

Reformed HELPING YOU THINK, SPEAK, AND ACT IN CHRIST

PERSPECTIVE

SINCE 1982

JULY - AUGUST 2026 Volume 45 Issue No. 4

LOG OUT & LOOK UP!

Can you go *screen-free*?
Sign up with friends and family
for RP's **July 13-22** screen-fast



Will you fast with us?

The 2026 "Log out. Look up." 10-day screen-fast is here, and we're doing this together again! Find all the details inside this issue, including answers to these five Ws:

- **When** it is
- **Why** you should join
- **Who** you should get to do it with you
- **What** you can do with all of the extra time you'll have on your hands
- and **How** your fasting can help raise \$20,000 for charity



Now let's clear up some confusion from last year. We heard from readers who would have liked to sign up, except their jobs didn't allow them to go screen-free. Well, *you can still do it!* The point of the screen-fast isn't to villainize all screens at all times. If your phone/computer is a vital tool, then just be sure to step away from it whenever it isn't required. The screen-fast isn't about fostering wooden legalism; it's about regaining control. For some that'll mean pulling out the maps instead of relying on your phone's GPS (your kids can learn what it was like growing up before 2010!). For others it will involve working on a screen at work, and then coming home and picking up a book, or starting on that chicken coop you had planned, instead of picking up your phone or reaching for the TV clicker. So we can all fast! Sign up now by going to ReformedPerspective.ca/noscreens or by scanning the QR code above.

The results of the **Your Turn contest fan favorite** voting are now in, with 555 RP readers casting their ballots. In reverse order, the top 5 are:

5. Leanna's "How hardships bring you closer to God in true faith"
4. Cameron Blokker's "Behold" video
3. Holly Enter's "Life inside the lines: a profile of an artist"
2. Aslan's video on how kids can learn Hebrew too

And the fan favorite winner was...

1. Mary Koppert's "All that I need" song!

Like the previous 6 winners, she will be awarded \$1,000. Readers can check out her song, as well as the other Your Turn entries from the last issue by scanning the QR code here with your phone, or by going to ReformedPerspective.ca/yourturn2026.



While the contest is over, the blessings from it just keep coming. We were so overwhelmed with wonderful entries, that we're excited to be able to feature another ten in this issue.

And with one contest done, the next is now on deck: this year's photo contest has the theme "**Let's Get Real**" and you can find the details on the back page.

P.S. Be sure to compare this issue's back cover with last issue's!

Cover illustration by Stephanie Vanderpol

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

Published bimonthly by Reformed Perspective Foundation Inc.

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or to change your address, contact:**

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

Contact Address for Australia:

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

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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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Registration: ISSN 0714-8208

Charitable Organization under Canada Income Tax Act

Registration No. 118929272RR0001

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RP's nationwide screenfast starts July 13!

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READERS' RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR:

My name is Lisa Alkema and I read an article in last month's Reformed Perspective about a lady who has cerebral palsy. I really enjoyed reading her story. I also have cerebral palsy and I was born very early. I weighed the same as a pound of butter and had lots of surgeries. Besides all of that I can do many activities on my own. I work at the Mission Thrift Store three days a week, and I go to a day program for people with disabilities called Peace Haven. We all have many different God-given talents and gifts to use in God's kingdom. I'm really blessed to be a child of God.

LISA ALKEMA
HAMILTON, ONTARIO



NEW FROM ARPA:

FOUNDATIONS 2026 CONFERENCE

More information at arpacanada.ca/foundations2026

Think more biblically. Stand more confidently.

HAMILTON, ONTARIO | SEPT. 19, 2026



Dr. Kevin Flatt



Mr. Josh Wood

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA | NOV. 14, 2026



Professor Nancy Pearcey



The Hon. Stockwell Day

CREATION EX NIHILO

2026 Niagara Conference

November 20-21, 2026

Worldview Campus

6727 S. Chippawa Rd., Wellandport, ON.

If Genesis 1–3 were to be compromised, the entire Christian worldview would begin to unravel. The 2026 Niagara Conference, *Creation Ex Nihilo*, directly addresses the rise of theistic evolution, scientism, and other reductionist frameworks that seek to reinterpret Scripture’s opening chapters. This conference makes the case that Genesis is not peripheral, but foundational to the church’s doctrine of God, creation, mankind, sin, and redemption—equipping believers to stand firmly on the authority of God’s Word in a confused age.

WITH TEACHING FROM

Astronaut Capt. Barry Wilmore, Joe Owen, Dr. Jerry Bergman, Calvin Smith, and Steven R. Martins



REGISTER AT
[CANTAROINSTITUTE.ORG/NIAGARA2026](https://cantaroinstitute.org/niagara2026)



Is AI helping you, or dumbing you down?

Yes.

3 questions to help us use AI better.

by Jon Dykstra

The Preacher declares in Ecclesiastes 1:9 that “there is nothing new under the sun.” He was saying it with a sense of despair, but there’s a reality there that can prove helpful too. Even with something newfangled like AI, the issues aren’t all new. And because we’ve seen some of this before, we can look to history for guidance.

So here are three questions to help us look to the past to see how we can best use today’s AI.

Q. 1: AM I USING AI TO SKIP MY EXERCISE?

For as long as there have been schools, there’s probably been boys learning how to do division in ways their math teacher wasn’t intending. If little Timmy and a couple of his third grade buddies did their homework together, the three of them would quickly realize that an assignment of 15 questions could be done 3 times as quickly if they did 5 questions each and shared their answers.

That gets the assignment done in record time, but these “get ‘er done” boys misunderstood the point. The teacher’s goal isn’t simply to get 15 right answers from them – she could go to the back of the teacher’s edition if that was all she was after. What she wants is for her students to go through the struggle of working through each of the 15 questions so that their brain muscles will grow. What Timmy has done instead is the equivalent of recruiting his two friends to each attend a third of his basketball practice for him. That’d be a better cheat actually, because it wouldn’t take him long to figure out that his shooting percentage isn’t going to improve so long as *he* isn’t putting up the shots.

The issue is older even than schools, addressed in various ways throughout Scripture, but maybe most pointedly in Proverbs 10:4: “Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth” and Galatians 6:7: “Do not be deceived: God

cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”

Now, in our AI age, there are students using ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini to skip their school “workouts” in this updated fashion, and still not making the connection as to how that’ll keep them mentally and spiritually flabby, stopping them from growing in knowledge, wisdom, and capacity.

Adults have their own version of this problem, complicated by the reality that sometimes it is just about “getting ‘er done,” while other times it’s about needing to get stretched and refined by the work you put in.

Need a pile of rocks moved? Then having a couple of friends help is a great idea. Got access to some tech that will do the heavy lifting for you? Great, go drive that tractor over here.

In an office setting, AI can help us move all sorts of “rocks,” by doing the big-effort-but-little-thought tasks of quickly compiling your week’s billable hours, assembling your spreadsheets into an array of insightful, colorful pie charts, or gathering and summarizing vast amounts of research material.

But if, like little Timmy, we thought it was *always* about the results, we’d miss out on when it’s important to put in the sweat. There’s a Stephen King quote about how “I write to find out what I think” and it’s exactly there that AI might be most harming us. We don’t all have to be writers, but if we’re going to be thinkers, then we need to be able to get our thoughts down on paper, or up on a computer, or batted around with our coworkers. That process will allow those ideas to be tested and refined, and sometimes discarded. It’s the sweat invested that helps us really think through things. AI can even be a part of this process, being a part of the batting-around refinement. But we can’t use it to skip over that process.

When we should or shouldn’t use AI will depend on whether we just need to get ‘er done, or whether we should

be putting in the exercise to increase our own capacity, knowledge, and wisdom.

Figuring out which we're doing is complicated by the fact that our jobs are going to regularly involve a mix of both. A pastor might use AI as an upgraded search engine to much more quickly gather up what his most trusted theologians have said about the text he's planning to preach on. But he can't pull a Timmy and have AI write his sermon, because his job isn't simply to *read* a sermon, but to glorify God in the preparation of it, so that he can tailor it to the flock God has entrusted to him and not to AI.

Q. 2: AM I OWNING MY OUTPUT?

And that takes us to the issue of responsibility. AI brings up some powerful temptations on this front, but, again, it's nothing new for Man to try to avoid blame by sidestepping his own responsibility.

"The man said, 'The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it'" (Gen. 3:12).

With AI's instantaneous output, what that prompts is the very strong temptation to skip over the "is this actually right?" stage. After all, if you've generated a whole report in seconds, doesn't it seem weird to spend half an hour checking through it? And that's how you get output like the pictured post from the US Department of Education. It was meant to promote jobs that AI isn't going to replace any time soon, but it went viral for showing what kind of output AI can provide when the humans in charge aren't really taking charge. Pipes, pipes, everywhere... and what *is* that tool she's using?

In our day-to-day, this temptation will pop up in small ways, like using Gemini's auto-response to reply to an email you've barely read. See how impressed your coworker will be when he pops by your office door for a follow-up and you can't recall what he's even talking about because your brain was *never* engaged. This isn't a big thing – it might be the difference between having AI complete an email response in 3 seconds that you should have taken 30 seconds to do yourself so you'd know and recall what you wrote.

In our schools, AI can be used to generate math and spelling worksheets, and history and geography pop quizzes in just seconds. For the most part, that's just AI helping teachers "move rocks," and what a wonderful resource for them to have. But their

students will be wondering why teachers can turn to AI to do the heavy lifting when their pupils aren't allowed to. To keep students' hypocrisy-detectors from firing off, teachers will then need to model the highest standards of responsible AI usage. Practically speaking, that means putting in the time proofreading whatever they have AI outputting. How can they convince students they need to put in the sweat if they're not willing to sweat themselves?

Q. 3: WHAT'S MISSING FROM MY AI OUTPUT?

What makes a lot of AI output cheesy? What's "off" about it?

The other side of this question would be, "What makes something valuable?" There'll be a subjective nature to any answer to that question because there's a degree to which beauty is in the eye of the beholder. One person might like Rembrandt, another AI-manufactured alien landscapes. To each their own.

But a friend passed along something he'd learned from a Tim Keller sermon on 1 Cor. 13. Here Paul makes the point that prophecies, tongues, and even charity, without love, are nothing.

While we were excited about all that AI could do just a year ago, now we've coined the term "AI slop" and lament the "AI gloss" detectable in its pictures and written work. Maybe what Paul is saying explains this reaction. Someone could use AI to produce a "new" Rembrandt or maybe a "new" piece by Bach, manufactured in seconds by having these artists' styles convincingly mimicked. The result could be beautiful, and we might not detect even a hint of "AI gloss." Yet would we treasure these new works like the old?

No.

Why?

Because AI allowed them to be created without sweat or thought. They were made without love.

Love is why the kids' art on Oma's fridge is treasured – because of the love going both ways. And love is why the poems many households craft to accompany Christmas presents were better before AI was there to perfect them. Butchered meters and forced rhymes – and the care involved in crafting each line – were what made the merriment.

Could an aspiring poet partner time and intent with AI to lovingly craft a poem for his beloved wife? Certainly. AI usage doesn't have to be loveless.

But AI *without* love? That's nothing at all. **RP**

Jon Dykstra realizes he should write his beloved wife more poetry, with or without AI's help.



NEWS IN *Perspective*

TEACHERS LEAD THE WAY IN ADOPTING, AND SOMETIMES RESTRAINING, TECH

BY JON DYKSTRA



The Spring issue of Redeemer University's *Resound* magazine featured an article about Dr. Katie Day Good, a Christian professor who has been researching the history of how tech gets adopted, and what sort of impact it has.

"She found that teachers have often been early adopters of technologies including motion pictures, stereographs, records, illustrated magazines and radio to enliven and increase the effectiveness of their teaching.... Teachers around the world were eager to think about how these technologies could help their students think beyond their borders."

Teachers loved the tech, because it was all about connecting their students to the world around them. But today we're finding something quite different. As Dr. Good put it in that same article, "Hope beyond the screen":

"What we're discovering as we grow and age with these technologies is that they can also stand in the way of meaningful connection. They can even lead us to feel estranged from our neighbours, from our environment, from God."

AI is only going to make that estrangement worse, with reports already of people turning to these super-powered programs for companionship.

So how can we deal with the digital distraction, and the social isolation? There's no one answer, but Good shared what a couple of groups have chosen to do.

"Something I've seen is parents banding together to create landline pods, using landline phones to encourage friendship and independence among their children without having to rely on smartphones."

Then there is "The Luddite Club" she learned about – a group of New York students who have chosen to unplug and connect in tech-free ways. Then there's the Cornell University prof who got all her students to type their reports. She brought in a bunch of old typewriters, and the students had to shift gears entirely – the lack of a delete key had them thinking through what they were going to type before they typed it. With their phones banned, students weren't distracted by notifications, but also couldn't research in an instant, and ended up asking each other for help – their class became a place for conversation rather than head-down, isolated scrolling.

There there's what's happening at Redeemer itself. This past year, faculty at the Christian college who are involved with its "Core Curriculum" – 10 courses that all students have to take – have "adopted a tech-wise approach, encouraging students to swap laptops and tablets for pen and paper." They aren't going full Amish – this is just a select number of courses, and while pen and paper are encouraged, laptops aren't banned. It's a small but real effort being made to put restraints on tech usage. Why? Because it just makes sense. As Dr. Jonathan Juilfs, Redeemer's associate professor of English, explained, "many studies have shown that students retain more information and learn better with traditional note-taking methods." That's not a startling revelation, but it is news how some schools are starting to act on what we all already know: our screen usage has gotten out of hand, and that even includes our purportedly "educational" usage too.

9 IN 10 CANADIAN WOMEN IN THEIR 20S WHO “PRACTICE A RELIGION” ARE NOW CHILDLESS

BY MARK PENNINGA

Canada is now among South Korea, Japan, Italy, and a small number of other “ultra-low fertility” countries, with a total fertility rate below 1.30 children per woman. As of 2024 (the most recent year where we have data), our fertility rate dropped to 1.25 children per woman. A fertility rate of 2.1 is needed to keep a population stable, while a fertility rate of 1.25 would halve the population in two generations, and leave just a quarter behind in three.

Earlier this year, Statistics Canada provided a report with more detail. Among other startling findings, they found that 9 in 10 women in their 20s do not have children. This decreases to 43.2% of women in their 30s and 23.6% in their 40s. The average age of mothers at the birth of their first child has increased to 31.8 years.

In spite of these low numbers, 66% of women in their 20s who don’t have

children say that they would like to in the next few years. This intention held relatively constant among those who were university graduates or not, employed or not, and married or not.

In other words, while most young women say that they would like to have children, the vast majority are not receiving or pursuing this blessing in their 20s.

They also found that women who “practice a religion” are more likely to have children, though that is only noticeable after the age of 30. Only 11.1% of “practicing” women in their 20s have children, which is actually lower than “non-practicing” (11.9%). How “religious” are these practicing women? The study defines practicing a religion as “participating in religious activities [at least once] in the year preceding the survey, excluding events such as weddings or funerals.” That’s a very low bar, so, this

category includes a lot of people who might not be making God their priority.

But imagine what could happen if all God’s people did make Him and what He says our first priority? God’s first words to humanity were to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). This flies in the face of the prevailing worldview of today, focused on doing what works best for me. When this is combined with contraception and abortion, the result is sex but very few children. Increasingly, the decision to welcome the gift of children, when God provides them, is one of the most counter-cultural choices to be made. But it is also the lifeline for future generations and a means by which God’s kingdom comes.

Imagine what would happen if Christ’s church welcomed the gift of children, while the world continued with this trajectory.



FEDERAL SPENDING INCREASES UNDER CARNEY

BY MARK PENNINGA AND JON DYKSTRA

To make a diamond dazzle, a skilled jeweller will slip a black cloth under it.

The federal government pulled a similar tactic with its Spring Economic Update, setting the current state of the economy in the context of the ongoing instability in the world. In spite of trade disruptions with the USA, conflict in the Middle East, and fragile global supply chains, the government was keen to showcase that Canada’s economy grew by 1.7 percent in 2025 and is expected to have the second-fastest growth in the G7, next to the USA.

But a careful examination shows a less dazzling picture.

The deficit for 2025 is a staggering \$66.9 billion, with no end to deficits in sight. The federal government is already \$1.3 trillion in debt, and is on track to pile up \$309 billion more in total debt by the end of this decade. Our cost to service all our debt is projected to increase from \$54 billion this year, to \$81 billion by 2030-31. History backs up the instruction from Proverbs 22:7 that “the borrower is a slave to the lender.” Just like family debt handcuffs a household from pursuing opportunities they might otherwise want to pursue, the same is true for countries. We severely limit what we can do when we have to pay billions, not even to pay off the debt, *but just to pay the yearly*

interest. But the federal government emphasizes that we are doing better than most G7 countries.

After 9 consecutive budget deficits under Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister Carney promised:

“what we will do is to focus on reducing spending, if I’m elected.... The essence of this is to spend less, and invest more.”

When we hear our government wants to spend less to allow for more investment, we might conclude that means spending cuts will be accompanied by tax cuts to leave the private sector with more of their money. They can then invest those newly available funds in their businesses.

But that’s not what Carney means by “spending less.” His plan is to have the government spend much more overall, but label some of it “investing.” Neat trick, but let’s not fall for it. His new Economic Update reveals a plan to increase spending by \$83.2 billion more than the Trudeau government planned from 2025/26 through 2029/30.



OPPOSING RAINBOW CROSSWALK RESULTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS TRIAL IN ALBERTA

BY MARK PENNINGA AND JON DYKSTRA

Ronald Reagan once shared a quip about the difference between his country and the totalitarian USSR.

“Two Soviets... were talking to each other. And one of them asked, ‘What’s the difference between the Soviet Constitution and the United States Constitution?’ And the other one said, ‘That’s easy. The Soviet Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of gathering. The American Constitution guarantees freedom *after* speech and freedom *after* gathering.”

Here in Canada, we still have freedom of speech, but, it seems, no guarantee of freedom after speech. An Alberta woman is facing a two-week hearing before the Alberta Human Rights Commission for distributing flyers opposing the Town of Westlock’s plan to paint a rainbow crosswalk. Benita Pedersen created the flyers in June of 2023, in an effort to encourage other citizens to reach out to their elected officials and oppose the crosswalk.

“Based on my personal experiences in interacting with parents and children, I have learned that the practice of ‘gender affirmation’ harms kids more

than it helps,” she explained to the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (JCCF). “When I composed the flyer, one of my objectives was to warn parents about the potential consequences of children pursuing the pathway of transgenderism.” She added that the way to solve problems is “by having open conversation.”

Others disagree, and human rights commissions make it easy to shut down speech they don’t like. In this case, fellow citizen Laurie Hodge took offense and filed a human rights complaint, stating that the flyer discriminated on the basis of gender, gender identity, and gender expression. Hodge has since become a member of the Westlock Town Council.

The wheels of “justice” turn slowly. In October of 2025, the Director of the Alberta HRC referred the complaint to the province’s human rights tribunal, finding that there was a sufficient basis to proceed with the hearing.

Human rights commissions and tribunals were under the public eye 15 years ago, in light of complaints against high-profile figures like Ezra Levant,


Mark Steyn, and against *Maclean’s* magazine. Complaints were made on the basis of hurt feelings. Even if there was no conviction, the process of responding to a complaint – involving tens of thousands of dollars in legal bills and years of hassle – was itself a punishment.

The passage of a private member’s bill in 2012 to reform the Canadian Human Rights Act seemed to settle the commissions down. But the recent decision from the BC Human Rights Tribunal to fine school trustee Barry Neufeld \$750,000 for speaking against “sexual orientation and gender identity” (SOGI), as well as this case in Alberta, suggest that the sleeping giants are awakening. Let’s not be caught sleeping ourselves. ARPA Canada took a lead in responding to the challenges 15 years ago, and continues to speak out today.

We care so deeply about freedom of speech and expression not because our opinions are so important, but because God’s truth is. We love our neighbors, so we want and need to be free to share what God says is best for them and everyone.

Is that’s it? The offending brochure at the center of the complaint.

Let’s work together to bring back healthy boundaries



Say NO to the rainbow crosswalk in Westlock

The Town of Westlock has scheduled the crosswalk in front of the Westlock Legion to be painted in the “pride” rainbow color on Father’s Day, Sunday, June 18. You can express opposition to this project by doing the following:

1. Compose a message that includes the phrase “Cancel the rainbow crosswalk.” Feel free to add your own personal reasons for wanting the halted. (If you are comfortable doing so, include your full name, address, and signature, especially if you are a resident of Westlock.)
2. Send the message to all of the elected representatives and the CAO via text/email/phone. Their contact information is available below:

Mayor Ralph Langer	780-349-6769	rlanger@westlock.ab.ca
Councillor Maritza Janely	780-716-6878	mjanely@westlock.ab.ca
Councillor Abby Keyes	780-367-7780	akayes@westlock.ab.ca
Councillor Jon Kramer	780-283-0107	jkramer@westlock.ab.ca
Councillor Lana Marie	780-349-1950	lmarie@westlock.ab.ca
Councillor Curtis Snell	780-349-6400	csnell@westlock.ab.ca
Councillor Randy Wild	780-367-2600	rwild@westlock.ab.ca
CAO Stacey Wiley	780-350-2100	swiley@westlock.ab.ca
3. Share this notice out with other people to get others involved as well. Copy it, print it out, go door-to-door with it, share it digitally via email, text, and social media; whatever is on your heart to do. Share it with others and encourage them to take action as well. Create videos of yourself expressing support for this message and share them online.
4. Attend the Westlock Town Council meeting on Monday, June 12 at 6:30 PM at the Library building at 10007-100 Avenue. Bring this sign with you (and/or a similar sign) and hold it up so that the elected representatives can see it. Stand peacefully and in a respectful manner listen to the presentations, including the presentation of David Thomas, who will be speaking in our behalf. We encourage you to arrive by 6:15 PM.

For more information about this initiative, reach out to **Benita Pedersen of ARPA Alberta** by emailing BenitaPedersen@protonmail.com or by calling or texting **1-780-349-0181**

Let’s work together for the protection and restoration of healthy boundaries for our children


As you have likely noticed, the “pride” movement has been accelerating in momentum in Alberta. Many Albertans are concerned because as the “pride” movement grows in momentum, so does the transgender agenda. Although it isn’t every transgender individual that aggressively pushes the transgender agenda, many of them do. Many municipalities, schools, libraries, and even swimming pools. Boundaries are being crossed and children are being exposed to inappropriate knowledge about gender and sexuality. This is leading children to start questioning their own genders. One has to ask, how is the transgender agenda being financed?

The goal of the transgender agenda is to confuse children about gender and sexuality so that they are less likely to grow up and have happy, healthy, heterosexual relationships and produce children. This transgender agenda is part of the de-population agenda, which is part of Agenda 2030.

If the transgender agenda is successful, your children will be rendered infertile and unable to reproduce, because of these treatments? One of our sources has shared with us that for every individual that chooses to go transgender, the taxpayer is on the hook for one million dollars.

Although supporters of the “trans” movement often refer to trans changes as being “gender affirmation,” the reality is that these changes actually involve chemical castration and genital mutilation. Although many supporters will claim that the treatments are reversible and that you can change your mind and go back to the way you were, that is untrue. In addition to the Town of Westlock collaborating with FCS (Family & Community Support Services) to paint a rainbow crosswalk this Father’s Day, there are many other events that attempt to advance the transgender agenda. Here is a sample of events that occur in municipalities that already have their rainbow crosswalks:

- **Edmonton: Drag Queen shows that involve children.** These shows involve grown men dressed as women dancing in a sexual manner in front of children. There is a show scheduled for Saturday, June 17 at Millwoods United Church from 6 PM to 8:30 PM. See it for yourself as it believes it does not code in “rainbows” and entry is \$5.
- **St. Albert: SOGI 1 2 3** is now being taught in all of the St. Albert Public Schools. SOGI started in Alberta in the 2017/2018 school year. Lessons about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity are embedded in all subjects, including math, language arts, and more. SOGI crosses boundaries with regards to exposing children to inappropriate gender and sexuality concepts. After being exposed to SOGI 1 2 3 programming, a seven-year-old girl wrote home to her mother and asked: “Mommy, when I grow up, will I be a boy or a girl?” There is so much “pride programming” going on in schools nowadays, the cartoon below depicts how many kids are feeling.



The good news is that parents, grandparents, and caregivers are becoming aware of what is going on and are starting to take steps to protect their families. You can take action by following through on the actions steps on the other side of this page. There are other ways to take action as well. For suggestions on ways you can take coordinated, effective action, reach out to Benita Pedersen at 1-780-349-0181.

For more insights about concerning aspects of the “trans” ideology, go to Twitter and search “What is a Woman?” by Matt Walsh via the Daily Wire. Also, check out the work of “man hunt” Scott Newsum.

The transgender agenda is part of a larger agenda called Agenda 2030. For more information, go to www.ARF.ca/afirefreedom.com

For additional information and resources, check out: www.ActionC.ca/mia.com

Together we can effectively protect our children from inappropriate exposure to gender ideology and sex

RADICALIZED AND REFORMED? SOMEONE WE KNOW TRIED TO KILL THE PRESIDENT.

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

The news traveled in Reformed circles like wildfire: the young man who tried to kill President Trump and members of his cabinet on April 25 was one of our own. 31-year-old Cole Tomas Allen, who traveled across the country by train from California to Washington DC with a plan to murder dozens, was a long-time member of Grace United Reformed Church in Torrance, California.

How could a young man raised in the church and living under his parents' roof have become so radicalized that he would attempt such a heinous, violent crime? Allen's written manifesto, sent out to family members and friends moments before his attack, gives some clues of what type of news and opinions he had been consuming:

"I am a citizen of the United States of America. What my representatives do reflects on me. And I am no longer willing to permit a pedophile, rapist and traitor to coat my hands with his crimes."

National Public Radio reported on statements Allen's sister made to the Secret Service and Montgomery County police. She said he was involved with a

"No Kings" anti-Trump protest recently, and was influenced by a group called "The Wide Awakes," a self-described,

"open source network who radically reimagine the future... Disruptive, visionary, accountable... We believe liberation is a game and all of us can play now and forever."

It should be noted, however, that "The Wide Awakes" also declare that "we can emancipate ourselves without violence."

No doubt we will learn more about the type of influences that radicalized Allen as he stands trial on two charges related to the assassination attempt. We can wonder how someone who sat under faithful preaching of the Gospel could ignore the teachings of the Bible and turn to violence and hatred. Because Allen seemed to believe terrible things about President Trump and members of his cabinet, he apparently thought he needed to take justice into his own hands, without a trial, without a judge or jury. From his manifesto:



"Turning the other cheek when *someone else* is oppressed is not Christian behavior; it is complicity in the oppressor's crimes."

Today's social media and online world is full of conspiracies, outright lies, and malignant forces. Algorithms are designed to feed us more and more of whatever we've shown an interest in, and we may find ourselves over time believing the lie instead of the truth. May we guard our hearts and minds, and those of our children, and look for ways to encourage others in our church family to free themselves from harmful influences.

Photo is from an April 25 post to TruthSocial.com/@realDonaldTrumpDonald, the US president's own Truth Social account.

1 IN 7 DOG OWNERS WOULD GIVE UP PARTNER TO PROLONG FIDO'S LIFE

BY JAN BROERSMA

How much do North Americans love their dogs? Apparently, sometimes more than they love their spouses.

A 2025 Talker Research survey of nearly 2000 American pet owners, commissioned by high-end dog-food company Spot & Tango and cited in the *National Post*, revealed some intense feelings. Half of owners say they would clone their dog if they could, with ten percent claiming there was "no limit" to what they would spend to do so. Over 90% felt their dog's health was "as important" or "more important" than their own (though many felt guilty for neglecting

their dog's dental care). And one in seven admitted they'd give up their relationship with their partner/spouse to extend their dog's life by three years.

The survey (and other data) shows a progression through the generations, with millennials more likely than Gen Z or the baby boomers to identify their dogs as full family members, and to consider themselves as "pet parents."

Now, dogs can be a wonderful blessing, providing unique unconditional love and real support. And if we take on the care of a pet, we should certainly be kind and humane owners (Prov. 12:10).

But it's a troublingly upside-down



world when pet neglect is met with outrage, while human life is often held cheaply – and when we know how to love our pets well, but not our neighbor as ourselves.

Jan Broersma considers herself a "people parent" (and a dog owner)

“TRANSITION” VICTIMS AND SUPPORTERS DECRY CONVERSION THERAPY LAW

BY LEVI MINDERHOUD



(You can hear both fury and sorrow in her voice during the entirety of her remarks.)

“I was experimented on. I was not told they were experimental. I was told it was medicine and that it would help. And it did none of that. It gave me complications that the doctors ignored or would treat as separate illnesses. It made my already pre-existing mental health worse. And my physical health continued to deteriorate.”

“These people [who are offered sex-denying medical interventions] do not know what they are signing up for because they are children,” she continued.

“I was a child. I wanted help. That’s all I wanted. I did not need to be medicalized. I did not need to be cut up. I did not need to be drugged. I just wanted to be loved the way I was.”

Faith didn’t further explain what she meant by “the way I was.” But for orthodox Christians, her identity is obvious. God created her as a female, just as He creates every person to be a member of one of two sexes. Whenever someone is confused about their identity as a man or a woman, they don’t need to be “medicalized,” “cut up,” or “drugged.” They need to be counseled that they are wonderfully made in the image of God and to embrace their God-given identity as male and female.

Yet these are truths denied by conversion therapy bans across the country and the practice of sex-denying medical interventions. While no explicitly Christian perspective was offered at this press conference, all seven took a stand against harmful conversion therapy bans and sex-denying medical interventions.

Picture is a screenshot of the CPAC coverage of the press conference and used under Canada’s fair dealings provision.

In early May, seven people hosted a press conference in Ottawa to express their concerns with Canada’s conversion therapy law. This law bans any practice, treatment, or service designed to help someone identify with the sex that God gave them – if, for example, a man feels effeminate, but wants help aligning his feelings with his male *reality*, this law bans professionals (including pastors) from helping him.

But the group’s unspoken petition was to ban sex-denying medical interventions like puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgeries.

Each of the seven took their turn at the microphone. Parent Jeff Evelyn shared how an Ontario hospital tried to surgically “transition” his teenage daughter without his consent. Scott Newgent shared her testimony of how these sex-denying interventions led to lifelong health challenges. Mia Hughes, a senior fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the Director of Genspect Canada, described the lack of evidence to support these medical practices. Kellie-Lynn Pirie, a detransitioner and founder of the DeTrans Alliance Canada, Dr. Ann Gillies, a former therapist, and Barry Neufeld, the former Chilliwack school trustee who was fined \$750,000 by the BC Human Rights Tribunal for speaking out against gender ideology, also offered brief remarks.

But perhaps the most moving comments were offered by Faith

Groleau, who shared her personal story of the dangers of ideological gender medicine. She described being born with a hole in her diaphragm that required extensive surgery as a newborn to fix. At the age of two, she was sexually assaulted. That assault broke her collarbone, reopened that diaphragmatic hole, and rammed much of her intestines further up into her chest cavity. These internal wounds, misdiagnosed as mere asthma, also left her in poor emotional and mental health.

Eventually, the same hospital that provided the life-saving surgery as a baby suggested sex-denying interventions as the fix. “A pediatrician overrode a psychiatric diagnosis – several of them,” she explained, to clear her for sex-denying hormones and surgeries.

“Instead of assessing my mental health thoroughly, they decided to assume in the emergency room that my suicidal ideation came from the gender confusion. It did not. It was already there long before.”

And yet, the medical professionals used this fiction to fast-track sex-denying interventions, giving her cross-sex hormones at the age of 16 and approving her for top surgery at 18.

“Everything that had happened to me was wrong and had nothing to do with evidence-based medicine,” she accused.

BC MIDWIVES NOW ALLOWED TO KILL

BY LEVI MINDERHOUD



On May 5th, the British Columbia government decided to celebrate International Midwives Day by authorizing midwives to participate in something antithetical to their purpose: aborting pre-born children.

For millennia, midwives have helped women during one of the most difficult and vulnerable times of their lives. And in eras where childbirth was a potentially lethal process (many mothers and pre-born children died during or soon after birth due to medical complications or infections), midwives did their best to preserve the life of both the mother and the child. Today, although there are only 500 midwives in British Columbia, they still assist with about 30% of births in the province.

But rather than only helping with delivering new life, as of April 1st, midwives in British Columbia can participate in delivering death to a pre-born child. With this policy change, midwives will now be permitted to prescribe the abortion pill Mifegymiso, also called RU 486. According to the government's press release, midwives in Quebec and Saskatchewan are already allowed. The government claims that,

"by allowing midwives to prescribe Mifegymiso, the Province is improving midwife-led abortion care and increasing access to safe, confidential and timely services closer to home."

"Midwife-led abortion care" – now that's an oxymoron if ever there was one.

And here's another self-contradicting statement from the government's press release: "These measures build on ongoing investments to ensure women and gender-diverse people have



access to compassionate, equitable and comprehensive care at every stage of life."

Care at every stage of life... except the first nine months.

Canadians need to call out this abuse of language. Care at every stage of life cannot include abortion because murder is not a form of caring. Abortion ignores the life and rights of the pre-born child. It sloughs off the God-given responsibilities of the parents.

For 57 years, the needle on abortion has only ever moved in the wrong direction. Abortion in therapeutic settings was legalized in the 1969 *Criminal Code* reform. That law was struck down entirely in the *Morgentaler* decision of 1988, leaving Canada without any law on abortion. British Columbia passed its first abortion bubble zone in 1996, and most provinces have followed suit. Health Canada approved the abortion pill in 2015. By 2017, Health Canada removed several safeguards around the abortion pill's use. Every single province covered the cost of these abortion pills by 2019. And now midwives in three provinces can prescribe the abortion pill themselves. Canada needs to reverse course, and we need to help. Find a pro-life organization – like WeNeedALaw.ca – to learn how you can get involved in pro-life activism today.

GREENER PASTURES? EAST LOSING RESIDENTS TO ALBERTA & BC

BY JON DYKSTRA



When we think of voting, we usually think of election night. But are you just out of luck if your candidate

gets crushed? Not necessarily. There is another way we can vote: *with our feet*.

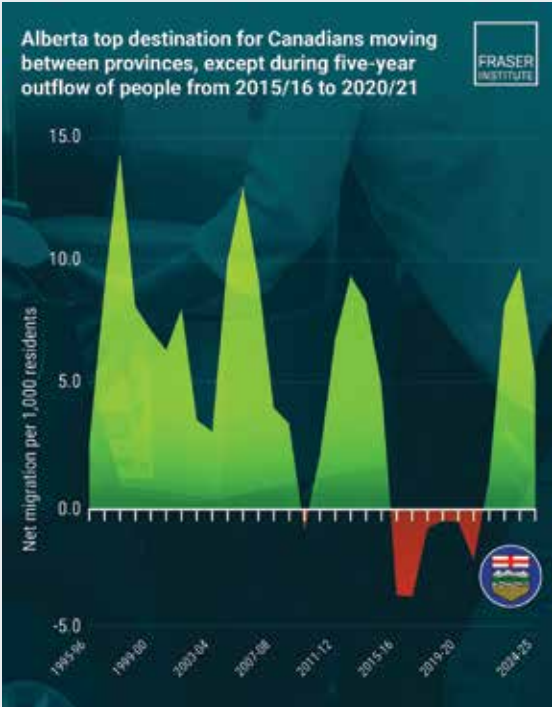
A Fraser Institute study called *Interprovincial Migration in Canada, 1995-2024* seems to show quite a lot of Canadian residents doing just that, with a crowd heading West. Interprovincial migration describes the people moving within the country, rather than the immigrants coming from outside it. Over the 30 years of the study, Alberta saw a net gain of 538,824 more Canadian residents moving in than moved out. BC had the next biggest net gain: 214,883.

The movement wasn't always in the

same direction – Alberta lost residents from 2015/16 to 2020/21. Is it entirely a coincidence that the NDP were in charge for four of those years?

The three biggest losers? Quebec (-255,988 residents), Ontario (-168,166) and Manitoba (-155,919).

Voting with our feet can apply to not only where we live, but where we shop too, and it can be an effective countermeasure when our surrounding culture shifts away from God and His just laws. If a store, or an entire province, doesn't care what Christians think, we can choose to support another store... or another province. It's like a boycott, focussed on what we want to support, rather than a boycott, which is focussed on what we don't like.



Love thy neighbor. Love thy neighborhood encampment...?

by Ruth Tchobanian

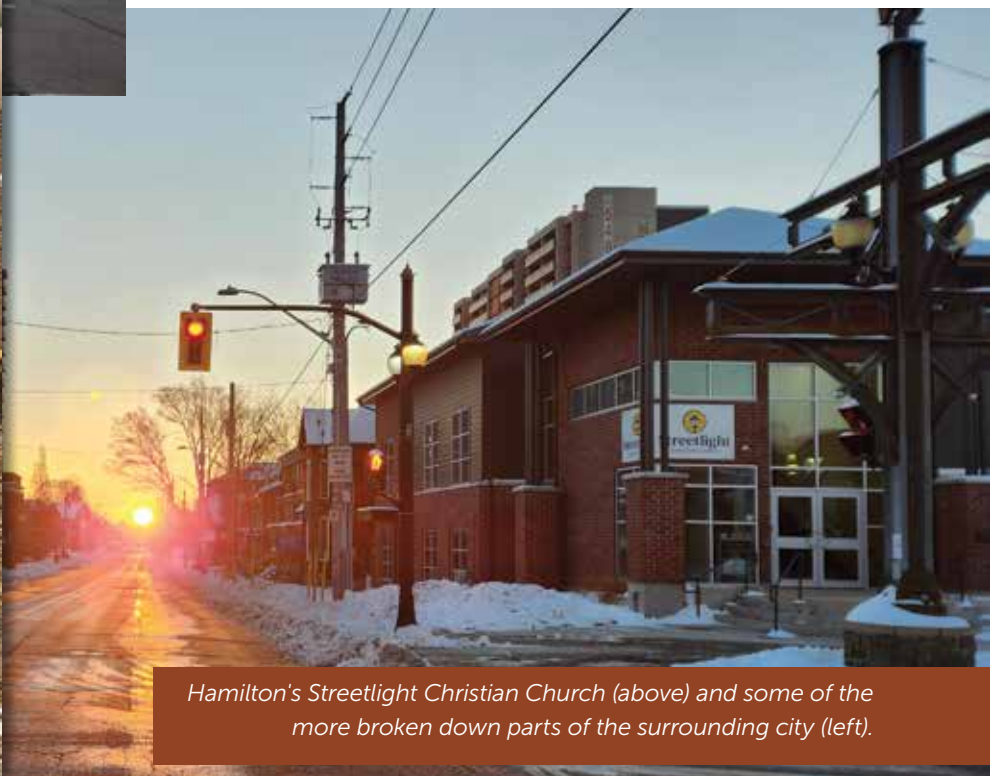
What comes to mind when you think of Hamilton, Ontario? The waterfall capital of the world? The armpit of the Golden Horse-

shoe? Or perhaps you've visited recently, and found the "Social Services Capital of Canada" to be seriously... hurting. The city is fraying at the edges.

Encampments continually crop up in our parks, leaving behind needles, actual mounds of garbage, and disturbed souls hanging out by the playground. It's a city where drug addicts shoot up on streets, many bent in the signature "fenty-fold."

Police recently discovered a labyrinth of tunnels in our largest park, connecting tents to a generator and tapping into the city's power supply.

This is where my kids play next to the "Truck Man," who lives out of a beat-up black pickup and occasionally flashes his brass knuckles. Just last fall, thieves broke into a nearby vehicle. Discovered by a vigilante neighbor, they dashed within five feet of my kids as they played in our yard. Down the escarpment, my friend's aged neighbor was attacked in his own home last year, stabbed to death by a homeless man on drugs.



Hamilton's Streetlight Christian Church (above) and some of the more broken down parts of the surrounding city (left).

This is the new Hamilton, and we're all still trying to cope with it.

When I see a new tent being pitched just down the road, I cringe. Not another one. Not more brokenness and filth in our neighborhood. Please just move away!

Then I feel a twinge of guilt because Jesus calls us to love our neighbor (Matt. 22:39) and minister to the least of these (Matt. 25:40). He reaches out to the most vulnerable and rejected of society, and commissions us to do the same. "Please move away!" isn't in the Great Commission. My cringing disgust and Christ's commands have created a strong dissonance within me. I suspect that many Canadians and Americans feel the same, as our lands slip deeper into brokenness and ruin.

AN IDOLATRY OF COMFORT

Pastor Winston Bosch ministers to Streetlight Christian Church, a missional Canadian Reformed congregation set in Hamilton's inner city. After serving impoverished peoples (both in Hamilton and abroad) for over seven years, Bosch still feels that dissonance.

"I'm constantly uncomfortable," he admits. "Christ is no longer here on earth, and so we His Church go about sharing the Gospel, being the voice and hands of the Good Shepherd. That involves getting dirty and messy with poverty and it's uncomfortable. We share in His suffering."

As middle-class Canadians, we've been shielded from much of the brokenness of this world. But it's moving in, it's around the corner and it's in our face. That desire to hunker down with our families in a fortress, walled off from the problems of the world? Maybe it points to something hidden deep in our hearts. Pastor Bosch calls it "the idolatry of comfort."

"If the religion that the Lord accepts as pure and faultless is to look after orphans and widows and to keep one's self from being polluted by the world, then the Lord also wants us not to be polluted by the world of comfort and ease, but to move towards suffering."

Move towards suffering? That's tricky to do, especially when that suffering comes with a smell or bed bugs. Yet the Scriptural imperative to minister to our poor is clearly written throughout Scriptures. James 2 lays a finger on our tendency towards favoritism. "Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in..." Who do we give the best seat to? James brings us back to the second great command, love your neighbor as yourself.

So how do we? Let's tackle that question step by step.

THE "PROBLEM" – A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR POOR AND NEEDY

Admittedly, I've been quick to spout out all sorts of excuses when I see homeless people. "Why don't they just get a job? They're only on the street because they can't do drugs in shelters..." And there's some truth in those objections.

But when you look closely at the real facts, these trite little phrases ring hollow. Last year the City of Hamilton reported that only 747 shelter beds are available for the estimated 1,500 homeless people in the city.¹ Across the lake in Toronto, dozens of calls requesting shelter (and as many as 150+ requests a day during certain months) were not matched to a bed last year. Though the 2026 numbers seem to be improving², unmet requests can mean death on frigid Ontario winter nights. For many, Pastor Bosch says, it's easier to skip the shelter lineups and just live in a park.

We've all felt the financial crunch as the cost of living has risen – that's had an even greater impact on the poor. Our social services are overwhelmed and insufficient to meet the needs of many. Consider the prospects of someone on disability support in Ontario. They can receive up to \$1,408 per month.³ About \$1000 of that goes to rent (if they're lucky! Market rent on studio apartments averages \$1450, although individual rooms are under \$1000 if you can weather the safety hazards). \$125 buys a bus pass, leaving just \$283 for the month's groceries. Bosch says that social workers will actually tell their clients, "Look, your Ontario Disability is



Winston Bosch is the pastor of Hamilton's Streetlight Christian Church.

not enough for rent and food, so you need to go around to all the churches and ask for help. That's the only way you'll survive."

Another contributing factor to poverty is disability and mental health struggles. Teresa Howe is a community engagement manager for Indwell, a Christian charity devoted to providing affordable housing. She reports that almost 80 percent of Indwell's tenants have a chronic mental health diagnosis, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, etc. "We don't have cures for any of these," Howe reflects.

"It's just something you're living with... But a large part of [our tenants'] challenges are gone when they have supportive housing. If people are taking meds regularly and going to appointments, we can help prevent hospitalization."

Of course, addiction is a huge driver of poverty and homelessness – as is painfully obvious on Hamilton's streets. Howe says Indwell has many supports in place for tenants struggling with addictions, to help them "meet their recovery goals." This approach breaks down when tenants show little in the way of recovery goals, but at this time and place in Canada, it's something. "Their best chance at recovery

is stable housing,” Howe says. “Whoever got sober living in an encampment or under a bridge?” But what does providing stable housing look like for unstable people? If it is accompanied with any sort of requirements – like sobriety – some won’t accept it. And if it is provided with no obligations, it doesn’t take a prophet to predict what an apartment or small room will soon look like if an addict treats it with the same respect they give their own body. A more drastic abstinence-focused approach is necessary – but more on that later.

Perhaps the most heartrending aspect of all this is family and generational breakdown. Pastor Bosch tells story after story of this, as adults with a history of enormous trauma raise children of their own. In Streetlight Christian Church, where Bosch pastors, the vast majority of church members coming from surrounding neighborhoods have suffered extreme trauma, like severe physical or sexual abuse and neglect. Grandparents raise their grandchildren, because parents are addicted and off the radar.

Bosch recalls one kid whose only real interaction with either parent was searching out his mom in an encampment on his birthday every year, and getting a few bucks as a present. One fellow recently told Bosch that he had four different names before turning five years old – because every time he was “thrown around” to another home, the caregiver would give him a new name.

There’s a 17-year-old girl who came to Streetlight’s family support worker. She was born in a tent, her birth never registered. The worker went to enormous lengths to get government ID so this girl could then attend school.

This is the legacy that is passed on – a burden of generational problems, both learned (addiction, etc.) and inborn (e.g. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders). “We have six-year-olds coming in with no bowel control,” Bosch says. “They stink and are dirty, they have no shoes in the winter... when that person becomes an adult, there’s a good chance that person will be on and off the street.”

Jim*, a 16-year-old young man, was raised by his grandparents. They gave him

marijuana as a child when he was anxious. With no one sending him off to school, Jim’s attendance was spotty. He came to Streetlight, and began a youth internship, setting up chairs and cleaning. Jim shared his two life goals with Streetlight’s youth worker: he wanted a job (nobody in his family had a job), and a family that sat down to eat together (the very things we usually take for granted!). Jim applied to jobs with nothing on his resume but the Streetlight internship. One day he came up to Bosch, beaming. “Pastor Winston, guess what – I got a job!”

Streetlight celebrates the wins, but doesn’t lose sight of the pattern. Family and generational brokenness are the norm, the legacy being inherited. It’s a community crying out for the healing of the Gospel.

And it brings me back to my own, beautiful upbringing – two godly parents, five wonderful siblings, a home and three meals a day. What do I have that I haven’t been given?

THE NEED FOR A MULTI-PRONGED RESPONSE

Things look pretty dark for Canada. We’ve cast off our Christian heritage with vitriolic fervor and are reaping the rewards of godlessness. Poverty is moving in quickly. Brokenness is becoming the norm. Amidst this, may Christ’s Church shine out like a city on a hill.

Pastor Bosch sees a strong need for a multi-pronged response to homelessness and addiction. Much like Christians have split the pro-life cause into political action (lobbying for legal change) and mercy ministry (pregnancy centers, etc.), Bosch sees room for a similar approach here.

On the political front, Canada’s soft response to encampments has had a ruinous effect on our communities and the homeless themselves. Alberta Social Services Minister Jason Nixon points out that encampments are not a humane response to homelessness – they quickly become cesspools of homeless-on-homeless abuse, drug addiction, human trafficking, often being run by drug cartels.

By contrast to much of Canada, Alberta disassembled many homeless

encampments and provided residents with social services, including rehab and mental health supports. This hasn’t been a seamless process, but it’s a better response for all concerned than simply enabling lawless encampments.⁴ As Romans 13:3 says “For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.” It’s time for the government to take up its role in protecting the vulnerable and punishing the evil-doer.

In the realm of drugs and addictions, the federal government has moved from prevention to “harm reduction,” effectively turning itself into a colossal drug dealer.⁵ The Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) recommends an alternative model similar to Portugal’s, which offers addicts a choice between treatment or legal penalties. The sad truth is that many addicts are, well, addicted and won’t choose treatment of their own free will. Addiction motivates many homeless people towards violent or criminal activity, thereby harming residential neighborhoods and parks. A move to mandatory treatment would greatly improve the lives of our addicts, homeless and general population. To date, ARPA does not have an active campaign pushing for this approach – it remains an area of need for Christian political action.

When you throw in the crush of waves of recent refugees and an overwhelmed social system so bureaucratically constipated that accessing services is a monumental job, things are dark for impoverished and homeless Canadians. So what’s a Christian to do?

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE – FAR FROM EASY TO KNOW WHAT TO DO

Ministering to the homeless gets complicated. My cousin Steven Williamson pastors Cornerstone URC in London, Ontario. London is known as the “Zombie Capital of Canada,” and Williamson’s church is in the thick of it. The church has actively reached out to the homeless camping on church property and in the neighborhood. Williamson tells the story of one fellow – we’ll call him Zach. Zach attended church and Bible study for four months,



bringing his backpack along with him every time. One morning, a church member nudged his bag – Zach began screaming and shouting. He turned violent, pulling a long butcher knife from his backpack. A week later, he returned. Williamson and some other fellows escorted him out the door, locking it behind him. Zach then attempted to throw bricks through the windows but couldn't break the safety glass. He tried to enter by sliding his knife through the double doors and opening the lock, while Williamson held the doors shut from inside. That wasn't in his seminary training!

"Our justice system is not protecting us properly," Williamson commented. He discovered that the man had a whole history of pulling knives on others. "The church bears the basin and the towel, but the government bears the sword. We have to hold our government to the fire."

Williamson and his church are in a tight spot. "We want to be kind and merciful, but we also need to be safe. We don't really have many good answers and it feels very much beyond us as a church."

STREETLIGHT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Church shines brightest in the dark. Someone told Pastor Winston Bosch the other day that, "If Reformed Christians and Roman Catholics were not doing work in Hamilton it would be like hell on earth." Bosch says most of the real ministry to the poor is being done by Christians. "The church is active and the Gospel is going out."

Streetlight Christian Church has been reaching out to the poor regions of Hamilton for 26 years. They work with many people upstream or downstream

from homelessness.

An active part of their support is working together with city and housing workers to help people navigate social services. Many folks need help recovering identification papers or, with the many who are illiterate, simply reading documents. Streetlight holds adult Bible studies, and offers community kids' sporting opportunities. They also offer weekly meals, Bible lessons and discipling for those who want to know God more. The church provides a sense of love and community, always accompanied by the good news of the Gospel.

It can be discouraging work. Bosch says the Streetlight team has to "fight for joy, seeing where wonderful things are happening." And there are many. Like one teen who recently asked Streetlight's youth worker, "I'm a Christian... is that an insult to my First Nations ancestors?" Or the folks who used to be sleeping outside the building, now coming to church healthy and clean. And the 16-year-old girl from a loving – and very Buddhist – family. "I think I'm a Christian," she told Bosch, "But my parents are Buddhists..." How does she reconcile these two things?

Healing and growth don't always look like we'd expect. "I meet so many people in downtown Hamilton that are believers,"



Some of the servers and those being served by Missions to the Margins.

Bosch shares, "and their life is just a living miracle. Everything in life has been against them. And they're still alive. They live in a tent, but they're praising the Lord! The Holy Spirit is doing work right now, in unexpected places."

The miracles are all around, for those with eyes to see. Bosch recalls a church

member – once a drug addict, now a believer. Her life is still a mess. One day Bosch found her outside, screaming and cursing out another church member. Bosch tapped her on the shoulder. “Hey, can I talk to you?” he asked. Her response caught him by surprise. “Praise the Lord, Pastor! Five years ago, I would have beat the s* out of that b*, and today all I did was yell at her. The Holy Spirit is working in my life!” And so He is!

MISSION TO THE MARGINS

In the nearby city of Cambridge, Jeff Hesselink works as a chaplain with Mission to the Margins, ministering to the homeless and impoverished.

The Gospel is at the heart of everything



As a young man Jeff Hesselink walked away from his loving Christian family and struck out for western Canada, and ended up on the streets. Now, in the city of Cambridge, Jeff Hesselink works as a chaplain with Mission to the Margins, ministering to the homeless and impoverished.

they do. “What we bring most of all is the message of the Gospel, but we do that in conjunction with meeting people’s tangible needs as much as we can.”

Twice a week they work with churches to provide meals to those who need it. A Gospel message is served before the meal (prepared in-house by church volunteers). Guests are welcome to the ministry’s food bank, clothing room, and laundry and shower facilities. Throughout the week, the ministry offers pastoral, grief and community support, a bike repair clinic and mentorship.

“Here, in this place,” Hesselink says, “People find a warm place like home on cold winter nights; a refreshing place to halt their unceasing march, to come cool off from the oppressive heat of scorching summer days. And here people find relief from that crushing, suffocating plague of loneliness... All this is nothing new or innovative. The church has been caring for the poor and needy like this... since its inception.”

Hesselink knows firsthand that unceasing march. As a young man he walked away from his loving Christian family and struck out for western Canada. He came to the end of himself and made a deal with God: either God would reveal Himself to Hesselink, or the desperate young man would call it quits – because life without Him was unbearable.

God heard, and answered in a powerful way. Hesselink vividly recalls those days. “Suffice it to say that as I made my way West I was given a new life, and a hope and a future in Him.” Hesselink had peace – but he didn’t have a home. “Here on the streets, in a city I had never been in before, people treated me like I was a thing and not a person, like a garbage can or street post they needed to get around...” Many years later, God has given Hesselink a home, a family and a calling – to reach out to others on the margins, as he once was, with the hope of the Gospel.

He recalls a recent conversation with Barry*. As they were discussing Matthew 7, Barry asked in a hushed voice, “How do I do it? What do I do? How do I take the next step in Christianity?” Essentially it was the question of the Philippian jailer, “What must I do to be saved?”

THE GOSPEL WILL TRIUMPH IN HAMILTON, CANADA, & THE WORLD

As Canada slides into deeper poverty and brokenness, Christians need to shine the light of Christ to the impoverished and homeless. The call is both personal and corporate. On a personal level, it starts with seeing the resident homeless man, not as a “street post” to get around, but as a person made in the image of God. We can pray for them and offer to buy them food or other necessities. Corporately, we as churches have a mandate to minister to the least of these. Partnering with an inner-city church or Gospel-driven ministry is both obedient and redemptive.

The seed of the Word will fall on good earth. Bosch and his church are seeing that. They work with eyes open to the suffering, and with sights fixed on the future. “I know the end of the story,” Bosch says. “I’ve read the end of the Bible and Jesus wins! There’s no more suffering. He’s going to take His nail-scarred hand and wipe away every tear... He’s going to make all things new. And all the brokenness, sin, suffering and bad decisions; all of that will be pushed into outer darkness and will be made right. Jesus is doing that. He’s going to win!” RP

*Names with an * have been changed to protect privacy. Pictures graciously supplied by Jeff Hesselink and Winston Bosch.*

ENDNOTES

¹ <https://www.hamilton.ca/city-council/news-notice/news-releases/city-calls-enhanced-support-government-partners-address>

² <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/research-reports/housing-and-homelessness-research-and-reports/shelter-system-requests-for-referrals/>

³ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/income-support-odsp>

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2V8nKqLkFg

⁵ In an effort to move addicts away from dangerous street drugs, Safe Supply Centres offer “safer supply” drugs – prescription fentanyl and other drugs. <https://arpacanada.ca/articles/canadas-drug-crisis-a-wicked-public-policy-problem-part-4/>

WHY I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE NOTWITHSTANDING CLAUSE

by John Sikkema

Legislatures make laws, the executive enforces them, judges interpret and apply them in specific cases. Three branches, checks and balances – that's Civics 101.

As Calvinists, we get why we need checks and balances. We know that voters, lawmakers, bureaucrats, police, judges, juries – *everyone* – is fallen. So we don't want to entrust one sinner or one group of sinners with too much power. And we want to hold people with power accountable. It's this Calvinistic insight into human nature that contributed to strong checks and balances emerging in the UK and the US.

But who checks whom and how, exactly? That's where things get interesting.

Canada currently awaits a ruling from our Supreme Court on whether the legislature or the judiciary has the final say in disputes over *Charter* rights and freedoms. More specifically, the Court is reviewing the Quebec government's use of the notwithstanding clause (section 33 of the *Charter*) to shield its secularism law (Bill 21) from being declared unconstitutional and unenforceable by the judiciary.

The federal government has intervened in the Quebec case to argue that the Supreme Court should impose certain limits on the use of the notwithstanding clause – limits that do not appear anywhere in the text of the *Charter*. Various other interveners insist that the clause is dangerous and contrary to the spirit of the Canadian constitution.

What is the notwithstanding clause?

Prior to 1982, Canada had no constitutional bill of rights, unlike the US, which adopted its Bill of Rights in 1791. Today,

Britain and several other Commonwealth countries continue to go without such a constitutional bill of rights, which would authorize judges to strike down legislation. Britain, therefore, is said to maintain *legislative* or *Parliamentary supremacy* on rights questions, while the US is said to have *judicial supremacy*.

Canada has a kind of hybrid model. Ordinarily, a judge in Canada can strike down a statute if, in the judge's opinion, the statute violates Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. However, section 33 of the *Charter* says that a legislature may declare that a law will operate "notwithstanding" certain parts of the *Charter*, which include the fundamental freedoms listed in section 2, and the legal rights in sections 7-15.

Any invocation of the notwithstanding clause expires in five years, though a legislature may re-invoke it limitless times. This five-year-expiry rule ensures voters can have a say, since the constitution requires an election within 5 years of the last election.

Judges' role in lawmaking

Returning to the basic notion that legislatures make laws and judges interpret them – well, that's not the whole story.

1. Judges have been setting precedents for centuries

In the nearly 1000-year-old common law tradition, much of the law is judge-made. Their rulings set a precedent that other judges then follow, and it's these precedents that make up what's called *common law*.

But common law is subject to statute. Legislatures might choose to codify the

existing common law, or they could pass a law that deliberately modifies or overturns it. But the key is, any legislation they pass prevails over common law precedents whenever there is a tension between the two. The maxim that legislatures make law and judges interpret and apply it may lack nuance, but it highlights the supremacy of statute law over common law.

2. Judges interpret the laws

Where we have a statute, there is still an important role for judicial interpretation and precedent, since legislators cannot conceive of and cover every possible situation.

But for centuries under the common law tradition, judges have recognized that while they have an inherent civic authority to resolve civil disputes, they are also duty-bound to apply any statute that applies to the case before them.

3. Judges can overturn laws when they find a conflict with the Charter

When it comes to the *Charter*, however, it gets a little odd, because there's always another law involved. Judges recognize that they should not apply the *Charter* in the abstract. Rather, as with other laws, judges apply the *Charter* in particular cases with particular facts. But the *Charter* is normally used to argue that the other law in question in a given case must not be applied. If applying the law – say, a law forbidding noise above a certain decibel level in a park – would violate the *Charter* in a particular case (e.g. a group gathers in the park and shouts a political slogan), then judges may declare the law itself to be void.

The *Charter* has massively expanded



Canada currently awaits a ruling from our Supreme Court on whether the legislature or the judiciary has the final say in disputes over Charter rights and freedoms.

judges' lawmaking role in Canada. Most Charter rights are stated broadly and abstractly. Consequently, although a judge is supposed to rely on the facts of a particular case and not make rulings about the constitutionality of statutes in the abstract, judges still end up deciding major policy questions via their Charter rulings. Here, the basic principles underlying the differentiation between the legislative and judicial roles are in tension. Judges end up deciding what the law on a given matter will be for the country, or province, or town, based on the evidence and legal arguments presented to them in a particular case.

Legislatures vs. courts

The legal process is supposed to discover the truth and reach a just outcome in individual cases.

The legislative process ideally channels the wisdom and experience of the broader community and persons from various walks of life into formulating generally applicable rules that reflect what society considers just and good.

As John Finnis explains, while courts are fundamentally backward-looking (resolving particular, concrete disputes between parties based on pre-existing rules), legislatures are fundamentally forward-looking – deciding what ground

rules should govern society in the future.

Legislatures are sometimes referred to as majoritarian bodies, in two senses. First, bills become law by majority vote among legislators. Second, legislators are elected, so presumably legislation reflects majority views in society. The fear, then, is that legislators may not care about the rights and interests of minorities.

The latter point may be more or less true depending on how elected members conceive of their role. Do they decide their vote based on public opinion polling? Or do they, in line with Edmund Burke and Abraham Kuyper, see themselves as elected to exercise personal judgment, bring their personal knowledge and experience to bear, and seek to enact just laws for all citizens? Legislatures need not be merely majoritarian bodies codifying shifting popular opinion into law. At their best, they are representative and deliberative bodies endeavoring to enact just laws for everyone in society.

Meanwhile, we tend to overlook the fact that the judiciary, too, is majoritarian in the former sense – in appellate courts, cases are decided by a majority vote of justices on the bench. Of course, judges in Canada are appointed, not elected. When a judge fulfills his role of carefully deciphering the facts, and faithfully interpreting and applying the law to the facts, he

should not be worried about whether his ruling will be popular. Legal training and expertise are most applicable to applying pre-existing laws to specific events that occurred in the past.

But what if a judge is not deciding whether Person A violated Law X, but whether Law X (e.g. a law restricting abortion or euthanasia) should even be law? Should the latter be shielded from electoral and legislative accountability (short of amending the constitution)?

Of course, a constitutional bill of rights only gives judges final say over laws that affect the rights listed therein. But since such rights tend to be broadly worded (e.g. freedom of expression, liberty, security of the person), and judges often take considerable liberties in interpreting them, the result is that a small group of unelected people – judges, especially on apex courts, who often serve for decades – can decide major political issues for a province or nation.

A prominent justification proffered for giving judges the final say on rights matters is that these are matters of principle and courts are better forums for resolving them on principle rather than politics – which supposedly has more to do with negotiating the distribution of material benefits in society. But this is mere question begging. Rights are matters of

principle, sure, but so are questions about the just and proper limits on rights, the duties that correspond to rights, the just distribution of benefits in society, and so on. Really, these are all political questions. They all raise competing moral views and involve judgments about how we ought to live together as a community.

Against judicial supremacy

There's an instrumental or consequentialist case to be made – in terms of better or worse policy outcomes – against judicial supremacy, to be sure. Canada's judges invalidated Canada's abortion restrictions and euthanasia ban, for example. They also struck down various laws that were premised on spouses being opposite-sex, paving the way for same-sex marriage. The same is true in the US, except on euthanasia.

A principled, biblical case against judicial supremacy is somewhat more difficult, and necessarily fairly nuanced. I think Christians can make decent principled arguments in defence of the American system over the British or the Canadian system. But allow me to attempt a more principled case against judicial supremacy and explain why I'm grateful for the notwithstanding clause.

The biblical truth that all persons are image-bearers of God is the fundamental basis for the equality of all citizens. And while the *imago dei* admits of distinct, unequal offices (e.g. parent, elder, magistrate), one political implication of *imago dei* is that each person is God's representative on earth, and together we exercise dominion. We are equal before God, and we all bear some (albeit not equal, depending on our office) responsibility for our political community and the rules that will govern it. Representative legislatures, arguably, best reflect this Christian anthropology as it applies in the political sphere.

A nation's citizens share a common civic responsibility to respect and preserve public justice, the common good, and each other's individual rights. The body politic, as David Koyzis explains, is by its nature not a private concern, but a community of citizens and their government called by

God to do justice. Therefore, it seems appropriate that citizens should bear political responsibility within that community.

"Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women," the famous Justice Learned Hand observed. "When it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it. While it lies there it needs no constitution, no law, no court to save it."

By assigning "rights questions" to unelected judges to finally resolve, legislators and citizens effectively wash our hands of this responsibility. Does a person have a "right" to abort a baby, euthanize a patient, or "marry" a person of the same sex? Does a pre-born baby have a right to life? Should people be free to publicly proclaim the gospel? And so on. A system of judicial supremacy obscures if not reduces the responsibility we have as citizens for preserving others' rights and the common good.

"Isn't it awful that Barry Neufeld was censored so severely by the Human Rights Tribunal?" you might say. "Yeah, let's hope he wins in court," your friend might reply. I hope that too, of course. But do we realize, as citizens, that we are responsible for the law that applies in such cases? A constitutional model – in which legislatures remain ultimately responsible for deciding whether we will be a society that will permit abortion, prostitution, euthanasia, and easy access to online pornography – makes our responsibility as Christian citizens more clear.

Also, a system in which judges play a predominant law-making role privileges legal rhetoric and "rights talk" while displacing or marginalizing moral and theological language and perspectives. This accelerates secularization and makes the prophetic task of the Church in politics more difficult, as there is more translating to do.

Outstanding opportunity?

Functionally, outside of Quebec, Canada has had a system of judicial supremacy since 1982. Cracks have started to show recently in some provinces, as Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan have

all used the notwithstanding clause in the last three years. Alberta and Saskatchewan have used it to protect parental authority. Alberta has also used it to preserve its law against medically transitioning minors. Federally, it has never been used, though Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre has, notably, endorsed its use.

I think this represents an opportunity for us as Reformed Christians. While biblical truth is generally ignored in Canadian society, it is *systemically* ignored in our highly secularized legal system. Canada's courts are a uniquely challenging forum to make biblical arguments – in fact, if arguments are explicitly biblical, a judge will likely reject them outright. The notwithstanding clause could offer Christians opportunities to advance more just laws by persuading their fellow citizens instead.

"Who will guard the guardians?"

"Who will guard the guardians?" has been a classic question in politics throughout the ages. Reformed political thought, Koyzis explains, posits various checks, including those built into government itself, such as separation of powers, recurrent elections, limited jurisdiction of government agencies and ministers, federalism, and so on.

But within such a system, some body must bear primary responsibility for resolving great public problems. It is best, I believe, for that body to be a representative and deliberative one, one for which each and every citizen bears some responsibility. The Charter has greatly obscured the sense of citizens' responsibility to preserve fundamental rights and freedoms. The notwithstanding clause offers an opportunity to recover it. ^{RP}

John Sikkema is ARPA Canada's Director of Law and Policy. He lives with his wife and four kids in Gatineau, and enjoys commuting via e-bike along the Ottawa river.



THE STATE OF THEOLOGY

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MORE OF YOUR TURN

We received so many fantastic entries we couldn't fit them all in just one issue. So here are 10 more that we're very happy to be able to share now.



See More Entries 

Thoughts from tulips to TULIP:

MY JOURNEY INTO THE REFORMED FAITH AND TRANSLATION

by Jean Zhou

One morning in early April 2025, I am sitting on our back deck, holding a cup of coffee and enjoying the quiet stillness of the day. The air is crisp, and the warmth of the cup settles into my hands. Along the edge of the yard, tightly closed tulip buds push through the damp soil, standing bravely against the lingering grey of winter – like a baby stretching out a tiny hand to reach for the world after a good night's sleep.

Spring is here!

As I watch this quiet miracle unfold, the melody of the Doxology – Hymn 8 in the *Book of Praise* – drifts into my mind. How beautiful! God is the source of every blessing. All that lives and grows on earth shall praise the Lord, the great Creator.

As I hum, my thoughts turn to the Chinese translation of the hymn. And speaking of translation, I realize I have work to do. I have been invited to speak at my local Christian school's assembly about my career as a translator, particularly my work translating Reformed books and sermons, and about the journey that brought me to this point.

My memories begin to surface, one after another, as if scrolling back through Google Photos all the way to the 1990s. Time truly does fly. It has been twenty years since I began translating.

The heart of man plans his way,
but the Lord establishes his steps.
– Prov. 16:9

My translation journey begins in the early 1990s, during a period when China is experiencing rapid growth in foreign trade following its opening-to-the-world policy.

As a university English teacher, I am often assigned to interpret for foreign investors and at government-hosted events. These experiences bring me into contact with people from across the English-speaking world and expand my perspective far beyond the boundaries of Chinese culture. What captivates me most is not the act of translation itself, but the people – their stories, their backgrounds, and the ways they think.

Around that time, I meet several American couples on campus who happen to live in the same neighborhood as we do. We become friends, and they invite me to join their weekly Bible study. Wanting to better understand Western



"My journey of becoming a translator – particularly of Reformed books and sermons – began with TULIP, the Five Points of Calvinism. Through the Asian mission work of the Canadian Reformed Churches, God lifted me up, guided me by His Word, brought me from China, and graciously nurtured my fragile faith here in Canada. God sovereignly uses the gifts He gives His people to build His kingdom, and I am deeply honored to be but a speck of dust in His great work."

culture for my teaching, and enjoying learning from people of different backgrounds, I gladly accept their invitation.

Later, I learn that they have been sent by Campus Crusade (now called Power to Change) and are serving university students and young professors in China while living there as international students.

For years, I question Christianity, challenge their beliefs, and debate with them. Yet even in my resistance, I begin searching for answers to life's deepest questions. Slowly, as I stand in awe of God, my pride is humbled, and a deep hunger for His Word takes root in my heart.

...for it is God who works in you,
both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
– Phil. 2:13

Our Bible study group grows as more Chinese friends join

us. Because our home is large enough to welcome a bigger group – and with my husband’s permission, though he is not yet a believer – we open our home to host the gatherings. Many of the participants are English teachers like me.

God blesses us in ways we do not expect. As the Bible study meets in our home, my husband also begins to hear the gospel. At first, he overhears only fragments from his home office upstairs. Later, he moves downstairs and sits quietly on the edge of the group. Over time, he becomes more engaged and eventually joins us fully.

He asks questions, debates ideas, and explores the Scriptures – often approaching them through the lenses he loves most: art and human history. Through listening, thinking, and seeking, he comes to accept Jesus as his Saviour.

...they were harassed and helpless,
like sheep without a shepherd.
– Matt. 9:36

In 2004, we make a short landing in Canada as new immigrants. British Columbia’s breathtaking scenery immediately captivates us. Yet leaving behind our family, our friends, and our promising careers is deeply difficult.

Around the same time, our American friends prepare to relocate to other countries. Our Bible study group is left without leadership and without a connection to a church.

Feeling uncertain but determined, we press on – much like the Chinese saying, “a newborn calf is not afraid of a tiger,” meaning that beginners often act with fearless simplicity. We search online for materials and take turns leading Bible studies. At first, this seems to solve the problem. But pulling resources from many different sources soon leads to confusion. Questions multiply, disagreements arise, and discussions turn into heated debates. While reading Matthew 11:12, a difference between the English and Chinese translations sparks a debate over human effort versus God’s sovereignty, and the discussion ends in tears.

As similar conflicts repeat, we become spiritually weary and cry out to God for clarity – and it is then that the Reformed faith enters our lives.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them...
– Matt. 9:36

Shortly after we return from a visit to Canada, Rev. F. Vandongen (a pseudonym used for security reasons) embarks on a mission trip to China, delivering his lecture on TULIP – the Five Points of Calvinism. Somehow, he learns about our small fellowship and reaches out to ask if we would help translate sermons for his mission work.

We answer immediately and wholeheartedly – yes – and roll up our sleeves to begin. As we translate, clarity grows. What once felt fragmented now comes together like a puzzle, each piece fitting into place. We are like gold miners uncovering hidden treasure, awestruck by the depth and

beauty of God’s truth.

God is merciful. He hears even our unspoken prayers and shines His light on us as we grow through struggle.

As we begin studying the Heidelberg Catechism, clarity replaces confusion. We often hear people say, “That makes sense,” or, “If we had known this earlier, we wouldn’t have argued at all.” Others share their relief: fears of weak faith, of rejection, even nightmares about judgment, begin to fade.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us,
let us use them... – Rom. 12:6

From that point on, I spend countless hours – day after day, year after year – sitting at my computer translating Reformed, faith-based books and sermons. For two decades, the same core truths fill my work: our sin, God’s mercy, and Christ’s saving work on the cross.

To others, my work may appear repetitive. To me, it is life-giving. These messages nourish my soul and richly bless our family.

Not long ago, I overheard our two sons say, “Mom’s job is pretty solid.” Those words warm my heart – not only as appreciation, but as testimony to God’s faithful care for our family.

And beyond our home, countless Chinese-speaking families around the world are blessed through translation work connected to Asia Mission and supported by local churches.


When the Chinese translation of the *Book of Praise* is finally completed and printed, I can hardly contain my joy. I share the news on Facebook, and the response is overwhelming: congratulations from believers across the globe, from China to Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, Russia, and Japan.

The *Book of Praise* is only one of many completed projects. Others include *I Belong*, *The Overflowing Riches of God’s Mercy*, *Lest Anyone Should Boast*, *The Covenant of Love*, *The Elder and the Deacon*, *Unseen Footprints*, and *Christ’s Psalms*, *Our Psalms*, as well as many more.

To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
– 1 Pet. 4:11

I claim no credit of my own. Translation is never a solo effort – it is always a team endeavor. I am simply grateful to have been part of it.

Before I close, I invite you to pause, look at God’s creation, and sing Hymn 8. Perhaps you might even try the Chinese version. I have asked AI to render the pronunciation so it can be sung aloud. And if that feels daunting, simply hum along until “Amen.” After all, Amen is beautifully universal.

*Dzan may juhn shun wan foo Dzer ywen
Dee shahng wan yo doe dahng soong dzan
Tien sher tien joon dahng dzan joo meeng
Dzan may shuhng foo, shuhng dzer, shuhng leeng
Amen!* 

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS

by Margo Koster



In this piece of writing, I like to share one of the most edifying experiences in my life. I hope you as reader will be encouraged and blessed by it. To God be the glory.

Have you ever been disappointed with, and ashamed of yourself because you bullied someone or hurt someone's feelings in the past?

I did, and I tell you... it's not a nice experience!

Here is my story, and I hope you will learn from it so that instead of being discouraged, you will be encouraged.

She was my classmate for six elementary school years. She was a nice, quiet girl, but she was picked on. It wasn't because she struggled with learning, or because she wasn't friendly. The only reason was because her parents weren't very well off, and the clothes she wore were probably first worn by her cousins and then passed on to her. She didn't feel embarrassed or different about this, but her classmates caused her to feel that way. They would ask her where she got these clothes, or why her hair was messy, or her shoes out of style. They would call her names and sometimes pull her hair.

Although I liked her, and even befriended her for a while, I also didn't want my classmates, especially not the dominant ones, to get the feeling I was her friend. I was highly affected by peer pressure at that time. I wanted to be part of the popular group of girls and even joined them in name calling her, and, to my shame, I also once pulled her braids...

Since the village school was an elementary school only, after graduation we all went to different high schools. Still, I saw her sometimes in church or at catechism class, but besides a smile or an occasional "hello" there was no contact. But whenever I saw her, I was reminded of my unkind, deceptive behavior. I, the only friend she thought she had, had joined the group in bullying her. I felt ashamed!

After my high school years, I once had a more extended conversation with her when I met her in the village where we lived. I asked her what she was studying, and she asked me what I did. She was studying to be a pharmacist while I was doing my teacher training. I was happy we had a nice talk but still I didn't apologize.

After getting married, my husband and I moved to various places, something that's typical for teachers, and later we emigrated from the Netherlands to Canada with our children.

Did I still think about my elementary school friend? Yes, once in while, especially when talking or thinking about my school years. Now, being a teacher myself, I had to protect my students from being bullied and realized I had been a bully myself. I wished that I could still have an opportunity to talk to the school friend I had mistreated long ago. I so wanted to ask her for forgiveness. Confessing my sin, I asked the Lord to open a way to apologize to her. And God opened a way! *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. – 1 John 1:9*


After a lot of searching and inquiring, I received her address via a friend of mine. I wrote her a letter, meanwhile praying that she would be in good health, happy, and wealthy. I explained who I was and also the reason for my writing.

You can imagine my excitement when I received a letter back from her. My fingers trembled when I opened the envelope. Would she be able to accept my apology and forgive me? Her response exceeded my expectations. She couldn't even remember that I ever mistreated her. She only remembered me as her classmate with long braids with whom she had skipped rope. And if I thought there was something that needed to be

forgiven, she gladly did so. I was very thankful for her kind answer and eagerly continued reading. I learned she was indeed the healthy, happy, and wealthy woman, for which I had prayed. She and her husband owned a beautiful country estate, and they had a flourishing antique and vintage business. She ended her letter that she appreciated my letter very much and hoped we would stay in touch with each other.

And that's what we did. We exchanged email addresses, cell phone numbers and sent each other regular WhatsApp messages. Three years ago, we met in person when my husband and I visited the Netherlands. How good it was to see her after more than fifty years! There was so much to talk and laugh about when we shared elementary school memories. But I was especially delighted that we could talk as "sisters in the Lord" and share how the Lord had led both of us throughout these fifty years. Much too soon it was time to say "goodbye"; this time with a warm embrace and a "hope to see you later." That day was a day with a "golden rim" for me. God is good.

I hope and pray you are encouraged by my story. Confessing our sins and asking forgiveness to God and our "neighbor," give so much joy and cause such a liberating feeling.

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." – Ephesians 3:20-21 

Trust and anxiety

by Mark Hicks

There are moments when the world grows quiet, yet our minds grow loud. Worries replay themselves in the dark – unfinished conversations, uncertain futures, fears we cannot seem to turn off. Anxiety does not discriminate by age or season of life; it visits children facing school pressures, adults carrying responsibilities, and older hearts wrestling with health or loss.

For many believers, this restless mind can also stir guilt: If I trust God, why do I still feel this way? Scripture does not shy away from these questions. Instead, God's Word speaks gently and truthfully to anxious hearts, inviting us not into denial, but into trust.

Anxiety is often treated as a modern problem, but the Bible tells a different story. God's people have always wrestled with fear, uncertainty, and restless thoughts. From the psalms of David to the teachings of Jesus, Scripture meets anxiety head-on – not with condemnation, but with compassion and hope.

David, a man described as being after God's own heart, openly expressed his anxiety before the Lord. In Psalm 55 he writes,

"My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Fear and trembling come upon me."

These words are not polished or calm; they are raw and honest. Yet David does not hide his anxiety from God – he brings it directly to Him. This shows us something vital: feeling anxious is not a sign of weak faith. What matters is where we take our anxiety.

Even faithful servants of God experienced moments of overwhelming fear. The prophet Elijah, after boldly standing against false prophets, fled in fear and despair, asking God to take his life (1 Kings 19). God's response was not an angry rebuke. Instead, He provided rest, nourishment, and gentle reassurance. This pattern reveals God's heart toward the anxious: He does not push us away but comes closer to us.

Jesus addressed anxiety during His earthly ministry. In Matthew 6:25-34, He speaks directly to wor-

ried hearts, saying, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life." These words are familiar yet often misunderstood. Jesus was not dismissing real concerns or suggesting that faithful people never feel anxious. Rather, He was redirecting His listeners' focus – from the uncertainty of tomorrow to the faithfulness of their Father today.

Jesus points to birds and flowers, reminding us that God faithfully provides for His creation. If God cares so attentively for what is here today and gone tomorrow, how much more does He care for His children? Anxiety often grows when we imagine a future without God's presence. Jesus invites us instead to trust that the same God who is faithful today will be faithful tomorrow.

One of the most comforting promises in Scripture comes from Philippians 4:6:

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Notice that Paul does not say anxiety will disappear instantly. Instead, in the next verse, he promises that God's peace, "which transcends all understanding," will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Peace is not always the absence of anxious thoughts; sometimes it is God's protection in the midst of them.

Trust, then, is not a switch we flip but a practice we return to daily. When we have anxious thoughts, we are invited again and again to bring them before God.

Peter echoes this invitation when he writes, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). The command is paired with a reason: God cares. Our ability to trust rests not in our strength, but in His.

It is also important to remember that God often works through community. Scripture reminds us to "carry each other's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). Seeking help from trusted believers, pastors, counselors, or medical professionals is not a failure of faith. It can be an act of humility and wisdom. God never intended us to walk through anxiety alone, and the Church is meant to be a place of refuge.


For those walking through seasons when the mind will not be quiet, Scripture offers this steady reassurance: God does not slumber or sleep (Ps. 121:4). Even when we lie awake, restless and worried, He remains fully attentive.

Modern anxiety – especially among our youth – cannot be reduced to a single cause. Excessive screen time, diets filled with preservatives, sedentary lifestyles, and constant stimulation all play a role. These realities are not spiritually neutral; they reflect a way of life increasingly detached from God’s design. When we ignore these principles, there are consequences – physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

However, it would be both unbiblical and unloving to conclude that anxiety itself is proof of sin or spiritual failure. Faithful men and women throughout Scripture experienced deep distress while walking closely with God.

As Christians, we must resist the temptation to spiritualize anxiety into shame or dismiss it as mere weakness. Instead, we are invited to ask a more faithful question: What does anxiety reveal about how far modern life has drifted from God’s design for rest, embodiment, community, and trust? In this sense, anxiety may be less a personal moral failure and more a symptom of living in a world that has forgotten how to live rightly before God.

The Christian response, then, is not condemnation but restoration – calling people back to healthier rhythms, deeper dependence on God, embodied community, and compassionate care for both soul and body. In doing so, we bear witness to a God who does not abandon the anxious, but meets them with truth, grace, and healing.

Anxiety may visit, but it does not have the final word. The final word belongs to a God who sees, cares, and invites us to rest in Him – one prayer, one breath, one day at a time. 



Mark Hicks was excited to submit this article to the Your Turn contest. We are grateful to share it with you, but very sad that he is no longer with us to see it in print. On May 25, the LORD took Mark home to Himself. We mourn his sudden passing with his loved ones, but rejoice that He is alive in Christ.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." – Philippians 1:21

PARENTING - IT'S NOT ABOUT ME

by Heidi Vogel

Never before have we had so much help raising our children. Resources abound, programs are plentiful, and for a big family like mine the monthly child benefit is equivalent to a part-time wage.

At the same time, so many of us are anxious and overwhelmed in our parenting. Ideas and opinions surround us – which voices do we listen to? The debate between authoritative and gentle parenting rages on social media: are we raising a nation of entitled, disrespectful brats? Do kids these days just need a good old-fashioned spanking? Or is our distracted parenting and lack of connection the reason for their anger? Have we modeled emotional awareness and regulation? Have we taken the time to make sure they are heard and understood? My head swims. I find myself wishing that I could find “the right” methodology that would give me a brand-new kid by Friday. (Of course, for this to work, my kids first need a new mom by Monday!)

The reality is that the problems in parenting come from the sin in my heart and the sin in my children. They come when my primary identity becomes that of a parent, rather than that of a child of God.

WHEN AUTHORITY IS ABOUT ME

Many decry a lack of authority as one of the main problems with parenting today. Kids are floundering, testing boundaries, looking for truth and structure and grounding. Proverbs 22:6 says “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*” Clearly, we have a God-given responsibility to direct our children.

The problem comes when my authority becomes about *me*. My child refuses to sit still in church, or misbehaves in front of people I want to impress. I am embarrassed, and in that moment, I am not thinking about how to grow a love for God and others in his heart: I am thinking about how to make it stop.

Now.

Control is my goal.

I use threats, anger, and manipulation in the name of “discipline” in order to produce the desired behavior. I withhold my favor from my children unless they perform

to my standards. I stress the importance of outward obedience, but miss the sin and struggle my child is wrestling with under a seemingly placid surface of outward obedience.

When authority is about me, then I am ultimately responsible to demonstrate a standard of perfection to my children. I have read parenting books that instructed me to think of myself as “God” to my children, since they are too young to know Him personally. If this is the case, I cannot ask them to stop nibbling their nails if I’m still munching mine. I cannot admit to my own sins, because then I will lose respect and they will no longer see me as the perfect example. The weight of parenting rests on my shoulders and if my children fail, then I have failed.

WHEN RELATIONSHIP IS ABOUT ME

For many parents, especially those that experienced emotionally unavailable parents, the measure of ultimate parenting success is the quality of relationship we build with our children. “Will they feel safe to come to me when they have problems?” “Will they feel unconditionally loved and accepted by me?”

Once again, these good desires become twisted when my desire for a close relationship with my kids becomes about me. I want to be the hero in my kids’ life. I will be there for them, smooth the road for them, fight their battles for them and do anything I can to protect them from adversity. I inadvertently feed anxiety and create co-dependency because then I get to be their strong one. I feel needed and purposeful. When I sin against them, or make mistakes in my parenting, I imagine the future chapters in their memoirs that retell my mistakes, and the lifelong damage those mistakes created. I become weary, burned out and guilt-ridden. When my kids sin, I struggle to discipline because of the fear of damaging our relationship, or losing their admiration and trust. When my kids are angry with me, it crushes me. When they fail to appreciate me, I begin to resent them. Instead of teaching them how to live before God, I whine “Don’t you see how much I do for you? How can you treat me like this?” My kids carry the weight of my

emotional stability on their shoulders, knowing that my purpose and sense of value are dependent on them.

JESUS, THE GENTLE SHEPHERD

I didn't write this article because I enjoy parent-shaming. (There is enough of that on Instagram!) I wrote it because there is hope for us and our kids – not in a new method, but in a Person: Jesus Christ, our Gentle Shepherd.

When I think of shepherding, I often imagine pastoral meadow scenes where sheep graze on lush green grass while the shepherd relaxes nearby. In reality, shepherding requires a great amount of authority. Sheep are stubborn and foolish and if they are allowed to lead the way, they will end up hurt. A shepherd must work hard to protect and guide his sheep. He can do this because his sheep know him. *"My sheep hear my voice"* (John 10:27). He can do this because they trust him. Because he has provided safety and a gentle hand – *"He carries the lambs in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young"* (Is. 40:11).

Jesus is the only perfect example of gentle authority. He had the power to command the wind and the waves (Mark 4), yet refused to use that authority for His own benefit when the devil tempted Him to turn the stones into bread (Luke 4). He offered grace to the woman caught in adultery (John 8) in the same breath removing her condemnation and commanding her to *"go, and sin no more."* His is the ultimate gentle authority. The authority that both demands obedience and provides payment for disobedience. The loving Savior who draws us continually closer to Himself even as He teaches us, sometimes with difficult lessons.

GOD'S GENTLE AUTHORITY AND GENEROUS GRACE

When I live under God's gentle authority instead of my own, it frees me to admit my sins, weakness and need of Him. I am not a stand-in for God. I don't need to be all knowing, all powerful, ever present and sinless. I am an image bearer of God, and I have a responsibility to demonstrate His character to those around me. But I am a flawed image bearer, and my children will have a front row seat to my sinfulness.

Repenting of my sins to my children does not undermine my authority, rather it points me and my children back to our need for a Savior, and our dependence on the Holy Spirit in living under His divine authority. It frees me to discipline my children with gentleness, but without

fear, knowing that God has given me the responsibility of helping them live under His authority. I don't have to come up with the rules, or present a curated image to the world. I can look to the scriptures with my children to learn the pathway of blessing and teach them to walk in it. I can take time to work for long term growth and heart change, even if that means things are messier in the moment.

MY TRUE IDENTITY

In the months that followed my oldest daughter's birth I felt a huge shift in my identity. I used to define myself by interests and gifts that I felt like I was no longer using in those intense days of motherhood. With raging hormones and little sleep, the parts of my personality I was less than proud of came to the forefront. As a project-loving person, it felt shameful to have no measurable accomplishments to share with my husband when he came home from work. Most dauntingly, I now had a tiny human that was completely helpless and completely dependent on me for survival.

As I looked down at her tiny, trusting body asleep in my arms, I realized that this was my truest identity. Not as a parent, but as a helpless, dependent child, completely trusting in my own Father's care and love for me. In the years that have followed, as more children arrived and I added the role of home educator to my list, I have felt even more strongly the temptation to either: a) resent the demands of parenting and all that it asks of me, or, b) cling to that identity as the fullest measurement of my purpose and value.

The grace of God continues to remind me that who I am is not defined by my performance, but by Christ's love for me. This is the generous grace that God extends to my children also, the grace that drives our grateful living under the care of our perfect Gentle Shepherd. YT



I wrote this article to refocus my own heart and hopefully encourage other weary parents.

*"He will feed His flock like a shepherd;
He will gather the lambs with His arm,
And carry them in His bosom,
And gently lead those who are with young." –
Isaiah 40:11*

LESSONS FROM THE DIRT

by Holly Braendlein

It all started in the backyard with my Dad when I was no older than 6 or 7. He took me outside and taught me how to transplant, by gently digging up the roots of the desired plant, and placing it elsewhere in the yard. I remember transplanting so many mint plants and dandelions all over our nice property and that's when I knew I wanted to be a farmer, just like my dad.

I grew up running to meet my father at the door when he would come in from work, coated in sweat and smelling of tractor grease, ripe apples and sunshine. These, to me, are the scents of safety, security, and masculinity. My dad has many years of experience growing wine grapes, apples, pears, cherries, and vegetables, and as his kid, I have had the privilege of learning a lot from him about how things grow, and it was my dad who first demonstrated to me how often God uses agriculture in Scripture to teach us about Himself. He made those Scriptures come alive to me out there in the dirt, and I hope I can begin to do the same for you.

One of the most famous examples we have is in the book of John which talks about pruning vines. Let's begin to pick apart the spiritual applications of these verses by introducing you to the vine itself.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are



"My entry is an in-depth view of John 15:1-6 where Jesus talks about pruning, and abiding in Him. My father has been in agriculture for 20+ years, and so I know a thing or two about pruning and the awesome wonder of the agricultural world. I hope to spread some light on these passages as I explain the process and intricacies of the vine."

clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

—John 15:1-6 (ESV)

THE VINE

A vine is made up of a trunk that bears the plant up in the ground, with long reaching "cordons" that make the entire vine into a big "T" shape. The branches Jesus refers to are called "canes" – long, wild branches that possess the buds responsible for bearing fruit.

Each winter, after the fruit has been harvested, farmers everywhere take their pruning shears and start hacking away viciously at the canes. There are several different methods for pruning, but the one I will focus on is called "spur pruning." Spur pruning is when the farmer cuts until each cane has only two buds remaining. You are left with mounting piles of dead canes throughout the vineyard, and it is an ugly business, but this makes it so the following year's crop is remarkably higher than it would be if you had simply done nothing and allowed the vine to grow unchecked.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit."



First, let's establish who's who in this passage. God is the vinedresser, the husbandman; Jesus is the vine; we are the branches.

As the vinedresser, God is responsible for planting the vine and giving it life, and then cultivating the plant so as to bear fruit. He feeds, waters, and prunes the plant to produce the glory of the husbandman, which is the fruit. The fruit is the glory of the husbandman!

As the vine, Jesus was sent to be the life of our entire being, but was also entirely dependent on God as the vinedresser. Everything we have, we have from Jesus, and everything Jesus has, He has from God. The vine is responsible for the life-giving sap that courses through the branches to bear much fruit. The branch is the glory of the vine. Jesus gives us all we need in order to be fruitful.

As the branch, we are heavily dependent on the vine for our source of life! If it weren't for the vine, we would not be nourished with the life-giving sap, and we would be dead and worthless, unable to bear fruit, and whatever branch doesn't fruit, the Lord takes away.

THE BRANCH

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

A branch exists solely to bear fruit. It is not there to give life. It is not there to plant the vine. It is not there to do anything of itself! Not even the fruit comes from the branch's own will and perseverance. The branch bears fruit with the supplies given to him by the vine, and *that is all*. As Andrew Murray is credited with having said, "Fruit bearing is the one thing they [the branches] have been saved for."

Do you worry that you somehow have something to contribute and you are failing your end of the deal? Are you grappling to work your own salvation by the strength of your own right hand? Stop these gross assumptions

and foolish floundering attempts at being God! Just be a branch! Jesus, the vine, will provide *everything* you need, as long as you rest and abide in the vine to supply all you need. That's the vine's job. You have nothing you need to bring to the table.



"My dad has many years of experience growing wine grapes, apples, pears, cherries, and vegetables..."

PRUNING

"Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you."

The fruit He is referring to are the fruits of the Spirit, namely love, joy,

peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Jesus provides us with the life-giving sap in order to bear such fruit, and God prunes us to accomplish the same result.

A healthy vine *must* be pruned. Only fruitful branches get pruned. If we were perfect, we would have no need for pruning, but as it is, we are naturally full of inbred sin, so we tend toward producing more wood rather than fruit. Thus, the Lord in His mercy unsheaths His knife and gently cuts away at the sin that is coursing through the branches' veins.

It does not matter how hard you have been working, trying to grow the fruit. This is no sin; you are doing what the Lord has commanded you! But what if you were able to bear much more fruit? Well, the only way for this to happen is if last year's wood is stripped away and left short and stumpy. It is only when we are stripped of what we have and are more fully aware of our own helplessness that the Lord's mercies are more deeply saturated.

So what is pruning? What does the Lord use to spiritually prune us? Many people believe that affliction is the pruning knife God uses on his branches, but Charles Spurgeon has convinced me otherwise. Look at verse 3 once more.

"Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you."

Spurgeon says that when he says you are clean, he really means, "You have been *pruned* because of the word I have spoken to you." It is the Word that does the pruning! The

pruning knife is the Word; affliction is the dresser which removes our garments for the surgeon's knife. Affliction prepares the incision site for the word to enter in. Affliction strips us bare so we are fully prepared to receive the Word of God, which works in us to bear more fruit.

TAKEAWAY

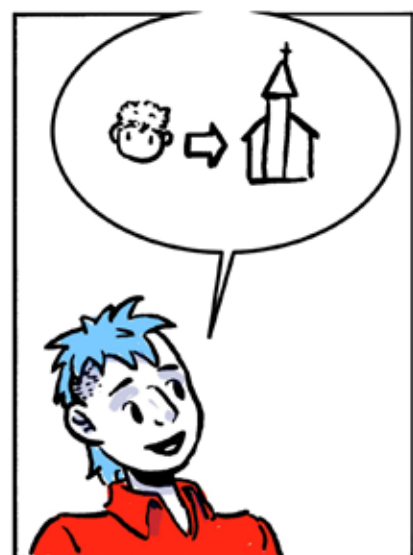
So what are you to take from this passage? Abide in Him. Leave everything to the Vine. Let the Vine sustain all your needs, both in spirit and body, and let Him work in you so you bear much fruit. Do not wonder that the Lord sees fit to prune you a little (or a lot). It is for His glory, and for the branches' good growth, and it is evidence that you are in Him.

Dead branches don't need pruning. Let affliction be the preparation for the pruning by the Word, and give thanks for your good Husbandman who, wearing the smell of the dirt and sunshine He created, will one day complete the work He has begun in you.

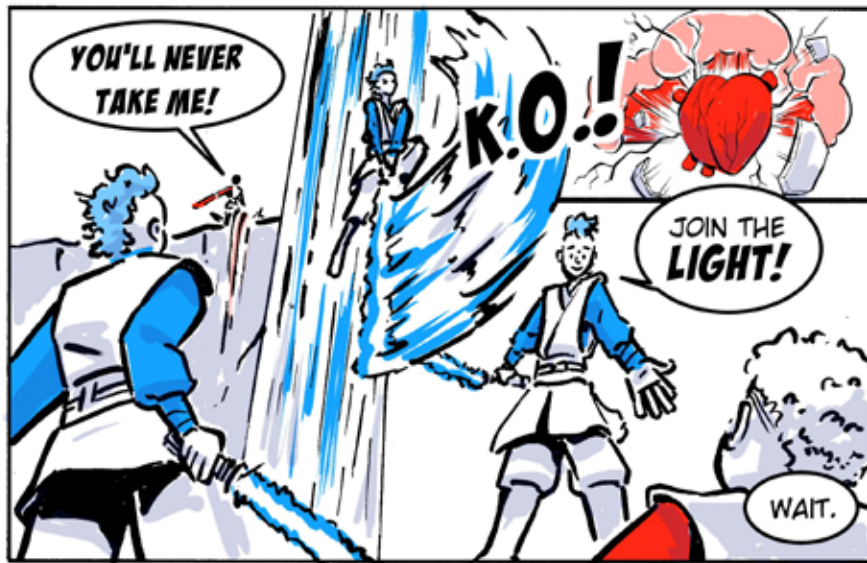
Abide. The fruit is going to be glorious. YT



"'Made New' is about the quiet witness of the Christian life. How God can use that quiet witness to chip away at a 'heart of stone' which He'll replace with a 'heart of flesh' (Eze. 36:26)."







BORROWED LANGUAGE TO THANK MY DEAREST FRIEND

by Rachel Moes

As Moses raised the serpent up
so God's own Son was lifted high.
Alas! My Saviour Jesus bled,
my Sovereign Lord did die.
His sacred head was wounded, scorned,
with grief and shame weighed down;
the Man of Sorrows mocked, despised,
with thorns his only crown.
From his dear head and hands and feet
such love and sorrow flowed.
How deep the Father's love for me!
What mercy he bestowed!
Amazing pity, boundless grace,
and love beyond all measure:
My Jesus tasted death's cold sting
to make a wretch his treasure.

What language shall I borrow?
MY words a gift too small
to thank my dear Redeemer
who gave his life, his all.
My finest phrasing can't suffice
to bless my matchless King.
"Crown him with many crowns!"
I join the angel choirs to sing.
"All blessing, honour, thanks and praise!"
repeats my grateful heart
while, echoing the saints of old,
I cry, "How great Thou art!" YT



I have been blessed throughout the course of my life with an exposure to – and love of – sacred hymnary. I've rephrased beautiful, meaningful Easter hymns to express my deep gratitude for Christ's sacrifice.

BECAUSE by Doug Vandenberg

What if you were rich as you could be?
You owned everything, far as the eye could see.
You loved to share these riches with a friend,
of your generosity there was no end.

They ate with you, the best delights;
they walked and talked with you day and night.
They shared in all your pleasures,
had free access without measure.

But there was one thing you told them they
couldn't touch.
Such a little thing. It wasn't much.
But if they touched it, it would be the end;
you could no longer be considered friends.

How would you feel if they couldn't resist?
They considered this one thing that they missed,
more important than all their delights;
so, they touched it. Gave up all their rights.

How would you respond to betrayal like this?
Like the betrayal of the Judas kiss.
Would you find a way to make amends?
Would you lay down your life to again be friends?

What a wonder such a sacrifice would be;
it would be beyond the comprehension of me.
Yet this very thing has taken place,
a mightier than all the human race.

Laid down His life to redeem His own.
Came to earth from His heavenly throne.
Came so redemption He could give,
Gave His life, so we could live.

Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find.
Do not continue to be stubbornly blind.
Take this gift so that you may say
I've received the unimaginable gift this day.

I've received the greatest gift of all.
I've been rescued from my awful fall.
Now I live as one set free,
because my Redeemer died for me.

Genesis 2:15 to Genesis 3:2-12,15
Matthew 7:7,8
John 3:16,17
Romans 5:6
Romans 6:18,22
1 Corinthians 15:21 YT

*When thoughts cross my mind.
That turn into rhyme. I feel I
need to write it because some-
one needs to hear it. I usually
feel it's not my creation. I just
retell what the Bible already
says. I feel honored when
anyone wishes to publish my
poetry, and always hope that it
will benefit the reader.*



While this is by Tyler Bouman, it was submitted by his mother Jenny, who shared, "This poem was written and given to us by our son Tyler when my mother passed away. It is very meaningful!"

THE RING

by Tyler Bouman

He looks down at his wrinkled fingers
 Thumbs the gold band wrapped around it
 His wedding ring
 71 years ago the church bells rang
 Then her father gave her hand to him
 And they cherished many years of love
 Now it was his turn
 To return to the church
 To give her away as the bride again
 Back to her Father
 The bells will ring again
 A funeral and a wedding
 Full circle, like a ring on a finger
 A symbol of endless love YT

SONNET FOR AN UNKNOWN GOD – ACTS 17

by Ariel Vis

I saw an altar, nameless, cold, and bare,
 With faded letters signed "The Unknown God."
 A feeling dark and lonesome lingered there,
 A shadow of a faith unsure and flawed.
 The other gods put claim to name and shrine,
 Majestic in the grandeur they command.
 Their temples rise in grace, designed divine,
 Their altars calling – none could dare withstand.
 I kneel, a fool, and whisper my thin prayer,
 But weight descends and I can scarcely breathe.
 I wish to live and find a breath of air,
 And yet I seem to sense his rage beneath.
 I pray to emptiness, though none replies,
 As anguished, I reach up to vacant skies. YT



This work was inspired by Acts 17, where Paul came to Athens and noticed an altar with the inscription, "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." This piece is a work of fiction, set before Paul's visit, taking place in the mind of an Athenian who is in serious doubt of the gods that he has grown up with.

THE DAY IS NOT AN AGE

Billions of years don't fit with the Bible

BY MARK SANDERCOCK

When my daughter was young, I introduced her to sketching and how to use colored pencils to enhance her drawings. She continued to practice and develop her technique until now, as a young woman, her skill has far exceeded my ability to draw. After examining one of her drawings of a horse – so real that its muzzle looks soft to the touch – one would never believe that she just randomly chose a few colored pencils, blindly allowing them to contact the paper in random strokes.

Yet, this is how some Christians attempt to reconcile the historical account of Creation, the world of order and beauty recorded in Genesis 1-2, and the “fact” claimed by secular scientists that everything in the world around us is the product of random processes, occurring without a plan, over a very long period of time.

WHAT IF WE STRETCH THE DAYS?

There are good reasons to believe that God did create everything in six, literal 24-hour days (Gen. 1:1–31). However, some people feel the need to interpret each “day” in Genesis 1 as symbolic of millions or even billions of years, because Science tells us that the universe was created by the Big Bang, that the Solar System and our Earth formed out of the chaos of this unique explosion, and that all life came about through the random processes of Evolution. This attempt to reconcile the Bible with science is called the Day Age Theory because it posits that each “day” in Genesis 1 represents an “age” that is millions or billions of years long.

The problem with the Day Age Theory is that it contradicts the Biblical narrative.

This theory assumes that the reigning cosmological theory for the origin and history of the universe – from the Big

Bang to the evolution of all life on Earth – must be correct because it is proven by Science. However, the Day Age Theory does not reconcile scientific belief with the events described in Genesis 1 because the order of events in Big Bang cosmology are completely different from those given in the Bible.

For example, Genesis asserts that:

- the Earth was formed (on Day 1) before the Sun and stars (Day 4),
- plants were formed (on Day 3) before the Sun (Day 4).

Secular scientists, on the other hand, claim that:

- over 4 billion years ago the Sun formed first from a collapsing solar nebula, followed by the planets, including Earth,
- plant life only began to colonize the land around 450 million years ago.

The Day Age Theory is, therefore, at odds with the Biblical account and so it does nothing to reconcile the historical account in Genesis with scientific opinion.

HISTORY CAN BE SYMBOLIC TOO BECAUSE GOD WRITES IT

The Literary Framework Hypothesis dispenses with the need to harmonize the “facts” of scientific cosmology with the Biblical narrative by teaching that the Biblical account is not intended to be taken as a chronological history but as a figurative, poetic narrative that teaches that God is the creator of all things. This notion that the Biblical narrative is allegory or poetry stems from a perceived parallel structure between Days 1-3 and Days 4-6.

Beginning with Genesis 1:2, which describes the cosmos as “formless and void,” this argument contends that Days 1-3 create the “form” and Days 4-6 fill the “void.” However, as Dr. Noel Weeks has pointed out, “even though there is no logical reason why the presence of a structure should prove that a passage is not to be taken literally, this idea seems to have great emotive appeal.”



Just as the process of constructing a building follows an ordered process – site preparation, laying the foundation, erecting the framework, etc. – the process of creating the universe will also be structured and not chaotic. Therefore, the presence of a structure in the creation narrative actually supports the fact that this is a record of a real historical and creative event that occurred over six literal days.

In addition, parallel literary structures are also found elsewhere in the Bible, such as in the historical narratives contained in Exodus and the gospel of Matthew. For example, in Matthew 2, Jesus took a journey into Egypt and was led back into Israel, fulfilling the prophesy that “out of Egypt I called my son,” which parallels the nation of Israel being led out of Egypt by

the Spirit of God, with pillars of fire and smoke going before them (Ex. 13:17-22). Also, the people who came out of Egypt passed through the waters of the Red Sea (Ex. 14), which Paul describes as passing through the waters of baptism into Moses to be identified as God’s people (1 Cor. 10:1-4), and which parallels Jesus passing through the baptismal waters and being identified as God’s Son (Matt. 3:13-17).

Many other parallels could be listed, making it evident that parallel structure in a narrative does not indicate that the text is allegorical. Rather, it demonstrates God’s involvement in history.

As with the examples of historical parallels described above, historical events and objects may also have spiritual significance. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, points

out the error of assuming that because something described in Scripture has spiritual significance it could not exist as a “visible and material object.” He writes:

It is arbitrary to suppose that there could not have been a material paradise, just because it can be understood also in a spiritual significance... [in that same way it is arbitrary to suppose that] there was no rock from which water flowed when Moses struck it, just because it can be interpreted in a symbolic sense, as prefiguring Christ; which is how the same Apostle takes it when he says, ‘Now the rock was Christ’ [cf. Ex. 17:6; Numbers 20:11; 1 Cor. 10:4].”



Grand Canyon formed gradually?

If you assume that “all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation” then the Grand Canyon’s depth and size, and the small river running through it would all be evidence of it being formed over tens and hundreds of thousands of years. But the Bible speaks of things being different in the past than they are today, with a worldwide Flood and its enormous volume of water able to carve out much more quickly what would take a small river eons to do.



The Sun or Earth: which came first?

Secular science says that the Sun came before the Earth, and the Bible says the opposite. So who are you going to believe?

In the same way, states Augustine, one may attribute symbolic significance to the Tree of Life (*cf.* Gen. 2:9, 3:33; Prov. 3:18; Rev. 2:7, 22:2) and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil – even the entire garden paradise of Eden: “There is no prohibition against such exegesis,” says Augustine, “provided that we also believe in the truth of the story as a faithful record of historical fact.”

JESUS TAUGHT THAT GENESIS WAS LITERAL

The Bible clearly teaches that humans did not evolve but were created, first man and then woman. Dr. Weeks asserted that Genesis 1 is to be understood literally, stating that

“a number of passages which refer to the original creation of man and woman and their relationship may be considered together (Matt.19:4; 1 Cor. 11:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:13-14). Note that the account is taken literally and made the basis of teaching on the relation of man and woman. Even if in only this point we take issue with evolutionary theory we find ourselves in complete antithesis to naturalistic evolution.”

The gospels contain several examples of Jesus referring to the events recorded in Genesis as real history.

- When speaking of the prophets who had been martyred by the Jews, Jesus refers to Abel as the first martyr and Zechariah as the last (Luke 11:48–51, Matt. 23:49–51).
- In Matthew 19:5–6 (and Mark 10:7), Jesus quotes Genesis 2:24 to clarify that marriage is between one man and one woman: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and

be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Jesus uses the real history of Genesis to explain the basis of the marriage covenant.

- Finally, Jesus tells us that His return will bring judgement on everyone in the world in the same way God judged all people in Noah’s day. In Luke 17:26–27, Jesus says that “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all” (also Matt. 24:36–44). The world-wide flood recorded in Genesis 6–9 was a real event, and so Jesus expects His listeners to believe that the final judgement will be just as real.

Still, some people are tempted to believe that God used millions of years to create because the Bible says that, “with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Pet. 3:8).

However, we need to look at the context of this statement. The whole passage says, “But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” Peter is not writing about long ages of creation but about the Lord’s willingness to wait patiently so that every person has an opportunity to repent and restore their relationship with God. Peter is repeating the same illustration that he used in his first letter where God

waited patiently so that people would have every opportunity to repent and be saved “when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared” (1 Pet. 3:20). Even with the help of his sons and hired men, it would have taken Noah many years to build and provision a ship as large as the ark and so those aware of Noah’s project would have had a long time to come to repentance. In other words, God is more than willing to wait a long time so as not to lose anyone (Eze. 18:23).

GRADUALISTIC ASSUMPTIONS TOOK HOLD

While there were exceptions, in the late-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, scientists seemed to readily accept the Genesis account of a global flood, concluding that it was responsible for the Earth’s geology, including the creation of fossils.

But by the end of the eighteenth century the majority of scientists began to favor a more “naturalistic” view of geology, no longer seeing a need for their ideas to fit with the Biblical account of Creation nor its account of watery catastrophe on a global scale. This naturalistic geology relied on slow and gradual processes, such as the laying down of layers of sediment to form layers of rock. Physician James Hutton, considered the father of contemporary geology, stated that the natural forces we observe shaping the Earth in the present also operated in the past, slowly and gradually over long periods of time.

In his treatise on the subject, *Theory of the Earth*, Hutton says that “in examining things present, we have data from which to reason with regard to what has been..., therefore, we are to examine the construction of the present earth, in order to understand the natural operations of time past.” Hutton writes that such slow and

gradual processes occurred on Earth “for millions of ages.” Hutton’s gradualist, or uniformitarian, views were later popularized by Charles Lyell in his three-volume work titled *Principles of Geology*. And it was the acceptance of slow and gradual geological processes that provided Charles Darwin with the long-ages required for his theory of biological Evolution, *Origin of Species*, published in 1859.

This dramatic shift in scientific thought, currently held by many scientists today, was the antithesis of the Biblical account of Creation contained in Genesis 1. Thus, the Day Age Theory was invented in an attempt to reinterpret the days of Creation as symbolic of the “deep-time” required for the Big Bang and biological Evolution required by scientific thinking.

God foreknew that people would invoke ideas like uniformitarianism to deny the historicity of the global Flood and bring doubt concerning the final judgment of the world:

“Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, *all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.*’ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished” (emphasis added; 2 Pet. 3:3-6).

Thus, it should come as no surprise that, rejecting the Creation account in Genesis 1, scientists claim that the Universe formed 15 billion years ago after the Big Bang, and the geology of the Earth was formed by slow, gradual processes over millions of years, and that life evolved over millions of years. When we are encouraged by scientists to believe that the universe was created over billions of years, and that life evolved over millions of years, we are being asked to doubt God’s Word. Logically, once the beginning of the Bible is called into question, we will also begin to doubt everything else written in the Bible as well.

DID GOD REALLY SAY?

Hearing ideas that may cause us to doubt God’s Word is not a new phenomenon; in fact, sowing seeds of doubt was the first ploy used by Satan to deceive humanity. It was not long after God created a world that was “very good” and placed the first couple in the Garden that Satan came along and tempted them to doubt God’s word. We read in Genesis 3:1 that “[Satan] said to the woman, ‘Did God really say...’” In this way Satan caused the woman to doubt God’s goodness, convincing her that God does not really mean what He says.

Some people do not want to believe in a God Who will hold them to account for their thoughts and actions. They do not want to acknowledge that they are sinful – that they disobey God – and that the only way to restore a right relationship with God is through repentance and belief in Jesus, God’s Son, Who died to redeem them and was raised from the dead (Rom. 10:9). Nor do they want to believe that Jesus will come again to judge each one of us.

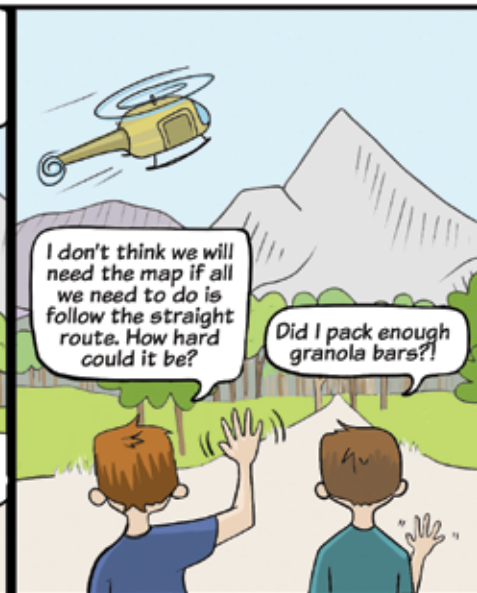
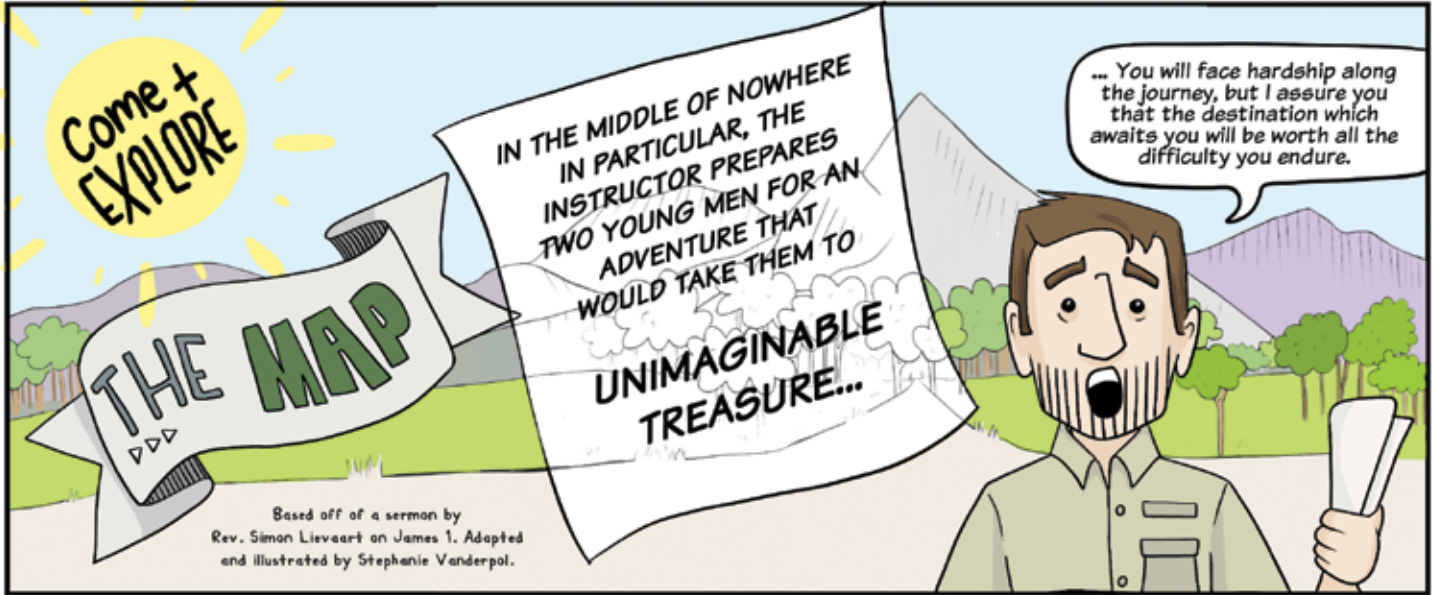
As a result, they make up their own stories about how the world began so that they can write God out of history, pretending He does not exist. The apostle Paul wrote that some people would deny God and create their own stories: “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). We are living in such a time and Big Bang cosmology and Evolution are those myths. When Satan uses the authority of science to cast doubt on God’s Word – “Did God really say...He created the heavens and the earth in six days?” – remember how Satan deceived Adam and the woman in the garden, which had devastating consequences. RP

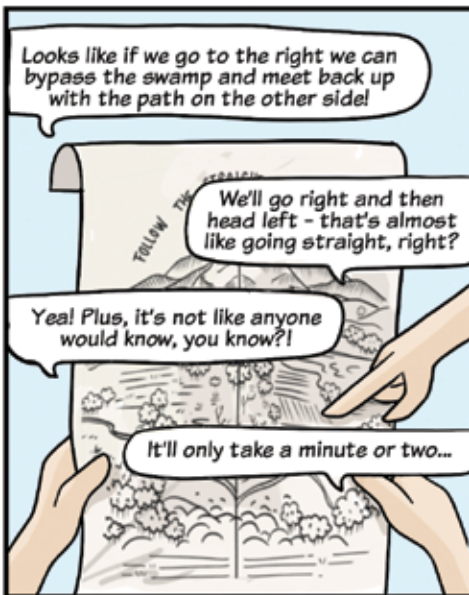
Dr. Mark Sandercock is a retired forensic chemist who worked for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the author of “Foundation: A Biblical Worldview.” This is an abridged extract from Chapter 4. His book is available on Amazon.

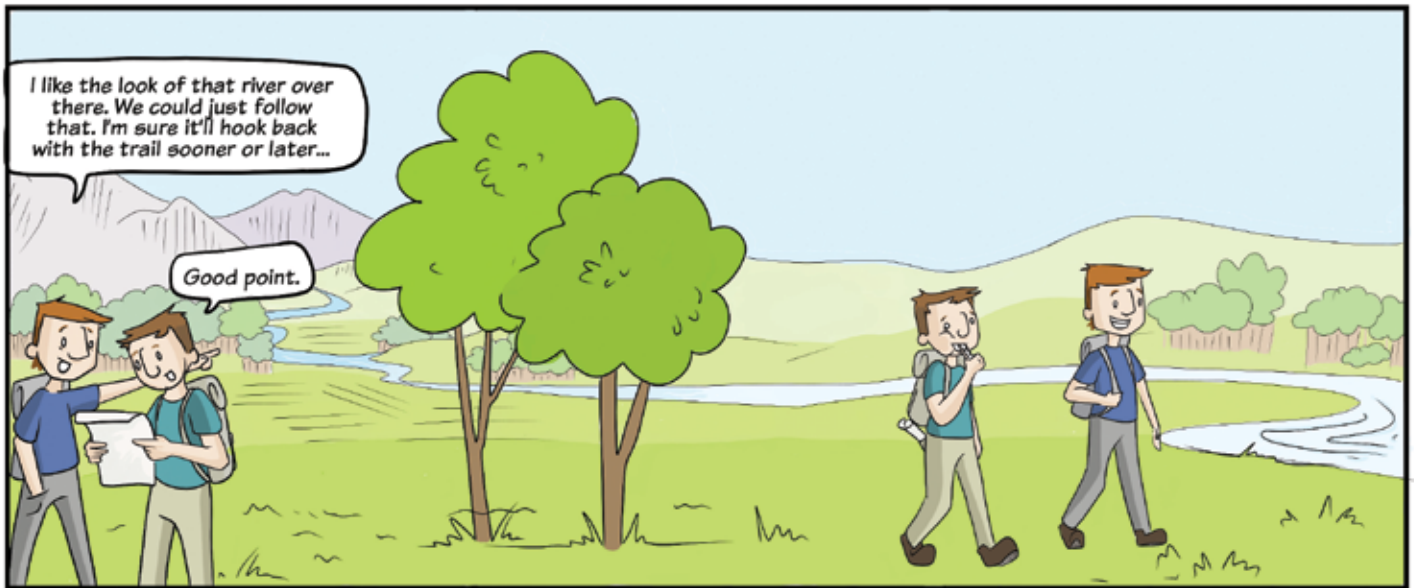
3 ATTEMPTS AT MAKING THE BIBLE FIT BILLIONS OF YEARS

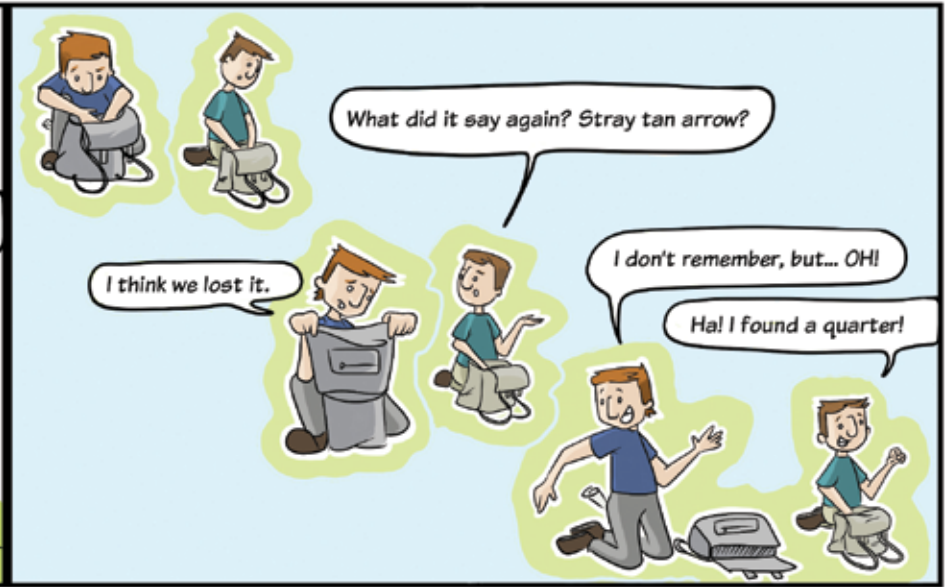
There are several theories that attempt to reconcile the Biblical creation narrative with a belief in Big Bang cosmology and Evolution over millions and billions of years. The three common theories are:

- The **Day Age Theory** claims that God used the Big Bang and millions of years of Evolution to create the universe and all life on Earth. Progressive Creationism, and Theistic Evolution are other theories that share similar tenets with the Day Age Theory.
- The **Literary Framework Hypothesis** argues that the first 11 chapters of Genesis (Creation to the post-Flood Tower of Babel) are not literal history but are merely figurative or symbolic stories (i.e., poetry, allegory, and parable) written only to teach us theological truths.
- The **Gap Theory**, popularized by the Scottish Scofield Study Bible first published in 1909, claims that there is a gap of billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. It was during this gap that the universe formed 14 billion years ago, the Solar System coalesced 5 billion years ago, and life began to evolve on Earth over millions of years. This theory asserts that Satan’s rebellion against God caused a universal cataclysm that wiped out the entire creation, depositing fossils in the rock strata but leaving the Earth “void and formless” as described in Genesis 1:2. God then re-created the Earth, re-populating it with plant life that had survived the cataclysm, and so on. RP









distant whirr of the helicopter going away

Uh oh.

Uh... where did we put that map?

I fear it's too late...

THE MAP IS IN YOUR POSSESSION!

What if I told you that every household actually OWNS this map? You most likely look at it every day! Sometimes it's there in your hands, other times it's collecting dust on a shelf, but it is safe to say that every household within our Reformed community has this map. And yet, it's not enough to just own it. You must take decisive action and follow it! Just like it's not enough to just hear your mom when she asks you to clean up your room. You must follow her instructions, get off the couch, make your way to your room and clean it - in obedience.

Every one of us, adults included (!) are prone to wandering from the correct path, the straight and narrow. It's easy to be swayed by the temptations of the world, or even the desires of our own heart (let us never forget that the heart is deceitful above all things! Jeremiah 17:9). But the path is made very clear to us. By God, by our parents, by the teachers at school. Follow the straight and narrow! God didn't make it complicated for us: Repent from your sins and put your faith in Jesus! Follow his commandments in thanksgiving; you will not be harmed in doing so!

The young men in this story followed their own desires after seeing that the straight and narrow would lead them through difficult circumstances. Instead of persevering through the trial (James 1), they took the "easy" way out. Only, following their own eyes led them so, so, far away from where they would have received treasure unimaginable. Let us all commit our lives back to the straight and narrow! To love God with all our hearts, souls and minds and to love our neighbor as ourselves, to repent of our sins (not just acknowledging we make mistakes), and putting our faith in Jesus - even if it means getting our shoes wet!

" ANYONE WHO LISTENS TO THE WORD BUT DOES NOT DO WHAT IT SAYS IS LIKE SOMEONE WHO LOOKS AT HIS FACE IN A MIRROR AND, AFTER LOOKING AT HIMSELF, GOES AWAY AND IMMEDIATELY FORGETS WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE. "

JAMES 1: 23-24

PONDER WHAT IT MEANS

1. How is the map a picture of God's Word?
2. Where do we see evidence in the Bible of people doing what is right in their own eyes? What happened?
3. What's an area in your life where you are straying from the straight and narrow? How can you get back on the path?
4. Ask your parents: Can you give me an example of when you have seen your faith grow through hardship?
5. Considering that God is merciful and yet also just, what do you think should happen next? Talk about it with your parents!

IN A NUTSHELL

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY JON DYKSTRA

ANOTHER REASON EVERYONE SHOULD STUDY ECONOMICS

A story is told about an old man who was called silly names by the neighborhood kids and he couldn't get them to stop. Then he hit on an idea. The next day, when the children gathered around him, shouting their taunts, he told them that next week he was going to pay them to insult him – if they came on Tuesday, four days later, he would give them each a dollar to shout their insults. They agreed, and the immediate impact was that the children stopped hassling him – it seemed they were saving up their insults. Then, come Tuesday, the man did as he promised, giving each of the little bullies a dollar for shouting insults at him. Then he announced that he'd pay them the next day too, but just 50 cents each.

Wednesday they all gathered again, threw their insults, and were given their 50 cents. Afterwards the man announced that he'd only pay them a penny for their insults tomorrow. "A penny?" the ringleader complained, "that's not even worth it." And they never taunted the man again.

Source: adapted from Michael Hodgins' "1001 More Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking"

DO YOU LIKE BEING CORRECTED? DAVID DID.

We're supposed to love correction. Not throw a fit in response to it, or even stoically accept it. No, we're supposed to *love* it. Proverbs 9:8 is just one of the texts where God makes this point:

*Don't reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you.
Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.*

God tells us that reproof is, in fact, a sign that He loves us: "whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives" (Heb. 12:6). This verse makes good sense to any parent – it's a lot easier to *not* discipline our kids, to just let it go this time (and the next, and the time after that), but if we love them, then we want to teach them what's wrong and right, and that will necessarily involve reproof of some sort.

Still, "love correction" is a hard command to follow, so it struck me when I came across King David's response to the prophet Nathan's rebuke. As you'll recall, Nathan came to David after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, and murdered her husband to cover it up (2 Samuel 11-12). Nathan came with condemnation, and a curse. Though David confessed his guilt, Nathan informed the king that the LORD would kill the child that he had conceived with Bathsheba. And the child did die.

We would all understand it if David didn't think all that kindly of Nathan after that. But, despite his great sins, David was still a man of God, and he shows this in his response to Nathan's

reproof. In 1 Chronicles 3:5 we read that, of the four sons David had with Bathsheba, *one was named Nathan!* Here, then, is a man who was reproofed and, at least in this instance, seemed to have loved the messenger who brought him that correction.

PRESUPPOSITIONS

When a little boy asked his grandfather whether he'd been on the ark with Noah, his grandfather had to laugh, and assured the boy that no, he had not been on the ark.

"But grandpa," the boy asked, "then why didn't you drown?"

WHEN JOHN MACARTHUR VISITED A PHILOSOPHY CLASS...

We, as Christians, are called to walk humbly (Micah 6:8). But let's not get confused about who or what we are being humble about. It's us, *not* God.

That's a point worth pausing on. We so often get things wrong and muddled, so we have good reason to be humble. But not about God or His Word. Yet, somehow, there are all sorts of topics the Bible is crystal clear on that we're still acting quite "humbly" about, reluctant to speak up in His Name. It's time to get confident. For inspiration, here's a story from the late John MacArthur. This is a man who'd proclaim God's Truth just as boldly sitting across from a newscaster as he would standing up in a pulpit, but the point here isn't his *example*, but his *basis* – he had God's Word.

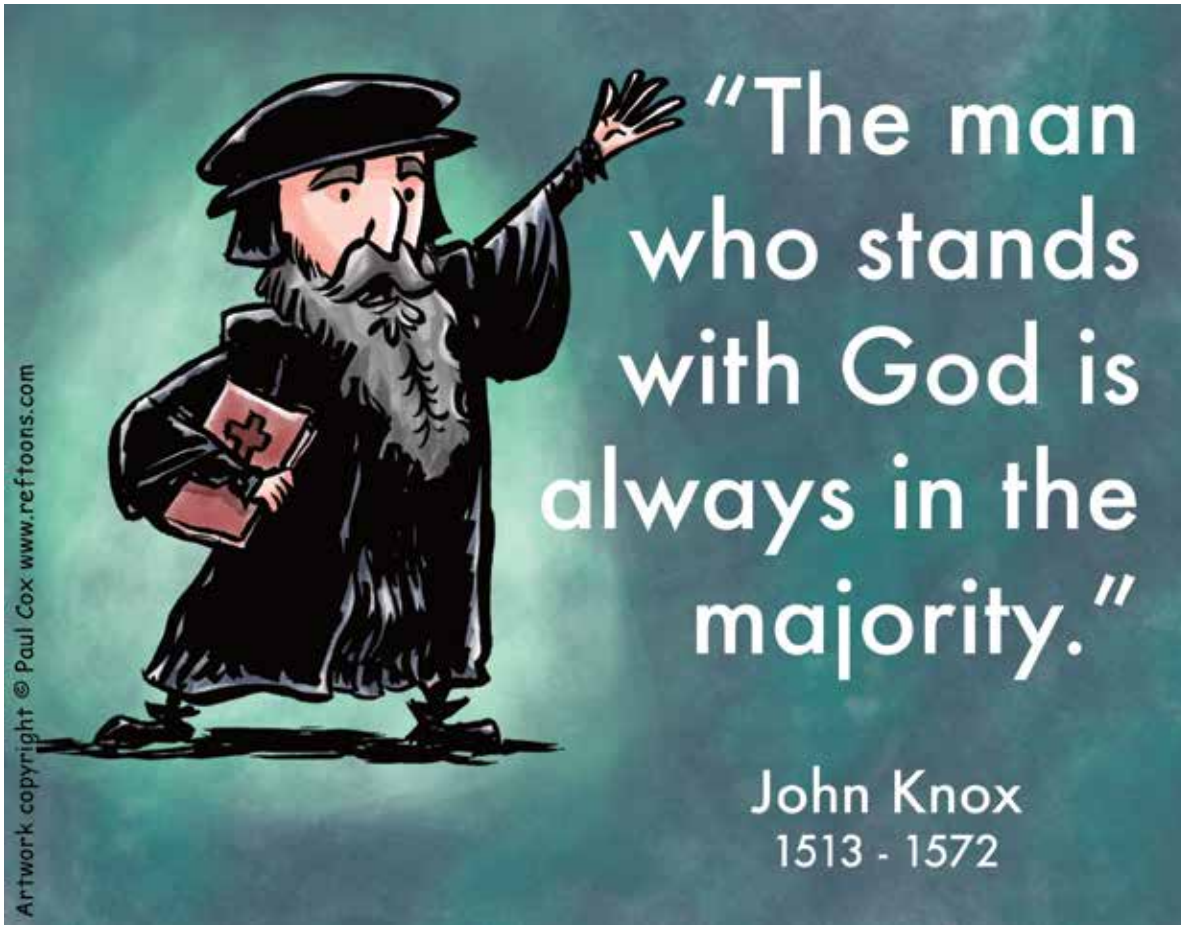
"As a Christian, you and I share this in common: I see things clearly. I see the world clearly. In fact, I often wonder why I'm not on more programs giving the right answer to everything. It's all very clear to me. Everything is clear to me. I understand where the world came from, where it's going. I understand all of that. I understand why things happen the way they happen. I understand life and death and life after death and heaven and hell and morality and immorality. I understand it all. I understand why the world is the way it is. Why people act the way they act. Am I particularly intelligent? No. Am I particularly wise? No. I just have the mind of Christ here in this book.

"I remember one time, years ago, being invited to Cal State Northridge to speak to the philosophy class and the professor was a former rabbi who liked to chew on an occasional fundamentalist. And so, I was going to be the bone for that experience. I went to the class and I was supposed to talk on the subject of Christianity and culture. Well, I didn't want to talk about Christianity and culture. I wanted to talk about the gospel. I think I opened by saying, something like,

'...I know this is a philosophy class, and I know that you're searching for the truth, and I'm here to bring your search to an end.'

"That was enough to lose them all. They looked like somebody had shot off a gun in the room. So, I said:

'I'm here to tell you the truth. Tell you the truth about the origin of the universe. Tell you the truth about why the universe holds together. Things that Einstein couldn't figure



out. I'm here to tell you where the universe is going in the future, how it will end. I'm here to tell you about life and death and the afterlife, morality, everything you want to know. I'm here to tell you all of it.'

"And when I said this, the rabbi professor was as stunned as everybody else.

"I said, 'But no matter what I say, you're not going to understand it and you're not going to believe it.'

"And one student at that moment spoke for all of them and said, 'How do you know? How do you know we won't understand it? We won't believe it?'

"I said, 'Because there's a prerequisite. For you to understand this, you have to have been transformed by faith in Jesus Christ so that your understanding is opened.'

"To which he replied, 'Well, how does that happen?'

"And I said, 'Good. Now we'll talk about how you become transformed by Jesus Christ.'

"And so I went into the gospel, which was no small irritation to the professor. I remember an extended time of sharing the gospel with some of the students out in the hall after the class was over. A number of them came to church and a couple of them actually joined our ministry here and professed Christ. The Word brings light to absolutely everything."

BIG BROTHER CAN'T BE FATHER OR MOTHER

"We fear the government may be powerful enough to destroy families; we know that it is not powerful enough to replace them." – Ronald Reagan

BERRA-ISMS

Major league player and coach Yogi Berra had quite the way with words. Here are a few of his most famous "Berra-isms," with wisdom to be found, if you're willing to ponder.

- It ain't over 'til it's over.
- If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there.
- Ninety percent of the game is half mental.
- You can observe a lot by watching.
- When you come to a fork in the road, take it.
- If you can't imitate him, don't copy him.

ARE WE CONSERVATIVES?

Dave Rubin, Douglas Murray, and the *DailyWire's* Spencer Klaven are all self-described "gay conservatives," and how can that be? It's because "conservative" is a term that has meaning in *comparison*. So long as a position can be placed on a spectrum, there will always be liberal and conservative versions. If an anarchist wants to destroy all of Western Civilization, and I want to destroy only half of it, I would be the conservative anarchist. And if a couple of college ethics professors want to euthanize all disabled babies now, and I want to wait a few years, I am the conservative *eugenicist* in this conversation. In much the same way, conservative and gay go together just fine too.

That's why God's people need to understand that if we want to express our loyalties clearly, we need to come out as *Christians*, not conservatives. Conservative Christians even, but not simply conservatives.

SHOWING AND TELLING

A half dozen writing tips that highlight what's to be done, and how not to do it.

- Don't use a big word where diminutive verbiage will suffice.
- Check carefully to see if you any words out.
- Avoid clichés like the plague.
- It's generally a good idea to be specific.
- Colorful, vivid, descriptive, multi-layered adjectives are overdone.
- Don't re-use the same words. Use different words. Other words.

NEVER READ A BIBLE VERSE

Mark Twain once quipped that a cat that's sat on a hot stove will never do so again... but he'll never sit on a cold one either. In other words, that the lesson the cat learned had been applied broadly, even to circumstances where it isn't warranted.

That notion – that we shouldn't overlearn our lessons – has biblical backing. God regularly tells us to do one thing in one place, and nearly the opposite elsewhere. The starkest contrast is Proverbs 26:4-5, where God begins with why we *shouldn't* answer a fool (lest we appear like him), before, in the very next verse, telling us why we *must* answer a fool (lest he appear wise in his own eyes). So when should you do which? That's where wisdom is required.

Another contrast? Solomon's advice to be like the hard-working ant who diligently plans ahead (Prov. 6:6-8), and Jesus' encouragement not to be anxious about tomorrow (Matt. 6:25-34). Contradictions? Not at all – just different lessons for different circumstances. Solomon's advice was for the lazy,

CROSSWORD SOLUTION JULY-AUGUST

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and Jesus' correction was to those fixated on the here and now rather than on God.

So don't be like Twain's cat who let one incident shape its whole understanding. God gave us a Book, not just a verse, so we should be sure to never read just a Bible verse – read His Word in the context of what else God thought it important for us to know.

IF DAD TOLD ONLY DINOSAUR JOKES - PART II

- How can you tell a dinosaur from a peanut? Try lifting it up. If you can't, it's probably a dinosaur. (Though it might be a heavy peanut.)
- What's red, has a long neck, and hates to be touched? A dinosaur with sunburn.
- What do you do with a green dinosaur? Wait until it ripens.
- What do you do with a blue dinosaur? Cheer him up.
- What do you do with a white dinosaur? Try not to lose him in the snow.
- Why did the dinosaur cross the road? It was the chicken's day off.
- What's the difference between a dinosaur and a cup of coffee? A dinosaur doesn't keep you awake at night. (Usually.)
- How are dinosaurs and bluebirds alike? They both have wings. Except for the dinosaurs.
- What's the difference between a dinosaur and a pencil? A dinosaur is harder to sharpen.

Source: inspired by, and some borrowed from, Charles Keller's "Colossal Fossils: Dinosaur Riddles"

HOW HE LEARNED HE NEEDED TO PREACH MARK 2:28

Some years ago, on an early Sunday morning, a young Dutch pastor faced a quandary. A snowstorm had closed the roads between his house and the church and there seemed no way he could make it there to preach. But then he had an idea. The canal running behind his house went right to the church, so he could still make it there if he skated.

But was that a good idea? Bringing the Word was important; however his church was very firm on Sunday observance, and skating was simply not an acceptable Sunday activity.

He hemmed and hawed before finally deciding that if it was at all possible, he just had to conduct worship. So the pastor strapped on his skates, and though the wind was howling, he managed to speedily make his way down the frozen canal right to the church building.

When he walked up the steps, he saw the congregation was already in place, and as he stepped in the door, the consistory was there waiting for him, grim expressions all. The elders weren't pleased, but they liked their young pastor and weren't eager to publicly rebuke him. So after some hurried discussion among the men, one elder asked the pastor a question: "Did you enjoy the skating, reverend?"

"No," he replied, "I didn't enjoy it at all."

"Phew!" the consistory said as one. It was all right – skating on Sunday could be allowed, just so long as there was no joy in it!

Source: adapted from Michael Hodgin's "1001 More Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking"

Geek Out

There's something you care about deeply.

And if it's worth caring about—music, investing, coding, agriculture, sports, comedy—it's worth doing well.

Pursue it wholeheartedly. Dig deep. Find people who share your curiosity. In the process, grow.

At Dordt University, we want you to go deeper, but also grow wider. Gain knowledge and garner wisdom. Become someone receptive to God's calling in your life.

Christ is making all things new. Join Him in that calling at Dordt University.



DORDT
UNIVERSITY

Sioux Center, Iowa

Until All Is Made New



VIBRANT CLUBS ON CAMPUS

Gaming Guild
Capital Management Club
Astronomy Club
Improv Group
Ag Club
Production Arts Team
Cattle Management Club
Trapshooting Club



Schedule a Campus Visit

LOG OUT. LOOK UP.

RP'S 10-DAY SCREEN-FAST CHALLENGE

to free us from distraction and get us exploring God's creation



LET'S DO IT TOGETHER!

We can all join RP's July 13-22, nation-wide 10-day screen-fast challenge

If the idea of going 10 days without your screens and social media gives you the kriebels, then doesn't that show how badly you need to sign up? Take up the challenge, and recruit a friend or two (or 20) to come alongside to remember what life was like without our devices. It's a reset, that can provide a fresh opportunity to very deliberately decide how you and your family want to use your phones and screens going forward.

And for a little extra motivation, **you can help others, even as you're helping yourself**. Two businesses are happy to make a donation – to be split between *Reformed Perspective* and *Word & Deed* – that would be the amount of \$10 for every day from July 13- 22 that you successfully go without your screens (to a maximum of \$20,000). Go all 10 days, and that's \$100. Manage just 8, and that's still \$80. Go just 1 or 2 and that's still \$10 or \$20... and an important insight into dependency. So challenge yourself. How long can you go?

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



DETAILS

- Sign up at the link above. Then put your screens aside July 13-22, 2026.
- Allow your own exceptions (like if you need a computer or your smartphone for your work) but note them down.
- There are no age limits: kids and seniors can fast no less than teens and young-adults.
- Find an accountability person who is willing to check in with you to make sure you see this through.

TIPS TO HELP YOU FAST

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

“What can I do?” Part II

35 more screen-alternatives

by Mark Penninga and Jon Dykstra

For our first screen-fast in 2025, we offered up 35 ideas for great activities you and your family can do with your screen-free moments, minutes, hours, and days. As we get set for another fast, we have another opportunity to make a course-correction in our lives when it comes to where our hearts, minds, and eyes are directed. We’re back with 35 more activities, including some ideas from people who did the screen-fast last summer.

But first, let’s start with one of their testimonials on why it is worth taking the screen-fast plunge:

What follows are 35 suggestions, gathered from RP readers and staff, for what you can do with all your extra screen-free time!



“I somewhat reluctantly signed up for the screen-fast as my wife and kids were participating, but reflecting on it now, I can see God’s hand working through them and the screen-fast.

“I spent more time reading the Bible and additional study material, and more time in prayer and reflection. I was able to think more clearly after the first few days as the cheap distraction of screens was gone. This gave me time and focus to think through issues at work which I’ve been contending with for around a year and come to difficult decisions there that I had perhaps been avoiding. My time was better spent in devotions, exercise, conversation, family activities, and time in God’s creation. I felt much better mentally, physically, and spiritually at the end of the ten days.

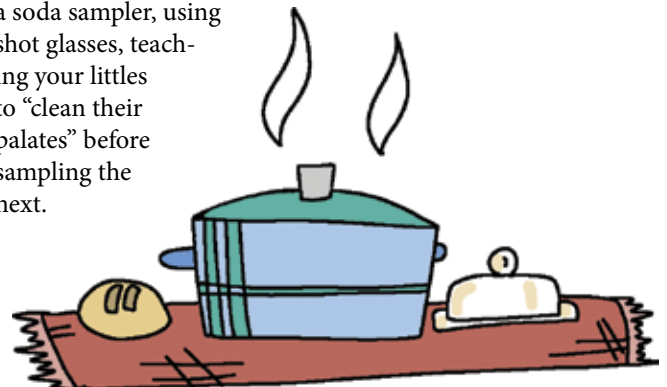
“I intend to do this screen-fast again in the future and strongly encourage anyone who has not done it to do so and aim to grow in service of our gracious God.”

MAKE GOD FIRST

- **Bible-in-a-year is easier** – “My husband and I also had more time to work on our ‘Bible-in-a-year’ readings in the evenings as well as more time to journal and read some fiction.”
- **Devoted devotions** – “I started each day with devotions rather than reaching for my phone and therefore skipping devotions didn’t happen anymore.”
- **Remembering to pray** – “Helped to remind me to pray every time I went to tap an ‘earbud.’”

BREAK, AND BAKE, BREAD

- **Rediscover dinner** – “We had meals at the kitchen table instead of in the living room while watching YouTube.”
- **Hold a tasting party** – It doesn’t need to be fancy. Kids could find it fun to make and sample 3 different kinds of mac ‘n cheese with a couple of different ketchups. Or have a soda sampler, using shot glasses, teaching your littles to “clean their palates” before sampling the next.





TWISTS ON READING A GOOD BOOK

- **Pay your kids to read what you want** – Some kids won't read, and others only read a certain sort of book. If you're spending thousands on Christian education, maybe a few hundred could be devoted to upgrading your children's summer reading by paying them to read the books you really want them reading. Maybe it's an old classic like *Pilgrim's Progress* (but be sure you have a copy with updated English) or a great Christian biography you loved. Would a couple bucks motivate them? Maybe a fiver? This wouldn't be a great idea long-term – we don't want them thinking reading is a job – but for the 10 days of the screen-fast maybe it'd be just right.
- **All together now** – Try reading a picture book together – maybe one by Mo Willems about Piggie and Gerald, but any heavy-on-dialogue book would do. Then assign each family member and friend a character. Give them a few moments to create the character's voice. Mom or dad can act the part of the narrator, and you are ready for a dramatic performance.
- **Library treasure hunt** – Pick an animal you want to know more about, and then head to the library to research all about it. Everyone needs to choose their own animal, read up, and present your findings in a few days. Best done with adult oversight, or when your kids are able to see through most nature books' evolutionary nonsense, and can see God's fingerprints evident in their new favorite critter.

LOVE THE NEIGHBOR NEXT TO YOU

- **Only head up in the room** – “Quite often if you're sitting in a waiting room, someone will strike up a conversation with you, because you're available and willing to talk. You may have an impact on someone else's day. Smile and give eye contact!”
- **Howdy!** – Go for a walk and talk, chatting up all the neighbors you meet.
- **Paint party** – Paint the opening question and answer of the Westminster or Heidelberg Catechisms on your garage door. Then spend extra time outside, with your head up, ready for any conversations that may come.
- **Outdoor games night** – Hold a games night on your front lawn and invite passersby to join in. Make sure they are simple short games, to make it easiest.

BE CONTAGIOUS

- **Show, don't tell** – “Over the days [my family that didn't join the screen fast] slowly joined me in some of my non-screen pursuits, doing jigsaw puzzles and chatting over cups of tea.” “We had family come for summer holidays, and they willingly partook (kids too)! Fishing and bike rides at 7 am rather than cartoons... win!”
- **Start a “What I wouldn't have seen” journal** – Every time a family member sees something they know they wouldn't have seen if they'd been on a screen, they should write it down in this journal. It may be quite the collection before the screen-fast is done!

ACTUALLY FIX THINGS

- **All-in hour** – Your honey-do list is getting long? Pick one hour each day for everyone to just get at whatever needs to be gotten. Dishes piling up? That door squeaking? It's so much more motivating to work, when no one can shirk.
- **One room at a time** – Each day, a different room. You're picking a target, not promising yourself perfection. So pick a room, get help, and get what you can done in a set amount of time. Then tomorrow, move on to the next room whether you're done this one or not.

GAMING TOGETHER

- **Race remote control cars** – “The quality time together was definitely better as we played cards, drove RCs at the park and made homemade cards.”
- **Rebound for your bro or sis** – “Our whole family did a lot more reading, board game playing, and shooting hoops.... I was impressed to see them doing Sudokus, reading, looking out the window, and playing cards with each other.”

EMBRACE THE BOREDOM

- **Be bored** – “My 10-year-old said that she found more space to be creative when the computer and TV was off.”



- **Tackle a “shower thought”** – It’s no wonder so many of us get our best ideas in the shower as there’s nothing else for our brain to do in there but think. Now don’t just think about it; use your extra time to turn an idea into reality.

ENJOY YOUR SPOUSE

- **Go on walks** – “It helped me reconnect with my wife. Instead of sitting on the couch consuming content in the evenings, we went for more walks and had more time to talk about what was going on.”
- **Go to bed at the same time** – It can be hard to connect if you’re falling asleep to a device. But if you turn off the distractions, you can tune into your spouse, and vice versa. “My best recommendation for others would be to eliminate phones from your bedroom. Reading my Bible nightly is

way more likely to happen when Instagram is more than a click away. That Christian influencer's advice might be insightful, but God's Word will not return empty (Is. 55:11).”

- **Wash the dishes together** – A dishwasher is a lovely thing, but it’s sweet teamwork when a couple divvies up the washing and drying. In our busy lives, this short time right after dinner is still usually open and available, not just to work, but to flirt.

CONNECT WITH THE KIDS

- **Backyard camping** – Pitch the tent, get out the flashlights, and if you can, get some s’mores made. And when it’s time to sleep, have dad or mom read a story, or share a childhood adventure.
- **Game-night marathon** – Play your kids’ favorite board or card game as many times in a row as they like, even into the wee hours of the night.

MORE PAINTING

- **Untouched canvas** – If your house has a big blank wall somewhere, do something about it. With some painter’s tape, line out, and then paint in, a humongous rectangular frame that you and your friends or family are now going to fill in with your own beautiful artistry.

Need more inspiration?

This being our second screen-fast, that means we have a whole other issue’s worth of inspiration you can tap into. Like this:

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

This is the article that started it all. Last year Marty VanDriel, along with obliging friends and family, screenfasted earlier than the rest of us so he could report back on the highs and lows, and share some tips on how to make it easier.



“WHAT CAN I DO ANYWAYS?” 35 screen-alternative ideas

If the 35 suggestions in this issue aren’t enough, then be sure to turn to the original article for 35 more! There’s going to be something here you can put to use.

ARE YOU STILL ABLE?

A nationwide challenge to experience life without screens

The original call to arms, highlighting why this isn’t just something you should do, but very likely something you and your family need to do, to put screens back in their place.



LESS SCREENS = MORE LIFE

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

After last year’s screenfast was over, we heard feedback from over 150 participants sharing how helpful and important this had been for them. And how hard as well.



On being smartphone-free for five years

by Shane Lems

Way back in the Fall of 2021, I ditched my iPhone and got a dumbphone. I was sick of how my smartphone was a major distraction in my life. My phone began to use up too much of my brain space and mental energy. Parts of my brain were always thinking about stuff on my phone: baseball scores, texts from friends, emails, my eBay store, a backpacking forum, and other similar things. Though I haven't ever done too much with social media or YouTube, I was still on my phone way too much. I tried apps that helped minimize screen time, and they did help to some extent. But I wanted to try a clean break and get a dumbphone.

GREAT ADVICE IS READILY AVAILABLE

By the way, it is pretty easy to try out a dumbphone. Most flip phones aren't terribly expensive, and you can often just swap SIM cards with your other phone. I started with a Nokia 6300. Then I got a CAT S22 flip phone and debloated it. I also tried out a \$25 TCL flip phone. More recently, I got a Light Phone II. Note: The book

Digital Minimalism by Cal Newport was a huge help in my move to a dumbphone. I highly recommend it! Jose Briones' book, *Low Tech Life* is also quite helpful. There are plenty of resources out there to help people minimize their phone usage because it is such a big problem.

Fast-forward to over four years later: I have not gone back to a smartphone. And I'm not planning on doing so in the near future. For me, life is better without a smartphone in most situations. I can hang out with my friends and family and be completely present with them – my phone isn't tugging at my attention. It's no longer on my mind at all. I can stand in line at a store and talk to people or just think about random things rather than stare at a phone out of boredom. I don't need email or a web browser when I'm at a baseball game, a movie, or out shopping for groceries. I still text a few times each day and make phone calls, but I'm pretty much never on it.

In fact, without a smartphone, my brain is less cluttered, my thoughts are less distracted, and my attention span has increased. I don't ever suffer from



dopamine withdrawal, and I'm not anxious or in a zombie-like state from doomscrolling for hours. And no longer does a smartphone affect my sleep. I have more time each day because I'm rarely on my phone. For me, minimal phone time has had maximum life benefits.

Speaking of anxiety and doomscrolling, another book I recently read is *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. It is a book that documents the rise of adolescent/teen anxiety, depression, and other mental issues in the last ten years or so. The reason for these increases, Haidt argues, is that most children in the last ten years have had a screen-based childhood rather than a play-based childhood. It's a good book for parents to read. The author's advice and my advice is this: don't get your kids a smartphone until they're older – I'd say 17 or 18.



As another author bluntly put it, don't get your kids a smartphone until you're prepared to deal with pornography in the home.

DUMBPHONES, FLIP PHONES, AND HELPFUL APPS

Now, I realize that some people with certain jobs might be unable to move to a dumbphone because of their work or travel. For example, a friend of mine is a dispatcher and his smartphone is crucial for him to get his job done well. If your phone is truly important for work, you could perhaps get a dumbphone for evenings and weekends. As I mentioned above, you can also find apps that help minimize your screen time. There are various tried-and-true ways to help you avoid excessive screen time and its associated negatives.


For those of you who don't absolutely need a smartphone for work or another

legitimate reason, I'd challenge you to do a digital detox and stop using one for a set number of days. Read *Digital Minimalism* and follow the advice there. Or read Catherine Price's *How to Break Up with Your Phone* and give it a shot. As I mentioned earlier, cheap flip phones are an option for a digital detox. Thankfully, quite a few dumbphones and semi-dumbphones have come out in the last few years (see **Dumbphones.org** for a helpful list).

YOUR BRAIN WILL THANK YOU

I know that for some people, giving up a smartphone is almost impossible because the level of addiction is high. We're not called the "dopamine nation" for nothing! But trust me, you can break up with your smartphone. You can take steps and develop habits to get your life back, regain your mental focus, and be present once again. You may want to get

rid of your smartphone! Do you dare? Or maybe you just need a good app and an accountability partner. Whatever the case, I can say, based on some years of experience, that living without a smartphone is possible and beneficial. But even if you don't totally give up your smartphone, I hope you find that drastically minimizing your smartphone use is a personal goal you make.

And I guarantee that if you seriously cut down on your phone use, your brain will thank you! 

Shane Lems is the pastor of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Hammond, Wisconsin, and blogs on books (and dumbphones too) at ReformedReader.wordpress.com, where a version of this article first appeared.

What I like about my dumbphone

by Shane Lems



(Sidebar: lighphone.jpg) Picture provided by the LightPhone folk.

I've been using the Light Phone III (theLightPhone.com) exclusively for almost a year now and wanted to share a few notes for anyone who might be interested.

First, the LPIII is not a smartphone at all. It truly is "dumb." It doesn't have email, a web browser, social media apps, or YouTube. It only has these basics:

- phone
- texting
- maps
- camera
- podcasts
- a calendar
- music
- notes
- calculator
- an alarm
- a timer

I purchased the LPIII because it's truly a dumbphone and doesn't have any of the distractions that smartphones have.

Second, it works well! Calls and texts are as they should be. The camera isn't top-of-the-line, but it does a pretty good job. The podcast and music tools work as I'd expect. I load podcasts and music from my laptop on the Light Phone dashboard website. Easy! The Bluetooth works nicely with my earbuds and with

my car's aftermarket Pioneer radio. You can brighten/dim the screen using the little wheel on the side of the phone. There's even a night mode that minimizes the blue light output. I love that you can use this phone in the sun and still see the screen just fine.

Third, the LPIII is sturdy. It feels solid in my hand. It has a removable battery so I can replace it in the future if need be. Speaking of battery, I get around 2-3 days per charge.

Fourth, there is a learning curve to using the phone. The user interface is not like your smartphone. That's because it's not designed to suck you in for hours at a time. Smartphone companies and app developers aim to keep users on the phone as much as possible. The Light Phone team does not have that philosophy at all. They purposely made the phone not addictive. Although the OS was new to me, I did adapt to the interface in just a week or two, and now it's fine – I have no complaints.

I realize the phone is not cheap (\$699 right now – though the older version is half that). However, this phone is worth it to me for these reasons:

- 1) my monthly phone bill is half what it used to be. That is a savings of around \$250 per year.

- 2) I don't have to upgrade this phone every two or three years because the battery is easily replaceable, and Light will keep updating it as they have with the previous version of the phone.
- 3) I don't have to worry about data mining, creepy spyware, purchasing apps, or expensive subscriptions.
- 4) I will never be addicted to this phone, nor will it distract me from being present. It's hard to explain how wonderful it is not to be tethered to my phone. I often go for hours without touching my phone or thinking about it.

LPIII is not for everyone. Don't order it if you want a dumbed-down smartphone. There are apps and hacks for that. But if you're looking for a good full-time dumbphone or a dumbphone for untethering on evenings and weekends, I'd suggest you check out the LPIII. There are other good dumbphones out there – I think several more came out in the last two years – but the LPIII is one of the best ones on the market right now. **RP**

Before ordering the Light Phone III at theLightPhone.com be sure to check with your carrier to see if they support it. Canadian plans are \$29 to \$39 plus tax (though without a long-distance option).

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JASON BOUWMAN

Jason Bouwman is a perennial creative, endlessly dreaming up new ideas and giving shape to them on white boards, sketchbooks, iPads and napkins if need be. He has an uncanny ability to think and play with ideas, formulate his thoughts and share them in a way that infects all those listening to come along for the ride. His personal philosophy to "live artfully" sits at the heart of Compass Creative - a marketing agency which Jason founded in 2005. He is often found discussing the deeper issues of life around the water cooler.

The designs found on the 'Just Thinking' merchandise originate from Jason Bouwman's thought provoking book 'Just Thinking', and its sequel 'Still Thinking'.



Give your kids a

super power

Reading to your kids will give them something better than the ability to leap tall buildings

by Amanda Poppe

I've been thinking lately that books are incredible. They are full of adventures and worlds and characters that shape us in profound ways. They make us laugh and cry and think. They dispel boredom, boost grades and reduce poverty. Giving kids access to books is like giving them a super power.

There is only one problem: Not every child can unlock this power.

They may be *literate* and able to read, but they aren't *readers* – kids who love good books and devour as many as they can. If you can raise your children to be readers, you will unleash a power that will change their lives.

Parents say, "I wish my son would read, but he just doesn't enjoy it." How do we get kids to fall in love with reading?

Of all the skills we want our children to master, reading is near the top of the list. We want our children to love words so that they will be daily readers of the Word. The Bible is a challenging book, and our children need to be able to read and understand it in order to grow in their relationship with God. We



want them to read Christian literature so that they will grow in faith and that they can be a blessing to others. And one day, our boys might become elders or deacons, and they will need to do a lot of reading. If they are fluent read-

ers, their task will not be such a burden. Raising readers is a priority for Christians.

So how do we get them to change from those who love the image to those who love the Word?

A SOCCER LESSON

A baby is not born wanting to read, any more than he is born wanting to play soccer (believe it or not!).

So what makes kids learn to love soccer? Usually, someone in their life is excited about the sport and introduces them to it. They practice with their mom or dad or brother or friend, and the more they play the better they get. Soon they enter a positive upward spiral:

They enjoy soccer because it's fun, so they play lots and they improve – and they love soccer even more!

To get proficient at a skill, children need to practice it over and over. But they are the same as adults: they tend to avoid things that give them pain and to do things that give them pleasure. Learning to read involves a certain amount of pain. Have you ever sat next to a child sounding out her home reader? Yeah, I know. If it's painful for you, what do you think it's like for your child?

Children need to read a lot to get proficient, but they won't unless it's enjoyable. So they enter a negative downward spiral:

They don't enjoy reading because it's hard, so they don't practice and they fall further behind – and they hate reading even more!

If only we could make the pleasure of reading outweigh the pain long enough for kids to become proficient readers. Then the super power will be unleashed. When they start to read because they want to, a whole new world of ideas, delights and experiences will open up before them like the view from a mountain peak.

IN LOVE WITH READING

So how do we get our kids to fall in love with reading? With books? The answer is very simple: We read to our kids out loud. We start as soon as we can and we read for a minimum of fifteen minutes. Every day. Throughout their childhood.

It's not complicated. It doesn't cost any money. But it is the secret to raising readers.

HOW DOES THIS HELP?

You might be wondering, "If I'm doing all the reading, how is that helping my child to read on her own?"

Reading to kids is like advertising for books. From a very young age, children learn that great books are a source of joy and delight. They associate these books with the pleasure of snuggling on your

lap. They are drawn into the story so that when you stop, they say, "Oooh, keep reading, keep reading!" And they steal the book off the shelf and read the next chapter on their own because they can't wait to find out what happens next. They are highly motivated to master this skill.

The pleasure outweighs the pain.

Most kids start school eager to learn to

12 TIPS TO GET US READING-ALLOUD

We all have the same twenty-four hours in a day and we find time for whatever we think is important. The bottom line is: reading to our children only happens if it's a priority! And here's how to do it.

- 1 Start small. It's better to read every day for five minutes, than to wait for that elusive half hour of "free time." Build the habit and the attention spans slowly.
- 2 Decide on a set time and place. Write your plan down, post it on the fridge and tell your kids you are starting a new habit. Attach reading aloud to a habit your family already has, such as eating a snack after school. Let them know "It's book reading time!" Soon they will be reminding you!
- 3 If your children are very active, pick a time when their energy levels are low and they would appreciate snuggling in for a story. Every child is happy to listen to a story if it means bedtime will be postponed.
- 4 How well you read doesn't matter. As the parent, you are the best reader for your child, especially fathers. Pick a book that you enjoy and don't be afraid to skip boring bits.
- 5 Look for other pockets of time to read out loud. Keep a book in your bag for when you are waiting in the car or the doctor's office. Resist giving them a screen to keep them occupied. You want to feed their brains, not damage them.
- 6 Read around a campfire.
- 7 Listen to audio books during long car rides – or short ones! You'd be amazed how much of the Bible you can listen to over a year of driving kids ten minutes to school. The NIV 1984 (dramatized version) is a favorite for our kids, with its sound effects of swords clashing and cargo splashing overboard.
- 8 Record yourself reading aloud on your smartphone. Young children can listen to it while you make dinner.
- 9 Have lots of great books in the house. Check out book sales and thrift stores. Give kids a bookshelf to start their own collection, and let grandparents know what titles they can give as birthday presents.
- 10 Visit your local library regularly (with discernment!). Make use of their online reservation system to make requests.
- 11 Children should see you enjoying books, so model reading for yourself.
- 12 Keep reading to children even after they learn to read.

read. But as they go through the grades, this interest drops lower and lower. They might know how to read, but they never pick up a book. What is happening?

The advertising has stopped. Parents figure they don't need to keep reading to their child now that he can read on his own. But here's the thing. A child's level of comprehension is way above his reading ability until about grade eight. The gap doesn't close until age 13 to 14. That means in the early grades he's stuck reading "Matt and Pat put on a hat" when what he's thirsting for is adventure stories,

with knights and spies and fearsome foes and daring-do. But he can't read that on his own yet. He is stuck reading simple, boring books.

Then the pain outweighs the pleasure. It's not worth the slog.

We have to keep advertising. We have to keep reading out loud.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE

Reading aloud is such a bonding thing to do with your kids. The story characters become part of your family culture. You laugh and cry together. You discuss seri-

ous topics together. You read chapter after chapter way past bedtime because it's too exciting to stop. It's a simple, beautiful activity in which your children feel very loved.

My dad was a very busy man, and he had a hard time talking to his children. But one of the ways I knew that he loved me was that when I was a teenager, every night, I would go into his study, and he would read *The Viking Saga* by Henry Treece.

My dad was diagnosed with cancer when my youngest sister was 10 years old.

Don't. Just. Read.

ENCOURAGING READING IS LIKE ENCOURAGING EATING, OR DRINKING... OR YOUTUBE SHORT-WATCHING. SHOULD OUR KIDS SHOVEL IN JUST ANYTHING THAT'S SERVED UP IN FRONT OF THEM?

by Jon Dykstra

You've seen the poster at your local library – "READ!" it commands in the biggest block letters. But for all its brevity, the message lacks some clarity. Read *what*? And, as every boy needs to know, *why should we*?

Other posters offer more specifics. "Read more books" we're told, because "Reading makes you smarter," so we should "Read every day."

Not all reading slogans are as instructive, but some are downright inspiring, and cute enough to leap off the library walls and maybe make an appearance on a girl's t-shirt:

- My weekend is booked
- Bookmarks are for quitters
- I read, therefore I don't text back

But if those are cute, there's also a bunch that are more than a little sad. Pitched as encouragements to read, they should be understood as reasons to close the cover, and get out into the real world.

- Books are my best friends
- Books stay. People leave.
- Books: because reality is overrated

As you might expect in a secular library, some of their slogans

are straight-out lies, and fairly easy to spot in how they promise too much.

- Books never fail
- Fiction fixes everything
- Reading makes every student stronger

More troubling are the slogans that are true enough, but where they can cut both ways.

- Reading opens new worlds
- Books shape young minds
- Books are full of surprises

Marx remade the world with a book. Kinsey did it with a report. The written word is indeed powerful, and your local library has all sorts of life-changing, world-opening books fully intended to shape young minds... much to the surprise of many parents. Some of those new worlds are delightful – you can probably find a copy of *The Wingfeather Saga*, or *The Wilderking Trilogy* – but others are dark. All the most popular teen and pre-teen fiction seems tainted, most often by homosexuality (pushed in everything from *Wings of Fire*, to *Percy Jackson*, and *Keeper of the Lost Cities*) but also demons, or even homosexual demons. Evolution too. And far too much angst drama.

He kept reading *The Hobbit* to her every night until he was too sick to continue. Those moments are now some of her most treasured memories of her dad.

Reading to your children is one of the most powerful things you can do for them.

But how do we compete for their attention in an age of screens and constant entertainment? And where do we find the time to fit this into our hectic schedule? And what if I'm not good at reading? Then check out my 12 tips for developing a read-aloud habit in your home.

LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER

Many of the ideas in this article are based on *The Read-Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease, first self-published in 1979 and now in its 8th edition. I highly recommend it, especially because it contains extensive lists of books for all ages. It might make for a good selection for any book club you are in, or want to start. Tackling it together could be a wonderful encouragement – we can help each other keep up with this important habit.

Let me leave you with the concluding verse from a Strickland Gillilan poem:

You may have tangible wealth untold;
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.
Richer than I you can never be –
I had a Mother who read to me. RP

*Amanda Poppe writes Christian fiction for children ages 8-12. Find her at amandapoppe.com and download a free short story to read to your kids. A version of this article first appeared in *Una Sancta*.*



The same mind-reshaping agenda is evident even among the picture books, where kids too young to know the proper anatomical terms for key bits of their bodies are already being targeted by transgender activist/authors.

So we don't want to just read. We want to read with discernment. We want to pick for ourselves what we will ingest, and not simply chow down on what the Enemy has managed to market on the best-seller lists. We want to be intentional, and teach our kids to be choosy too. So to end off, here's one

more secular slogan, but finished off right.

Knowledge starts with reading.
Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord.

If you're looking for books that will educate, edify, or entertain, and oftentimes all three at once, be sure to check out all our recommendations at ReformedPerspective.ca/books. RP

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

Comedy / Drama

1939 / 130 min

Rating: 9/10

Imagine if a director made a movie lauding Martin Luther's Reformation, and then had the chutzpah to arrange for its debut showing to be at the Vatican in front of an audience of the pope and his cardinals. Now you've got an idea of what Frank Capra dared, when he got a packed audience of 4,000 government leaders, including senators, Supreme Court justices, and White House officials, to come out to the movie premiere of his *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

The film asks, *what would happen if a decent man somehow ended up in Washington as a US senator?*

The answer it gives is, *the corrupt, cowardly entrenched powers would try to tear him to shreds.*

It all begins when the young Jefferson Smith – played by Jimmy Stewart – is appointed to serve out the term of a deceased senator. He's been picked for his naiveté – political lobbyist and behind-the-scenes powerbroker Jim Taylor, and the politicians Taylor has bought, think Jefferson will be too inexperienced, and too blinded by his patriotism and trusting nature, to recognize, let alone expose, their backroom dealings. And to keep Jefferson too busy to even begin to uncover their graft, they've got a pretty girl to turn his head, and Jefferson's own secretary in on it, set to misdirect him so long as she gets a good appointment out of it.

But what Jefferson might lack in a sense of discerning skepticism, he makes up for in his dogged determination to do right for the state that sent him here. He gets his very first bill proposed in record

fall guy for the very corruption Taylor was actually guilty of. Taylor doesn't just own politicians, he's got control of the papers too, and he uses this one-two punch to blacken Smith's name.

While much has changed in the 85 years since this film was made, one-sided mainstream media remains. We've seen the media decide for us what we're allowed and not allowed to talk about. Just consider the transgender discussion, or COVID, or the value of the unborn – only one side is allowed.

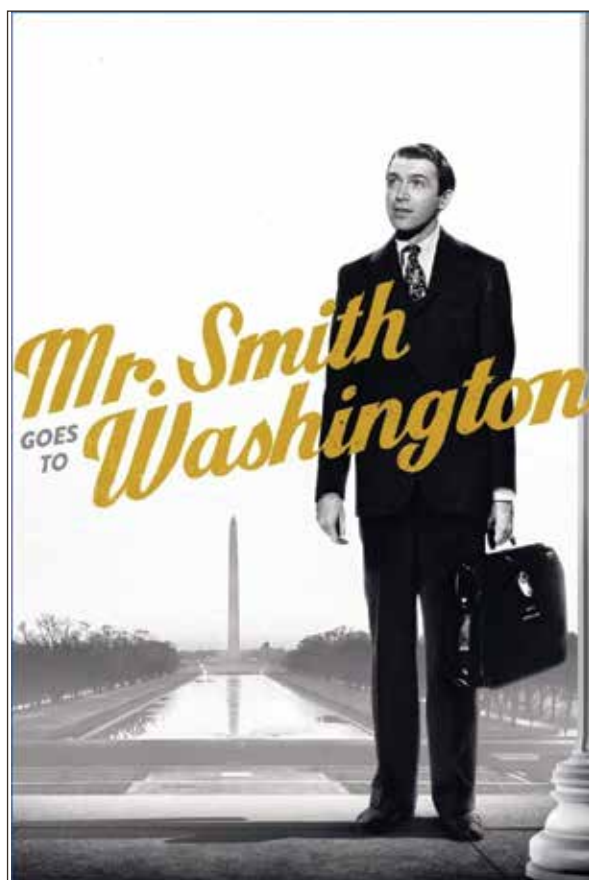
Thankfully, like Smith in this film, there are ways to get around and past the gatekeepers. So when the press joins in on the assault of a good man, the people who know Jefferson best help him get his message out.

So why should everyone see this film at least once?

1. LIKE JEFFERSON SMITH, WE ARE CALLED TO FIGHT FOR LOST CAUSES WITH ALL OF OUR MIGHT

As Smith put it:

"I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine. All you people don't know about lost causes. Mr. Paine does. He said once they were the only causes worth fighting for. And he fought for them for the only reason any man ever fights for them. Because of just one plain, simple rule: Love thy



time, and it just happens to run right up against the latest project of Taylor and his gang. That won't do, so Taylor decides to destroy Jefferson, and sets him up as the

neighbor. In this world full of hatred a man who knows that one rule has a great trust. You know that rule, Mr. Paine. I loved you for it, just as my father did. You know that you fight harder for the lost causes. You even die for them.”

There is no earthly means by which we're ever going to win the abortion battle. But do we still need to speak up for the unborn? Of course we do. And, humanly speaking, are we ever going to convince Canada to turn around and end euthanasia? No, we are not. And yet God can be glorified in the speaking of His truth. His is no earthly power, and He can

do things no human can, so who knows but that He might work a miracle through us, fighting for a “lost cause.”

2. WE MUSTN'T MIX UP OUR FIRST AND SECOND PRIORITIES

Smith's hero is a senator who came to Washington just as committed and courageous as Smith himself. But over the decades, that senator, Senator Paine, compromised. He compromised because he thought he needed power to fulfill his goals. But while power can be a valuable servant, it is a lousy master. It can help you achieve goals, but when it becomes your primary goal, then you'll compromise anything and everything else

to keep it. And then what goals are you actually going to accomplish?

Christians, and politicians among them, regularly censor ourselves, refusing to bring up God in the public square, even when His truth is what everyone most needs to hear. Consider the transgender debate, where no one understands Who determines our gender. How many Canadians have ever heard the worth of the unborn explained in biblical terms? Why do we keep quiet? Because we think it is the only way to be heard – we presume the secular world won't be interested in an explicitly Christian message. But then, in an effort to be heard – in making getting heard

Can I watch a movie during my screenfast?

...and other FAQs answered

1. CAN I STILL DO THE SCREEN-FAST IF MY WORK REQUIRES I BE ON A COMPUTER?

Some didn't participate in last year's screen-fast because they figured their job just didn't allow for it – they had to answer texts and calls, or type away on a keyboard most of the day.

But everyone can join in on the fun! For kids an entirely screen-free fast is probably best, just to help them reset. For mom and dad, it'd be about stretching ourselves as much as we realistically can. To paraphrase Andy Crouch, the screen-fast isn't about becoming Amish; it's just about becoming a lot more Amish than we might be comfortable with. Go without Instagram, Facebook, or checking the sports scores... because that can so easily go from the seconds you intended to the minutes you didn't. It's about drawing a line. So sign up, note your exceptions, and then stick to them.

2. CAN I STILL FACETIME WITH OMA DURING THE SCREEN FAST?

If your children do regular Sunday Facetime or Messenger video calls with their grandma, should they skip those for RP's 10-day screen-fast challenge? No siree, for at least a couple of reasons.

First, the you from the future wants you to call. A good way to evaluate decisions is to consider what the you from ten years hence might have wished you'd have done now. We know that the us from then would really appreciate it if we'd kick our screen-addiction... which is a reason to get at it now. But that same future you would love it if you'd call your mom more often (and more importantly God does too – Ex. 20:12). Even during a screen-fast. So you should.

Second, not all screen usage is the same. Jonathan Haidt, author of *The Anxious Generation*, has spoken to how face-to-face communication, even over a smartphone, is entirely different

our first priority – we compromise our message, and never even deliver the clear, God-given, God-glorifying, unshakeable truth.

CAUTIONS

At the time this film was made, the population as a whole would have said they loved God, family, and country, but some of them might have gotten confused about the order. That seems a very American problem, even today, where the country is revered as almost akin to Christ – the last, best hope for the world. There's more than a touch of that error here, with Jefferson's patriotic zeal taking on a religious feel. He *believes* in America.

Thankfully, we aren't forced to agree


with Jefferson 100% or not at all – we can appreciate his heroism, honesty, and will to fight, and appreciate his repeated references to Scripture too, even as we topple “country” from atop the pedestal he's placed it.

The only other cautions would be a prolonged scene where two key characters are drunk, but I don't think anyone will imagine the film is encouraging this behavior.

CONCLUSION

This is a classic film, nominated for 11 Oscars for the acting, writing, directing, score, and more. Director Frank Capra and his star Jimmy Stewart later teamed up for *It's a Wonderful Life*, and maybe that can be the hook you use to get folks

watching this one.

And here's a trick you can use to improve the experience. At 2 hours and 10 minutes, this is a *long* story, and few of us are used to that anymore. Part of the length is because Jimmy Stewart is a bit of a slow talker, so if your DVD player or streaming service is capable of it, play this at 1.25 times speed. That'll make it a more manageable 1 hour and 40 minutes. And the thing is, no one will even notice you sped it up – Stewart will just sound like he's talking at a normal rate. Add in an intermission for snacks and ice cream, and everyone will make it through to the absolute smasher of an ending. Folks who make it to the finish are going to cry and clap, guaranteed! 

from a kid swiping through a video roll. One destroys our ability to focus, and the other helps stretch it. One involves interaction and intention, while the other is simply consumption and the abdication of deliberate decision-making. One harms us, and the other builds us up. And we all know which is which.

3. CAN I WATCH A MOVIE DURING MY SCREEN-FAST?

The screen-fast shouldn't be just another time to watch the latest that Hollywood offers.

But as mentioned, not all screen usage is the same, and Haidt also speaks to how watching a long-form movie – not a half-hour sitcom but one single story told over a couple of hours – is very different from viewing TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube. Those mediums' seconds-long clips erode attention spans, making us unable to deal with moments or minutes of boredom. But even the best movies aren't going to be one long action scene, and sticking with the story through the lulls will actually help build up our ability to focus.

So, for some families captivated by YouTube shorts, watching a film could be part of taking back control. The key is intentionality. Don't fall onto the couch and see what's on. Watching “just something” is like eating “just something” – God gave us a brain, and we need to use it to meal plan. If you're going to do it, deliberate so that you, and not the algorithm, decides. Pick a challenging film that will spark conversation, and get you and your family thinking and then watch it with the pause button at the ready so you can make this interactive and not simply consumptive. A movie could be an exception in your screen-fast... if it's a movie (and not ten) and a certain sort (and not just any). I've offered one nominee this issue, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, which will stretch young viewers' attention-spans, but will certainly reward all who make it to the end.

4. WHAT IS THE SCREEN-FAST ACTUALLY FOR?

First off, this isn't about legalism and creating some 11th commandment that must be woodenly followed. It really isn't even about screens so much as it is *about regaining self-control*.

What we're doing now is damaging ourselves and our kids in ways that are both obvious, and not so. When every ding has our hand flinching toward our phones, we're never fully present – we're always distractible and we can all feel our attention span frittering away. And it doesn't take a genius to know screens are impacting our kids all the more so, and will cripple their ability to buckle down and just learn.

But our out-of-control screen usage is also impacting us in ways we might not have even considered. In Ps. 63:6. King David spoke of how:

“...I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on You in the watches of the night...”

Do any of us use our insomnia like that anymore? We leave no room for long unhurried conversations with God when we fall asleep staring at our devices instead.

The problem isn't our deliberate, intentional usage, but our loss of self-control, and with it the loss of minutes going on hours, with nothing to show for it. The screen-fast is about a reset to put our screens in their place, as our tools and not our masters. And more so, it is about reorienting our lives to properly recognize God's place as the Lord of our lives, our time and our priorities.

– Jon Dykstra

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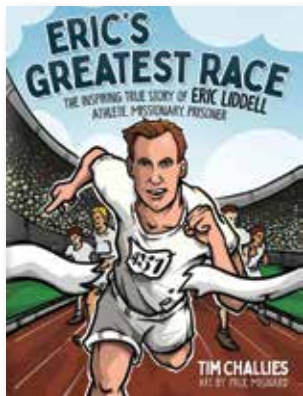
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ERIC'S GREATEST RACE: THE INSPIRING TRUE STORY OF ERIC LIDDELL

BY TIM CHALLIES
2025 / 128 PAGES
RATING: GOOD



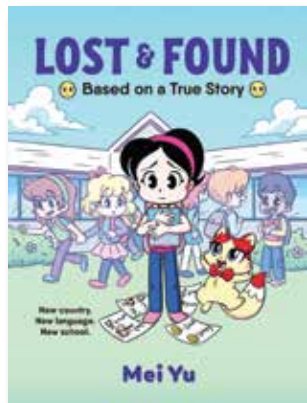
Eric Liddell is best known for refusing to run the 100 meters at the 1924 Olympics because the finals were going to take place on Sunday. To honor God, Eric instead competed in other events that weren't his specialty. While Hollywood played a little loose with the facts in their 1981 biopic *Chariots of Fire*, they got the gist right – Liddell went on to win a gold in the 400.

Tim Challies keeps to the facts and includes more of Liddell's life. He and his brother were often separated from their missionary parents, but both enjoyed many athletic ventures. Then, after his Olympic win, Liddell went on to become a missionary himself in China. When the Japanese invaded China during World War II, Liddell spent his final years as a prisoner in a Japanese internment camp where he pointed fellow prisoners to the God who was still in control, even in these circumstances. Liddell died right as the war was nearing an end.

With only about 30 words a page, this is quite a brief overview of Liddell's life. The black and white artwork is solid, but not vivid enough to grab a young reader's attention. I pitched this to my teen daughter, and she echoed my own take: this is a solid base hit, not a home run.

LOST & FOUND: BASED ON A TRUE STORY

BY MEI YU
2024 / 124 PAGES
RATING: GREAT



Cartoonist and Chinese-Canadian Mei Yu shares the mostly true story of her own immigration experience. On arriving in Canada, she is sent to school to sink or swim and there is a lot of floundering early on. Her classmates' dialogue, spoken in English which she doesn't yet understand, is shown in a green font, while her Chinese conversations with her parents are shown in the typical black font. The large amounts of green in the first half of the book give readers a good idea as to just how confusing it all is for Mei Yu.

This could have been a pretty brutal book, what with how scary it is for her. But for comic relief we have her stuffie, Kitty Paws, coming to life to provide companionship. And there is a very happy ending, with Mei Yu's artistic skills helping to bridge the gap between the two languages.

There's a bit of potty humor but not to be naughty – Mei Yu's "pee levels" near the emergency mark, and in her desperation she ends up in the boys' bathroom by mistake, much to the amusement of her classmates.

So, a great one for school libraries, elementary through even high school, to show what it is like to be an outsider.

PROJECT ARTIFACT: THE SPEAR

BY TREY BOWLING & LORI FAUSAK
2025 / 169 PAGES
RATING: GOOD



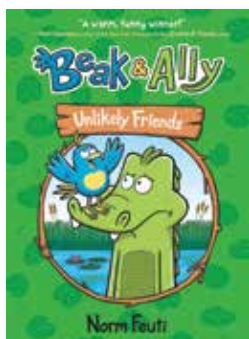
This is the Institute for Creation Research's (ICR) very first graphic novel, and the story is intriguing. We're taken to the year 2257, where a mega-corporation, Quanticorps, rivals the nation-states in size and influence. Its *Project Artifact* has as its audacious goal, to decipher the secrets of man's origin once and for all. Head scientist, Dr. Gideon Gates, is operating from evolutionary presumptions, trying to use a computer holographic interface to take himself back millions of years, to examine human-kind back then. Will we be half monkey?

But surprise, surprise, when the computer takes Dr. Gates back to our origins, the people he sees aren't monkey-like at all. And they seem to be building a tower of sorts. When Gates figures out the date, he finds he is only thousands and not millions of years in the past. And the man in charge of this tower-building project is a king who is mentioned in the Bible – Nimrod. Hmmmm...

As the author confidently declared, "*Project Artifact: the Spear* is going to be the best sci-fi, dystopian, creationist, Christian graphic novel you will read this year." The only disappointment? It didn't have a proper ending. This is just Part 1 and there's no indication of when Part 2 might be coming.

BEAK & ALLY: UNLIKELY FRIENDS

BY NORM FEUTI
2021 / 64 PAGES
RATING: GOOD



If you're like me and can't get enough of comic duos, here's another odd couple pairing you'll want to get to know. Ally is an alligator that appreciates his alone time, and Beak is a Yellow-Bellied Fee Boo bird, new to the swamp, and eager to make friends. She's also blissfully unaware that predators and prey don't usually spend quality time together, so she makes her introductions by way of landing on Ally's snout. Ally isn't the most receptive, and is even quite annoyed by Beak's "Fee Boo" song. But when a Long-Bill Party Pooper kicks Beak out of her new nest, it's Ally to the rescue. This is light-hearted fun, and not really meant as anything more. That said, it could be used by a parent to talk about what it means to be open to friendship with folks who don't share exactly the same interests.

There are three more in the series. In #2, *Bedtime Jitters*, Beak has trouble sleeping, because of all the weird sounds that happen in the swamp at night. Thankfully, Ally is there to explain that the Zump Zump Monster was just a bullfrog, and the Chatter Ghosts are just cicadas, and so on. In #4, *Snow Birds*, vacationing birds take advantage of Beak's good nature, and it is up to Ally to set some ground rules, and clear up the misunderstanding.

The only caution for the series occurs in #3, *The Big Storm*, where Beak says, "Oh my gosh," so, easy enough to give it a miss. A wonderful series for Grades 2 through 4.

SECRET CODERS (6 BOOKS)

BY GENE LUEN YANG & MIKE HOLMES
2015-2018 / 92-110 PAGES EACH
RATING: GREAT

Hopper is at a new school and gets off to a rocky start: her classes are boring, the other students are ignoring her, and when she does get their attention, it almost results in a fight. During lunch period she ends up sitting alone... until a bird comes fluttering down to sit in front of her. A feathered friend is better than no friend at all, right? That's what Hopper figures, at least until it blinks one of its *four* eyes!

Turns out the bird is robot, and it's blinking in binary. Another student, Eni, spots the odd bird and gives Hopper, and us, a lesson in how binary works. Then the two of them discover a turtle robot designed to aid the janitor, that seems programmable, if only you know how. The janitor turns out to be a super genius, and there is a whole secret subterranean system underneath the school, but accessible only to those who know how to program the turtle.

That gets us to the goal of this book. This is a series that my kids read, just for fun, but it's actually educational fiction – the authors' goal is to teach kids some of the basic logic that's involved in computer programming. And as Hopper and Eni get better at coding simple computer programs to make the turtle robot move and work, readers are learning too.

CAUTIONS

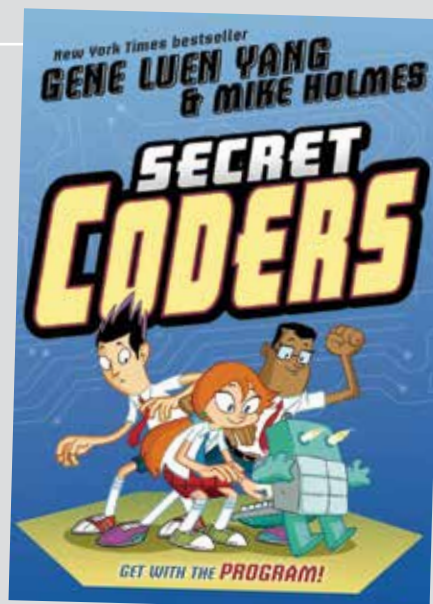
In the first book we learn that the teacher that Hopper has the biggest difficulty with – and speaks disrespectfully to – is actually her mom. We also find out that Hopper's mom and dad had a big fight six months ago, her dad left, and they haven't seen him since. It seems like he walked out on his family, though we later learn that he was kidnapped and has been stuck in a two-dimensional system since then. Thankfully Hopper does realize she needs to apologize to her mom. But her initial rudeness, and a few conversations between Hopper and her mom about whose fault it is that dad is gone, mean this isn't one for under 12s.

Language concerns would be limited to a few *jerk-faces*, a *gosh* and a *geez*.

CONCLUSION

There are points at which the story is sacrificed for the sake of the education – each time Eni and Hopper program a turtle we all have to think through it slowly and carefully. But a nefarious principal, his rugby team henchmen, a green-skinned villain and his army of toothy robot ducks, and a budding romance between Hopper and Eni, keep things interesting.

Any teen with a bent towards math and logic will find these an entertaining introduction to some basic computer code thinking.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

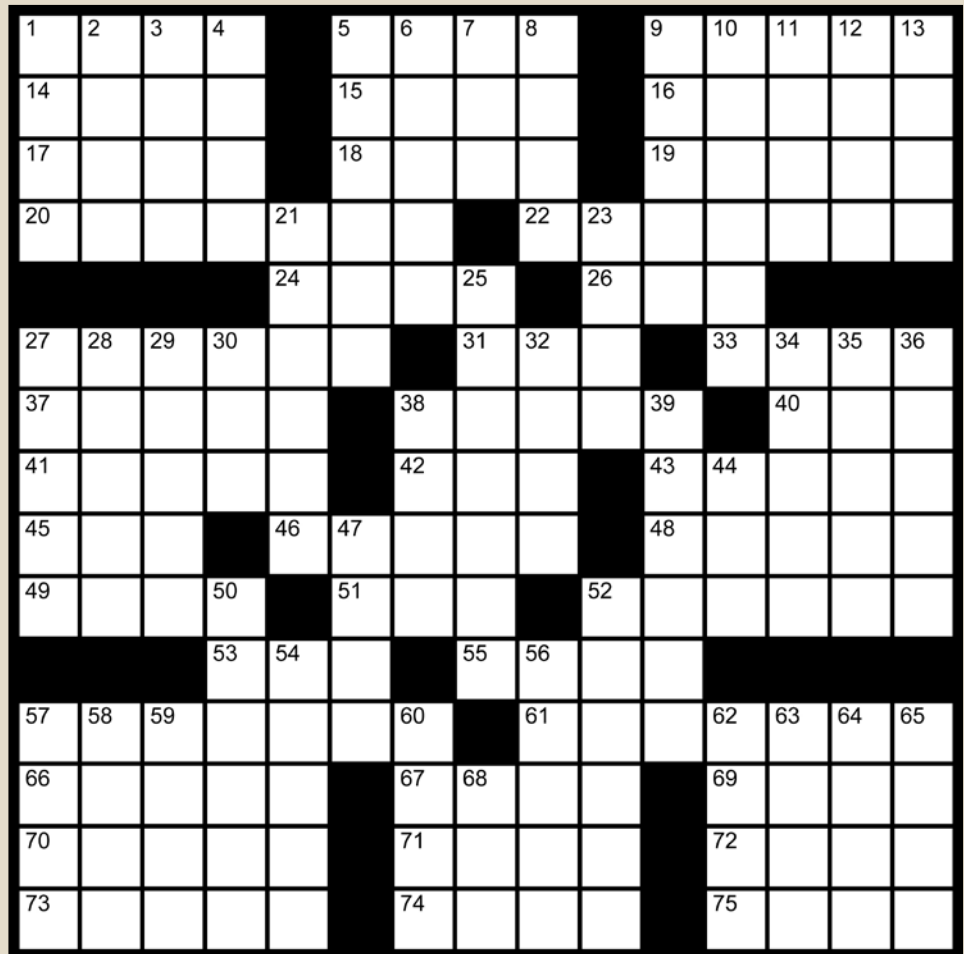
JULY-AUGUST 2026

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 51.

ACROSS

1. Length times width
5. "The ____ of the righteous..." (Is. 26)
9. Ready for crouton production
14. "they lowered the ____" (Acts 27)
15. ____ Cup (2026 cricket tournament)
16. Source of fever in winter?
17. "a scorching ____ wind" (Jonah 4)
18. Typical pub serving
19. Lubricated; greased
20. "Stay _____ for action" (Luke 12)
22. "_____ the horses..." (Jer. 46)
24. "bore our sins... on the ____" (1 Pet. 2)
26. "They ____ the altar in its place" (Ezra 3)
27. Sharp way to buy your asparagus?
31. "Can I borrow your car?" "That's a big ____"
33. "and ____ it and sealed it" (Rev. 20)
37. "almond and _____ trees" (Gen. 30)
38. What some recommend you do for success
40. ____ Wednesday
41. Continues; persists; remains
42. Place to sleep in, sounds like?
43. July-Aug *RP*, for example
45. "for destruction ____ is also great" (Frost)
46. "So I *can* borrow your car? _____!"
48. The L of LEM in Apollo 11
49. "Tychicus will ____ you all" (Col. 4)
51. "the tree bears ____ fruit" (Joel 2)
52. "like _____ rain" (Deut. 32)
53. ____ *Squad* (kids educational TV show)
55. Thomas's nickname (John 11, 20, 21)
57. Rowdier when I in nosier group?
61. What Dr. Seuss's Horton did (1942)
66. "it _____ at the Jordan." (Josh. 19)
67. "Their throat is an ____ grave" (Rom. 3)
69. Kind of awakening
70. Back of the boat
71. "____ on his head" (2 Sam. 1, 15)
72. Cheaper by the dozen
73. Wedding "wish"
74. "and ____ his brother in need (1 John 3)
75. Half a fortnight



DOWN

1. Likely trait for wisdom and good wine
2. "the ____ of the tabernacle" (Ex. 36)
3. Comfort; relief
4. What a bachelor or master may have studied?
5. *The Pentagon* _____ (government report)
6. "And Peter took him _____" (Mark 8)
7. Waste metal in refining process (Ez. 22)
8. "Lord! Who ____ praise enough?" (Herbert)
9. Make a goal, or twenty
10. Says it ain't safe, partly, and mars its image?
11. "to him who is ____ to keep you" (Jude 24)
12. "their ____ have led them astray" (Amos 2)
13. "Love never _____." (1 Cor. 13)
21. "It's not _____ that kills us..." (Selye)
23. Queries; questions
25. "...from his _____ counsel." (Prov. 27)
27. "and the rocks were _____." (Matt. 27)
28. "she set out from the _____" (Ruth 1)
29. Partial weasel painting work stand?
30. What an anteater might eat
32. "There was a man ____ from God" (John 1)
34. "It _____, sunk in yet." (frequent quotation)
35. Conventional; current; customary
36. "_____ is none like him on the earth" (Job 1)
38. Gluten-free or low-FODMAP, for example
39. *Run _____, Run Deep* (submarine movie)
44. "For the ____ rises with its... heat" (James 1)
47. "The gates... are ____ open" (Nahum 3)
50. "Only the _____ win" (Switch-foot lyrics)
52. Big MLB team?
54. "We _____ Start the Fire" (Billy Joel song)
56. Beginning of question about Waldo
57. C'est un oiseau in that _____, _____-ce pas?
58. "____ Ottawa Trek" (1935 protest march)
59. Project; proposal; purpose; point
60. Used to fish
62. Kind of neck or cut
63. 97 millimeters, for a cockroach
64. "...the ____ of the sword" (Heb. 11)
65. Where to jockey for position at the office?
68. Part of piece... or the whole thing?



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More Info:

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



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



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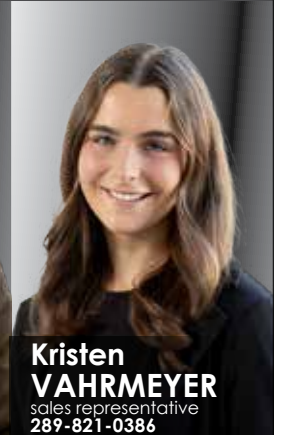
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As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10



GOALS

- Allow seniors the opportunity to remain living in their home
- Provide respite to family caregivers within our own Reformed community
- Demonstrate compassion in a God glorifying manner

How to Support Us:

- Pray for our clients and caregivers
- Donate to Compassion Care
- Become a caregiver
- Encourage our caregivers
- Become an annual supporter



*MARTHA'S HANDS
MARY'S HEART*

IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF OUR SERVICES OR INTERESTED IN BECOMING A CAREGIVER, PLEASE CONTACT:



DIRECTOR OF SERVICES:
TANYA KLEINJAN: 905-519-2829



Info & E-Transfer:
compassioncarefr@gmail.com



ABOUT US

Compassion Care is a non-profit organization within the Southern Ontario Reformed community consisting of nurses, PSWs and other caregivers. We provide all home care services to help our families care for their loved ones.

Your Reformed Voice in Ottawa



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Growing In Grace
Equipping For Excellence
Learning for Life



DUFFERIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

invites applications for full-time openings for

3 ELEMENTARY TEACHERS & 1 PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER

for the 2026-2027 school year.

Both B.Ed and CCRTC graduates are encourage to apply.

Teacher Opportunity – Join a Supportive Christian School Community

DCS is a K-12 Reformed school with over 285 students, located in the beautiful prairie town of Carman, just a short 45-minute drive SW of Winnipeg.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

www.dufferinchristian.ca



Growing In Grace
Equipping For Excellence
Learning For Life

DUFFERIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Invites applications for the role of

PRINCIPAL

for the 2026-2027 school year.

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

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

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

Applications should be sent to Dufferin Christian School
Box 1450, Carman, MB, Canada, ROG OJO

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

Capturing a moment in pastel

LAURA KROESBERGEN'S hyperrealistic animals

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Harma-Mae Smit

In her childhood, Laura Kroesbergen found she struggled with confidence in her relationships with people, but when she was in nature or with animals she could relax and be herself. Animals' ability to tune into non-verbal cues and communicate through them seemed, to her, to bring them a softer, calmer way of life. And horses, in particular, inspired her with their majesty, and freedom. They became a major source of inspiration for her works in pastel.

Her pastel drawings are filled with the texture of hair on the horses' necks, and veins outlining their muscles, as they gallop across the field or gaze wisely at you. Horses were her first drawing interest. However, after encouragement from her mother and others, she began to create drawings of other wildlife as well – prowling panthers, curious lion cubs, and guarded antelopes.

Her faith is an inescapable part of her work. As she explains,

“Since going through severe depression in my early 20s, I have come to recognize the value of life, and though my focus is still on the animal world, I now try to bring some of that ‘life essence’ into each drawing.”

She intuitively knows what makes living things tick, and translates that into her work. Detail is also important:

“Working in the field of hyper- or photo-realism also brings the unique experience of learning the subtle colors and intricate patterns our Creator has put into His creation. The more detail I

dive into, the more detail there is to see. This gives me a beautiful glimpse of how infinite our glorious God is.”

For Laura, doing her absolute best is a big part of how she brings her faith into her work. This ties into the intricate detail and realism she always attempts to capture. “The attitude of, ‘it’s the best I can do,’ if it’s not realistic, is not something I allow for myself,” she says. She tries to combine the accuracy of a photograph with the added emotion or “essence” of what she’s drawing – essentially capturing a moment in time.

This influenced her choice of pastels as a medium. At first, she did all her drawings primarily in grayscale, because she found capturing color much more difficult. But after watching an online time-lapse video of an artist using pastels, she was surprised to find herself thinking, “I can probably do that.” To her delight, she found she was able to create beautiful hyperrealistic drawings in pastel on her first attempt. She sees this as a major way God was working in her life at that time, as she was laid up with a fractured pelvis and was asking Him about what she could learn during her time of recovery.

“Pastels are a great way for me to achieve more of a ‘painterly’ effect without having to switch to a wet medium... though trying out painting is on my list.”

She is fascinated by how much color can be put out by a simple pastel pencil. And

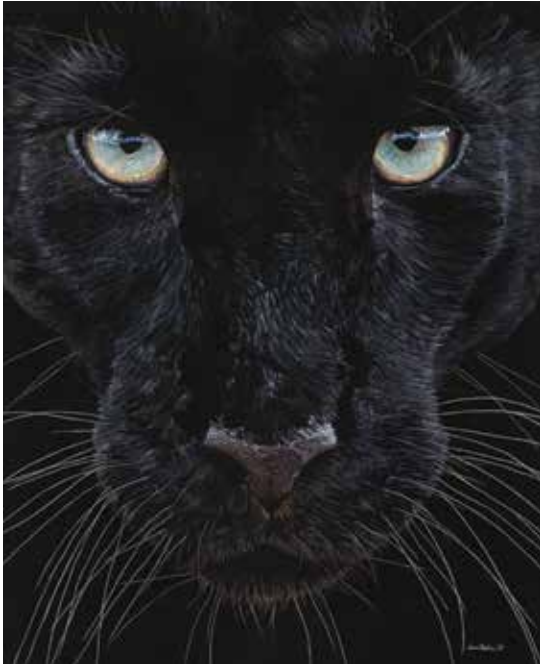
the paper she uses can hold many layers of pencil without getting too saturated, and it contains felt so she doesn’t need to use a fixative spray to keep the pastel from smudging.

She is currently not working as an artist full-time, though she did pursue this in the past, and continues to draw and create. “I do wonder in what ways God will have me use my skills in the future,” she says, “since this is a talent He has given me.”

You can see more of Laura Kroesbergen’s work at laurachristinefineart.com. She also does pet portraits, which you can view there. Or contact her by email with your questions about art-related things at lcfineart825@gmail.com. RP

Harma-Mae Smit loves to write and think about art, despite not being an artist herself. She loves how art can reflect the Creator Himself. Send Harma-Mae Smit suggestions for artists to profile at harmamae@reformedperspective.ca, including their contact information.





◀ **Night Prowler | 24 x 18"**

The black panther (aka the black leopard), is a melanistic leopard with a recessive gene that produces more pigment, thus creating the black coat. These leopards are mostly found in the forested areas of Africa and Asia, however, this particular leopardess lives wild in the African country of Kenya.



▲ **A Whole New World | 15.5 x 21.5"**

This lion cub's inquisitive expression portrays the universal curiosity of the young - a good reminder to be ever curious about ourselves and those around us.



◀ **Reflection | 13.75 x 16.75"**

A Canadian beaver building its home in one of the many inlets off Lake Huron, Ontario.

▼ **A Mother's Love | 18 x 24"**

This pastel painting captures a quiet moment between a zebra mother and son.



▲ **Free Spirit | 25 x 20"**

An attempt to capture the desire to let loose and simply enjoy the present moment.

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



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



Ep. 142 – How to fight fair and forgive well, with Dr. Timothy Lane

Is conflict always bad? And do Christians always have to forgive? Lucas teams up with biblical counselor Dr. Tim Lane, the author of *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*. Together, they take a look at conflict and forgiveness – two realities every Christian faces because every Christian is in relationships. They explore what distinguishes godly conflict from ungodly conflict, what real forgiveness actually looks like, and how the gospel shapes our relationships both personally and in the church. Conflict doesn't have to destroy relationships. And forgiveness is more than just words.



Ep. 147 – Lead with intention or lose the mission, with Peter Greer

Harvard and Yale were founded to spread the gospel, but today these universities are known for being hostile to orthodox Christianity. How'd it happen? It wasn't overnight – in the case of Harvard it took decades and even centuries. Much of the drift from their original mission was likely gradual, and even unintentional, though there was at least one university president who took deliberate steps to head off in a new direction. But he couldn't have charted that new course if they hadn't already been adrift.

So, mission drift is real, and whether we realize it or not, it can happen to not just schools, but businesses, people, and even churches. In this episode, Tyler is joined by Peter Greer, author of the book *Mission Drift*, to talk about how drift happens and how to avoid it. Through real examples, they unpack the

subtle warning signs of mission drift and how the influence of culture, your leadership team, and even your other priorities can quietly shift your direction. This conversation is about staying intentional – whether you're leading a non-profit, a business, your family, or you're simply trying to stay grounded in what matters most.



Ep. 149 – The kindness of God in guilt and conviction, with Matt King

What do we do with guilt? Is conviction something to fear... or could it actually be one of the ways God lovingly draws us back to Himself? In this conversation, Pastor Matt King talks with Lucas about sin, confession, repentance, and the difference between shame and guilt. Together they unpack why guilt, when understood rightly, isn't meant to crush us, but can be a gift of God's kindness that leads us back into relationship with Him. They also explore: what it means when we don't feel convicted, the importance of confession in the Christian life, "gospel gaps" between what we believe and how we live, and how the brothers and sisters in the Church are meant to walk with one another through sin with both truth and grace.



◀ Kevin Martin, leader of WORLD News Group, shows me some of the covers of their magazine through the decades.



through Blessed ~~by~~ the U.S.

by Mark Penninga

Donald Trump is not a good tourism ambassador for his country, at least when it comes to attracting Canadian visitors. Repeated quips about making Canada the 51st state have him coming off as the most arrogant of all Americans.

But before we turn our nose up at the country down below, we should remember their very real reasons to boast – not in themselves and not in their president, but in our LORD. Their Christian heritage and political structure, and their wealth of God-glorifying ministries and teachers, are a treasure trove that we would be foolish to ignore.

I was reminded of their blessed state on a recent trip I took on behalf of RP, first to the Colson Center National Conference in Knoxville, Tennessee, and then again on a short drive to the headquarters of WORLD Magazine, in Asheville, North Carolina.

I went there to learn from, and build deeper relationships with, those who have a lot more experience than us with bringing a Christian worldview to culture and media.


I shared before about the Colson Center's Fellows program, an intense year-

long training in Christian worldview that my wife Jaclyn and I completed a couple of years ago. Their daily Breakpoint newsletter, the Fellows program, and this national conference are the gold standard for what it looks like to apply our Christian faith to the issues of the day. Although I don't have an official count from the organizers, I was told that I was one of five people from Canada, out of a gathering of around 1,500.

I have extolled some of the resources from the WORLD News Group through the years, including their World Journalism Institute, which trains young and old Christians to do journalism as Christians (and which also blessed Marty VanDriel, Jon Dykstra, and myself with training through the years). We have nothing like this in Canada, so we shouldn't be surprised by the lack of faithful journalism among media outlets in this country. Although WORLD produces excellent media – like its WORLD Watch News daily videos for children and youth – it is largely unknown north of the 49th parallel. That is to our own loss.

As Os Guinness shared at the Colson Center conference, the deepest influence for the United States republic was

not Greek, Roman, English, or French. Rather, it was the biblical idea of the covenant, going back to Israel at Mount Sinai. This biblical basis, recaptured in the Reformation, recognizes the importance of freedom. But it isn't a selfish, autonomous, "my-choice" kind of freedom. Rather, it is ordered freedom, where rights and responsibilities go hand-in-hand. Canada has lost its way in this regard, as evidenced in the many court decisions where our Charter rights are interpreted simply as a license for autonomy, even if that autonomy is used to end our own lives. We would do well to repent, and learn from others, including our neighbors to the south.

My time there also reminded me that the need for work like this is much greater in Canada. There are so few Christian ministries in this nation, even proportional to our population. There is very little "salt" here. Although it may be attractive to live where there is an abundance of Christian universities, churches, and ministries, God has put us here "for such a time as this." We can learn from our brothers and sisters in the USA, but then we need to put that learning to work wherever God has planted us. 

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.



You've been farming long?



Oma's Refuge

Deadline?

September 1, 2026.

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

Log out. Look up.
Sign up for the July 13-22 screen-fast!

