

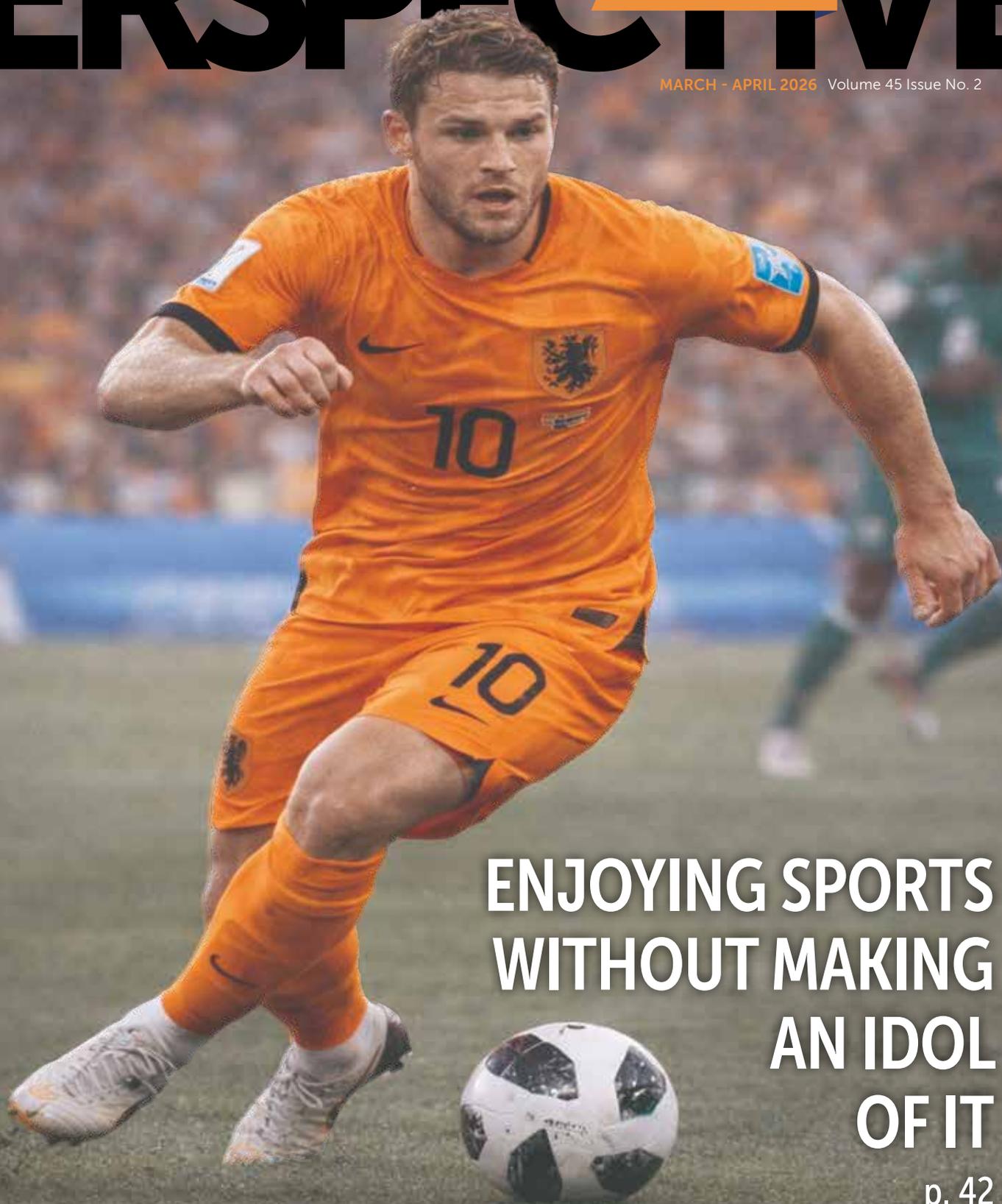
Reformed

HELPING YOU THINK, SPEAK, AND ACT IN CHRIST

PERSPECTIVE

SINCE 1982

MARCH - APRIL 2026 Volume 45 Issue No. 2



**ENJOYING SPORTS
WITHOUT MAKING
AN IDOL
OF IT**

p. 42

Not to late to join the RPBLBC

We're excited to share the winners of this year's brick building contest. Once again, we received hundreds of entries, and once again we hope that what's featured here in the magazine will motivate you to go online to watch the contestants' videos, which are a must-see! Check them out at ReformedPerspective.ca/bricks2026.

Reformed Perspective's Bucket List Book Club (the RPBLBC for short!) had its first two Zoom call meetings of the year (with 100+ participants) and it is never too late to join in. Our next call is March 28, and for the month of March we're reading Henry Cloud's *Necessary Endings*, a self-improvement book that has application to business and far beyond. Do you know anyone who has been in a dating relationship for years that doesn't seem to be going anywhere but they're reluctant to walk away because they've invested so much time in it already? Has one of your kids felt pressured to play some online game every day to keep up their "streak"? Do you know someone who is invested in a political party that doesn't represent their values at all, but they stick with it because they've been involved for years? Or have you ever regretted sinking a couple thousand dollars into your beater car only to have it blow out a different part of the engine? Loyalty is generally a good thing, and Christians understand that better than the world, but that

may leave us a little vulnerable to sticking with things even when they aren't fruitful. So *Necessary Endings* is a book worth your time! Go to ReformedPerspective.ca/BLBC, or scan the QR code below, to find out how to join our next Zoom call, and get more information on other books we'll be reading this year.



Finally, we're trying to figure out what limits we should have on AI pictures. Our internal rule is that illustrations can be AI crafted or enhanced, and news photos can't be. But are our readers aware of that difference? So, for example, readers will understand that the Scrooge illustration on page 12 is not real and is used for illustrative purposes. But what about the cover picture, created with AI, of a generic sports figure, so as to not accidentally impugn any real player as a sports "idol"? Is that tricking people or a smart usage? We'd love to hear your thoughts on where the line should be. Please send them on in to editor@ReformedPerspective.ca.

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WHEN SPORTS IS AN IDOL

Eric Liddell shows us how to enjoy sports & keep it in its place

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READERS' RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR:

I wanted to share my thankfulness to everyone at Reformed Perspective who give of their time and talents to publish a great magazine every two months. By God's good Grace, this happens, through and by His Will and pleasure.

I was excited to find a copy of the newest edition in my church mailbox yesterday. I have been reading through it this evening and paid particular attention to the article entitled, "When God goes to war" by Rev. Rob Schouten. This resonated deeply for me as I have recently been discussing the very issue that Rob pointed out in his opening remarks about how our churches have been leaning towards Grace and not focusing on God's righteous judgment.

When I was a child growing up in Niagara-area Canadian Reformed churches, I recall vividly many more sermons about God's wrath and our need for repentance. I recall the fear I had from those sermons. Fear of disobedience and fear of angering our Holy God. I do not hear this anymore. Certainly, every Sunday morning we hear God's Law and are reminded that this is a mirror we can use to judge our own lives against the Holy Law. There is no doubt that we are consistently called to repent. But the sermons seem, for lack of better terms, to not bring the fire and brimstone. This article does an excellent job of reminding its readers that God, while infinitely patient, will bring judgment to those who constantly defy His Will. Thank you for this reminder! To Him be all the glory!

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A BUSINESS TITHE ON SALES?

Not a requirement, but what an opportunity!

by Bruce Deboer

Every sale has a story and an opportunity behind it.

- Someone trusted you and chose your product or service.
- And as believers, we know something deeper still is happening, that every sale is God's providence, His care being displayed to us.

So how should a believer respond to God's providence? The answer is simple: gratitude – biblical gratitude.

And one way to express that gratitude is through a business tithe. Now Scripture does not say, “businesses must tithe.” Even in the Old Testament the tithe requirement was on individuals, not business entities.

The tithe command is not directly repeated in the New Testament, so it might well be part of the ceremonial law that is no longer binding. Yet the absence of a tithe requirement does not mean the absence of direction. We are still to give, and joyously! The Bible consistently shifts the focus from obligation to intention, reminding believers that giving is not meant to be done “reluctantly or under compulsion” but as a deliberate act of faith (2 Cor. 9:7).

STEWARDS, NOT OWNERS

What does that look like in practice? It starts with moving from gratitude, being thankful for the sale, to recognizing the opportunity it presents and converting it into stewardship.

The dominant biblical framework for money is stewardship. Like the servants given money to invest in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), a business owner is entrusted with capital, people, and opportunity, none of which ultimately belong to them. Giving from business increase, therefore, is not about meeting a quota but acknowledging God's ownership over what has been entrusted.

Scripture also teaches us to give of our first fruits to honor God as our first priority: “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your produce” (Prov. 3:9). For business owners, this must be expressed wisely and often in a calculated, budgeted way. Sometimes planning is thought to be too deliberate, and consequently not joyous enough – that maybe there is a lack of faith to not give as you feel led in the moment.

But planning generosity is not a lack of faith; it is intentional worship that balances faithfulness with responsibility to employees, customers, and the long-term health of the business.

TITHING ON THE SALE

So what does it look like to convert our gratitude into stewardship?

I will offer up some details on one approach I like very much.

It involves creating a business model with tithing built right into it at the very beginning.

More specifically, it involves tithing the sale *as it comes in*, rather than waiting to year's end to see what profit is left over.

I think this better reflects a heart posture of faith, gratitude, and honor. The full sale represents the true increase God provides, while profit is simply what remains after human calculations and expenses.

By giving first from the sale as it comes in, we acknowledge that everything – costs, opportunities, and provision – comes from Him. Tithing on the sale is an act of trust that declares God, and not our profit margins, is our Source. It's a way of putting God *first*, not just giving Him what's left.

In essence, what this approach says is, “Lord, this business belongs to You.” Not at the end of the year, not when the numbers feel safe, but from day one, from the moment the business begins until it is sold or transferred to the next generation.

WORKING IT OUT – UNDERSTANDING NET MARGIN

To show how this might work out practically, let's start with considering the concept of “net margin.” Net margin is what a business keeps after all expenses, such as payroll, supplies, and services. It's calculated with this formula:

$$\text{Net Margin (\%)} = \frac{\text{Net Profit}}{\text{Revenue}} \times 100$$

For example, if a company earns \$100,000 in sales and, after expenses, has \$10,000 left, its net margin is 10%. This means the business keeps 10 cents of every dollar earned. You can figure

out your net margin for the last year, or, if your accounting is very tight, you can figure out your net margin for the last quarter.

Then, instead of tithing from profit at year's end, you give 10% of the net margin – essentially a percentage of total sales – throughout the year. For instance, if your business has a net margin of 20%, you would give 2% of sales; if your net margin is 15%, you give 1.5%.

The key is that giving isn't from profit or leftovers; it's from the sales God provides in real time. Again, it's about honoring the Lord with our first fruits. Giving of our leftovers doesn't require faith, but giving from our first fruits does. And when we give first, it will reshape everything we do and think: how we spend, how we grow, and how we lead. The question shifts from, "What can we afford to give?" to "What has God already entrusted to us?"

HOW THIS WORKS IN PRACTICE

Let's make it practical.

Imagine if, last year, your sales were \$1.2 million, and your business operated at a 10% net margin. Then, if you were committed to giving 1% of sales, that equals \$12,000 for the year. Breaking it down monthly, with sales averaging \$100,000 per month, 1% is \$1,000 per month. Then each month, you'd distribute \$500 to the kingdom and save \$500 for future needs.

Why save half? God brings needs throughout the year. Saving allows us to respond immediately when a family is in crisis, support a ministry mid-year, or meet any need He places in front of us. At year-end, the remaining balance is distributed in full. This approach removes stress, eliminates debate, and keeps guilt out of the process. Tithing this way doesn't limit growth, it refines it. Generosity keeps us grateful, and gratitude keeps us disciplined.

Sometimes business owners get caught up trying to forecast God's provision, as if we must predict exactly what He will provide or when. The reason we save half each month isn't about forecasting God – it's about being faithful and wise stewards of what He has al-

ready entrusted to us, ready to respond when needs arise.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The heart of this isn't about rules or earning God's favor, or working this out the exact same way my company has to plan its giving – it's about recognition. Who provides your work? Who owns your business? And ultimately, who are you really working for? When every sale is seen as a gift from God, we naturally don't want to waste it. We steward it, honor Him with it, and He multiplies it.

When provision is treated casually and we give only from leftovers, our spending can follow the same pattern: extra lunches, convenience purchases, upgrading vehicles too soon, or not seeking efficiency. Committing to a business tithe recenters our hearts, reminding us that everything comes from God and should be managed with gratitude and intentionality. Personally, I believe that a 1% tithe on sales naturally encourages efficiency, which can grow a net 10% margin to 11% or 12% over time.

Jesus rarely spoke in percentages but frequently addressed trust. Giving is meant to loosen money's grip as a source of security and control. While no verse says, "Business owners must tithe," Scripture consistently calls believers to honor God through stewardship, generosity, justice, and trust. When giving flows from these principles, it fulfills the heart of biblical teaching, even without a mandated number.

TITHING THAT MAKES THINGS POSSIBLE

Let me conclude with two pictures for your mind's eye.

The first is a man, let's call him Bob. Bob comes to your shop every other day to vacuum up the sawdust. He lives in a supported residential home for adults with limitations. From a purely business perspective, Bob isn't your most efficient choice; an assistant would get it done quicker and cheaper. But Bob doesn't come just to vacuum; he comes to work, to contribute. God uses Bob to remind us that people are people, that He made

them all, and He provides for them too.

The second picture is a widowed woman in your community whose back fence had been knocked over in a windstorm. She couldn't afford repairs. Because your generosity was pre-decided through the 1% tithe on your sales, you didn't hesitate. You showed up, served her, and took care of her, a tithe of service. You may never know all the prayers she had been lifting, but God always provides.

When planned, these acts of generosity can be part of your 1% of sales, Spirit-led, and used to meet needs where God places them. Neither of these moments will show up on financial statements, but both exist because God entrusted us to honor Him with our first fruits, not leftovers.

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

When we tie giving to sales, generosity becomes automatic. Every sale becomes an opportunity to steward God's provision, giving every dollar purpose and making every business decision an act of worship. Churches and charities benefit from steady month-to-month funding, and there's no stress at year-end. Cash flow remains consistent, and we can respond immediately when needs arise – whether it's someone like Bob or a widow in your community.

Stewardship brings joy, as we see God's kingdom at work through what He provides. When we give first and consistently, God multiplies the impact far beyond what we can measure. That is the power of a business tithe: thankfulness in action. The challenge is clear – push your company to grow from 1% to 2%, 3%, or even 4%, and watch how God multiplies faithful generosity. 

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.’” – Mal. 3:10

Bruce Deboer is the RP Board chairman, and a partner in Ontario Metal Products.

NEWS IN *Perspective*

TWO COVID CONVICTIONS AGAINST PASTOR KOOPMAN VACATED

BY MARK PENNINGA AND JON DYKSTRA



Four years after the fact, two of more than 20 Covid-era convictions against Rev. John Koopman, pastor of the Chilliwack Free Reformed Church, have now been vacated, which is to say, undone.

Pastor Koopman was charged for taking part in worship services in 2020 and 2021, at a time when the province's Health Officer imposed a

complete ban on in-person worship services, even while bars, gyms, and other secular establishments were allowed to stay open. The Chilliwack Free Reformed Church opened their doors for worship, while complying with all of the other public health orders such as social distancing and masking.

The church then joined a couple of other churches in launching

a constitutional challenge to the Health Order. They were represented in court by the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (JCCF); as they reported it, another issue at play was religious discrimination:

"Pastor Koopman and other pastors then submitted an accommodation request to the BC Provincial Health Office to gather for in-person services, but their request received no response for several weeks. At the same time, Dr. Henry's office had been responding within one or two days to accommodation requests from Orthodox Synagogues, permitting them to gather indoors."

The lower court dismissed the churches' challenge in March of 2021 in part, the JCCF reports, because the churches had just been allowed to gather outdoors. Meanwhile the charges against the pastors and the churches continued on. They faced \$40,000 in fines. Many of these charges were later dropped or reduced, but Pastor Koopman was convicted of others, most recently as of Feb. 2025.

Now two of those convictions have been vacated but based on technicalities, rather than a real assessment of what happened. As the JCCF noted:

"While the correction resolved a technical error in the court record, it did not address the broader constitutional concerns raised about the ban on in-person worship services and the unequal treatment of faith communities during lockdowns."

Pastor Koopman was also grateful for the Crown's acknowledgement of error:

"Dr. Henry and the government should carefully evaluate their entire approach, for this is only one of many errors which were made, the greatest of which is the restriction of the public worship of our God."



COURT RULES THAT EMERGENCIES ACT AGAINST “FREEDOM CONVOY” WAS UNLAWFUL

BY MARK PENNINGA

Four years ago, in February 2022, Canada’s federal government invoked the Emergencies Act for the first time since it was enacted back in 1988, granting itself extraordinary powers to break up the truckers’ convoy that assembled in Ottawa and elsewhere to protest Covid policies.

By invoking the Act, the government received the power to prohibit citizens from assembling, as well as freeze bank accounts of those involved in the protests, and even ban and freeze crowdfunding, among other measures.

In January of this year, the country’s Federal Court of Appeal made a unanimous decision, agreeing with the lower court ruling from 2024, that the government had not been legally justified in making use of the Emergencies Act.

The court ruled that the protests “fell well short of a threat to national security.” The court also found there simply wasn’t sufficient evidence to back up the government’s claim that the convoy posed a threat of serious violence.

“When all these legal and factual considerations are taken into

account, we fail to see how the [Governor General in Council] could ‘reasonably believe’ that a threat to national security existed at the time the decision to invoke the Act was made.”

This decision is a good example of why civil governments need checks and balances on themselves, given our sinful human condition – and particularly a check on the age-old thirst for more power. The legislative and executive branches require the accountability and safeguards that are supposed to come from the Constitution, through the oversight of the judicial branch.

For Christians, obeying the Romans 13 command to “be subject to the governing authorities” isn’t as simple as submitting to whatever the Prime Minister or Governor General orders in a given moment. In this case, it was the Prime Minister and Governor General that were acting illegally, and not the private citizens – the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian Constitution Foundation, among others – who successfully challenged them in court.

US ABORTIONS ROSE 20+% AFTER ROE OVERTURNED

BY JON DYKSTRA

In 2022 the *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court decision, which had legalized abortion in the US for the past previous 50 years, was overturned. But the overturned decision didn’t actually protect the unborn – it just made it legal for the individual states to start doing so.

Some did start. But the Trump administration allowed Joe Biden-era “abortion by mail” prescriptions to continue, and this kind of abortion has exploded since 2022, rising from 80,000/month then, to 98,000/month in 2025.

This increase highlights how it isn’t just a legal ruling we need to save the unborn, and not even a somewhat sympathetic government, as the American pro-life movement has in the Trump administration.

What’s been largely missing from the abortion debate is an explicitly Christian witness. Like in every aspect of life, what we need here is the Gospel. Why do the unborn deserve the same protection under the law as those who are born? It comes down to two questions:

- Where does human worth come from?
- On what basis are we all equal?

The world struggles answering either, but usually focuses on our abilities. The unborn fetus is said to be less valuable, because they can do less. But, by that logic, bigger, smarter, stronger people should have more rights. And even the world knows that’s not right. Men are not better even though they are stronger.

What makes us all valuable, and equally so, is the only thing we all equally share: that we are made in the very Image of God. That’s what it says in the very first book of the Bible, in Genesis 1:27, where we read:

“So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.”



EXPLICIT BOOKS BEING PULLED FROM SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN ALBERTA

BY MARK PENNINGA

In the wake of a government order that made waves around the world in 2025, the two largest school divisions in Alberta reported in early 2026 that they have started pulling books with sexually explicit images.

According to CTV, the Edmonton Public School Board reported that they have removed 34 titles while the Calgary Board of Education said that 44 titles have been removed from shelves in their schools. Sadly, even the Edmonton Catholic School Division reported that they had to remove six books.

Last summer, a Ministerial Order was introduced, requiring school boards to develop standards around what materials are deemed suitable for school libraries. This was the result of a consultation with the public, including 77,395 responses to an online survey.

As a result of the order, the Edmonton Public School Board identified over 200 titles as having to be pulled because of the government's sexually explicit content policy, and their list included well-known, often-discussed classics like *1984* and *Brave New World*. This resulted in a public outcry that was covered by media outlets around the world. Premier Danielle Smith turned to X and Facebook to respond:

"I'm going to be more explicit than usual so there is no misunderstanding this policy:

1. Get graphic pornographic images out of school libraries.
2. Leave the classics on the shelves.
3. We all know the difference between the items in 1 and 2. Let's not play any more games in implementing this policy for our kids."

The provincial government did then amend its order to target only visual depictions of explicit sexual activity.

It has been known for many years now that graphic sexual content is being pushed in public school libraries, along with children's sections of public libraries, in towns and cities across the country.

This has been going on even while our secular culture is grappling with the consequences of hypersexualization of youth. Even the Quebec government, known for pushing a radical secular worldview, recently published a report about "hypersexualization" that noted:

"the huge amount of sexual content that is publicly available generates a distorted understanding of gender

relationships, beginning at a very early age."

They added:

"hypersexualization can lead to precocious sexual behaviour among young people. Fascinated by the images they see on television and the Internet, they sometimes adopt behaviours borrowed from adult sexuality without having the maturity required to deal with the situations that may result."

In spite of the obvious harm, Alberta is the only government in Canada that has had the courage to take action, and even their decision continues to allow sexually explicit content in the reach of the province's vulnerable youth.

God is being loving to us in giving us the gift of sexuality, while placing safeguards around sex: a committed lifelong relationship of marriage between a man and a woman. As a fence around a swimming pool allows a family to enjoy the pool safely, so God's safeguards around sex allow sex to be a blessing, first for married couples, but indirectly for the flourishing of children and all society.

Photo supplied by the Alberta Government and used with permission.

WHEN REPORTING BOTH SIDES IS BIAS DISGUISED

BY JON DYKSTRA



When Alberta's government began, last year, to respond to the problem of sexually-explicit materials on public school library shelves, it might have seemed to some that the media coverage was fair. After all, both sides were given space to have their say.

So, for example, when CBC ran the headline, "Alberta bans school library books it deems sexually explicit," it stated as fact that the government was banning books – how's that for politically-charged terminology? – but they did include, in a smaller sub-head, that the "Education minister says province's new standards aren't about banning books."

Not quite equal time, but... fair-ish, right?

In CBC reporter Emily Williams' piece "*The Handmaid's Tale* among more than 200 books to be pulled at Edmonton public schools" she shared the public schools' objection: "As a result of the ministerial order, several excellent books will be removed from our shelves this fall."

But Williams also included Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis' response that his government wasn't trying to ban *The Handmaid's Tale*, but was instead trying to get sexually-explicit content off public school shelves.

So, both sides, right?

Well, as Christian journalist Ted Byfield noted, there's not just two sides to the story. And one of the sides the media didn't report on here is telling, and much more important than what they focused on.

Williams' article included the list of the 200+ books the Edmonton Public School (EPS) system said they were going to have to pull off their shelves to comply with the government's mandate. This wasn't a list the government made; this was the list the EPS made and then used to characterize the government's efforts as book banning – going after famed and problematic classics like *Brave New World*, *Atlas Shrugged* and, yes, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Still, EPS's list was there, available for anyone interested to peruse. And isn't that what reporters do? Peruse, investigate, uncover? Well, some perusing was done, but almost exclusively in one direction. CBC and other outlets reported on the aforementioned famous books that made the government look like book banners.

But what reporters didn't do is look into how much filth there actually was on the list. The press didn't look for books that'd confirm the need for winnowing. They didn't question why the public schools were being so negligent as to expose our children to pornography. They didn't highlight the outrageous examples of available comics that had pages of nudity, graphically depicted oral sex, showed a child being stripped for abuse, and showed another being sexually humiliated. Those details were made available by the Minister of Education, but they didn't show up in any of mainstream media accounts I read.

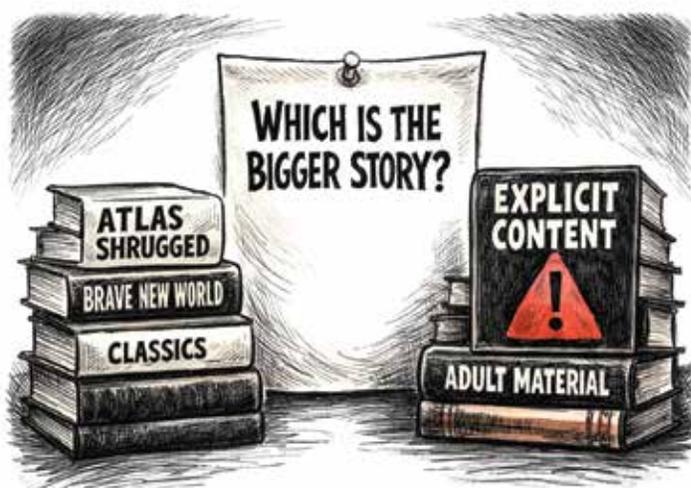
So I did some of the work they wouldn't, checking up on the list's first 25 books as they were presented alphabetically. I discovered that 15 were clearly and wildly inappropriate. These were all books that, had they been read aloud or shown at a public school board meeting, would likely have gotten the presenting parent booted. The 15 books were:

- 9 books from Kanoko Sakurakoji's *Black Bird* manga series
- Kentaro Miura's graphic novel *Berserk, Vol. 3*
- Talia Hibbert's *Act Your Age, Eve Brown*
- Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*
- Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*
- Daria Snadowsky's *Anatomy of a Boyfriend*
- Emily Henry's *Beach Read*

15 out of 25 amounts to 60%. And that's just the titles that were clearly crazy, with secular reviewers describing them as "rapey" and "sexually obsessed." The other 10 weren't necessarily good either; it was just that in my research it wasn't as clear that they were so blaringly bad.

The mainstream media made this about the 5 or 6 "classics" at risk. I don't know if that 60% rate would have held up, but if so, that would have amounted to more than 100 obscene books – 60% of 226 works out to 135– being pushed on kids via the province's public school libraries. Where were the "Edmonton Public Schools own up to being porn-peddlers" headlines?

While Christians should attempt to be fair – reporting on others as we would want to be covered ourselves (Matt. 7:12) – *Reformed Perspective* doesn't pretend to be unbiased. We have our bias firmly in place: the Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. And with that bias comes a different sort of way of looking at the world, where teachers and schools entrusted with acting *in loco parentis* – acting in the place of parents – should, like a parent, be eager to protect the children in their care. That was the story here. And that was the story that was almost entirely missed by the mainstream media.



4 OUT OF 5 CANADIANS GIVE LIKE SCROOGE

BY MARK PENNINGA

The Fraser Institute's "Generosity Index" for 2025 revealed that a scant 0.52% of all income is being donated to charities. To add to this, the percentage of tax-filing Canadians that donate to charity has dropped dramatically in just a decade, from an already miserly 21.9% in 2013 to just 16.8% in 2023.

Manitoba stands at the top of the paltry hill, with 18.7% of tax-filers donating. Nunavut takes home the provincial Scrooge award, with only 5.1% of tax-filers giving some of their income to charity.

"What is most striking about these trends is that the extent of charitable giving fell in every Canadian jurisdiction" explained the authors of the report. They also noted that Americans give more than twice as much of their aggregate income to charity.

The Globe and Mail's Jason Kirby wrote that:

"between 2013 and 2023 the national net worth of households soared by 50 per cent after adjusting for inflation, owing to real estate and stock market gains, according to an analysis of Statscan's balance sheet data."

In other words, this precipitous generosity drop isn't simply because Canadians are becoming poorer – overall we are wealthier, at least on paper.

The worldview implications beneath this story become clear when combined with a report from Imagine Canada that found that 9 out of 10 charitable donors attend a religious service weekly. Scripture tells us that "we love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Christians understand that everything belongs to God, and the possessions He gives us are not ours



to keep but ours to steward. Because He loved us, we love those around us, and demonstrate this love also in our charitable giving.

COURT CASE SEEKS TO FORCE RELIGIOUS GROUPS TO PROVIDE EUTHANASIA

BY MARK PENNINGA

Providence Health Care, a Roman Catholic organization, is being challenged in a BC court for not providing euthanasia in their facilities.

The same activist group that spearheaded state-sanctioned killing in Canada, launched yet another constitutional challenge to expand euthanasia. This time, its sights are on health facilities run by religious groups.

Providence operates St. Paul's

hospital, in downtown Vancouver. It has been exempt from having to provide euthanasia, on the basis of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms' guarantee of freedom of religion – Providence wants the freedom to practice medicine according to their Catholic convictions. Christians both know euthanasia is murder – a theft from God of a life He created and only He is entitled to take (Gen. 9:6) – so we should never commit this evil against anyone entrusted to

our care. The killing-not-caring activists are now arguing that since Providence gets public funding they should have to allow outside euthanasia doctors into

every part of their facilities to do the killings that Providence won't. They're demanding that murder-as-medicine be perpetrated here too, even in a hospital dedicated to honoring God's precious gift of life.

Their court challenge comes even after the BC government expropriated property from the Catholic hospital in 2023 to build a killing center right next to the hospital. But that isn't enough for the pro-death lobby, which intends to see religious groups like Providence carry out the killings in their own facilities.

"This case will decide whether or not religiously affiliated healthcare institutions can continue to exist in Canada," noted Alex Schadenberg, Executive Director of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition.

Photo of St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver is by Joe Mabel, and used under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license.



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Blessed are the Caregivers

FOR THEY WILL BE GIVEN CARE

by Mark Penninga



Zach ran hard as a little guy.
He's running just as hard now.

Zach (pictured with Megan)
always had a smile on his face
when he was in the mountains.





Although we don't get a diploma and cap, many of us graduate from the role of caregiver when our youngest child spreads their wings and leaves our home.

For Ed and Alice Hoogerdyk, their caregiving journey began in 2000, when God blessed them with their one and only child: Zach. Two decades later, shortly after Zach spread his wings and became engaged to a wonderful girl named Megan, a sudden illness and anoxic brain injury changed everything. Ed and Alice were called back to full-time caregiving.

Ed and Alice aren't alone. Ed shared that 160,000 Canadians sustain brain injuries each year and a quarter of older adults are family caregivers, with projections that this will increase significantly in our lifetime.

Although we may have other plans for our lives, the LORD's plan is sovereign. We then must decide whether we will run alongside the Zachs in our lives, or run away from them.

A STRING BEAN BECOMES A MAN

Ed and Alice were married on August 1st, 1998. Ed was a school teacher, and after they married, took a position in Alice's hometown of Carman, Manitoba. On July 23, 2000, God blessed them with the joy of their life: a healthy boy whom they named Zach. Two years later, they moved to Calgary as Ed took on a new role as school principal, and they have made that city home since then.

Zach was shy. "He didn't leave my side," said Alice. She tried to make him more social, but he preferred to stay close and sit on her lap. Someone from her church reminded her to treasure this time, because it doesn't come back. "He

wasn't Mr. Popular in the class. You could tell he was an only child," she added.

But he had a caring heart, looking out for kids who were left out. This carried on as he became a teen and then a young adult. He despised cliques and was intentional about spending time with young people on the margins. Although he wouldn't have put the label on himself, Zach was a caregiver.

As he grew, so did his love for sports, particularly ball hockey, and then running. He got his love of running from watching Ed. "He came to all my races, or most of them," said Ed. "The next thing you know, he starts running. His goal was to beat my best running times."

As a young adult, Zach got his friends off their couches, organizing activities like skiing and, you guessed it, running races.

He didn't know what he was going to do as a career until he met a gentleman at a school career fair who pointed him to the masonry trade. "He went for an interview, and as he drove off all the other guys at the masonry industry laughed and said, "That kid ain't gonna last a week. He's such a little string bean," Ed shared. But Zach ended up flourishing in the trade, to the point that, when his boss had to downsize his crew from 40 to 5 not long after hiring him, Zach made the cut.

Ed reflects that this was a stage where the whole family was thriving: Alice was enjoying her job as a controller at a construction and building supply company, Ed was experiencing a "whole new lease on life" with a position as Grassroots Director of ARPA Canada, and Zach was flourishing in his new career as a brick layer, with a boss commenting that "people like you come only once every 25 years."

That is also when Zach met Megan at a young adults' conference in Calgary on a February long weekend. The two clicked, and in due time they were engaged, looking forward to a life together.

But the LORD had different plans.

FROM FULL OF LIFE TO LIFE-SUPPORT

In March of 2024, Zach made a trip to Megan's hometown of Winnipeg. When he left, he had a really sore throat and was losing his voice. Ed encouraged him to go to the doctor, but Zach didn't think it was necessary.

"We dropped him off [at the airport], and I still have the vision of him walking through the doors, pulling his little carry-on," recalled Ed.

That was the last time they saw him walking.

Zach spent the weekend at the home of Ed's brother and sister-in-law, but he wasn't getting better. On Monday, Megan took him to a clinic, but by that point he could hardly walk out of the house. From the clinic he went straight to critical care in the hospital, and immediately needed assistance with his breathing.

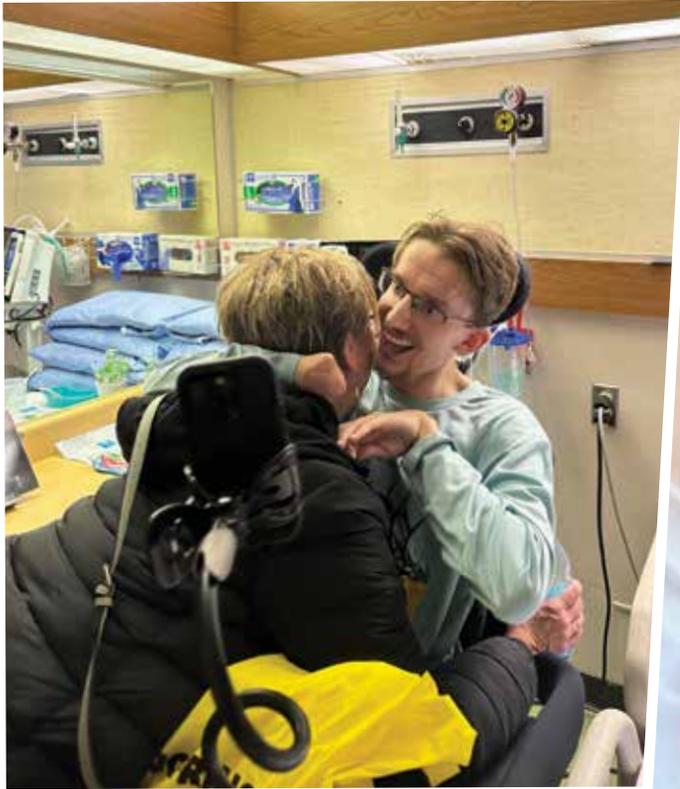
At this point, Alice was at home in Calgary, unaware of any issues, and Ed was just starting a two-week speaking tour in southern Ontario. Megan let them know that Zach was checked into the hospital, and Alice was able to talk with Zach on the phone. He told her he was all right, would likely stay overnight, but would be just fine.

An hour later a phone call came that Zach had just had a cardiac arrest. Alice immediately went to the airport and was able to catch a flight to Winnipeg because it was delayed. Ed dropped everything and joined her at the hospital soon after. The news they received wasn't good. "The doctor put his hand on my shoulder and Megan's and told us to prepare for the possibility that Zach may lose his life."

Ed and Alice later learned that Zach was going through a combination of strep pneumonia, influenza A, septic shock, bacterial infection, and then the cardiac arrest.

The following hours were a blur of medical care, as the team worked hard to get Zach's temperature down and his

He won't let go of his mama!



Having a good laugh with his pappy.

oxygen up. They packed bags of ice all over his body.

"I still sometimes do it where I go to my phone and scroll up to the 2024 pictures," shared Ed. "When you look at March, I'm at this gig and that gig. It's all go, and lots of hype, and all of a sudden there's a picture of Zach laying in this bed."

"Your whole life perspective changes in a second," added Alice. "You hear stories from other people. You don't know what it's like until you have it yourself."

Although their life changed in a blink, their Foundation didn't.

"It's amazing. Amazing how the Lord held us up through all of that," Alice testified. She proceeded to share how they were surrounded by loving care from family, friends, and the church community. "It was always just at the right time to build you up again."

The nurses and others asked "how are you handling this?" To this they replied: "Only by the grace of God."

In the proceeding days, weeks, and months, as Zach's life hung in the balance, there were points when Ed and Alice asked the LORD to spare him from further suffering and take him home. Zach was still on the ventilator, intubated, and endured multiple instances of septic shock.

Eventually his hand was amputated, followed by both his feet. He hadn't spoken since the cardiac arrest, and it was difficult to know the extent of his brain injury and how aware he was of what was happening around him. But when they wheeled him off to surgery to have his feet amputated, Zach was very emotional.

Through this journey the family kept loved ones updated through a blog, titled "Running with Zach." It didn't take long

before countless people from across the country were journeying with them, reading the health updates, meditations, and accompanying Scripture verses, praying for Zach and his loved ones.

A NEW CALLING

It wasn't just Zach's life that changed, Ed and Alice were given a new calling: caregiver.

Ed knew very quickly that he couldn't carry on with his job, as it required him to travel regularly. He recalled calling his boss and informing him that "it's obvious to me that this is my new calling. It's as simple as that." Alice, meanwhile, was able to carry on with her bookkeeping work, as it could be done remotely.

Ed admits that they went through some dark valleys in the weeks and months following the hospitalization. "But when the



First trip back to the mountains since the injury.



A successful physio session sitting up in the prone position.

time came, we had to be up at Zach's unit and be there for him."

And just like the early years when he needed his mom close by, Zach needed them in the same way now. "If he needed to get changed, or any kind of care, he needed one of us there," shared Ed. When Zach no longer received one-on-one medical care, he needed Ed or Alice to be close by. "So, we took turns sleeping in his room. And he definitely needed it. He would look, to make sure I wasn't leaving, then he would lay down and sleep."

When Zach's health stabilized, it took Ed and Alice some time to find a good care home for their son in Calgary, as some of the care homes for "young adults" (under age 55) were sketchy, filled with rough music, rough language, and even drug trading.

The Hoogerdyks found something

special at AgeCare Seton, particularly with the staff. "If you want to learn about care from a culture, look to the Filipino culture. These people get care. They just live care. Young or old," explained Ed. "They love Zach and a lot of them go to church. They talk about God and faith."

Zach also receives great care from the rehabilitation he is getting at the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured (ARBI). "It is a great place. The team is very, very caring," Ed commented.

"He's gained a lot of muscle back," Alice said. "I can't put my fingers around his arm anymore. He can 'beat us up,' and he takes great joy in that." Lately, Alice has been challenging Zach to give better hugs, and he squeezes her hard, "laughing his head off." "That's not good, Zach," she responds. "That is not loving your mother," she jokes and then Zach

responds with a laugh.

Although he remains non-verbal, Zach is now using a tablet to communicate with his caregivers.

"The best time of each day is 4:30-5:00, giving him supper, until we leave between 8:30 or 9:00," explained Ed. "It is almost as if the family memories are all back. You can say certain sayings we used to say at home and he starts to laugh. So he is in a good mood, with lots of laughs." They always read a devotional together and pray before leaving for the night. "He is dialed in when you're reading. I try to keep my finger on the words."

He is also able to make it to church some Sundays. "He is listening," Alice explained. She gave an example of the pastor sharing a one-liner joke and "Zach was even laughing without prompt, where it's like he sort of gets it."

BLESSED IS HE WHO CONSIDERS THE POOR

Ed and Alice testified that their loving Father has been caring for them every step of the way. “God gives you strength for every day. Not for the next year, not for the next.... No, he gives it for today. It is a real thing,” emphasized Alice.

Both Ed and Alice see God’s hand particularly in how He prepared Ed for this new role with his recent career. A lot of Ed’s work was related to protection for the vulnerable. The transition was from advocating for this protection, to actually providing it themselves.

But the work experience had deeper application. It didn’t take long and Ed was convicted, particularly through a family member, to advocate for other caregivers through setting up a platform called “Running for Zach” (Running-ForZach.ca). “We aren’t the only ones doing this. There is a brain injury every

three minutes in Canada and it is the leading cause of disability and death in adults under the age of 35. There is a real, real need.”

Ed pointed particularly to Psalm 41:1: “Blessed is he who considers the poor.” He explained that the word “poor” means much more than those without financial means. It is the vulnerable, the weak, those who can’t help themselves.

“To consider the poor means to pay close attention to them and then to spend significant time and energy changing their lives.” Always one for a quip, Ed proceeded to connect this Psalm to a quote from Dr. Seuss: “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not!”

This goes beyond the Zachs of the world. “We are all vulnerable in one way, shape, or form. We’re all weak. The church should be a haven of caregivers

and a haven for caregivers. It should be caregiving central.”

I asked Ed and Alice how we, as a church community, can better care for caregivers. Ed said the first step is to overcome the fear of approaching and speaking with the caregivers. “It’s fear. Fear that you are going to say something stupid, fear that you are going to cry. If you are exiting church, don’t try to find a different route to bypass the caregiver.”

“Quit stewing too much over ‘I’m not sure what to say’ or ‘I’m not sure what to do.’ Doing something or saying something is better than nothing.” He added that “if you can go to the fellowship hall and talk to somebody about your fishing trip the previous week, surely you can go to a caregiver and find out what’s going on in their lives.”

Ed and Alice are grateful to be part of a church community where the leadership led by example in this regard, with



Never takes hugs for granted.



The RunningforZach cap. Repping the cause.

an elder or deacon coming to visit them every week. Ironically, it has often been the elder or deacon who leaves feeling lifted up.

KION FOUNDATION

Ed is now working on building a charitable organization called “The Kion Foundation.” Kion means pillar, and the foundation hopes to be a pillar of hope for families navigating acquired brain injuries.

Beyond awareness, the goal is to help fill the care gap between a hospital discharge and home, providing things like centralized therapy and support spaces for caregivers to go to and receive help.

Ed shared that it would take 2.8 million full-time equivalent workers to replace the 5.7 billion unpaid hours that family caregivers provide each year in Canada. That is a lot of people, including Christians, who are humbly serving outside the

medical system. They need support.

The Kion Foundation’s board includes Ed’s brother-in-law, Ed Tams, an entrepreneur, as well as Dr. Stephen Neal; Alisa Lieuwen, whose brother was diagnosed with a rare neurological condition that resulted in him becoming quadriplegic and non-verbal; and Wanda Knol, a business owner and volunteer serving the vulnerable.

DESIGNED TO BE A BURDEN

Although we can look forward to a world without the effects of sin, we can trust that God has a good purpose for where we find ourselves today. That includes the burdens He gives us.

Ed quoted pastor and theologian John Stott: “We all are designed to be a burden to others. You are designed to be a burden to me, and I am designed to be a burden to you.” Instead of doing everything possible to run from these burdens,

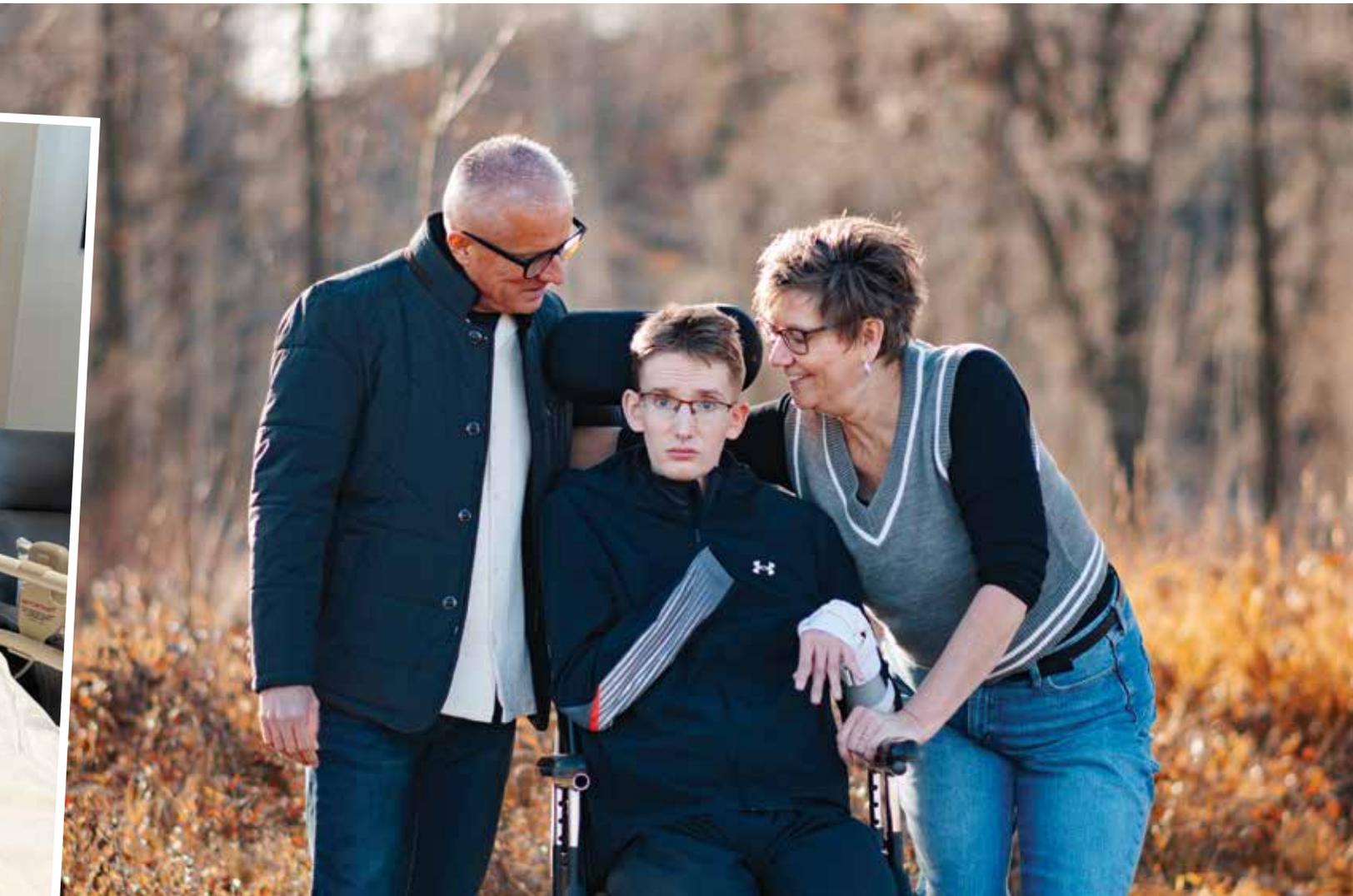
we can take to heart our LORD’s calling to “carry each other’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).

Zach isn’t running like he used to. But he is running the race marked out for him.

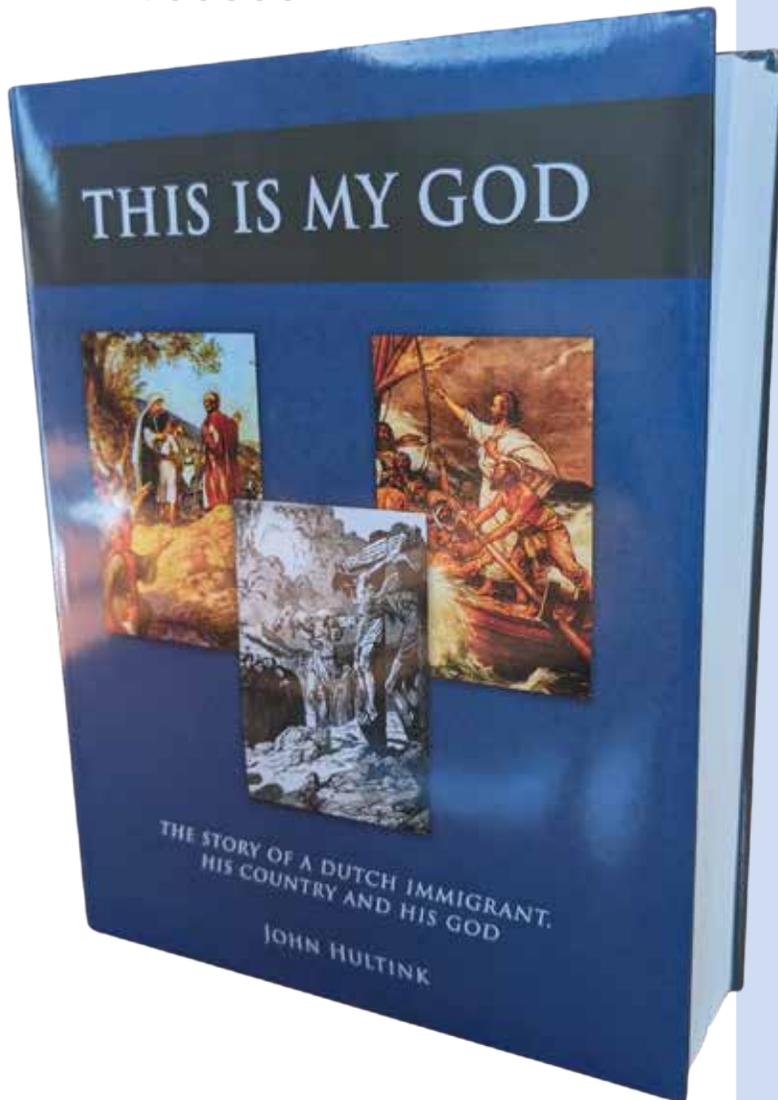
Running alongside him, we can look forward to crossing the finish line, where we will not just run, but soar like eagles. **RP**

“Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” (Heb. 12:1-2)

“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Is. 40:30-31)



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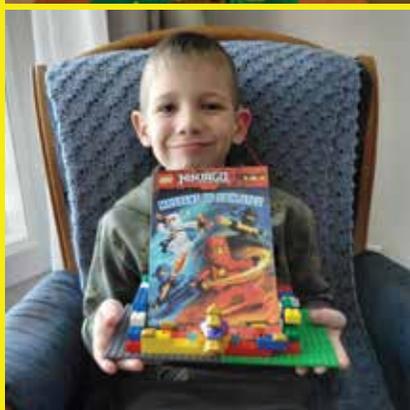


There were so many fun builds again this year. Here's a sampling of the 200+ we received!





Go to ReformedPerspective.ca/bricks2026 to see the winners' videos!





CAN YOU BUILD IT BETTER?

Yes, you can!

We had another wonderful response to our brick-building contest. We asked whether entrants could think of “things that aren’t but should be” – we wanted to see if they could “build it better” and more than 200 entrants said that yes, they could. We had all sorts of cars and trucks and motorhomes and tractors that could drive, and fly or float, turn garbage into tires or rocket right across the ocean at 28,000 km/hr (and, if you weren’t careful, they might even sting you!). In a “great minds think alike” moment, two entrants designed creative alarm clocks that used a teapot and a coffee pot to motivate a sleepy sort to get up now! And if you don’t like coffee or tea? There was a hot chocolate machine too!

Some of the submissions were enormous, like a plane that was 6 feet, 7 inches long, and a robot that people can go inside of. There were also a number of major appliances reinvented – dishwashers, dryers, and washing machines that had been upgraded to be even more automatic. And let’s not forget some fantastic homes – an apartment building that includes a smoothie bar, a house on wheels, one that flies, and who wouldn’t want to live in a castle?

There were also some entries that were powered and functional – like a tractor that distributes Mentos, and a bulldozer of sorts that can collect all the LEGO that gets kicked under your couches. It was clear once again that our readers are a creative lot.

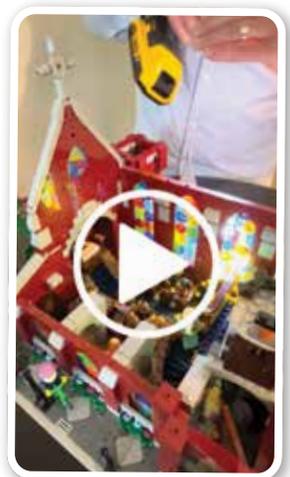
What follows are pictures of the best of the best, and while a picture can be worth a thousand words, in this case you *have* to check out the videos. Be sure to scan the QR code to go see the winners and the honorees give you a tour of their creations. The inventiveness on display is sure to spawn even more. Do you want to encourage your kids’ creativity? Watch these videos with the whole family and you won’t be able to stop your littles (and maybe your bigs too) from pulling out your LEGOs.

That family fun is a big part of the reason we’ve enjoyed this contest. Our kids are growing up with screens all around them, and we need to help them fight the pull to distraction. And when hundreds of parents and kids do something constructive and creative instead, we’re experiencing the joy of doing what God made us to do – we are glorifying Him in time spent in communion, and glorifying Him too, by reflecting just a bit of His creativity.

So check out the QR code to go watch the video-equipped version of this article that you’ll find online. It’s as simple as pointing your smartphone camera at it, and clicking on the link that pops up, or just go to ReformedPerspective.ca/bricks2026.



SCAN ME

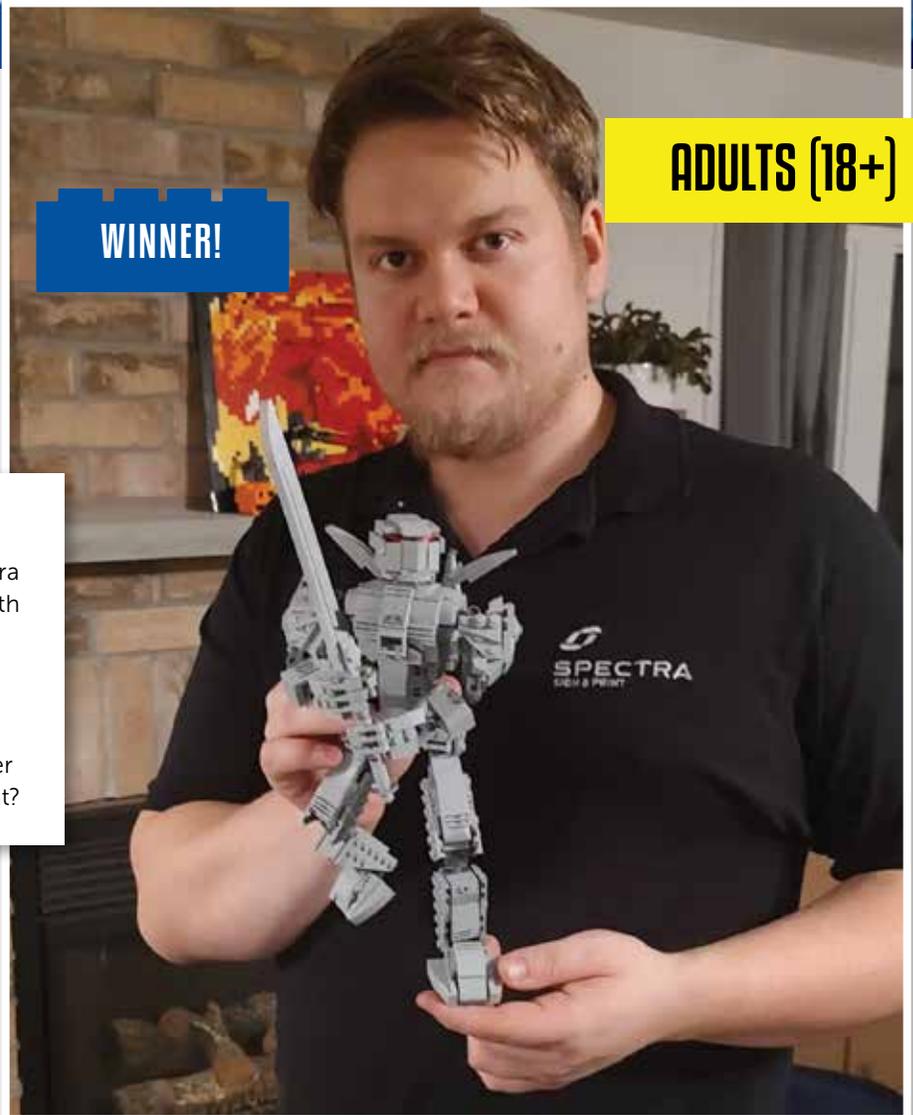


ADULTS (18+)

WINNER!

**COLIN VAN MANEN –
SAMURAI SWORD MECH**

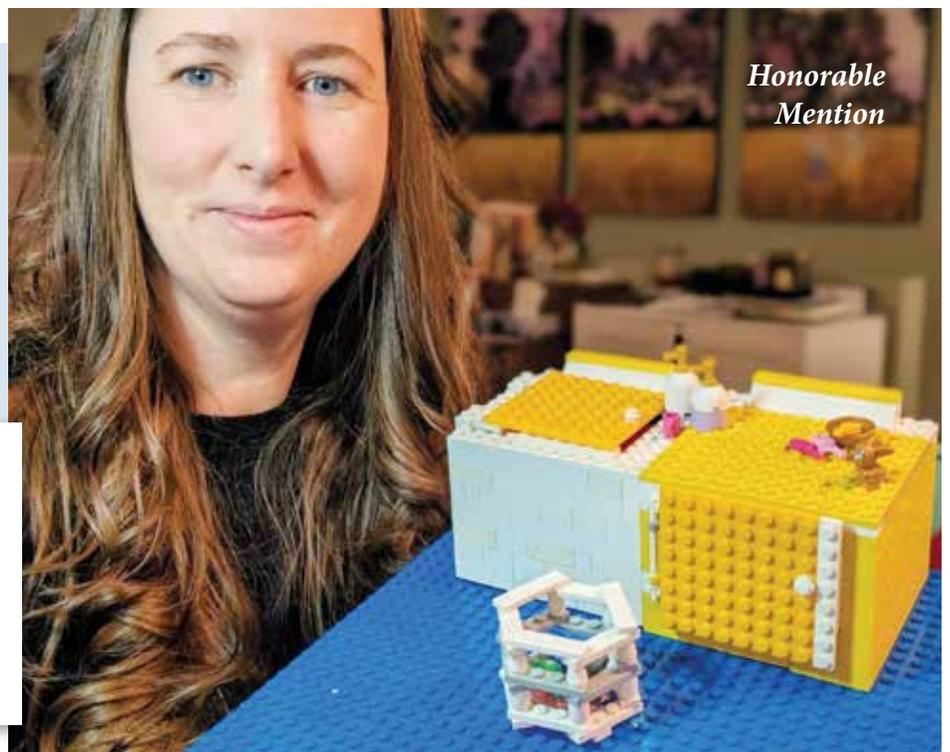
Built entirely out of extra gray pieces, complete with a sword, a jetpack, a face mask, fully-functioning and posable parts... and with a pilot seat for the driver because it's a better commute than a car, right?



*Honorable
Mention*

**FELICITY TAMMINGA –
WASHER/
DRYER ONE-BASKET SYSTEM**

Imagine if you had a special laundry basket that could just be dropped right into your washing machine, and then, when the wash is done, lifted out and slotted right into your dryer – no hauling each piece out one by one!



14-17-years-old

WINNER!

JEREMY, 15 – TEA POT ALARM CLOCK

Have you ever slept through your alarm? That won't happen with this upgrade – instead of just a sound, this one tips a teapot over to pour water on sleeping you. To add to the cleverness, the interior of the clock is a model bedroom, complete with bed, sleeper, and tiny teapot alarm clock!



EVERETT, 14 – TECHNICAL CRANE

This is a functional, motorized crane that works via a remote control. It's just downright impressive!



SCAN ME

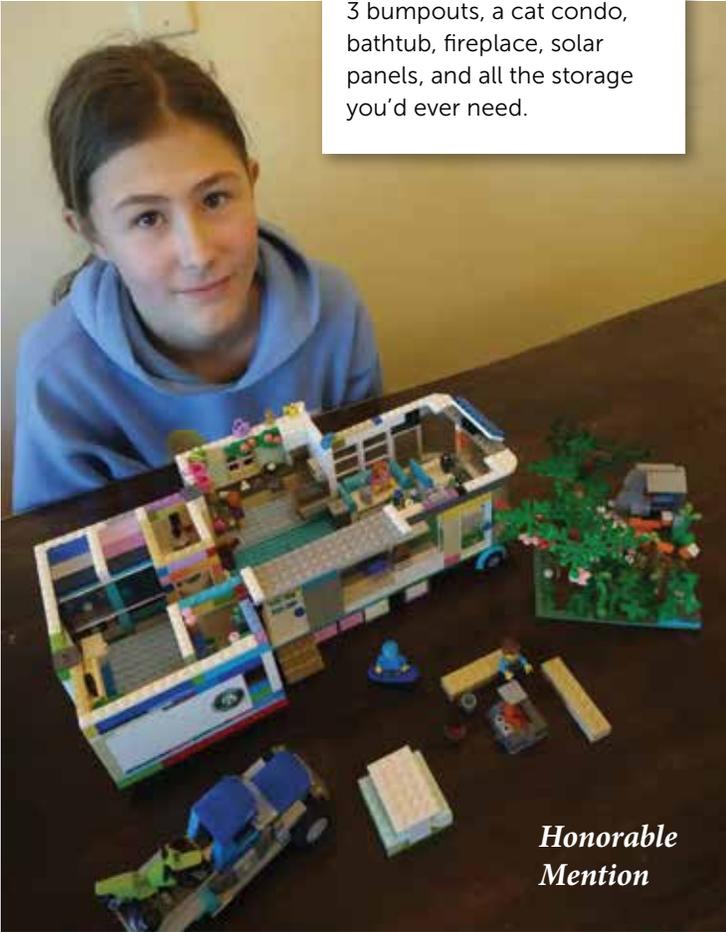
*Honorable
Mention*



"CAN YOU BUILD IT BETTER?" CONTEST RESULTS

CHARLOTTE, 14 – THE ULTIMATE MOTORHOME!

It's got 3, count them, 3 bumpouts, a cat condo, bathtub, fireplace, solar panels, and all the storage you'd ever need.



*Honorable
Mention*



*Honorable
Mention*

GERRARD, 17 – AVRO ARROW CF-105

This is what should have been – but wasn't – if Canada, under Prime Minister Diefenbaker, hadn't scrapped the Avro Arrow. It includes air defense systems with nuclear-armed missiles and functional landing gear and is just a really cleanly built plane.

Check out the creators' videos by scanning the QR code with your phone or just go to ReformedPerspective.ca/bricks2026



10-13-years-old

WINNER!

QUINTEN, 13 - A SELF-SUSTAINABLE FLOATING ISLAND

Such a detailed build! It includes dams, wind turbines, rooftop gardens, and solar panels. There's space for camping, for farms and rural areas, plus a city equipped with a hospital, police station, fire station, and a church. There's even a lighthouse to guide the boats from the ocean/lake. To add to the detail, there are even layers of rock underneath the build where the island was ripped from the ground.



Honorable Mention



EVAN, 13 - PLANE AND TANK

A plane...and a tank? With stabilizers, shooting missiles, a tank turret under each wheel, wing flaps, and landing gear where the tank wheels are hidden while flying and deployed while driving, and extendable wings for added armor - who's the engineer up for building this?

Honorable Mention



AUSTIN, 13 - SELF-CLEANING LEGO MACHINE

LEGO should clean itself up, but it doesn't. Introducing the self-cleaning LEGO machine! An entirely motorized vehicle with two drive wheels - each with its own motor - and a spinning blade connected by gears to its own motor. It collects the LEGO into the hopper for you to simply empty and start again. Problem solved!

Honorable Mention

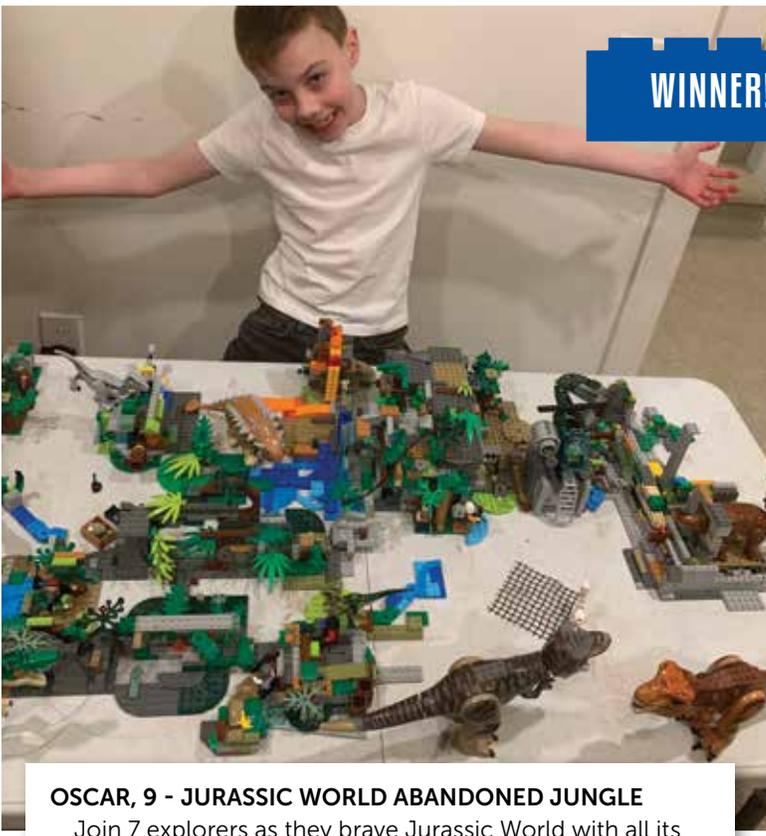
EDEN, 12 - THE MALL WITH MORE

There are some things we can all agree on, and this is one of them: "I think that all malls should have a water-park and a petting zoo."



9 and under

WINNER!



OSCAR, 9 - JURASSIC WORLD ABANDONED JUNGLE

Join 7 explorers as they brave Jurassic World with all its predators, erupting volcanoes, caves with hidden animals, fighting dinosaurs, and a dino-capturing helicopter. Let your imagination run wild!

*Honorable
Mention*

**ELIZA, 8 –
BUMBLE CAR**

It's a bee car that can drive, park, and fly. And watch out, it can also sting!



*Honorable
Mention*

CARINA, 9 – WALK-IN PICTURE FRAME

"I thought it would be really cool if you could walk into a picture frame because then you could paint or draw your own world and walk right in."



ADAM, 6 – HYGIENE HELPER

"It has everything you need to go to school" – a toothbrush to brush your teeth, comb and scissors to style your hair, gets you dressed, helps you eat breakfast, and will walk right up to you to get things started!



*Honorable
Mention*

RETIREMENT:

WHAT ARE YOU RETIRING FROM? WHAT ARE YOU RETIRING TO?

After a life-time of experience, it's time to "exhale"

by Keith Knight



“Retirement is unbiblical,” she told me, her fist firmly pounding her desk.

Alice had been the company bookkeeper for about 50 years. She lived and breathed the daily routine, and now that she was approaching 80, she was reluctant to give it up.

She believed that if she ever retired, she'd probably just pass away within a few months. Her work defined her.

Retirement conjures up a wide variety

of emotions and ideas: anticipation, excitement, perpetual vacation, travel. But also anxiety, apprehension, and a loss of purpose.

The closest that the Bible comes to mentioning retirement is in Numbers 8:25:

“At the age of 50, they (the Levites) must retire from their regular service and work no longer. They may assist

their brothers in performing their duties ...but they themselves must not do the work.”

WORK EVEN IN PARADISE

But it's worthwhile to go back even further, to the beginning of Genesis to determine that work isn't the result of sin but it's part of God's creation order. In fact, our very first image of God “in the beginning” is a God of work; creating the

universe, creating day and night, plants and animals, mankind.

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested (ceased) from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.” (Gen. 2:2)

After God created Adam, He put him to work: pick fruit, tend the garden, and give names to each living creature.

Work is part of the creation order. “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” There is delight in work. Work is also worship. It is how we use our God-given talents each day in God’s Kingdom.

It is only once we understand the value and the role of work that we can understand the value and the role of retirement.

Is it true that, as that desk-pounding retiree declared, “retirement is unbiblical” ...perhaps with the exception of the Levites who had to pack it in at age 50?

TIME TO REFLECT

The notion of retirement is a fairly recent phenomenon. The Canada Pension Plan was created in 1965, setting the retirement age at 65. Interestingly, the life expectancy back then was 66.8 years for men and 73 for women. That’s not much of a retirement. Today, someone at age 65 can expect to live to age 90; that’s another 25 years! We’re living longer and staying healthy longer.

What do we do with all that time? There’s the rub.

As you approach your retirement – probably somewhere between the age of 65 and 75 – consider taking a sabbatical; a few months off. Maybe even a year. Rest, relax, travel, visit the kids, do a few of the things that you’ve always wanted to do.

But before boredom sets in, before you spend endless hours in your deck chair or riding around on a golf cart, you need to spend some valuable time reflecting on your life, focusing on your areas of expertise, knowledge and wisdom. It’s also important to spend considerable time in prayer, realizing how God has led you throughout your life, and to be open to His leading during this next chapter in your life.

Pull out your latest resume or CV and reflect upon all that you have done: your various jobs – good and bad, your career challenges. Create a list of the areas of expertise that you have developed over the years. That could be a brief list or it could evolve into a novel.

Your history will shape your future. What you have done, and accomplished, and even failed at, will help you determine how you can share your experiences with others.

TIME TO SHARE

You have learned a lot and done a lot in your life. Now it’s time to share it with others; especially teaching and training and mentoring the next generation.

When our oldest daughter began her new career as a teacher after graduating from college, she was clearly nervous. I told her that, after all of those years of education and training, she simply had to

“learn to exhale.” Just breathe all of that knowledge over those children.

That’s what retirement can become for you. After decades of learning, doing and experiencing life, it is now time to simply “exhale”; breathe all of your knowledge over younger men and women as they shape their careers.

There is, however, something even more important to share with others. It’s your spiritual journey. It’s about how God has shaped you and molded you and walked with you throughout your life. Tell them your story. It’s invaluable.

As you mentor and train others, teach them your Christian perspective on leadership, on stewardship, on the right way to treat employees. Teach young men and women the importance of work/family balance. Remind them that their treasure is in heaven, not in the accumulation of wealth or toys or real estate.

Most of us can expect to live 20 to 30 years after we reach retirement age. That’s an entire career! Prayerfully take a sabbatical to determine where God wants you to serve next and who you should be mentoring. Then approach this new chapter in your life with the same zeal that you had in your former career. Except that now you will have the benefit of wisdom and experience. More importantly, you will have the benefit of walking with God throughout your life, feeling His presence as you made those thousands of good and bad decisions.

It’s time to exhale. 

A version of this article first appeared in “Faith Today” magazine.

IS RETIREMENT BIBLICAL OR AIN’T IT?

One year ago, in the March/April 2025 issue, Levi Minderhoud’s article “Christians don’t retire” began with this line: “Retirement is unbiblical.” Now we have Keith Knight’s article that would seem to be saying the opposite.

But is it?

Minderhoud was addressing the worldly notion that we work only as long as we have to, and stop as soon as we can. Working for the weekend, “Freedom 55,” and all that. But we don’t honor God by using our talents and abilities as minimally as we can. We glorify Him in word *and deed*,

and so long as we are still able, that calling persists. So Christians never retire.

Except, they also do. People retire from being firefighters, and bike couriers, and competitive ice skaters when their bodies aren’t up to the rigors of the work anymore. Or they retire from full-time work to take on part-time efforts. Or volunteer. Or they pray. They retire... but as Knight notes in his article, they don’t stop glorifying God with whatever strength remains and whatever experience and abilities they may have to offer.



THE CASE AGAINST THE DRAFT

Why no State has the right to take what belongs to Christ

by Rob Schouten

Across the Western world, military recruiting is sputtering. In 2022 and 2023, the United States Army missed its enlistment targets by tens of thousands, prompting emergency bonuses and lowered entry standards. In Berlin, after declaring a “turning-point” rearmament, the government now admits its *Bundeswehr* is so understaffed that legislation to reinstate compulsory service may be introduced as early as next year. And in The Hague, Dutch defence planners warn that Swedish-style selective

conscription may be the only path to their target of 200,000 active and reserve personnel.

When volunteerism fails, governments reach for the oldest lever in the toolbox: obligation. Whether it’s described as a shared burden, a civic duty, or a matter of national survival, the reality is the same: someone will be compelled to serve.

And not just in times of war. In Canada, calls for mandatory national service are growing – not to defend the nation, but to shape it. A 2024 article

in *The Hub*, a generally conservative publication, argued for conscription as a peacetime tool to bolster civic unity and “career preparedness.” The idea is that young adults should be required to serve the government for one or two years – perhaps in the military, or in civil programs – because it would make them more employable, more mature, and more engaged citizens. In effect, conscription becomes a finishing school for State-formed adulthood.¹

One national survey showed that half of Canadians would support mandatory

Canada can't find enough soldiers: A 2025 Maclean's article noted that "The Canadian Armed Forces are facing a shortage of between 14,000 and 16,000 personnel..."

national service.²

Some might argue that national service could build character or instill discipline, offering young adults structure in a time of cultural drift. But the deeper question is this: *under whose direction* will that discipline unfold? In a nation that funds the killing of the unborn and the elderly, that redefines the family under the influence of radical sexual ideologies and then silences dissent in the name of inclusion, can we entrust our sons and daughters to mandatory programs of moral formation? What kind of conscience formation can we expect from a State that denies the image of God?

The same applies to military service. In 2011, Canada joined in the NATO bombing of Libya – it was a campaign that helped destabilize an entire region. Should a Christian be compelled to fight in such a conflict, even if he cannot in good faith regard it as just? These are not hypotheticals. They are the practical consequence of giving the State dominion over the body and the conscience.

For Christians, this renewed talk of conscription demands moral clarity. The draft is not merely a regrettable policy choice – it is, in most forms, a theological offense. Whatever name it takes – universal call-up, selective lottery, or “national service” – compulsory service often claims the body and conscience of the individual in a way that only Christ may rightfully claim.

This is not to deny that civil government bears the sword (Rom. 13), or that, in times of extraordinary peril, it may call its citizens to take up arms in defense of the innocent. But even then, the State may not rule the conscience. It must still respect the individual's accountability before God. When the draft is imposed without regard for faith,

vocation, or moral conviction, it ceases to be an act of justice and becomes a form of spiritual seizure. It commands not just action, but allegiance. And that is no longer civil authority – it is idolatry.

IT WASN'T EVEN NEEDED IN WWII

But what about the draft for World War II. Wasn't that a good thing? It's true that many draftees served bravely in World War II, and yes, we owe them respect.

In Canada, however, conscription was politically explosive, and conscripted soldiers only started being sent overseas in 1944, after a plebiscite. Just 12,900 conscripts in all were sent overseas – *barely one percent* of Canada's wartime force. The vast majority of Canadian soldiers in WWII volunteered. This undermines the claim that victory required forced service. *When the cause was seen as just, free men responded.* If free men will not fight, that is a referendum on the cause and the leadership.

YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN – SO THE STATE CANNOT OWN YOU

“You are not your own, for you were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19–20). Paul wrote these words to address sexual ethics, but the theological truth reaches further: the body of a believer belongs to Christ, not to any earthly power.

That ownership has sweeping implications. When a government claims the authority to compel military service – disregarding conscience or conviction – it denies that Christ is Lord over the whole person. It effectively declares: “Your life is ours. You will serve, fight, kill, or die... because we command it.”

Conscription reduces image-bearers to instruments. It treats men and women not as persons with moral agency and

dignity, but as the raw material of state ambition. The citizen is no longer someone to serve, protect, or persuade, but someone to use.

Yes, Scripture affirms that governments are instituted by God (Rom. 13). But never as gods. Earthly authority is real, but always bounded by God's higher claim. When the State begins to treat citizens as its property, overriding conscience and laying claim to their bodies, it crosses a sacred line.

In such cases, patriotism can become a form of idolatry. We see this clearly in regimes like North Korea, where the State claims total control. But what if the same violation of conscience and ownership is happening quietly, legally, and patriotically, and for just two years at a time, right here at home?

FORCED SERVICE VIOLATES BOTH SACRIFICE AND CONSCIENCE

History bears witness to believers who have fought with honor and integrity, even laying down their lives. But Scripture insists that every true offering – whether of time, money, or life – must be freely given.

The problem with conscription is not that it calls men to defend what may be right, but that it demands such service by coercion. It does not persuade the conscience; it overrides it. It removes space for discernment, prayer, and conviction, and replaces it with mandate, penalty, and shame.

This is more than a problem of method; it is a violation of moral authority. Conscription does not ask whether a prospective soldier, before God, can judge the war just. It simply commands. If he hesitates – still weighing Scripture, justice, or prudence – it threatens him with fines, prison, or public disgrace.

Reformed theology has long upheld the sanctity of conscience under Christ. As the Belgic Confession teaches, we obey civil authorities “in all things which do not disagree with the Word of God” (Art. 36). But when the State demands what conscience forbids – compelling a believer to fight in a war he cannot, in good faith, regard as

Canadian soldiers playing with Dutch children, 1945:

During World War II, approximately ten percent of the population served in the military. Of the more than 1 million personnel, just 13,000 conscripts had been sent overseas by war's end, and of those less than 2,500 actually made it to the front lines before Germany surrendered.



Photo by Private Floyd Watkins, Canadian Scottish Regiment, Nijmegen, Fall 1945, and used under CC 1.0 Public Domain dedication.

just – then obedience to God must take precedence.

As Paul writes, “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Righteousness cannot be manufactured by threat of punishment. Forced sacrifice is not virtue but violation. It flows from fear, not faith – from State power, not spiritual freedom. In such cases, resistance is not rebellion. It is fidelity to a higher law: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

THE LITMUS TEST OF STATIST IDOLATRY

How can one tell when the State has become an idol? One simple test suffices: *Does it claim the right to your life?* Not merely your taxes or your

labor, but your very blood?

When a government asserts the power to compel its citizens to fight, kill, or die – regardless of conscience – it declares that the preservation or ambition of the political order outweighs the vocation and spiritual integrity of the individual. It elevates the needs of the State above the authority of God.

History shows where this logic leads. In its extreme forms, totalitarian regimes have demanded absolute allegiance – even human lives – for the sake of national survival or ideological purity. Think of China’s one-child policy, or the atrocities committed by the Soviet Union against non-compliant citizens. Conscriptio may appear more restrained, but it rests on the same

premise: *that the individual belongs to the State, and may be spent for its ends.*

TRUE DEFENSE MUST BE FREE

The moral and theological case is clear. But even on practical grounds, coercion signals weakness, not strength. A nation that must force its citizens to defend it has already lost something deeper than territory – it has lost trust.

Advocates of conscription argue that emergencies demand drastic measures. *If the nation is under threat, they ask, how else shall we defend ourselves?*

But a society worth defending will inspire its citizens to defend it freely. If the cause is just – and the leadership trustworthy – free men will step forward. If they do not, that failure is

not a crisis of manpower, but a verdict on the moral authority of the State.

To preserve liberty by destroying the citizen's most basic liberty – obedience of conscience to God – is a contradiction. A nation may survive military defeat. It cannot survive the spiritual surrender the draft requires.

ONE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH

Ultimately, the question is stark: *Who has authority over life and death?* Scripture teaches that civil government, under God, bears the sword to punish evil and protect the innocent (Rom. 13). In this sense, the State holds real – but limited – authority in matters of justice and defense.

A PRACTICAL OBJECTION TO ONE MORE YEAR OF INCULCATION

by Jon Dykstra

In recent years, a variety of conservative or at least somewhat conservative organizations and media outlets have been making the case for some sort of forced servitude for young Canadians. What's motivating this push? For some it is about fostering a sense of citizenship. As Ginny Roth argued in her 2023 article for *The Hub*, "How a mandatory year of service for young Canadians could solve our national identity crisis":

"What if we could build a common identity, inculcate a shared national vision, and address some of our economy's biggest challenges all at once? Eighteen-year-old Canadians should be required to perform a mandatory year of service – in the military or caring for seniors or children. They should be encouraged to serve in a place they didn't grow up in and meet people different from themselves. It could bolster our ailing military, inject long-term care homes and childcare centres with the labour they desperately need, increase birth rates, and cure loneliness. And it would give us something meaningful to celebrate on Canada Day: a shared national identity."

In his article, Rev. Schouten highlights the underlying theological, biblical objections to this notion, and I'll just add one practical one here. If our government hasn't managed to fully "inculcate" our country's youth in the 12 years they've already spent in State schools, why should anyone believe that "inculcating" them one more year would make any difference?

And here's one quick practical, but thoroughly Christian objection you can raise with the other side. If your liberal friends or acquaintances think it no big thing to force your kids to serve their big government aims, point them to Matt. 7:2b and the clear justice on display there: "For... with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

The Conservative Party isn't a Christian party, but the Left imagines it as radically so. We can run with that and ask them to imagine what might happen if this "national service" was forced upon the country's youth, and then the Conservatives won and turnabout became a possibility. "How would you like it if Pierre Poilievre was telling your kids what they will be forced to do for a year?"

But that authority is never absolute. It is the authority to restrain evil, not to claim ownership of a person's body or to override his conscience before God. When the State demands unquestioning obedience – disregarding moral conviction, vocation, or faith – it crosses a sacred boundary. It begins to act not as God's servant, but as His rival.

The State may levy taxes, build roads, and punish evildoers. But it may not lay claim to what belongs to Christ alone. When it does, it trespasses on holy ground.

Let the Church say so – without apology. In almost every case, the draft is evil: it denies Christ's lordship, violates human dignity, and compels men to act against conscience. No rhetoric of crisis, no appeal to national survival, can sanctify what God has not commanded.

Let the State honor the Lord of conscience. And let the Church stand firm in the freedom for which Christ has set us free, declaring with calm, unyielding faith: *We belong to Christ, and not to you.* 

END NOTES

- ¹ <https://thehub.ca/2024/07/24/scott-stirrett-the-time-has-come-for-mandatory-national-service-for-young-canadians/>
- ² <https://www.timescolonist.com/economy-law-politics/half-of-canadians-support-mandatory-national-service-survey-reveals-9434252>

What do you think?

Do you agree or disagree, and why? If you want to join in on the discussion, send your thoughts to editor@ReformedPerspective.ca and we might include it in the next issue.



THE BEAUTY OF 52 SUNDAYS

or why we gave two years to bringing the Heidelberg Catechism to video... and more

by Kyle Vasas & David Visser

There is something disarming about the Heidelberg Catechism. It doesn't begin with abstract definitions, but with comfort. *Our only comfort.*

Many of us have encountered, or experienced ourselves, a quiet guilt about “not knowing enough theology,” as if faithfulness were measured primarily by intellectual mastery. The Heidelberg resists that posture. Designed to be digested slowly over the course of a year, it teaches with patience. It repeats itself intentionally. It understands that formation takes time.

And it certainly took time to capture that on film.

Today, we find ourselves standing at a moment we honestly didn't know how to imagine back on July 13th, 2023 when our organization, Faith to Film (FaithToFilm.ca) first took on this project. Every Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism now has a completed video. Fifty-two videos. Twenty-six pastors. Multiple denominations. One catechism. A full, freely available teaching resource on **ReformedConfessions.org** that did not exist before, but now it does.

WHY WE STARTED

Too often, Christian content is forced to choose between depth and visual excellence. We didn't think that tradeoff was necessary.

The Reformed confessions, in particu-

lar, seemed like an area crying out for this kind of care. Written centuries ago, they articulate truths that remain deeply relevant today. Truths with direct application for people wrestling with today's fears, today's doubts, and today's hope. The



Rev. Paul Murphy assisted with Lord's Days 33 and 39.

church has never failed to recognize their value. They remain central to catechesis, preaching, and discipleship. And yet, the digital representation of them has not sufficiently reflected the clarity, weight, and beauty of the truth they contain.

We wanted to do something about that.

Our broader vision continues to be a single digital home for the Reformed Confessions where learning is layered. A video for introduction. A quiz for reinforcement. Extended material for deeper study. Illustrations that help concepts land. A place where churches can confidently send their people, knowing they will be met with clarity, pastoral care, and theological integrity.

Not to replace traditional catechesis, but to supplement it and to provide access for those who may not have the same proximity to teachers or resources, whether new converts, families, or believers in other parts of the world.

The Heidelberg Catechism felt like the natural place to begin.

We are deeply grateful to the twenty-six pastors who lent their voices to this work. Though they serve in a range of congregational settings, they spoke here in one voice, bearing witness to the unity the Heidelberg Catechism has long provided to the Reformed church. Their participation reflects a shared commitment to teaching what has been confessed, received, and faithfully passed down through generations.

THE LONG MIDDLE

What we didn't fully anticipate was just how long this patient approach would take. Don't be mistaken, we understood the importance of moving slowly. We simply wanted the fruit of patience immediately. After all, two and a half years is long enough for enthusiasm to fade. Long enough for schedules to clash, funding to stretch thin, and momentum to feel fragile. This is why we are so grateful for everyone who supported this work.

There is also a unique weight to the nature of this work. We regularly found ourselves asking difficult questions: Are we honoring the gravity of these truths? Are we preserving the warmth that Ursinus and Olevianus intended? Are we

being careful, not only with words, but with images?

There is a real challenge in visually representing biblical and theological concepts while maintaining a healthy reverence for God's name and character. Navigating that tension was no small task.

So yes, it is true that this has been a challenge, but it's hard to stay stressed when the very content you are producing is a balm for your own soul. Sitting there, mouse in hand, editing a video on Lord's Day 1, and being reminded that you are "not your own, but belong body and soul, to your faithful Savior, Jesus Christ." Time after time the words of the pastor on screen would cut straight through the producer mindset and hit the believer's heart.

It really is a profound thing to experience. To realize that the very truths you are trying to broadcast are the same truths holding you together while you do it.

READY FOR YOU TO USE

At this point, the Heidelberg Catechism series is no longer a project we are working on, but a free resource the church can now rely on. Go to ReformedConfessions.org, watch the videos, sit with the illustrations, and work through the questions. It is our prayer that it finds its way into your homes, classrooms, membership instruction, or quiet personal study.



We pray that, in the steady rhythms of teaching and repetition, God would use this work as He has so often used catechesis: to form believers who know what they believe, why they believe it, and how that belief shapes their lives before Him and before one another.

Above all, this moment draws our attention away from ourselves and back to the God who preserves His truth across centuries, cultures, and mediums.

As we look forward to the development of the remaining Three Forms of Unity, we rest in the knowledge that the weight of this work does not fall on us. We are

Pastors Mark Wagenaar, John van Eyk, & Hans Overduin were among the many ministers who each tackled two Lord's Days each.



not the reason these words endure. We are witnesses to the fact that they do. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8). **RP**

Kyle Vasas and David Visser are a part of the team at Faith to Film which, in addition to ReformedConfessions.org, has done video series on Calvinism and Essential Truths, and is in the planning stage for one on office bearer training. Check out all their work, and how you can support it, at FaithtoFilm.ca.



CARRIED

by Christine Farenhorst

*Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob,
all the remnant of the people of Israel,
you whom I have upheld since your birth,
and have carried since you were born.
Even to your old age and gray hairs
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you;
I will sustain you and I will rescue you.*
(Isaiah 46:3-4)

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried
our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.*
(Isaiah 53:4a)

Around the year 1000, on a low-lying mountain and near to a trade route, a castle was built. Named Weinsberg Castle, it was situated in what is known today as Baden-Württemberg, Germany. Along the right bank of the Rhine, the area abutted Germany's largest continuous forest, the Black Forest. It also boasted beautiful valleys and small lakes. Fruit was grown in these valleys and the region had a delightful profusion of vineyards. Weinsberg is, after all, translated as "wine mountain." The rich, well-drained soil on its sides, plunges roots solidly and deeply downward to seek water. The vines, consequently, produce well-nourished grapes. Truly a wonderful piece of property and a pleasure to visit.

The Castle of Weinsberg does not stand on that mountain any longer, although if you were to pass along a nearby road, you could climb up and visit its ruins. There is a story about the importance of power, wealth and fame touching Weinsberg. It is a good story!

FEUDAL FEUDING

In the 1100s, two rival families in Europe were engaged in a feud. The names of these two families were Welf and Hohen-

staufen. Rather like the American Hatfield vs. McCoy disagreement, ongoing power struggles and quarrelling had long taken place in the Weinsberg Castle area. It was not always comfortable or safe to live in the shadow of this beautiful fortress. The Castle of Weinsberg, and its small surrounding town, belonged to the house of Welf, with Welf VI as its head. Conrad III was the head of the Hohenstaufen faction.

In 1138, anger came to a head for the two families due to the fact that Conrad III had just been elected the new Holy Roman Emperor, rather than Welf VI. Bloodshed rather than reconciliation loomed on the horizon. It appeared as if Conrad III, who laid siege to Weinsberg Castle in 1140, might triumph. But the small town and its castle stood firm. The house of Welf were an obstinate lot who refused to buckle, much to Conrad's irritation.

Seemingly, relief appeared on the horizon for the Welf family. A relative was marching to their aid with an army at his side. However, the tide turned as this army was crushed by Conrad.

The siege of Weinsberg continued and turned out to be a brutal and protracted affair. Conrad III's forces employed a range of tactics to wear down the city's defenses. His army, comprised of heavily armored knights and skilled archers, surrounded the city, totally cutting off the castle's supply lines, and blocking escape routes. Despite the defenders' valiant efforts, the relentless pressure eventually took its toll, and the once-formidable walls of Weinsberg Castle began to crumble.

The Welfs, whose ancestry could be traced back to Charlemagne (747-814), the first Holy Roman Emperor, were a proud family. By all rights, they should have conceded the battle. But they did not.

Conrad, angered by their obstinacy, vowed that he would make Castle Weins-

berg an example to all his enemies. He sent this ultimatum to them:

"Unless you surrender, I am going to demolish the city, burn your houses and put you all to the sword."

A BOON GRANTED

The citizens were, at this point, filled with terror and despair. Supplies were scarce and starvation hung in the air. The men of Weinsberg, knowing that further fighting was futile, sent a reply to the angry besieger. They asked for a pardon. But Conrad was inflexible at this point. He had been offended by the length of the siege, and it had rubbed him the wrong way. Then he received another message from the castle:

"We are not afraid to die and we are ready to continue fighting. We are even prepared to see the castle destroyed and our houses burned; but we are not prepared to see our women die. So, we beg that their lives be spared and that they be allowed to leave the castle."

Conrad granted this request. And, perhaps suddenly struck by some compassion, he permitted an extra boon for the wives as well. Not only would he allow them to leave the castle unmolested, but he would also give them approval to carry out their most precious possession. But he stipulated that this possession had to be carried by them – carried without the help of carts or animals.

When Conrad's message was read out loud in the town square, all the men nodded soberly. They agreed to his conditions and were happy their wives would be spared.

The Weinsberg women, including Welf VI's wife, Uta, had also been listening to

the message. Uta, at the time of her marriage to Welf, had been one of the richest heiresses in Germany. A wealthy, respected woman, she left the square solemnly, Conrad's message ringing in her ears. Then she assembled with all the women of Weinsberg. Together they gravely and rationally conferred with one another, and they came to a decision about what they would carry out – about what their most treasured possession was.

TOTAL AGREEMENT

The next morning, the gates of Weinsberg Castle were thrown wide open for the departure of the duchess and the other women, who would take, so it was thought, money and provisions for the journey ahead to safe territory. But Conrad III, and his army, were taken aback at what came through the gates. The first woman to appear was the Duchess Uta, and, on her shoulders, she bore her husband, Welf VI. Behind her came all the other women. Some of them, like Uta, carried their husbands; other carried parents, children, or sickly relatives on their backs.

Disregarding jewelry and personal safety, but counting loyalty and love for their husbands and others as their most precious possessions, the women bore fellow citizens on their shoulders. It was not an easy physical feat and it was one that might have been unacceptable to Conrad. As a matter of fact, Duke Friedrich, Conrad's brother, commented disapprovingly that such things should not be allowed. The king, however, with a certain amount of admiration, showed favor to the women's cunning, and replied that it would not be fitting to change one's royal word. He honored his agreement despite the fact that he had not foreseen the result.

The siege ended peacefully and the castle was later renamed Schloss Weibertreu, which means "castle of women's faith," symbolizing the bravery and loyalty of those women.

ANOTHER MAN

Although this story warms hearts and illustrates bravery, affection and compassion, there is a story, another story, which is greater and filled with more grace and love for saving family, than even these women were able to give.

This other story involves a man who, although he was of princely dynasty, did not have a particularly regal appearance. He was not popular either. The truth is that he was mocked by most. He was neither respected nor wanted. He did not impress his opponents. As a matter of fact, you could go so far as to say that he was despised and rejected by people. Yet, despite his high

disapproval rating (even his few friends forsook him), this man walked freely, alone and of his own accord, towards a battlefield. This battlefield was a vineyard and it was called Gethsemane. Filled with dying branches, it was being besieged by the "god of this world," by the "prince of the power of the air" – by the most hideous and evil host that ever was on earth. Incredibly, the man's goal was to fight a battle by himself against this horrendous horde. Why? So that he could carry his family to safety away from this murderous throng.

In the darkness of the blackest of nights, the besieging army, carrying torches, spears and staves, met the solitary man.

And the man, walking boldly towards them, asked this opposing army a question. Twice he asked the same question: "Whom do you seek?"

When he was told that he was the one whom they wanted, the man answered by

giving these amazing words of creation, redemption, and comfort: "I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go."

The voice of that man, the voice of Truth, echoes and resounds: "Let these men, let my people, go."

Ecce Homo.

What the Man said then, is true today and will be true tomorrow. Jesus knows His people. They are part of His family. They are the branches in His vineyard, and He is the vine. They are a people freed, a people let go and they are His own. And He knows them even though they might be old and have gray hairs. His care extends beyond time and He carries them with love and purpose, even through extremely difficult and besieged times. He bears them in their griefs and He carries them in their sorrows, carries them to a heavenly mansion which He has prepared for them. **RP**



WHEN SPORTS IS AN IDOL

by Josh Senneker

In July 1924, Scottish sprinter Eric Liddell refused to race in the qualifying heat of the Olympic 100-meter competition. A devout Presbyterian, Liddell had been heavily favored to win the event's gold medal. When schedul-makers placed the qualifying heat on a Sunday, however, Liddell resigned from the competition rather than violate his

conscience by competing on the Lord's Day.

Liddell's story has been honored for over 100 years through biographies, children's books, and the blockbuster movie *Chariots of Fire*. For Christians, Liddell is a model of godly participation in sports, a demonstration that playing and watching sports may bring glory to God when contained by self-control.

for many major televised sporting events including the Super Bowl, the Olympic gold medal hockey game, and the World Cup Final – in addition to standard NFL, NHL, MLB, NBA, and CFL broadcasts. A day designed for lasting spiritual benefit has become a feast day for temporary entertainment.

SOME BENEFIT

Scripture affirms that bodily training – including involvement in sports – is of *some* benefit. However, when this temporary benefit hinders growth in holiness, the Christian should lay aside such a hindrance. Of course, Christians must also avoid the trap of gnosticism, the ancient heresy which taught that the material world, including the body, is inherently evil. Against this, the early Church asserted that the incarnation and resurrection of Christ proves the inherent goodness of the body as designed by God – every human being has a body that is designed by God and must be respected rather than ignored.

Paul tells the Corinthians “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31), giving

spiritual worth to the regular care of the body. Participation in sports, then, may glorify God by exemplifying stewardship of the body, and valorizing the self-control which marks high-level athletes. This is affirmed by Paul

SUNDAY AS SPORTS DAY

The challenges Liddell faced, however, have not disappeared in the modern context. Today, youth sports fill up Sunday morning after Sunday morning in the calendars of many Canadian families, impeding church attendance and implicitly inculcating an alternate-catechism.

Sunday is also the preferred day

How should Christians respond to a sports-obsessed world without becoming modern gnostics? The example of Eric Liddell is helpful.



himself when he tells Timothy that “while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1 Tim. 4:8).

The “some value” of bodily training may be incurred through direct participation or by watching professional athletes compete at the highest level – giving cause to rejoice in the creative wonder of God. These benefits, however, are only applicable to the heart of a God-worshipper. When our human bodies are offered as sacrifices to self rather than “living sacrifices” to God, the temporary benefit dissipates and instead becomes a hindrance – a distraction from the eternal benefit of holiness.

A RIVAL RELIGION

The temporal must always serve the eternal. If what is temporal, fleeting, and quickly aging is honored as the ultimate prize of life, then bodily training is of very little value. If, however, the body is disciplined for action in service to God, there is great value in sport.

By contrast, the world often presents sports as a rival religion to Christianity. Fans congregate together, watch repeatedly, spend money, make pilgrimages, and speak constantly of their favorite teams.

This rival religiosity is reflected in the habits of Canadian families. In addition to exorbitant costs, families are often required to travel long distances for extended periods of time for children’s sports. Perhaps more alarmingly, avid sports fans spend countless hours consuming sports-related content on TV, social media, and audio platforms. Increasingly, the cost of lost time is conjoined with the cost of squandered wealth as recently-legalized sports gambling leads to dramatic increases in the number of individuals reporting sports gambling-related addiction and financial crises. There’s plenty of reasons, then, to want to topple this growing idol.

WHOSE GLORY?

So how should Christians respond to a sports-obsessed world without becoming modern gnostics?

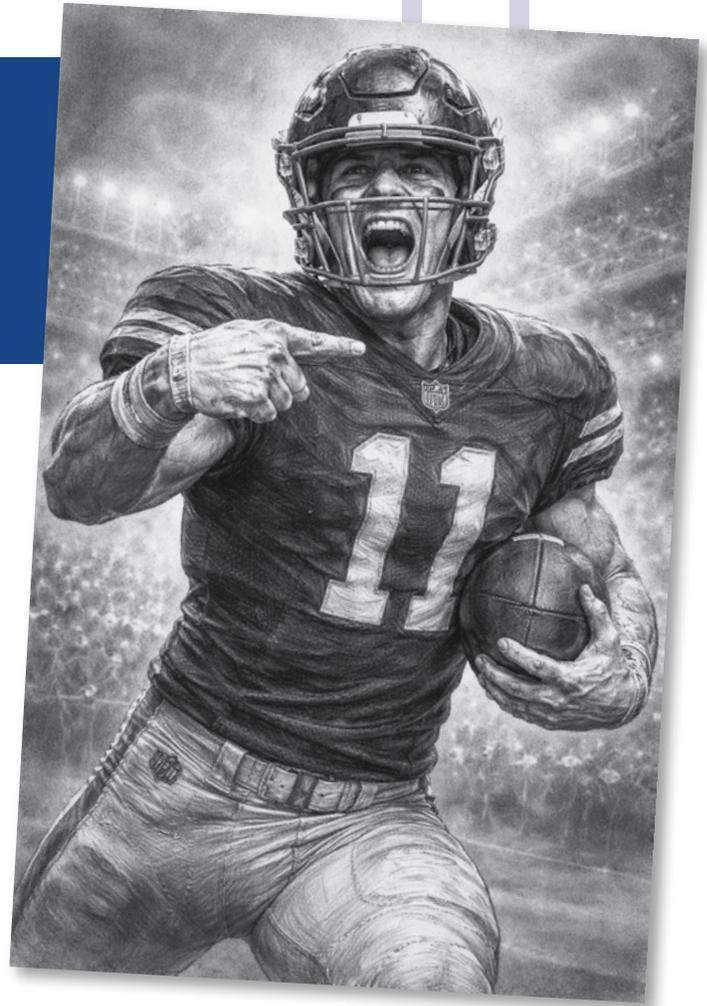
Athletes as idols? It’s true for some fans (and some athletes – self-worship) and now the explosion of sports gambling has only increased the fervor.

Here, the example of Eric Liddell is helpful. Eric Liddell invested a significant amount of time into training. He endured pain, studied other athletes, rose early, and traveled far distances to compete. Yet he did so to the glory of God.

When faced with the choice to glorify himself or to present his body as a living sacrifice by keeping God’s law, Liddell did not hesitate – a decision that baffled onlookers. Eric Liddell understood that physical training was of “some value” but, more fundamentally, he understood that godliness is of eternal value. Liddell flourished as a Christian in sport because he did not worship sport. Sport, instead, was for him a means by which he could present his body as a living sacrifice.

In later life, Liddell became a missionary to China, pouring out his life for the sake of lost souls in a foreign nation that knew little of his athletic achievements. Ultimately, Liddell would die in that country, having become sick in a Japanese concentration camp during the Second World War. The youth he served inside the camp reported his last words: “It’s complete surrender.”

Liddell died as he had lived: in obedience to the Master who was able to deliver eternal godliness to his soul, far beyond the “some value” of bodily training. Even as Liddell’s once athletically unmatched



body began to fade, his eternal godliness and joy – which his sporting career helped cultivate – became stronger and stronger.

Today, the location of the gold medal sacrificed by Eric Liddell and won by Harold Abrahams is unknown. Liddell, however, is seated with Christ on high – having received the reward of his total surrender. And his body – trained by godliness – will soon be raised to immortality. Though his medals are corroding and will one day be consumed by fire, his eternal reward is everlasting.

With Liddell as an example, Christians should play and watch sports as if it holds some value, all the while remembering that godliness is of eternal value. ^{RP}

Josh Senneker is a Christian political operative from Southern Alberta. He grew up playing Little League baseball and cheering for his two favorite hockey teams: the Calgary Flames and whoever is playing the Edmonton Oilers.

LIFE SKILLS *EVERY* HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE NEEDS TO KNOW

by Levi Minderhoud

What skills should every child learn? Schools have traditionally focused on the 3 R's of education: reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. (All right, whoever came up with that might have needed another year or two of school.) Modern schools and Christian schools have supplemented this standard by making science, civics, and Bible courses mandatory, with a wide array of elective courses to help students pursue their different interests and talents.

But as all Christians should know, it isn't only (or even primarily) the school that should teach children. The ultimate classroom is the home, where parents teach their children not only knowledge, but also character and skills. The "school of mom and dad" was particularly important for me and my siblings as we spent most of our grade school years being homeschooled. Much of our education included the standard academic subjects. But over the years, our family started naming a few less orthodox "life skills" that we needed to have some proficiency in before graduating high school, if not earlier. My family is made up of four boys, followed by our one sister. To some degree, our family's set of life skills was designed to ensure that, no matter our gender, we all could be competent in some basic life skills.

So, without further ado, here is my family's not-so-complete list of life skills.

COOKING

Cooking typically isn't a strength of the male sex. The stereotypical menu of a young man when he first moves out of his parents' house and lives alone or rooms with other young men isn't a particularly nutritious or varied one. Quick and easy meals – ramen, mac 'n cheese, pizza, or leftovers – abound.

Lest you think this is more fiction than fact, I've lived it. For two years, I roomed with a set of university buddies. We each took turns cooking one night of the week for the five or seven of us. And you know what was on the menu three or four days a week? Pizza ordered from the school cafeteria. Most of my roommates didn't have the ability (or at least the time or interest) to cook, and I ate more pizza in those two years than I probably will eat for the rest of my lifetime.

Anticipating this problem, our parents ensured that we all had some basic culinary ability. Once all five of us siblings were old enough, we annually held an "Iron Chef Minderhoud" competition, based on a Food Network show. Each sibling (with our parents being the *sous chefs* for the younger ones) was responsible for cooking one new dish each summer. The goal was not only for us all to have the ability to cook, but also to spark creativity and explore new recipes.

And pretty much all the recipes were a hit: lamb dhansak, pierogies, schnitzel and spätzle, crab cakes, lamb chops and couscous, lobster pasta, gulab jamun,

cinnamon fudge, and xocolatl are the most memorable delicacies that I remember.

The perks of gaining this life skill are that you will always be able to make delicious and nutritious food regardless of your stage of life. Whether you're freshly moved out of your parents' house and living alone, married but your spouse who usually does the cooking is out of town, or widowed towards the end of life, cooking is a life skill.

SWIMMING

Of all the "life skills" on this list, this is probably the most important one for preserving life.

My parents never learned to swim. (We affectionately refer to them as "rock" and "anchor" at the pool.) But we often went to the beach on hot summer days. Well, one day when I was something like seven or eight, I decided that I wanted to swim across the tip of the lake. So, without telling my parents, I strapped on my life jacket and set out on the 150-meter swim to the dock on the other side.

I made it across just fine. But my parents were terrified that their son was swimming in the middle of a lake where they were unable to reach me. When they realized what I was doing, my dad frantically ran around the outer edge of the lake, and once I reached the other side, he hauled me up out of the water. I was perfectly fine and rather proud of my swim, but I got quite the scolding for the heart attack that

it gave my parents.

And so, given their lack of swimming ability and their desire for us to be safe in the water, my parents diligently enrolled us all in swimming lessons. I forget precisely how many years we took swimming lessons, but my parents insisted that it was literally a “life skill.” Thanks to those years of swimming lessons, all of us have a basic ability to keep our heads above water.

Even if we still have a penchant to sink rather than float.

VOLLEYBALL

This one might seem like the oddest life skill of the bunch, but it was the one most elevated to the status of “life skill.”

Why?

Well, this skill was less about volleyball itself and more about what it represented: being competent in common social activities. At the time, a common social activity at youth retreats, church picnics, or

backyard barbecues was to play volleyball. Most people would join in and have a blast. Those who didn’t know how to play risked loneliness on the sidelines. Those who played badly risked inciting frustration from their teammates.

In hindsight, those risks probably say more about the character or temperament of the other players than anything else. But, without being able to do anything about the actions of other teenagers and young adults, basic competency at volleyball was designated a life skill in our family. (How good we actually were at volley is another question entirely.) Other sports and games that are common social activities informally followed suit. Most of us are half-decent at hockey, cornhole, or spike ball, Settlers of Catan, Dutch Blitz, or Codenames.

And the life skill has paid off, at least for me. The life skill of being a (somewhat) capable athlete, board gamer, and card shark has led to countless hours of fun and

fellowship. It may not be necessary for life, but it can certainly enhance the enjoyment of life.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

I don’t think that this one ever officially made the list, but this was definitely a life skill that our parents had to hammer into our quartet of homeschooled boys. There were the parental refrains to put deodorant on, do our hair, untuck (or tuck in) that shirt, or shower after a hockey game before going to bed. When we were older, there were admonitions to get a haircut or trim that Hutterite beard.

At the time, we didn’t care about such things. But now we sometimes look back through family photos and playfully tease each other about our stylistic choices of yore. The proverb “cleanliness is next to godliness” isn’t found in the Bible, but it still is a life skill that will benefit you and the people around you.





READING

Now, I know that I mentioned reading at the top of the article. By listing *reading* as a life skill, I don't mean the *ability* to read. (That's absolutely a life skill, but one that I trust is virtually universal.) I mean a *love* of reading, which is far from universal.

Teaching anyone to *love* something is far harder than teaching them *about* something. But the best way to ensure that a kid loves to read is to make reading enjoyable. My parents spent a pretty penny buying books that I enjoyed so that I would develop a love for reading.

For me, that started with my parents reading aloud to me: *Little House on the Prairie*, *Little Britches*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *Redwall* are all books that I recall listening to before bed.

My personal love of reading began with the Hardy Boys. One day – probably for my birthday or Christmas – my parents gave me *The Tower Treasure*. I must have read it pretty quickly and asked for another because I got *The House on the Cliff* soon after. And then

I got the next book. And then the next book. Eventually, I discovered that my mom had bought and stashed the entire 58-book series in her work desk. And so, when I finished one book, I snuck into the desk and grabbed the next book. Before my twelfth birthday, I had read a stack of Hardy Boys books that was taller than I was.

After that, I got hooked on the historical novels of G.A. Henty. Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, Henty is certainly not an award-winning writer. But to a teenage boy, historical military fiction was addictive. I read and re-read about 45 of his books, recounting episodes as diverse as the destruction of the Jewish temple, the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, and the struggle between the British and Napoleonic forces in Spain and Portugal.

That life skill of a love of reading has stuck with me. I've never quite been able to reach RP's challenge to read 52 books in a year, but I always have a stack of books that I'm working through.

ANY OTHERS?

These are a few of the life skills emphasized as I was growing up. Perhaps you'd consider them important life skills too. Perhaps you think that one or two of these are not so vital. Perhaps you have your own list of skills that every high school graduate should learn. Either way, it is a good exercise to think through.

Are there any life skills that you would want your children to learn before graduating high school? Maybe some of these life skills would stem from personal regrets, skills that you wish you had but never acquired. Others might come from personal experience of what is important. Perhaps you've always thought that X should be taught in school, but isn't.

I challenge you to pick up a pen and jot down your own list. What makes the cut? 

Levi Minderhoud lives in the Fraser Valley with his wife and daughters. In his spare time, he loves playing hockey, tickling the ivories, and playing board and card games.

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- Find application forms at www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment
- Send completed applications to board@jcs.tas.edu.au

Come +
EXPLORE



Once upon a time,
Before life even began,
God knew all He would do,
And made YOU part of HIS plan!

*From your intimate beginning,
When you were a wee little dot;
He knew everything about you,
There was nothing He did not!*

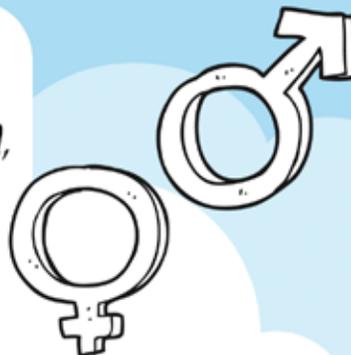
EVEN SMALLER
THAN THIS!



*Knit within your DNA,
God wrote everything unique,
Your eyes, your skin, your hair,
The dimple on your cheek.*

Do you have over
20-30% of them in!

*He assigned for you a gender,
From the very moment you began,
Boy or Girl - Just what He wanted
To carry out His plan.*



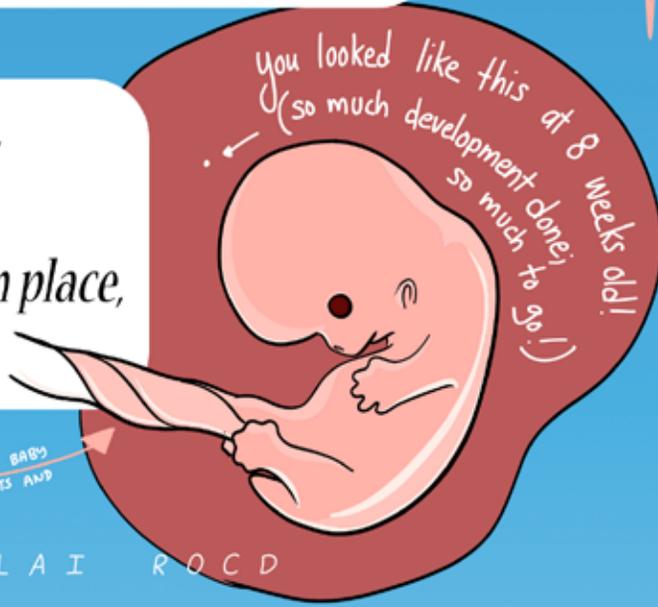
*"Before I formed you in the
womb I knew you, and before
you were born I consecrated
you; I appointed you a
prophet to the nations."*

Jeremiah 1 :5

Before your mother knew it,
By 22 days at least,

BA-BUM-BA-BUM-BA-BUM-BA
Your little heart began to beat!

Little buds for hands and toes,
And everything essential,
Organs, spinal cord, systems in place,
For development potential!



By 14 weeks you could kick your legs,
And give a flutter to your mom,
And with your newfound fingers
You could even suck your thumb!

You could hear your parents talking,
And recognize your mom and dad!
At 20 weeks all your organs
And systems you now had!



For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Psalm 139 : 13-15



tiny little human

*Growing in your mother's womb
Now getting fat and chunky
And slowly running out of room.*



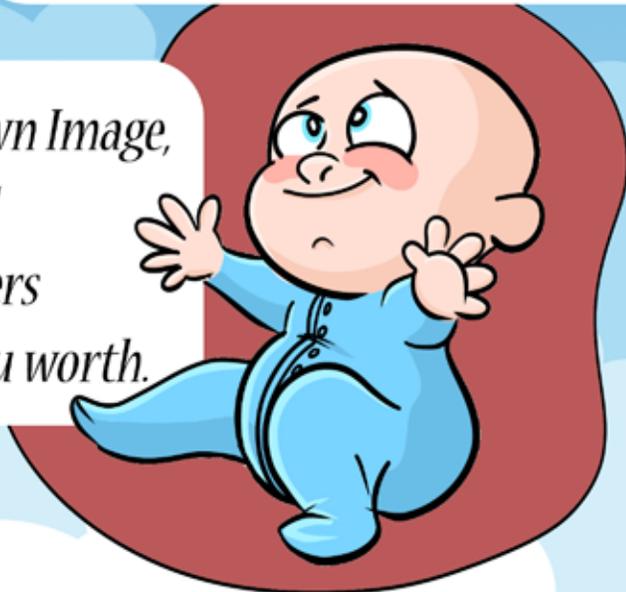
*BABIES FLIP UPSIDE DOWN
AROUND YOUR MOM IF YOU DID - NOT ALL
WEEKS 30-35. ASK
BABIES DO!*

*With each and every moment
God made you His work of art
And with 9 months of waiting
Part of your parents' heart.*



*And while this world may tell you
That you don't live up to their "level"
Remember to listen to GOD's words
And not those of the devil,*

*For you were made in God's own Image,
The God of Heaven and Earth!
And this reason above all others
Is the very thing that gives you worth.*



*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

Genesis 1 : 27

*Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.
Psalm 139 : 16*

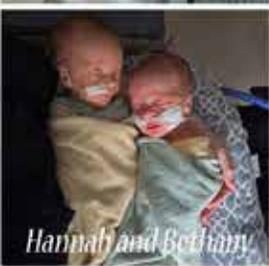
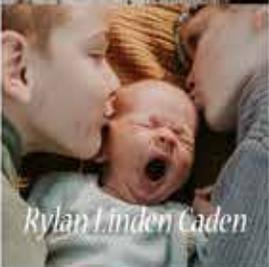


*From the very, very beginning,
 God wrote the number of your days,
 His plan to give you a hope and future,
 And purpose - to give Him praise.*

*So praise Him in the morning,
 Praise Him in the night,
 Praise Him with your words and thoughts,
 And by doing what is right.*

*Praise Him in your differences,
 Whatever form that takes,
 Remembering our holy God
 Doesn't make mistakes.*

Featuring babies from our Reformed community! Each one unique, made for God's glory in HIS Image!



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

EVEN IF YOUR WIFE IS A NINJA....

In his book, *This Momentary Marriage*, John Piper takes on the task of teaching men what it means to be men. Building on Ephesians 5:21-33 he points out a number of roles males should take on including one he wishes was “too obvious to need illustration,” that of protector. He notes that this role is not given on the basis of *ability*, but *gender* alone – this is what real men do:

“If there is a sound downstairs during the night and it might be a burglar, you don’t say to her, “This is an egalitarian marriage, so it’s your turn to go check it out. I went last time.”



A SHIRT THAT JUST SPEAKS TO ME

I don’t think I’m a Luddite – I use all sorts of technology in my day to day – but I just can’t get behind the attention assassin, brain bandit, conversation killer, dopamine drip, eye-contact eraser that we call the modern smartphone. So I just had to pick up this shirt from Jason Bouwman’s “Just Thinking” line. Find this shirt, and more like it, at Store.ReformedPerspective.ca.

And I mean that – even if your wife has a black belt in karate. After you’ve tried to deter him, she may finish off the burglar with one good kick to the solar plexus. But you’d better be unconscious on the floor, or you’re no man. That’s written on your soul, brother, by God Almighty. Big or little, strong or weak, night or day, you go up against the enemy first. Woe to the husbands – and woe to the nation – that send their women to fight their battles.”

CHESTERTON AND CHARLIE ON ORIGINAL SIN

Chesterton spoke of how some religious sorts were disputing whether Man was even in need of washing – was he actually sinful? How ridiculous, Chesterton argued, for men incapable of even imagining sinlessness in their dreams, to “deny human sin, which they can see in the street.” “Certain new theologians dispute original sin, which is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved.” Charles Spurgeon made the same point this way:

“Any man who declares children to be born perfect was never a father. Your child without evil? You without eyes, you mean!”

STILL TRUE IN SOME PLACES...

Johan had left Edmonton to go up northward, near Neerlandia, for a bit of skydiving. Late Sunday evening he was found in a tree by a farmer.

“What happened?” asked the farmer.

“My parachute didn’t open!” Johan replied.

“Of course not,” said the farmer. “Around here most nothing opens on Sunday.”

SOME IS BETTER THAN NONE

“There is nothing wrong with starting a hefty book like Calvin’s *Institutes* and only getting a hundred pages read. Think what the Church today would be like if we all read the first hundred pages of Calvin.”

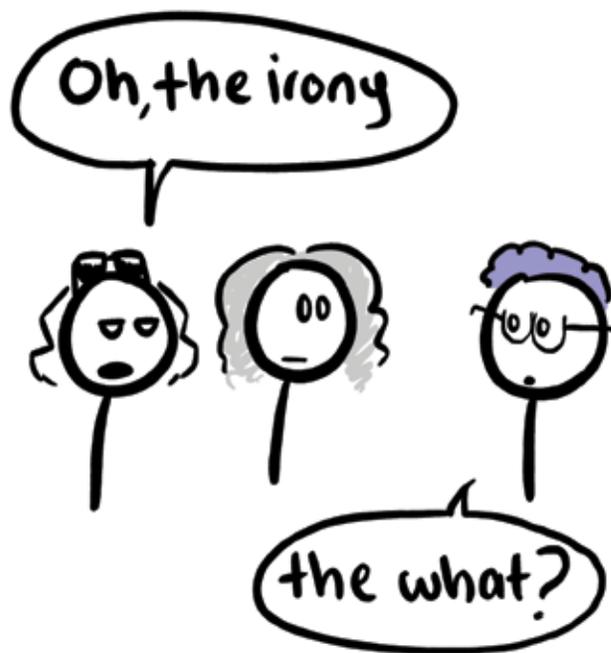
– Ben House

PIOUS SOUNDING EVASION

When evangelist Ray Comfort first heard the St. Francis of Assisi quote, “Preach the Gospel; where necessary, use words” it, rather ironically, left him “upset beyond words.”

This quote is used to encourage a type of “lifestyle evangelism” that involves “less talk, and more walk.” Instead of preaching the Word to their unbelieving friends and neighbors, Christians are supposed to just let their light shine by living good lives. There is something to this idea – God tells us we can impact the unbelieving with the way we live our lives (1 Pet. 3:1-2). But that doesn’t negate the need to use the Word (Rom. 10:14).

Comfort exposed the empty piety of the St. Francis quote with a story. In a refugee camp thousands of children were on the brink of starving to death even though there was food enough to give them. Why weren’t they being given the food?



©nostalgymemetics

Because one of the aid workers had held up a sign that said: “Feed the starving children. Where necessary, use food.” Such an approach would be insane, but, Comfort insists, no more so than thinking we can preach the Gospel without using words.

“EARTH THROWN IN”

“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were those who thought most of the next. The apostles themselves, who set out on foot to convert the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in.’ Aim at earth and you will get neither.”

– C.S. Lewis

WHAT KIND OF IMPACT WILL YOU HAVE?

Whether it is municipal, provincial, or federal, there always seems to be an election just around the corner and Tim Bloedow’s way to influence these elections is worth considering. Some years ago he passed on a strategy he’d gleaned from one Dr. Glenn Martin. The professor was convinced that every serious Christian should try to influence the vote of at least 100 people. He himself wasn’t satisfied unless he attempted to influence at least 1,000. This was back before social media was much of a thing, so he would *write* these 1,000 people and tell them how they should vote and why. We’ve got more means now

than he did then, so this next election can we have that kind of impact?

A BRIEF REBUTTAL OF POST-MODERNISM

“Some of you may believe that you cannot discover Truth. If this is true, you have actually discovered a truth. You might as well continue searching for more.”

– Thor Ramsey, *A Comedian’s Guide to Theology*

SOME CHOICES ARE WICKED

When American abortionist George Tiller was murdered in 2009, pro-life leaders knew that whatever they said in response would be misinterpreted by the media. That left most too cautious to speak out, but it pushed columnist Ann Coulter to do so. In an interview with *Fox News* anchor Bill O’Reilly she talked about the murder using rhetoric that pro-abortionists use to justify killing the unborn.

She started by telling O’Reilly that she didn’t like thinking of Tiller’s death as murder, preferring instead to call it “terminating Tiller in the 203rd trimester.” O’Reilly, misunderstanding what Coulter was doing, started to protest, which prompted Coulter to take it further, putting a twist on another well-known bit of abortion rhetoric. “I am personally opposed to shooting abortionists,” she told O’Reilly, “but I don’t want to impose my moral values on others.” Putting her own spin on a best-selling pro-abortion bumper sticker she told viewers, “If you don’t believe in shooting abortionists, then don’t shoot an abortionist.”

When abortionists bring up issues like “privacy,” “choice,” or “imposing morality” on others, they’re trying to evade the only relevant issue in the abortion debate: are the unborn human

beings? If they aren't, then no one should object to abortion; if they are, then everyone should! But instead of arguing this issue, abortionists avoid the debate entirely using slogans that assume what they are trying to prove – that the unborn aren't human. Coulter exposed this evasion by showing how their slogans make no sense when applied to an acknowledged human being, abortionist George Tiller.

HOW MUCH DO OUR CHILDREN OWE?

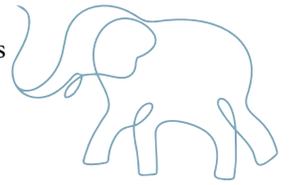
Parents try to leave their children with an inheritance, not debt (Prov. 13:22), but Canada continues to debt-finance their federal and provincial government budgets. They spend money they don't have to pay for promises made to this present generation. But while this generation gets more than they paid for, the next generations will be saddled with paying off the more than \$2.3 trillion combined debt of our federal and provincial governments. Individually what we owe differs some, depending on what province we live in, but according to the Fraser Institute, even in Alberta it amounts to \$41,000 per person, and it rises to nearly \$69,000 per Newfoundlander.

SO WHAT'S A BILLION... OR A TRILLION?

When our debt is in trillions that's pretty hard to fathom. So let's start with a smaller number and see if we can wrap our heads around it. Just how much then, is one billion? Well...

- A North American's average age expectancy is 2-3 billion seconds
- A billion liters would fill 400 Olympic-size swimming pools

- 170 African bull elephants weigh the equivalent of one billion grams
- A bit over one billion minutes ago Jesus walked the Earth



And what's a trillion? Dr. D. James Kennedy did an interesting bit of calculating in his book *The Mortgaging of America*. He notes that, "if you had gone into business when Jesus Christ was born – a business that was so unprofitable that... you lost a million dollars a day, seven days a week, it would still take you 700 more years from today to lose a trillion dollars."

THE LOG IN OUR OWN EYE

When the *London Times* asked notable personalities across Britain to write on what they thought was wrong with the world, they purportedly got this response from author G.K. Chesterton: "Dear Sirs, I am. Yours truly, G.K. Chesterton."

FCAT OR FOITCIN?

An email mkanig its way ronud the Ietrnent calims:

It deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are. The olny iprmohtnant tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it woutiht a porbelm.

Tish is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed eervy ltteer by istelf, but the wrod as a wohle. Azamnig, huh?

But is it ture? Yes and no. Lsat lteerts are irtomanpt but wehn the wdros we raed are lses flaimiar or qtue lhtgney or rbleemse oehetr wdros it bmoeees duicflit to urnneadtsd eevn wth frsit and lsat lterets paceld ctlrcroey.

PARENTAL DICTIONARY

If words were defined just for parents:

- bathroom:** used by the entire family, believed by all except mom to be self-cleaning
- feedback:** what you get when your baby doesn't appreciate dinner
- grandparents:** people who think your children are wonderful even though they're not sure you're raising them right
- independent:** how we want our children to be, as long as they do everything we say
- ow:** the first word spoken by children with older siblings
- puddle:** a small body of water that draws other small bodies, wearing dry shoes, into it
- show-off:** a child more talented than your own
- sterilize:** done to your first baby's pacifier by boiling it and your last baby's pacifier by blowing on it
- sweater:** garment worn by child when its mother is feeling chilly
- top bunk:** bed where you should never put a child wearing Superman pajamas

CROSSWORD SOLUTION MARCH-APRIL

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by Andrew Lootens

“Do you have a devotional that you would recommend?”

I get asked this question in various forms from time to time, and I think my answer sometimes surprises or disappoints people, because I don't recommend what they might expect.

I don't really find most devotionals fruitful. But in my mid 20s I came across Steven K. Scott's book *The Richest Man Who Ever Lived*, a book which lays out “King Solomon's secrets to success, wealth, and happiness.” The author describes how he went through nine jobs in five years, constantly failing at everything he tried, and convinced he would never succeed. Then he was challenged by a friend to read one chapter of Proverbs, write down his insights, and find ways to apply those insights to his day-to-day activities. And do that every day again for two years. The author went on to find success in his financial and business ventures and credits it to the wisdom of Solomon.

I don't remember much else of the book, but I did take up the same challenge, though not quite as long.

HOW

I read the book of Proverbs every day for eight months, reading Proverbs 1 on the first day of the month, Proverbs 2 on the second, and so on, 31 chapters for a month with 31 days (yes, sometimes you'll have to read a few more chapters per day for the shorter months).

Each day I would read a chapter and write down my own takeaways in a notebook, leaving enough room between the notes on each chapter so I had space for the following months' notes. I would write down verses that really stood out to me, some months word-for-word, and other months challenging myself to write them in my own words.

Some months I would listen to the audio version, and some months I would read it in a different translation, to break up the

repetitiveness of reading the same words over again and hear them afresh, and to see if there were verses that would stand out to me more than in other translations.

WHY

Did I become wise overnight? No, but I can attribute much of my own personal growth to studying the book of Proverbs consistently. I still refer back to my notes from years ago, and I still read through the entire book of Proverbs once or twice a year. Proverbs is chock full of wisdom on relationships, avoiding temptation, being a good steward of God's resources, surrounding yourself with godly people, and bridling your tongue (an area where I need constant encouragement).

Proverbs can be challenging to read at times. Some proverbs seem to conflict with one another, which can be confusing: how do we know when it's the right time to “answer a fool” (Prov. 26:4-5)? Some proverbs can be very convicting and make us uncomfortable. But these proverbs are given by God not just for wisdom information (good for our head only); these proverbs are meant for the transformation of our hearts and lives.

I'm grateful for Solomon's wisdom, gifted to him by God. And I'm grateful for the One who was greater than Solomon (Matt. 12:42). It can be difficult at times to see Jesus Christ in Proverbs, and that's going to be my next focus as I read through the book again.

So when people ask which devotional I recommend, I encourage them to read Proverbs. Read one chapter every day and record your own insights. It's been very fruitful for me and for those that I've recommended it to. 

Andrew Lootens is a disciple of Jesus Christ, a husband and father, a resident of Chilliwack, BC, and a voracious reader who is kindling the flame to write a little bit more and read a little bit less.

GOOD, GREAT, and GIFT

RP's 3 levels of best books

by Jon Dykstra

Learning to read *well* is more like cooking a steak than you might imagine. A great chef can have the best set of knives and the most expensive pots and pans, but even if he pulls off the perfect medium-rare it isn't going to matter if you started him off with a dollar-store patty. And even if a kid knows his ABCs, and has worked hard on being able to sound out the toughest words, if all he has around him are the same 10 *Captain Underpants* comics he rips through each night, he isn't going to turn into a good reader.

So whether you're cooking or booking, it needs to start with good ingredients.

There are more than a million books published in English each year, and it's a task to hunt down the very few good ones. Secular libraries and bookstores won't help – they're the ones pushing trash on our kids. There are a lot of conservative and Christian review sites, but too often they're reviewing what's popular, whether it's good or not.

MEAT AND CANDY ARE BOTH GOOD

We focus only on what's awesome. On our website book page, "Recommended Reads" (ReformedPerspective.ca/books), you can find hundreds of suggestions, covering all ages and interests.

Some are important and even life-changing, while others are simply light-hearted fare. Both sorts are good, it's just the former is like *meat* – we *need* it in our diet – while the second is akin to *candy*, which can be a delight and a joy, but we'll get unhealthy fast if we turn it into our major food group. When RP does pass along a *chocolate-brownie-with-a-dollop-of-moosetracks-ice-cream-on-top* suggestion, you can be sure it's going to be amazing, and you shouldn't be surprised if it also happens to have some vitamins packed in there somewhere too.

Even among the best books, some are still going to be better than others. That's why, moving forward, we're going to give a rating for each book we review, and it isn't going to be a star system, or a one thumb vs. two thumbs up kind of thing. I've settled on three categories, and there's a sense in which these could be divided into *could*, *should*, and *must* reads. Or the three categories could be understood as books worth *borrowing*, *buying*, or *giving*.

The point is, these are *all* good books, so that's where the scale starts, going up from there, from *good* to *great* and finally to *gift*.

These ratings will be applied to all children and teen books, and adult biographies and fiction too, but not adult non-fiction. There a book's value is often tied to its utility or usefulness for a *specific* audience so a *generalized* rating doesn't work as well.

GOOD

Some books are entertaining, but maybe not important. These could be kids' picture books that they'll enjoy for a time, or maybe a geo-political thriller that dad will find just perfect for the beach. But they aren't the sort of books you want to get stuck in, rereading again and again, because they just aren't worth that sort of investment. It's the sort you might borrow from the



library rather than buy: plenty of adventure, bright, hilarious, and safe – none of that modern-day weird stuff – but not the sort that needs to be passed through the generations.

These could still make for fantastic purchases for a Christian school library, for all the kids who just rip through one book after another and the librarians just can't keep ahead of 'em. But there's plenty of even better books you'd get first for your home library, which is going to be more selective, stocked with the books you want your kids paging through repeatedly.

GREAT

Here we're getting into books that are going to be read by multiple members of your family, and it just makes sense to have your own copy then. Or we're talking about books that really *should* be read, for whatever reason – maybe to refine the palette, teach what the world's really like, or just generally make one literate. They are worth buying to always have on hand.



GIFT!

Finally, we've got books that really *must* be read. We're talking the kind of novel your spouse doesn't need to read because you just had to share this great bit and that, until finally by book's end you've read the whole thing to her. It's the book you want everyone in your company to read so you bought it by the pallet. It's one your kids aren't allowed to move out of the house until they've read it. And even if your grandkids are far on the horizon yet, you already know what you'll be getting them for at least one birthday. It's the book you always have a spare copy on hand, in your car glove compartment, just in case you meet someone who hasn't read it yet. It's that book.

There aren't a lot of this sort, but these rare gems will make for the perfect gift, whether for birthdays, or just because. **RP**



Check out hundreds and hundreds of reviews with this new and improved rating system at ReformedPerspective.ca/books



Why Reformed theology writes better fantasy

by Aaron Reyburn

Reformed theology – with its doctrines of Man’s total depravity, God’s covenant, His sovereignty, and costly grace – gives fantasy writers what most Christian fantasy lacks: the theological architecture for honest stories that train readers to face darkness rather than sanitize it. Most Christian fantasy is propaganda with a plot: safe, sanitized, morally tidy. The hero wins, evil loses, and everyone learns a lesson by the last page. It checks all the boxes for concerned parents and none of the boxes for honest storytelling.

I write as the author of a middle-grade/YA fantasy series, *The Brytewood Chronicles*, and I’ve become convinced that the best Christian fantasy doesn’t preach – it shows. It doesn’t protect young readers

from darkness – it trains them to face it with clear eyes and steady faith.

The models are already there. Tolkien and Lewis understood that sub-creation is worship, that story disciples as powerfully as sermon, and that good fantasy makes us more human, not less. They built worlds where Reformed truths weren’t abstractions to affirm but realities to encounter. Where covenant, corruption, and grace governed the physics of existence itself.

We’ve forgotten how to do that. And our kids are paying the price.

THE “SHOULD BE” PROBLEM

Walk into most Christian bookstores. You’ll find fantasy that obeys an unwritten formula. Safely inspirational, cleanly

resolved, neatly moral. The hero defeats the dark lord. Gets the girl. Rides into an uncomplicated sunset.

The theology might be orthodox on paper, but the world feels Disneyfied. Grace arrives on cue. Suffering is brief. Faithfulness costs little.

Reformed theology should make us suspicious of this. Allergic to it, even. If we truly believe in total depravity, God’s exhaustive sovereignty, and grace as our only answer, then our stories should reflect worlds where those truths actually cost something. Where they’re tested under pressure. Where they shape not just the moral lessons but the metaphysical structure of reality itself.

The young readers we’re writing for already know war, divorce, church hurt, anxiety, doubt. They know it from the inside. A fantasy that pretends otherwise doesn’t protect them. It abandons them to face real darkness with imaginations trained only on false light.

SUB-CREATION AS THEOLOGICAL ACT

Tolkien insisted that fantasy isn’t about escaping reality but entering it more deeply. His concept of “sub-creation” is explicitly theological: humans, made in God’s image, are called to fashion coherent secondary worlds that reflect His order, beauty, and moral grain. Middle-earth isn’t a neutral playground where anything goes. It has a created “rightness” that makes certain choices fitting and others disastrous.

No cheap grace:

“...that grace comes at staggering cost. Frodo cannot remain in the Shire.”



This is profoundly Reformed. The universe is covenantal, not chaotic. History unfolds under a sovereign Author whose providence works through ordinary means and long, often painful, processes. Reality isn't held together by impersonal forces but by the personal faithfulness of the God who spoke it into being and sustains it by the word of His power.

Consider how divine sovereignty operates in *The Lord of the Rings*. Providence is present but almost entirely offstage. Never announced in speeches. Rarely explained. Yet unmistakably governing the flow of events.

Gandalf's return at Helm's Deep. Gollum's role in the quest's completion. Even Bilbo's "chance" discovery of the Ring sixty years earlier. All of it points toward a deeper pattern, a *euclastrophe* – Tolkien's term for the sudden joyous turn – that arrives not through the heroes' strength but through grace working in and through their weakness.

But that grace comes at staggering cost. Frodo cannot remain in the Shire. Middle-earth itself cannot heal his wounds. Aragorn wins his throne only after decades of wilderness exile and war. The elves must abandon the home they've loved for millennia. Victory is real. But it passes through genuine loss, and not all wounds close before the final sailing.

Lewis works similar terrain in *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Space Trilogy*. In *Perelandra*, the cosmic conflict hinges on whether the Green Lady will obey a command she doesn't understand. Not because she grasps its wisdom but because she trusts the Giver. The entire book is a meditation on divine decree and human responsibility. On whether God's "no" can be good even when we can't see why.

In Narnia, Aslan is "not a tame lion" – the most succinct summary of Reformed theology's insistence that God's sovereignty and goodness coexist even when His ways confound our categories of fairness.

DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH NARRATIVE

Jesus taught doctrine through parables that lodged in the imagination before they could be reduced to propositions.

The Prodigal Son isn't an essay on repentance. It's the smell of pig slop. The humiliation of the long walk home. The shock of the Father running with his robes hiked up – undignified, overwhelming, scandalous grace made flesh.

This is discipleship through narrative. Truth that shapes us not primarily through systematic instruction but through imaginative participation. Tolkien and Lewis both understood this instinctively.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the doctrines of human weakness, divine providence, and self-giving love are never delivered as talking points. They are *lived*. Through Frodo's breaking under the Ring's weight. Through Gandalf's refusal of illegitimate power when Frodo offers him the Ring in Bag End. Through Boromir's grasping and tearful repentance. Through Sam's stubborn fidelity that looks almost foolish until the moment it becomes salvation.

Readers don't learn *about* these things. They walk through them. And the walking changes how they see their own world when they return to it.

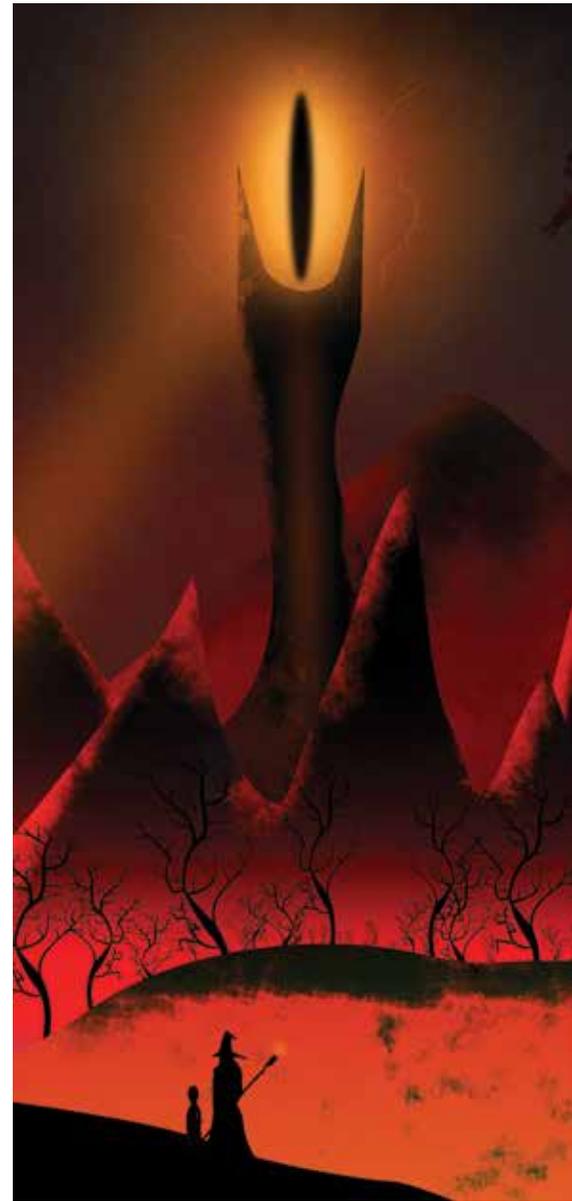
Lewis does something similar in *The Horse and His Boy*. Shasta's suffering is neither dismissed ("it wasn't really that bad") nor celebrated ("suffering makes you strong"), but revealed at story's end to have been woven into something larger than his pain. The Lion who was with him in every terrifying moment, even when Shasta couldn't see or understand.

Reformed theology has always insisted that grace must be experienced, not just affirmed. Conversion involves not just intellectual assent but a renovation of the affections, a reorienting of loves. Fantasy is uniquely positioned to assist that work. Not by preaching at readers, but by giving them worlds to inhabit where Reformed truths are not doctrines to defend but realities to encounter.

WHAT REFORMED THEOLOGY OFFERS FANTASY

What does a Reformed imagination bring to fantasy that other frameworks miss?

First, total depravity makes for honest characters. If the doctrine is true, then even our heroes will be deeply mixed.



Villainy that is all-too relatable: "Saruman begins with reasonable concerns – Sauron is dangerous, we need strength to resist – and follows that logic into corruption."

Capable of treachery, self-deception, cowardice, and lasting damage despite their good intentions.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Denethor's despair is rooted in genuine love for Gondor twisted by pride. Saruman begins with reasonable concerns – Sauron is dangerous, we need strength to resist

– and follows that logic into corruption. Even Boromir, brave and loyal and genuinely devoted to his people, reaches for the Ring because he loves Gondor too much and trusts grace too little.

These characters aren't cartoons. They're comprehensible. That's what makes them terrifying. They show us that great evil often begins with small compromises. That corruption works by bending good desires toward wrong ends. That's a Reformed understanding of sin – not a monster invading from outside, but the twisting of created goods into idols.

This same pattern appears when young rulers follow seemingly wise counsel that makes life easier and outwardly better. Until "strength" curdles into cruelty justified as leadership. Or when protagonists wrestle with "When is it *my* turn to live my life?" while callings compete with loves, neither releasing its claim. Or when the question haunts them: "Why do things corrupt so easily but restore so hard?"

That asymmetry – total depravity made personal – is the exhausting reality Reformed theology refuses to sanitize.

Second, covenant theology gives fantasy a structural backbone. In a Reformed worldview, reality isn't held together by impersonal forces but by personal promises. God's covenant faithfulness running through creation like roots through soil. Fantasy built on this foundation doesn't need to allegorize every detail, but it will tend toward worlds where oaths matter, where generational blessing and curse are real, where the choices of fathers and mothers shape the inheritance their children receive.

Tolkien builds this into his world's architecture. The oath of Fëanor echoes through ages, destroying those who swore it and those who inherit it. Aragorn's kingship depends on ancient covenant. He's not just the strongest warrior but the rightful heir of promises made millennia ago. Even the Ents' slow deliberation over whether to march on Isengard reflects a covenantal understanding of stewardship. They are shepherds of the forest, and that calling matters more than immediate tactical advantage.

Third, divine sovereignty creates space for eucatastrophe without undermining

genuine agency. One of fantasy's chronic problems is preserving both real stakes and ultimate hope. If the heroes can truly lose, readers despair. If they can't, the story feels hollow. But Reformed theology has spent centuries wrestling with how God's absolute sovereignty and human responsibility coexist without collapsing into determinism or Pelagianism.

Fantasy shaped by that tension can offer genuine danger – characters making choices that truly matter, suffering consequences that aren't quickly reversed – while still leaning the story toward a hope that doesn't depend on the heroes' competence. Frodo fails at Mount Doom. The quest succeeds anyway. Not through the hero's strength but through mercy shown to Gollum months earlier, through Gandalf's hidden wisdom, through providence working in ways no one planned. The victory is real, earned through real sacrifice. Yet also utterly gift.

Fourth, a theology of grace makes room for wounds that don't heal in this age. Frodo doesn't get his old life back. The Shire is saved, but not for him. He must sail West, carrying scars Middle-earth cannot mend. This isn't narrative failure. It's honesty about the cost of bearing burdens in a fallen world, coupled with the promise that healing exists even when it's deferred to the life to come.

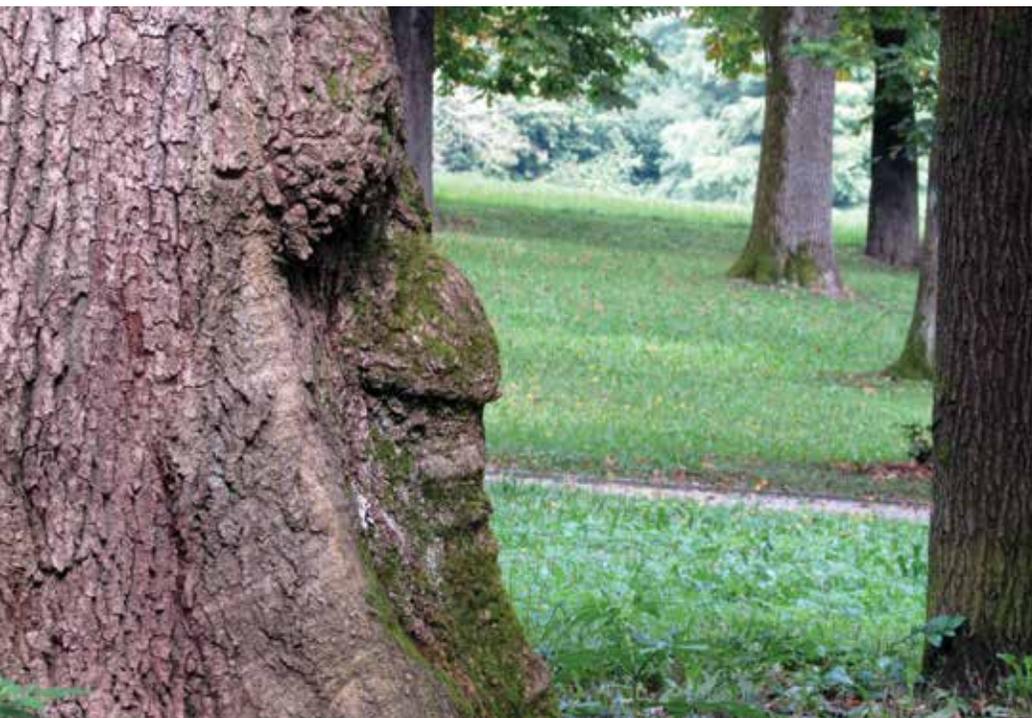
Susan's story in Narnia operates similarly. Lewis refuses to tie up her thread with a neat bow. She's "no longer a friend of Narnia," interested only in "nylons and lipstick and invitations." Many readers find this troubling. Even cruel. But it's profoundly realistic about how people can walk away from grace. About how the same freedom that makes love possible also makes apostasy possible.

Reformed eschatology teaches that not everything is made right on this side of the resurrection. Fantasy can reflect that without falling into despair, because the story's arc bends toward a redemption that is both certain and costly.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Tolkien and Lewis weren't Reformed themselves, but what they got right shows us what Reformed fantasy can be. Rich, risky, deeply human stories that

Personal promises: "Even the Ents' slow deliberation over whether to march on Isengard reflects a covenantal understanding of stewardship."





Providence's fingerprints: "The quest succeeds anyway. Not through the hero's strength but through mercy shown to Gollum months earlier, through Gandalf's hidden wisdom, through providence working in ways no one planned..."

disciple the imagination by letting readers inhabit worlds where covenant, corruption, and grace aren't abstractions but the governing laws of reality.

So what should Reformed writers do?

- Build worlds governed by covenant, not just populated by Christians. Don't add prayer scenes to otherwise generic fantasy. Let Reformed truths shape your world's metaphysical structure – how power works, what promises cost, why some wounds don't heal.
- Write honest characters who reflect total depravity. Give your heroes virtues twisted by sin. Show corruption working through good desires bent toward wrong ends. Let your villains begin with reasonable concerns that curdle into tyranny.
- Trust providence more than plot

armor. Don't rescue your characters with convenient escapes. Let them fail, suffer real consequences, and still find grace working through their weakness in ways they couldn't predict.

- Resist tidy endings. Not every wound closes before the final page. Not every character gets their Shire back. Hope is certain, but costly. Redemption is real, but often deferred to the life to come.

When young readers close such books, they shouldn't have merely "learned a lesson." They should have lived through something that makes it easier to believe the God of Scripture is not a tame mascot for our wishes, but the holy, sovereign, gracious Lord who holds burning cities and frightened children in the same scarred hands that hold the stars.

That's the tradition Tolkien and Lewis

exemplified. That's what Reformed theology demands and enables. And that's what fantasy has always been trying to do: send us back into the real world with eyes trained to see the King. ^{RP}

Aaron Reyburn is the author of "The Brytewood Chronicles," a seven-book Christian fantasy series.

He also operates Reyburn Press (ReyburnPress.com), a small publishing house focused on Christian literature where you can download the e-book version of his first book, "The Hearthwood Oak," for free.



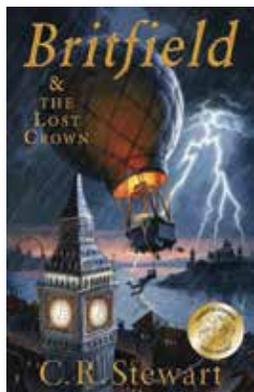
BOOKS

FOR BOYS, AGED 10-13

ReformedPerspective.ca/books

BRITFIELD & THE LOST CROWN

BY C.R STEWART
2019 / 383 PAGES
RATING: GOOD



Tom is a 12-year-old orphan living in a modern-day workhouse/orphanage where the kids are known by numbers, not their names. The adventure begins when Tom's friend Sarah is sent to solitude for 30 days. Tom doesn't think she can manage it, so he plans her escape. All the kids are in on it; they can't all escape, but if they can just get Sarah and Tom out, then the two of them can go for help!

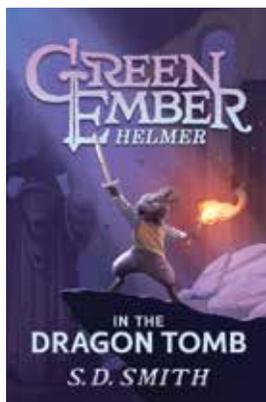
When the escape is a success, the chase starts. For reasons Tom and Sarah don't understand all of Britain seems to be after them, and it isn't just the police – a killer is on their trail too! So this is a jailbreak, cross-country chase, mystery!

One caution would be that Tom and Sarah do things our kids shouldn't – stealing a hot air balloon, for example – but a killer is after them, so a little sneakiness to save their lives is appropriate.

I've only read the first of this four-book series, and I think kids 10-12 would like it. It was choppy in parts, so it just wasn't a great read-aloud, but kids reading it themselves will just breeze through those parts. So, overall a Hardy Boys-level adventure, but in a chunkier, more attractive package.

HELMER IN THE DRAGON TOMB

BY S.D. SMITH
2025 / 243 PAGES
RATING: GOOD



Helmer is a young rabbit who wants to farm the same land his family has been working for generations. But the king is old, and the heir to the throne is missing, and rabbit gangs are roaming (or should I say hopping) and taking whatever they want. And they want the Helmer family farm.

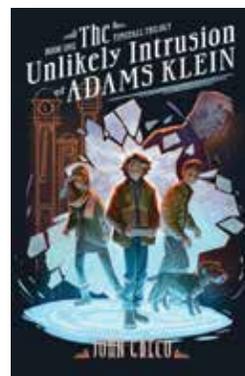
But when Helmer stands up for his lands, he gets taken to a forced labor camp deep in an underground cave network known as "Dragon Tomb." How is he ever going to escape to let the King know what's going on? Well, it'll take some patience... and some help!

Author S.D. Smith has paired this, the 12th book in his *Green Ember* series, with a video game of the same name, so if your family is into gaming too, it might be worth checking out (though I haven't myself yet).

As for the book, it could serve as a great on-ramp to the *Green Ember* universe. The series is probably for 12 and up, but this is a little simpler, and could be tackled a year or two earlier. It is also a standalone, so your kids don't have to have read any of the other *Ember* books to follow along. But if they have been reading the others, then they'll love to learn this backstory to a favorite character, Captain Helmer.

THE UNLIKELY INTRUSION OF ADAMS KLEIN

BY JOHN GRECO
2025 / 288 PAGES
RATING: GREAT



Adams Klein is a pretty ordinary 14-year-old, except that he's from the future. Adams has been sent back 200 years, to today, for his protection. The future's dictator wants to kill him, but now that Adams is back in the past, he's safe, right? Well, so long as he doesn't get noticed. If Adams pops up in a newspaper, then the future's dictator can figure out where he is, and when, and send killer robots back in time to get him.

So Adams keeps a low profile, hiding in the woods in the middle of the winter. But how long can a boy do that without the loneliness getting to him? Then, when he sees a girl, Emma Bloom, fall through the ice, he springs into action and saves her, and that gets him noticed! Are the killer drone robots on their way? You bet. But saving Emma also got Adams friends: Emma, and a boy named Clay Danvers. Together they'll take on the Marshall and change the future!

This "TimeFall Trilogy" has just the first two books out yet, both great. It would be best for most boys and some girls 10 through 14 who like lots of action here. Very creative, and the Christian underpinnings are evident, even if they aren't explicit.

PIET PRINS' WAMBU TRILOGY HAS BEEN GIVEN A POLISH

WAMBU: THE CHIEFTAIN'S SON WAMBU: IN THE VALLEY OF DEATH WAMBU: JOURNEY TO MANHOOD

BY PIET PRINS

2025 / 350-ISH PAGES EACH

RATING: GIFT

Cannibals, crocodiles, evil witch doctors, and a small boy who has to contend with them all on his own? Yup, this is the story of Wambu, a boy of 8 or so who lives with his cannibal tribe in the deep jungles of New Guinea, back before the white man yet dared venture there.

Wambu's tribe is small, and they haven't been able to eat any people for quite some time now. So when Wambu and his father come across a strange girl wandering through their part of the forest, their first inclination is to have her for dinner... as the main entree. Fortunately, they have second thoughts and instead adopt the girl, Sirja, into their family. And that's when things get really interesting because Sirja is a recent Christian convert. And her newfound faith in the Lord is sharply contrasted with the village's reliance on pagan gods.

Though Wambu likes listening to Sirja's stories about Moses and Abraham and Jesus, he also likes going hunting with his father and learning about all the evil spirits in the forest. Sirja tells him that the white missionaries are wonderful, but the village's witch doctor insists that white men are evil spirits who have taken on flesh. Who is Wambu to believe?

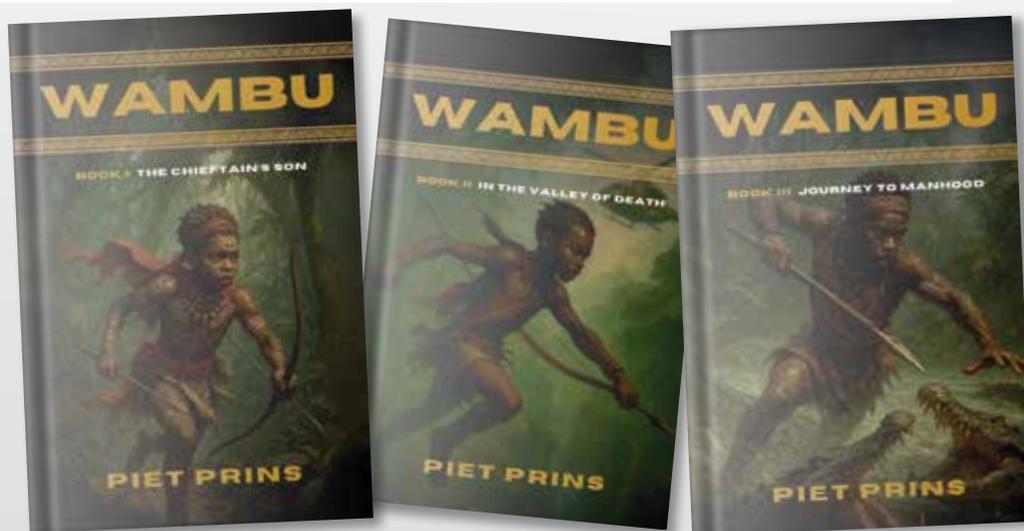
When Wambu's village is attacked by a rival headhunting tribe he escapes and goes for help...to the white man!

This is quite the adventure, and quite the education too, with loads of information about what it's like to live in the jungle. Kids will learn that caterpillars are delicious, and the insides of certain trees are too. Tidbits like this are thrown in throughout and make the story all the more intriguing as we are taken into the depths of a very foreign world.

But what makes this exceptional is the very real way that Wambu encounters God. There's no preachiness, and nothing saccharine about it – Wambu is on his own up against insurmountable odds, and he needs help from God. But who is this Jesus that Sirja was talking about, and how is He different from all the other spirits Wambu has been taught about? It's a boy asking real and desperate questions, and God showing this boy how to find out more about Him.

CAUTIONS

This is about a cruel cannibal culture, so people die, including the near entirety of Wambu's tribe. That might seem too grim a story for a tween audience. And for many a tween it may be.



But the massacre is given in sparse detail – Piet Prins was trying to teach children that darkness exists, but only so he could highlight how God defeats it.

CONCLUSION

Piet Prins is best known for his World War Two-era *Scout* series about a boy and his loyal German Shepherd, but his *Wambu* trilogy is better still. The first book in this classic jungle tale was published in Dutch back in 1961, and then published by Paideia Press in English in 1981. Now operating as an imprint of the Cantaro Institute, Paideia Press has given the whole series a polish. Originally formatted to be tall and not-so-long books – about 200 pages – all the same content is repackaged to fit a shorter but chunkier size of 300+ pages, with brilliant new covers.

I'm grateful for the update because this is a remarkable series, being *authentic* in a way that no non-Christian book can be. What it teaches the reader about God – about His power, mercy, love, and sovereignty over every square inch of the world (and that includes even the densest corners of the darkest jungle) – is really *real*. How many Christian books manage that?

With that said, I'll also note this has proven more hit and miss than I would have expected. Normally I can predict what'll be a hit with my kids. But I tried this with my girls at just nine or ten because that's roughly when I read and absolutely loved them. However, it sure wasn't a good bedtime read for them, no matter their dad's enthusiasm. Maybe there was a bit of a boy/girl difference going on here, but it might also be that today's preteen books are generally tamer, "safer" fare, so one cannibal tribe wiping out another would come as a most unexpected shock.

So a few years later, I'm pitching this to my youngest again, now at 12, and hoping she'll love the books as much as I enjoyed re-reading them again this year.

BUSINESS SUCCESS CHANNELED INTO KINGDOM GROWTH

by Mark Penninga

I first met Mr. John Hultink quite a few years ago on a blustery winter day at the Rathfon Inn, on the shores of Lake Erie. Mr. Hultink had generously let the board and staff of the organization I was working with use this beautiful stone building for a two-day meeting.

While waiting for the others to arrive, Mr. Hultink introduced me to two topics that were largely new to me: his conviction about soul sleep, and the philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd. I was struck by the fascinating combination of an entrepreneur, philosopher, and a publisher. There are many passionate entrepreneurs, and occasionally you find a person who loves to talk philosophy. But how often do you meet a successful entrepreneur who channels his success towards advancing philosophical ideas?

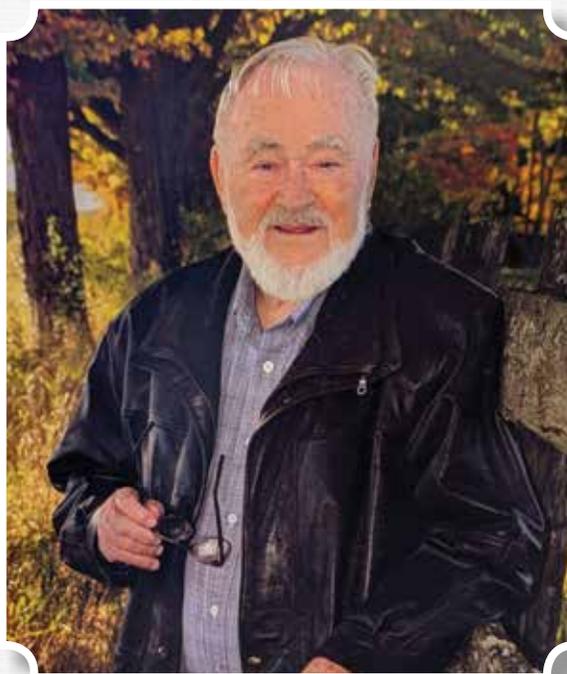
I also discovered that Hultink was behind the company (Paideia Press) that published a lot of the titles that I saw in my home as I was growing up: Piet Prins' *Wambu* and *Scout* collections, and Anne De Vries' *Journey Through the Night* series and classic story Bible for older children.

How did this ever happen? Over time I learned that Hultink pursued success in business with the explicit goal of being able to devote his life to publishing and promoting Christian content.

God graciously blessed this goal.

Fast forward to the end of 2025, and Mr. Hultink, now advanced in years, has published a book of his own: *This Is My God: The story of a Dutch immigrant, his country and his God*. The book is massive – the largest book I own, both in size and weight. When it arrived at my home in a box, I wondered if there was a battery or heavy tool in the box. I didn't expect to find a single book. Yet it was surprisingly easy to read, even while I was next to a wood stove in a cabin enjoying some time with my family over Christmas break.

The autobiography fills the many gaps I had regarding God's work through Mr. Hultink's life. For example, I didn't realize he was the founder and editor of *Christian Renewal*, a magazine I have a lot of respect and appreciation for. It also confirmed to me that those first two topics he spoke to me about many years



ago weren't passing thoughts but rather two of the ideas that dominate much of his thinking still today.

Like some other Dutch immigrants I know, Mr. Hultink has strong opinions, and is eager to share them. And I have known him long enough to see that his convictions translate into deeds that have born a great deal of fruit. Many Christian ministries in Ontario and beyond are the direct recipients of his and his wife Jenny's generosity.

God has blessed him with an extraordinary life, and I'm grateful that he is willing to share his story with his brothers and sisters in Christ. While Christians can be bashful about sharing their own story, we can also learn so much from each other's experiences.

Although many would enjoy the collection of history, pictures, and ideas in *This Is My God*, my hope is that entrepreneurs in particular will be willing to pick up a copy (if they are strong enough to carry it), and consider how they too can mobilize their skills and creativity for God's kingdom. RP



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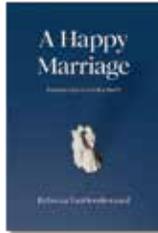


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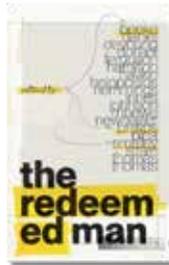


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various authors

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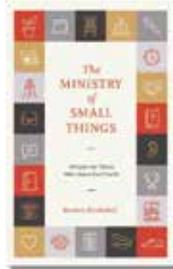


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Principal, Jeff Van Raalte
(403) 345-4055 | jeff.vanraalte@coaldalecs.com

Applications may be sent to

Chair of School Board, James Bareman
jamesbareman@gmail.com



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Psalm 23: 2

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- Demonstrate compassion in a God glorifying manner

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**MARTHA'S HANDS
MARY'S HEART**



ABOUT US

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TANYA KLEINJAN: 905-519-2829



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DUFFERIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

invites applications for full-time openings for
3 ELEMENTARY TEACHERS & 1 PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER
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DCS is a **K-12 Reformed school** with **over 285 students**, located in the **beautiful prairie town of Carman**, just a short **45-minute drive SW of Winnipeg**.

We offer a **highly supportive community, attractive facilities, competitive wages**, and a **friendly, welcoming atmosphere** where staff and students thrive together.

DCS serves three local Canadian Reformed congregations in the communities of **Carman and Elm Creek**, with a combined membership of approximately **1,000 members**.

Our school is deeply rooted in faith, community, and a shared commitment to Christ-centered education.

Applicants must be **members of the Canadian Reformed Church or members of churches within the ecclesiastical fellowship**.

If you are **passionate about Christian education** and value strong community connections, we would **love to hear from you**.

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

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

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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
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SONG AND SING PRAISES!"

Psalm 98:4

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Compass League of Reformed Schools (formerly League of Canadian Reformed School Societies) invites applications for the position of:

COORDINATOR

Compass League of Reformed Schools is seeking a visionary leader to champion Reformed Christian education. In this pivotal role, you will coordinate the strategic work of our directors and committees, manage key projects, and provide vital support to our member school societies across Canada.

The Mission

Compass League of Reformed Schools exists to help parents equip students to employ their talents in the service of God and His kingdom. You will ensure member schools have the curriculum, policy support, and collaborative network needed to fulfill this calling in obedience to God's Word.

Key Responsibilities

- **Visionary Leadership:** Promote a Reformed view of education and foster unity among members.
- **School Support:** Collaborate with committees (CARE, SRC, GCC, ACE, PDC, CC, etc.) on curriculum development, governance, government policy, and professional development.
- **Organizational Management:** Implement policies, oversee financial planning, strategic planning, and represent Compass LRS to government bodies and school associations.
- **Operational Excellence:** Oversee office routines and manage digital communications.

Qualifications & Commitments

- **Faith:** A professing believer and active member of a Canadian or United Reformed Church.
- **Education:** Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc) and an Education degree (B.Ed. or Diploma from CCRTC).
- **Experience:** Minimum five years in educational administration within a Reformed Christian school. **Skills:** Strong organizational and communication skills; proficiency in Microsoft Office, Google Suite, and basic website maintenance.

Terms & Application

- **Start Date:** August 1, 2026 (later dates may be considered).
- **Application Deadline:** April 18, 2026.

For questions or to submit your application, please contact Compass League of Reformed Schools, (formerly League of Canadian Reformed School Societies) HR Chair, Ben Helder, bh@compass.ca | 905-520-8541



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ABOUT US:

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- Strong relationship with local Reformed churches (ARP, FRC, HRC, URC)
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HOW TO APPLY: Applications must include a resume, statement of faith, philosophy of Christian education, and references.



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principal@acreschool.ca

Applicants should be members of a Canadian Reformed Church or sister church. Applications for teachers should include resume, statement of faith, philosophy of education and two letters of reference.

Applications for educational assistants should include resume, a statement of faith and two letters of reference.

Applicants interested in a part-time job-sharing position are also welcome to apply. Applications may be sent to

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Principal, Debbie Johnson djohnson@cornerstoneschool.us
Chairman, Lance Visser chairman@cornerstoneschool.us
School: 360-318-0663

Complete applications consisting of a resume summarizing university and teaching qualifications, contact information and three references, and a statement of educational philosophy can be sent electronically to either of the above email addresses. The successful candidate must be able to work in the United States by the start of the applicable school year.

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Hope Reformed Christian School



We invite individuals who are committed to Reformed Christian education to apply for the following positions:

- Educational Assistant (FT & PT)**
- Elementary Teacher**
- Junior level (FT & PT)
- Secondary Teacher/**
- High School Vice Principal**

Duties to commence August 2026.

Interested applicants who are members in good standing of a NAPARC church are asked to submit a statement of faith, philosophy of teaching, and references (including their pastor), along with their resume to:
Mr. Joe Kikkert
principal@hopercs.ca



ABOUT HOPE RCS:

- Located in beautiful Brant Country, serving the Reformed Christian communities of Brantford, St. George, Paris, Cambridge & Woodstock.
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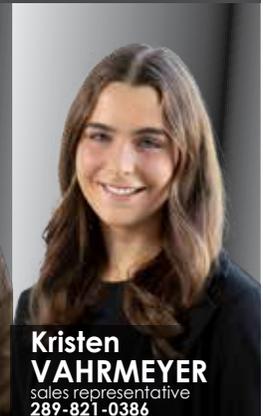
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ANNE DEJONG

is taking a palette knife to the Rockies

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Harma-Mae Smit

Breathe in the crisp mountain air. Allow the hustle and bustle of everyday life to drift away on the breeze. Drink in the beauty of the jagged mountain peaks and the blue, blue lakes. These are the feelings that Anne deJong's paintings summon up. Her love for spending time in the mountains, and her awe at the majesty of God's creation she finds there, inspire her.

"I take every opportunity I can to hike and camp in the Rockies, and I always come home with hundreds of photos as inspiration for my work. Those stop-in-your-tracks moments where I am filled with awe for the creation around me is what I try to capture on canvas."

She wants the viewer to feel like they are there. And she's succeeded – over the years, many who've found similar feelings of tranquility and awe in these majestic Canadian landscapes have connected with her work.

How did she become a painter of the mountains? Beginning as a graphic designer, she started to take painting more seriously in 2019. "My Grandpa did a lot of painting after he retired, and he was the one who encouraged me to try painting." Her unique style developed as Anne dove into the use of palette knives, something she discovered while leading an Art Club at Parkland Immanuel Christian School. She loves the thick textures the knives create with oil paint, and uses different strokes to capture motion in long grasses or the rugged cliffs and rocks. At first she painted many different landscapes, but she found herself drawn more and more to the scenes of the Rockies.

For Anne, the mountains bring to mind the presence of the Lord, as in Psalm 125:2: "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore." She explains, "I don't think specifically of what I believe when I work, but to me the mountains are such a witness to the majesty of our God." She feels blessed to experience God's creation through the mountains, and to be able to recreate it on canvas.

For many artists, getting their work out into the world is a challenge, and it didn't come easily to Anne either. She had to research the selling process and find the best ways to



▲ **New Every Morning** | 72 x 48"

"New Every Morning" is the largest painting Anne has done, showing the Athabasca River in Jasper National Park. While it was a little intimidating to start, she loves the scale of the mountains in the finished piece.

reach people interested in her work. But she has found that people who share similar experiences with the mountains connect with what she paints, so she starts by talking about her experiences in the mountains. Through her website, social media, and in-person events such as art walks and community markets, she has found ways to bring her work to others who find joy in the scenes she creates.

And her work has gained recognition and appreciation over the years, and is included in private collections in Canada, the US, the UK, Australia and the Netherlands, and corporate collections within Alberta. Most recently her paintings have been chosen to be displayed at the Avens Gallery in Canmore, a well-known gallery that focuses on western Canadian artists. God gives great opportunities for His people to display the joy they find in His creation!

Learn more about Anne deJong's work at AnnedeJongart.com, and at [Instagram.com/AnnedeJongart](https://www.instagram.com/AnnedeJongart). She also has a newsletter you can subscribe to on her website, which is the best way to learn about her events and latest work. 

Send Harma-Mae Smit suggestions for artists to profile at harma-mae@reformedperspective.ca.

Kootenay Trails | 48 x 24" ▶

Inspired by Anne's very first hike in Kootenay National Park. The trails were just barely snow-free, meaning there was still plenty of snow on the peaks. The sunlight and snow on the contours brought the mountains to life, and she couldn't resist painting it.



▼ Rundle | 6" birch panel

A fall view of the well-known Rundle Mountain in Banff National Park.



Rest | 12 x 12" ▶

A view from along the Icefields Parkway - alongside her favorite palette knives.



▲ Steadfast | 24 x 36"

This is a pre-wildfire view of Jasper National Park's Pyramid Mountain, from the Parkway. It looks quite different now but the mountain is the same – standing strong above the devastation left behind by the wildfire.

Original Minis | 5 x 5" ▶

Anne likes wrapping her paintings around the edges of the canvas as it gives the paintings a 3D-feel when viewed from an angle.



WHEN THERE IS SMOKE...

by Barb Braendlein



You think you know someone. Five years – truly, has it already been five years that we have spent morning, noon and night working side by side? How many meals, how much laughter, how many truly delicious accomplishments we have achieved together only to arrive at this Easter morning and have you, the oven I've grown to trust, inexplicably burn the bacon beyond recognition?! The betrayal runs deep.

Now, hopefully there aren't any readers who are questioning the underlying necessity of bacon in the life of the believer. If so, go read Nehemiah 8 and then come back. I'll wait. A large platter of bacon, crisped to perfection, is my weekly gift to my people, the reminder of all the wondrous things we mortals can experience this side of paradise.

Over the years, I have moved through many different seasons and methods of bacon prep. In the newlywed years, I attempted bacon on a paper-towel-ensconced plate in the microwave. This works better, I admit, if you hadn't thought it a brilliant idea to register for large, square dinner plates that, when placed in the microwave, aggressively prohibit the rotation mechanism, thus

producing bacon that is highly, almost toxically cooked on one end and raw on the other.

I then spent multiple years employing the electric skillet on the countertop method, which was largely fine but had two predictable problems I never seemed to entirely stay ahead of: I buy cheap griddles (yes, that technically makes me the problem, so make it three predictable problems) and they always seem to have large dead spots in the center, thus requiring a complicated mosaic of fatty meat scattered about that can cook approximately three pieces at a time, and the grease catch always has a tendency to break, which I consistently fail to notice until the grease has dripped all across the counter and floor, leaving an exciting patch for walking on days after the bacon has been consumed.

Then I was introduced to cooking bacon in the oven and, dare I have the hubris to say, I shall never go back? It has now become a part of my own personal Sunday morning liturgy. To get the family up and out to worship without a stressed atmosphere, I wake up an hour or so before the rest and go cook bacon. Later, when everyone is up, I pop the already cooked bacon back into the now cooling oven to warm it back to perfection and voilà – eat the fat! This was my plan on Easter morning...

And then the oven betrayed me.

Now, if ovens could speak, mine would probably say (and for some reason, I hear this in an Australian accent), *Whoa now, Missy, I am not the one who broke the pattern, you did! You acted the dingo (again, Australian) and left the oven on for too long and you did not pay close attention when you warmed the bacon back up, which is why your family had to eat LIMP TURKEY BACON on Resurrection Sunday!* At this point, obviously, I would push random buttons on the oven that

would make it stop talking and probably clean itself. Ha, and so there.

But then... I would have to acknowledge that the oven, while unnecessarily preening and self-righteous and sporting a cooler accent than mine, was correct – I assumed the bacon was safe. I stopped paying attention. Smoke always ensues when we stop paying attention.

It is really no different in our daily walks with Christ. We have areas that we let our guard down (you know the one, that guard we are told to keep up with unceasing vigilance because our adversary the devil roams about like a lion seeking one to destroy?). We feel safe, spiritually, and fail to pay attention to the faint aroma of singed flesh that is beginning to permeate our relationships, our thoughts, our homes. One such example that leaps to mind for me is that brief window of time at the end of a long day when you and your spouse finally get to go to bed. How many thoughtless words have been spoken in those last moments of the waking hours? How many misunderstandings could have been avoided, how many apologies would not have become necessary, if we were to go to bed, spiritually, with a knife under our pillow, ready to spring to the cross at the first sign of temptation?

Because that is the only recourse when you light God's good gifts on fire: Christ. He is your only protection, your true security, the only place you can and must turn again and again in the midst of temptation, of failure, of opposition, of smoke. Some kitchen fires... some relational fires... leave an aroma in the air that lasts for days. I spent a solid 48 hours haunted by the Easter bacon. But with each acrid whiff, I am given the choice to turn, and return, to the Gospel and put my hope in His unfailing protection. He is not done handing out bacon. So, I cannot be done standing guard, in His grace alone. **RP**

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

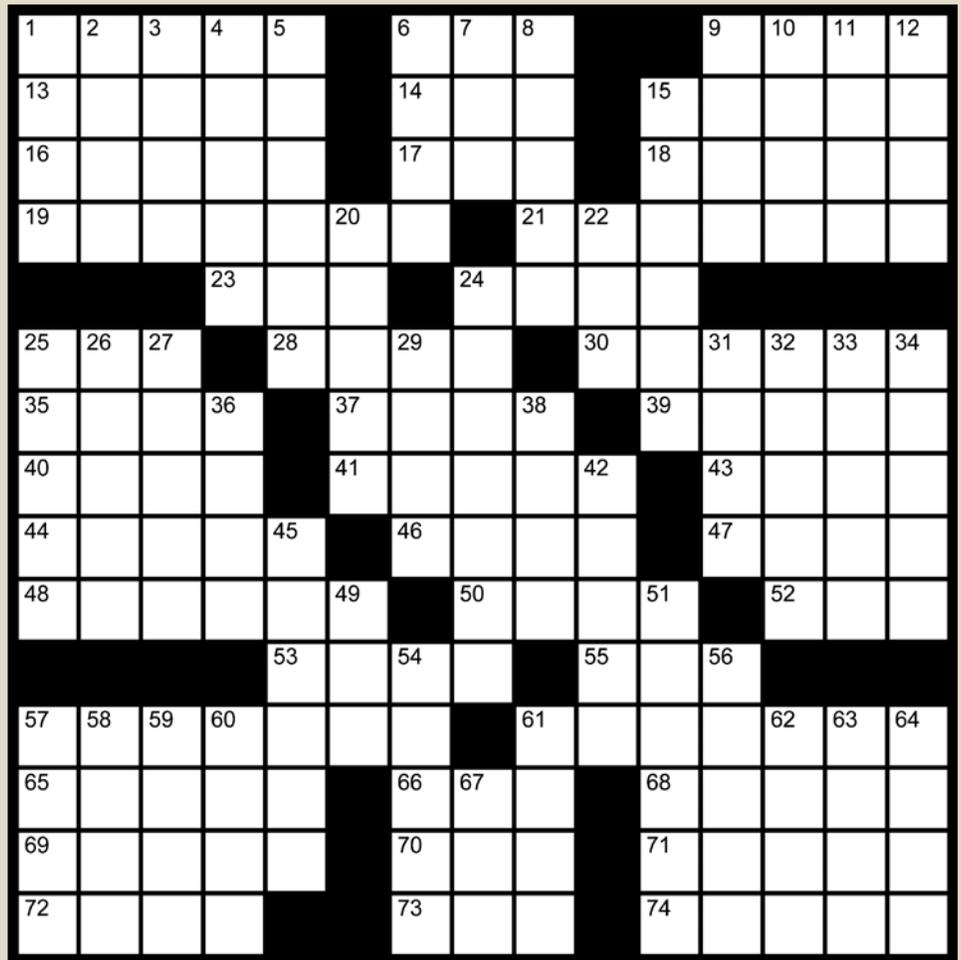
MARCH-APRIL 2026

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 54.

ACROSS

1. One of "The Seven A's of Confession"
6. What to keep private info under
9. Coat worn by Goliath (1 Sam. 17)
13. Forbidden type of joking (Eph. 5)
14. "Just the Way You ___" (Billy Joel song)
15. "my distress grew ____" (Ps. 39)
16. ____ from the *Perilous Realm* (Tolkien)
17. Something often broken at a party
18. Part of pizza and pottery preparation
19. For some, an ugly part of Christmas season?
21. Reasons for possible criminal charges
23. Driver's license information
24. What a random guesser takes in the dark
25. Type of phrase or analogy
28. What worms are to the early bird
30. Stops answering someone's texts
35. Flag; fade; feel fatigued
37. Acid; astringent
39. Boat with two silent consonants
40. 42 Down minus one letter
41. "You shall not ____" (Rom. 13)
43. "like a ____ planted by streams" (Ps. 1)
44. Opposite of bases
46. What sometimes occurs in a garage or yard
47. "From the ____ mouth come..." (James 3)
48. Five ways to enjoy creation
50. "Over the half he eats ____" (Is. 44)
52. For each
53. English Breakfast and Scottish Breakfast
55. Dodge this (moving help for friend)?
57. Raptor or Mighty Dragon
61. Leaders' attitude to Peter and John (Acts 4)
65. _ ____ in *Danger* (1966 WWII spy movie)
66. "with a ___ they strike the judge" (Mic. 5)
68. What successful students make
69. "use it to ____ one another" (1 Pet. 4)
70. Word used in dozens of classic book titles
71. "its boughs grew ____" (Eze. 31)
72. No longer wild part of iambic pentameter?
73. "___, and I will rejoice," (Phili. 1)
74. Pieter Bruegel the ____ (Dutch painter)



DOWN

1. "great ____ of judgment" (Ex. 6, 7)
2. "____ near to God" (Heb. 7)
3. What Solomon rode on (1 Kings 1)
4. Partly ideal projects or proposals
5. "though it is ____ by fire" (1 Pet. 1)
6. Absalom's pride and joy (2 Sam. 14)
7. Where Joan came from, perhaps?
8. "they ground their ____ at him." (Acts 7)
9. What idols can not do (Is. 40, 46)
10. "____ of influence" (2 Cor. 10)
11. "____ She Lovely?" (Stevie Wonder song)
12. "...some more, some ____." (Ex. 16)
15. "____ of more glory" (Heb. 3)
20. Ways to leave; and exist, confused
22. Keep it to yourself
24. What a miner dams up (Job 28)
25. He had the world on his shoulders?
26. "tunic... woven in one ____" (John 19)
27. "the ____ of his robe filled..." (Is. 6)
29. Takes in
31. What grows with "peas, beans, and barley"
32. Fracas; fray; fight; fisticuffs; fuss
33. Point of the story
34. Lead; guide
36. "from the ____ of the earth" (Mark 13)
38. A ____ of *Two Cities* (Charles Dickens)
42. "that I... ____ your statutes." (Ps. 119)
45. "wished to ____ accounts" (Matt. 18)
49. "your young men shall ____ visions" (Joel 2)
51. What it takes two to do (but you shouldn't)
54. Very Large ____ (in New Mexico)
56. Point of the story
57. What you use for a pump or a bump
58. What you toy with when you're not sure
59. Microbe; microorganism
60. "to ____ and to hold" (marriage vow)
61. Attaches; appends
62. Scotland ____ (but not in Scotland!)
63. "fall by the ____ of the sword" (Luke 21)
64. Only animal in "Do-Re-Mi"
67. "gathered as ____ man" (Ezra 3)



A THEOLOGY OF CLEANING?

by Ruth Tchobanian

Solomon was a wise man. But as a king, he passed over some vivid illustrations in the futility chapter of Ecclesiastes. Allow me to add the mother's version of "chasing after wind":

The dishes are cleared and hasten back to where they lie dirty.

The laundry is washed, and returns to the dirty hamper

– around and around goes the laundry, and on its circuit it returns.

The children's stomachs are not satisfied with lunch, nor their appetites with supper.

Vanity of vanities...

I don't know how Solomon would respond to that, but honestly, as I chase after my three small whirlwinds with vacuum and cloth in hand, I'm overwhelmed by the futility of it all. I'd far rather be reading something... or making something ...

or doing something "important," something better than this mindless pecking away at dirt.

I needed a theology for cleaning.

So, between the rubbing and scrubbing, I've been doing a bit of reading. I've found some good news for us belabored housewives: cleaning is kingdom work! Chipping away at that eternal pileup of toys in the living room, dirty laundry on the floor and handprints on the walls is eternal stuff because God is glorified by our cleaning. And in a small way, we work alongside Him in redeeming and restoring this broken world. Let's dive in...

GOD IS PLEASED WITH OUR WORK

We worship a God who loves cleanliness. If you don't believe me, have a peek at the book of Leviticus, which sparkles and squeaks right down to the quarantining of moldy fabric (Lev. 13:47-59). Yet God Himself cursed work in the Gar-

den of Eden, filling it with thorns and thistles... and dust, dirt, and ick.

Even in a world of cursed ground, work – and housework – is also a blessing. God blessed Adam and Eve with a job in the Garden of Eden. When we serve Him joyfully and cheerfully, be it ever so mindless a job, we glorify Him through it. I like to picture our heavenly Father, smiling and pleased with me as I do battle with bathtub scum. Will my husband notice our scrubbed tub? Probably not, but God will!

The Lord also urges us to invite Him into the daily grind. Paul's instruction to "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:16-18) surely doesn't stop at cleaning. It's sandwiched right between rejoicing always and giving thanks in everything. The one leads us to the other. So I can thank God for the beautiful invention of a toilet while scrubbing it (and it is beautiful – imagine life without toilets! or washing machines, gulp).



When we serve Him joyfully and cheerfully, be it ever so mindless a job, we glorify Him through it

There's a pitfall I find myself slipping into on occasion – viewing myself a bit like a slave (yes, there's some over-the-top exaggeration there!). But it can feel like that – some seasons are a long marathon of cleaning and caring for everyone else.

Our all-knowing God actually commanded the Israelites to rest. Commanded, as in, not optional. In Deuteronomy 5 He reminds them that they were slaves in the land of Egypt, and He rescued them with a “mighty hand and an outstretched arm.” Freedom comes with the luxury – the prescribed luxury – of rest.

God uses the term “rest,” not “me-time.” We live in a hyper-entitled world that constantly tells us, “You deserve it, mama, go settle on the couch with your phone and a glass of wine.” While these things aren't bad of themselves (in small doses!), they aren't rights. And I find myself quick to claim them as rights (not the wine, but the doom-scrolling). But rest is above me-time as Greek salad is above ramen noodles.

God built rest into the rhyme and rhythm of creation, to be enjoyed on the Lord's Day as worship and praise to Him. It's a foretaste of the eternal rest which Christ has won for us. When we rest, we worship Him. We need to guard that rest or it will slip away!

ENLIST YOUR KIDS!

My mom always wanted to hang this proverb in her kitchen: “Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.” Comparing us kids to oxen was, well, rather accurate. As a good Dutch mom of six she had to embrace a lot of mess! She went beyond this to a complete application of the proverb: she faithfully harnessed her “oxen” up for work. This was probably a lot harder on her ears than it was on our hands, but it taught us to work faithfully and well. It was one of the best things she gave us, and I'm grateful for it.

I remind myself of that as my four-year-old moans and groans through his daily task of putting away the clean silverware every day.

WE CLEAN ALONGSIDE GOD HIMSELF

That's a truth so glorious it almost sounds heretical, but there are multiple levels to this. First off, there's the cleaning of creation. It's truly incredible how God has built cleaners into creation to maintain and purify it. Tides sweep the shorelines, scavengers and fungi devour rotten materials, rains wash the land, trees filter the air. There's even a bacterium that can turn massive oil spills into harmless carbon dioxide and water within weeks. These are God's janitorial taskforce on earth, restoring, refreshing, redeeming creation.

As we beat back weeds and submit the garden to order, as we scour scum and change diapers, as we restore peace and order once again to our belabored homes, we join God in the redemption of creation. That's a pretty incredible calling.

IT'S ALL A REMINDER

The constant demands of cleaning also point to our spiritual state. As Christians, we are in a constant cycle of conviction, confession and repentance. We come to God, the purifier of our souls, for redemption on a daily basis. He doesn't get tired of the same old work on the same old soul. So, when we pick up our kids' dirty undies off the floor for the umpteenth time, may it be a reminder to us of God's faithful cleaning.

One day, the oxen will be gone and the stall will be (moderately) clean. And we'll miss those dear little cows with all our hearts. But for now, we get to share in the glorious, everyday task of redeeming the universe with God. So if you'll excuse me, I've got a kitchen to redeem! **RP**

We Dutch women have a little saying we like to whip out on occasion – “cleanliness is next to godliness.” It's found... absolutely nowhere in the Bible. But the desire to meet up to community standards and maintain a Pinterest-worthy house is definitely still there, and still one we have to battle regularly! So let's apply Paul's exhortation to work heartily as *for the Lord* and not for men... or for mothers-in-law, picky friends, or nosy neighbors.

GOD IS HONORED IN BOTH OUR WORK AND OUR RESTING

When my oldest was about three, she came up with this brilliant idea. “Mommy,” she said, “we should have two mommies. Then one can do all the work while you play with us!” And on that particular day, I was almost ready to agree with her.

Thankfully, rest isn't just given but even required.

HOW TO CATCH ICE AGE MAN USING DIGITAL REINDEER

by Shannon Skaer

What would happen if we assumed ancient man was intelligent?

One man did just that, and I haven't been able to stop talking about it since. Which, incidentally, is a substantial reason to have 10 children, all of whom you homeschool. Captive audience.

Professor John O'Shea is an archaeologist with the University of Michigan who likes to read. (It's a good habit. Highly recommended.) One day, he was reading a book about subarctic reindeer* hunters and the stone structures they used to direct the animals. He was also studying a topographical map of the bottom of Lake Huron. The map included a feature known as Six Fathom Shoal, a continuous underwater ridge connecting southern Ontario to northeast Michigan. During the last days of the Ice Age, that ridge would have been above water, separating Lake Huron into two lakes. As John studied the map and read about the hunters, he realized that the ridge would have been a great place to hunt reindeer thousands of years ago. So he took a team and scanned the lake bottom.

It wasn't easy. The underwater ridge encompasses hundreds of square miles of lakebed, and just reaching the site required a 60-mile trip over unpredictable water. Expectations were low. Often the weather was too dangerous to even think

about sailing, but on the rare occasions when they could get out of their port in Alpena, they used side-scanning sonar to create a map of the lake bottom. One day, by "dumb luck" they stumbled upon something that maybe only John would have expected or recognized: a line of rocks.

Stick with me here.

ON THE LEFT SIDE, OF COURSE

You see, reindeer are essentially British. They like queues. Lines. Geometry, one might say, is their love language. To direct reindeer, a hunter can create a line on the ground, usually with stones – sometimes it amounts to a low fence. This is called a "drive line." When the reindeer encounter the line, even though they could easily jump over it, they will often walk alongside it wherever it leads. Not unlike Harold and the Purple Crayon. The line of rocks John O'Shea found on the bottom of the lake looked a lot like a drive line.

Further investigation by a tethered, unmanned underwater robot, and later, divers, revealed it was indeed a man-made drive line, pointing towards a coral and a blind where the hunters could wait to kill the animals.

An incredible, career-changing, history-making discovery. But it gets better.

Next, John teamed up with Bob

Reynolds from Wayne State University, and together they created a digital topographical map of Six Fathom Shoal during the Ice Age. They simulated rain, waterfalls, marshes and creeks. They enlisted botanists to look at the landscape and predict where different plants would have grown. And once the computer world was complete, they did the next sensible thing.

They turned an entire herd of AI reindeer loose on the landscape.

Initially, the AI reindeer had an annoying habit of walking off cliffs, gliding on stiff, pixelated legs to a swift digital death. The programming took a while to tweak, but as the weeks went on, the AI reindeer took on an increasingly life-like set of behaviors. The herd was sent from one side of Six Fathom Shoal to the other, and patterns emerged as they learned which routes were best.

Then John's team asked modern reindeer hunters from Alaska and Canada to walk through the virtual landscape on computers, pointing out the best locations for blinds, campsites, and caches. They took intelligent human beings and asked them where they would hunt and then assumed that ancient man would hunt in the same places. Shocking.

With this information in hand, they returned to inspect the sea floor. And

that's how they discovered a hunting structure they called "Drop 45 Site." Right in the location pinpointed as a choke site for the AI reindeer.

This hunting site is the most sophisticated of its kind discovered to date. It includes a drive line, blinds, fire pits, and stone rings that indicate places where the hunters may have camped. The researchers also found stone structures identical to those used by modern subarctic hunters to store caches of meat during the freezing winter months. Further investigation revealed stone tools, including one made with obsidian from Oregon.

Yep. Oregon.

Wagontire, Oregon, to be exact, over 2,000 miles away from the underwater ridge where it was found. Not bad for Ice Age hunters.

"None of this matches the models we had about peoples in this region... you have to go back and be like, 'All right, now we have this new data, what does that mean for what we thought about peoples that were living in the Great

Lakes?' You have to rewrite the story."
– Ashley Lemke, Professor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee

BREAKING DOWN OR EVOLVING UP?

She's right, of course. The models she's talking about are based on the assumption that humans evolved from ape-like creatures, stumbling out of the dull fog of an animal existence to come to a shocking realization: "Fire... hot?" Of course we had never looked for evidence of Ice Age structures at Six Mile Shoal before, because the odds of such creatures building anything were slim.

But what could we accomplish if we started with the assumption that man was created intelligent and capable, as the Bible teaches? Adam and Eve, coming straight from the hand of the Creator, had perfect genes. Those genes have only deteriorated a little more with each generation that passes. So those Ice Age hunters could well have been more intelligent than you or I.

Computer models and sonar can

recreate the Ice Age shorelines along the entire globe. What would happen if we looked at those maps and asked where we would build our cities, ports or villages? In some places, accumulated sediment has probably buried any Ice Age structures, but some remain. At the moment, our preferred method of finding these sites is dumb luck. That's how we discovered a similar hunting drive line under the Baltic sea. The entire underwater world of Doggerland was also discovered by a series of accidents.

What if we trusted the Biblical account enough to use less accidents and more "AI reindeer"? **RP**

Shannon Skaer is an ancient history aficionado, homeschool mom, science nerd, and beekeeper. She lives in a small logging town in Oregon with her very own hero and their ten children. Her life could best be described as a love affair with beauty – which explains the number of babies – and her greatest joy is to know God, from whom all beauty comes. Find out more about her at www.shannonskaer.com.



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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.



The secular liturgy of *Goodnight Moon*

"Here's the point for Christian parents. *Goodnight Moon* reads like a bedtime prayer for a reason. Brown's experimental writing was part of a modernist movement to shape an alternative moral ecology for children.... The next time you read *Goodnight Moon* with your kids at bedtime, don't stop at 'goodnight noises everywhere.' End your routine with bedtime prayers..."

Rosaria Butterfield raps?

Here's the wild, wacky, and wonderful side of AI – Reformed rap battles that never were, but need to be. This time we have Rosaria Butterfield taking on a "woke leftist" about homosexuality, and what's awesome here is there is no caricaturing. The young lady gets to say her piece in as convincing a fashion as you'll ever hear it, and then Rosaria offers her up the truth unvarnished.



Delayed gratification: 3 quick tips to teach it to our kids

This article is hosted on an economics website, but even economists seem to understand that gratitude starts with expressing our thanks to God.

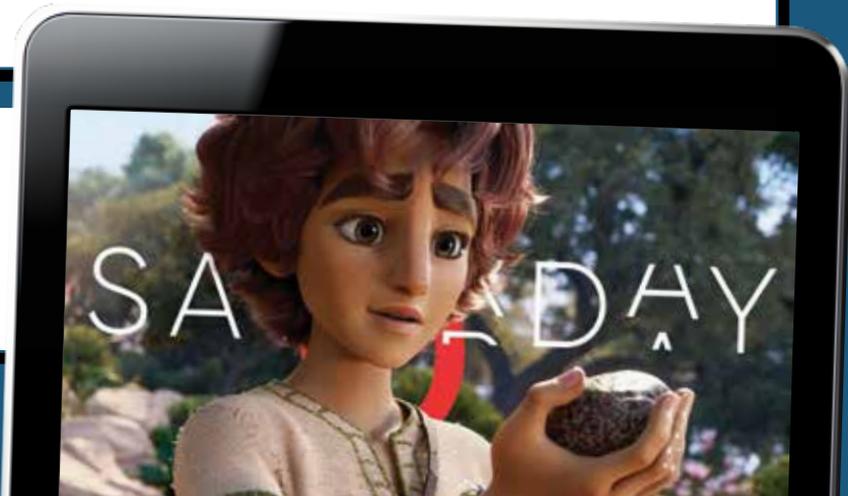
A pastor's review of the animated movie *David*

Does the 2nd commandment forbid depicting Christ on film? Whatever your thoughts, this commandment wouldn't apply to David... so what about bringing him to the big screen? There is still a need for reverence, treating God's Word like the sacred text it is, and not as if it were a first draft in need of fixing. But biblical screenwriters too often depart from the text, and as this pastor highlights, in the second half of the new animated *David*, that's happened here too.



More being killed by IVF than abortion?

In America, approximately 1 million children are murdered each year via abortion. Now a new report estimates that between 2 million and nearly 4 million children were murdered during the IVF process.



Buckle up for real questions, real answers and real direction. This is REAL TALK.



Lucas Holtvluwer and Tyler Vanderwoude have been podcasting for five years now, and you can find all the episodes at RealTalkPodcast.ca or by scanning the QR code to watch them on YouTube. Recent highlights include:



#133 – Do home visits actually work?

Dr. Van Dam is back to finish off our series on the offices of the Church! Tyler asks him about his book, *The Elder*, and they discuss some hot topics such as: should elders be elected for terms or a lifetime, are home visits really all that effective, and what about woman voting?

#136 – Addiction, recovery, & true healing

Do we really understand addiction? Lucas tackles this question and more with Jake and Carling from Agape Recovery (AgapeRecovery.ca). This is a brand-new Ontario organization they helped launch in January of 2026 aimed at helping those struggling with addiction.



#138 – Lessons we can learn from Charlie Kirk

Charlie Kirk started visiting colleges intent on bringing kids, not to Christ, but to economist Thomas Sowell. But while these troubled students might have been confused about capitalism, the deepest questions that Kirk had to answer were about meaning, purpose, and gender, and he couldn't go there without going to God.



Daily Devotionals



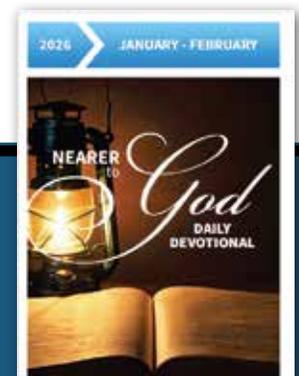
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IN CHRIST

THE ANTIDOTE TO WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE ANXIETY, EXHAUSTION, AND RESENTMENT THAT COMES WITH IT.

by Mark Penninga

I used to enjoy rock climbing. At least, I thought I did.

If you've tried it, you know what it feels like to be 50 feet up a cliff, clutching any hold thicker than the edge of a loonie. I would normally "top-rope," which involved my brother belaying from the bottom and the rope running through a carabiner at the top and back down to my harness. If I fell, my brother ensured that I wouldn't fall far.

But there were occasions when we couldn't get a rope to the top and would have to "lead climb." The climber would take the rope up as he climbed, and, using carabiners and a sling, secure it to bolts that were drilled into the cliff, usually about every 10 feet. So, if you climbed 10 feet past a bolt and were almost at the next one, you knew that a fall at that point would send you, not just to the next bolt, but 10 feet beyond it. Even if the belayer was holding the rope firmly, he couldn't stop you from falling 20 feet! You were on your own.

Even if my mind was willing, it was when I needed the most stability and strength that my body would sometimes rebel and stiffen or shake uncontrollably.

It wasn't enough to be determined. My body didn't cooperate with my mind. And then my mind would soon lose faith. As much as I wanted it, there was no way I could simply will myself into being able to do this – there was going to be no summit. And if I insisted on trying, there may have even been a painful fall.

LEAD-CLIMBING LIFE

In many ways, the same has been true of my effort to live as a Christian. Perhaps you can identify.

From our youth we are urged to "become like Christ." WWJD or "What would Jesus do?" is ringing in many ears. Perhaps it is a Bible passage like "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me" (Phil. 3:14) or maybe a doctrine we were instructed in, such as our calling to be a prophet, priest, and king (Lord's Day 12, Heidelberg Catechism). The underlying message we hear from many pulpits, classrooms, and dinner tables is "you confess to being a Christian, now act like it!"

Throughout my life, I have been trying to make progress towards the LORD.

One foot hold at a time, I have been striving to overcome fear and failure and make it to the summit.

But like my twitching body on the cliff, I have been humbled time and again. As much as I willed to make progress, my body was weak. "Step it up, Mark!" I told myself time and again. As I shared in a previous article on anxiety, eventually I burnt out. I got to the point where I felt like I could barely move, let alone summit anything. It is a horrible feeling to be a father, husband, and leader, and yet incapable of basic functioning.

That was about 8 years ago. My journey with understanding anxiety and stress has been ongoing, and I have been blessed with many helpful resources. But beneath it all I have discovered a spiritual root – I was trying to *earn* God's favor, to measure up, to prove my status as His child. Yes, I understand what grace means, and I'm convinced that I can be justified only by faith alone, in Christ alone. I've clipped my rope into these spiritual truths again and again, and then tried to keep climbing up, towards the summit. But it doesn't take long before I'm weary, restless, or

anxious again. Then I'm left shaking on the side of the cliff.

It has taken me too long to realize the answer has been close at hand all my life. It is captured in many places in Scripture, including:

- “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are *in Christ Jesus*.” (Rom. 8:1)
- “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but *Christ who lives in me*.” (Gal. 2:20)
- “...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to *put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*.” (Eph. 4:22-24)
- “For *in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God*, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:26-27)

The theme of being “in Christ” is immersed throughout the New Testament. When Paul refers to himself, he doesn't call himself a Christian. Rather, he calls himself a “man in Christ” (2 Cor. 12:2).

Christ Himself draws this out in John 15 when He describes how He is the true vine and we are branches.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me” (John 15:4).

The branch doesn't grow itself and then find a vine or branch to attach itself to and form a partnership with. We find our life wholly in Christ. He initiates the

growth, He sustains with His life-giving water, and He carries us through the winds and storms of life.

“Jesus does not call us to mimic Him but to manifest Him,” explains Steve Cuss, in his book *Managing Leadership Anxiety*. In my leadership and writing, as well as my parenting, I have constantly gotten this wrong. And the challenges I see in the Christian community suggest that I'm the norm, not the exception. “*Becoming like Christ is what God does in us, not what we do. God is the active agent; we are the recipients*,” explains Cuss (emphasis added).

But isn't there something we need to do? Cuss points to Scripture and explains that our first task is something we aren't usually that keen to do: to die to our old self (Rom. 6:6, Eph. 4:22-24, Col. 3:5-10). That includes the age-old propensity to pursue these false needs:

- Control
- Perfection
- Always having the answer
- Being there for everyone in need
- Approval

The truth is that these are attributes of God, not us. He is in control. He is perfect. He knows everything. He is there for everyone. And He give us our approval.

As Steve Cuss explains, “anytime a human being tries to take on a God-sized job, we get reactive.” Feeling stressed lately? Perhaps, like me, you are trying to become like God rather than living *in Christ*. Like many other Christians, I have spent much of my life trying to be faithful, while not experiencing the peace that Christ promises us when we abide in Him.

REFORMED PERSPECTIVE'S CORE PURPOSE

Every healthy organization should have a clearly-articulated reason for being. At our December board meeting, the board of Reformed Perspective settled on this core purpose:

Helping you think, speak,
and act *in Christ*.

This flows from our mission statement of “equipping and encouraging Christians to think, speak, and act in a manner consistent with their confession.” But hopefully you can also distinguish the nuance of the last two words. Instead of encouraging Christians to “step it up” by living in line with what we confess, the new focus is on thinking, speaking, and acting *in Christ*.

We think, speak, and act not to become like Christ. Rather, like a branch that produces fruit, our good works happen because we are connected to the Vine. We already are in Christ. We already are accepted. We already are loved. I don't have to climb toward God's favor. I don't have to fear my next slip and fall. Christ has already summited for me and is holding me firmly while I complete my journey.

We humbly invite you, our readers and listeners, to hold us accountable to our stated purpose, as we seek to assist you in thinking, speaking, and acting in Christ. 



Photo Credit: Harold Dykstra

Reformed Perspective is Hiring *Managing Editor (full-time)*

Are you ready to devote your fulltime to helping others think, speak, and act *in Christ*? Do others consider you to be very organized and great at moving projects forward? Are you humble, kind, results-driven, good with technology, and a persistent problem-solver?

The **Managing Editor** is a new role in the RP team, and will be responsible for keeping all of RP's content moving seamlessly from concept to production, in print and online.

It will be based from our office in the Bulkley Valley, in northwest BC. Smithers is a small community, surrounded by mountains, lakes, and rivers, with excellent Reformed churches and schools.

For details, please go to www.ReformedPerspective.ca/jobposting.

The posting is open until **August 15**, or it is filled.