is comparable to pro-lifers who make use of large graphic pictures and pair that with soft-spoken words.

## 180: FROM PRO-CHOICE TO PRO-LIFE IN MINUTES

2011 / 33 MINUTES

RATING: 7/10

What kind of question would prompt a pro-choicer to become pro-life almost instantly? What street preacher Ray Comfort does here is confront people with the incoherence of their own views. When he asks them to explain what circumstances make it permissible to kill a baby, each of his interviewees is brought short. They don't want to say we can kill a human being simply because they might grow up poor. Or because they are unwanted. Or because they are inconvenient. Their conscience convicts them with the knowledge that these are not good reasons to murder someone. By asking his pointed question, Comfort makes them realize that they have never really thought through the issue of abortion before. Comfort's approach will not work with those who have hardened their consciences. But for the ignorant or confused, what Comfort presents is incredibly clarifying.



## APOLOGETICS

We're called to have a ready response to any who want to know about the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15) because of Jesus. How can we do that? What would it look like? Here's two masterclasses.

## COLLISION

2009 / 88 MINUTES


RATING: 9/10

In May 2007, leading atheist Christopher Hitchens and pastor Douglas Wilson were asked by *Christianity Today* to dialogue on the question "Is Christianity good for the world?" They wrote six exchanges which were printed in the magazine and then, in 2008, compiled into a book. When the two men headed out to do an East Coast book tour, filmmaker Darren Doane tagged along. He captured their exchanges and interactions, both onstage in formal debate settings, and as they conversed over a pint of beer in the local pub. The end result is the most entertaining and enthralling debate you will ever see on film. This is a must-see for its able demonstration of *presuppositional apologetics*. (Don't know what that is? See the next documentary.) The attacks that Hitchens levels against God and Christianity are mimicked on secular campuses so Wilson's able defense of the faith will be instructive and will be an encouragement to our young people when they face these same attacks from their professors and fellow students.

## HOW TO ANSWER THE FOOL

2013 / 85 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10

While Wilson, in *Collision*, gives the better *demonstration* of presuppositional apologetics, Sye Ten Bruggencate gives the better *explanation* of it here. Some Christians will try to provide atheists with reasons for why they should believe in the Bible, and for why they should believe in God. In *How to Answer the Fool*, Ten Bruggencate teaches us to start with the Bible instead, and to present to the unbeliever the fact that it is only by acknowledging God, and the Bible as His Word, that the world makes any sense. Or to borrow from a C.S. Lewis analogy in *Weight of Glory*, this is believing in the Bible for the same sort of reason we believe in the sun. It's not because we see it but because by it we can see everything else. 



Find more than 100 other documentary recommendations, many of them also free to see, at [ReformedPerspective.ca/100](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/100).

# YOU MIGHT BE EATING CANDY FOR DINNER AND WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT FOOD.

(BUT WE DO MENTION IT.)

Come +  
EXPLORE

## IT'S SUNDAY LUNCH

- you've just eaten a good bowl of soup, perhaps a bun with some sliced ham and cheese on it. The warmth of the soup travels down your throat warming you from head to toe on this cold winter's day. There's nothing better than some hot soup while the snow falls gently outside. The soup makes its way to your stomach where the acid breaks it down further. Then within twenty minutes it makes its way into your small intestine - that's where the magic happens. While it travels through all 22 feet of your small intestine, your body takes the vitamins, minerals and nutrients from your now mushy food mix, and delivers it, via your blood stream, to your muscles, bones, organs and brain. This sleek delivery system helps your body grow, stay strong, fight sickness, and supplies all your cells with energy. Your body thrives off of the food you eat ... if it's good food.



**WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO OUR BODY IF WE SWAPPED EVERY MEAL WE HAD IN A DAY WITH WHAT WE CRAVE INSTEAD? WHAT IF INSTEAD OF MEAT AND POTATOES WE HAD ....**

# CANDY



Sounds like a dream dinner, doesn't it? Instead of meat, your mom places down a bowl of Skittles!

Instead of sprouts, you get a handful of Dropjes!  
And to finish off the meal (move aside salad), you get the biggest smongasbord of all the candies you crave:

Hershey's bars, Oh Henry bars, Rockets, Tootsie Rolls, Sour Gummy Worms, Hi-Chews, Fruitella, and Nerds.

How tasty would that be!



**... BUT WE AREN'T TALKING ABOUT FOOD.**

*(even though it's all we've talked about so far.)*



You've just watched a show on TV, a lighthearted comedy with nothing inherently bad in it. You've just finished a book, a silly story about a boy-crazy princess. You've just listened to another hour of music that had a good beat but nothing really impactful in the lyrics. The words you listened to, the pictures that flashed before you on the screen, the words you read, all of it traveled down to your heart, making it glad. Laughter, after all, is good medicine. Your mind casts it aside - *that was fun* - and moves on. Your soul feels unchanged, *just another day*.

It felt good at the moment. Now it's just time that's passed. And there's nothing inherently bad with that. It's like having some candy once in a while. It tastes good, passes through, and then it's gone.





But if it's become our habit to only ingest the candy of entertainment, are we really doing ourselves a favor? Like that dinner of Skittles, dropjes, and gummy worms, do we really think we'd benefit from overdosing on candy entertainment? The things that we digest through our eyes and ears, whether it be books we read, songs we listen to, or movies and shows we watch, all have an effect on our heart, good or bad. It's rare that anything is actually neutral. They will affect our thoughts, words and desires, especially if we aren't being diligent in recognizing the impact of our content. Lighthearted books, shows, and songs aren't bad in moderation, but feed your heart and soul only that "candy" day after day and you'll find yourself in a pickle. Just like the body needs steak, your heart, soul, and brain need substance to thrive – they need to be challenged, motivated, encouraged, and strengthened through what you entertain yourself with too. We were made to grow in wisdom and knowledge, and God gave us the ability to watch, read and listen partly for that purpose.



How often when we have time for God's nourishment – His Word or time in prayer (the meat), we reach for "candy" instead? Or when we're at the library we reach for that funny book we've read more than once, instead of the book about heroes of faith or books that would encourage us to try something new. Instead, why not books that make us chew the information, discuss it with others, and spur us on to good works? Let's be honest with ourselves.





# HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S CANDY OR NOT?



Good question! Let me introduce you to the "candy-o-meter": a series of questions you can ask when you're considering a choice of entertainment. If you answer "no" to the following, it's candy and best to use in moderation. If "yes," it's a good side dish - "eat" it up as much as you want (once you've done all your chores, of course). And if, and you'd know in your heart (if you're being honest with yourself - hello, conscience), what you read/watch/listen to does not line up with God's Word, it's garbage and you're best to throw it out, repent, and sin no more.



Scan the QR codes below for our

## "SIDE-DISH" RECOMMENDATIONS

### CHALLENGE

Does it challenge my thinking?  
Does this encourage self-reflection?  
Does this promote problem-solving?  
Does this stretch my imagination?

### ACTION

Does this make me want to do good?  
Does this make me want to help others?  
Does this make me want to try something new?  
Does this make me want to speak up for others?

### NOURISH

Does this feed my soul with good thoughts?  
Does this promote good over evil?  
Does this teach me how to overcome my struggles?  
Does this bring my soul comfort?

### DEVOTION

Does this honor God in its content?  
Does this keep God's commandments?  
Does this honor God's holy name?  
Does this make me feel closer to God?

### YAY!

Does this make me feel good afterwards?  
Does this make me feel uplifted in faith?  
Does this make me feel energized?  
Does this make me thankful?

KEEP YOUR HEART WITH  
ALL VIGILANCE,  
FOR FROM IT FLOW THE  
SPRINGS OF LIFE.

PROVERBS 4:23

MOVIES  
BOOKS  
MUSIC



Come & Explore is created by Stephanie Vanderpol, who came up with this idea after having far too many Wilhelmina peppermints in one sitting while reading Jon Dykstra's review on *Keeper of the Lost Cities*.

# WE ARE NOT TRASHCANS: how to analyze stories

by Lucia Wilson

**W**hy is it important for Christians to understand stories? Obviously, God loves to tell them. Our world is saturated with His stories and the stories of those who emulate Him, stories that teach, inspire, entertain, and more.

However, Christians aren't the only ones with access to this tool. The secular world pumps out hundreds of movies every year, and millions of books. Modern men and women sit with slack jaws, swallowing as much as can be shoved down their throats, without any active

discrimination or discernment. But, just as stories can be edifying and beautiful, they can even more easily be toxic and destructive. The fallen world has all sorts of corrupt messages it would like to slip you, like a pill wrapped in cheese for a dog. With enough explosions and drama scenes, the lies often pass by unnoticed.

## WORLDVIEW WORKOUT

Let the unbelievers be duped if they insist, but Christians should not be such an easy audience. We don't need to exclusively consume explicitly Christian content, but we should not be caught unawares or slowly marinated in lies we not only fail to resist, but fail to even notice. We need to watch and read with open eyes and active, and even cynical, minds. We are not called by God to serve as the world's trash cans taking in whatever's pitched at us.

However, the ability to intelligently analyze stories isn't a light switch you can just flip on. I can't give you three simple steps that, if followed exactly, will instantly turn you into the perfect movie critic. This is something that takes *practice*. We do brain pushups. We change the way we look at stories; and then, over time, it becomes second nature.

## CAN'T SPIT OUT WHAT YOU SWALLOW WHOLE

To start us off, it's important to be a *participant*, not just a *consumer*.

Every story has a message, even if only in its worldview assumptions. This message isn't always deep and philosophical. You will find children's movies with the simple message of, "we don't really



**We are not trash cans** — If you're taking in whatever's pitched at you, it's not just empty calories you're absorbing. Every story has a message, and if you haven't spotted it, it only means you've swallowed it whole, completely unawares. To be a discriminating consumer means becoming active and engaged. When you open your novel, when your latest audiobook starts playing, or when the TV turns on, that's no time to turn your brain off.



care about quality and are just here to provide vapid stories in the hopes of getting your money.” But even that is a disrespectful statement about beauty and children.

Regardless of the depth of the message, *there is always a message*. A story is always insinuating judgments of one kind or another, and those judgments are true or false, wise or foolish, edifying or unedifying, engaging or a waste of your time. And when it comes to analyzing a book or movie, you can’t participate in a discussion that you don’t know is happening or that you can’t follow. Once you learn to pay active attention to what stories are actually doing, you can join the conversation. You can agree or disagree with another Christian about the value of a story, but the most important step has been made. You are no longer a passive consumer.

### THE SNEAKY ONE IS WHAT MATTERS

A big note to remember is that stories often have both explicit and implicit messages. It will *tell* you what it’s saying, and then it will *show* you what it really thinks (and what it really wants you to think) as the story plays out. In a good story, the explicit “tell” and the implicit “show” will match. But in a poorly done, incoherent, or problematic story, they often do not. And in those cases, the implicit message should be treated as the real one. After all, “monkey see, monkey do”; not “monkey hear overt instruction, monkey do.”

### *Hunger Games*

One such example of explicit-implicit messaging tension is *The Hunger Games* novels. There is a stated morality: it’s bad to kill. But our heroine Katniss’s situation is claimed as an exception. Katniss steps into her position in the deadly games sacrificially, taking her sister’s place. That initial ethical move is explicit messaging that any Christian could appreciate. However, Katniss then kills other children, some in self-defense, some not. And the readers/viewers are meant to treat her behavior as noble. However, the self-sacrifice is just

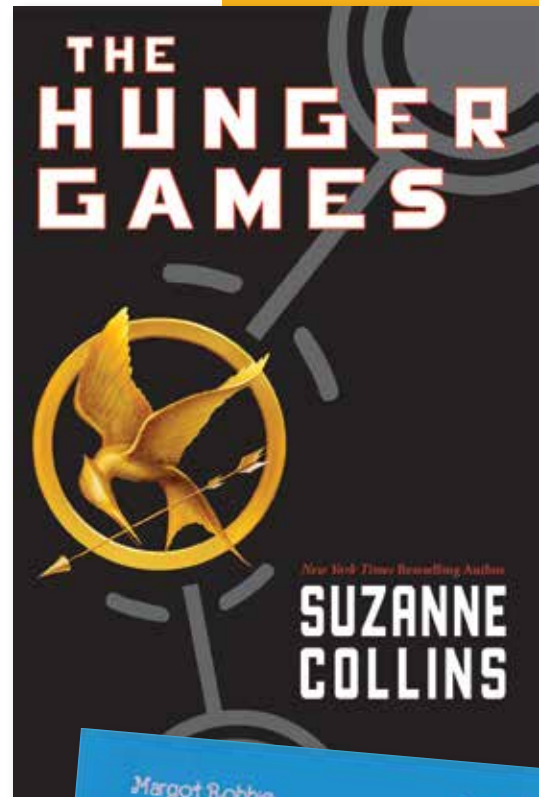
tacked on to make the audience sympathetic to the murders Katniss commits.

What is demonstrated by the series is that Katniss actively chooses to kill when there are other options. Several other characters only hurt people in cases of self-defense; and in the second book, a group teams up against the real enemy and breaks out of the games. The implicit messaging of the books contradicts the explicit moral messaging, which keeps readers feeling guilt-free and loyal to Katniss as they vicariously enjoy the violence of a truly selfish character. And that loyalty to Katniss is so strong that people who disagree with my take tend to have very strong emotional reactions to my criticism.

### *Encanto and Barbie*

Another example of implicit vs. explicit messaging is Pixar’s *Encanto*. The movie very clearly discusses heroine Mirabel’s problems and her need for growth; however, the action of the finale is purely affirmation that she was always great, and it shifts all blame to others. Turns out, all Mirabel was missing was confidence, and the movie ends by cosplaying self-affirmation as self-improvement.

In the *Barbie* movie, there are lines in the conclusion that affirm *true* equality, which are then immediately followed up by mocking the Kens (the stand-ins for all men) and banning them



from holding any political power in Barbieland. Just like with people, when in doubt, believe the actions in a film, not the words.

### God's Not Dead

This goes for Christian movies, too. Faith films love to front-load positive explicit messaging, as if it can somehow redeem all the sentimentality, saccharine action, and clumsy filmmaking that follows. Bad news, kids. A movie that sets out to emphasize the importance of forgiveness on the most shallow level, without truly bringing God into it, might actually just convince viewers that Christianity is hollow and ugly. And yes, that should be treated as its real (even if unintended) message. We should care less about what you were aiming at, and more about what your bullet actually hit.

What a film does and shows you will always be a better representation of its impact on viewers than what it might tell you.

### EVEN THE AUTHOR CAN MISS IT

A downstream effect of all this is that, funnily enough, authors can be wrong about their own works. Stories are slippery things. They can grow and move on their own.

A petty example is *Harry Potter* author J.K. Rowling's understanding of her own character, Draco Malfoy. As she sees him, this pain in Potter's side is just a flat and unredeemed bully. Rowling has admitted to being unnerved by Draco fans and has even claimed people only like him because of the actor, Tom Felton, who played Draco in the movies. However, is it possible some audiences saw something in the character that she, the author, missed? Of course it is. Her idea that an 11-year-old who was rude and used slurs can't ever be sympathetic is silly. Draco Malfoy is a child with a horrible family situation, both his parents being elitist and racist murderers and Death Eaters. Draco also had no real friends and was unsupported by teachers. Later on, he is fully isolated, with the biggest, baddest villain in the story, Voldemort, holding Draco's par-

ents hostage and threatening to torture and kill them if the boy doesn't completely destroy himself for Voldemort's cause and commit murder. This child is so broken at that point, he's crying in the bathroom when Harry walks in and goes, "ew, Draco" and almost kills him with a curse. Worse, the supposedly wisest and best adult figure in the story, Dumbledore, knows all about it, and allows it to continue for the greater good (and the good of Harry). Is it all that surprising that Draco's character inspires pity and hope for redemption in so many fans? J.K. Rowling is surprised. I am not.

### CONSUMER QUESTIONS

There are many more such examples, but let's get into some specific questions you can ask as you consume, and things to look out for in a story.

First up, the theme. *What's the theme statement?* It normally happens in the first five minutes of a movie. It's stated, and then contested in some ways, it is debated by the rest of the film, and it is the question the story will attempt to answer. This is a discussion you should be joining.

A pristine example is in the movie *Gladiator*. In the first scenes, the Roman soldier Quintus looks over the battlefield and the final barbarian horde as these Germanic tribes ready themselves to fight on to their inevitable doom. He then says, "Men should know when they're conquered." Should they? Really? Men should become submissive when up against overwhelming odds? Maximus answers, "Would you, Quintus? Would I?" As everyone should know who has seen it, the movie answers

Quintus' statement with a resounding "NO." If you're on the right side, you should *not* know when you're conquered. Fight until the bitter end. Do not allow yourself to be steered by a fear of death. So, watch for overtly stated themes and questions early in a film – that's what the film is going to be about.

After the action of the plot, the second major progression of a story is often the movement within the main character. Having identified the theme, character growth is the next thing to pay attention to. The key questions here are, where do they *start* and where do they *end*?

In stories with a strong character progression, there will be gradual change leading to a true pivotal moment, often at the beginning of the third act, sometimes right before the finale. Disney's animated *Mulan* is about a young woman who disguises herself as a man so as to take her elderly father's place in the conscripted army. She starts out with a good heart but is caught up in her own insecurities and foolishness. Through the movie, Mulan is getting smarter and better, all leading to a big moment just





after she's busted for being a woman. Then, she looks at her reflection, admits to her foolishness and self-absorption, and casts aside her reflection. The next time she stands up, she does so in true selflessness. Compare that to the more recent live-action version, and you'll encounter an entirely different worldview. The older one actually has something healthy to offer. The new one... not so much.

### WHAT MAKES A BOOK OR MOVIE GOOD?

Of course, maybe the biggest question is whether a story is worth consuming at all. The three categories I use to determine the worth of a story are *technical value*, *response value*, and *objective value*. These are categories used around our own dinner table at home.

*Objective value* is easy. Does God like this story? If He asked you what you were watching or reading, would you be embarrassed to answer?

*Response value* is a little more subjective. What is the effect this has on you and on others? Watch your own emotional reactions. What does this make me feel? Why? Should I be feeling that? Maybe I felt moved because it was a well done and emotionally compelling story, or maybe I felt moved because it was sucking up to my temptations. Just because something felt good at first blush, doesn't mean it is good. The road to hell is a primrose path and all that. Or, even if it's a good story, is it feeding my mind some darkness that I don't want in there? If you're a parent, this means watching your kids' reactions as well. The young will respond differently than you do.

The final category is *technical value*. How well executed is this movie? All the questions I've covered up until now are enough to be wise in *consuming* stories. But if you enjoy thinking about movies and books, and if you want to be involved in *storytelling*, you can dig into this category as well. Ask the questions, "Why does this movie feel fast?" or "Why do I not care about the main character?" "How was that shot so effective?" "Why do I like someone so unlikable?" For people looking to dive



**Quick questions for the kiddos – Whether it's a book or a movie, one way to build discernment and engagement with your kids (and grandkids) is to ask them just a handful of questions:**

***Did you like it? Why or why not?* (The words *boring*, *stupid*, or *dumb* are not allowed answers.)**

***What was your favorite part or character?* (Even if you disliked the book or movie.)**

***What was your least favorite part or character?* (Even if you liked it.)**

into this, I recommend the book, *Save the Cat* as a great resource on the story side of things.

Here's a last tip if you're trying to build these muscles in your kids. I always use these basic questions after every book and movie:

- *Did you like it? Why or why not?* (The words *boring*, *stupid*, or *dumb* are not allowed answers.)
- *What was your favorite part or character?* (Even if you disliked the movie.)
- *What was your least favorite part or character?* (Even if you liked it.)

### ENGAGE, WRESTLE, CONSIDER...

All in all, analyzing stories is pretty simple. I can distill it down to one simple instruction: *ask questions*. Don't be passive and mindless. Question it. Poke at it. Wrestle with it. If you're a Christian, pursuing holiness in your life, and you become intentional and intellectually active in your consumption, you're most of the way there.

I hope you all enjoy stories as much as I do. Not as trash cans, but as active participants. RP





# DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE LISTENING TO?

*Looking at those lyrics...*

by Levi Minderhoud

**T**wenty hours a week. That's how much time the average person spends listening to music, according to a report by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry. That's a *ton* of time. And while most of us distractedly listen to music to pass the time – on the bus, in the car, or out running – without critically thinking about the lyrics, it is impossible to spend that much time listening to content without imbibing some of the worldview behind the songs.

So, do you realize what you're listening to? Is our music consumption shifting us towards or away from God and His law? Let's think about those questions for a few minutes.

## LET'S LISTEN

I might not be the best person to analyze the lyrics of popular music, since I listen to far more podcasts than tunes. The only Spotify albums that I listen to with any regularity are a Broadway show (*Hamilton*), a Hollywood musical (*The Greatest Showman*), a classical oratorio (Handel's *Messiah*), and a collection of hymns (*This Is Keith and Kristyn Getty*).

But then again, maybe I stand in the *most* need to think through what I'm listening to. As a musician, I'm usually attracted to the tune far more than the words of a song. So what messages am I subliminally absorbing or promoting as I'm rocking to my favorite tunes?

My hope is that as I take a look at three

songs for myself, you'll pause and take some time to consider what you're listening to as well.

### 1. "FROM NOW ON" FROM *THE GREATEST SHOWMAN*

First up is a song from one of my favorite musicals, *The Greatest Showman*. I could have chosen any song from this movie, but I'm going to look at "From Now On" for three reasons:

1. This song marks the climax of the movie.
2. It brought tears to my eyes when I first watched it.
3. My family decided to alter the lyrics for a flash mob at a wedding reception, so it has a special place in my heart.

Here's the background of the song for those who haven't seen the movie. The protagonist, P.T. Barnum, with the help of his family, woos dozens of social outcasts, people marginalized by their appearance, to start a highly successful circus. Eventually, he branches out from just the circus for the common man, and teams up with a business partner from the upper class and with a world-renowned singer, to offer high-brow performances.

Barnum's insatiable thirst for greater and greater success eventually estranges him from his family and leaves him bankrupt. At this point, he contemplates his mistakes and realizes that, as successful as his circus was, it distracted him from

what really mattered: his family. This isn't readily apparent in the lyrics of the song, but as Barnum sings this song, we see him repeatedly looking at a picture of his family and then running back towards home. So he resolves from that moment on to make his family the most important part of his life again.

Here's a sampling of the lyrics:

*A man learns who is there for him  
When the glitter fades and the walls won't hold.*

*'Cause from that rubble, what remains  
Can only be what's true.*

*If all was lost, there's more I gained  
'Cause it led me back to you.*

*I drank champagne with kings and queens;  
The politicians praised my name.  
But those are someone else's dreams,  
The pitfalls of the man I became.  
For years and years, I chased their cheers,  
The crazy speed of always needing more.  
But when I stop and see you here,  
I remember who all this was for.  
And from now on,  
These eyes will not be blinded by the lights.*

*From now on,  
What's waited till tomorrow starts tonight.  
It starts tonight!  
And let this promise in me start,  
Like an anthem in my heart,  
From now on*

*And we will come back home.*

*Home, again!*

Taken altogether, this song is about the importance of family. Although it does this in a secular context, this family-first message is much needed in our culture today, where the family is under attack and redefinition. It's a positive message that accords well with the importance that Christians place on the family, and so I have few qualms about putting *From Now On*, taken by itself, on my playlist.

## 2. "FADED" BY ALAN WALKER

The second song I want to dive into is *Faded* by Alan Walker. Although I had never heard it before I was asked to play it for a wedding, its music video is currently the 31st most viewed video in YouTube history. I found a fantastic piano cover arrangement for the song, which has become one of my favorite pieces to play, but I had really no idea what the lyrics were about. Here's a sampling:

*You were the shadow to my light  
Did you feel us?  
Another star, you fade away  
Afraid our aim is out of sight  
Wanna see us alight*

*Where are you now?  
Was it all in my fantasy?  
Where are you now?  
Were you only imaginary?  
Where are you now?  
Atlantis, under the sea, under the sea  
Where are you now? Another dream  
The monster's running wild inside of me  
I'm faded, I'm faded  
So lost, I'm faded, I'm faded  
So lost, I'm faded*

*These shallow waters never met what I  
needed  
I'm letting go, a deeper dive  
Eternal silence of the sea  
I'm breathing, alive*

The song laments the end of a close relationship (*You were the shadow to my light / Where are you now?*). The lyrics present some contrast between various emotional reactions to that breakup. Some lines hint at healing (*I'm letting go / I'm*

*breathing, alive*) or madness (*The monster's running wild inside of me*), but the overall tone of the song, reflected in the title, is one of aimlessness (*So lost, I'm faded*). This is reinforced by the references to the imaginary reality in the chorus (*Where are you now? Was it all in my fantasy? / Were you only imaginary? / Atlantis, under the sea, under the sea / Another dream*).

Now, such aimlessness and other emotions, such as sorrow and depression, are common after a breakup (or some other life tragedy). In this regard, *Faded* gives voice to a natural human response to loss in a sin-stained world.

But I can't help but compare these lyrics here to the soul-talk of the psalms. Many of the lament psalms express similar feelings as *Faded*. Psalm 22, for instance, cries,

"I am poured out like water; and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death" (vs. 14-15).

But the psalms – even the psalms of lament – differ from *Faded* in at least two key facets. First, the psalmist almost never wallows in his despair (with the famous exception of Psalm 88) but charts a path from sorrow and aimlessness and back to joy and purpose. The Christian's life should be one of joy. By contrast, *Faded* provides little hope for an emotional recovery or joy. And so, while there might be temporary circumstances where the sorrow expressed by *Faded* is appropriate, listening to *Faded* on repeat is bound to sap Christian joy.

Secondly, while *Faded* turns inward in response to sorrow, the response of the

psalmist is always to look outward to God and to His people. In the midst of his distress in Psalm 22, David cries out, "But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid!" (vs. 19). And because of God's faithfulness, David commits, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation, I will praise you" (vs. 22). And so, while *Faded* implicitly promotes an individualistic and humanistic response to sorrow, the psalmist looks to God for help and healing.

So, to tie these thoughts together, while there might be little that is blatantly objectionable in *Faded*, frequent consumption of the song is probably not beneficial to the soul.

## 3. "SUGAR" BY MAROON 5

The third song under the microscope is another famous one that you've almost certainly heard on the radio or on your Spotify playlist. Standing at the 19th most viewed YouTube video of all time, *Sugar*, by Maroon 5, hit the radio waves back when I used to drive my three brothers around in the summer. I have many memories of the four of us cruising with windows down, singing the catchy chorus in falsetto voices. Any recording of our singing would almost assuredly be cringe-worthy to listen to. But are the lyrics of the song any better? Here are some key lines:

*I'm hurtin', baby, I'm broken down  
I need your lovin', lovin', I need it now  
When I'm without you, I'm smokin' weed  
You got me beggin', beggin', I'm on my knees*

*Your sugar, yes, please  
Won't you come and put it down on me?  
I'm right here, 'cause I need*



*Little love, a little sympathy  
Yeah, you show me good lovin', make it alright  
Need a little sweetness in my life*

*Babe, my broken pieces, you pick them up  
Don't leave me hangin', hangin', come give me some  
When I'm without you, I'm so insecure  
You are the one thing, one thing I'm livin' for*

*Yeah I want that red velvet, I want that sugar sweet  
Don't let nobody touch it unless that somebody's me  
I gotta be a man, there ain't no other way  
'Cause, girl, you're hotter than a Southern California day  
And I wanna play no games, you don't gotta be afraid  
Don't give me all that shy shit  
No makeup on, that's my sugar*

Now, there is some explicitly objectionable material in these lyrics, such as references to drug use and foul language. But what's the main theme of the song?

One way to interpret the lyrics is that the man loves the girl so much that he can't stand for her to be apart from him. Now, if the song really was about the need for love, companionship, and sexual relationships as sweet (i.e., desirable) things and the characters in the song were chastely pursuing marriage or already married, perhaps this song could be a regular on a Christian's playlist. After all, God did create human beings with these needs and desires (Genesis 2).

The problem is that this is almost certainly *not* the intent of the song. Maroon 5 is not using the word *sugar* as a term of endearment. They are not talking about a girl having a sweet personality. The man in the song is not literally asking for his beau to pour actual sugar crystals down on him. Instead, the thinly veiled subject of the song is lust for sex. This is most explicit in the bridge (*I want that red velvet, I want that sugar sweet / Don't let nobody touch it unless that somebody's me*). And the vibes of the song certainly don't imply that this is the intimacy between a husband and

wife. (And even if it was, that's not exactly something that should be sung about in public.) All of this stands opposed to the chaste and pure life that God's law calls us to.

So, all in all, this isn't a great song for four teenage boys to be singing along to, or for discerning adults today to add to their playlist.

## THE VERDICT

In the analysis of the three songs above, we've mostly looked at whether the lyrics encourage us to act or think in a way in accordance with God's Word. For now, we've put aside a bigger question about if or when "secular music" that has no explicit mention of God can be glorifying to God when Christians listen to it or play it. That gets into a much larger discussion about the content of the lyrics, the intent of the artist, and the disposition of the hearer that I haven't quite figured out.

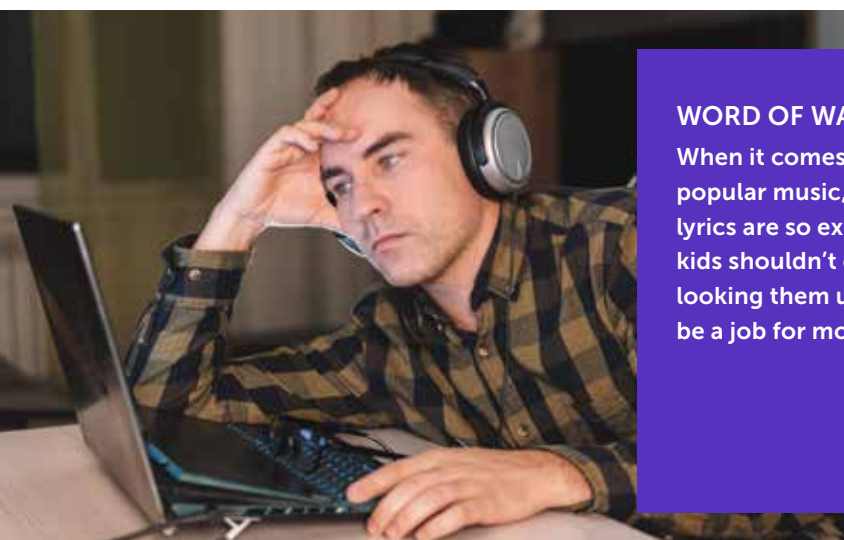
And the verdict on whether "secular" songs conflict with God's law is that it depends. Some songs like *From Now On* in *The Greatest Showman* remind us of the importance of the family, which accords well with the high place that Christians give to the family. *Faded* by Alan Walker expresses typical human emotions that might be valid to sing about or listen to as the first song in a playlist of grief but should be followed up with a song of hope and crying out to God. *Sugar* by Maroon 5, on the other hand, revels in the lust denounced by the seventh commandment, the sermon on the mount, and the Heidelberg Catechism.

This range of music highlights the need for Christians to exercise wisdom and discretion in our choice of music. Solomon asked God for an "understanding mind" that he might "discern between good and evil" in his task of governing the people of Israel (1 Kings 3:9). We too need to use the wisdom and discernment that God has given us to discern what we should and should not listen to.

But perhaps even more than discernment, we need the zeal to apply it. I'll admit that I've been far too ambivalent and apathetic to what I listen to on the radio. I'm sure that I'm not alone. It takes some effort to flip the radio station when an ungodly song comes on. It takes time to craft a Spotify playlist of "secular" tunes that you enjoy but with lyrics that don't conflict with God's Word.

That might require spending a few evenings looking up the lyrics to the songs on your playlist, discerning their message, and deciding whether your consumption of these songs is truly for God's glory. That might require asking your friend or coworker to change the station when *Sugar* comes on the air. That might require searching for new music, artists, and genres that better align with God's desire.

So exercise some discernment and zeal when you turn on the tunes, especially as our lives become more and more saturated by music. **RP**



**WORD OF WARNING:**  
When it comes to today's popular music, some lyrics are so explicit that kids shouldn't even try looking them up – that'd be a job for mom or dad.



# CHRISTIAN FANTASY AFTER TOLKIEN - A TOP 10

by Jon Dykstra

If your kids are just gobbling books, and have already worked their way through all of Lewis's *Narnia*, then what's next? If you've read through Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* a couple of times already, where do you go now?

What follows is my Top 10 list of Christian fantasy novels, with some more obviously Christian than others, though the depth is certainly a tell. And all are a fantastic follow-up to Jack and Tollers.

Before we begin, I should also list a few honorable mentions.

Neil Dykstra's *The Seraph's Path* is a two-book tale of Dyrk, a horse trainer who finds himself delivering the king's mail on a flying tarn that may want to kill him. I can usually predict the general direction a story is heading, but not this time, which made for an especially intriguing journey

– this isn't like anything I've read before. It is for older teens and adults: at one point a key character faces sexual temptation, and while the passage is not lurid – there's nothing here that would make grandma blush – it is sad and realistic enough that pre-teen readers might find it distressing. But at almost 1,200 pages, few pre-teens are going to be ambitious enough to pick it up anyway.

*Wings of Dawn* is by my favorite Arminian, theistic evolutionist author, Sigmund Brouwer, though, thankfully, neither of those elements comes out in this story. Thomas is a young boy seeking to win back his castle by using technologies – like gunpowder, and kites – that seem like magic in his feudal England but which were in use at that time elsewhere in the world. I would have ranked this a bit higher up on the list, but it is getting harder to find.

I just discovered an Australian best known for his poetry, but who also crafted a solid other-world fantasy series. Andrew Lansdown's *The Chronicles of Klarin* is the collected volume of his 3-book series. A boy, Colin, finds a knife that allows him to cut through the curtain separating one world from the next. And the world next door is one filled with wicked dragons, and people who need his help, and who seem to have some connection to his family. Each novel is around 100 pages, making this a quick fast-paced read, and

it might have made the list except that it is hard to come by in Canada.

## 10. IN THE HALL OF THE DRAGON KING

BY STEPHEN LAWHEAD  
1982 / 384 PAGES

This is the first book in the *Dragon King Trilogy*, a well-written sword-and-knights story set in another world. The young acolyte Quentin, serving a false god, gets swept up in political intrigue when a wounded knight stops at the temple and needs someone to carry on his message, which is vital for the kingdom. None of the monks are willing, because if they leave the temple, they won't be allowed back. Quentin finds himself volunteering, losing the quiet peaceful life he's always known, and now not just contending with the wildness of the world out there, but facing off with a wicked necromancer! Lawhead had some clear Christian undertones to his earlier stories that get lost in his later books, so stick with older series like this one.

## 9. THE WINTER KING

BY CHRISTINE COHEN  
2019 / 360 PAGES

15-year-old Cora is resourceful, but the odds are stacked against her! Her dad is dead, her neighbors all avoid her, thinking she's cursed, and the village god, the





tyrannical Winter King, seems to hate her. This beautifully written book is best suited for high school readers (and up) because it has echoes of the Reformation – the “official” church is foe, not friend – which might confuse a younger reader.

## 8. URCHIN OF THE RIDING STARS

BY M.I. MCALLISTER  
2021 / 299 PAGES

Squirrels with swords. Need I say more? Well, maybe a little. This was so good I just had to read bits of it out loud to my wife. It's an animals-with-swords tale, the hedgehogs, otters, moles, and squirrels all living together in the same island kingdom under the good King Brushen. But all is not well in the kingdom of Mistmantle – there are “cullings” being done to the newborn handicapped children.

This is quite the somber subject for a children's book, and as the cullings are considered for the elderly too, it's clear that the author is speaking to both abortion and euthanasia. The young Urchin is very much opposed, but his heroes, Captains Crispin and Padra, don't seem to be doing anything to stop it, and the third captain, Husk, seems to be enjoying it! So who are the good guys then? That nuance is going to trouble some of this book's target pre-teen and teen audience – our kids often prefer the good guys be easier to spot. But that's also why this is good for them. An otherwise entertaining second book in this series is marred by an agenda-pushing, albeit passing, mention of a female priest, but this first book stands well enough on its own.

## 7. THE RISE AND FALL OF MOUNT MAJESTIC

BY JENNIFER TRAFTON  
2011 / 340 PAGES

Books with adventurous girl heroes can be hard to find. Most often the heroine is decidedly boyish (or at the very least tomboy-ish): armor-wearing, sword-swinging, that sort of thing. But Persimmony Smudge is a different sort. She dreams of battles, yes, but when it comes down to it, it's her brain and her bravery, and not her battle skills, that save the day. This is such a fun romp – great for 10 to 110 – with all sorts of inventive ingredients including:

- Piles of poison-tongued jumping turtles
- A castle built on top of a mountain that rises and falls once each day
- A tyrant twelve-year-old pepper-hoarding king

## 6. BRAVE OLLIE POSSUM

BY ETHAN NICOLLE  
2019 / 373 PAGES

The author was one of the guys behind the *Babylon Bee*. A kid who is scared of everything can't get his parents to believe him that there is a monster on the roof outside his window. And the thing is, he's *right*. How's that for a terrifying premise? Don't worry, though, the comic hijinks soon take over, with the scared boy getting turned into a possum, a creature that faints whenever it is scared. So how is this

not-so-brave boy going to get away from the witch that's transformed him? With a little help from his pint-sized animal friends.

This is a great one for 10 and up, but I learned the hard way that it is best read earlier on in the day with the lights on. Dads, do not read this to your little girls as a bed-time read – I've warned you!



## 5. DAWN OF WONDER

BY JONATHAN RENSHAW  
2017 / 713 PAGES

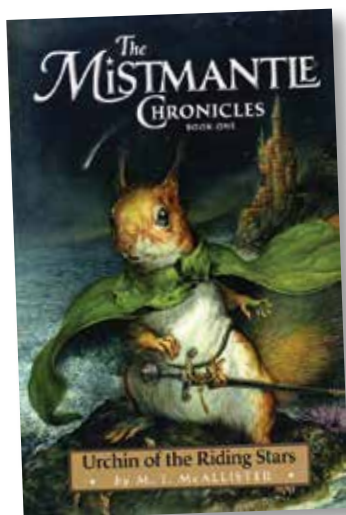
This might, at first glance, seem to be your typical *boy-meets-girl, boy-dares-girl-to-jump-off-of-a-thousand-foot-high-bridge-into-the-icy-cold-stream-below-and-girl-shows-him-up-by-actually-doing-it* story. And, as many a fantasy tale contains, there are swords, courageous heroes, battles to be fought (sometimes with large, very toothy creatures), and evil not yet here but lurking ominously. Our hero, Aedan, is not yet thirteen but he has a sharp mind, and he's had a hard life, which makes him wise beyond those few years. So when an officer comes galloping into the village with warnings of slavers on the way, Aedan is the first to suspect the man might not be the ally he seems. But when no one will listen, his foresight isn't enough to save his not-yet-a-girlfriend-but-already-his-best-friend Kalry. In the adventures that follow, Aedan is equal parts determined and desperate, willing to do and try whatever it takes to retrieve, or revenge, his lost companion.

A nephew *made* me, and most of our church, read this, and no one has regretted doing so. The only downside is that book 2 has been more than 8 years in the waiting. But book 1 is really, really good.

## 4. THE DARK FAITH

BY JEREMIAH W. MONTGOMERY  
2012 / 368 PAGES

I gave the first book in the *Dark Harvest Trilogy* to my oldest daughter to test out. The cover looked a bit dark and ominous,





but I figured, “It’s by a Reformed pastor, so how freaky can it be?” I hadn’t gotten to it yet because, well, I’d also figured, “It’s an epic fantasy novel by a Reformed pastor, so how good could it really be?” I was wrong on both counts. This was really good, and quite freaky.

The trilogy is set on a Great Britain-like island empire called Aeld Gowan, and the time is very pre-Reformation. The Church here isn’t quite the bed of hypocrisy that got Luther going, but it attracts both the devout and the power-hungry eager to use its influence. Our hero is one of the devout, a monk named Morumus, who turned to the Church for another reason: knowledge. When still a boy, Morumus saw his father, Raudron Red-Fist, and all his soldiers, slain by nightmarish creatures whose song rendered the men unable to raise their swords and shields in defense. The boy Morumus was overlooked and escaped. Now, as a grown man, Morumus thinks that whatever it was that attacked his father, they were likely followers of the “Dark Faith” that once ruled the island. There’s just so much here – whether it’s palace intrigue, a compromised Church, cunning enemies, or unexpected friends, it’s all here, and all wrapped up in an epic fantasy that is very relevant for our own time. One big caution is that while not gratuitous, there is *gore*. Quite a bit of it too. So, best for older teens.

### 3. THE GREEN EMBER

BY S.D. SMITH  
2015 / 365 PAGES

Rabbits with swords! – it’s an irresistible combination, and all I had to say to get my two pre-teen daughters begging me

to start reading. This has rabbit lords and ladies, and noble rabbit knights and, of course, villainous wolves. Intended for preteens and early teens, naturally the heroes are children too. However, the story begins with siblings Pickett and Heather being torn from the only home they’ve known, pursued by wolves, and separated from their parents and baby brother. That might warrant some caution as to how appropriate this would be for the very

young. It isn’t clear if mom, dad, and baby Jack are dead...but it seems like that might well be, and that could be a bit much for the very young. One very attractive feature is that, in addition to the four main bigger books, there are a half dozen shorter stand-alone stories. Our family favorite is definitely *The Last Archer*, which we’ve read together 3 times.

### 2. BARK OF THE BOG OWL

BY JONATHAN ROGERS  
2014 / 248 PAGES

This must be read out loud. The author is just such a brilliant writer that he can make any dad reading it sound *good*. This *Wilderking Trilogy* is loosely and hilariously riffing off the story of David and Saul, but there’s no confusing it with the Bible. I didn’t even realize it had any biblical echoes at first, seeing as it takes place in an American South setting... with castles... and strange gnome-like feechies. It’s been described as Mark Twain crossed with C.S. Lewis, and that reviewer was on to something. What’s fun too is that while this is a kids’ trilogy, there is a fourth book from this same universe, *The Charlatan’s Boy*, that is intended for adults (Tolkien did something similar, with *Lord of the Rings* intended for an older audience, and *The Hobbit* for the littles). Don’t judge a book by its cover, right? But sometimes you can. These are

absolutely gorgeous hardcovers, with beautiful, quirky pictures inside too.

### 1. ON THE EDGE OF THE DARK SEA OF DARKNESS

BY ANDREW PETERSON  
2008 / 304 PAGES

This sat on my bookshelf for more than a year because the author is a well-known and talented musician, so I figured, how can a person so good at music be any good at writing too? I mean, what are the odds? But this is fantastic, rating right up there with Lewis and Tolkien. Three children contend with the Fangs of Dang, lizard creatures that have conquered the land of Skree, and with their ruler Gnag the nameless. This is the first title in the four-book *Wingfeather Saga* which is really just one story overall. There’s also a fifth book, a short story collection, that’s a very welcome addition. Again, you aren’t supposed to judge a book by its cover, but these are so beautifully produced it demands a mention – the pictures inside are sure to grab your kids’ attention. Brilliant for 12-year-olds, but adults will appreciate them on a whole other level – like Lewis’ “simple” stories, there’s depth to explore here! Finally, I should share that the whole saga is being turned into an animated TV series, just now heading into its third season (and streaming on Angel.com). RP

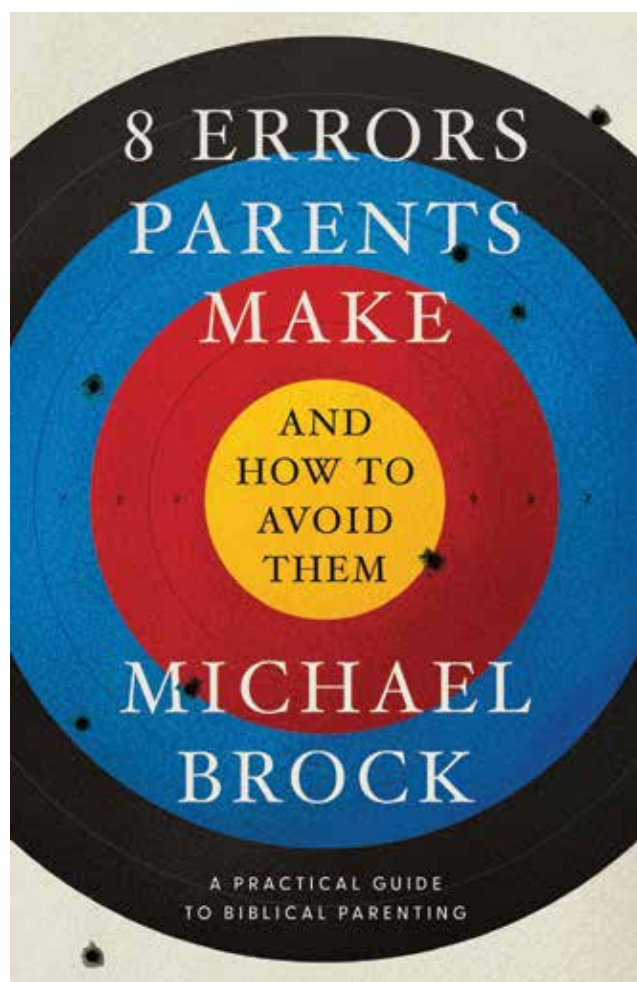
*Longer versions of these reviews are available via clickable links in the online version of this article at [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca).*





# 8 ERRORS PARENTS MAKE

reviewed by Arend Witten



BY MICHAEL BROCK  
2024 / 224 PAGES

Climbing the ladder out of the tranquil waters of Middleton beach, my ears were assaulted by an angry rant. A mother was giving her son a verbal lashing right there on the pontoon deck. The issue, I could not help but learning, was the misuse of some borrowed snorkeling equipment. But the incident was apparently indicative of what a completely useless boy he was in general. “Give me a break, lady. Do you really think your caustic belittling is helping? What chance does this kid have of growing up into a confident, well-adjusted adult? Listen to yourself!” Now I didn’t say any of that aloud. I dove back in and swam to the jetty.

But it got me thinking. What does my parenting sound like? Renae and I were reading the recently published *8 Errors Parents Make and How to Avoid Them* by Michael Brock. When a friend recommended it, I had raised my eyebrows at the word “Error” in the title. Couldn’t he have titled it, “8 Principles”? Put it in the positive. Give us a bit of encouragement here. But I’ve read the book (twice). “Errors” is the right word. You could even say “Sins.” The book is concise, but incisive and biblical.

## NOTHING NEW

Author Michael Brock opens by admitting that he’s not giving anything new here. In his introduction, he cites some of the materials he and his wife have benefited from. These include a lot of the titles we read earlier in our parenting career: Douglas Wilson, Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo, the Tripp brothers (Paul and Ted). But Brock’s contribution is that he nicely balances the explanation of biblical principles with specific practical application. He’s not afraid to describe what this can look like in practice. He acknowledges that other parents have raised godly kids, doing things differently. He’s not saying that if you don’t raise your child as he counsels, you are guaranteed a rebellious child. But he is saying there are clear biblical principles that must be applied by everyone. We ignore them to our peril.

*I’ve read the book (twice). “Errors” is the right word. You could even say “Sins.”*

# AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

## PARENTING BEGINS WITH PARENTS

For example, the first error is “Shifting the blame.” We like to spread around the blame when things go wrong. One of his mantras is that “parenting begins with parents.” If you are an angry person, your children will likely be angry. If you are a lazy person, your children will likely be lazy. If you are a joyful person, your children will probably be joyful. For sure, there are exceptions. Prodigal sons and daughters break the hearts of their godly parents. But still, parents need to recognize that their training has a massive impact. They have received both authority and a call to train their children.

Now, this might not sound like good news, but it is. Because when we see we are shifting the blame, there is grace and power to change. For example, Brock emphasizes that you need to pray with your kids. Not just prayers at mealtimes but meaningfully bringing your needs and theirs before the throne of grace, through the ups and downs of life. You might say, “I’m not good at that. I’ve never done that.” Well, you must learn. With the help of the Lord and His people, you can.

## WHEN THE STAKES ARE LOW

The book has a chapter on each stage of child development: toddler through to teenager. He advises parents to be strict and teach obedience when children are young, so that they can loosen up and give more independence when they are older. Otherwise, older children get frustrated. But many parents do it the other way around. They smile at the foibles and rebellion of their toddler. Tantrums are kind of cute in a one-year-old. But later on, it’s not so cute, and then parents try to rein things in. But sin is sin, even in the young. So, discipline when the stakes are low (“Eat your broccoli”) so that later they will listen when the stakes are higher (“Don’t date that guy”).

What does that discipline look like? Our culture has all but lost an understanding of what a loving spanking looks like. Brock gives clear step-by-step guidance on what discipline looks like as the child matures (here he riffs on Ted Tripp’s book, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*). Without proper discipline, parents must resort to controlling their young children by berating them. The tirade I heard on the Middleton beach cartoon was much more painful than a couple of paddy whacks.

## JOY AND LAUGHTER

You may be getting the impression that this book will turn your home into the VonTrapp residence (pre-Maria). But far from it. Brock paints a picture of how beautiful and fun a Christian family is. It is not a dour, unpleasant place. It can be full of more laughter and joy than you can imagine. And children who are disciplined and trained when they are young can grow to be your lifelong friends as adults.

Was there anything I didn’t like? Anything unbiblical? I wondered whether by emphasizing the responsibility of the parent to train, Brock might miss the grace and sovereignty of God. When a child grows up to love and serve the Lord, that is the result of a miracle of God’s grace. We can’t take credit for it. But Brock affirms that too. There are no perfect parents. God uses us through our weaknesses. Parents are responsible to do their best and then trust the results to the Lord.

## THE SOLUTION TO REGRET

Brock describes the day his daughter left for college. His heart was full of regrets. “I should have spent more one-on-one time with her. I have not taught her the best ways to have personal devotions. Etc....” When we are overcome with a feeling of failure, the solution is not to get defensive. It is not to try to remind ourselves of the good things that we’ve done. The solution is to confess our weakness and sin to the Lord. And then to trust that there is grace and forgiveness in Christ. And rest in that grace. God uses us in our weakness. We can trust that by His power we (and they) can grow. While reading the book for the first time, I found myself regularly stopping to repent and pray.

I’d recommend Brock’s book to new and experienced parents. You might wince at times. But that’s good. It’s the clear, biblical, practical instruction that parents need. RP

*Rev. Arend Witten is the pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Baldivis. This is reprinted with permission from the June 2025 issue of “Una Sancta.”*

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

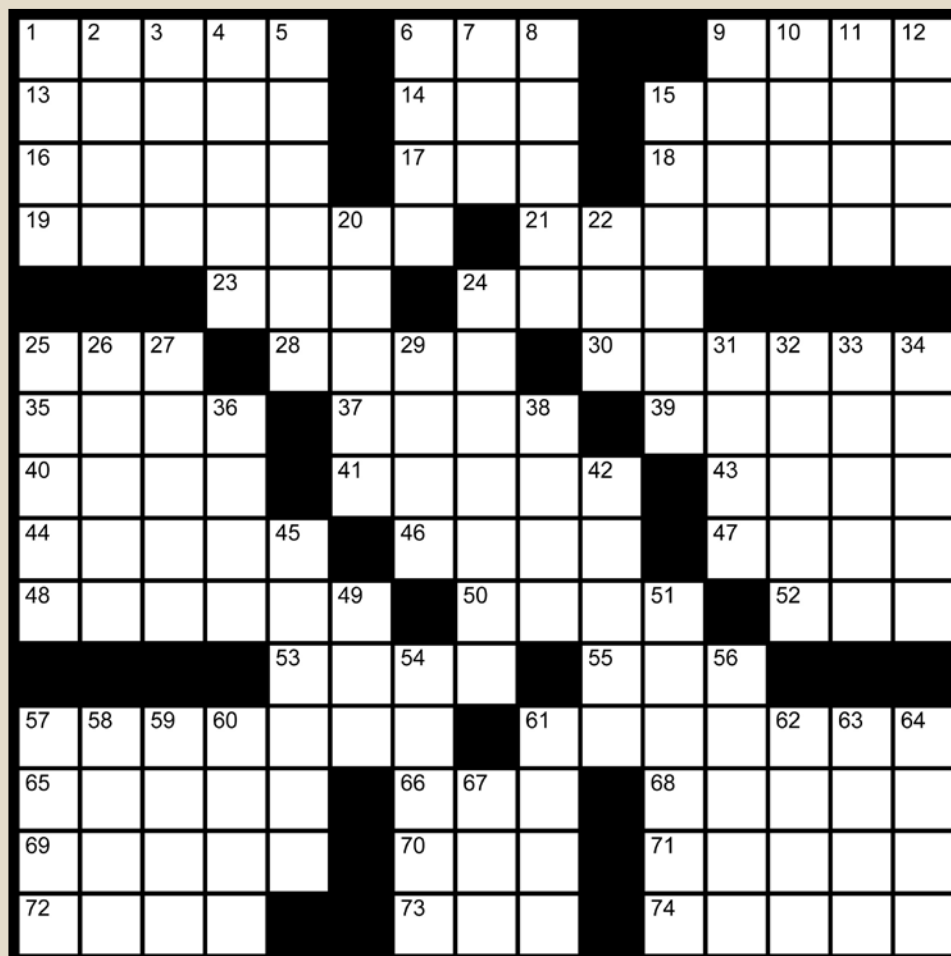
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2026

## PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 44.

### ACROSS

1. Wolf (down)
6. What you don't want your horse to do
9. What Michael Phelps did
13. With ease, lets an artist work better?
14. It's in the bag!
15. Part of a letter's salutation (Ezra 5:7 ESV)
16. "false prophets will \_\_\_\_\_" (Mark 13)
17. Sign of triumph à Paris
18. One who spoke to Joseph (Matt. 1,2)
19. Description of courtly jurisdiction of U.S.?
21. Latest; trendiest
23. Part of a pig's lifestyle?
24. Ferment; flap; flurry; furor; fuss
25. "\_\_\_\_ the altar in its place" (Ezra 3)
28. "the other \_\_\_\_\_ of the sea" (John 6)
30. What to cut when you're in trouble
35. "your words are \_\_\_\_\_" (2 Sam. 7)
37. What the giraffe has long been known for
39. The kind of weather everybody talks about
40. Financially good street to live on (slang)
41. Twelve of them in the wall (Rev. 21)
43. Part of burger you implore me to eat?
44. "she \_\_\_\_\_ for nothing except..." (Esther 2)
46. 1521 \_\_\_\_\_ of Worms: trying time for Luther
47. What goes into the paper
48. Untidy affairs
50. "...as God's chosen \_\_\_\_\_," (Col. 3)
52. Gambling on getting part of Tibet?
53. "my eyes have \_\_\_\_\_ the King" (Is. 6)
55. Metal or plastic part of glasses
57. "Knowledge describes; wisdom \_\_\_\_\_."
61. Bothered; miffed; upset
65. Potentate; prince
66. Recipient of private's "yes"
68. What successful applicants make
69. "\_\_\_\_\_ by any other name" (Shakespeare)
70. "So speak and so \_\_\_\_\_ as those..." (James 1)
71. Size of King Solomon's shields (1 Kings 10)
72. New York baseball team
73. "in Him it is always \_\_\_\_\_." (2 Cor. 1)
74. Pliny the \_\_\_\_\_: the Younger's uncle



### DOWN

1. "into the heart of the \_\_\_\_\_" (Jonah 2)
2. What you check when shopping online
3. Where Paul stayed for a while (Acts 19)
4. "On God \_\_\_\_\_ my salvation" (Ps. 62)
5. What you might find on the 1 Down
6. "\_\_\_\_\_ dressed for action" (Luke 12)
7. "And they said to \_\_\_\_\_," (Ruth 1)
8. Some of y'all in a boat?
9. "God \_\_\_\_\_ his only Son" (1 John 4)
10. "His sons shall \_\_\_\_\_ war" (Dan. 11)
11. Best in the air in World War I
12. "the heavenly bodies will \_\_\_\_\_" (2 Pet. 3)
15. What 5 Down and 11 Down might go on
20. "while he was \_\_\_\_\_ fast asleep" (Judg. 4)
22. Medical treatment (Luke 10, James 5)
24. "...repaired another \_\_\_\_\_" (Neh. 3)
25. Water vapor from hot varied meats?
26. Eliminate; expunge
27. Feature of both babirusas and hippos
29. "who gives life to the \_\_\_\_\_" (Rom. 4)
31. "Stone \_\_\_\_\_" (European folk tale)
32. Eliminate; expunge
33. Unclean bird (Lev. 11)
34. What Aesop's foolish hare did
36. "Smoke Gets in Your \_\_\_\_\_"
38. Anxious; ardent; avid
42. Place on a boat of confused terns?
45. Synonym for 43 Across
49. "\_\_\_\_\_ that they lack nothing." (Titus 3)
51. "Not a \_\_\_\_\_ locust was left" (Ex. 10)
54. Try (to write)... a prose composition
56. Type of compass or support
57. Ancient land located in Syria
58. "whatever is \_\_\_\_\_" (Phili. 4)
59. What an irrational person has lost
60. "\_\_\_\_\_ is more." (Robert Browning)
61. Something you have to a liberal degree
62. Part of temple described in Ezra 41
63. Boundary; brink
64. Animal to run like
67. The end of prejudice?





## ADMISSIONS SEPTEMBER 2026

Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College invites applications from prospective students for the 2026-2027 academic year.

### ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

#### For the Two-Year Diploma of Education Program:

- a suitable university degree

#### For the Three-Year Diploma of Teaching Program:

- a grade 12 diploma with university entrance equivalence

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 1, 2026**

### FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

COVENANT CANADIAN REFORMED TEACHERS COLLEGE  
410 Crerar Drive Hamilton, ON L9A 5K3 • 905-385-0634  
admissions@covenantteacherscollege.com

[www.covenantteacherscollege.com](http://www.covenantteacherscollege.com)



**"He leadeth me beside  
the still waters."**

Psalms 23:2

**Units Still Available  
For Purchase or Rent!**

8 Centre St, Norwich

- Enjoy The Community and Christian Fellowship
- Amenities such as the Community Gardens, Workshop, Puzzle Room, and more
- Large Fellowship Hall for Family Gatherings, or Planned Events

**CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
519-808-3940 | email@stillwaters.info

Assisting parents by training  
students for **a life of  
service to God** and their  
neighbour through biblical  
redemptive teaching.

Now hiring for  
**Principal  
Elementary Teacher**

Duties to commence in the 2026-2027 school year

**It's time to look at us again.**



*Leading Children in the Light*

Apply today. Contact [principal@covenantschool.ca](mailto:principal@covenantschool.ca) or  
[secretary@covenantschool.ca](mailto:secretary@covenantschool.ca) or 780-674-4774

## ELEMENTARY & HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Teaching applications for the 2026-2027 school year are welcome!



We are looking for enthusiastic, qualified **elementary and high school teachers** who have a passion for Christian education, and submit to the Holy Scriptures as summarized in the Reformed confessions. Seasoned veterans looking for a positive change, or young beginners looking to gain experience are both encouraged to apply.

### ABOUT US:

- An expanding student body of 350+ students from Kindergarten to Grade 12
- A dedicated parent-run school community
- Strong relationship with local Reformed churches (ARP, FRC, HRC, URC)
- Newer facilities in the rural setting of Mount Elgin, in southwestern Ontario
- A unified, professional staff committed to a Christ-centered education

**HOW TO APPLY:** Applications must include a resume, statement of faith, philosophy of Christian education, and references.



[principal@orcscschool.ca](mailto:principal@orcscschool.ca) (Mr. William Van Brugge)



[www.orcscschool.ca](http://www.orcscschool.ca)



519-485-1142



333182 Plank Line, Mount Elgin, Ontario. Come visit us!



## CHRIST FOR ALL MINISTRY

CFAM stands with persecuted Christians in Pakistan and Thailand, sharing God's Word through Sunday Schools for children, supporting pastors and believers, providing Paper and Audio Bibles, preparing leaders and women through Bible studies, and evangelizing through Jesus film outreaches on the streets. We also bring hope through skill programs, agriculture training, and Sewing Centers that equip young women for a brighter future. CFAM provides food and relief aid to struggling Christian families, as well as emergency assistance during church burnings or flood disasters. Together, let us share the light of Christ and bear each other's burdens.



Naeem



Mehwish



Josh



Ken



Andy

**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:5**

Contact:

[www.christforallministry.com](http://www.christforallministry.com)  
[info@christforallministry.com](mailto:info@christforallministry.com)  
 6046008851/6048076415

**the rathfon inn**

SUMMER WEEKS AVAILABLE!

Private 6 acre - 13,000 sf property on Lake Erie  
 Perfect for family gatherings!

Ideal for corporate retreats

- Capacity for 50 people
- 12 bedrooms in main inn, each with private bath
- Additional coach house with kitchen, living, 4 bedrooms + 2 baths
- Heated pool - playground

BOOK TODAY: [rathfoninfo@gmail.com](mailto:rathfoninfo@gmail.com)

# WE SERVE OUR CLIENTS, OUR COMMUNITY & OUR LORD

**Rachel VANDYK**  
 sales representative  
 289-214-1825

**Randy MULDER**  
 sales representative  
 905-359-9411

**Bill BROUWER**  
 sales representative  
 905-341-4400

**Ron MULDER**  
 sales representative  
 905-327-4564

**Kristen VAHRMEIER**  
 sales representative  
 289-821-0386

**YOUR NIAGARA HOME TEAM**  
 For All Your Real Estate Needs  
each office independently owned & operated



**RE/MAX GARDEN CITY**  
 realty inc., brokerage  
 2390 South Service Road, Jordan

**Adventure  
awaits.**

## **Could you be our new Business Manager?**

Come on an adventure to beautiful Tasmania,  
and join our team at John Calvin School, Launceston!

### **Part-time Business Manager**

This part-time position (3 days per week) is ideal for a finance professional who wants to contribute meaningfully to a mission-driven school community and is looking to make a long-term commitment.

John Calvin School Launceston is a small, close-knit Independent Christian School in Tasmania with 25 dedicated staff and 120 students, committed to providing Christ-centred education. We are seeking a financially qualified, organised, and reliable Business Manager to oversee our school's finances, compliance, and strategic operations.

You'll work closely with school leadership and be supported by two capable admin staff who manage day-to-day operational tasks. This allows you to focus on financial stewardship, regulatory compliance, and providing sound strategic advice.

#### **Key responsibilities:**

- Managing budgets, financial planning, and reporting for the leadership team and board
- Ensuring full compliance with relevant education, charity, and financial regulations
- Maintaining and improving internal controls and financial systems
- Supporting strategic decision-making with timely, accurate financial insight
- Collaborating with staff to ensure effective financial practices across the school

#### **Applicants must have:**

- A recognised tertiary financial qualification
- Experience in finance and compliance within a not-for-profit or independent school setting
- Strong organisational and analytical skills, with clear communication and a proactive mindset
- The confidence to ensure accountability and uphold policy and procedure

#### **What's in it for you?**

- Flexible 3-day working week
- A meaningful, long-term role within a faith-based educational community
- A high-impact position with autonomy and purpose
- A fulfilling role in beautiful, peaceful Tasmania

***Sign me up!  
How do I apply?***

- For more information contact Mr D Coote - Principal [cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au](mailto:cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au)
- Find application forms at [www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment](http://www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment)
- Send completed applications to [board@jcs.tas.edu.au](mailto:board@jcs.tas.edu.au)





**WORD & DEED**

Christian Education   Theological Training   Infrastructure   Vocational Training

Medical Care   Christian After School Programs   Orphan Care Program   Disaster Relief   Agricultural Training

**55+** ongoing projects   **17+** countries   **25+** partners

*"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*  
Colossians 3:17

[www.wordanddeed.org](http://www.wordanddeed.org)

## Coaldale Christian School

CCS is a growing K-12 Reformed School with over 200 students in beautiful Southern Alberta, offering Prairie town living in an amiable community of believers. We are 15 minutes away from the historic city of Lethbridge (pop. 104,000), and 2.5 hours from the heart of the Rocky Mountains. \$400,000 gets you into an established neighbourhood, with new subdivisions to select from. 330+ days of full sunshine comes free.

[coaldalechristianschool.com](http://coaldalechristianschool.com)



**Exciting Opportunities!**  
Join our Team for the 2026- 2027 School Year!

Coaldale Christian School is seeking passionate educators for various K-12 positions. We have openings in several areas, including (but not limited to) Kindergarten, Grade 5, Grade 6, High School English, Phys-Ed, and Science. We offer competitive salaries, professional development, and a supportive community. If you're eager to make a difference in a vibrant Christian environment, apply today!

Preference will be given to applicants who are members of the Canadian Reformed Church or one with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship.

**Inquiries may be directed to**  
Principal, Jeff Van Raalte  
(403) 345-4055 | [jeff.vanraalte@coaldalecs.com](mailto:jeff.vanraalte@coaldalecs.com)

**Applications may be sent to**  
Chair of Personnel Committee, Pete Harthoorn  
[peter.harthoorn@mnp.ca](mailto:peter.harthoorn@mnp.ca)

**GLÖW**  
Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.  
Psalm 119:105

## Reformed Mission Services exists to mobilize the body of Christ to demonstrate Christ's compassion through local churches for the advancement of the gospel.



**RMS**  
Reformed Mission Services

COMMUNITY OUTREACH   DISASTER RESPONSE   MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT   EVANGELISM

**Reformed Mission SERVICES**  
[rms.org](http://rms.org)





DEMOLITION.  
EXCAVATION.  
ENVIRONMENTAL.

**We Are HIRING!**  
Apply now at [hr@schouten.ca](mailto:hr@schouten.ca)

Scan to get in touch  
Start smart at [schouten.ca](https://schouten.ca)

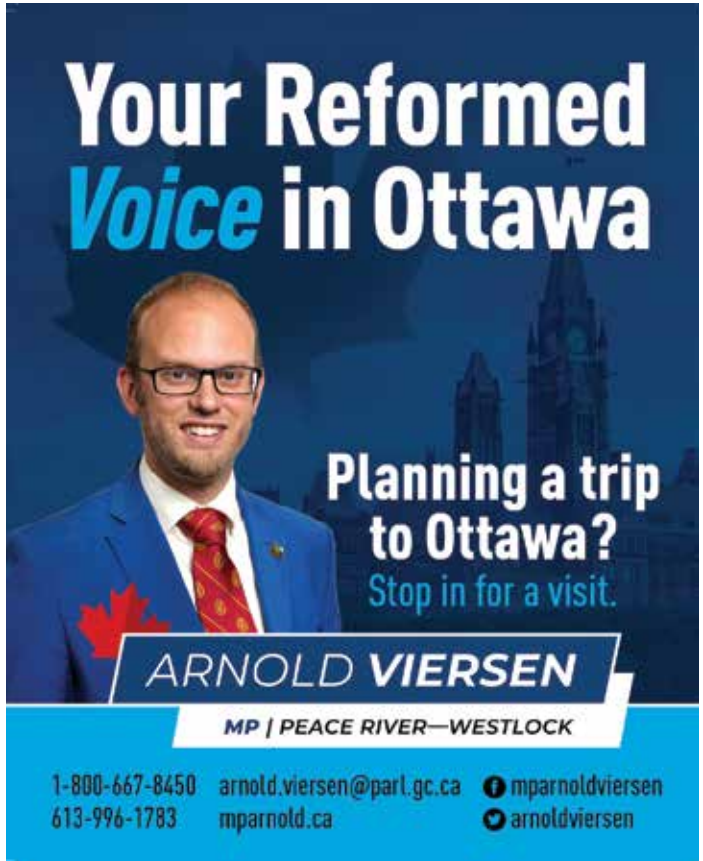
Join us on 

**Schouten**  
NOTHING IN YOUR WAY.

Schouten is seeking an experienced **Human Resources Generalist** to manage the full employee life-cycle in a fast-paced environment. This role offers variety, autonomy, and the chance to make a real impact on our company culture and team.

| Salary: \$60,000 - \$75,000 Location: Watford, Ontario  
For more information on the company, position, and qualifications, please visit: [schouten.ca/careers](https://schouten.ca/careers) (or scan the QR code).

# Your Reformed *Voice* in Ottawa



**Planning a trip  
to Ottawa?**  
Stop in for a visit.

**ARNOLD VIERSEN**  
MP | PEACE RIVER—WESTLOCK

1-800-667-8450 | [arnold.viersen@parl.gc.ca](mailto:arnold.viersen@parl.gc.ca) | [mparnoldviersen](https://twitter.com/mparnoldviersen)  
613-996-1783 | [mparnold.ca](https://www.mparnold.ca) | [arnoldviersen](https://www.arnoldviersen.com)

# SERVE. TEACH. *INSPIRE.*

## WE ARE HIRING FOR:

**2026-2027**  
**ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL - HIGH SCHOOL**  
TEACHING/ADMINISTRATIVE TIME WILL BE  
APPROXIMATELY 0.7/0.3  
**RELIGIOUS TEACHER - HIGH SCHOOL**  
**TEACHER - GRADE 5 AND GRADE 3**

**PICS Mission:**  
*To Glorify God through Reformed Education*  
find more details: [www.parklandimmanuel.ca](https://www.parklandimmanuel.ca)



**Parkland Immanuel  
Christian School**  
**EDMONTON, AB**





## The Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Elementary School

invites applications for the position of

### GRADE 1 TEACHER

commencing in March, 2026.  
This is an 18 month maternity leave position.  
Job-sharing arrangements are also a possibility.

Applications should include a resume, statement of faith, philosophy of education and two letters of reference.

For inquiries or to apply for this position, please contact the principal,  
Mr. Clarence Blokhuis  
(principal@acreschool.ca).



## The Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Elementary School

invites applications for the position of

### VICE-PRINCIPAL

commencing for the 2026-2027 school year.  
This is a combined position consisting of approximately  
40% VP duties and 60% teaching duties.

The ability to offer IT support to staff will be considered an asset.

Applications should include a resume, statement of faith, philosophy of education and two letters of reference.

For inquiries or to apply for this position, please contact the principal,  
Mr. Clarence Blokhuis  
(principal@acreschool.ca).



Growing In Grace  
Equipping For Excellence  
Learning For Life

## DUFFERIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Invites applications for the role of  
**PRINCIPAL**  
for the 2026-2027 school year.

DCS is a K-12 Canadian Reformed school with over 280 students located in Carman, Manitoba. It offers a highly supportive community, an enthusiastic and cohesive staff, a robust administrative support team, and an experienced and committed board.

Interested individuals are encouraged to reach out to the current Principal or Board chairman for more details, and to discuss the possibility of taking on a transitioning role in the 2025-2026 school year.

Applicants must be communicant members of a Canadian Reformed Church or a Church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the same.

Applications should be sent to Dufferin Christian School  
Box 1450, Carman, MB, Canada, R0G 0J0  
**Attention: Mr. Jon Dewit**  
OR EMAILED TO: chairman@dufferinchristian.ca

For more information, please contact:  
Principal: Dr. Chris deBoer Ph. 204-745-2278 Email: principal@dufferinchristian.ca  
Chairman: Mr. Jon Dewit Ph. 204-750-1394 Email: chairman@dufferinchristian.ca

Reformed  
**PERSPECTIVE**  
SINCE 1982

# WANT A BIG REACH?

Advertise in **RP** magazine to reach over 10,000 Reformed families & 165+ churches in Canada, while supporting this ministry at the same time.

For rates and details go to:  
**ReformedPerspective.ca/advertise**



## **AUTOREADY** COLLISION CENTRE

### Join our team in Carman, MB!

AutoReady Collision Centre is a trusted, family-owned collision repair shop serving our community for over 20 years. We're looking for a skilled Auto Body Technician who has experience in vehicle repair and/or mechanics and takes pride in quality workmanship.

Bring your skills to a shop where quality matters.  
**Apply Today:** [albert@autoready.ca](mailto:albert@autoready.ca)

**AUTOREADY.ca**

**All set to go**

CRWRF IS  
THANKFUL FOR  
**GOD'S GOOD GIFTS**  
OVER 60 YEARS




*Thank you!*

"MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE TO  
THE LORD, ALL THE EARTH;  
BREAK FORTH INTO JOYOUS  
SONG AND SING PRAISES!"

*Psalm 98:4*


[crwrf.ca](http://crwrf.ca)

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark hoodie with 'REDEEMER' in red letters, holds a glowing lightbulb in her right hand. She is looking up at the lightbulb with a hopeful expression. The background is dark and moody.

## The world is full of noise,

pushing in every direction. Find your way forward and prepare for a career while exploring what it means to reflect the love of Jesus Christ wherever you go, in whatever you do. Turn down the volume and listen closely.

# Your Future is Calling

The logo consists of a red shield with a white cross and the text 'Redeemer University' to its right.

LEARN MORE AT  
[REDEEMER.CA](http://REDEEMER.CA)

NEW CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT LANDMARK

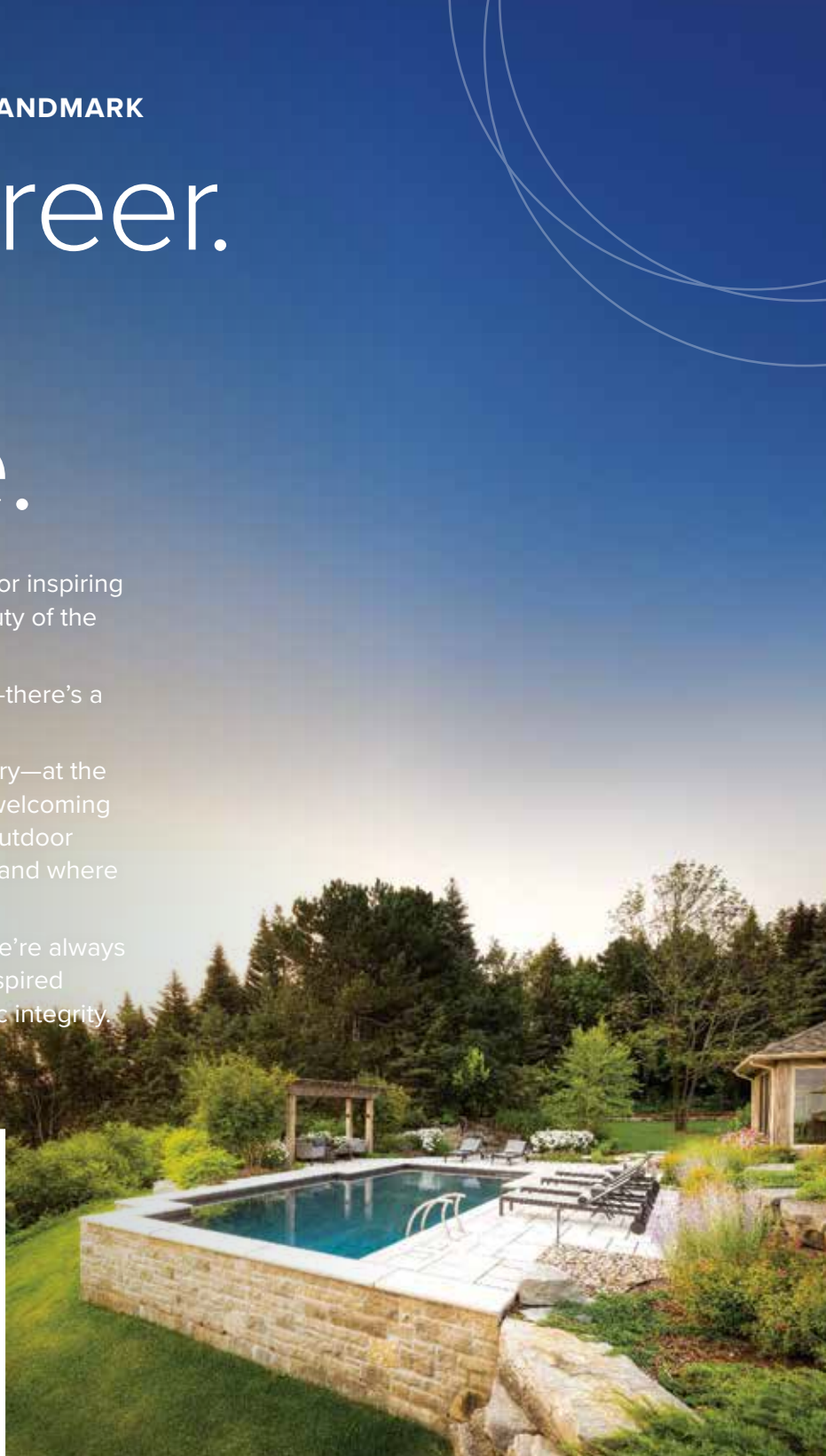
# Build a career. And a life you'll love.

At The Landmark Group, we create and care for inspiring landscapes that connect people with the beauty of the outdoors. And we're growing!

Whether your passion is outdoors or indoors—there's a place for you to grow with us.

Enjoy a relocation bonus to join us in Thornbury—at the heart of Ontario's Georgian Bay region. With welcoming churches, Christian schools, and year-round outdoor adventure, it's a place your family can thrive—and where you'll find a rewarding career with great pay.

Don't see the right posting? Apply anyway—we're always looking for people who share our values of inspired beauty, committed relationships, and authentic integrity.



**AWARD-WINNING  
LANDSCAPES &  
PROPERTY CARE**




Apply today at  
[thelandmarkgroup.ca/careers](https://thelandmarkgroup.ca/careers)  
or scan the QR code.





## THE LIFELONG BATTLE



I hate it. I love it.  
I'm held in its grip.  
Its power's alarming.  
I feel myself slip.

It draws me with offers  
Of quiet and rest,  
Of freedom from sorrow,  
Escape when I'm stressed.

But it always leaves me  
So cold and alone,  
With shame and confusion –  
I reap what I've sown.

And yet I keep going,  
Returning for more;  
A slave to behaviors  
I also abhor.

The devil, he whispers,  
"Just do it once more;  
This time you'll enjoy it  
Far more than before."

I'm weak, and I know it,  
And fighting is hard,  
For moment by moment  
I must be on guard.

It is so much easier  
To give in to sin,  
To yield to temptation  
And let Satan win.

But while sin allures me,  
I hear Jesus say,  
"Come, ask Me for mercy,  
For help every day.

I lift up the fallen,  
Forgive all your sin;  
I'll strengthen and help you  
Again and again."

I hate it. I hate it.  
When 'gainst God I sin.  
Oh Saviour, please help me  
The vict'ry to win.

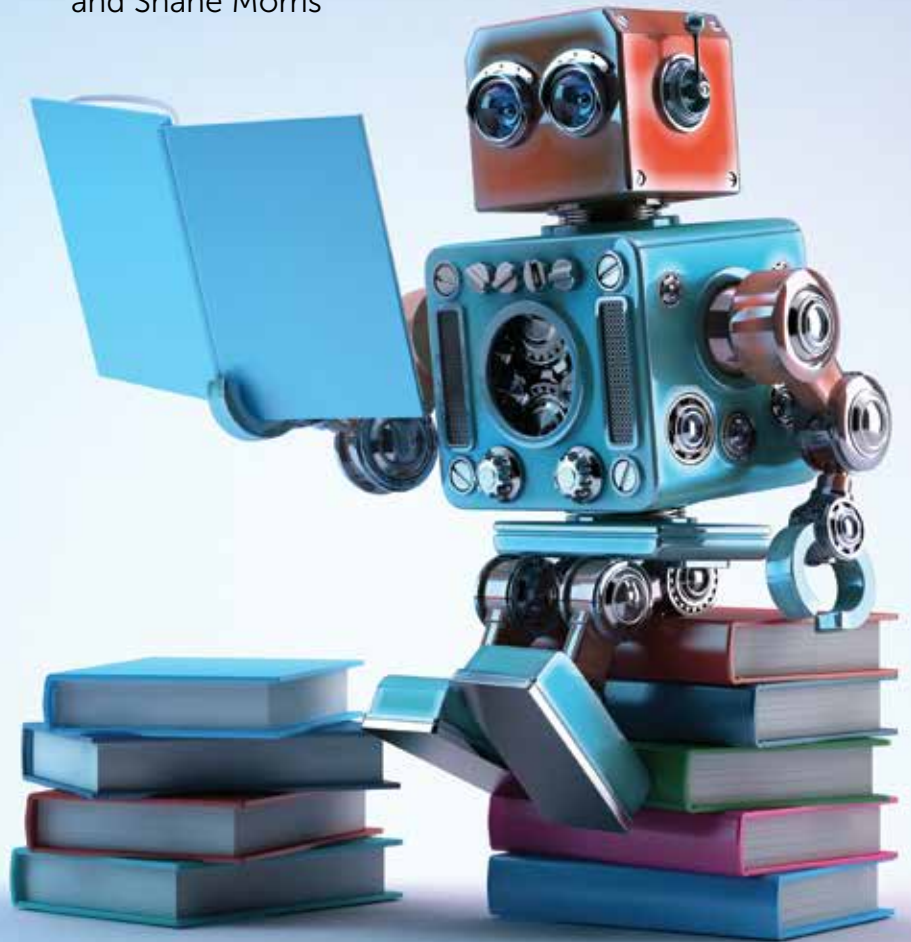
- Frances Baars



# WILL AI REPLACE READING?

*Empty libraries and human-less humans*

by John Stonestreet  
and Shane Morris



Many new technologies are sold with the promise of freeing people from menial tasks. Dishwashers, dryers, tractors, and word processors are just a few of the many inventions that have made life easier, reducing the amount of backbreaking labor involved in necessary chores and leaving users more time for things worthwhile, like learning, creating, and enjoying relationships.

But what happens when technology promises to “free” us from even those worthwhile activities? That’s one of the many questions we face in the age of artificial intelligence. For example, entrepreneur and “Shark Tank” judge Davie Fogarty recently told his 40,000 followers on X that

“(r)ead[ing] books is now a waste of time. AI reasoning models can distill key insights and tell you exactly how to implement them based on everything they know about you.”

Can reading really be outsourced to AI? Should it be? Is this a post-schooling version of the new epidemic of AI-based cheating where students have chatbots do their research and compose their assignments? Is the study and reflection on ideas now as much of an historical anachronism as plowing a field by hand?

### THE PROCESS IS THE POINT

The belief that reading and writing should be delegated to AI betrays a confusion not only about what technology is for but, even more, what *we* are for. Also, it lands us in some dark places, philosophically and spiritually. Author and classics professor Spencer Kavan wrote on X that many students who outsource the slow work of reading and writing soon find themselves wondering what the point of life is. After all, why go on if humans are obsolete, and chatbots can perform *every* task better in a fraction of the time?

All new technologies require humans to wrestle again with what it means to be human. Human work is vital, not only because it is a way in which humans love and serve our neighbors, but because it is a fulfillment of the creation mandate. It’s true the Fall has turned much of our work into toil, and so any technology that alleviates futile, dangerous, and pointless work is a blessing. However, for some of our work, like reading, *the process is the point*. Not all activities can be measured in the narrow, utilitarian way that Fogarty and other over-eager fans of AI claim. Assuming AI can “distill” a work accurately, or that we need to be made “free” of sitting with an author, following an argument, or experiencing a narrative reduces truth, goodness, and beauty to mere data. To optimize or automate reading is simply *not to read*. It is like asking AI to free us from eating a delicious meal or taking a walk in the park with our

kids. Some things cannot be optimized or outsourced, because they are irreducibly embodied, conscious, and human.

### REQUIRED TO READ AND WRESTLE


The best case-in-point is the Bible. God could have revealed what He wanted us to know in a bulleted list of “distilled” theological “insights” or moral pronouncements. Instead, He gave us a library of stories, proverbs, epistles, history, and authors, writing diverse types of literature over centuries, all of which comprise Holy Scripture. Part of what makes the Bible such a gift is the work and the humility God requires of us as we wrestle with It.

*Part of what makes the Bible such a gift is the work and the humility God requires of us as we wrestle with It.*

Describing the slow and divinely blessed act of reading the Bible as a “waste of time” is a failure to grasp what it is, why it was given to us, and why we, as creatures, *need it*. And this is also true of many other books. To “free” us from this wonderfully inefficient process is to free us of our humanity. It is asking to be liberated from the nature given us by the God whose image we bear. To paraphrase the Psalmist, this will be how humans in this technocratic age become like our artificially intelligent idols.

Novelist and songwriter Joseph Fasano wrote a poem entitled “For a Student Who Used AI to Write a Paper”:

*I know your days are precious  
on this earth.  
But what are you trying  
to be free of?  
The living? The miraculous task of it?  
Love is for the ones who love the work.*

The most important part of that work, in fact, reflects what it means to be made in the likeness of God instead of a computer. 

*For more resources to live like a Christian in this cultural moment, go to [Breakpoint.org](https://breakpoint.org). This is reprinted with permission from the Colson Center.*

# NAVIGATING FAILURE

by Harma-Mae Smit

**F**ear of failure can paralyze you. There's a lot to be said about how, in order to succeed, you need to be comfortable with failure – but that doesn't erase the fact that failing feels painful and shameful. Who wants that? Better to avoid it. Suddenly success becomes less important than “not failing.” And the only sure way to avoid all the feelings that come with not being able to do something is to not try it at all. Not trying assures you of not failing. But in trying to avoid failure, you can hold yourself back from doing things in your path that God has given you to do.

So what's a *good* way to navigate failure?

There are two different approaches I've taken at different times of my life to deal with this fear of failure. They both begin with a question. What would you do – or attempt – or explore...

1. ...if you knew you couldn't fail – that it was impossible?
2. ... if you were free to fail?

## 1. WHAT IF YOU COULD NOT FAIL?

*“What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?”*

I first came across this question in a book called *Launching a Leadership Revolution*, but asking this kind of question is a pretty common approach to working with a fear of failure. Why? Because this question can be clarifying: stop thinking about what's holding you back and start thinking about what you'd really want to do if you could.

Once you know what you really want, then you can think about how to navigate the obstacles that might come up. If you never stop to think about what you really

desire to accomplish, you could spend your whole life doing things that feel safe just because they feel safe, and miss what you might be uniquely suited to do.

But this question can also be disheartening, and it certainly was for me back when I first read it. Because the answer was – a lot more than what I was doing at that moment. I can't count how many times the fear of terrible things happening to me stopped me, all because I couldn't count on these terrible things *not* happening. And I'm not alone in dreaming of a world of failure-free achievement, judging by the number of self-help books that use this quote.

It is true that many successful people plowed on despite failure and in the face of more failure, but I couldn't shake the nagging awareness of people who did plow on after failing and just kept on failing. I know failure isn't necessarily a bad thing. But it can feel terrible. And there's no guarantee that “keep trying” will lead to success.

So I found it difficult to ignore the thought of failure, as this quote seemed to advise me to do. Or even to accept failure as part of the process.

The quote did, however, inspire me to dream about what I'd like to achieve with my life. It helps cut to the chase of what you really want to do, even if you feel at the moment that it's unachievable.

Which brings me to the second approach.

## 2. WHAT IF YOU WERE FREE TO FAIL?

*“When you've been found, you're free to fail.” – James K.A. Smith, *On the Road with St. Augustine**

When you're young, life is more about trying to make choices about what you want to do, and that must've drawn me to the first question years ago. Maybe I'm drawn to this second quote more now as I'm older and navigating the result of my own and other people's failures. Here's the full quote in context:

*“Resting in the love of God doesn't squelch ambition; it fuels it with a different fire. I don't have to strive to get God to love me; rather, because God loves me unconditionally, I'm free to take risks and launch out into the deep. I'm released to aspire to use my gifts in gratitude, caught up in God's mission for the sake of the world. When you've been found, you're free to fail.”*

Rest, rather than striving. Release rather than control. And the peace of God's love, rather than approval conditional on success.

Humans judge on achievements. We compare each other, and we compare ourselves to each other, and in the age of social media it doesn't take long to see how much we lack in comparison to everyone else.

But if life is about what we produce, what

*“Resting in the love of God doesn't squelch ambition; it fuels it with a different fire...”*



we show, and whether we've made good on the promise or potential we showed at one point, how can we ever find peace?

### GOOD QUESTIONS BOTH

I still like both questions though.

*What would you do if you knew you could not fail* is for young people deciding what to do with their lives. They're making decisions about paths to take. They're trying to diagnose their passions.

*What if you're free to fail* is for when you get a little older. It's for those days when you're dealing with the knowledge you have failed at various things. You DID fail. What does that mean? How do you handle it?

Failure hits us because we take it as a reflection of who we are and what we're worth. But we're urged to start from a place of acceptance – God's acceptance.

Sometimes failure weighs on us because we know our sin is involved. Our feelings of guilt add to the pain of failure. But the beauty of this quote is that it prevents us from relying on "fixing" ourselves – *God*

makes us acceptable. God loved us even when we were dead in our sins, and He promises us no sin can come between us if we turn to Him. God doesn't ask us to overcome our failures before He loves us. He makes us new, and we can rely on that.

So this is not only about the type of failure you can learn from. It's not just the kind of "failing so you know what to do better next time." Not the kind of failing that life coaches advise you is good for you ("fail fast and fail hard!"). No, this applies to the kind of failing that seems completely futile, that seems to have no meaning and no lesson to learn. The kind of failure that can crush you and make you too paralyzed to do anything more.

You need the promise you've accepted no matter what.


### WHAT WE REALLY NEED

Because here's the thing about failure: you won't avoid it. In a broken world, you will crash and burn at some point. But maybe we face failure for a reason

– to be reminded that we cannot go through life on our own.

Failure forces us to face the reality we're dependent on God. *He* has to take us through the next steps.

Both of the above approaches to failure are quotes from human authors. But the Bible reminds us that God promises to be there in all our shortcomings. In 2 Cor. 12:9 we read how God reminded Paul that, "My power is made perfect in weakness," and in Phil. 1:6 Paul reminds us that God "who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." What God started, He will finish, and we can rest in that assurance. In the end, none of us will be failures.

What we really need is not to reach certain milestones, to earn anything, or to look successful in the eyes of the world, but rather to learn that utter dependence on God. If you can let go and let God work out His plan for the world, you can trust He will bring everything to good. You can trust He knows the way even when you don't. 



COMFORT ZONE



by Barbara Braendlein

# The Evil Of Simplicity





If ever there was an idol thoroughly ripe and ready for a great heaving into eternal hell fire, it has to be the idol of simplicity.

This leapt to my attention, not for the first time, this morning when I made the grave mistake of wandering from the “Holds” section of our depraved local library and into the cookbook aisle. My sight was immediately accosted with drivel — *5 Easy Ways to Feed People So That They Will Never Ask You to Do It Again*, *Eating with No Grain and Only a Fraction of a Grimace*, and *Whole 30 to Become Half a Human*.

I might be paraphrasing.  
A little.

We are people captivated by convenience and ease, by a false simplicity. The only simplicity worth having is that simplicity we don’t want: simplicity of heart, childlike faith, accepting what our Father gives us without throwing a fit about it, because He is our dad and if He says we need it, then we do.

## EVERYTHING SPELLED OUT?

No, we have no use for true simplicity. We want systems. We want all the ways to save time, money and calories. There is a paradox here – true simplicity gives rise to perfect complexity, the sort that can be in awe of fungus that is good to eat, and in awe of the mystery of breastfeeding, the sort that can know it is worthwhile to make a thing with your own hands, and that saving time can be the most deadly waste of all. But when simplicity is the goal in and of itself, all such glorious complexity is once and for all abandoned for the sake of efficiency, of economy, of a time-saving system or technique.

Ironically, our quest for simplicity often goes hand in hand with a devotion to busyness, and thus the vicious cycle is born. You worry that if the only socialization your kids receive is at home (gah, what if they start talking like me??) and at church, such that they will grow up to be like that oddball who sings with a sign on the corners of intersections trying to get you to buy mattresses. So you sign them up for activities and sports and lessons (I wonder how many of the decisions we make as parents have their be-

ginnings in fear...). This busyness drives you to seek out ways to “maximize your time.” You meal prep – perhaps you cook one day a month and freeze it, if you are an ambitious homemaker at heart, or maybe you just buy pre-packaged meals and snacks, things that can be heated up quickly or eaten on the run. You make a detailed plan for getting all the laundry done as you seek the simple life... but true simplicity just does the wash, and thanks God for having people to dirty the clothes He gave you.

The quest for simplicity blinds us to the stunning complexity that is living.

## SIMPLE SHOULDN'T DRIVE

Don’t get me wrong – the frozen pizza is not the problem. I love frozen pizza and canned food is a gift. It is always about the heart. Simplicity is a bad master. So is complexity, for that matter. Pride creeps in on both fields and makes a mess of our enjoyments and our work.

*All well and good*, you might be saying, *but the laundry actually does need doing and I think better with a system! Without a plan, my whole house reeks of stinky socks!*

Take a breath (well, unless you haven’t been doing your laundry). This is not an indictment of planning or of systems. It is not even necessarily a criticism of trying to find the easiest, fastest, cheapest way to do things. There are good reasons for pursuing all of these goals. The evil I find is when the means becomes the end. We are a forgetful people; we build idols out of anything and everything.


## SO MUCH TO APPRECIATE

Let’s contemplate an example of what I am talking about, shall we? It is August as I write this and all the vegetables on the farm are ripe for the taking. There is tremendous abundance. I am delighted by everything about summer squash: the color of sunshine, the smooth, thin exterior, the butter-colored flesh, and a flavor mild enough to serve with anything. Our visit to the library was cut blissfully and providentially short by the knowledge that we needed to get back home in time to bake a Yukon gold potato and summer squash torte that I had prepared for

lunch. This delicious dish was new to me and I think it demonstrates the principle I am fumbling around to express. There is nothing inherently difficult or fussy about this torte. It is thinly sliced potato and squash, layered with drizzles of olive oil and a cheese and salt and pepper mixture, with green onions sprinkled throughout, baked to a golden, crispy-edged perfection. Yet it was captivating – appreciation led me to take the time to slice, to stir, to grind, to arrange, to bake. It took time and attention to use the gifts of the ultimate Husbandman well, and the result was lovely, a feast for the senses. It was not the easiest way to use the vegetables, it was not the least expensive lunch, it was in no way time saving. But there is glory in gratitude. One of the interesting side effects of offering up your time and money and effort during the preparation of a thing is that it tends to encourage a similar offering up in the receiving of the thing. A torte that took two hours to prepare (not even considering the time and effort spent in the growing of the vegetables) could certainly be scarfed down in mere moments... but it felt so natural to eat it slowly, to lift layers and perceive what the heat of the oven had accomplished in the time it was given. Simple, right?

## HIS WORLD IS FAR FROM SIMPLE

You are up to your eyeballs in the generous, way over-the-top gifts of God. And the only simple part of this gift-giving is meant to be the receiving – wide-eyed, hands clapping, laughter bubbling out of you because He did it again! He made wild things grow in the wood, He caused the carpet fibers to hold their form and be soft under your feet, He spoke flowers and hummingbirds and green lacewings into existence and taught them to dance. So sing while you work, drink your water from a pretty glass, be in awe that hair can be combed, live amazed. He has not given you the future; today’s gifts are more than enough to keep you occupied, to fill your arms and your thoughts and your affections.

This story is way too big to waste on simplicity. 



# 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](https://ReformedPerspective.ca/RoundUp).



### **What is K-Pop Demon Hunters? A primer for parents**

It's the latest "thing" – one of those cultural happenings that all the kids are talking about. The film is hardly family-time viewing, but depending on how many of your kids' classmates have already seen it, consider if you might want to watch it so you can discuss it with your own crew.

### **Why experts don't deserve automatic credibility**

"Because of disillusionment with the COVID-19 vaccines, more people are refusing to have themselves and their children inoculated with other vaccines, which over a long period of time have proven to be safer and more effective than the COVID-19 vaccines. This has led to an increase in preventable diseases such as measles, chickenpox, and polio. Rather than criticize such people as ignorant and foolish, governments and public health authorities should perhaps take a long look in the mirror to see what role they have played in this undermining of trust in the public health system."



### **Too hot to be old (10 min. read)**

There are moons, and planets, and even a former planet, that are way too hot to be 4.6 billion years old. Our solar system gives evidence of being a young one after all.

### **Guarding against a conspiracy mindset**

Conspiracies do happen – we know Satan is brilliant, and active behind the scenes working to oppose all that is good. But so often conspiracy theories are simply gossip, used by that same Enemy to tear down leaders, including godly men in the Church, based on nothing more than mind-reading, what-ifs, and connected dots that could be connected other ways too... if only we were charitably evaluating others as we want to be evaluated (Matt. 7:1).



### **Edwards vs. Spurgeon - the baptism rap battle you never knew you needed**

This is what AI can give us – a video of a rapping, axe-playing Jonathan Edwards rebutting Charles Spurgeon's case for adult baptism. Hilarious, and downright insightful too.



# Real Talk About Education

Over the last five years, Lucas Holtvluwer and Tyler Vanderwoude have been talking about the different types of Christian education – Christian schools, homeschooling, and now classical Christian schooling – and you can find all the episodes at [RealTalkPodcast.ca](https://RealTalkPodcast.ca). You can also watch those episodes on YouTube by scanning the QR codes below.



## #134 – What is Classical Christian Education?

Lucas is joined by Oakhill Christian Academy's Doug Sikkema and Jesse Newton to discuss the model and goals of Classical Christian Education, and what it does differently than traditional Reformed schooling.

## #101 – Classroom or kitchen table: should Christians homeschool?

Andrea Veldkamp, a homeschooling mom, joins Lucas to talk about her experiences, the different homeschooling resources available and yes, we even discuss homeschooling versus traditional Reformed schooling. Then in episode **#106**, Lucas, Tyler, and Jon Dykstra continue the discussion, interacting with some of this homeschooling episode's feedback.



## #1 – Christian education with Jason Heemskerk

In Real Talk's very first episode – so early on they didn't have video yet – Tyler and Lucas kick things off with Jason Heemskerk, Guido de Brès Christian High School's principal, to talk about how education is done different in the Reformed school model.



# Daily Devotionals

If you haven't already, you'll want to check out RP's two daily devotionals. Access both on the front page of [ReformedPerspective.ca](https://ReformedPerspective.ca) or through the RP App, downloadable at [ReformedPerspective.ca/App](https://ReformedPerspective.ca/App).



**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](https://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.



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

Last year, in our first ever LEGO/brick building contest, hundreds joined in. So of course we wanted to do it again!

This time the theme is **"things that aren't but should be"** – we want you to improve on whatever you want. Would your alarm clock be better if it had a coffee pot on top? Should your car have 6 wheels instead of 4? Would your cat run faster if he had rollerblades on? Our God is the Grand Inventor, and as His Image-bearers, we can echo His creativity!

## THEME: THINGS THAT AREN'T BUT SHOULD BE

Create something entirely new.

It can be functional, fun, or out-of-this-world.

### CATEGORIES:

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

**PRIZES:**  
**\$200 gift certificate**  
**towards Lego for each**  
**category**

### RULES:

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

### HOW TO ENTER:

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

**Deadline: January 20, 2026**

*RP* plans to share as many of the entries as we can online – maybe even all of them! – with some also appearing in our March/April issue, along with links to the videos.



Contest sponsored by:



– where adults get to keep building  
creative things that help this world



# A HOME TO GROW IN

## INTRODUCING OUR NEW REAL TALK STUDIO!

by Mark Penninga

There is no shortage of talk in this world, but how much of it is grounded on God's Word and willing to speak to the nitty-gritty of life?

RP's *Real Talk* podcast, which addresses the elephants in the Reformed room, is now among the less than 5% of podcasts that endure past 5 years and 100 episodes. Not only is *Real Talk* enduring, in recent months it has been blessed with some generous investments of time and capital, setting it up to thrive long-term, the Lord willing.

### GREAT CONVERSATIONS, NOW IN A GREAT STUDIO

In November, we recorded our first episode from our very own studio, nestled in the basement of Reformed Book Services in Brantford, Ontario. We are so grateful to RBS for letting us set up a home in their amazing facility!

Not only is it a new location to record from, we also built a professional studio, complete with three video cameras (for multiple angles), professional mics and lighting, and a beautiful set. This was overseen by our podcast producer Mariah Tamminga, who also does the filming/recording and publishes the episodes on YouTube and wherever you access your podcasts. In recent months, she has also been creating video clips of the podcasts for YouTube and Instagram, some of which have received hundreds of thousands of views.

It was so encouraging to see the help we received with this big project. A big thank you goes to:


- Darren Oosterhof of Wolfe Creek Contracting and George Tamminga, with the set construction,
- Ted Schouten of FastSigns, with the *Real Talk* sign,

- Ralph Vis of Bert Vis Flooring, with the carpet for sound damping,
- and Jacob Leguijt and Josiah Knor, with the sound and video testing.

### EXPLORING THE WORLD AS IT REALLY IS

The podcast is a labor of love from founders and hosts Tyler VanderWoude and Lucas Holtvluwer, who recognized the need for Christians to go beyond shallow and safe conversations to applying God's Word to the nitty-gritty of life: from marriage and infertility to home-schooling and retirement.

We are buckling down on this goal for the podcast in more recent episodes, searching out the topics that most need to be addressed in our Reformed circles, along with seeking out guests who are able to speak to these from a Christian perspective. Recent examples include adoptions, classical education, and the role of the elder and "do home visits actually work?". Our hosts are ever more intentional about asking real questions, finding real answers, and providing real direction.

Whether you are washing the dishes, going for a walk, or getting in the car, consider giving *Real Talk* a try. Go to [RealTalkPodcast.ca](http://RealTalkPodcast.ca) to listen, or search for "Reformed Real Talk" wherever you access your podcasts. 



# Reformed **PERSPECTIVE** *Store*

OVER 700 PRODUCTS  
ALREADY SOLD!!

Cozy, Beautiful & *God-Glorifying*



**STORE.REFORMEDPERSPECTIVE.CA**

## **AFFORDABLE, CANADIAN, QUALITY**

This is a non-profit store. Our goal is to see God's name honored, not to raise funds. This allows us to price the merch as low as possible, resulting in more sales and more opportunities to shine.