

Reformed HELPING YOU THINK, SPEAK, AND ACT IN CHRIST

PERSPECTIVE

SINCE 1982

MAY - JUNE 2026 Volume 45 Issue No. 3



Check out the
top 25 *Your Turn*
entries and vote for
your favorite!

A good problem to have

We love making each new issue, but reviewing all the **"Your Turn"** contest entries has been one of the *highlights of our respective careers* with RP. Never in RP's history have we received so many submissions (well over a hundred, some of which were 15+ pages). And many of these were incredible. We wish this could be a 300-page issue where we could feature all of them!

This created a good kind of problem: how do we profile these in an 84-page magazine, when we already have other great content? We settled on some finalists for you to vote on in this issue (for the \$1,000 fan-favorite prize). But we have more great content scheduled for the next two issues of the magazine. So stay tuned!

We are very grateful to a generous sponsor, who is giving **\$7,000 in prizes** to these worthy winners!

Is your family tech-wise?

And we are finding our groove with **RP's Bucket List Book Club** calls on the last Saturday morning of each month. In April we tackled Andy Crouch's *The Tech-Wise Family*, about how families can best think through how they are going to use tech together. It's such a compact helpful title, we'd gift it to every RP reader if we could.

Then, in June we are working through Hans Rosling's

Factfulness, which is a secular book so why, one might ask, is it on RP's book list? Because it offers up, as the subtitle says, "10 reasons we're wrong about the world – and why things are better than you think." We're told the world is getting worse and worse, whether that's because of global warming or other environmental calamities, or because of overpopulation, or massive economic downturns. But there are so many reasons to be grateful, not panicked. Rosling might not have known it when he wrote it, but his book is all about how God continues to provide and bless.

It is never too late to join us. For a taste of university without the tuition sign up at **ReformedPerspective.ca/BLBC**.

Log out. Look up.

Summer is approaching, which means we are looking forward to joining many of you for a **10-day screen-fast from July 13-22**. The 1000+ people who took part last year spoke very positively about the blessing it was in their lives. Are you willing to join the fast this time? You can make exceptions (e.g. for work, or navigation, or music).

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We seek to be:

- **Biblical:** faithful to God's Word and the Reformed confessions;
- **Real:** applying God's Word to the nitty gritty of life;
- **Inspiring:** a catalyst for action by connecting to hearts;
- **Celebratory:** Christ is LORD and has already won!

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Now it's your turn to vote for your favorite!

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THE STATE OF THEOLOGY

What Do Canadians Believe About God?

See for yourself with The State of Theology survey from Ligonier Ministries. For the first time ever, we've conducted this survey throughout Canada, revealing what people today think about core teachings of the Christian faith.

Available in May, the 2026 key findings reveal significant confusion within the Canadian church, calling for clear and faithful Bible teaching. Explore the results and gain insights for discipleship.

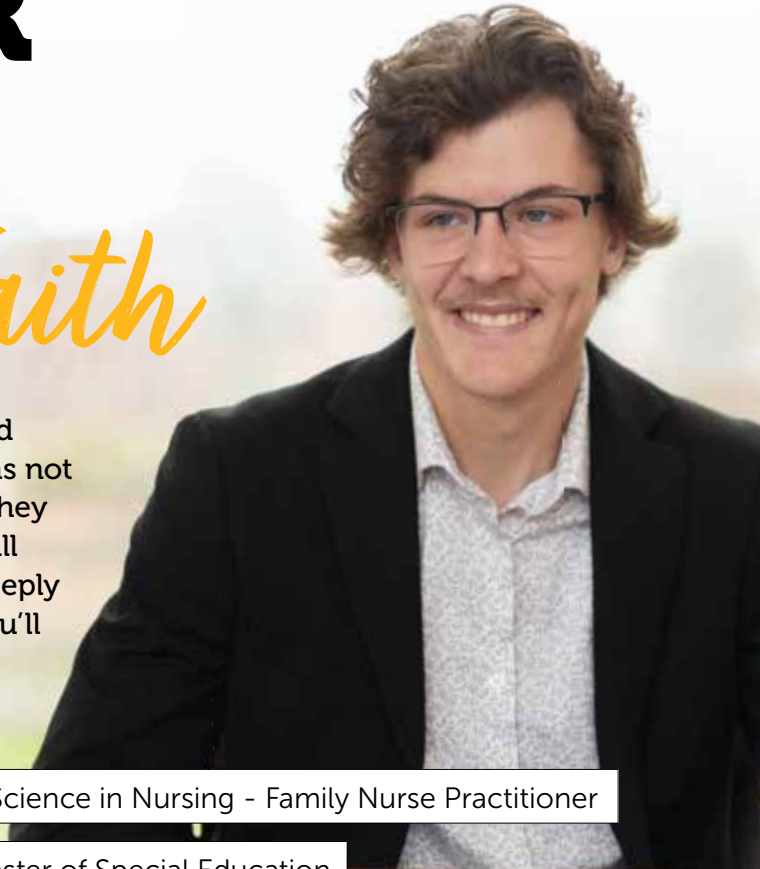


TheStateOfTheology.com/ca

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MERCEL BAUTISTA

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EQUIPPED TO SERVE

As a full-time teacher, administrator, and mom in British Columbia, Kelly Blackmore was looking for a program that would enable her to continue doing what she loved while deepening her education.

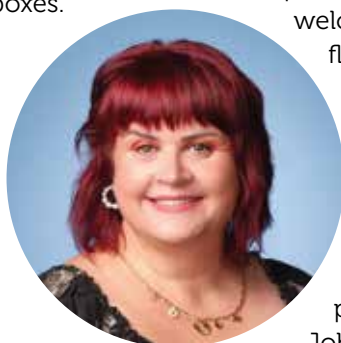
Recommended to her by fellow Canadian educators, Blackmore decided to look further into Dordt's Master of Education program.

Between cost, course offerings, and flexibility, the program checked all of her boxes.

"Knowing that I could complete a three-year program while working and still 'doing life' was one of the main factors in my enrolling in the program," she explains. Plus, even for an out-of-country student, the cost was surprisingly affordable, according to Blackmore.

Throughout her time in the program, Blackmore was consistently impressed by the faculty's genuine investment in their students' success. "The way in which my professors structured their courses allowed for a lot of my success," she explains. The balance of routine and flexibility helped her establish a steady rhythm, as she became familiar with "the ebb and flow of when assignments would be due and when new modules began."

Faculty members were also highly accessible, responding to emails promptly and readily scheduling Zoom meetings when additional support was needed. Blackmore emphasizes that her professors were not only invested in academic achievement, but "even more so—my growth as a Christian educator."



Beyond faculty support, Blackmore found the coursework itself to be immediately applicable to her daily work in education. "As a Canadian teacher, when I wanted to focus on an aspect of a topic through a Canadian lens, it was not only welcomed but encouraged," she says. "The flexibility of assignment criteria—often based on my context—was a great way to use what I was learning in real time," making the program especially practical and relevant to her day-to-day role.

Now, Blackmore serves as vice principal and sixth-grade teacher at John Knox Christian School. With an Instructional Coaching emphasis, Blackmore believes she is even better equipped to serve fellow teachers across grade levels. "It gave me so much valuable practice in supporting teachers in their practice—being able to ask questions to guide reflection, build relationships, and help staff build their capacity and capability," she says.

Although her time in the program has ended, Blackmore remains grateful for the impact Dordt's Master of Education program had on her life, helping her develop deeper professional skills and knowledge, as well as meaningful, lasting personal relationships. "I have made so many valuable connections through this program—friendships that are deep and meaningful and continuing to develop," says Blackmore.

IT'S YOUR TURN TO PICK THE FAN FAVORITE

You're going to love all the courage and creativity on display in these *Your Turn* Contest entries

by Mark Penninga & Jon Dykstra

Over one hundred of our readers created content just for you. Now we are asking you to pick your favorite.

When we advertised the “Your Turn” contest a few issues ago – to ask you to create content that inspires your brothers and sisters in Christ – we had no idea what kind of a response it would receive. After all, we live in a society where the vast majority of people *consume*, rather than *create* media. They read their books, scroll their phones, watch their screens, and listen to podcasts or the latest tunes that Spotify suggests. Fewer and fewer people actually produce the content. For example, the number of journalists in Canada has decreased by a third since 2010, and in the newspapers that remain they seem to be republishing much of the same content.

WOW. JUST WOW.

So, it was very encouraging to see 100+ of you respond to the challenge with incredible stories, articles, poems, songs, videos, and other creations.

Working through these entries has been one of the most enjoyable experiences we have had in our respective jobs to date. Your entries made us cry, shook us up, challenged our thinking, and helped us understand what it is like to experience trials that we have never gone through. For all who took the time to create, and were willing to share it with us, we extend our most sincere thanks.

Narrowing down the entries has been very difficult, and we want to emphasize that there are many more top-notch entries that will be published in the next couple of issues, the Lord willing. We simply don't have space to profile them all in single issue of the magazine.

HELP US NAME THE FAN FAVORITE


In this issue we are showcasing the winners of each category: audio, video, and written, for both youth and adults. Plus, we are profiling some others that came close. Thanks to the generosity of a donor, each of these winners is being awarded \$1,000. But there is **another \$1,000 prize that is yet to be determined**: the one that our readers vote for as the fan favorite!

We challenged our readers to create, now we are asking you to judge which of these you think is the very best. After giving them a listen, a watch, or a read, please scan the QR code here (using the camera app on your phone or tablet), or go to www.ReformedPerspective.ca/vote to make your selection.

We're asking that you vote for *your* favorite, not just because someone asks you to vote for *theirs*. Please also limit yourself to one vote. But

don't hesitate to get everyone in your household, and your neighbors, and your friends, to vote as well.

We will share the winner of the fan-favorite in the next issue, along with more superb entries. Thanks to the support of our donors, we are able to provide honorariums for many of the submissions we publish. So even if someone isn't a winner of the \$1,000 prizes, if their entry is published then they will be awarded a well-earned, though smaller, cheque, being paid just like our other writers are paid. More importantly, thousands of readers will be edified by their work, and God's Name will be glorified through the impact each piece will have.

Although we are limited by the size of our magazine, the reality is that we rely on submissions for every issue, including when there isn't a contest running. As such, whether you entered this contest or never got around to it, we warmly welcome submissions from you at any time. Our editor, Jon Dykstra, is adamant that everyone has at least one article (or song/video/podcast) in them. So we are always looking forward to *your turn!* 



Vote Here! 

You can send submissions to editor@ReformedPerspective.ca (and find tips on writing at ReformedPerspective.ca/how-to-write).

I WENT TO CHURCH

by Natasha Fennema

I went to church when I was young,
Where psalms and hymns were always sung,
Was baptized as a baby there,
And often went to God in prayer,
I knew some Bible stories well,
I thought that I was safe from hell,
My heart, I felt, was good enough,
To save me when the times got rough,

But Jesus Christ I didn't know,
The planted seed had yet to grow,
From church and God I fell away,
I had to leave, I couldn't stay,
I felt it all must be a farce,
A lie made up, for truth seemed sparse,
A cult, a sham, twas make believe,
I didn't want to be deceived,

For many years I lived in sin,
Away from God, my faith was thin,
But I could never shake the thought,
That there was more than I'd been taught,
My endless questions brought despair,
I searched for answers everywhere,
I had to know just what was real,
Based on the truth, not how I feel,

But then God opened up my eyes,
Turned out the world was full of lies,
The truth was always there with me,
I just was blind and couldn't see,
The Holy Spirit in my soul,
He gave new life and made me whole,
That's when the Bible came alive,
And faith deep down began to thrive,

'Cause what was missing all along,
Was Jesus, to whom I belong,
I learned that I had been set free,
From all my sins and misery,
Because of His great sacrifice,
Where on the cross He paid the price,
I was redeemed, my sins no more,
I now had Jesus to live for,

I went to church when I was young,
Where psalms and hymns were always sung,
To that same church I go today,
But in a very different way,
Twas as a Christian I was raised,
For that our God is to be praised,
He gave me roots, the seed, it grew,
And then He made my heart anew. YT



"This is a poem I wrote about faith and my testimony, a life of redemption, and my spiritual journey."

EDUCATIONAL PEACE

by Tamara Nieuwenhuis

It was the closest to a deal breaker we'd had. In our year and a few months of dating my fiancé and I had covered all the important topics extensively, or so I thought. That summer evening as we talked it finally hit me that my husband-to-be was set on Christian school for any future children we might be blessed with, and not, in fact, ever, interested in home-schooling.

"He really means it" I thought. I saw resolve and promise. He wanted something very good for his children and he would provide this for his family, Lord willing.

I had been homeschooled and it had been a wonderful experience that had filled my mind with possibilities. I had strong opinions about education and wanted to teach my future children myself.

Stubbornly optimistic, I swung the opposite way as I thought this through, "Maybe I can still change his mind!"

I knew he'd already seen a new side of homeschooling by getting to know my family. I figured this was just the beginning of him seeing things from my perspective, ignoring that perhaps that meant I should also try to see things from his.

The more sobering realistic side of me had to consider this man I loved and his desires for any children we might have. Could I follow his lead if it was different from my plan?

Discussing topics that are far in the future can result in two people thinking they know their future selves so well that they can decide now what they will be then. It sounds a little arrogant, but isn't that what the marriage commitment is as well, a promise to have and to hold, through

sickness and health, till death do us part? We really don't know what that will truly mean, when those vows are made. However, we do so in faith, and faith can move mountains.

Our first son was born and any conversations about education were few and far between in those first years. In my day-to-day choices I opted out of the early education classes that were numerous in our area as I didn't believe in rushing children towards early reading, but instead set out to provide our son with lots of natural learning opportunities; get our hands messy, read lots of books and answer his many questions, as simple as that.

Before our oldest was Senior Kindergarten (SK) age we had 2 more children and had moved to a new neighborhood and school district. For my precocious oldest I set up a 'school room' in the basement while knowing full well that homeschool families generally do school at the kitchen table. I was not immune to being a rookie. We worked through the alphabet, doing an activity or two per letter and searching for those letters in books and on signs when we were out for walks or running errands. Learning became a part of every day. We did the program, *Five in a Row* by Jane Claire Lambert and enjoyed that very much. I gave my son a harmonica after we finished reading the book *Lentil* by Robert McCloskey and found that to be a musical instrument that sounds kind of nice, even from a beginner!

Was this homeschooling despite my husband's wishes? Well, yes and no. He liked the idea of me educating our son until he was SK age, at which point he would go to school. By this point we had talked about this often and agreed on this plan. I felt really good about this most of the time, especially since our son was becoming so excited to go to school and I got to try out some of the teaching methods I'd had in the back of my mind for so long. I recognized that I was still feeling pulled in two directions and I remember praying about my lack of peace, and arriving time and time again to the answer to trust Him. To trust that God led me to my husband and that I could follow his lead because he also loved the Lord. Sometimes this was a literal cap to the bottle of endless misgivings. Trust Him, and trust him.

When the time came for us to pick a school, there was that same tug in my heart in the opposite direction as we considered a school that was nearby. The school was small, and that appealed to me. If my babies had to leave me I was glad it was to a school where they wouldn't be lost in a crowd and ignored. A little dramatic, but these were my early thoughts! If I was going to be a school mom I wanted



"This article is about following God's lead for education choices for our children. My husband and I had differing opinions about education as we started our marriage, and I wanted to encourage others who might face something similar. I hope to show how God can surprise us with His goodness when we trust Him."

to like the school. What was involved with being a school mom anyway?

That first day of school arrived much too quickly for me, and at long last for him. He was born in February and had been 5 for ages. His enthusiasm soothed me immensely, but I put him on that bus and then went inside to cry over a sink of dishes. His words at the end of the day, "It was my first day of school and I did it!" have made me smile so many times in the years since.

My thoughts during this first year were many. In some ways it felt so wrong to pack a small child a lunch and send him off for the day. I didn't want to ignore that feeling, but was still trying to trust. I would need to let him go eventually, right? An impossible thought when they have bright trusting eyes, and still climb into your bed every morning for a snuggle before the day starts. In conflict to these thoughts was a thriving happy child with a teacher and community we were beginning to love. I spent time thinking about the course my life was taking in comparison to what I had known growing up. I went back and forth a lot as God was showing me the way. It was a special kind of fun to show up at school and see my child light up with excitement to show me what they had been learning. I felt myself being established as the one who welcomed him home and caused that big exhale at the end of the day.

Homeschooling had always been an example to me of the only schooling option that allowed a child to be an individual. Simply by moving through the day as a group, a student in a classroom setting did not have the freedom to be ahead or behind their peers. Expecting all to fit neatly into a shape grated on me as I had seen in my own family that my older brother excelled at many things, and being homeschooled allowed him the time to pursue his interests, and to glean education from them. Similarly, I had a strong interest in art and our schedule offered ample time for creative expression. My younger brother by 3 years was easily doing my math, peering over my shoulder and giving the answers long before I understood what the lesson was asking. I've since forgiven him for this but it really got on my nerves at the time.

I was able to grow at my own pace, in the biggest way perhaps in that I didn't read well until grade 3, and I didn't know that until I was an adult. I didn't know that I was behind. Is there a school anywhere where a child could be "behind" and not know it, besides in homeschooling? I am so thankful I wasn't aware of my slower pace, and had the space to figure it out without pressure. That later start has not held me back, though it easily could have been a shadow I carried with me if I'd endured teasing, or had seen worry in the eyes of my parents or teachers.


My own life experiences were the main reason why I felt a pull to homeschool my children. Additionally, I felt I needed to defend myself, for the rest of my life if that's what it took. "We aren't weird, we aren't lacking in social skills, we don't

have holes in our education." (These situations do occur, but it's not simply because of homeschooling. Every educational environment has students that don't fit the mold perfectly, and teachers that unfortunately miss the mark.) That defensive position would have been a selfish reason to homeschool, and would have been an unsteady foundation for an education.

It was humbling to admit to myself and others that I could grow up homeschooled, absolutely love it, and then leave it. Once you are on the team you don't leave it and do something else. At least that's how it can feel. The other team, the one I was outside of for so long is full of... loving parents too. What did I think would be there?

In walking through each school year beside my children I've been able to glean a great deal of wisdom from fellow parents and the staff at school. Many of them struggled to send their babies to school too. I wasn't alone in missing them and wasn't alone in relishing the quiet house. One mom pointed out to me that each teacher has their strengths in teaching, and those strengths can bless our children. I saw this in the grade 1 teacher who taught the Christian faith in a way that made my 6-year-old truly love the Lord and pray with new understanding. Or the teacher who showed how to be determined and not give up when something is hard, or who said just the right thing to make a hard concept suddenly click. We are so blessed by these adults that pour Christ-like love and excellence into our children! Each teacher has made an impression and each year has brought positive growth.

Many of my fears were for nothing, and many of the strengths homeschooling offered we have been able to provide within and alongside the school. I don't think I'll ever stop being the Mom who works a lesson into the day, as homeschooling showed me that lessons learned as you live your life have as much impact as the ones learned in a classroom following a curriculum. When your school recognizes that educating children falls primarily on the parents, and their intention is to come alongside that goal in support and with the Christian faith held central, well, that can be counted as nothing but a great blessing.

This past September we began our 8th year at our school. I am no longer going back and forth in my mind wondering again if this was the right choice. God gave me an unexpected opportunity to learn in leading us to send our children to school. I thought I was one of the fortunate ones who was more open minded than others due to homeschooling, but I had misunderstood others the same way they had me. By trusting God through following my husband's lead I have been rewarded in more ways than I could say. There is no way to guarantee our children the very best in life, but that is often what we receive despite ourselves. I had an excellent upbringing, and by God's grace and great love, my children are too. 

THE FIRST BELL

by Ilse Ravensbergen



“As I prepare to begin my first year of teaching this September, I have faced many changes and external pressures that have shaped this season of my life. The words of 2 Corinthians 9:12 have inspired me to pray, trust in God’s plan, and seek His will, even in the midst of my own weakness and imperfection. Through the story of a teacher on her first day, I hope readers are encouraged to reflect on these truths, to rely on God in every moment and trust that He can use even our shortcomings for His greater purpose.”

The first bell came all too soon. The shrill cry echoed through the empty halls. Hands cold and clammy, she rose from the chair, facing the empty classroom.

The desks were smaller than she remembered, all twenty-three of them, lined up in neat rows towards her. Bulletin boards proudly showcased the planned curriculum, every poster hung perfectly straight. Freshly dusted bookcases held a collection of familiar favorites and new exciting titles, promising one adventure after the next. The cubbies stood organized and labeled, waiting for little fingers to give them life.

This was the moment she had prayed for.

This was the moment she had trained for.

And this was the moment she most wanted to run from.

Doors swung open, and little footsteps filled the halls, uneven and eager. Laughter rang out as old friends reunited, eager to share a classroom once more. Backpacks slid from shoulders and slammed against the walls, zippers being tugged open for the first time that year. Gentle reminders wove through words of welcome, reminding returning students that shoes were to be neatly tucked away so that they could not become a tripping hazard.

Then the little blond head appeared, slipping through the doorway. Blue eyes lifted to meet hers.

Her breath caught. The room seemed to narrow until it just held the two of them. Her knees trembled.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

The clock narrated the seconds of silence, each sound pounding into her chest in rhythm with her beating heart.

I’m not ready.

Her fingers gripped her pen tightly, knuckles whitening from the pressure. *What if I fail them? What if I’m not good enough?* The thoughts came rushing – overlapping and crashing until it consumed her entirely.

I can’t do this.

Then the boy smiled, hesitant and small. He offered a quiet hello.

She returned the smile. Relief washed over her, and she drew in a steadying breath, willing the shivers and shakes to still.

In came the next blond head, then a pair of brown eyes. A frenzy of jeans and colored t-shirts filled the room, the chaos

of the hallway spilling over into the classroom. The bell rang again, sharp and final, followed by the echoes of doors closing around the newly emptied halls – the sound of other teachers ready to start their day.

Yet she stood there, frozen, trapped under the expectant gaze of twenty-three pairs of eyes. Hope. Innocence. Expectancy.

Please don't let me fail them.

Her eyes met those of a little dark-haired girl, twirling her hair between her fingers, sparkly letters spelling "faith" across her pink t-shirt.

She closed her eyes.

Her breathing slowed. Her fingers loosened their grip on the pen. She let the sound of her own heartbeat steady herself, as the verse from her morning's devotions rose in her mind – not fully formed, not fully confident, but present.

God, you have placed me here for a reason. I'm not sufficient on my own. I am your servant. I need your strength to obey. May your will be done, whether I am ready or not.

She opened her eyes and smiled at her class.

The words of greeting came, hesitant at first, then steadier. Soon, the first notes of a psalm started, soft and uneven, but quickly transforming to dance throughout the room. Something loosened inside of her.

The minutes quickly blurred into hours. Stories sparked laughter that bounced off the desks. Pencils rolled and were retrieved with giggles and flushed cheeks. Whispers erupted as students noticed a misspelt word on the whiteboard. Sunlight shifted across the floor.

Student questions came more quickly now. Some she answered with confidence, others she could not. Once, she stopped mid-sentence, heat rushing to her cheeks. Students shifted in their seats, waiting. She admitted she did not know yet. The pause stretched out, longer than she had wanted, her heart racing once more. She answered with honesty instead of certainty before continuing to circle the room.

When the final bell rang, the weight had lifted from

her shoulders. She waved as buses pulled away, a quiet Thank You forming on her lips. The inadequacy remained, but the fear had loosened its grip. God had met her there, in the small faithfulness of the day, not by removing her weakness, but by sustaining her obedience within it.

Tomorrow she will return to the same room. The same desks. The same expectant eyes. The fear may return, fed by doubt and inadequacy. She may stumble through the day, calling a student by the wrong name or being unable to answer a question. But God did not require her to feel ready, because He already called her to be faithful. The lessons that she taught that day were not just for her students. They were reminders of God's faithfulness: revealed through weakness, obedience, and trust that comes before assurance.

And so it is with us. God places His people in moments that expose our weakness, where our limitations quickly rise to the surface. Our voice falters. Our hands shake. We hesitate. Yet, God does not leave His people to stand on their own strength. He does not step back when we falter, but calls us forward, asking for faithful obedience even when our hands tremble and our voices waver.

His power is made perfect not in our readiness, but in our obedience in times of weakness. God meets His people there, supplying what they need as they move forward, one faithful moment at a time. God knows our weaknesses, and still He calls us. He provides what we do not have when we move forward in trust and in prayer. It is there, in small and faithful obedience, that His glory shines most fully.

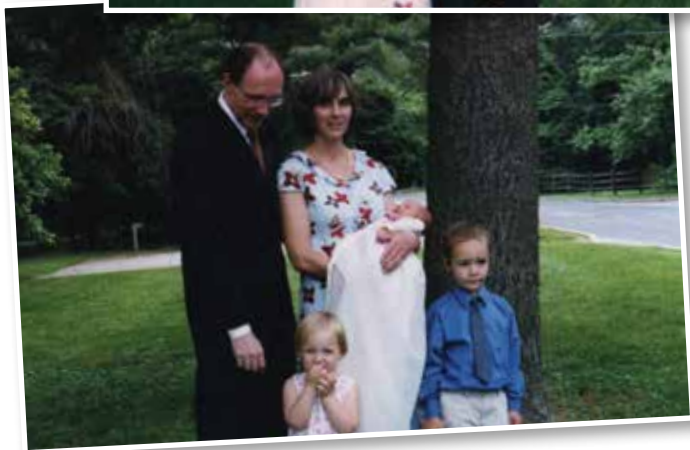
So, as you face the doorway where your weaknesses are exposed, where your hands shake and your voice falters, don't wait until you are comforted. Lift your eyes to Him. Pray for the strength you do not have, not to be made comfortable, but to be made obedient. The God who met this teacher in her trembling will meet you in yours, calling us to obey even when fear remains.

"For He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" (2 Cor. 12:9 NIV). YT

CREATED TO COMMUNE

by Madeleine Dewitt

My baptism photo



My little sister's baptism photo

Dinner at Aunt Barbara's house



A FIRST NEIGHBORHOOD

I was far too young to remember staying over at the neighbors' on the fateful day my sister – vernix-covered and with oh so perfect fingers and toes – entered the world. But I remember the house down to each room and can picture each tree in the expansive backyard – so large it seemed like a vast pasture to a younger me, the kind in which I was accustomed to seeing cows or sheep grazing as I sat through the miles and miles of driving to Ontario and back each August. I remember climbing in the willow and swimming in the infinitely deep pool and drinking Coca-Cola standing on the cold kitchen floor.

But memories and photographs become jumbled, and I wonder if any of it is really a memory. I can see my parents' wedding reception in the very same backyard through these photographs – boxes and boxes of them that seem to diminish with each successive cross-country move my parents make – the laughing faces of people ages older now, sweating joyfully in the June sun. Through another set of photographs, I can see my brother as a chubby and moody baby held in my honorary Aunt's lap on a lawn chair by the pool. Today, the house is inhabited by strangers, just as is the house nearby to it on Coles Boulevard, where at nine months I took my first steps so precociously.

Between these two houses stood another where a happy but fading part of my childhood was lived. There, I remember eating perfect dinners of spaghetti, salad, and jello in the pink dining room. Dinners were followed by joining my mother for a thoughtful examination of Aunt Barbara's new paintings in the small art studio at the top of the stairway. These neighbors we had a more perfect communion with; Sundays did not separate us. One of these "aunts" was the photographer for our family's iconic series of baptism photos taken in the graveyard behind our two-hundred-year-old church building. Each Lord's Day, we inhabited this building twice, listening to long sermons that changed everything each new week. Their handwritten summaries once filled drawers of filing cabinets in the laundry room. Now they spill into the online world in messy virtual piles, filling email inboxes.

COULD I BE COMING HOME AGAIN?

It's been nearly fifteen years since I sat in the cold, cushionless pews of the church where my baptism took place. Now I'm far away, driving down another long-forgotten street after having lunch with a long-lost childhood friend. It's a few weeks before my third semester of university begins. I turn right onto McNabb Street and cross Silver Creek, where years ago my sister and I would catch crawfish at lunchtime. With shock but no surprise, I see in front of number 17 the most enormous wall of sunflowers rising out of a tangle of vines. Gourds, squash, and pumpkins grow with singular abandon between their stalks. The sidewalk is barely passable, and where grass used to grow in the front yard, there are more vines and wildflowers than should be proper in such a small space.

I don't have to look at the familiar cars in the driveway to be certain that the neighbors from our brief years living at number 19 next door still inhabit the large brick house behind the jungle. I park and walk around the block twice before I work up the courage to knock on their door. I imagine their children, the event of whose births I can vividly recall, who must nearly be teenagers now. I wonder what it would be like if one of them answered the door and I had to explain myself. But no such thing happens, and after lingering on the porch for a few minutes, I walk back to my car and drive away with a feeling of finality I can't shake the whole way home.

DISCONNECTION AND DISTANCE

Late on a March night the following year, I call my mother from the top bunk in my rented basement room, exhausted from the impossible combination of relentless on-call work, loads of coursework, and the part-time job I try to fit in between it all. She gives me her usual account of the joys and entertaining politics of teaching first grade, her first time with a classroom of six-year-olds in decades, then pauses and says that she had sad news that morning. Our former neighbor has died after an unfathomable battle with the rapid physical and mental breakdown of Alzheimer's. This battle was evident in her diminishing presence in the immaculate garden she'd created over her lifetime. We don't live beside them anymore, but I can almost see the devastation on the face of her husband, the architect who rebuilt their beautiful house with floating walls and stairs to surround his wife's presence so perfectly.

Later in the year, I'm squatting beside an inflatable pool

with dripping sleeves, lost in the wonder of the moment, a few seconds after the clock turns 1:17 a.m. *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* plays in the background, and with irrelevant enthusiasm, I say "Oh, I love this hymn" as I hear it for the first time accompanied by the cries of a brand-new baby still sticky with vernix and warm from the radiant comfort of her mother's skin.

My visit there the next day is a quiet one – the younger children are still next door with their grandparents, and the new baby is utterly content with the colostrum filling her tiny but growing stomach. I hesitate to undress her and press my cold stethoscope to her steadily rising chest to hear her lungs and heart move in a remarkable synchrony they've only known for 34 hours now. From the end of their driveway as I leave, I can see the letterbox next door that bears the same family name as the new baby, the name of her grandparents, and I think about how impossibly distant we tend to put ourselves from our own families.

I look across the blue-green waves of Lake Huron on the following Saturday afternoon. I force myself to take my car down to the lake so I won't drown in the malaise of indecision and aloneness I so often encounter these days. As I stand on the narrow beach, I can't even make out the other side of the lake, let alone the thousands of kilometers of fields, trees, mountains, desert, and more lakes beyond that my mind traverses to imagine myself back at the dining room table that's followed my family to each new home they make.

LOSING OURSELVES AND FINDING A HOME

In C.S. Lewis' vision of Hell in *The Great Divorce*, the reader finds himself in a neighborhood, an uncanny departure from the flames and circles of Dante's Inferno imagined eight centuries before. But soon the reader of Lewis finds out this is no ordinary neighborhood; rather than every house being crowded, there is hardly a block with more than one occupant. In fact, the more houses empty, think Hell's inhabitants, the better. C.S. Lewis imagines Hell as a constant movement away from other people, an endless conflict that isolates people again and again and again. When Hell's inhabitants have the opportunity to visit the glassy, bright, and mysterious world of Heaven, they are disgusted. They long for the darkness of their tomb-like homes back in the false neighborhood to which they've been banished.

C.S. Lewis seeks to answer the nagging question: if we keep moving away from one another, where do we end up?

In Proverbs 27:10, the wise king tells us, “Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.” Solomon is calling us to first love and care for those who are near – both our literal neighbors and those who make up our communities. Nowhere is this better manifested than in the life of Christ, who ministered to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 15:24), working amongst those who knew Him despite their reluctance to hear His voice (Luke 4:16-30). For Christ, being rejected by His people – the very Jews He grew up amongst and journeyed alongside to Jerusalem for the Passover as a child – was the moment of His entrance into Hell.

As a result of Christ’s full isolation first from His community and finally from God, we do not have to experience such isolation any longer. Christ’s aloneness was part of the way God chose in His wisdom to restore our communion with Him and with others. When we reject isolation and live in gratefulness for communion and service in the body of Christ, we experience the true joy of fellowship. The story of our salvation mirrors that of Israel’s, the story of journeying as strangers from one foreign land into another and miraculously finding a beautiful home. In Psalm 119:17-21, the Psalmist pictures our lives as a sojourn from the isolation caused by sin towards God’s perfect law of love, a Holy Spirit-directed journey to restored fellowship. This journey is embodied in the context of community, particularly the Church community.

Because we belong body and soul to our Savior and thus to our brothers and sisters in the Church, our identity is tied to others. We were made for people. The idea of belonging and community seems popular in our modern world, but connections between people are often brittle and shallow, rooted in common interest rather than common confession. Common interest alone cannot truly bind people together. Devastating cultural impacts are evident in a world driven by technology, social media, and political causes, all ready to replace dependence on other human beings with self-sufficiency and self-determination. True community, however, means giving up self-ownership and self-interest and becoming grafted into the assembly of the redeemed – a people of God’s choosing.

NEW LIFE AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS

Since our spiritual well-being is dependent on our belonging to a community of believers, our physical well-being must also carry ties to relationships and dependence on others. This is made so clear on the path I currently travel as a third-year midwifery student. Maternity care makes the role of being bound to a community in improving physical health particularly evident.

Both anecdotal and peer-reviewed evidence point to the

effectiveness of community-based models of care, where home visiting by midwives and other caregivers is central to improving mental and physical health for mothers and babies.¹ These outcomes extend to the rest of the family and can lead to more involvement by fathers in parenting and improved health outcomes for all members of the family.^{2,3}

In the communion of the saints, these benefits seem natural and logical, but the support we take for granted, such as meals being provided unconditionally following a birth or tragedy or serious illness, is unheard of amongst the majority of people in Western countries. Our strong understanding of the covenant and its attendant blessings that spill down through generations helps us care for one another in the early days of parenting and be instruments of Christ in the way we care for our children. The absence of such a connection to community is evident in the intergenerational inheritance of poor health and parenting outcomes that so many in the world around us suffer from. Accessing help for the basic needs of life while trying to feed and care for a new human being is no small task. It leaves many in a position of compromise for themselves and their infants that continues down several generations.⁴ If no community of those physically or spiritually “next door” exists, new families lack the love, care, and support they need to thrive.

Perhaps more important than the tangible benefits (food, childcare, clothing, etc.) of a strong community is the comfort that our neighbors, particularly our fellow church members, can provide through the most challenging circumstances of life. Certain research has shown that there is a positive but finite role for both social support and healthcare provider-initiated intervention in preventing and alleviating serious mental health concerns.^{5,6} There is clearly a limited extent to which these supports, however important they are, can practically provide a long-term solution to mental health struggles like postpartum depression. Interestingly, research on spiritual health postpartum in North American contexts finds a connection that is widely supported between religious involvement, community support, and positive mental health outcomes.⁷ Of course, we understand that for all the medical research on the “hormonal” and “psychological” benefits of faith and religious community, it is only by the work of the Holy Spirit, a confounding variable more powerful than any that can be randomized or controlled for, that any true well-being can be conferred. Furthermore, we confess that such benefit comes through the preaching of the Gospel, an act that occurs only in communion with others.

HOW ARE WE THEN TO LIVE?

It’s a few weeks after I visit Lake Huron when I turn into the icy gravel road where my vast rented farmhouse sits. I’ve inhabited the house for the past six weeks, moving from

one room to another each time the loneliness grows to fill the kitchen or attic or drafty front bedroom. Sandy, my little white sticker-covered car, groans in the frozen air, air so cold the small screen on my dashboard flashes a pathetic-looking snowflake and beeps a strangely aggressive warning against venturing outside. It's only the third week of November, and yet winter, with its confounding grace, has already descended on the countryside in patches – driving from one town to the next out here can mean the difference of half a foot of snow.

Since I left for my postpartum home visits this morning, the road has been ploughed and covered again, and the laneway's entrance is no longer passable, at least for Sandy, who has been known to flounder in snowbanks much less formidable. For the first time, but without hesitation, I call the neighbor who is kindly renting me the house. I first came into contact with her through the happy confluence of church and clinic connections. *"I'm really just being lazy, but if I had a shovel..."* I start, but then I find myself in the warmth of her home fifteen minutes later, eating apple pie and talking about birth and the passage of time that to me is still totally beyond comprehension.

Every new home I've made in every new place has made it clear to me that life without a neighborhood, life without an embodied community, life without flesh-and-blood people, is no life at all. My hope is to remain always connected to a community that rejects futile individualism and finds itself belonging in a way that defies our lonesome contemporary culture. My hope is also that we as believers pray to belong to the beautiful God who has rescued us from ourselves and to the beautiful people He is making into His holy Bride. In this way, we can echo Christ's high priestly prayer in John 17 that gives believers the hope that they will never be alone in the world. For we know He will accompany us every day by granting us the Holy Spirit and helping us show love in the most tangible ways to one another through the communion of saints that He is continuously building. YT



"My name is Madeleine and I am a young believer in my final year of training at McMaster University to become a midwife. In my work over the past couple of years, I've come to realize how instrumental community and the support of neighbors are for new mothers in the early days postpartum. In this article, I wanted to use my personal experiences of moving frequently throughout my life and connect these to some writing about the spiritual and physical benefits that our neighbors provide. I hope what I have written can be edifying to readers and give people encouragement in their simple, daily, neighborly acts of love."

END NOTES

¹"Postpartum care for parent-infant dyads: A community midwifery model" by Ariana Thompson-Lastad (and associates), published in *Birth: Issues in Perinatal Care*, April 8, 2024

²"Midwives' perceptions and experiences of engaging fathers in perinatal services" by Holly Rominov (and associates), published in *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, August 2017

³"The impact of paternity leave and paternal involvement in child care on maternal postpartum depression" by N. Séjourné (and associates), published in the *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, June 29, 2012

⁴"Experiences accessing nutritious foods and perceptions of nutritional support needs among pregnant and post-partum mothers with low income in the United States" by Jessie Benson (and associates), published in *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, October 2024

⁵"Systematic Review of the Literature on Postpartum Care: Effectiveness of Postpartum Support to Improve Maternal Parenting, Mental Health, Quality of Life, and Physical Health" by Elizabeth Shaw (and associates), published in *Birth: Issues in Perinatal Care*, September 2006

⁶"A systematic review of community-based interventions to address perinatal mental health" by Jihye Scroggins (and associates), published in *Seminars in Perinatology*, October 2024

⁷"Social support, religious commitment, and depressive symptoms in pregnant and postpartum women" by Andrea D. Clements (and associates), published in *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, on March 15, 2016

ON KIDS IN THE PEWS AND GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

by Jennie VanDriel

Don't you sometimes sit in church, and look in amazement at some of the young families in the rows ahead of you, and wonder how these little ones can possibly sit still for a whole hour? True, some are better at it than others, even in the same family, but they are there faithfully every Sunday. It is amazing that week after week, you see improvements! It makes you laugh when you see an older sibling straightening out a younger fidgeting one. Not always easy!

In our Reformed tradition, taking your children to church, from age 3 or 4 on, has been the norm for many years. It hasn't been an easy thing to do! It's often a trial for Mom and Dad, to see to it that the youngest is learning to sit still, just like the older brother or sister. But amazingly, they learn!

We have friends who, many years ago, gave up the battle of taking their children to church, saying it was much too difficult to keep them quiet: they needed to be entertained in a much more appealing way. They found a church that catered to the needs of their kids; they wouldn't need to sit still; they could interact and speak their minds (and oh! they had minds of their own) as much as they wanted to. So often the kids' wants were catered to. What they liked and disliked was taken into account.

It so happened that these friends visited us last year. Yes, they had their worries about their now grown and married children, who didn't go to church anymore, and in turn had not taken their children at all – "It's a different world, Mom and Dad, that was maybe okay in your days, but things are so much faster paced, our kids have to keep up with all the latest. But Mom, don't worry, we still say a simple prayer at mealtime, the one you taught us, Mom!"

Our friends came with us to church during their stay, morning and afternoon services. They were appalled that again there were families with little children in church in the afternoon. "Ach, die arme kinderen!" exclaimed my friend Betsy – (Oh those poor kids!), "Do they have to sit still again for another hour?"

I leaned over and replied to Betsy, "Isn't that how you and I learned to sit still during worship services so many years ago? And it hasn't hurt us!" Just then another family walked in, sitting in front of a family with little kids, and it being before the service, they turned around and exchanged little tidbits with giggles. It warmed my heart!

And then I just had to share with Betsy – "Watch them sing when the service starts!" Oh! How thankful I was that our local Christian school still had the custom of teaching the students a psalm or hymn every week. Our pastors knew which ones!

And oh! Those kids in the rows ahead of us didn't disappoint. Even though it was a difficult Genevan melody, they knew the song! They sang their hearts out, and I couldn't help it, I had tears in my eyes – it was so moving. I didn't say anything to Betsy, but after the service, if I'd had a huge bag with chocolate bars, each of those kids would have gotten one from me.

We live in worrisome and confusing times, for us, and for our children. The pace of change in society seems to increase every year. What a comfort to have the solidity of God's unfailing Word as our comfort and our guide. Our God is faithful – even when we are not always!

The Lord made a covenant with us His children – something we can bank on! Psalm 105 is often sung at baptisms; reflect on these beautiful words from the Genevan Psalter, verse 3:

He is the Lord, our God unfailing,
 His judgements everywhere prevailing.
 He will remember and uphold
 His covenant made in days of old.
 The STEADFAST WORDS of His command
 A THOUSAND GENERATIONS STAND!

When our children learn these psalms, the meaning of the words is not always grasped, but the words are committed to memory. And by God's Holy Spirit they are brought to mind through different circumstances throughout their lives! That's God's Word; it never returns to Him empty. We can reflect on the beautiful words of Isaiah 55:9-11:

"As the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways higher than your ways
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.

"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
 and do not return to it without watering the earth,
 and making it bud and flourish
 so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
 so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
 it will not return to me empty,
 but will accomplish what I desire,
 and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Thank the Lord for faithful parents, for faithful pastors, for faithful teachers at our Christian schools!! Hold them up in prayer!! And remain faithful – it comes with many blessings! He has promised! YT



"The reason I wrote the article was to tell how easily we're influenced by the culture around us – it's so easy to give in, and it's so understandable to wish your kids to be happy and unfettered by old-fashioned dictates. But our faithful God wants us to be obedient – to obey is better than sacrifice. He wants our hearts and commitment.

*"How shall the young direct their way –
 What light shall be their perfect Guide?
 Thy Word oh Lord will safely lead
 If in its wisdom they confide!"*

That's from Psalm 119. Again and again, we're reminded that we need to be under the faithful preaching of His Word – and what better way than to bring your children to Church!

Haven't you had it, when you really don't feel like going to church on a hot Sunday afternoon – yet you go, and somehow been richly blessed by the preaching, the singing! Don't underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit to bring the great truths and comfort of His Word to us.

Let's be thankful that we still have the freedom to take our children to church!!

Our forefathers did this under much more difficult circumstances, and parents under repressive regimes must teach their children before they attend school the eternal truths and comfort of salvation in Jesus Christ – belonging to Him, body and soul!! That He will never leave them!!!"

ADULT WINNER!

YOUR TURN: ADULT WRITTEN

LIFE INSIDE THE LINES

A profile of an artist



by Holly Enter

Klaas, at age 12, painted this atop an older painting of “an uninspiring bowl of fruit,” the outline of which can still be seen as a faint outline.



Holly Enter has long been inspired by her dad's artwork. She desired to “share not just his artwork, but a bit of his life story as well. The theme of ‘lines’ connects his work in architecture, his style of art, and his faith. I was struck by how his life reflects a deeper truth: that beauty and joy are often found not in rejecting structure, but in living within the good boundaries God has given.”

BUDDING ARTIST

Twelve-year-old Klaas Stel sat uncomfortably before a blank canvas at a beginner art class. The year was 1958, and as the son of poor Dutch immigrants, Klaas could not have felt more out of place. The rest of the class consisted entirely of older ladies, who squeezed generous amounts of expensive paint onto their palettes. For Klaas, in whom thrift was as deeply ingrained as the Heidelberg Catechism, this felt like unnecessary extravagance. On the well-lit table before him sat the day's subject: a carefully arranged bowl of fruit.

It was a financial stretch for his parents to consider art lessons for their son, evidence of their faith in his abilities. Perhaps for his father, Klaas Stel Sr., from whom he inherited his creative streak, there was the desire to see his son have opportunities that he could not. The Stel family came to Ontario, Canada, in the 1950s, joining a flood of immigrants from the Netherlands in search of a better future for their five sons. In his later years, Klaas Stel Sr. wrote a book in his native Frisian tongue about the family's immigration experience. He gave his book the lofty title *The Land of Dreams and Wishes*.

With such high expectations, reality hit hard. But like many other Dutch immigrants at the time, the family rose to the challenge. The Stel boys, especially the older brothers, were expected to work to help support the family. As the youngest, these pressures had eased by the time Klaas was old enough for regular work, even to the point where his parents could consider modest “extras” like art lessons for their budding artist.

FINDING INSPIRATION

But it was to be the first and last art lesson for Klaas. Painting fruit bowls with old ladies just wasn't for him. It wasn't long after that class that he discovered a far more interesting subject for a new painting. He had picked up a book on shipbuilding at the local library and was fascinated by its detailed illustrations of a ship's design. Still tight on finances, it was pointless to consider buying art supplies such as a new canvas. This was not an issue; he had a canvas! It was just filled with



Part of the kitchen cabinet painting can be seen in the top right of the photograph. ►



an uninspiring bowl of fruit. With quick, decisive strokes, the bowl was covered, and a new scene emerged: a ship at full sail, tossed upon stormy seas. If one looks closely at this early painting, the faint outline of the original still life remains as a shadow beneath.

To reuse and recycle was a way of life for Dutch immigrants long before it became a municipal program with blue-colored bins. Thriftiness was inveterate; spending money on hobbies and frills was impossible. When young Klaas had another inspiration for a painting, a scene of deer grazing along a riverbank, he painted it on the exposed backing of upper cupboards in the family kitchen. Thankfully, this painting was saved when the family moved. But the small nail holes in several spots in the wood are a reminder of its original purpose.

FINDING VOCATION

Just as ingrained in Klaas's family was the biblical adage that he who does not work does not eat, and as someone who dearly loved his meat and potatoes, that meant practical work needed to be done and would always need to be done. An art career was not considered a practical vocation in those days, and therefore was not a consideration for Klaas. But providentially, he found a career path that was an excellent fit for his creative side: Architecture.

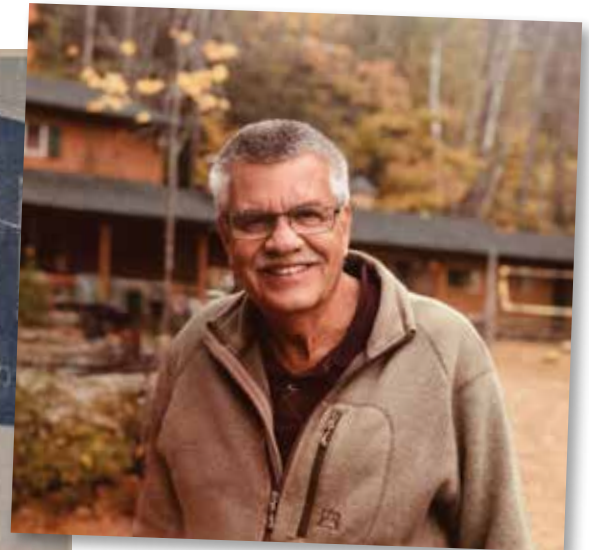
The lines of perspective and symmetry clearly appealed to him, providing rules that his artist's eye could already pick out. As he grew older, married, and began to raise his family of five daughters (of whom I am the fourth), his commitment

to rules grew, not only in his work but in life. The same instincts that drew him to clean angles and clear perspectives in buildings also drew him to love the firm and gracious lines that God draws for human flourishing. "How I love Thy law, O Lord! Daily joy its truth affords," exclaims the Psalmist. In keeping within the lines of law of both nature and God, rather than suffocating restriction, he found increasing joy.

COLORING IN THE LINES

My sisters and I were clearly taught these boundaries. When it came to art, like most children, we were encouraged to color within the lines. As young children, the discipline of mastering the skill and patience to fill in each clearly defined space on our coloring pages was praised. The most beautiful art we could create generally followed the rules of correct perspective, proportions, lighting, and color theory. We learned by example that in art, as well as life, our best work flourished within a framework of what was right and good. And though our home had fairly strict rules by common standards (and though I was the child who most often pushed against them!), the overall hindsight impression of my childhood was that it was a home not primarily characterized by its restrictions, but by its sense of love and joy.

Art, of course, can come in many types and forms; many artists defy what the eyes see in the form of impression and expression, creating beauty outside of the lines. There are



◀ Klaas, age 17 or 18, seated in front of a mural he painted for his high school. This photo is clipped from a newspaper article about the donated mural, which hung at Huron Heights for many years, disappearing from the school about 15 years ago.

certainly wonderful opportunities in art to expand boundaries. But in a world where a banana duct-taped to a wall is hailed as groundbreaking and sells for \$6.2 million, it's not surprising that we are often still drawn to traditional styles.

In Proverbs 8, the personification of Wisdom poetically describes herself as the unlikely companion to the Creator in His ultimate creative work, highlighting an aspect of creation left unstated in Genesis:

*"I was beside Him, as a master workman;
And I was daily His delight" (Prov 8:30).*

It's in God's amazing creation that we see rationality and natural law hand in hand with beauty and design. God delighted in weaving wisdom into the created order, and we too can appreciate the logic at the heart of all created things.

My dad's artwork is characterized by this sense of rightness, and the result is particularly beautiful. His paintings – serene landscapes, ordinary moments, and nostalgic scenes, especially of his native Holland – follow the well-established rules of composition learned through careful study of light and shadow. Often featuring paths and laneways, we are drawn into scenes that feel both familiar and inviting: moonlit farmyards, sun-dappled lanes, overgrown fields where farming implements are left to rust. They are places we may have passed a thousand times without ever pausing to notice their unique beauty, and we wonder how we could have missed it. Even without formal art training (besides that ill-fated art class at age twelve), his work reveals an instinctive

grasp of not just linear perspective, but of the subtler ways depth is suggested through shifts in color and clarity. His architectural background lends his paintings a pleasing correctness. It makes sense. It's right. It fittingly reflects not just what we see, but how we feel about it.

"BY THE WAY..."

When Leonardo da Vinci applied for a job to the ruler of Milan, he identified himself first as an engineer and architect. It is only at the end of his 10-point letter that he adds, in essence, "By the way, I can also paint." We may be astonished that the painter of the *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper* only mentions his painting ability as an afterthought, but he truly felt his gifts and interests lay elsewhere (such as inventing elaborate weaponry that was never built).

Similarly, my dad would never introduce himself as an artist. His identity lay in the many other roles in his life. He was an architect, a husband, father, and elder in our church. Painting was never his "passion"; he would far rather throw his creative energy into renovating derelict cottages, building a miniature village for his grandchildren, or assembling creatures out of driftwood found along the shores of nearby Lake Ontario.

But, by the way, he can also paint.

GIFTS

Rather than something primary in his life, painting became simply a delightful gift he would use when it could bless others. Every year, he painted a much-anticipated Christmas card for our family. He donated elaborate murals to two local schools.



He paints beautiful backdrops for our homeschool plays. He wrote and illustrated a children's story for his grandchildren.¹ Almost every painting he's ever created has been given away. Even now, in retirement, he is creating paintings for his twenty-five grandchildren. You won't find his paintings in a gallery, art studio, or online. They only hang in the homes of family and friends who were fortunate enough to receive them as gifts.

The Dutch thriftiness and practicality remain. Dad uses whatever supplies he happens to have on hand to create his masterpieces, including craft paint from Dollarama (defying those who would say that good art requires expensive supplies!). Though he no longer resorts to painting on kitchen cabinetry, most of his paintings are created on canvases picked up at thrift stores. While I was admiring one of his recent pieces, he pointed out to me that the original image of painted flowers was still visible on the reverse side. "That way," he said, "if whoever receives this painting gets tired of what I painted, they can always turn it over!"

PLEASANT PLACES

"The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places," says the Psalmist – a verse my dad has often quoted, and one that seems particularly fitting for someone who spent his life

drawing careful lines and teaching us to appreciate them. Both architecture and scripture gave him boundary lines that were not seen as fences to keep creativity out, but frameworks where beauty and artistry thrive.

In a world where so many lines are blurred, despised, or ignored, my dad's life has been a joyful testimony that boundaries are not barricades, but invitations. The same young man who discovered an appreciation for the disciplines of architecture learned that the Lord's lines are a yoke that is "easy and light." Within those lines, he created a life and a legacy filled with joy, usefulness, generosity, and creativity. And like his paintings, his life continues to be shaped by the gracious lines of a faithful God. YT

ENDNOTE

¹ *The Story of Bluebeard's Treasure* was written to accompany an annual treasure hunt my dad organizes for his grandchildren at our family cottage. Predictably, he didn't want any royalties, so it's available on Amazon for simply the cost of printing.

Pictures were provided with the gracious permission of the author (and her dad).

A Love That Gives Birth, Even Without Bearing Children

by Saadi Al Azah



“Often, my writing flows from deep inner moments, between pain and joy, where I experience God’s presence in the small details of life. This piece was born out of reflecting on a love I have truly experienced, a love not defined by physical ties, yet one that gave me a profound sense of belonging. While reading the story of Rahab, I was struck by how an open heart can become a refuge, and how a simple act filled with faith can enter into God’s greater story. In that moment, I remembered people who embraced me with genuine love, and their love became for me a living testimony that God still works through open hearts. This is why I wrote: to express a love that gives birth to life in others, even without bearing children.”

There are people who may never hold a child of their own,
yet they carry within them a love that gives birth to something far deeper.

Some hearts welcome strangers as though they were long-lost sons... Some open
their homes the way others open their arms...

Some treat the weary as family,
the refugee as a brother,

the one who struggles with language as though he had always belonged.

These hearts do not give birth to children of flesh and bone but they give birth to
something eternal:

A new hope in a tired heart,
a smile on the face of someone who thought he had none left,
a sense of peace in the path of someone who had walked alone for too long,
a feeling of belonging in the life of one who believed he had no place in this world.

Such people are like Rahab...

She was not a princess, nor a prophetess,
nor someone with a noble title.
And yet her house became a refuge,
her courage became a doorway through which God’s people entered, and her
simple act of love became a crimson thread

woven into the story of redemption.

Because love, true love does not wait for a cradle to be full. It waits for a heart to
open.

There is a love that may never prepare a crib for a child, but it prepares a table for
the lonely.

There is an embrace that may never hold a newborn, but it holds a wounded soul
until he can stand again.

And this is the truest meaning of parenthood in the Kingdom of God: not the birth
of bodies...

but the birth of life, warmth, and hope
in the hearts of others.

14 Ways of Looking at a Star

by Ariel

I.

Star: *noun*. A fixed luminous point in the night sky which is a large, remote incandescent body like the sun.

II.

There were no birthday candles,
curled chips,
dandelions, wells,
eyelashes, or bones.
But a single star shot across the night sky.

III.

A star is just a sun,
but too far away to keep us warm.

IV.

On ancient faded sailors' maps
dangerous waters,
trading cities,
marked with tiny perfect stars.

V.

Someone once said to find
the first star of the night
to make a wish.
But what happens when it's cloudy?

VI.

Some stars are long since dead.
The light just hasn't ceased shining
yet.

VII.

A starry black sky
reflects grains of sugar,
spilled across a kitchen counter.

VIII.

A shooting star isn't shooting.
It's burning up
and falling.
Nobody makes a wish for such
destruction.

IX.

A single star
imprisoned in
a frosted window pane
pretends not to eavesdrop.

X.

A fading star
at dawn's edge
spreads rumours
of daylight.

XI.

Stars cry out
behind city lights,
desperate to be seen
and admired.


XII.

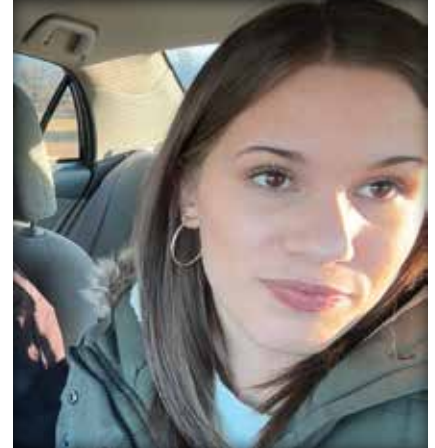
Things that can be mistaken for stars:
Street lamps
Planes
Satellites
Hope

XIII.

A million stars
reflected in the water's surface,
making it impossible to tell
which
way
is
up.

XIV.

If a star falls
and there's no one around
to see it,
does it still burn? 



"The idea and beginnings for this poem started at the end of high school for me, in my Writer's Craft course, around this time last year. We had just studied the poem 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird' by Wallace Stevens. It was a very confusing read, but I was inspired by what I could do with the idea behind it. I used a similar formatting and created my own meaning for it. Stars are one of the most majestic parts of God's creation and it's impossible not to feel overwhelmed by beauty standing under a blanket of inky night sky, scattered with them. I also wanted to make this poem to speak to a wide audience, so I wrote it as a brief series of perspectives to reflect how the meaning of a star shifts depending on who we are and how we look at something. So, for me, a star is a beautiful, inspiring representation of God's creation. But it could also be the twinkle in someone's eye, a wish, a marker on 'ancient, faded sailors' maps,' or a simple dictionary definition. I didn't want to go in-depth for each perspective, because I wanted to leave space for the audience to relate or connect with each piece differently than someone else might. I hope you enjoy it!"

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

A play for family gatherings

by Brianna

Gather your family together and relive the beloved story of CS Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. This would be great to do at Christmas or Eastertime. (Note: Some portions of the script (such as poems) are direct quotes from CS Lewis' novel.)

ROLES TO ASSIGN:

When assigning roles, it's great to have everyone involved. Consider having Grandma and Grandpa as the White Witch and Aslan. If you have kids who can act, but can't read, assign an adult to be their voice. The narrators should be good readers and pause for the actors to act out what they are narrating. Some parts can be played by the same people. A baby can play the role of the robin and dwarf (with an adult being the dwarf's voice). The stone statues and other animals provide great opportunities for small children, pets, or stuffed animals too!

Plan your roles ahead of time and have enough scripts for actors. Consider some simple costumes.

- Narrator 1
- Narrator 2
- White Witch
- Aslan
- Susan
- Peter
- Edmund
- Lucy
- Mr. Tumnus
- Mr. Beaver
- Mrs. Beaver
- Robin
- Professor
- Father Christmas
- Dwarf
- Animal 1
- Animal 2
- Maugrim
- Other wolf
- Evil messenger

PROPS:

Gather these ahead of time and plan how to set up your living room as a stage area. Feel free to substitute props with things you have on hand. We had Father Christmas giving Lucy a bottle of coke and Peter a banana sword and pizza cardboard shield out of a grocery bag. We didn't have a sewing machine and used an orange. It was good for some extra laughs. If you don't have the prop, you can pretend while acting.

- Wardrobe (ex. large cardboard box, cupboards kids can climb into, French doors)
- Tree (Christmas tree)
- Lamppost (Livingroom lamp)
- Package
- Umbrella
- Tea party supplies
- Handkerchief
- Sleigh (ex. Empty laundry basket, GT)
- Turkish Delight (something yummy to eat)
- Small piece of paper
- Table to sit around at the Beavers' dam (coffee table)
- Father Christmas' bag
- Sewing machine (ex. needle & thread)
- Bow & arrows
- Horn
- Small bottle (ex. Coke)
- Small dagger (ex. Butter knife)
- Sword
- Shield
- Breakfast (ex. Box of cereal)
- Rope (ex. Skipping rope)
- Stone Table (ex. Kitchen table that pulls apart, Two tables beside each other)
- 4 thrones of Car Paravel (kitchen chairs)
- Shaving supplies (ex. Razor)
- Mice (ex. Cat toys)
- Stone statues (ex. Stuffed animals)
- Copies of script for all actors with speaking roles

Narrator 1: Four kids named Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy stepped up to the professor's house. Because of WWII in London, the evacuees had to move to this giant house. London was being bombed and it was safer in the country. They were going to live here for a while.

Narrator 2: The next day it was raining. So, the siblings decided to explore the house. They passed a room with a small doorway. It didn't look very exciting, but Lucy, who was the youngest, decided to step in and look around. There was nothing but an old, musty wardrobe. Lucy decided to look at what was inside. She didn't close the door but walked many steps inside of it. First, she noticed that she could no longer feel coats with her fingers, which were stretched out in front of her. Then, she started to feel something cold. Then it started to get sunnier. Then she saw a tree in front of her! Curious Lucy decided to keep walking. Soon she came to a lamppost.

After waiting a while, because she was tired, she saw a Faun with a package.

Mr. Tumnus: Goodness gracious me! Are you a daughter of Eve?

Lucy: I'm just Lucy. What's your name?

Mr. Tumnus: I'm Tumnus. Are you a human?

Lucy: Yeah.

Mr. Tumnus: I am pleased to meet you. How did you come to Narnia?

Lucy: Narnia? I just came from the wardrobe.

Mr. Tumnus: Ah! I see.

Narrator 1: Lucy finally realized what was making it so cold.

Lucy: It is winter here? It is summer in England.

Mr. Tumnus: It's been winter here for a long time. Do you want some tea?

Narrator 2: Lucy was going to ask Mr. Tumnus why it has been winter for so long, but then she decided that that was rude and followed him under his umbrella to Mr. Tumnus' cave. They drank tea while talking and Mr. Tumnus played music. Lucy became sleepy.

Lucy: Mr. Tumnus, I must head home now.

Narrator 1: Suddenly, the faun started to cry.

Mr. Tumnus: I am such a bad faun!

Lucy: Why are you crying?

Narrator 2: She gave him a handkerchief.

Mr. Tumnus: The White Witch is paying me to capture humans. You are the first one I have met. It is the White Witch who makes it always winter and never Christmas.

Lucy: That's simply awful! Please let me go home.

Mr. Tumnus: Of course you can.

Narrator 1: Mr. Tumnus quietly took Lucy to the lamppost.

Mr. Tumnus: Please forgive me. Can you?

Lucy: Of course.

Mr. Tumnus: Can I please keep your handkerchief?

Lucy: Yes definitely.

Narrator 2: Lucy could see the wardrobe from here so she headed there on her own. She pushed her way through the coats and climbed out of the wardrobe.

Lucy: I'm here! I'm back!

Susan: What do you mean?

Lucy: Didn't you miss me?

Peter: You were hiding. We're not playing hide-and-seek.

Lucy: I was gone for hours.

Edmund: That's crazy.

Lucy: I went through the wardrobe and saw a faun. He brought me to his house and we drank tea together.

Susan: That's just silly. You were barely gone for a minute.

Lucy: No, the wardrobe is magical. Come and see!

Narrator 1: Lucy tried her best to persuade her siblings to believe that adventure actually happened, but the wardrobe was just an ordinary one that time. Once they were back in the hallway, Edmund began to tease her.

Edmund: Remember last time? When you said that you visited Unicornland. We know better than to believe you now.

Narrator 2: Lucy stomped away.

---BREAK OPPORTUNITY--- 



Read the rest of
the script here! 



"I love acting out stories with my family at Christmas time. This year we wanted to relive C.S. Lewis' 'The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,' so I wrote a script and gave parts to all my siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. We had so much fun and I wanted to share it with other families."

IN ITS TIME

by Miriam



The first painting I gave as a gift to Oma and Opa.

Let's start off with an introduction to one of my closest friends. My Opa was one of my best pals since I was born. We had a special bond, the kind that forms through years of smiles, inside jokes, laughter, and stories. We understood each other. I had already asked him to be my escort for my high school graduation when I was only fourteen.

My Opa loved the Lord with his whole heart and it shone through in his life, the way he was always building up and encouraging others. He had a deep love for beauty, from a small half-crushed flower, to a glorious sunset reflecting on the ocean.

One way he was especially encouraging in my life was with my paintings. I remember a time several years ago when he and Oma, on a visit to our home twelve hours away, were shopping with us. Opa noticed me eyeing an acrylic paint set and he came over, picked it up, brought it to the till, and paid for it.

Just like that.

I was delighted. It was one of the first acrylic paint sets that I ever owned. I insisted on paying him back, but he said all I owed him was an ice-cream cone. And so, the next time we visited Langley, the two of us went on an ice-cream date to McDonald's. And if I remember correctly, the money for that ice cream never came out of my wallet.

And as the next few years went by, I discovered a love for painting. I was pretty bad at it at first, but it brought me a lot of joy. Whenever I had a difficult or tiring day at school I would plug in some headphones and start mixing colors and slapping paint onto the canvas. I slowly (and I mean very slowly) improved a little bit. Opa and Oma would always admire my new artwork whenever they came for a visit.

Opa started putting it in my head that I should sell my paintings. I had begun selling a few at art auction donations, and to friends, but the idea of seeing if I could get accepted into a place like "Out of Hand" (a local artisan store) daunted me. However, I tried. I brought some samples in to Out of Hand in the fall of 2024. Unfortunately, I was emailed that they didn't have enough space and I could use some more practice. I was told to try again in a year.

This, of course, was rather discouraging. I found it harder to pick up a brush and keep painting. I told Opa about it and, like always, he kept encouraging me to continue. He was so enthusiastic about my art. He loved beauty. It was like he could see something in it that I couldn't. Or maybe it was because he loved me and wanted the best for me in everything I did.

One day it came to me that I should paint something for him. He always loved the local scenery that I painted. So, I found a picture on the internet of some nice mountains, pine trees and wildflowers, grabbed a piece of plywood – canvases are expensive you know :) – and got painting. I sent it along with someone who was travelling down to their town. My Oma and Opa immediately phoned me when it arrived. They just loved it, and again Opa encouraged me to sell my artwork.

During a stay in November, Opa told me he wanted to buy two paintings from me, for \$100 each. He picked out a smaller snowscape one I had done earlier. He said that for the other one I could choose what to paint. A cheque arrived in the mail for \$400, along with a loving card. \$400! That was \$200 each! Opa and Oma were not well off but they were very generous.

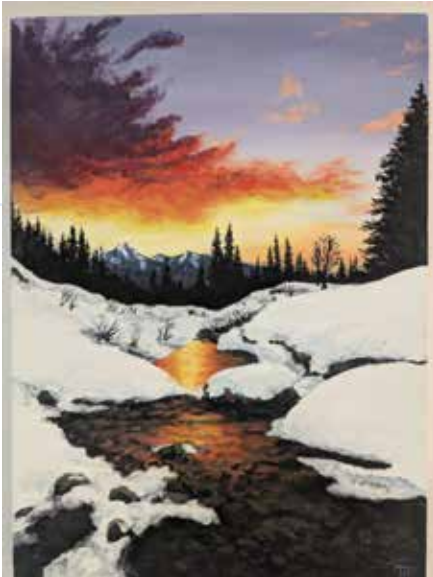
February came around. My cousin and I were able to stay with Oma and Opa for a night on our way back from a conference. I told Opa about a big painting I sold at the youth art show. He was very happy for me. I wasn't able to fit his first painting in my suitcase and had not yet started the second one, for I had to finish a different painting first. Looking back, I wish I started that second painting immediately. If only I had known.

My family visited again in March on our way to California. I brought the snowscape painting and he was thrilled. I had decided that for the second one I would paint a photo I took on our trip at California. I knew Opa loved the ocean dearly.

On March 24, 2025 I took a photo of the waves and rocky cliffs at Morro Bay. I would begin the painting once I got home.

The next day, March 25, 2025 was the worst day of my life. We received a phone call while driving to our campsite that Opa, my loving, wonderful, perfectly healthy Opa, had just died suddenly of a heart attack. No! How could this be? Who would cook shrimp, my favorite food, for me on our visits? Who would tell me countless childhood stories now? Who would remind me over and over how I was the spitting image of my Oma? Who would say my name the way no one else could, with a delightful twinkle in his eye? Who would walk me down the aisle on my graduation? I was brokenhearted.

The first painting he bought for \$200 that he got to own for about a week.



The painting of the photo I took in Morro Bay the day before Opa died. Given to my mom for Mother's Day.

The last \$200 painting given to Oma that Opa never got to see.



This is the lowest point of the story, and if I am being honest, it's probably also where I started growing the most. I had to decide to get back up on my feet and paint again. My head told me *never again* but my heart knew I must. And so, by God's strength, I began to paint that picture of Morro Bay. Opa's last painting. Part of me wanted it to be perfect, and the other part thought *"Who cares anyways, since he will never see it"*. Needless to say, I did finish it. I still owed Oma a \$200 painting, but I didn't really want to give this one up. I gave it to my mom for Mother's Day instead. She knew it was meant to be for Opa, but that I wanted her to have it since her dad was very special to her, and she shared the memory of the beautiful ocean at Morro Bay.

Sometime later I asked Oma what she wanted for the last painting. She told me that she and Opa "had a talk" and they decided they would like the view from our dock, since they often walked down there together and loved that view. I painted it and brought it to Langley on our next visit. I told her I had the last painting, but she said she wasn't ready and hurried away. I wasn't really ready either, but we both recovered ourselves and I showed it to her. We cried together and then put it in Opa's study with the other two. The last painting, though he never got to see it, was complete.

This world is broken. There is so much darkness and suffering. Yet we have hope. Opa has taught me that we can still rejoice in the Lord, and enjoy the beauty He has given us in this world. You see, death is not the end. Just imagine the beauty my Opa, and all those loved ones who have been taken to our Lord, are experiencing. Sunsets, baby birds, and mountains, to name a few, are just a tiny foretaste of the beauty to come. In my paintings I try to depict the beauty of God's creation. There is something about natural beauty that reminds us that one day everything will be restored. Sin and ugliness won't last. "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (Eccl. 3:11).

So, take a step outside. Breathe in the fresh air. Are the trials you face too heavy to carry? Watch an eagle soar in the sky. Does the grief feel like it is crushing your soul? Consider the lilies of the field. Is anxiety constantly fighting for your heart, a battle you just can't seem to win? Gaze at the stars. He will make everything beautiful in its time. Your mess is His canvas. Trust Him. The One who created all of that beauty just by speaking. The God who creates life out of death. Who brings the light of dawn after the darkest night. The one who carefully formed and fashioned you, and loves you, His masterpiece, more than you will ever know. Behold our God. YT



"Originally, this story was part of my autobiography for a school project. My teacher encouraged me to share it when I was ready, because he felt it could bless others. When I saw this contest, I thought it would be a good way to share it, and use it to inspire others. It is also a chance for me to share the wonderful legacy of my Opa. I was a bit hesitant to share it at first, as it is pretty personal, but I was encouraged by a few different people to put it out there. After all, I'm sure many people can relate to it in some way, and be reminded that they are not alone in their grieving."

HOW HARDSHIPS BRING YOU CLOSER TO GOD IN TRUE FAITH

by Leanna

Have you ever wondered what it would be like with no hardship at all? No pain, no struggles, and no tears; just joy and perfection? This question has often entered my mind as someone who struggles with a physical disability: Cerebral Palsy. We all have, or will be in, those situations where it's out of our control, it seems as though bad things keep happening, and your life is crumbling down with no one to stop it. Why would God do this, especially to those He loves?

May 21st, 2011, was a very special day. The day I came into the world, 10 weeks earlier than expected. Not only was I unexpected, but also very jaundiced, born only 3 pounds, one ounce. Being this tiny was a very scary thing, especially for my parents, who felt like I might slip from the grip of their arms if they didn't watch me carefully enough. Getting a diagnosis such as this for your child is one of the worst fears of parents, not being able to protect them from this when they first come into the world. Getting told that your daughter has a permanent condition that is caused by changes in the development of the brain in infancy, often due to being born really early, which causes hardship in mobility, balance, and many other things, is a shocking thing. I don't think my parents knew how they could handle this.

I never wanted this for my parents. I never wanted to be the child who causes all the problems. All the appointments and driving were definitely exhausting. But of course, they couldn't show that. My parents have never complained that I was a burden; they have always helped and encouraged me in any new task I wanted to take on. Instead of being disappointed that their daughter was born this way, they constantly became more proud of the daughter the LORD has given them.

As a girl with Cerebral Palsy (CP), hardship is a regular occurrence. Constant tripping over your own feet while getting winded in the process, with no one to stop the pain. Everyone asks what happened, but really, it happened way too fast to even remember. Doctors and therapists are constantly on your agenda, and the constant dread of getting criticized for something you can't help. But you know that this is for your own good, that they're just trying to help you, yet you can't help but feel the tears dripping down your face because you know deep down, no matter how hard people try to help you or how much effort you put into yourself, it won't leave you. It's a part of you. Really, it's who you are.

However, when we go to school, that's where hardship really begins, when all you get from people are stares and points. When you go outside to play, all the kids run past you at 100 miles an hour, ten times faster than you, leaving you to be by yourself. Making friends was always the hardest part for me. You always feel less. You feel like people only look down, never at you. It's like I'm a faceless person, someone people look past instead of at.

When I got older, around two years ago, I had a major surgery that affected my life forever. The day before my surgery, I couldn't begin to grasp what was about to happen. I was so afraid because I didn't know what to expect. The morning came sooner than I wanted. After an agonizing wait, I finally walked myself to the surgery room, got laid on the table, and soon enough I felt my dad's hand squeeze mine, telling me to be brave. Tears rolled down my face, asking God to protect and guide the surgery.

I woke up after six hours in surgery with all my family surrounding me. My family came to hug me, but I didn't really feel their touch. I felt like I was the only one there, hearing only the soft shuffle of feet coming towards me.

As soon as night fell, my dad sat beside me and started to play organ music on his phone, just like every Sunday. All I could do was laugh for the first time in a long time. Somehow, it felt good, like home was being brought to me even while lying in a hospital bed.

In times like these, it was really hard to see God near me and to be grateful for everyone trying to help me. I felt really trapped in this web of confusion and helplessness, even though my mom was there with me the whole time. I got through it after five days, finally getting to go home, but even there, I felt like such a burden, my mom having to do everything for me. It was a very painful time for me, having to sit with my legs far apart all day with big, constant pressure.

After around three weeks at home, I went to the rehabilitation center for five weeks straight, only able to go home on the weekends. But here I started to feel a lot better. It was a slow and gradual process, but I was making progress and moving again. What hurt the most was my family going home without me, while my mom and I stayed at the hospital. But really, it wasn't all bad. The most important part was how much this experience opened my eyes to how hard others had it, how much worse their lives were. I was so thankful for this, for how much joy I brought to these people, and for

how much I meant to them in such a short time, making me feel not alone.

When you have a disability, you can't explain to others what it's like, but to these people I could because they were going through the same thing. I felt this was God reassuring me that I am never alone. He gave me the strength not only to get through my own hardship but to help others get through theirs by shining Christ's light. The negative voice in my own head is constantly telling me I'm not enough. And I truly think that it will never leave me, but they helped me find a way to cope by putting the positive voice louder.

As I get older, I question many things: how deep you can get in sadness. What's out there for me? Will I be able to get a good job? Will I find someone who truly loves me? Will I be able to give my kids the life they need and deserve? But until then, you will always feel behind in life, seeing everyone have plans for their life already, while I'm here still trying to deal with my permanent condition – at least I do.

Everyone asks how I do it, how I live my life normally, always staying strong. But I know I definitely am not strong; not on my own anyway. If I didn't have God constantly carrying me, I wouldn't have the strength to stand. He is my stronghold. No, my life isn't normal. I am not a normal person, but that doesn't make me any less human. And you know what? That's okay, because hardship doesn't only scar you, it pushes you. Having CP naturally moves you out of your comfort zone. If we want to do something different, it takes a lot of practice and thought before action. Life is not worth living if you stay in your own safe corner. These are the times when I feel the most grateful that I don't have to deal with this alone, but that God is beside me giving me the strength to do it.


Like I've said many times over, I wish I had been born "normal," but normal is so overrated. God never made normal. We all have something unique that glows inside us. Psalm 139:13-14 says:

"For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well."

Let your glow shine for all to see. Even when we are struggling, we all have the strength to overcome it with God's

help. Isaiah 41:10 says, "Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God, I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

No matter the amount of tears you may shed or how much you may be struggling, God loves you. Whenever I feel weak, I look in the mirror and tell myself, I am beautiful. I am a glowing light to others. No one can tell me otherwise because my Father in heaven is more powerful than negativity or hardship. If you're struggling, just know it doesn't make you any less human. If anything, it makes you a stronger and more resilient human. Being dependent on God is a privilege.

Psalm 27:1 says "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Don't be afraid to be different and to go through hardship. Hardship is an opportunity to fully lay yourself on the LORD and let yourself grow with God. One day, we will run into the arms of our Savior without any spot or blemish. So don't run from hardship but towards it. Let it draw you closer to God in faith. For us, hardship becomes hope because God is the anchor in our storm. 



"I always felt God gave me CP for a reason. I've been through challenges some people just cannot understand. I know I am a compete and beautiful child of God, I wanted people to know my story because I know I might touch the hearts of people and help them in hardships they may be going through and inspire them to not be afraid of hardships but look forward to becoming a stronger and better person because of it."

CHILD OF GOD

by Jenny

A mother held her newborn son and whispered in his ear,
"I love you so much, little one, I hold you very dear.
I love exactly who you are, I love you through and through.
The LORD knew how He was blessing me, when He gave me you.
Knitting together your heart and mind as you grew inside of me,
In His wisdom He fully planned who you were going to be.
God made your little hands and feet, your eyes and nose as well,
so you can do so many things like dance, jump, see and smell.
You will grow bigger every day, and as more time will pass,
you and I will both wish that time had not flown by so fast.
You are a child of God, He declares you are His own.
The truth is your identity is found in Christ alone.
This truth is dear to us, but some people get it confused.
They think "whatever makes me happy" is a good excuse
to completely change how they look, and change their very self,
so they can try to live as someone other than themselves.
They think that they will love themselves more than they did before,
but they do not know that Jesus Christ loves them so much more.
Our Saviour loves these people so much more than they could know.
He loves every inch of them, from their head down to their toes.
He died out of pure love for them, exactly as they were.
The way that God created them is what they should prefer.
When you attempt to change yourself in every single way,
you find that loving how God made you is the better way.
I hope when you grow up, my dear, you love how you were made,
so that others may look to you and see God's love displayed.
Reach out to those who have no hope, give them a listening ear,
so by loving them they will see that God is always near.
Surround the people who do not know what to be or do,
pray for them and tell them that through Christ they are renewed.
My darling, if you ever have thoughts that you need to change,
or if you don't feel good enough just the way you are made,
you can come to me and tell me, I'll wrap you in my arms.
I'll whisper that I love you, exactly the way you are.
I love you because you are mine, but not just mine alone.
You are a precious child of God who bought you as His own." YT



"I wrote this poem a couple years ago for an assignment in my Health class. We had been discussing the topic of Identity, what our society has made it, and how we as Christians are to respond. I wanted to write something for children as well as adults to remind them that our identity is not dependent on our fluctuating emotions, but our identity is in Christ as image bearers of God."

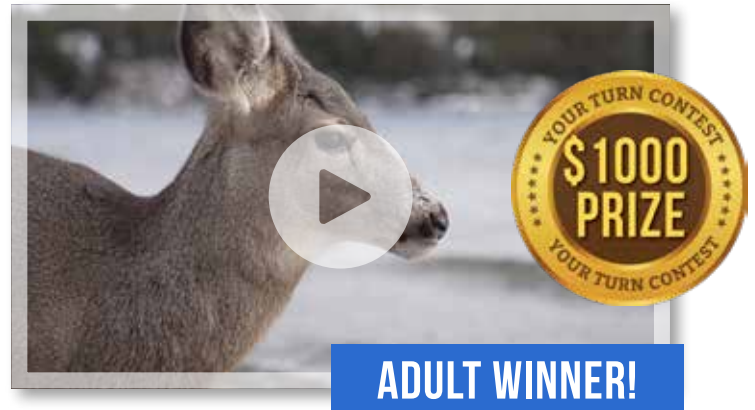
Videos – the best of the adults



Here are the top video contributions in the adult category. The top one here is the judges' pick as winner, but it doesn't need to be your pick. You can watch all three of these videos at ReformedPerspective.ca/videoYT or by using your phone's camera to scan the QR code.

JOEL VAN DER MOLEN'S BEAUTIFUL THINGS

"I came across the saying 'beautiful things don't ask for attention.' I thought that was an interesting quote, and wanted to consider it in the light of Scripture. I applied it first to nature, noticing that the beauty of nature doesn't seek attention for itself, but quietly points to its Creator. Then considering the question for ourselves, it is clear in Scripture as well, that we are not to demand attention or glorify ourselves, but rather seek to glorify God. And this is the true beauty that God has given us. I probably put more energy into this project than I thought I would. I wanted to learn how to do a daytime to nighttime starlapse. This was a challenge, and my final timelapse included sitting for 2.5 hours in subzero (windy) temperatures, followed by hiking down the mountain in the dark. Thank you for this contest and challenging me to use the talents God has given me to share."



CAMERON BLOKKER'S BEHOLD

"My piece is based on Revelation 21 and the repeated phrase, 'Behold, I am making all things new!' ...My song was written as a way to give people hope for what is to come – heaven – and all its beauty. It was written in a place of hurt and sadness... but the song also took on another comforting meaning when my grandpa passed away in late December 2025. It gave me hope that I will see him again one day, dancing and praising in the presence of God."



REBECCA VANVEEN'S IN ZION BORN

"Someone once told me I was made up of happiness and church music. When I miscarried our daughter at 17 weeks, I wasn't made of happiness but I was still filled with church music. I hummed in the ambulance, I sang in the hospital hallways, I stumbled through a doxology with her tiny body in our hands. When we got home, I sat down at the piano. I didn't need a lament. I needed to remember that God is good all the time. I needed to praise God that Mercy had never known anything but Him. I needed to praise God that "all to Him belong." I needed Psalm 87 and I needed to share it. St. Albert's Evensong Choir originally sang this in November 2023, nine months after Mercy's passing. What a blessing to be able to share this arrangement again. I cherish the reminder that God's covenant children are 'in Zion born.'"



Videos – the best of the youth



There were some great video contributions in the youth category. Watch them all at ReformedPerspective.ca/videoYT or by using your phone's camera to scan the QR code. And don't forget to vote for your favorite!

JEREMIAH

"I have never entered a contest like this before and after seeing it in the magazine, I was excited to enter. My mom had me writing about what I wanted to be when I grow up and why. I want to become a biblical archaeologist to show others that the Bible is real and true and to bring glory to God. I wanted to share this so that other people will want to do the same in whatever they do."



HOLLY

"This interview features me and my dog, Bruno, talking about how the world was made. Bruno doesn't quite understand it, though, so I have to explain it to him by discussing 3 questions. I thought this was a fun and unique way to share my perspective on evolution."

ASLAN

"I am 7 years old, and I can already read the Hebrew Bible. I learned to read Biblical Hebrew because I saw my dad studying it for seminary, and he also taught me. I would spend thirty minutes a day learning, and after six weeks, I learned to read slowly. Dad also bought me two Hebrew children's books. I now read the Hebrew Bible with my dad, and I enjoyed doing it with him as one of our bonding activities. I understand some words already, and he teaches me the words that I still do not know. I want to encourage parents to let their children, especially the boys, study the biblical languages while they are young, so that we all grow to love the Word of God. Maybe, we can also study in seminary in the future. You can watch the video lessons on HebrewVerse online. Dad's classmate Rodrigo made the website, and he gave me two certificates after I finished the two beginner levels. It is very enjoyable and not difficult. This summer, I will try to learn Greek as well. Shalom!"



**LORIA**

"This is my commentary and guide on how and why it is so important to be strong Christian examples as young people. It features two interviews with folks who recently joined the Canadian Reformed churches. The video walks viewers through Biblical facts, and prompts them to explore their own faith and challenges us all to get out of our comfort zone and connect with Christ."

**JAKE**

"I am 14 years old and live on the edge of a small town in Ontario. I love spending time in the woods behind our house. I figure there are lots of other young people who read your magazine who have the same struggles I do – getting up early, doing our school work diligently, reading the Bible regularly, and just generally not wasting time. I tried to make a video that spoke to these areas and that will hopefully inspire others to get up, and take life on with vigor, to the glory of God! The poem If by Rudyard Kipling, really inspires me, because it is about the trials that we will face in life and how we ought to deal with them. (I really do wake up at 5:20am and I don't waste time in front of the TV – because our family doesn't have one! I devour books instead.)"

YOUR TURN: YOUTH AUDIO



Audio – the best of the youth

Here are the the two best audio contributions in the youth category. Listen to them both at ReformedPerspective.ca/audioYT or by using your phone's camera to scan the QR code, and see if you think either should be your vote for the fan favorite.

MEAGHAN'S THE ARCHIVE OF UNSPOKEN WORDS

"Growing up I was someone who often tried to hide bits and pieces of my personality. I only showed parts I thought other people wanted to see. I've since learned that you should never ever apologize for who you really are because God made us all unique. I love writing poetry! Like loooove it. So what better way to wave goodbye to that part of my life than through something I love."

TALIA'S HER NAME WAS MIA

"I decided to do an audio recording on a story which I wrote about a woman and her journey through faith. It emphasizes a few main points, the main one being faith over fear."



Audio – the best of the adults



These are the top audio contributions in the adult category. We have our favorite, but what's yours? You can listen to all three songs at ReformedPerspective.ca/audioYT or by using your phone's camera to scan the QR code.

MIRIAM BRUNING'S *LITTLE MAN*

"I wrote this song towards the end of a very difficult postpartum phase with my first child. I was finally able to start feeling genuine joy again, watching my son grow and develop. This song wrote itself over two evenings as I reflected on how much I had to be grateful for. I feel so overwhelmed by God's grace and love shown to me, both in giving me my beautiful son and blessing me with an incredible husband. I get so much joy out of watching our little man (who is two years old now!) copy everything his daddy does.

I hope that by sharing this song, it can help to remind families, and mothers in particular, of the joy that can be found in the midst of the highs and lows of parenthood. I feel that the more I try to focus on gratitude, the more the Lord gently and lovingly shows me what I have to be grateful for."



MARY KOPPERS' *ALL THAT I NEED*

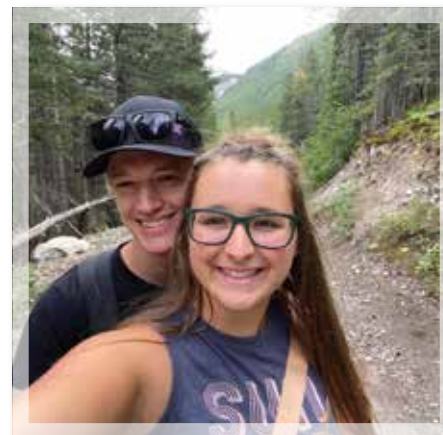
"This song was born when I stepped into the shower on a Saturday afternoon. The verse that's in my bathroom was tumbling around in my head. Suddenly, it had a melody, a meter; it even rhymed, right out of the pages of Scripture. On Sunday I was picking out the music on the piano. By Tuesday, I was refining the lyrics and laying down the melody on my notation software; the song, though needing refinement, was complete.

Curiously, it wasn't until I made yet another tiny tweak to the lyrics, that I was hit by the truth. This song that God gave me, was the very deepest cry of my own heart. I am a mother of 5 children living with a rare, incurable (but treatable) blood disorder. I am intimately acquainted with endless sighing and physical weakness. What began as a general meditation became a personal journey through 2 Corinthians 12: His strength is made perfect in my weakness and His grace is all that I need. My prayer is that this song would be a companion for those walking through their own 'night.'"



SAVANNAH BROUWER'S *IT WAS NEVER EASY*

"This faith is a fight. It is a battle. We are meant to be soldiers. Soldiers are not sitting around waiting for the battle to be won, they are walking with an aim, a goal, and they will not rest until they reach that goal, even if it costs their life! That's the purpose in this song – to encourage you to walk into those dangerous places, those unknown places and know God is carrying you to see his glory in it all! A couple months back I was expressing all these thoughts to my friend Hailey Vanderhorst and she said she would write a poem about it all. Just from a handful of notes and a good conversation, "It Was Never Easy" was created. These are the words she wrote down to capture the things God has been pressing upon my heart and I am deeply grateful. This song wouldn't be together without her!"



FOUND YOUR FAVORITE?



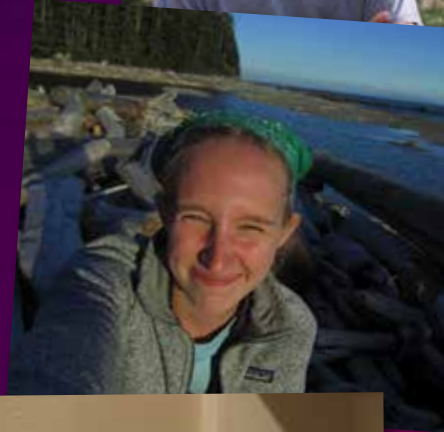
Don't forget to vote for them, so they can win the \$1,000 fan favorite award!

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Scan the QR code with your phone,
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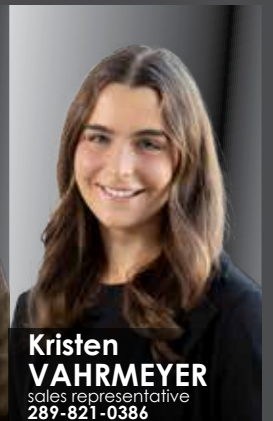
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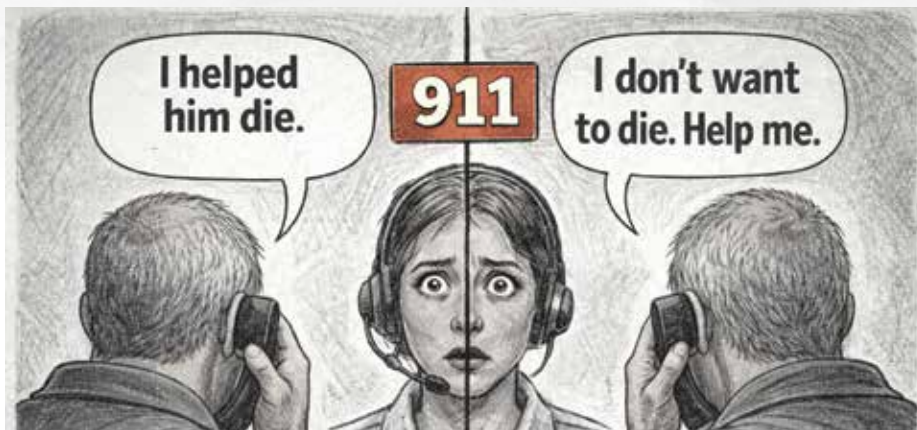


The Hon.
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NEWS IN *Perspective*

NO JAIL FOR MAN WHO ADMITS TO KILLING HIS PARTNER

BY MARK PENNINGA



"An Ottawa man who pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the death of his ailing husband has been sentenced to two years less a day of house arrest for an act the judge called 'in every respect an assisted-suicide mercy killing.'"

So began a news story from the CBC, which went on to explain that Philippe Hébert, 74, killed Richard Rutherford, 87, on April 15, 2022. Rutherford was struggling with health challenges and a recent cancer diagnosis, and Hébert was tired and stressed by Rutherford's condition, compounded by fears that Rutherford would be isolated due to Covid restrictions.

At the sentencing hearing on February 17, Justice Kevin Phillips explained the light sentence by noting that Rutherford wanted to die.

"Phillips said despite the killing being 'close to murder,' Hébert was honouring the 'last wish' of his husband and friend. Rutherford had the mental capacity to make that decision, and given his medical condition it was understandable, the judge said."

The CBC story, and others like it, painted a picture of how Hébert was a model citizen and was surrounded by supporters in the court room.

In law, as in journalism, words matter a great deal. In this case, the reader is led to feel understanding, and perhaps even gratitude, for Hébert's willingness to honor the "last wish" of his partner.

But if we avoid the euphemisms and speak the plain truth, a very different picture emerges. According to the *National Post*, Hébert woke up to find that his homosexual partner Rutherford was crying. Hébert claims that Rutherford couldn't go on living and wanted him to help him end his life. In response Hébert promised he would end his own life after killing Rutherford. According to Hébert's testimony, he used an incontinence pad to suffocate Rutherford, then attempted to end his own life, and called 911 for help.

Of course, with Mr. Rutherford now dead, we have no idea whether he actually asked to be killed.

Decisions and media coverage like this only further erode the sanctity of life. When Canadian law treats murder as medicine, then how can society be all that critical of someone who takes it upon himself to deliver that "treatment"? When killing-is-caring is logically extended, what protection does it give to others who are vulnerable and may be seen as a burden to their caregivers?

There is only one line that can be drawn here: that no one should murder another (Gen. 9:6) because our lives are not our own, but entrusted to us by our Maker. That will be too Christian for many, but then we can challenge them to offer any other standard that can hold scrutiny. What other line can they propose that won't be struck down by a court because it unfairly limits others? If it is compassionate to murder someone suffering from cancer, why isn't it compassionate to offer the same "treatment" to someone suffering from depression? By what standard – once God's law is abandoned – can anyone be denied this inexpensive, immediate, and sure cure for suffering?

HEALTH-ADJUSTED LIFE EXPECTANCY PLUMMETS

BY MARK PENNINGA

Canadians can expect 3.5 fewer years of good health compared to a decade ago, according to recent data published by Statistics Canada.

Life expectancy has increased steadily in Canada and throughout the world for many decades, though with a noticeable dip around the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. But it is one thing to live longer, and another to live healthier. The Statistics Canada report examined health-adjusted life expectancy (HALE), a measure of the number of years in good health an individual is expected to live.

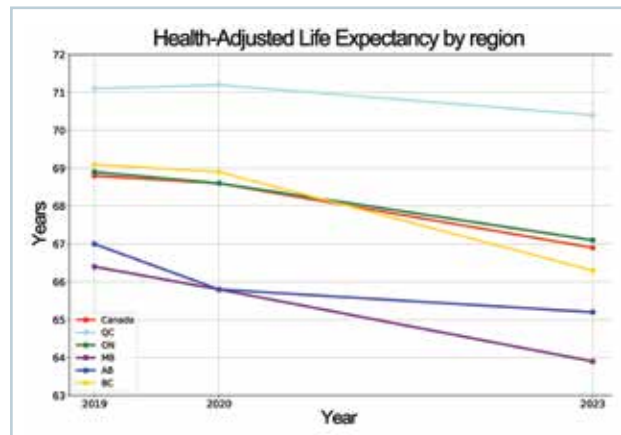
Comparing the period of 2000-2002 to 2010-2012, HALE increased by nearly two years, to 70.4. But fast-forward a decade later to 2023, and HALE has dropped to 66.9 years, erasing the gains from the previous decades. Factors that contribute to the drop include the thousands of annual deaths from drug overdoses, increased mental health challenges, increased

obesity, more misuse of drugs and alcohol, and a strained healthcare system.

Although other countries also experienced a drop, it wasn't as significant. The World Health Organization reported a 1.6 year decrease for HALE during and after the pandemic internationally.

And although Canada ranked 5th in the world in life expectancy in 1990, our ranking has plummeted to 25th today. The Statistics Canada study noted that Canadian females have a life expectancy of 84 years and a HALE of 67.7 years, while males have a life expectancy of 79.6 years and a HALE of 66.4 years.

Scripture makes it evident that God sovereignly determines how many days we live (Ps. 139:16) and is the One who gives us health or takes it away (Jer.



30:17, Ps. 103:3). We also learn from passages like Proverbs 3:1-2 ("keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity") that walking in line with God's Word is good not just for our spiritual health but also our mental and physical health. This correlates with studies that find that those who regularly attend religious services live about four years longer than average and have a much lower (up to 33 percent less) risk of death at any given moment.

MAN MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR GLOBAL POPULATION COLLAPSE HAS DIED

BY JON DYKSTRA

Paul Ehrlich spent his life prophesying that our planet was going to be overpopulated, and billions would consequently starve, starting in the 1970s. He died in March, at the age of 93, firmly established as a false prophet, but one who misled billions.

His 1968 book, *The Population Bomb*, was a bestseller, and the media coverage that followed made Ehrlich a household name. His celebrity was such that he was repeatedly invited on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show* to popularize his vision of doom. As R. Albert Mohler Jr. recounts:

"...the bearded scientist sat with Hollywood starlets explaining how babies were going to ruin the planet, and millions watched."

The United Nations, and governments around the world, listened, most notably China. They imposed their tyrannical "one child policy," which used abortion and mass sterilization to limit families to just one boy or girl.

Ehrlich did such an effective job selling his overpopulation catastrophism that our world is now in great danger of a demographic collapse. Today the vast majority of countries – Canada included – are not even having enough babies born to replace the adults who are dying.

Ehrlich might be the example of how godless Science isn't the trustworthy guide it's made out to be. Ehrlich had his ideological biases, the most impactful being how he saw children. God speaks of them as a blessing (Ps.

127:3-5). When we have eyes willing to see it, then we can understand that babies come with more than just mouths to feed, but grow up to have hands that can work, and brains that can problem-solve. They are consumers *and* producers too. So if we were to be facing a food shortage, what better way to solve it than to put more manpower on it? Even as Ehrlich was preaching his message of doom, Norman Borlaug and other brilliant minds were developing new grain and rice strains that vastly increased the world's food-growing capacity.

But what would have happened had Borlaug's mother aborted him in the name of saving an overpopulated planet? Thankfully, the Lord didn't have us find out.

ALBERTA INTRODUCES LAW TO RESTRICT EUTHANASIA

BY DANIEL ZEKVELD AND LEVI MINDERHOUD



In March 18, Alberta Justice Minister Mickey

Amery rose in the Alberta legislature to introduce Bill 18, the *Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act*.

“It is my hope that if Bill 18 is passed, it will set an example for the rest of Canada, because hope should always be easier to access than death.”

With this bill, Alberta is set to become the first Canadian jurisdiction to formally restrict euthanasia in Canada. This is big news and a massive win for pro-life advocacy in Canada. While the media, government bodies, and legislators have signaled concerns about euthanasia, there has been little appetite to reverse course. Until now.

WHAT DOES ALBERTA'S SAFEGUARDS BILL DO?

The *Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act* restricts euthanasia in many ways.

First, Bill 18 will prohibit doctors from murdering any of their patients who are not nearing natural death. Euthanasia was initially legalized only for those whose natural death was “reasonably foreseeable,” but it was also legalized for non-terminal conditions in 2021. Alberta’s bill turns back the clock and clarifies that Medically-Assisted Death (MAD) will only be available for people with a prognosis of natural death within 12 months.

Second, Bill 18 will prohibit euthanasia for people with mental illness as their only underlying condition. As of right now, euthanasia for mental illness is scheduled to become legal across Canada on March 17, 2027, although this expansion has been delayed a



couple of times and there is a federal bill right now that proposes to scrap this expansion entirely. Alberta’s legislation means that no matter what the federal government does about euthanasia for mental illness, it will not be offered in Alberta.

Third, the *Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act* bans healthcare providers from initiating a conversation about euthanasia or advertising euthanasia in medical facilities. If assisted suicide is offered or advertised in hospitals, patients may feel pressured or encouraged to consider it. If passed, Bill 18 would allow health professionals to talk about euthanasia only if the patient brings it up first.

Fourth, this legislation would codify conscience rights into law. It allows medical professionals not to provide euthanasia, assess a patient’s eligibility for euthanasia, or refer a patient to a euthanasia provider against their conscience. Bill 18 would also protect healthcare facilities’ freedom to opt out of providing or participating in euthanasia. This is increasingly an issue for faith-based institutions that want to provide care without murdering their patients.

Fifth, this proposal would establish better oversight over euthanasia. Although euthanasia is still an exception to murder in Canada’s *Criminal Code*, governments have implemented very little oversight to ensure that existing

rules are followed. Bill 18 will establish better oversight, review euthanasia deaths, and impose professional penalties for failure to follow criminal or provincial regulations.

Sixth, the bill cracks down on “doctor shopping.” Right now, if a person is refused euthanasia by one doctor, they may seek out another doctor who will approve their request. For example, in 2024, a woman who was refused euthanasia by her doctors in Alberta was later approved for euthanasia by a doctor in British Columbia. Bill 18 will prohibit doctors from referring a patient to a doctor in another province.

Those are the biggest changes Alberta is proposing, though the legislation contains even more restrictions on medical assistance in dying.

HOW CAN YOU RESPOND?

This legislation is the most pro-life legislation introduced by a sitting government since Brian Mulroney’s failed abortion bill over 35 years ago.

While the bill is very likely to pass in Alberta’s majority government, it is still a good idea to send a note to your MLA urging him or her to support this legislation if you live in Alberta. You can also thank the Premier and the Minister of Justice for their leadership on this issue.

Those who live outside Alberta should also reach out to their MPP/MLA, health minister, and premier to ask them to introduce similar legislation. Bill 18 only applies in Alberta. But every suffering person deserves these safeguards against euthanasia, no matter their postal code.

Proverbs 24:11 counsels us to “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.” While Reformed Christians shouldn’t rest until euthanasia is outlawed entirely, Alberta’s *Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act* will certainly rescue many and try to hold back many more.

Top photo is of, from left to right, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, Justice Minister Mickey Amery, and an Ontario doctor who also spoke, as they announce to reporters Bill 18’s euthanasia restrictions. Photo is by Chris Schwarz/Government of Alberta and used with the government’s permission.

AUSSIE SENATOR SHOWS US HOW TO DO IT... AND HOW NOT TO DO IT

BY JON DYKSTRA



On April 1st, Australian Senator Ralph Babet gave a speech that got some social media attention for good reason. He explained to all those willing to listen that there is no freedom apart from God. Here is what he said:

"I'm regularly criticized for being overtly Christian. I'm told to keep my faith private, to leave it at the door of this chamber and to speak as though God is irrelevant and truth is negotiable. I just will not do that. I'm not merely a man with opinions. I'm a man under authority, and that authority is the authority of Christ and his church. That changes everything.

"Christianity is not a lifestyle. It's not a cultural accessory. It is a total claim on the human person – on the mind, on the conscience, and on the soul. Here's the reality that my critics refuse to admit: every single person in this chamber serves a doctrine of some sort. Some serve God; others serve Marxist ideology. Some serve the State or maybe even public opinion, but no one is really neutral. So, when I'm told to leave my faith behind, what I'm really being told is: 'Abandon your authority and submit to ours instead.'

"No, I will not do that. I'll not trade eternal truth for political convenience. I won't bow to the false religion of relativism.

"What we are really dealing with here is not the absence of religion but the rise of a new one. It's a creed without God, a morality without foundation. It's a system that demands obedience and calls it tolerance. Let's just be clear: the claim that religion has no place in politics is itself a dogma – an exclusive claim, a coercive claim. The question is not whether beliefs shape this place. They already do. We know that. The question is: which truth will govern us?

"When God is pushed aside, it is not neutrality that replaces Him; it is power. The most oppressive regimes in history did not honor Christ; they rejected Christ. What followed was not freedom. It was control, it was persecution, and it was suffering on an industrial scale. Don't tell me that taking God out of society makes it safer. It just makes it worse.

"Let's speak plainly about what Christianity actually claims. What does it claim? It claims that Jesus Christ is God, that He rose from the dead, and that He established a charge of authority to teach truth in every single age. Just look at the King that we proclaim. He's not a tyrant. He's not a conqueror. He's a king that was crowned with thorns, a King who went on to forgive His executioners, a King who laid down His life for His enemies. Do you know what? That is strength. That is power rightly ordered. That is the model that Christianity calls us to follow. It's not weakness and it's not chaos. It's discipline, strength, and order towards truth and the good.

"Christianity also destroys the modern obsession with moral superiority, because no man earns salvation and no one stands above another. We are all in need of mercy and in need of grace, which means that there is no room for the

smugness, the posturing and the endless virtue-signaling that now dominate public life. From that humility comes order, from that order comes justice, and from that justice comes peace.

"I ask you again: what kind of society does that produce? It sounds remarkably like the one that we all claim to want...."

That's a message desperately needed in the political sphere. And it did get some social media coverage on Facebook. Unfortunately, the very same day he delivered this speech, the senator also chose to release an April Fool's Day prank about aliens being real... which is what the mainstream media covered instead.

While this has to be one of the strongest, clearest Christian presentations delivered by a politician in recent memory, Babet isn't the ideal messenger. He's gotten himself in trouble through the years for his tweets, particularly two years back when he used the N-word to enthusiastically endorse an Andrew Tate post. Then, when he was called on that, he followed it up with this:

"In my house, we say [n-word again, and two more bad words]. We are sick of you woke a-- clowns. Cry more. Write an article. Tweet about me. No one cares what you think."

Where Babet went wrong here is on the very point his 2026 speech corrects. You can't find the truth by bouncing off a lie; as Babet demonstrated, you won't end up in the right place by simply doing the opposite of what the woke folk want you to do. That's because, as Luther noted, there's more than one way you can fall off a horse. To simply swing away from an error on one side is to put yourself in danger of falling for a completely opposite, every bit as horrible, error on the other.

Instead, we need to do as the Senator, at his best, encouraged: rather than reacting against evil, we need to actively look to the Lord and His Word to find out what's true and good and right.



Picture is a screenshot of a video on the senator's Facebook feed, and used under fair use provisions.

US VP THINKS UFO ACCOUNTS INVOLVE DEMONS INSTEAD

BY JON DYKSTRA

In a March 28 interview, You-Tuber Benny Johnson asked the US vice president, J.D. Vance, whether his administration was going to release the country's UFO files. He offered up an emphatic yes. "I've still got three more years as vice president. I will get to the bottom of the UFO files." The VP also gave his own take on all the reports of alien encounters.

"I don't think they're aliens. I think they're demons anyway.... I mean,

every great world religion, including Christianity, the one that I believe in, has understood that there are weird things out there, and there are things that are very difficult to explain. And I naturally go, when I hear about that sort of extra supernatural phenomenon, I go to the Christian understanding that there's a lot of good out there, but there's also some evil out there. And I think that one of the devil's great tricks is to convince people he never existed."

And Vance isn't alone. Gary Bates, the former president of Creation Ministries International, has authored a whole book on the topic, *Alien Intrusion*, in which he makes a compelling case that the physics rules out aliens visiting us, even if they did exist. The distances involved and the energy needed to get here just wouldn't allow it. But he also argues that there are way too many reports to simply dismiss alien encounters as people just making things up.

What other explanation is there? Well, we know demons like to deceive, so the VP might be on to something.

WHEN THEY WENT AFTER BARRY NEUFELD...

BY LEVI MINDERHOUD

Barry Neufeld was a school trustee in Chilliwack, British Columbia. He was elected for three terms in 2011, 2014, and 2018, earning the second-most votes of the seven school trustees in each of those elections.

In 2016, British Columbia amended its *Human Rights Code* to recognize and protect people based on their "sexual orientation and gender identity," also known as SOGI. In 2017, the province introduced SOGI 123 in schools to prevent bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity, to teach students progressive sexual and gender ideology, and to create more LGBTQ-friendly facilities.

But Neufeld is a Christian and refused to promote this unchristian ideology. At school board meetings, in social media posts, and through speeches, Neufeld called out SOGI as a lie that contradicts the reality of who people are.

After the British Columbia Teachers' Federation and their president publicly disparaged Neufeld for his anti-SOGI comments, even accusing him of hate speech, Neufeld filed a defamation case to defend his name. Neufeld's lawsuit was ultimately tossed out by the Supreme Court of Canada, in part because it would limit his opponents' freedom to speak out on an issue of public importance.

Meanwhile, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation and the Chilliwack Teachers' Association filed a human rights complaint against Neufeld. They alleged that he discriminated against members of the LGBTQ community and that many of his comments amounted to hate speech under British Columbia's *Human Rights Code*.

Last week, the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal issued its decision. They found that Neufeld had published discriminatory and hate-promoting statements and ordered him to pay \$750,000. These funds would be distributed to any Chilliwack school teacher who identified as LGBTQ to compensate for "injury to their dignity, feelings, and self-respect."

So, what does this mean for us?

As it stands right now, this ruling sets a precedent that anyone who strongly criticizes SOGI or those who identify as LGBTQ could receive the same treatment as Neufeld: a complaint, a hearing, and a penalty from the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal.

Although Neufeld was condemned for his comments as a school trustee, there is no reason why anyone else could not be charged with similar violations. In other words, Christians could be severely fined for expressing their views on gender and sexuality in public. Now, Neufeld will almost assuredly appeal this

decision, and so it might be overturned by a court. But unless this happens, this decision is a real cudgel that can be used against Christian expression.

So, what can we do?

If Neufeld appeals the Tribunal ruling to a court, ARPA and other groups will likely seek to intervene as friends of the court to advance legal arguments about freedom of expression and the limits of the Tribunal's authority. We cannot make a grassroots or political appeal to courts, of course.

But we can use this opportunity to call on MLAs to rein in the Human Rights Tribunal's power to quash speech. The Tribunal gets its powers from the *Human Rights Code*. That means MLAs can rein it in by amending the *Code*, especially by revoking the clause that prohibits hate speech. Federal law already prohibits hate speech in the *Criminal Code*; however, that offence provides four defences, and the offence must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. In British Columbia law, conversely, there are no defences, and the standard of proof is merely a "balance of probabilities." In other words, as long as the Tribunal is at least 50% confident that a person violated the *Human Rights Code*, they can impose penalties.

Let's take this opportunity to tell our provincial MLAs how this ruling – and British Columbia's *Human Rights Code* – punishes or threatens to punish people for expressing Christian beliefs about sexuality and gender.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

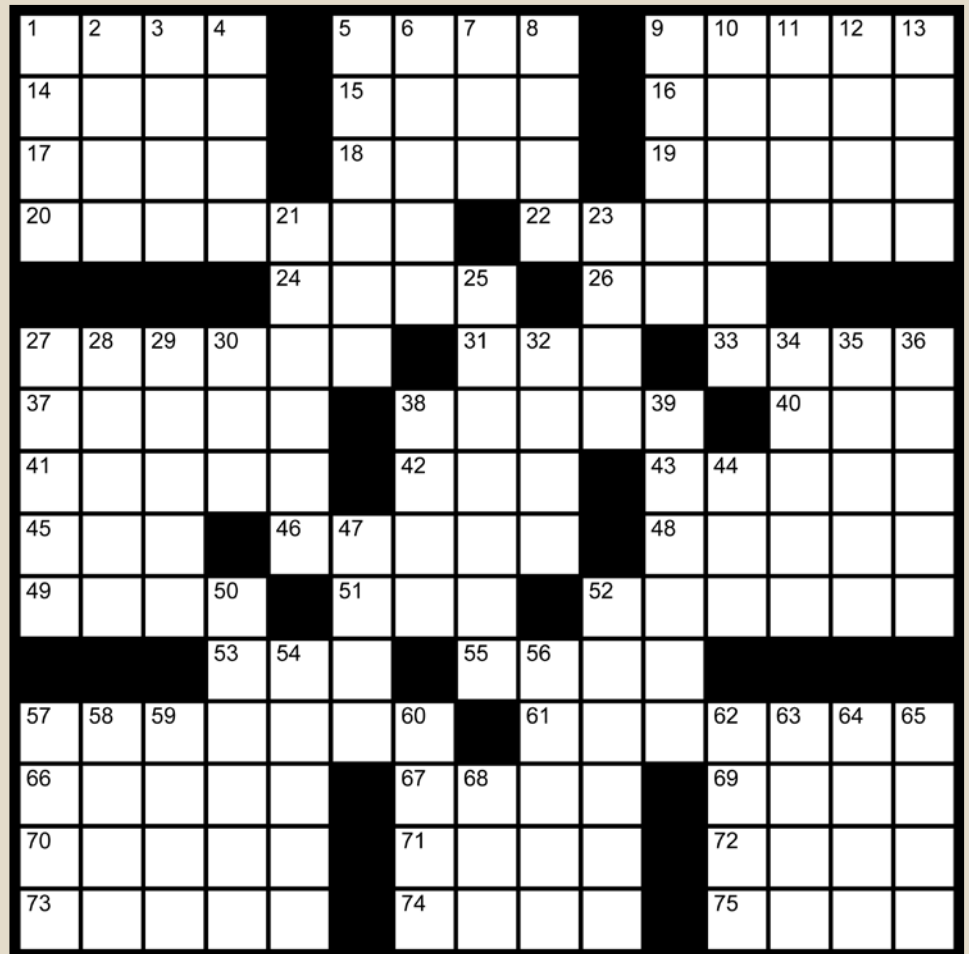
MAY-JUNE 2026

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 71.

ACROSS

1. "blotted out... your sins like ____" (Is. 44)
5. Del Tackett: "Do you really believe that what you believe is really ____?"
9. Bars; blocks; breaks
14. "God sent his ____ Son" (1 John 4)
15. "speak them ____ me" (Shakespeare)
16. Fur trade transportation
17. "Let the nations ____ themselves" (Joel 3)
18. *World in the Grip of an ____* (1979 book)
19. A red one is an urgent matter for concern.
20. "But _____ will say," (James 2)
22. Temperate and boreal, for example
24. "____ of spices" (Song of Solomon 5 and 6)
26. "...not write with ____ and ink." (3 John 1)
27. Lingered or loitered (behind)
31. "I ____ nothing to Women's Lib." (Thatcher)
33. Detergent brand
37. *In Holy _____* (Reformed youth magazine)
38. What you don't want other people to make
40. The Sea that didn't stop Israel (Josh. 24)
41. Joke; kid
42. Daydreamers look for it in the sky.
43. "I exhort the elders _____ you" (1 Pet. 5)
45. "at the ____ of the seven years" (2 Kings 8)
46. "its water was _____ up" (Rev. 16)
48. "O simple ones... learn _____." (Prov. 8)
49. "keep in _____ with the Spirit." (Gal. 5)
51. Aesop's wise insect
52. Perceived; felt; detected
53. (Partly?) appropriate
55. New online name of the *Yellow Pages*
57. "Just _____" (sign at the reception)
61. "_____ to the... whole earth." (Dan. 4)
66. Underground feature in Jules Verne novel
67. "The future ain't what it _____ to be." (Berra)
69. Elephant or leopard
70. U.S.'s main type of war in 2025
71. Mother... in Paris?
72. Monster's Loch location
73. "_____ looking at you, kid." (*Casablanca*)
74. Country... of France?
75. Shady part of street?



DOWN

1. What a rolling stone doesn't gather
2. "went _____ the city" (Ruth 2 and 3)
3. _____ Pickens (actor and rodeo performer)
4. Stop on Paul's journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21)
5. "woe to us, for we are _____!" (Jer. 4)
6. Completed; concluded
7. "and ____ bread with him" (Job 42)
8. "had only one _____ with them" (Mark 8)
9. Type of tactics or quotes
10. "a _____ of pure gold" (Ex. 25, 37)
11. "and blaspheme the glorious _____." (Jude 4)
12. Place to put your USB drive
13. "as the sun _____" (Deut. 23 and 24)
21. "By faith Abraham _____" (Heb. 11)
23. "we cannot stand in the _____" (Ezra 10)
25. *In _____* (Abbott and Costello movie)
27. Statistic of student attendance
28. Plural of 62 Down
29. Measurement of egg quality
30. An aerogen is a noble one.
32. "The _____ of crime bears bitter fruit!"
34. What they used to put some prisoners in
35. Crowded; compact
36. Shared characteristic of swords and bayonets
38. One thing lilies *don't* do (Luke 12)
39. Things artists use with ease?
44. "the ____ feared the Lord" (Jonah 1)
47. Measurement of interest or infection
50. One place you find the hits
52. Old way to show off your vacation
54. Trees mentioned in "Mending Walls"
56. "be ready for _____ good work," (Titus 3)
57. Its larva has a strong appetite for fashion.
58. Final Crusader stronghold in the Holy Land
59. "acting as the _____ guard" (Num. 10)
60. Garbage truck's final stop
62. Singular of 28 Down
63. Product of devout Protestant A. Guinness
64. Perform scalpel-free surgery
65. "nor anything _____ in..." (Rom. 8)
68. Rough synonym of 66 Across

WHY FAMILY BUSINESSES STILL MATTER

(and why the Church should care)

by Aaron Reyburn

I grew up with dirt under my fingernails and the sound of machinery in my ears.

My grandparents' farm sat on the arable land; our house was tucked into the wooded corner next door. Spring meant climbing onto my grandfather's tractor while he disc'd the field, then four boys with a pipe planter each, dropping seed by hand, row after row.

We were working the same ground my family had farmed for five generations, learning to fix the pump when it failed and to weed, then weed again. The harvest fed us and brought in a little extra cash, but the real yield was teamwork, patience, diligence, and a sense of responsibility for land that fed our own people.

My father's piano tuning/software business taught the same lessons with different tools. We learned to refurbish old computers, solder battery packs, fold brochures, pack shipments, and we learned to run a lathe and mill to fabricate specialty tools, where precision mattered because it could mean the difference between a salable part or wasted time and material. The wage was modest; the education was not.

None of that looked glamorous. It was just what our family did to survive. But those long days in the field and in the shop gave us children real work to do in a family economy where the stakes were tangible.

Children need to learn that their contribution isn't busywork but real help that is needed and valued. If we slacked off, we harvested less; if we cut corners, customers noticed. The consequences showed up in food on the table and the ability to keep

the lights on.

On the good days, when we'd done especially well, the reward was just as concrete: we might be chosen to pick raspberries – a rare treat for any eight-year-old who could mind the thorns.

Where I live, those conditions are becoming rare as family businesses are thinning out. And when they do, the church is losing not only jobs and independent income, but one of the most natural training grounds for Deuteronomy-6-shaped discipleship.

HOW WE GOT HERE

In my case, the farm and the shop were simply how our family made it. We were German-Irish by blood, but living in the Dutch-Reformed belt of West Michigan meant our views on work, worship, and family life ended up much the same.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, many Reformed immigrants landed in a bind. Industrial jobs were tied to unions whose class-warfare ethos and loyalty oaths a confessional Christian could not accept in light of Christ's command not to swear oaths beyond a simple yes or no (Matthew 5:34, 37).

So men did what they had to do: they started small construction crews, repair shops, trucking companies, print shops, and farms – not glamorous or easy, but theirs, and answerable only to Christ and His church.

Two and three generations later,

those necessity businesses have grown into a dense ecosystem of family firms that roof our churches, pour their foundations, insure their buildings, employ their young people, and help fund the Christian schools scattered across our denominations – an ecosystem we have largely taken for granted.

But it won't continue, at least not automatically.



The family that works together...

This is a picture, back in the day, of the author's father out logging with his own father and grandfather – three generations.

Family businesses today are being squeezed from three sides.

Economically, many smaller outfits live in the shadow of consolidation. Regulations, insurance costs, and succession planning all get more complex as the founder ages. In some sectors, the only viable “exit strategy” is to sell to a larger competitor or investor – or, in the case of farms, to sell rich soil for development instead of fields.

Culturally, we have quietly absorbed the assumption that “success” means leaving the shop behind. We push sons and daughters toward university and white-collar professions as the default measure of maturity. Staying in dad’s plumbing company or grandpa’s trucking business is too often presented as “settling.”

Ecclesiastically, we sometimes thin out the link between fathers, work, and children. A man may run a firm by day, then spend his evenings on church and school responsibilities – good things in themselves – while his kids mostly see him tired and absent.

In that environment, the business becomes just a source of income and perhaps a donor to the school, not a shared life. The next generation experiences it as background noise rather than as the place where they belong and are needed.

DEUTERONOMY 6 AND THE ECONOMY OF THE HOME

Deuteronomy 6 is one of those passages we know so well we stop seeing it.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts” (Deut. 6:4-6, NIV).

So far, so familiar. But notice where the text goes next:

“Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:7, NIV).



Continuing education:

Aaron and his dad, while receiving training at the Steinway and Sons Piano Factory in New York, to further their education in the industry. Those are piano rims drying after being pressed into shape.

The picture is not of a family scattering to separate spheres every morning and reconvening briefly at night. It is of a household whose work, meals, travel, and rest are woven together enough that the commands of God can be explained “on the way” without scheduling a special event. When the Lord warns Israel about forgetting Him, He does so in economic terms:

“when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down... then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God” (Deut. 8:12-14, NIV).

Climbing the corporate ladder might

give us nicer things, but it is hard to impress much of anything on our children if we aren’t there to do it. A family business can better allow us to mix vocation, wealth, and worship. Parents are able to disciple their children in the middle of their actual labor – plowing, harvesting, buying, selling, paying wages, and resting on the seventh day.

Family businesses, at their best, have been one of the most natural ways for that kind of life to happen in a modern economy.

In the farm and shop I grew up in, we didn’t schedule a seminar on honesty; we watched my father explain to a customer why a job would cost more than he’d first estimated. We didn’t need a lecture

on Sabbath; we saw machines sit idle on Sunday even if the weather was perfect. In many Reformed communities, the stories are similar. Children stand next to their father on a jobsite and see how he handles an unreasonable client. They hear their parents talk at the supper table about whether to take on a contract that will overload the crew and crowd out worship.

That is Deuteronomy 6 discipleship: not just catechism questions at the table, but a whole economy lived under the Lordship of Christ, with children close enough to see it.

When our work is hidden from our children – behind factory walls, office towers, and a firewall of “confidentiality” – we don’t just lose an apprenticeship. We lose one of God’s ordinary means for teaching the next generation what it looks like to love Him with heart, soul, and strength in the real world.

INHERITANCE IS MORE THAN MONEY

It’s tempting to think of succession

almost entirely in financial terms. A business is an asset. It can be passed on, sold, or wound down.

All of that matters. But if we think only in those categories, we miss the deeper covenant issue.

On our five-generation farm, we never inherited a corporation with a boardroom. What we inherited was a way of being in the world:

- You get up when the work needs you, not when you feel like it.
- You tell the truth about your work, even if it costs you.
- You remember that the land and the tools are the Lord’s first, yours second.

Similarly, in my father’s piano business, we didn’t learn a brand so much as a posture:

- Take difficult jobs seriously.
- Serve people who can’t quite afford you with the same care as those who can.

- Build something that will outlast your own two hands.

For many in Dutch-Reformed circles, the inheritance has similar contours. A grandfather who refused a union oath starts a small firm. His children grow it. His grandchildren now run companies that sponsor the local Christian school and employ young people in the congregation.

Selling such a firm when there is no successor, the burden is crushing, or health demands a change, is not automatically wrong. But to treat the business only as a commodity, with no conversation about whether God might be calling a son, daughter, or son-in-law to shoulder the responsibility, is to miss the covenant dimension.

Inheritance, biblically, is not just “what you get when dad dies.” It is the whole package of land, vocation, name, and reputation that one generation entrusts to the next. It is the field where you teach your children to drop seed at the right depth and the shop where you let them solder their first shaky connections.

If we have sons and daughters who could, in principle, step into that inheritance – on the shop floor, in the office, or by reshaping the business for a new age – have we spoken to them about it as a calling question, not just a career option?

WHY THE CHURCH SHOULD CARE

At this point someone might object: “Isn’t this just nostalgia? Not everyone can or should work in a family business. Many faithful Christians are employees, teachers, nurses, civil servants.”

That’s true. Scripture honors all honest work done as unto the Lord. Not every household will own land or a company. Not every child should take over dad’s trade.

But we should be honest about what we lose when family enterprises quietly disappear or become indistinguishable from any other professionalized asset.

We lose visible catechism in work. Children learn less from lectures on diligence than from watching their parents do good work under pressure. When work is invisible, that formation weakens.



Brothers get ‘er done:

Aaron (right) and his oldest brother Nate (left) using their new CNC machine to begin building new piano keyboards.

We lose natural apprenticeship for the non-academic. In many of our churches, there are young men and women whose gifts lie in their hands, eyes, and instincts rather than in essays and exams. Family businesses are often the first place those gifts are noticed, valued, and harnessed for the kingdom.

We lose a dense network of employers who “get” covenant life. When Christian schools rely on tuition flexibility and bosses who understand a young person might need time off for a cadet camp or a profession-of-faith class, they are often leaning on owners shaped by our own churches. If those owners sell to distant corporations, the culture changes, even if the logo stays the same.

This is not an argument that every elder must cut back on evenings or every father must start a company. It is a plea to recognize that in God’s providence, our churches and schools stand on the shoulders of men who, rather than yielding to certain pressures, built businesses that now sustain us. If that ecosystem decays, the fallout will be spiritual long before it is merely financial.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

What might it look like to take this seriously without turning it into a new law? A few modest proposals.

For business owners:

- Bring your children in intentionally – not as free labor to exploit, but as sons and daughters to form. Give them real responsibilities at age-appropriate levels and show them how their contribution matters.
- Narrate your decisions. When you refuse a dubious deal, honor a warranty that technically expired, or decline work that would compromise Lord’s Day worship, explain why and tie it to the character of the God you serve.
- Talk about succession as calling. If there is a realistic path for a child or in-law to carry the business forward, invite them into that discernment early. If there isn’t, be honest about that too, and help them see how the skills and instincts they learned can bless the broader church.

The fruit of their labors:

The family farm roughly 20 years ago – in front of the stacked pumpkins are Aaron’s grandparents Larry and Janic, with his father.



For churches and schools:

- See ordinary vocation as God does. Pray by name, from the pulpit, for tradesmen, small business owners, and farmers as you do for missionaries and office-bearers, knowing that we all need God’s grace and support in every one of our endeavors.
- Encourage apprenticeship. When a young person is drifting, consider whether what they need is not another program but a place at someone’s side from 7–3, five days a week.
- Be realistic about meeting loads. If a father steps back from a board so he can spend one more evening a week in the shop with his teenagers, that can be a wise, praiseworthy choice – but it shouldn’t be beyond gentle questioning. Some men need encouragement to make family a priority; others need encouragement not to neglect the church. Wise elders will help discern which is which, so that neither the household nor the congregation is quietly sacrificed.

None of this is a guarantee that every family business will survive, or that every child will embrace the inheritance offered. In a fallen world, some shops will close and some children will walk away. God’s kingdom is bigger than our particular

enterprises.

But Deuteronomy 6 will not be repealed. Until Christ returns, God will continue to call parents to teach their children when they sit, walk, lie down, and rise. The question before us is not whether we can recreate the 1950s, but whether we will steward the structures He has already given – farms, shops, firms, and offices – as places where that kind of life is even possible.

When a family business dies, it is not only a sign that comes down and a building that goes dark. A small ecosystem of covenant life dies with it: a place where children could see faith, work, risk, generosity, and repentance played out in real time. We won’t all reopen shops. We won’t all farm five-generation land. But we can all fight, in our own callings, to keep work, wealth, and worship from drifting apart – and where God has given our communities family businesses with deep roots and wide branches, we can at least pause before we cut them down and ask whether the next generation might yet learn to climb them. ^{RP}

Aaron Reyburn grew up on a multigenerational family farm and now serves as shop foreman in a three-generation piano service and rebuilding shop. He also enjoys writing, and owns a small Christian publishing house, Reyburn Press (ReyburnPress.com).

HOW TO PLAN FOR YOUR NEXT CHAPTER AS A SENIOR

by Erin Walton

By the year 2030, one in four Canadians will be over the age of 65. In my role as the CEO of two seniors' living centers in Edmonton, I'm seeing how this is putting tremendous pressure on the seniors' housing, as well as on the healthcare system in Alberta, and I'm sure the same is true across the country. Planning ahead is the best strategy to ensure your next chapter is filled with grace and dignity.

Whether you're currently working but considering retirement, already retired, living in your own home but considering a move, or are trying to navigate how best to support a senior you love, consider the items below as you create your plans.

REDEFINE PURPOSE AND MEANING

If you're currently working but considering retirement, recognize that you still need a purpose. Retirement and other life transitions can feel like a loss of identity. But it's important to remember, you're not winding down, you're shifting gears.

Many of the seniors who live where I work have successfully navigated the transition from raising a family and working as their purpose, to finding new ways to define purpose and find meaning. And it is not a coincidence that these are the folks who are facing aging head on and faring remarkably well! If you're considering moving into a congregate living setting, ask about opportunities for volunteering for programs and services. For example, in Edmonton's Emmanuel Home, we have a café, library, and thrift store run by volunteers, as well as various other events throughout the year in need of willing hands.

INVEST IN YOURSELF NOW

You've heard the expression "use it or lose it," right? Well, this is true for your mind as well as your body.

People are living longer than they ever have. The average life expectancy in Canada is 82 years, thus it's crucial to be proactive about developing preventive and sustainable habits now for mental and physical health later. These should include habits related to movement, sleep, stress, hydration and nutrition. Hydration and nutrition are proven to play a key role in preventing dementia.

Recognize that the brain is also a muscle that needs to be exercised regularly. Dementia is something that can impact many seniors, even those who don't have Alzheimer's. If you're considering a retirement facility, choose one with an active book club, Keep Fit class, exercise, puzzle and games rooms.

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

When I accepted my CEO role for the Emmanuel Seniors Living Society three years ago, I actually knew very little about working with seniors. I did, however, understand a lot about hospitality, being an instructor in the field. I've learned that some of the

same basic principles of hospitality are true no matter the age of the individuals you're serving. Essentially, hospitality is about welcome, comfort and goodwill, something every senior needs and wants in a home.

Social isolation can increase your risk of mental health decline, depression and dementia. If you intend to continue living in your own home, be intentional about



Exercise for body and mind are an important focus...

As they transition from career and raising a family, some seniors find new purpose in volunteering in charitable efforts like a Christian thrift store or maybe a local garden.

social connections and relationships – do not wait for invitations. Try reconnecting with old friends or colleagues, join clubs or classes, or volunteer to make new friends. As Christians, we are often blessed with a church family that creates these opportunities.

I hear from the seniors who live where I work how blessed they feel to live in a Christian community, especially those who recently lost a spouse. Having someone to share a coffee or sit with during a Hymn Sing, or to pray with at meals, devotions or anytime can really make a difference.

UNDERSTAND YOUR FINANCIAL HEALTH

It's important for seniors to fully understand their financial situation in the short and long term. Having a deep understanding of this provides clarity, which brings peace of mind.

Do this by reviewing income streams, savings and spending patterns. Include a plan for healthcare (especially if your health benefits end when your employment ends). Build in a buffer for private homecare or long-term care should those resources not be available to you when the time comes. If you're considering a retirement residence, consider choosing one with homecare on site, even if you don't need it today.

Be sure to talk openly about your goals with a financial adviser and be sure to appoint a trusted Power of Attorney (POA) who is aware of these goals and wishes.

If you're considering a retirement residence, it may be very helpful to choose one where the rent is inclusive of utilities, wifi, cable, tenant insurance and storage. Of course, it all depends on how much they charge, but this hassle-free rental




model can really reduce anxiety, which can increase with age.

Also, consider the benefits of living in a facility where there is staff on site 24 hours per day, and the cooking, cleaning and snow shoveling is done by someone else!

TALK ABOUT THE LIFE YOU WANT

Many people avoid having difficult conversations with their spouse and family until it becomes urgent and nothing is in place. Transitions are easier when shared so talk about what you want, where you want to live and why in an open and honest way. Consider how much structure or flexibility you want, and what you want

done (or not done) in a medical directive. When a crisis arises, families benefit greatly from clear, well laid-out plans because grief and stress cloud our ability to think.

No matter what stage you're at, I would encourage you to prayerfully consider some of these items to ensure you're ready to enjoy your next chapter to the fullest! 

Erin Walton is the CEO of Emmanuel Seniors Living Society, a Christian non-profit organization that operates Emmanuel Home and Lighthouse (ESLS.ca), independent and assisted living facilities in Edmonton, Alberta.

THAT WHICH BUBBLES UP TO THE SURFACE

The Bible is full of laughter and joy,
and God's people have every reason to be bubbly

by Christine Farenhorst

The Reformed theologian R.C. Sproul (1939-2017) is quoted as saying:

“... laughter is precisely the kind of thing that will always confound scientists because it is so intensely human. It is that which bubbles up to the surface from the parts of us too deep to fit in a test tube.

“Which is why it's so funny, and telling, that they try. One of the most common forms of humor is when the prideful take a fall. The Emperor's, shall we say, exposure, comes from this fertile field. How much more ridiculously prideful can man be than when he thinks he can come to a fundamental understanding of man? How can we not laugh when one of us takes another of us and earnestly tries to squeeze us under a microscope? And when our bellies begin to shake, instead of joining in the fun, the fool scientist sits down to take notes.”

That which bubbles up to the surface, that is to say, laughter, is a gift, and it is biblical. God gave us the gift of laughter. It is a good thing, for example, when we acknowledge something amazingly wonderful with a burst of happiness.

Remember Sarah who, when she became a mother, exclaimed in Genesis 21:6: “God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.” Ecclesiastes 3:4 notes that there is a time “to laugh.” Likewise, Proverbs 17:22 notes that a “joyful heart is good medicine.” And Psalm 126:2, one of the songs of ascent, speaks of how the Lord's great deeds resulted in

“mouths filled with laughter.”

There are other instances, but these are enough to point to the fact that laughter, good laughter, is a gift from God and a healthy one. The Holy Spirit deemed Sarah's laughter of such importance that her burst of joy was written down in Scripture – an illustration that acknowledgement of God's goodness can be a time of sheer joy. The Spirit also deemed it important that Bible readers know that it is good for one's health to shake with mirth.

On the other hand, there are thoughtless words and “bad jokes” which can mock holy things. We have to be extremely careful in discerning what we may laugh at. There is foolish laughter, shallow laughter, and there are times when we ought not to laugh.

Most people are familiar with the *Reader's Digest* column entitled “Laughter is the Best Medicine.” As a matter of fact, waiting in a dentist's or doctor's office, many pick up the magazine and read the amusing stories which these pages relay – stories which cause wholesome smiles. As well, both parents and school teachers often recount numerous delightful incidents of children redefining words, unwittingly bestowing warped meanings which generate heart-warming chuckles.

Richard Lederer's book of *Anguished English* records many funny bloopers and blunders in the English language. Here are some smiles unintentionally created by children during school hours.

- Q: “What is the capital of Italy?” A: “I”
- “Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston in 1809 and was found unconscious. Three days later, he died in 1849.”
- “A liter is a lot of newborn puppies.”
- “Some people can tell time by looking at the sun, but I have never been able to make out the numbers.”
- “The hydrogen bomb is sometimes called the itch bomb. I don't know why.”
- “Our new teacher told us all about fossils. Before she came to our class, I didn't know what a fossil looked like.”

Misplaced and strange phrases, as well as grammatical errors, can entirely change meanings. These errors can feed our day-to-day existence with ear-to-ear grins. Newspapers, for example, often contain strange but chortling information.

- “The patient lives at home with his mother, father, and pet turtle who is presently enrolled in day care three times a week.”
- “She was numb from her toes down.”
- “She typed the list of numbers alphabetically.”
- “The patient's vision was 20.20 in both ears.”
- “He has a long history of a short leg.”
- “The patient was bitten by a bat as he walked down the street on his thumb.”

Norman Cousins (1915-1990) was an American journalist. He was diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis in 1964, when he was 49 years old. Things looked so bad for the man that he was told by doctors to

put his affairs in order. Upon hearing the diagnosis, Norman left the hospital and decided upon an unusual course of action. Firstly, he began to take an extremely high dose of vitamin C every day, and, secondly, he rented a movie projector and began watching comedies – comedies such as the Marx brothers’ films and *Candid Camera* reruns. It is recorded that Norman Cousins laughed and laughed until his belly hurt. He later wrote: “I made the joyous discovery that ten minutes of genuine laughter had an anaesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep.” Cousins died in 1990, not of a worsening of the ankylosing spondylitis condition, but of heart disease.

The aforementioned book by Lederer also recorded guffaws of amusement generated by signs posted on public buildings.

- On a travel office: “Don’t take a chance on ruining your vacation – come to us and be sure.”
- On a gas station: “We’re out of Roloids, but we’ve got gas.”
- On a furniture store: “We promise you the lowest prices and workmanship.”
- Outside a country-kitchen restaurant: “Restrooms/Please wait for a hostess to seat you.”
- On an office: “Would the person who took the stepladder yesterday please bring it back, or further steps will be taken.”
- In the countryside: “Quicksand warning! Any person passing this point will be drowned. By order of the District Council.”
- On a store: “This is the back door. The front door is around the back.”
- Outside a pre-school: “Please slow drively.”

Signs in foreign countries, trying for perfect English, have also wreaked havoc with the English language, causing much amusement for tourists.

- On a building in Japan: “Beauty sa-loon.”
- On the wrapper of a Russian ice-cream bar: “Do not taste our ice cream when it is too hard. Please continue your conversation until the ice cream grows into



a softer. By adhering this advisement, you will fully appreciate the wonderful Soviet ice cream.”

- In a Beirut hotel: “Ladies are kindly requested not to have their babies in the cocktail bar.”
- In a Shanghai buffet: “You will be able to eat all you wish until you are fed up!”

Earth laughs in flowers. So said Ralph Waldo Emerson. We, however, live in times in which it often appears as if we can see nothing on earth about which we can chuckle or laugh. Rumors of war, economic distress, famines, hatred, a turning away from truth are reasons for sadness. And we do well to know this.

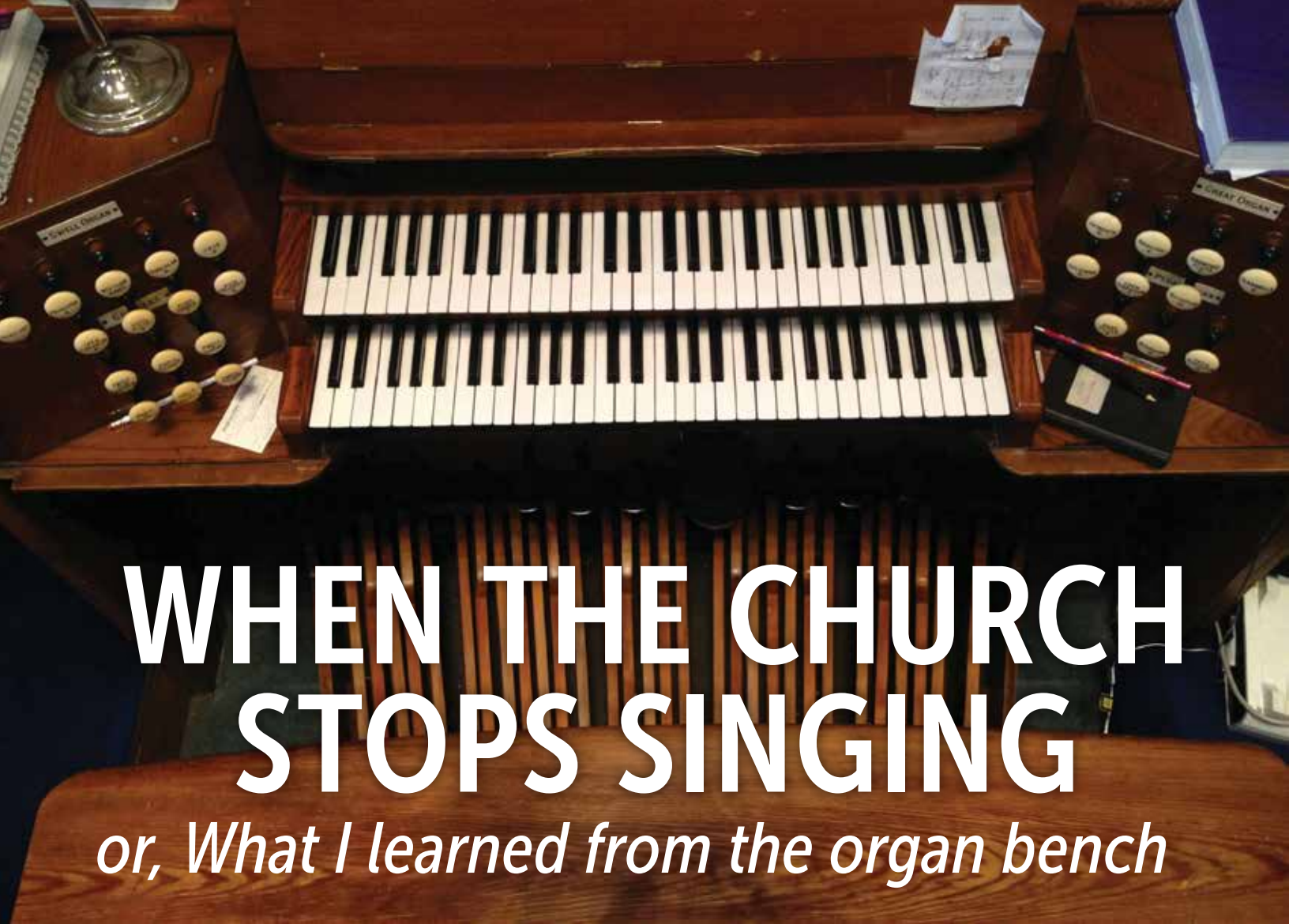
Yet humor and laughter are important to the Christian life. God has created the emotion of laughter within us and, by virtue of that fact alone, we can treasure it. It can be perverted, so we do well to be careful. The preacher, Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) rejoiced in birds and flowers and many ordinary things around him. Yet he also often struggled with depression and personal tragedies. He remained,

however, a man of great joy and humor, believing joy and humor to be vital in the life of a Christian. He loved to share good jokes with family, friends and colleagues. A fellow pastor and personal friend, William Williams, wrote about Spurgeon:

“What a bubbling fountain of humour Mr. Spurgeon had! I laughed more, I verily believe, when in his company than during all the rest of my life besides. He had the most fascinating gift of laughter – and he had also the greatest ability for making all who heard him laugh with him.”

Things which induce clean laughter or amusement increase our ability to perceive happiness and are a gift of God. Conversely, a somber Christian, one who never smiles or laughs, is often a Christian devoid of gladness. ^{RP}

Christine Farenhorst’s latest book is the remarkable, “Upheld: A widow’s story of love, grief, & the constancy of God.” Be sure to check out the review on ReformedPerspective.ca.



WHEN THE CHURCH STOPS SINGING

or, What I learned from the organ bench

by Felix Lilly

The first time I realized something was wrong with congregational singing, I was sixteen years old, sitting at the pipe organ bench at Tabor Presbyterian Church in Portland. The hymn introduction ended. I lifted my hands for the first verse – and almost no one sang. A few scattered voices appeared, hesitant and thin. The melody was there, printed clearly in the hymnal, but the room itself stayed quiet. From the organ bench, with the congregation behind you, silence is impossible to ignore. I remember thinking, *Is this normal?*

Over the next several years I played organ in several churches around Portland, and that moment kept repeating itself. Some congregations sang with surprising strength. Others barely sang at all. I remember one Sunday playing “A Mighty Fortress Is

Our God.” The first verse was hesitant and quiet, but by the final verse the congregation had found its voice and the room suddenly felt alive. The difference between those two moments – the hesitant beginning and the confident ending – revealed something important: congregational singing does not simply happen. It is something churches either cultivate intentionally or gradually lose.

THE SOUND SCRIPTURE EXPECTS

The New Testament assumes that the gathered Church sings. Paul writes in Colossians:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col. 3:16).

Notice what singing does here. It is not merely an emotional expression. Through singing, believers teach and encourage one another. Truth is carried not only through sermons but through the voices of the congregation itself.

Paul makes the same assumption in Ephesians:

“Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Eph. 5:19).

In both passages, singing is participatory. The church does not merely listen to music; the church sings.

For centuries, Christian worship assumed this. Choirs and musicians might assist, but the central voice in worship was the congregation. Today, that assumption is not always as strong.

WHEN WORSHIP MUSIC BECOMES SOMETHING WE WATCH

One of the things I noticed while playing in different churches was how dramatically congregational participation could change depending on how music was led.

In some congregations the moment the introduction ended, the singing began. The sound filled the sanctuary almost immediately. Even people who did not sing especially well sang confidently because the music supported them.

Other congregations responded very differently. The musicians played beautifully, the sound system was excellent, but the congregation remained hesitant. A few voices scattered here and there, but many people simply listened.

This shift often happens gradually and unintentionally. Churches want music to sound good. Musicians want to serve faithfully. Technology makes it easier than ever to produce polished sound. But the unintended result can be subtle: music becomes something happening at the front of the room rather than something shared by the whole church. From the organ bench, that difference is unmistakable.

THE QUIET DISAPPEARANCE OF CHURCH MUSICIANS

Another challenge is less visible but just as real: many churches struggle to find musicians. When I first began playing as a teenager, many congregations still had longtime pianists or organists who had served for decades. These musicians often trained younger players and gradually passed on their role. That pattern is becoming less common. More than once a pastor quietly asked me if I knew anyone who could play because their longtime pianist had retired and no one was ready to replace her. Sometimes churches relied on a single volunteer carrying the entire responsibility for music week after week.

This shortage changes the dynamic

of worship in ways many people never notice. When musical leadership becomes fragile, congregational singing often weakens as well. Leading congregational singing requires a particular kind of musician – someone who understands that their role is not performance but support.

WHAT THE ORGAN BENCH TEACHES

From the organ bench, you quickly learn that congregations sing best when they feel supported. If the accompaniment is steady and confident, people join in. If the tempo drifts or the melody becomes difficult to follow, the congregation hesitates.

Some Sundays the congregation would surprise me. A hymn I expected to struggle suddenly filled the room, especially on the final verse when people realized the organ was carrying them. When that happens, the room changes. People sing more boldly. The sound grows stronger with each verse.

The organ historically served this role well because its sustained sound naturally supports voices. But the deeper principle is not about instruments. Congregations sing best when the music invites participation rather than replacing it.

WHY THIS MATTERS

It might be tempting to treat this as a small issue. There are certainly larger challenges facing the Church today. But Scripture treats the gathered worship of God's people as something deeply significant. When a congregation sings together, the Word of Christ dwells richly among them (Col. 3:16). The truths of the gospel are not only preached but sung. Believers encourage one another through shared confession of faith.

Children hear their parents sing. Older members who can no longer serve in visible ways still contribute their voices. Corporate singing reminds us that worship is not about personal preference. No one in the room loves every song

equally. Yet everyone participates. In that sense, congregational singing becomes a small picture of the unity of the Church itself.


RECOVERING THE SOUND OF THE CHURCH

The encouraging news is that strong congregational singing is not complicated to cultivate. Churches that sing well usually share a few simple habits. They choose songs ordinary people can sing. They train musicians to support the congregation rather than showcase themselves. They encourage participation openly rather than assuming it will happen automatically.

In several churches I played in, the problem was not that people refused to sing. The problem was that no one had intentionally thought about how to help them sing. Once that question was asked, the difference could be remarkable.

LISTENING AGAIN

One of the strange privileges of sitting at an organ bench is that you learn to listen carefully to the room behind you. When a congregation really sings, you feel it through the bench and pedals as much as you hear it. The sound moves through the room like a single voice made up of many imperfect ones. It is not polished. Some voices drift off pitch. Some enter late. Yet the sound carries a unity no performance can create. It is the sound of the church speaking together. And once you have heard it clearly, you begin to notice when it starts to fade.

The question facing many churches today is not simply what style of music they prefer. The question is whether the congregation itself is still expected to sing. 

Felix Lilly is a musician who has served as a pipe organist in several local churches. He writes about church life, music, and Christian discipleship.



PERFECT PLANET

It all had to be *just right*
for life on Earth to
survive and thrive

by Mark Sandercock

In our garden is a plum tree. Now this may not sound unusual except that stone fruit trees, like plums, do not grow well on the northern prairie. The cold winter winds can dry out the delicate branches of the plum, killing it.

Yet our plum tree thrives. And it is growing larger and producing more delicious purple plums each summer. So why is it not just surviving, but thriving? Because it is planted in just the right spot; close to the house and a garden shed where these two buildings shield it from the brunt of the west and north winter winds. Conversely, in the summer the tree has good exposure to the east and south, providing it with enough sunlight and warmth to ripen the plums by the end of August.

PERFECTLY PLANTED PLANET

Earth is like our plum tree, thriving because it has been placed with care.

In fact, everything in the universe evidences the design of a careful Creator. Nobel Prize-winning professor of physics Charles Townes, in his 2003 article, “The convergence of science and religion,” asserted that,

“we are here only because the laws of physics have certain particular values.”

Townes recognized that these carefully balanced laws of physics, which “may be associated with intelligent planning,” are the reason life exists.

In order for our Sun or other stable stars to exist “the properties of nuclear reaction and gravitation must be just right,” wrote Townes. This is because over-abundant nuclear reactions in the Sun would cause it to expand and eventually explode, while it would be inherently unstable if its gravity was even a little too strong.

The composition of the elements available on Earth is also fine-tuned. According to Townes, the approximately 100 different chemical elements on earth – including carbon and oxygen on which life is based – could only exist if the electrical and nuclear forces were “just right and balanced.” Physicist Sir Fred Hoyle was impressed by the existence of

these finely-tuned laws of physics. Even though he was a religious skeptic, Hoyle recognized that:

“a common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. ... [T]he facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.”

God placed planet Earth in exactly the right spot for life to not just exist, but to thrive. In their book *The Grand Design*, renowned physicists Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow gave three important reasons why Earth has the right temperature for life to exist:

1. **Earth orbits only one star**, not two or more. About half of the known star systems are binary (two stars). If a planet were in a stable orbit in a binary star system it would be either too hot or too cold to sustain life;
2. **Earth’s orbit is nearly circular**. “Eccentricity” is a measure of how elliptical or oval an orbit is. An eccentricity of zero will result in a perfectly circular orbit and an eccentricity of one will be an elliptical orbit resembling a very squashed circle. With an eccentricity of 2%, Earth’s orbit is very nearly circular which keeps our planet’s temperature relatively stable throughout the year. In contrast to Earth’s orbit, Mercury’s orbit has an eccentricity of 20%, causing temperature swings of 93°C as Mercury orbits the Sun.
3. **Our Sun is just the right size, and Earth is just the right distance** from it for the Earth to have a temperature at which liquid water may exist throughout the year. The size of a star dictates the amount of energy it gives off, and if the Sun were just 20% larger, Earth would be as hot as Venus (464°C), and if just 20% smaller, Earth would be as cold as Mars (-64°C).

IT ALL HAD TO COME TOGETHER

Our blue and green planet is unique in many other ways that make it habitable.

1) A magnetic field

For example, neither Mars nor the Moon has a global magnetic field, whereas Earth does. Earth’s magnetic field extends out into space, protecting our world from the solar wind – that stream of charged particles released by the Sun. Without this magnetic field shielding our planet, the constant solar wind bombardment would strip away our atmosphere until our Earth became like the Moon or Mars.

2) Right rotation

In addition, the Earth rotates on its axis fast enough and at a sufficient angle of inclination to regulate the temperature across the globe so that it doesn’t get too hot nor too cold. These temperature differences provide us with seasons, but also generate ocean currents that redistribute heat and important nutrients.

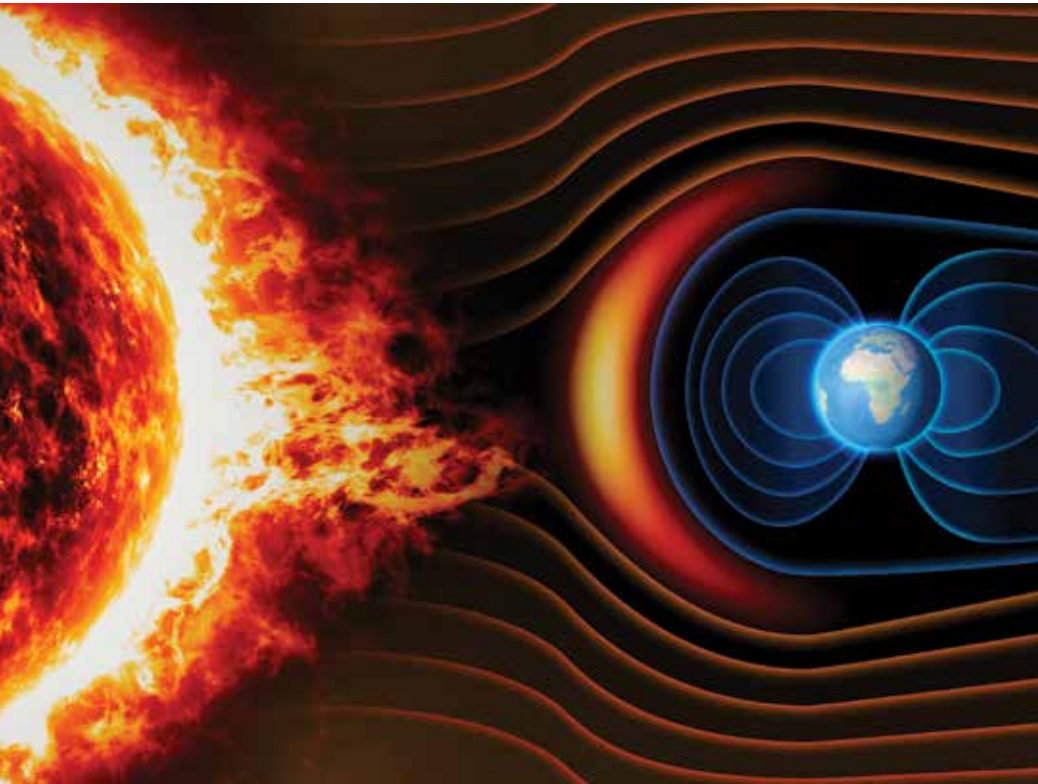
3) Moon of right size and location

Our moon is also the right size and distance from the Earth to allow its gravity to moderate the ocean tides. Tidal action is not just important for mixing of ocean waters along coastlines, is also vital for the mixing of deep ocean water, the circulation of which allows the exchange of a wide variety of substances between it and the atmosphere.

This action is essential to the overall maintenance of the climate system as heat, fresh water, carbon dioxide, and nutrients are redistributed. The Moon also stabilizes the degree of tilt of the Earth’s axis. Without our moon, large variations in the tilt of the Earth’s axis would result, driving cataclysmic changes to our world’s climate.

4) Stable Sun

In their article “How special is the Solar system?” astrophysicist Martin Beer and colleagues reluctantly accepted that our solar system is atypical and there is the possibility “that none of the observed planetary systems is likely to harbor an Earth-like planet.” Not only is our solar system rare in that it has only one star, our Sun is in the top 10% of



“Without this magnetic field shielding our planet, the constant solar wind bombardment would strip away our atmosphere until our Earth became like the Moon or Mars.”

star outputs and its output is incredibly stable compared with other stars of similar magnitude – important factors in making our solar system a perfect place for life on Earth.

5) Goldilocks zone

Ever since Isaac Newton first recognized in 1725 that Earth is the only planet in our solar system on which liquid water could exist, scientists have acknowledged that the range of distances from the Sun suitable for sustaining life is very narrow.

In *Strategies for the Search for Life in the Universe*, professor of astronomy, and expert on solar systems, Tobias Owen declared that

“in our solar system we have a situation that might be described as Goldilocks and the three planets – Venus is too hot, Mars is too cold, and Earth is just right!”

The “habitable zone” occupied by Earth is now popularly described as the “Goldilocks Zone” because it is “just right” for life.

Scientists have noted that the temperature of a planet directly affects the interaction between oceans and atmosphere, an interaction that is critical for maintaining a planet’s long-term suitability for life. When oceans interact with carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, a planet that is too cold will become even colder as more and more CO₂ is removed from the atmosphere by the oceans, eventually causing the planet to cool and the oceans to freeze. Conversely, a planet that is too warm will become even hotter as greater amounts of CO₂ are released from the oceans into the atmosphere, raising the planet’s temperature due to the greenhouse effect, and eventually rendering it too hot to sustain life. Our Earth is perfectly situated to keep

this interaction between oceans and atmosphere correctly balanced.

6) O₂ needs to be OK

We know that much more than the mere presence of liquid water is required to make Earth habitable. For example, a planet must also have sufficient gravity – but not too much – to retain its atmosphere.

One interesting fact about our atmosphere is that the oxygen level is exactly what we need for respiration, which supplies the correct amount of oxygen to our brain and organs. Too much or too little oxygen in the atmosphere will have a negative impact on human life, which is finely tuned to an atmospheric concentration of 21% oxygen. The amount of oxygen in our atmosphere is also the right amount needed for humans to work with metals. God gave us the ability to work with metals (Genesis 4:22), which requires heating ore, metals, and alloys with fire. Too much oxygen and fire will burn hotter and the flame will also spread much more rapidly, giving less control over combustion. Too little oxygen and combustion would not be a self-sustaining chemical reaction and the fire would go out shortly after the fuel is ignited. God created Earth as a place for humans to thrive (Ps. 115:16), and so He created our world, including the atmosphere, to be perfectly suited to both human life and human activity.

The presence of oxygen in Earth’s atmosphere is important not only for respiration but also for oxygen-based chemical reactions which are essential for the existence of life. Professor of physiology Kenneth Olson explained that the vast majority of these chemical reactions

“are driven by energy from the Sun; plants capture solar energy to oxidize water to oxygen and reduce carbon dioxide to simple sugars and other compounds [i.e., photosynthesis] while animals reverse the process, obtaining their energy by reducing oxygen to water and oxidizing sugars to carbon dioxide.”

EVOLUTION'S CHICKEN-EGG PROBLEM

Atmospheric oxygen is also necessary to create ozone (O₃), which provides an effective screen to shield the Earth's surface from harmful ultraviolet radiation. However, notes Olsen, according to Evolutionary theory, "in the prebiotic world there was neither photosynthesis nor oxygen and life had to take its origin elsewhere," such as sulfur-rich hydrothermal ocean vents. The problem with Evolutionary theory is that, without oxygen, there would be no protective layer of ozone and so any prebiotic life that did evolve would be bombarded by ultraviolet radiation and destroyed.

The fact that our Earth's atmosphere is oxygenated requires secular scientists to come up with a pathway to get from a prebiotic world without oxygen to the current world of complex life that utilizes oxygen. Many scientists now propose that oxygen-producing photosynthesis first evolved in cyanobacteria – algae – causing oxygen to be introduced into the atmosphere during what they call the Great Oxygenation Event.

However, some scientists have pointed out that the presence of any oxygen in the atmosphere would be lethal to emerging life, including the developing algae. Why? Because oxygen is very reactive and will damage DNA and cell proteins, breaking them down. In the beginning, God created living organisms with enzymes that dispose of damaging oxygen as it enters their cells... but life emerging via Evolution would not have had sufficient time to develop these complex enzymes yet.

Others explain away this difficulty by claiming that early life first developed mechanisms to deal with various reactive sulfur compounds which, with the appearance of oxygen, were then "tweaked" via evolutionary processes to deal with the presence of oxygen. Once levels of oxygen in the atmosphere increased, secular scientists suggest that more complex organisms must have *co-evolved* numerous mechanisms to protect themselves from reactive oxygen compounds that would literally bleach the organisms' proteins and DNA.

However, these hypotheses fail to explain how early life survived long enough to

develop mechanisms to deal with reactive sulfur compounds in the pre-oxygenated world in the same way that they fail to explain how an organism could survive the rapid damage caused by oxygen long enough for any "tweaking" to take place by the very slow evolutionary processes of mutation and natural selection.

The dilemma for scientists promoting Evolution is striking: on the one hand, oxygen forms highly reactive compounds that are destructive to biological life, while on the other hand, scientists contend that complex life could not have evolved without oxygen.

ONLY SOME OF WHAT ALL NEEDED TO HAPPEN

So, what are the requirements for Earth to be habitable? We've hardly named them all, but here's just some of them:

- right planet size,

- only one Sun that is stable and the right size,
- right distance from the Sun,
- a circular not elliptic orbit,
- the presence of a Moon of just the right size,
- an inclined rotational axis,
- a strong magnetic field,
- the presence of certain elements in the right proportions – including an oxygen atmosphere of the correct composition,
- and a large amount of liquid water.

God made our planet perfectly suited to be inhabited (Is. 45:18) and for this He should be praised (Ps. 104:24, Ps. 111:2-4)! RP

Dr. Mark Sandercock is a retired forensic chemist who worked for the RCMP and is the author of "Foundation: A Biblical Worldview." This is an abridged extract from Chapter 5. His book is available on Amazon.



"Without our Moon, large variations in the tilt of the Earth's axis would result, driving cataclysmic changes to our world's climate."

THE camel

Come + EXPLORE

Ever wish you could close your nostrils to keep sand, dust, debris out and to keep moisture in? Well, look no further than the incredible design of the camel, who is able to close them at will!

Camels have **THREE** eyelids! Two like us, plus one that is SEE-THROUGH. It acts as a windshield wiper, enabling them to wipe away sand & debris.

A group of camels is called a:
A herd B flock
C caravan D convoy

Camels can store up to **600 POUNDS** upon their backs and up to **100 POUNDS** in their hump!



ADULT CAMELS CAN GROW TO **7 FEET TALL!**

NEWBORNS ARE **3 FEET TALL!**

Water is very hard to find in the desert and sometimes camels don't drink for a long time... and then suddenly drink a LOT of water all at once. God gave camels oval-shaped blood cells so they can stretch and squish without popping (our round ones would pop!) and enable them to flow easily through blood vessels when the camel is very thirsty and its blood gets thick!



Tough, leathery skin on their knees pads the joints as they kneel on hot sand. Like volleyball knee pads!



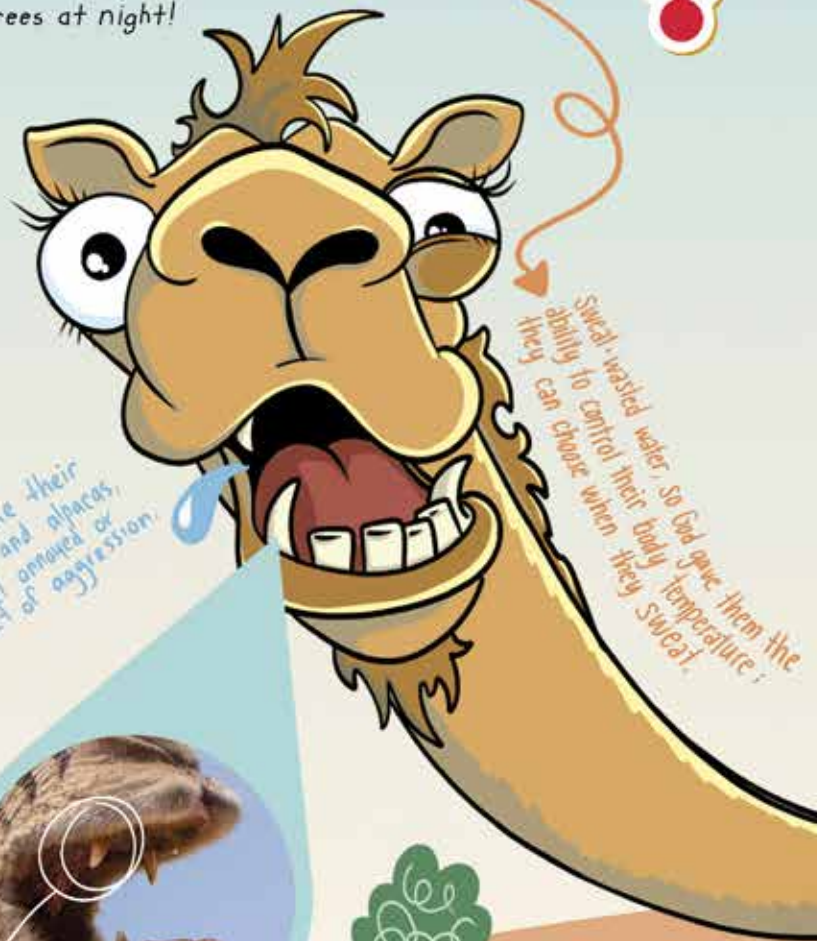
Camels can drink up to 40 gallons of water in as little as 3 to 5 minutes after enduring long periods without water. That's a 5 gallon water jug, times 5!

temperatures

in desert climates can often climb higher than 40 degrees during the day and down to -20 degrees at night!



Surprise! Contrary to popular belief, a camel's hump contains FAT, not water! When food is hard to find, the camel's body uses the fat as FUEL, allowing him to keep on trucking.



Swal, swal, water... so God gave them the ability to control their body temperature: they can choose when they Sweat!

Camels spit, like their cousins, llamas and alpacas, when they feel annoyed or as an act of aggression.



Harsh vegetation doesn't stand a chance against these sharp teeth! Beware, rival males - they use them in fights!

(GETTING SPIT ON DOESN'T SOUND SO BAD!)
(although their spit is pretty much vomit, so...)



Gestational period of 12-15 months.

Their spindly long legs keep their bodies high off the hot sand - another way to stay COOL!



These padded hooves give camels the ability to walk over hot, uneven, soft sand without sinking! When a camel bears down, the foot pads expand and the nails provide grip!

menu

ENTREE:

- Cactus
- Leafy grass
- Shrubs
- Thorny plants

DESSERT:

Regurgitated food



do you like BOOKS?

What about a book....
that isn't a book?!

Allow me to explain...

Belgic Confession - Article Two -

"We know Him (God) by two means: first, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God, even his everlasting power and divinity, as the apostle Paul says (Romans 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse. Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation."

That was a lot of fancy language. Here's what it means:

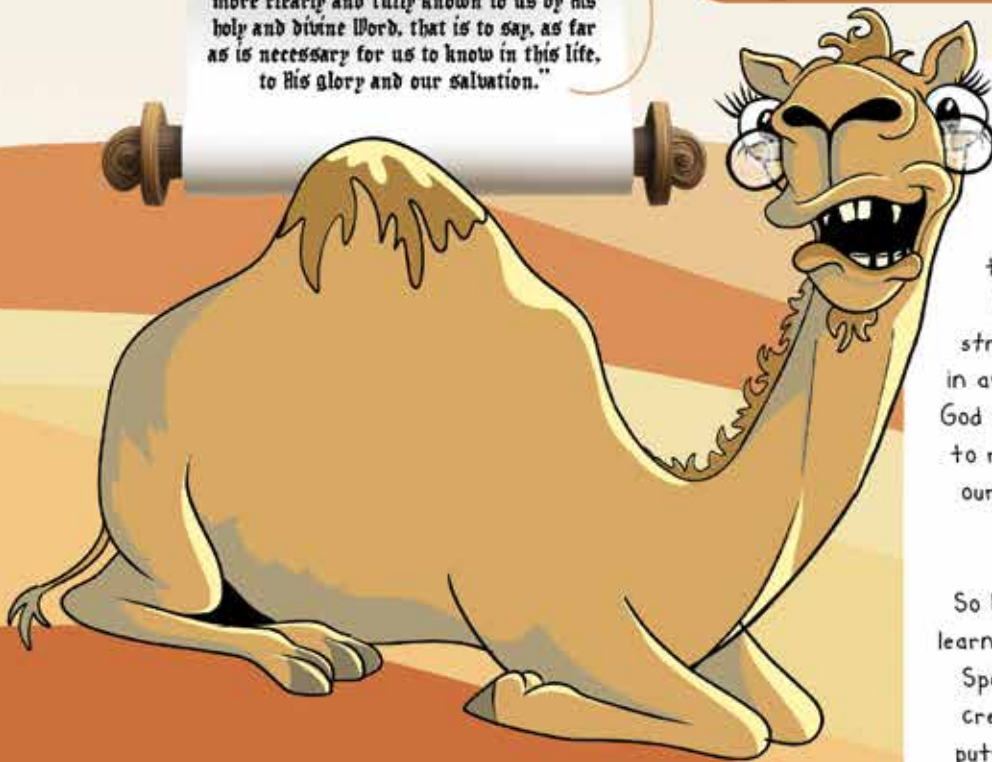
WE CAN LEARN ABOUT GOD IN TWO BIG WAYS

1. THROUGH HIS CREATION

By looking at the world He made we can learn that God is powerful, wise, creative and loving. Creation is like a huge picture book that shows us what God is like and what He can do! If only we take time to slow down and read its pages!

2. THROUGH THE BIBLE

By giving us the Bible to read, God teaches us things we couldn't know just by looking around. He teaches us who He is, what He has done for us and how we can love and follow Him. If only we'd take time to sit down and read its pages!



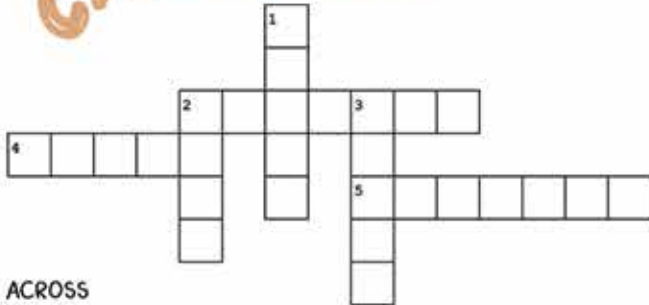
Do you remember the first time you saw an animal you had never seen before? Didn't it make you just stop and stare and wonder all at the same time? What is this animal, where does it live, what does it do, why does it have stripes, or spots.... One cannot help but be in awe and wonder at the marvelous works of God when we open our eyes and allow ourselves to read these beautiful pages He puts before our eyes - because that's what He created them for!

So here's a gentle reminder to take time to learn, marvel and be in awe of God's creation. Spend time flipping through the "pages" of creation by getting outside, slowing down, putting away distractions and look with the eyes of faith. If He cares about camels to give them all they need, how much more must He care for you who gives you so much more!

How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all: The earth is full of your creatures.

Psalm 104:24

Crossword



ACROSS

- 2. King Arthur's home
- 4. This queen of _____ brought loads of goods to Solomon on camels
- 5. First owner of a camel mentioned in the Bible

DOWN

- 1. Dromedary has one, Bactrian have two
- 2. What a baby camel is called
- 3. Cousin to the camel

Unscramble

- FEISONSNCO _____
- NTAGLLE _____
- NTOEARCI _____
- VBLEIIS _____
- NEIDIV _____
- VTAINOLAS _____

search

Humpbert the Camel has lost half of his owner's luggage! Can you flip through the magazine and find all the pieces?



maze

START

END

riddle

I sail across the arid land,
With a great cargo load,
Across the dry waves of sand,
My nickname - can you decode?

_____ of the _____



THE LIMITS OF THE “TWO-BOOKS” METAPHOR

by Jon Dykstra

There is a metaphor, common among Christians, about how God has revealed Himself to us via “two books”: Scripture and the book of Nature. The Belgic Confession, Article 2 puts it this way:

“We know [God] by two means:

1. “First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes **as a most beautiful book**, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to perceive clearly God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature, as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. All these things are sufficient to convict men and leave them without excuse.
2. “Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word as far as is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation.”

But what happens when these two “books” seem to conflict? This happens in the Creation/Evolution debate, where the plain reading of Genesis 1 and 2 conflicts with the evolutionary account of our origins. So, as Jason Lisle has noted, that has some Christians thinking that since:

“...the book of Nature clearly reveals that all life has evolved from a common ancestor....we must take Genesis as a metaphor.... we must interpret the days of Genesis as long ages, not ordinary days.”

ANALOGIES HAVE THEIR LIMITS

But that’s getting things backwards. While the Belgic Confession does speak of Creation as being like a book, metaphors and analogies have their limits. For example, in Matt. 23:37 God is compared to a hen who “gathers her chicks under her wings” – this analogy applies to the loving, protective nature of a hen, and should not be understood to reveal that God is feminine. That’s not what it is about.

Clearly Nature is *not* a book – the universe is not made up of pages and text, and it’s not enclosed in a cover or held together by a spine. The Belgic Confession is making a specific, very limited, point of comparison when it likens God’s creation to a book. How exactly is it like a book? In how it proclaims “God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature.” It does so with book-like clarity, “so that people are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

But in the Creation/Evolution debate some Christians extend this book analogy in a completely different, and entirely


inaccurate, direction. It has been taken to mean that Creation can *teach us about our origins with book-like clarity*. This misunderstanding then presents us with a dilemma: if we have one book saying we were created in just six days, and another apparently saying it took millions of years, and both are equally clear on this matter, then what should we believe?

We need to understand that this dilemma is entirely of our own making. Creation is *not* like a book when it comes to teaching us about our origins. As Dr. Lisle has noted, it does not speak with that kind of clarity on this topic.

ONLY ONE ACTUAL BOOK HERE

In contrast, the Bible is not merely *like* a book, it *actually is one!* It is there, and only there, that we get bookish clarity on how we, and the world around us, came to be.

So, yes, the two-book analogy remains helpful when it is used to illustrate the clarity with which God shows “his eternal power and divine nature” to everyone on the planet. But when it comes to the Creation/Evolution debate, the way the two-book analogy is being used is indeed *fallacious*. God’s creation simply does not speak with book-like clarity regarding our origins.

We can be thankful, then, that His Word does! 

IN A NUTSHELL

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY JON DYKSTRA

THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE GRUMPY...

I saw this four-step *cheer-yourself-up* process on my sister-in-law's social media feed and had to try it out. And it worked!

1. Whisper "beep boop" to yourself. Repeat randomly over the next couple minutes
2. Pinch your nose and say "sneep snop"
3. Nose pinched, say "boopdedoop" in a really deep voice
4. Nose still pinched, say "bubbles" in the angriest voice you can

Give it a go and let me know if you find it effective too (the fourth one really gets me).

But why does it work?

The world often acts as if emotions control us, but God talks about self-control as being a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). There's a sense too, in what God tells us, of emotions being actions we can *do*. So we might not be called to *feel* happy, but we are commanded to rejoice always (Phil. 4:4), and rejoicing is something we can express no matter how we might feel.

This involves a person trying to actually control their emotions. And because the attempt is something that lines right up with God's commands, the fruit that results is good. God's love comes out in His commandments, such that obeying God is good for us.

UPDATING A "CLASSIC"

Have you noticed how grim many nursery rhymes are? Jack goes up a hill to get water and ends up cracking his head, while precariously perched Humpty Dumpty breaks his whole body... irreparably.

Years back, I decided I absolutely had to draw the line when I made the mistake of reading "rock-a-bye baby" as a goodnight story to my two-year-old. I quickly made a last-line revision that would be far more conducive to my toddler having a restful – nightmare-free – sleep. This is how my version goes:

Rock-a-bye baby, on the treetop,

*When the wind blows, the cradle will rock,
If the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,*

And Daddy will catch them, cradle and all.

ON LOGIC

Sherlock Holmes and his faithful companion Dr. Watson once went on a camping trip. Some hours after they lay down for the night and went to sleep Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend.

"Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see."

Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars."

"What does that tell you?" Holmes asked.

Watson pondered for a minute – accompanying Holmes for years had given him countless opportunities to see the power of careful observations, and, as he was no intellectual slouch himself, he thought now might be a good opportunity to put his own keen observational abilities on display.

"Well, Holmes, astronomically speaking it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all-powerful and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you, Holmes?"

"It tells me, Watson, that someone has stolen our tent!"

SOURCE: Adapted from a joke making its way around the Internet

SOLA OPUS DEI

"I guess you could say we've been saved by works. His."

- Shai Linne

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR HOME?

Some years back Rev. Peter Moelker wrote a head-clearing piece titled "My home, my idol?" in *Faith in Focus*. He asked Christians to give their head a shake and really think about why we buy, renovate, paint, scrub, tidy, dust, vacuum and have our homes:

Have you ever sat back and asked yourself the question: "what is my home really for?" What is its purpose? A place to store our stuff? A museum to be shown to select guests? A fast-food restaurant to prepare quick meals for those who hurriedly pass through? What is the purpose of my home? The Bible tells us that our homes are to be places where children are instructed in the Law of the Lord (Deut. 6:7, 11:19), where the righteous experience the Lord's blessing (Prov. 3:33), where Christians fellowship and worship God together (Acts 2:46), and where others are invited in to enjoy that same blessing of the Lord (Acts 16:15, 18:26, Romans 12:13, 16:23, 1 Peter 4:9, 3 John 1:8).

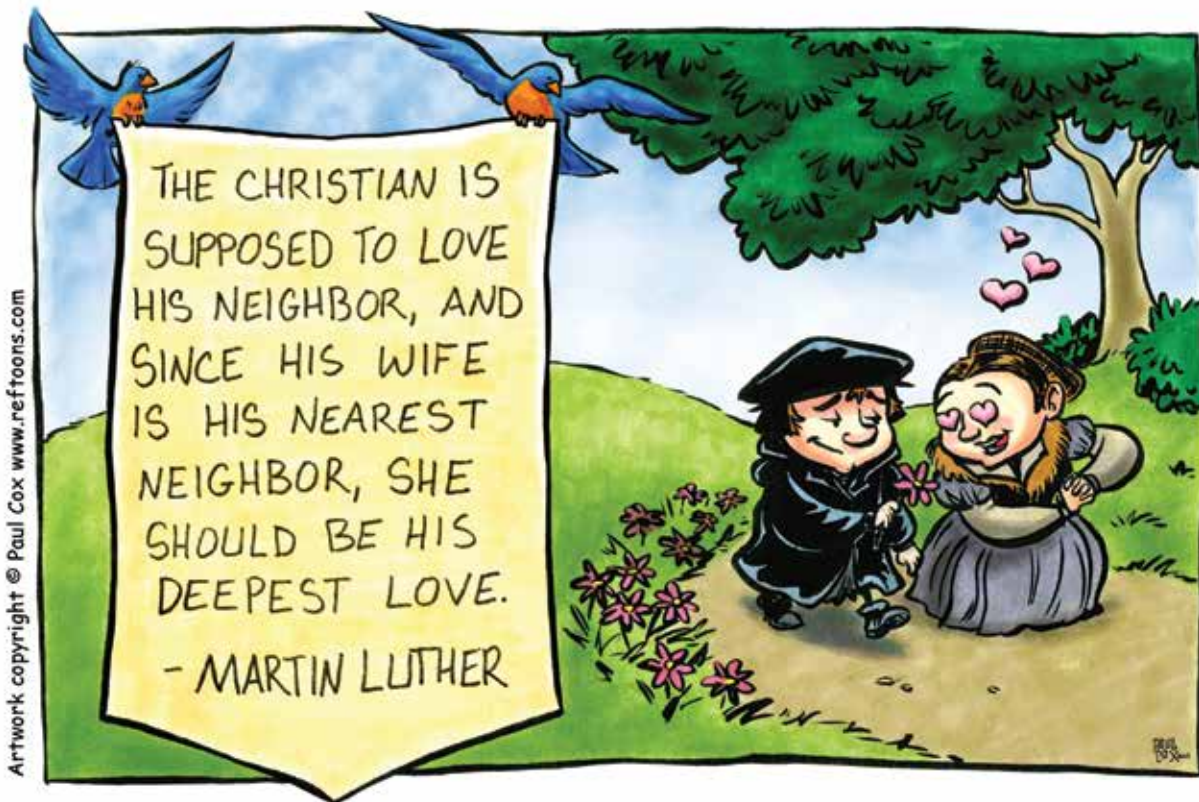
We might be embarrassed to have guests over when our home isn't pristine and smelling of lemon-scented Mr. Clean, or when we're having some problems with the night's menu. But if we realize the purpose of our home is for it to be used to the glory of God, rather than presented at its best *for our own glory* we'll have the proper perspective and not sweat such little stuff.

CAN GOD CAN MAKE A SQUARE CIRCLE?

Here's a trick question atheists pose:

"If God is all-powerful, can He create a rock so heavy He can't lift it?"

If Christians answer yes, then God must not be all-powerful since He can't lift the rock. And if we say no, then it again calls into question God's omnipotence – He must not be all-powerful,



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because it isn't within His powers to make such a rock.

But the question misunderstands what Christians are saying about God when we talk about God's omnipotence. While we claim it is within His power to do anything, we aren't saying it is *within His character*. There are, in fact, many things God cannot do, because to do them would violate His own character.

For example, God is eternal, so He cannot cease to be. He also cannot lie, and cannot abandon His elect. And, for the very same reason – because it would violate His character – He cannot make a rock so big He can't lift it (or make a square circle, or homosexual marriage, etc.). God's character is the very basis for reason and logic, and He will not do anything that would violate the essence of Who He is.

DIVERSITY

by Rob Slane

Up is like down when left is like right
 Cold may be hot when the day is like night
 The cat and the dog are the same only when
 The men are like women and the women like men

Celebrate diversity for sure, but recall
 That small really is small and tall really is tall
 Calling smiling a frown will not make it a frown
 Up really is up and down really down

ON PATIENCE

- "Patience is a quality you admire in the driver behind you, and scorn in the one ahead."
- "Living would be easier if men showed as much patience at home as they do when they're fishing."

SOURCE: *God's little instruction book*

MAN VS. BEAST

"...our best moralists tell us to treat other animals well – never dreaming of telling the animals to treat us well!"

– C. John Collins explaining how even those who say we came from the animals can't help but acknowledge how distinct we are from them.

SIMPLY AND TRULY...

There once was a man whose parents had given him the highly unusual name of "Amazing" when he was born. They gave him the name in the hopes that he would live up to it and achieve great things.

But as far as most people were concerned, Amazing never seemed to do anything to live up to his name. He never even got far from where he was born. He worked in the family business, and had some limited – one might even say quite normal or ordinary – success and married his high school sweetheart. While she thought him quite extraordinary, no one else did, and his name left him as the unfortunate butt of countless jokes. These jokes so bothered him that he told his wife that when he died he didn't even want his name put on his tombstone; maybe then the jokes would stop.

Well, when Amazing did finally die, his wife honored his request. But she also wanted to have people finally understand how extraordinary her husband had been. So in place of his name she had this inscription placed on the tombstone: "Here lies a man who was loving and faithful to his wife for 60 years."

And now, whenever people walk by, they point and say, "Well, isn't that Amazing!"

SOURCE: A joke passed along by my father-in-law

O CANADA!

A Canadian woman and a Saudi woman were arguing about which country was better.

The Canadian said, "Canada has more than its share of problems, but at least here I can freely walk up to Parliament Hill, head to the Prime Minister's office, and loudly complain, 'Mark Carney, I don't like the way you're running this country.'"

"But I can do that in my country too!" the Saudi woman exclaimed. "I'm free to walk up to the palace, go to the King's office, and loudly complain, 'King, I don't like the way Mark Carney is running Canada!'"

SOURCE: Adapted from a Reagan joke about Russia and the US

THE GOVERNMENT CAN'T RUN OUR LIVES

"Any man who thinks he can be happy and prosperous by letting the Government take care of him better take a closer look at the American Indian!"

– commonly attributed to Henry Ford, but without any clear sourcing. Whether from him or not, the truth it captures makes clear the foolishness of socialist schemes.

4 OF A KIND

Grace and *Mercy* are two words with distinct meanings...but do you know what they are?

Through sheer repetition some Christian words seem to blend into each other and we forget their distinct meanings. But their differences do matter. What follows are three short definitions that describe the following four words: *Grace*, *Mercy*, *Justice* and *Persecution*.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION MAY-JUNE

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- A. *not* getting what you do deserve
- B. getting what you *do* deserve
- C. getting what you *don't* deserve

Test yourself. Do you know what definition applies to each word? The answers follow below:

- A. *Not* getting what you do deserve, is *Mercy*. God is merciful when He doesn't send us to hell. We deserve to go to hell, but fortunately Christians don't get what we deserve.
- B. Getting what you *do* deserve, is *Justice*. God's justice requires that sinful man be punished. Jesus took our deserved punishment on Himself and thus fulfilled God's requirement for justice.
- C. Getting what you *don't* deserve is *Persecution*. If justice is about getting punished when you do something bad, then persecution is about getting punished when you've done nothing, or done something good (like handing out a Bible in China). Persecution is, therefore, getting something bad that you don't deserve. This definition is a little tricky, however, because it can also be a *good* thing to get what we don't deserve. That's exactly what *Grace* is! Our salvation and adoption as God's children is ours entirely out of grace – we have done nothing to merit this reward. It is through grace alone.



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An application can be sent to the above email address
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president@ambassadorschristianschool.ca





DON'T TRUST FISH

BY NEIL SHARPSON AND DAN SANTAT

2025 / 40 PAGES

RATING: GREAT



Can you look at this title and not open the cover? And it only gets better the further on and further in you go. I've shared this with everyone in my family, though they are all long past the picture book stage. I gave a dramatic reading to my wife, because I just had to. This is the kind of book that can make a dad into a performer – your kids will be asking for encores. You may well get a standing ovation! (I'm quite sure I just missed out on one.)

I don't want to spoil the story so I'll only share the inside book flap.

Fish.

They're in our homes.

They're in our water.

But what do we really know about them?

Don't.

Trust.

FISH.

That, there, is a really good inside flap, and too good to really let it go to waste so let me lay this tip on you dads – don't start this read-aloud on page 1, start on the inside flap!

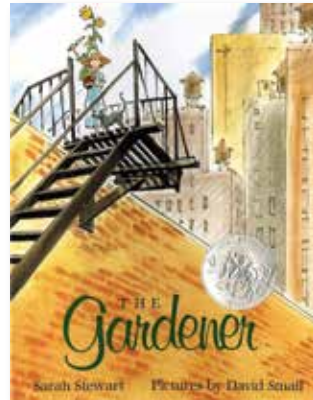
So run – but don't swim – to your nearest bookstore and get this one today!

THE GARDENER

BY SARAH STEWART AND DAVID SMALL

1997 / 38 PAGES

RATING: GREAT



Lydia's family has fallen on hard times so their little girl is sent off to the big city to live with uncle Jim to help around his bakery. Via short letters home, Lydia updates the family on her efforts at making her somber uncle smile.

She's quite the gardener, an interest she shares with her grandma back home. One of the care packages from her grandma even contains little plants that amazingly survive the postal trip. Though she's living in her uncle's apartment, Lydia fills everything she can with plants, and finds room on the roof to create her own secret garden. Will all her flowery beauty manage to prompt a smile from her uncle? This is a sweet story, and the art fills every corner of every page.

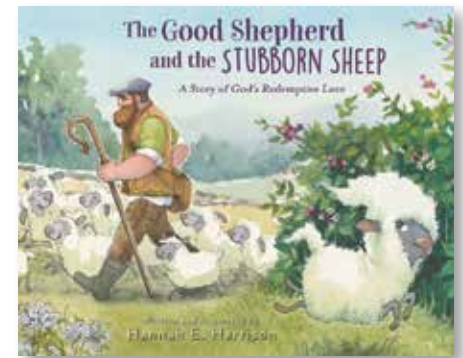
If you liked this, you'll enjoy three others by David Small: *One Cool Friend* about a boy, Elliot who takes a penguin home with him from the zoo, and *Imogene's Antlers*, where a girl wakes up one morning to find a set of antlers on her head. It doesn't faze her, and she runs with it, using them to dry laundry and hang donuts. Her optimistic outlook makes this, and the sequel *Imogene Comes Back*, such fun.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE STUBBORN SHEEP

BY HANNAH E. HARRISON

2025 / 32 PAGES

RATING: GREAT



George wants us to know that he, and the other sheep in his flock, are a rather helpless lot. They have a bad sense of direction (especially Mabel). They're all utterly defenseless, what with the lack of claws, and not even a set of top teeth to bare when they growl (and what sheep growls anyway?). And, when they are big and fluffy, if they get tipped over, they might not even be able to right themselves without help.

That, then, is why sheep need a Shepherd.

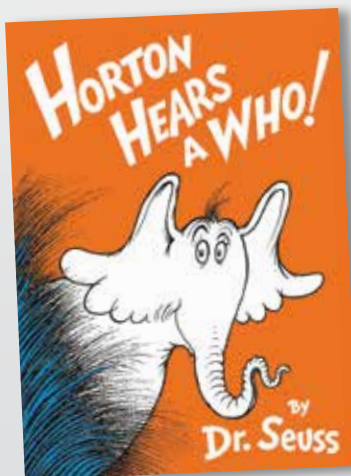
And, of course, this is why we need One too.

I'm not a big fan, generally, of fictionalized retellings of biblical stories. They strike me as shoddy stand-ins for a story that God decided to deliver to us in His own chosen manner.

But that's not what's going on here. This isn't a retelling of Psalm 23. This is an explanation to us – a people without a lot of farm experience – of the sheep metaphor God uses here that would have been very familiar to its original audience. It turns out sheep are dumb. Really dumb. So when God, through David, compares us to sheep in need of a shepherd, when we better understand sheep we'll better understand what God is saying here about our own helpless state.

DR. SEUSS'S "HORTON TRILOGY"

BOOKS BETTER THAN THE AUTHOR INTENDED?



HORTON HEARS A WHO!

BY DR. SEUSS
1954 / 72 PAGES

This was the last Horton story written, but ranks first in our hearts for its surprising pro-life message! With his giant ears, the elephant Horton is able to hear what no one else can: that there are tiny little people – Whos they call themselves – living on what looks like a dandelion puff. They are too tiny to see,

and for everyone else they are too tiny to hear, but as Horton knows, and as he often repeats: “a person’s a person no matter how small.”

Conscientious pachyderm that he is, Horton is determined

to protect the Whos. His friends think he’s crazy, and one in particular is so sure he’s nuts that she wants to grab the dandelion puff and burn it, to put an end to his delusion. It comes to a climax with Horton encouraging all the residents of Who-ville to make as much noise as they can so others will finally be able to hear them! Will their humanity ever be recognized?

Kids will love this for the rhymes and the charming hero, but pro-life parents can’t help but embrace Horton’s oft-repeated entreaty that “a person’s a person no matter how small.” Are Christians reading something into the story that the author didn’t intend? Probably. Seuss’s second wife said the pro-life movement was hijacking the story for its own purposes. But whether Seuss intended it or not, his story makes a point worth hearing: that our worth is not dependent on our size. Christians have to take that further though, explaining where our worth *does* come from: being made in the very image of God (Genesis 9:6).

HORTON HATCHES THE EGG

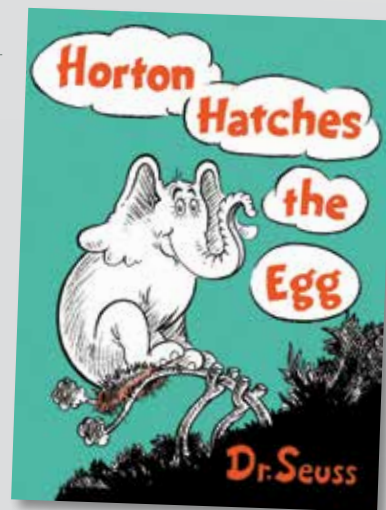
BY DR. SEUSS
1940 / 64 PAGES

The start of the Horton trilogy isn’t as insightful as the third, but it is fun. In his first outing, the genial elephant is taken advantage of by a lazy mother bird named Mayzie. She says she just wants a quick break from egg-sitting, but once Horton agrees to take over, Mayzie takes off and doesn’t look back.

Day after day, Horton faithfully babysits the egg, roosting on the nest at the top of the tree. Hunters, startled by this strange sight of an elephant up a tree, transport him, tree and all, over the sea to put him in a circus. Horton has to endure the indignity, being displayed as a spectacle to crowds all over, but, as he repeats to all his critics: “I meant what I said, and I said what

I meant. An elephant’s faithful, one hundred percent!”

And that, there, is the attraction of this book – it is about steadfastness, and sticking to your word, even when others – *where is that Mayzie?* – just won’t. Children don’t need to worry, though, as both Horton and Mayzie get what’s coming to them in the end: the baby bird that hatches is half elephant!



HORTON AND THE KWUGGERBUG AND MORE LOST STORIES

BY DR. SEUSS
2014 / 64 PAGES

Back in 2014, a “new” Dr. Seuss book was published 23 years after the author’s death. It wasn’t *new new*, but rather rediscovered, from work Seuss had published in magazines back in the early 1950s.

The title tale in this

collection of four stories, has Horton once again being sorely treated, this time by a kwuggerbug, who promises to split some delicious beezlenuts if Horton will only carry him to the tree. It seems a deal when the tree seems near but in the end Horton is crossing crocodile-infested rivers, and climbing mountains and the trail just keeps going on and on. Then, in one final trick, the kwuggerbug “splits” the nuts by taking all the nut meat for himself and leaving Horton the shells for his half. But once again, justice is done, this time via an unintentional sneeze. And while there is no great moral to this story, it sure is fun to see Horton this one more time.



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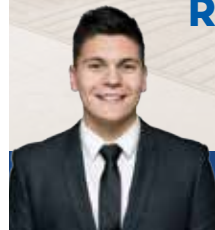
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Invites applications for the role of
PRINCIPAL

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DCS is a K-12 Canadian Reformed school with over 280 students located in Carman, Manitoba. It offers a highly supportive community, an enthusiastic and cohesive staff, a robust administrative support team, and an experienced and committed board.

Interested individuals are encouraged to reach out to the current Principal or Board chairman for more details, and to discuss the possibility of taking on a transitioning role in the 2025-2026 school year.

Applicants must be communicant members of a Canadian Reformed Church or a Church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the same.

Applications should be sent to Dufferin Christian School
Box 1450, Carman, MB, Canada, R0G 0J0
Attention: Mr. Jon Dewit
OR EMAILED TO: chairman@dufferinchristian.ca

For more information, please contact:

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

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More Info:

cantaroinstitute.org/garden-path-camp-26/



Worldview Sports Camp (Aug. 17–21, 2026) is an action-packed week for ages 6–12 that develops athletic skill, teamwork, and discipline while helping campers understand how sports, competition, and training can be lived out to the glory of God within a faithful biblical worldview.

More Info:

cantaroinstitute.org/worldview-sports-camp-26/



Trees, rocks, water, sky, wildlife -

SHEILA VAN DELFT

paints refreshment for the soul

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Harma-Mae Smit

The quiet cool of a forest trail brings inspiration to artist Sheila Van Delft. As an introvert, she finds she can recharge by breathing deeply in the midst of nature. And in her work, she brings that feeling to others, through haunting scenes of groves on Vancouver Island, fog-filled vistas of the West Coast Trail, or serene views of a lone eagle surveying his kingdom.

“When I think deeply about why it’s always nature [that I paint],” she says,

“I realize that I’m painting my longing for the new earth and fellowship with God. Adam and Eve in Paradise enjoyed perfect nature with God, and the renewed earth will also have landscapes and seascapes, trees, animals, and big skies – all perfected and even more incredibly beautiful than what we enjoy here because of the redeeming work of Jesus. I long for this, and dream of this, and in my own way, must paint it again and again.”

Sheila is blessed to be able to work in art full-time – part-time as an art teacher and the rest of the time in her home studio. A typical day for her might involve: catching up on email requests and admin tasks, painting, taking a break for household tasks, taking the dog for a walk, brainstorming the next twenty paintings, painting some more, reluctantly stopping to make dinner, and then painting the rest of the evening because, really, it’s her favorite thing to do.



Van Delft has been an artist since she was a child, encouraged by her parents. Later, she studied graphic design, and then even later, as a mature student, she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Arts. Through it all, she honed her skills, motivated by Colossians 3:23: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”

“I sometimes have market customers tell me that they feel so at peace when they look at my work, or that they

don’t want to leave because it’s all so beautiful. I marvel at this! How can it be that what I do can have this effect? It’s all God’s hand working through my hand.”

One of the things she’s most proud of is her work as a high school teacher. Through it, Sheila nurtures her students’ ability to use their talents to share beauty and truth. Students she never expected have come up to her and admitted she made them care about art, and that brings her a feeling of fulfillment.

“When I try capture emotions like awe, contentment, gratitude, harmony, joy, peace, and wholeness in my paintings, I think others can feel that too. And that’s why I paint, so others can also feel the hopeful anticipation of the better life that is coming. I’m trying to share a bit of Heaven.”

Learn more about Sheila Van Delft’s work at SheilaRaeVanDelftArt.com, where you can also stay up to date about the markets and other events where you can view her work in person. She shares her work on [Instagram.com/sheila.rae.vandelft.art](https://www.instagram.com/sheila.rae.vandelft.art) and [Facebook.com/sheila.klavervandelft](https://www.facebook.com/sheila.klavervandelft). 

Harma-Mae Smit loves to write and think about art, and how it can reflect the Creator himself. Send her suggestions for artists to profile at harmamae@reformedperspective.ca.

Eagle Mountain | 12 x 12" acrylic on canvas ►

This was inspired by a visit to Brackendale, on the west coast of BC, in January to see all the eagles gorging on spawning salmon. There were hundreds of them along the river banks and in the trees – but this particular eagle was just by himself, surveying his kingdom.



◀ Zoe | 36 x 24" acrylic on canvas

The artist's grand-daughter in a field near her home in Ontario

At the End of the Day | 48 x 36" acrylic on canvas ►

Near Cathedral Grove on Vancouver Island – Sheila finds the forest one of the places where she recharges the best. She is so grateful to live in the country with trees all around her – and the endless inspiration they provide!

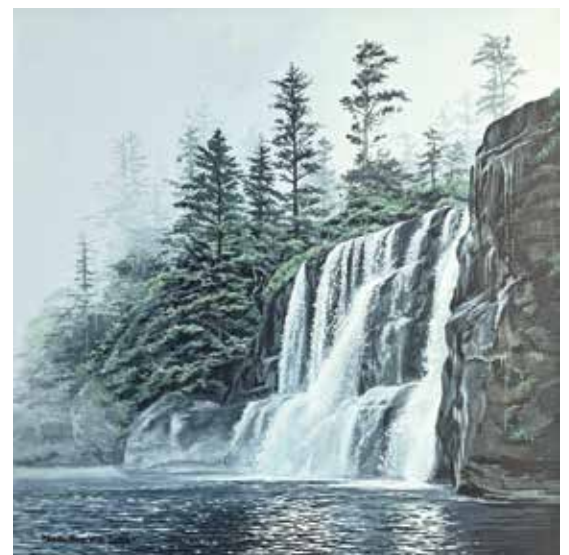


▲ Grandson

The artist's grandson, while they were all vacationing on the Oregon coast as a family

At the Falls | 16 x 16" acrylic on canvas ►

Along the West Coast Trail is a magnificent waterfall that runs right into the ocean. Sheila dreams of visiting, though she will likely never make the hike. Instead, she enjoys the scene by painting it.



Basil Rathbone's classic 14-film (1939-1946) go as **SHERLOCK HOLMES**

by Jon Dykstra

If there's any one film that deserves credit as the inspiration for the innumerable cinematic Holmesian interpretations that followed, it'd be Basil Rathbone's 1939 performance in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. This was the second, and probably the best in a 7-year, 14-film series of Holmes films starring Rathbone as the world's most famous detective and Nigel Bruce as his faithful companion Dr. John Watson.

While this film shares the name of one of Arthur Conan Doyle's collections, the plot is original. In the opening scene we see Holmes' arch-nemesis, the brilliant, villainous Professor Moriarty, quite literally getting away with murder. He is in court, standing trial, and the jury has returned to declare they find him "not guilty," not because they think him at all innocent, but only because they don't have the evidence they need. So what

is Moriarty going to do now that he has been set free again? He pledges to Holmes that:

"I am going to break you, Holmes. I am going to bring out, right under your nose, the most incredible crime of the century and you will never suspect until it is too late. And that will be the end of you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

And with that, the game is afoot!

Part of Holmes' appeal is in seeing wrongs righted, whether that's murderers caught or stymied, or thefts recovered or averted. Even when these were written, the world was being overturned, with Darwin's theories causing people to question long-held truths. So, to have a logician calmly calculating what is indeed true was an encouragement. Truth could be known!

Of course, that trust in man's reasoning abilities overlooks how able we are to tell a convincing lie to ourselves – Darwin's tall tale was only compelling (then and now) because so many wanted to deny the evidence of God's fingerprints that are everywhere evident in His creation around us. So, yes, Holmes' logic is impressive, but if there is a warning we should give to our kids in watching these films, the most pressing might be that our fallible rationality isn't the firm foundation that Holmes makes it out to be.

The first and this second film in this series are set in the novels' original Victorian era, giving us a good exposure to this classic character in his proper setting. But in a most intriguing twist, the next dozen take Holmes and Watson forward in time to World War II, when these films were actually being produced. That's a fun bit of time travel starting with *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942) where we get to see Holmes' brilliance pitted against conniving Nazis. The duo aren't the only time travelers, however – Professor Moriarty makes his presence felt further on in the series, tag-teaming with Hitler!

CAUTIONS

While two people are murdered in *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, it happens off screen. The scariest part is probably the mood music. The only other concern is the question of whether Sherlock Holmes



needed to bring this to the resolution he did. I don't want to give spoilers, so I'll just say, a discussion might be had about what happens at precisely the 77-minute mark.

Other cautions concern not this film, but others in the series. The author of the Sherlock Holmes books, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), was a spiritualist who sought out communication with the dead via séances. That side of Doyle doesn't seem to fit with Holmes, who comes off as a materialist. But in the first film, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a brief impromptu séance is had at a dinner party. It's presented as hardly controversial, and seemingly akin to an entertaining "party game," as if some might play cards after the meal, while others try to contact the dead. Holmes isn't present, and that makes sense – he'd have had to uncover the chicanery. The whole thing isn't key to the story, but does add to the eeriness. It also serves as a reminder that while Sherlock Holmes is a cultural icon in the West best known for being logical, he isn't always logical, and he isn't the G-rated character parents might remember.


Another example: in the opening of the second novel, *The Sign of Four*, we find Holmes using opium to quell his restless mind. This addiction comes up in the *Hound of the Baskervilles* film, though not in a way that kids would understand. It is the last line of the movie, when Holmes says goodnight to everyone, then turns back and says, "Oh, Watson. The needle."

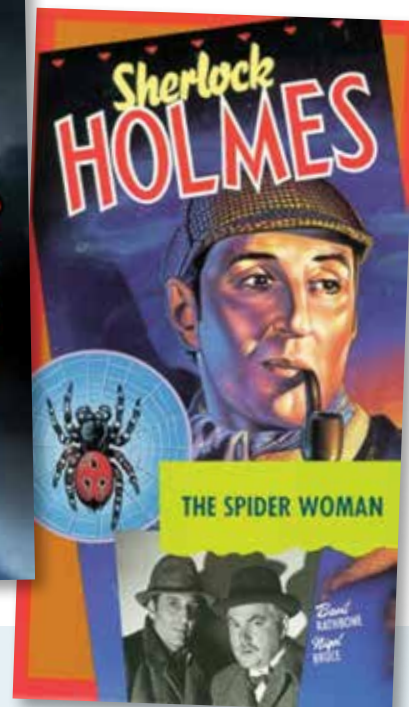
This gives you a representative idea of what to watch out for in the rest of the films.

CONCLUSION

Almost the whole of this film series is quite entertaining, with one notable flaw being in how they've made Watson more a doddering bumbler than the capable veteran surgeon he is in the books. This was probably done to show the more sharply how brilliant Holmes is. But the books' thoughtful Watson was still struck by Holmes' brilliance, so this downgrade just isn't needed.

As to age appropriateness, there are murders aplenty throughout the series, so this isn't for the very young. But the lack of gore, and the black and white film, take a lot of the edge off of any scariness. Kids over 12 likely won't have any problems with the tension.

I've listed the whole series below, noting which ones were set in the Victorian era, and which take place in WWII. Four films ended up in the public domain when their copyright wasn't renewed, and they were popular enough to be colorized, making them more of an attractive watch for modern audiences, so I've noted that too. I've rated each with the idea that the 8s will be of interest to many, the 7s to quite a few, but the 6s are only for those who just can't get enough of Rathbone's Holmes. And even they won't want to bother with *The Woman in Green*, a stinker which I'm giving only a 5. 



VICTORIAN ERA

1. *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* – 1939, 80 MINUTES – 7/10
2. *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* – 1939, 79 MINUTES – 8/10

DURING WWII

3. *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR* – 1942, 65 MINUTES – 6/10
4. *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON* – 1942, 68 MINUTES – 6/10 (COLORIZED)
5. *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON* – 1943, 71 MINUTES – 7/10
6. *SHERLOCK HOLMES FACES DEATH* – 1943, 68 MINUTES – 6/10
7. *THE SPIDER WOMAN* – 1944, 62 MINUTES – 8/10
8. *THE SCARLET CLAW* – 1944, 74 MINUTES – 7/10
9. *THE PEARL OF DEATH* – 1944, 69 MINUTES – 8/10
10. *THE HOUSE OF FEAR* – 1945, 69 MINUTES – 7/10
11. *THE WOMAN IN GREEN* – 1945, 68 MINUTES – 5/10 (COLORIZED)
12. *PURSUIT TO ALGIERS* – 1945, 65 MINUTES – 8/10
13. *TERROR BY NIGHT* – 1946, 60 MINUTES – 7/10 (COLORIZED)
14. *DRESSED TO KILL* – 1946, 72 MINUTES – 7/10 (COLORIZED)

These are widely available in DVD collections (probably available to reserve at your local library or cheap on Amazon), and can also be found on all sorts of streaming services.



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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:



Ep. 140 - Godly Ambition: The Eagle Builder's Story

What does it mean to have godly ambition and to work hard with what God has given you? Joining Lucas to answer these questions is the Director of Eagle Builders, Craig Haan. Joined by his brother-in-law Gerrit Sterk, the two share the story of their family business and how God has blessed them as they've sought to work for His glory and the good of the Kingdom. Listen in, not only to hear a fantastic story, but to learn what it means to take action and be faithful every day.



Ep. 141: The Comfort Heaven Brings to Earth, & Ep. 143: The Sobering Conviction & Comfort of Hell, with Dr. Will den Hollander

Dr. Will den Hollander sat down with Tyler for a pair of episodes, one on heaven and the second on hell. In the first they hit on questions like, what happens when we die, what is heaven, and what will the New Earth be like? They discuss the intermediate state, the spiritual realm, and why meditating on heaven matters for how we live today.

In the second, Tyler and Dr. den Hollander discuss what hell is and how it displays the character of God. They also get into some quite emotional questions such as can God send a child to hell? How bad is it? And why doesn't God just create the elect? They also touch on how knowing about hell's existence should inform the way we live and share the Gospel, and they even tackle why the reality of hell can actually be comforting.



Ep. 144: Backsliding: How to Guard Against Complacency, with Dr. Mark Jones

In this episode, Dr. Mark Jones joins Lucas to tackle the quiet danger of backsliding – what it is, why it happens even in churchgoers, and how complacency can creep into our spiritual lives, from the subtle signs like pride, prayerlessness, and neglect of Scripture, to modern distractions and the love of the world. This episode dives into what real growth, perseverance, and daily repentance look like, offering both conviction and hope as listeners are challenged to examine their hearts and run to the grace of Christ.



Ep. 145: Redeeming Productivity: Are You Making the Most of Your Time? with Tim Challies

Everyone's busy. Packed schedules, constant pressure, always something next. But the real question is – are you actually doing what matters? In this episode, Lucas and *Do More Better* author Tim Challies talk about what it means to redeem your productivity – not by cramming more into your day, but by stewarding your time with purpose. If you're someone who prides yourself on being busy, this might challenge you.



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HOLD US ACCOUNTABLE TO OUR NON-NEGOTIABLES

by Mark Penninga

You have core values: traits that define who you already are. You use these core values to make decisions about everything from who you will marry, to the kind of vehicle you purchase, to how you respond when you get that email through Church Social about a work-bee at church on Saturday morning.

Businesses and organizations also have core values, and they have an impact too. That's why you will have a different experience if you shop at Superstore or No Frills compared to Farm Boy or Safeway – their unique core values show up in differences like the products shelved, the pricing, and even how wide the aisles are.

Core values come alive when they serve as the guide for making decisions. For a business or organization, that'll mean they'll hire people they are confident have these same values, and will even fire those who don't share them. Failing to hire and fire in keeping with core values would mean that they aren't really core values. Like white-washed tombs, their core values might look good but are only skin-deep (Matt. 23:27-29).

At our most recent in-person board meeting, our board nailed down Reformed Perspective's *core purpose* – “helping you think, speak, and act in Christ” – as well as these *core values*:

1. **Biblical:** faithful to God's Word and the Reformed confessions;
2. **Real:** applying God's Word to the nitty gritty of life;
3. **Inspiring:** a catalyst for action by connecting to hearts;
4. **Celebratory:** Christ is LORD and has already won!

We believe these traits define who we already are (with weakness), and how we want to remain.


As we look for new staff to work alongside our existing team, we need to have confidence that he or she already has a reputation for each of these values. If they want to be inspiring but simply aren't, that is a problem. If they are very bright, but unable to apply their learning to real people, that too won't work.

But it is easy to be deceived about who we are, and led astray. This is particularly true when an individual or organization gets a stage and can influence a lot of people. Sin, which already has a devastating effect, can hurt so many more people. RP's influence has grown, but we are no less susceptible to Satan, the world, and our old nature.

So we ask for your accountability: *do you see Reformed Perspective exemplifying these values consistently and faithfully? Is this true of all of our people and work?*

Where is there room for improvement?

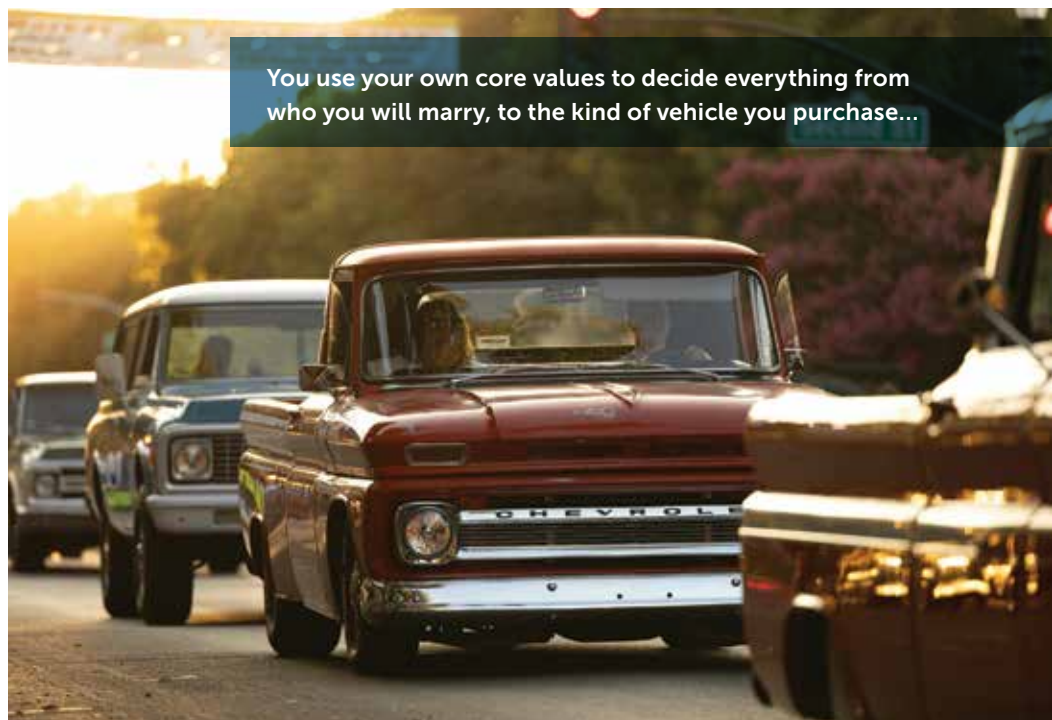
As much as we appreciate encouragement (and we have been blessed with a lot of encouragement from you), we also welcome accountability.

Whether you have concerns now, or at some point in the future, we respectfully ask you to please take a moment to reach out directly to us. My email is mark.penninga@reformedperspective.ca, or you can call me at 778-210-0376 (BC time). 

Help Wanted:

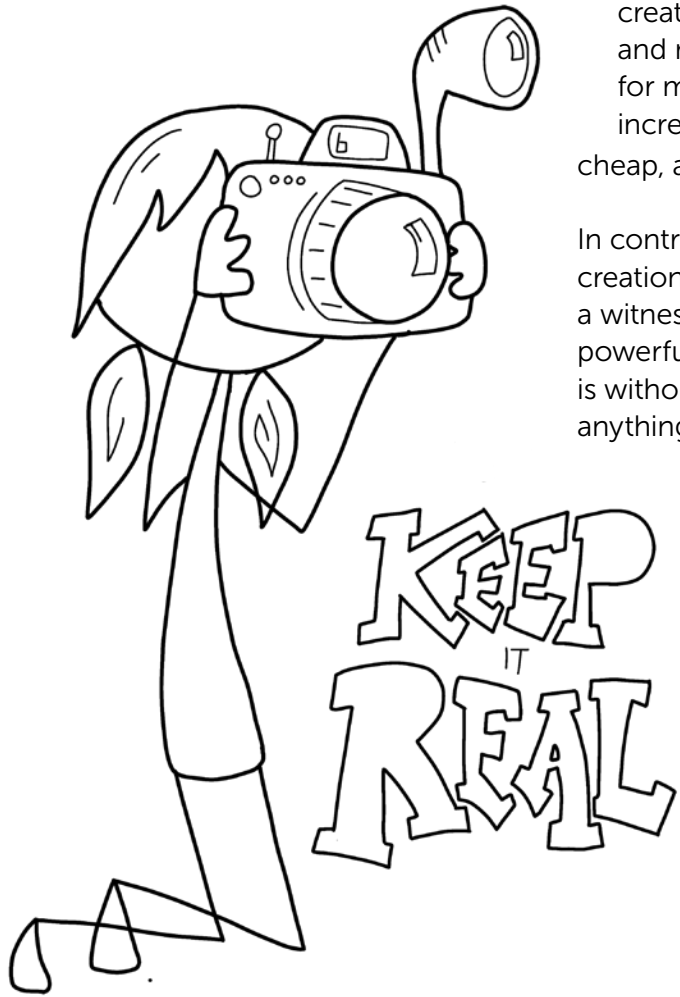
RP is looking for a full-time MANAGING EDITOR, working from our office in Smithers, BC. Details at www.ReformedPerspective.ca/jobposting

You use your own core values to decide everything from who you will marry, to the kind of vehicle you purchase...



2026 Photo Contest

LET'S GET REAL



The fascination with AI media creation, be it pictures, videos, and music, has turned sour for many of us. AI images are increasingly felt to be easy, cheap, and too often deceitful.

In contrast to this AI gloss, God's creation stands before us as a witness to just how real and powerful He is, so that everyone is without excuse (Rom. 1:20). It's anything but artificial.

Our challenge for you this year is to take photos that capture what reality looks like on this side of eternity. There is brokenness, but there is also hope, darkness but now light, strength and fragility, complexity and order... God's fingerprints are everywhere.



Deadline?

September 1, 2026.

Prizes, categories, and rules can all be found at ReformedPerspective.ca/contests

Log out. Look up.

Save the date - screen-fast is back July 13-22