

Reformed

HELPING YOU THINK, SPEAK, AND ACT IN CHRIST

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PERSPECTIVE

SINCE



CELEBRATING

25

ISSUES OF

Come +
EXPLORE

Come & Explore stickers!

This is a wild and wonderful issue!

To celebrate 25(?) issues of Come & Explore, author and illustrator Stephanie Vanderpol presents "The Case of the Missing Stickers"! To solve it, you'll need to carefully page through her special 10-page edition here and hunt through past Come & Explore issues online. This is fun for the whole family to tackle together – particularly for those who enjoy escape rooms. And yes, we really do have stickers for you, along with the possibility of winning gift certificates to the RP merch store!

LESSONS FROM FASTING

A huge thanks to the nearly 800 of you who registered to screen-fast with us this summer. You raised \$20,000 for two great charities. Many of you committed to longer-term changes – putting technology in its proper place. Don't miss the feedback from all our fasters!

WATCH OUT FOR SCAMMERS! AND SHOULD ALBERTA STAY OR GO?

When we heard from a reader how he'd seen loved ones being taken in by scammers, we wanted to send out the alert. Marty VanDriel tackles this head-on, sharing exactly

how it can happen, and what we can do to make sure it doesn't.

Also in this issue, in October Albertans will be asked to vote on whether they'd like to start a separation process to leave Canada. Although the province is unlikely to leave anytime soon, we are devoting a couple of articles to the question, and whether it would be wrong to go.

RP BUCKET LIST BOOK CLUB UPDATE

Over 120 people signed up to read through 11 fantastic books with us this year (and we hear many more are participating on their own). On our Zoom call in July, the feedback on Christine Farenhorst's book *Upheld* was super positive – a favorite for many. For August we looked at Peter Greer's *Mission Drift*, a must-read for any non-profit, and for that matter businesses and families too. Then in September we are turning to *Cost of My Faith* by cake baker Jack Phillips, followed by apologist Greg Koukl's *Tactics*. Go to ReformedPerspective.ca/BLBC to sign up.

Cover art by Stephanie Vanderpol

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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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Clever online scammers are targeting Christians **BEWARE THE NEW THIEVES**

by Marty VanDriel

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READERS' RESPONSE



DEAR EDITOR:

To “trample underfoot” is to show disrespect to something, be it a flag or a garden. This is how I think of rainbow crosswalks. I am trampling the ideology underfoot in a show of disrespect whenever I use one. To skirt around it feels to me as if I am showing deference or respect. But also, the sight of a rainbow crosswalk or flag is my cue to say a prayer for all those caught up in sexual immorality or gender confusion.

GAIL STONEMAN
WINDSOR, ONTARIO

DEAR EDITOR:

When perusing issues of *RP*, I get the sense that *RP* has a great admiration for the U.S.A. This sense was confirmed in the article on the last page of the July-August 2026 issue of *RP*, “Blessed through the U.S.,” where it spoke of the founding of the U.S. in glowing terms. Referring to what had been learned from Os Guinness, the article states that

“...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 Mt. 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.”

It is then stated that Canada has lost its way in this regard, which leads to an exhortation that “we would do well to repent, and learn from others, including our neighbors.”

While words like biblical, covenant, and freedom sound impressive, and it is given credibility by referring to Os Guinness, they triggered a red flag in my mind. An internet search quickly led to some videos where Os Guinness verbalized these thoughts. In one he said,

“In Exodus 19 and 20, God proposes a covenant, but it is only ratified when the people agree three times, saying, ‘All that the Lord says we will do.’”

In another, he states,

“I think the Hebrew republic broke with the Greek system – monarchy, aristocracy, democracy – and put in its place... the tradition of covenantalism... So I would root the genius of the American republic actually in the Hebrew republic.”

Aside from the anachronism, where he contrasts the Hebrew Republic with the Greek system, we have here a serious misuse and misreading of Scripture.

As for the misuse, we confess in Article 2 of the Belgic Confession that God “...makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word as far as is necessary to us in this life to his glory and salvation.” It does that by pointing to how we are saved through faith in Christ and how we should live in response (c.f. Luke 24:27, John 5:39). Scripture is not a source book for political science.

As for the misreading, this is glaring in the use of the concept of covenant. A familiar Reformed expression states that the covenant is unilateral in its institution and bilateral in its execution, i.e., God comes to us in grace, and then, empowered by his Spirit, we respond. When it is stated by Os

Guinness that, "In Exodus 19 and 20, God proposes a covenant, but it is only ratified when the people agree three times, saying, 'All that the Lord says we will do,'" that is Arminianism in the highest degree. In the case of the Sinai covenant, it was ratified by the sprinkling of the blood on the book of the covenant and the people, as described in Exodus 24. This points to the blood of Jesus Christ. His blood ratifies the covenant. The response of the people is the response of faith, which is not the same as ratifying the covenant.

In addition, it is misleading to refer to the Hebrew republic. Israel was a theocracy, as God was Israel's king out of divine grace, fulfilling his promise made to Abraham, and not by the people's consent.

Exodus is not a political document, laying out a model of government, but revelation of salvation. It appears that the author of the article was misled by hearing the word "covenant," not aware that its sense is totally different from a Biblical, Reformed use of that term.

Finally, there is the glowing reference to freedom. An article in the *Globe and Mail* of May 2, 2026, pointed out how

"From the viewpoint of many in the British North American colonies that would eventually coalesce into Canada, all the American Revolution did was free masses of white, male, pro-slavery, self-declared libertarians to enact enterprises of mass oppression – a system that colonial Canadian intellectuals...described as 'Mobocracy.'"

In other words, it was exactly the "selfish, autonomous, 'my choice' kind of freedom" mentioned in the *RP* article.

In sum, I would encourage *RP* to show the same level of discernment at events in the U.S. as at events in Canada. Both nations were founded at a time when the Western mindset showed many centuries of Christian influence. It would make an interesting article to compare the way the two nations were founded in light of Scripture. Sad to say, whatever Christian influences there were, both are drifting from that foundation, the one in a more openly secular way, the other by hijacking the Christian faith for nationalistic purposes. A little less adoration for all things American would help to take away the sense that the R in *RP* stands for Republican rather than Reformed.

REV. E. KAMPEN
GUELPH, ONTARIO



RP doesn't normally respond to letters because we've had our say and this column is for readers to have theirs. But one of Rev. Kampen's points, about how we are to understand the Bible, warranted a short reply.

EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

You wrote that God's Word points "to how we are saved through faith in Christ and how we should live in response" but that "Scripture is not a source book for political science."

That's a false dichotomy, akin to how theistic evolutionists argue that the Bible points to salvation, but that "Scripture is not a source book for science."

God can do both, and more. His Word does show us His plan for salvation and it also teaches us about politics. How do we know that socialism and communism have a naïve understanding of human nature? Because God reveals it in His Word (Jer. 17:9). Genesis explains our need for our Savior, and also answers the hot-button political questions of our day about where our worth, equality, and even gender come from (Gen. 1:26-27). Exodus is a political document too, with the 10th Commandment correcting the spirit of our age that claims it's virtuous to covet our rich neighbor's goods. Scripture must be our source book for political science – there is no other solid foundation to be found. – JD



How to respond to desecration

by Mark Penninga

A while back the polling company Ipsos Reid asked Canadians if our country was “broken.” 70% said it was, with younger Canadians agreeing the most strongly.

Whether we’re recalling the rampant drug use, increased homelessness, year-long waits for health services, or how hard it’s become to do business in a world of red tape, most of us likely agree with this assessment. Yet what we are witnessing in Canada and throughout the world today is not simple brokenness. It is something darker.

What we are witnessing is a very purposeful desecration.

DESECRATION

Desecration involves a very deliberate defiling. It involves dishonoring something sacred by treating it as if it were ordinary, or even garbage. Picture an 8-year-old daughter devoting days of effort to making her dad a special piece of art for his birthday. Now imagine that when she gives it to him, offered tentatively and with a shy smile, her dad responds with a sneer and he tells her he could get a much nicer picture from the dollar store. That’s what desecration is like – the girl’s gift, and the love with which she offered it, have been dismissed like trash.

But desecration is worse yet, because the target is God Himself. The intent is to spit in His face. Think back to the opening ceremony of the 2024 summer Olympic games, which featured drag performers re-enacting the Last Supper. With the spotlight of the world on them,

ready to celebrate the gift of sport, the organizers chose to take the opportunity to blaspheme our LORD. The Olympic committee didn’t just make a mistake. Their actions were intentional and lined up with the hate in their hearts.

In a biblical context, we can recall “the abomination that makes desolate” (from Daniel 11:31) that foretold the desecration of the Temple in 167 BC. Not only was the faithful worship in the Temple ended, a pagan altar was set up in its place. God’s holy place was desecrated.

Today, as we look around us with eyes of faith, it is evident that we live in an age of desecration.

DR. ELLEN WIEBE’S “INCREDIBLY REWARDING” WORK

Consider BC family physician Dr. Ellen Wiebe. She grew up in a Mennonite family in Manitoba and is proud to have killed hundreds of her patients. Section 222 of Canada’s Criminal Code rightly identifies these deaths as homicides, though Parliament has now legalized them when done by approved specialists and has given it a friendly name: Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD). As of May 2022, Dr. Wiebe’s count was already at 430 deaths. The number is likely much higher today.

That’s right, she has legally committed hundreds of homicides and continues to carry on with more every week. In fact, she is paid by our government to do this, and is happy to share about it at conferences or on podcasts. Dr. Wiebe isn’t shy about her work, which she calls

“incredibly rewarding.” But she now keeps her numbers secret. “I know the exact number,” she shared with the *National Post*, “but I don’t want to do that, no. It’s become a weird thing, people talking about their numbers, or criticizing people who talk about their numbers.”

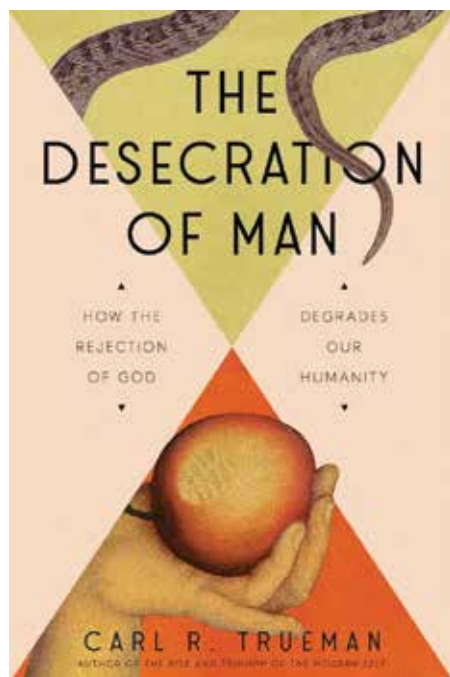
Her state-sanctioned homicides are only a fraction of the 100,000+ Canadians who have already been killed by the hand of medical professionals in Canada since “MAiD” was legalized in 2016.

Her other side business likely isn’t surprising. “Human rights has been a major focus of my life and my other practice is abortion,” she shared in a podcast with the *New York Times*. Although she didn’t disclose how many abortions she has done, 4.5 million abortions have been reported since this form of homicide was decriminalized in Canada. It is impossible for our hearts and minds to grasp the scale of this desecration.

For Dr. Wiebe, this isn’t just another job. It is exhilarating. “Her face lights up as she describes MAiD as the most fulfilling work she’s done since doctor-assisted death became legal in Canada in 2016,” the *National Post* reported.

WHAT IS GOING ON?

How is it possible that a doctor, whose profession is devoted to healing, would find such fulfillment in murdering? How can our society normalize and even celebrate the deaths of over 100,000 children each year?



"To the question 'What is man?' our world has apparently given the answer: the one who transgresses what was formerly considered sacred and thereby demonstrates his own godlike status."

– Carl Trueman

Dr. Carl Trueman is a Reformed professor and thinker who has become well-known in recent years for his ability to capture what is occurring in culture. He recently authored a book called *The Desecration of Man: How the Rejection of God Degrades our Humanity*. This book, and a number of talks that he gave on the same matter, have opened my eyes to better understand not just the Dr. Wiebes of this world, but also those who would allow governments to hand out free drugs, or give their children over to transgender mutilations.

Desecration isn't something that is simply happening because we live in a sinful world post-fall – it's not like cancer, difficult communication, or mosquito bites. Trueman argues desecration is deliberate, and that for many desecration has become the very purpose of their existence.

What does Dr. Trueman mean by that? As we know, God put His image on humanity (see Genesis 1:28). "Man as the divine image bearer is the mark of God's ownership of this world," notes Dr. Trueman, "and he is to act as his vice-regent within it, carrying out God's will, not acting in accordance with his own desires."

That was God's calling for us, but we were very quick to reject it. Adam and Eve didn't want to listen to God's expectations about how to live. They would decide for themselves, by eating from the one tree that God commanded them not to eat from. "To refuse limits, obligations, and ends that are understood to be imposed by God is to rise to god-like status oneself," explains Trueman.

One of the foremost ways humanity tries to assert itself as its own god is to defile wherever God has put His own stamp, and that most specifically includes us, His image-bearers – human life itself. From the murder of Abel to whatever murder is in the headlines today, human history has been a story filled with desecration ever since. That explains in part why so many of the world's "culture wars" have centered on life and on sex. These are key parts of what it means to image God.

So why do we have abortion in Canada right up to the moment of birth? No

one can be confused at that point about whether it is a child, so the reason it's allowed is because this destruction is the clearest possible desecration of the Image of God.

Why would an "enlightened" society that speaks so highly of science and reason ever say that a boy can become a girl? Because there are no barriers – not even our DNA can limit us. We can be whatever we want to be because we are gods.

Why do we have a conversion therapy law that bans counseling someone out of homosexuality, but doesn't ban counseling someone out of heterosexuality? Because it desecrates God's created order of a man and a woman.

Why is there such pressure to bow to LGBTQ identity, including with the pronouns that we are expected to use? Because gods demand worship. We must bow the knee. Who are you to deny me!

THE ANTIDOTE TO DESECRATION

What is the answer to desecration? Consecration.

To consecrate something is to set it apart as special and sacred. God has consecrated us, through the Holy Spirit, and His covenant. We belong to the LORD and are called then to live for Him. Living out this consecration will, for many of us, appear very ordinary and maybe not all that special. But it is special because of Who we are dedicating this to. A consecrated life involves:

- Listening to our mom when she asks us to clean up our room
- Talking respectfully to our siblings, spouse, and neighbors
- Showing up on time at work
- Not allowing our hearts and minds to lust
- Welcoming the gift of life, and taking good care of each child that God has entrusted us with
- Bringing a meal to our elderly neighbors
- Caring for a loved one with a terminal illness for as many days as God gives them
- Singing songs of praise to God around our dinner table

In sum, it means we love God and our neighbor.

Granted, we can still do these things for the wrong reasons, serving ourselves. But in small and big ways, our thoughts and actions testify to whether we see ourselves as god, or whether we humbly serve the One True God.

MAKING THE RIGHT DIAGNOSIS

If this all comes down to “loving the LORD and our neighbor,” why does it deserve another article?

Because it is critical that we understand our times rightly – that we make the correct diagnosis of the problems we are experiencing in our world.

If we look superficially and conclude that things are merely “broken,” we will likely think that the answer is that we can try to fix it. Then our hope might be put into political parties, leaders, and influencers, or technology or perhaps education to “fix” things in Canada and the world. Most of the “social justice” causes of our age are an effort to fix real and perceived injustices that we experience and see daily, from racism to drug addictions.

But we aren’t very good at fixing the human condition because the problem goes a lot deeper.

Going back to the example I gave at the beginning of the French Olympic committee, the answer isn’t going to be to educate the committee members about how their Opening Ceremony made Christians feel. They knew it would be offensive. That was their goal.

When we understand that it is desecration we are witnessing all around us, it becomes evident that the first ingredient to restoration and life is spiritual. A heart-change is needed. The only “fix” is to repent of our desire to be gods, and to humbly bow before the only true God.

Politics, education, and technology can all be very important means to bring restoration to this world. But they aren’t the answer by themselves. Jesus Christ is. That is why it is so important that we do everything in Christ, and that also explains why the core purpose of *Reformed Perspective* is to help you think, speak, and act in Christ.

Far too often I see Christians showing up in the public square and trying to engage with the world on the world’s terms – without Christ. They appeal to logic, science, human rights, natural law, kindness, and a variety of other good things, but fail to recognize that many of the people they are working with are just paying lip service to these values. What they really care about is their own divinity – doing what is right in their own eyes. Then we can waste a lot of effort, and do much harm, when we try to meet them on their terms.

ORDINARY AND WORLD-CHANGING

Recognizing the desecration all around doesn’t just give us the correct diagnosis of what’s gone wrong, it also resets the expectations for what success and faithfulness look like.

Christian apologist and thinker Francis Schaeffer understood this well. In a powerful sermon, he went through Scripture to explain that throughout the history of redemption, God has used little people (Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Ruth,

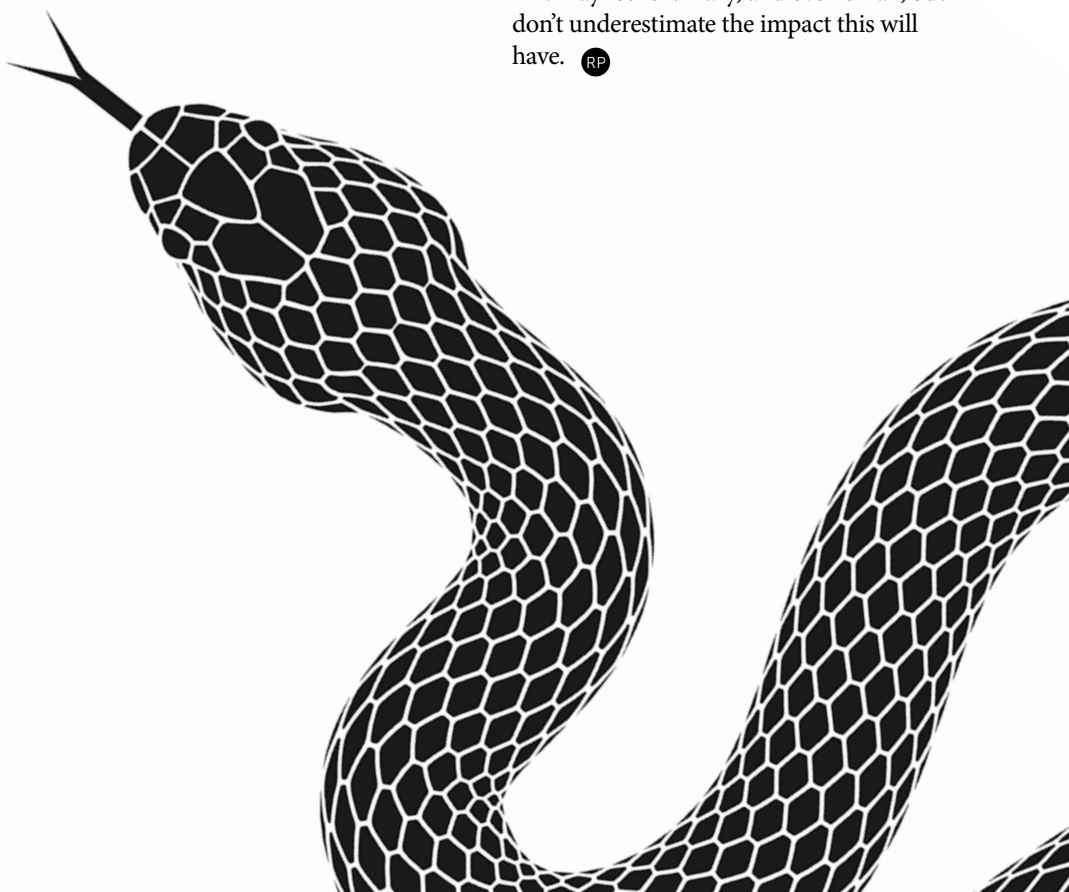
Hannah, David, Esther, Mary, the disciples, etc.) and little places (Bethel, Shiloh, Bethlehem, Nazareth) to accomplish big things for His kingdom. These people and places were not anything special in their world. Nobody expected much from them.

Schaeffer reflected that many Christians look at their weaknesses and conclude: “It is wonderful to be a Christian, but I am such a small person, so limited in talents or energy or psychological strength or knowledge that what I do is not really important.” To this Schaeffer replied: “The Bible, however, has quite a different emphasis: With God there are no little people.” That is because what matters is not our strength or accomplishments.

“Only one thing is important: to be *consecrated* persons in God’s place for us, at each moment. Those who think of themselves as little people in little places, if committed to Christ and living under his Lordship in the whole of life, may, by God’s grace, change the flow of our generation.” [emphasis added]

In a world of desecration, our calling is both simple and noble: living consecrated lives for our LORD. Living in Christ.

It may feel ordinary, and even small, but don’t underestimate the impact this will have. 



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NEWS IN *Perspective*

GLOBAL WEALTH IS GROWING

BY MARTY VANDRIEL



Overall, the world's population is richer than ever, with global personal wealth growing 10.8% in 2025, after more modest growth of 4.6% in 2024, and 4.2% in 2023.

This is according to UBS Bank's annual *Global Wealth Report 2026*, which also offers national rankings of average wealth per adult. Canada came in at 13th in the world at just below \$400,000 (in US dollars) per adult. Switzerland topped this ranking at over \$900,000 per adult, with the U.S. in second at just

under \$700,000. Personal wealth, often referred to as "net worth," consists of all of a person's assets, including real estate, savings, retirement accounts, and stock portfolios.

This average wealth number includes very high net worth individuals, which can skew the results, which is why median wealth – the mid-point where half of Canadians have more and half have less – may be a more meaningful statistic. On this ranking, Canada is higher on the UBS list at 7th place, with a median wealth per adult estimate of

around \$150,000, well ahead of the U.S. ranking of 28th on this same list (around \$70,000 per adult). America's lower ranking in the median scale shows that there is indeed a large gap in the U.S. between the very rich and those of more modest means, while this disparity is smaller in Canada.

Despite these positive reports, Canadians might not feel wealthier for a number of reasons. Being wealthier (having a higher net worth) does not mean that one has quick access to more cash. For example, the value of your home may have risen significantly, but that doesn't help you to pay for this month's utility bills. Many are also feeling the squeeze from higher prices for everyday purchases like gasoline and groceries due to inflation and tariffs.

Nonetheless, it's worth reflecting on how we are, today, experiencing unprecedented riches when compared to how people have lived for all of the history of the world. Poverty rates are falling all over the world: in the mid 1970's, nearly half of the world's population lived in extreme poverty; today, roughly 1 in 10 people live below the global poverty line.

In 1 Chronicles 29, after requesting gifts from the people in preparation for Solomon's building of the temple, King David prays to the Lord before the assembled Israelites. He reminds them – and us – that,

"Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. In Your hand are power and might, and in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own we have given you." (1 Chron. 29:12-14)

May we also remember that our wealth has been entrusted to us, but it is ultimately all the Lord's, and may we always be ready to give freely and joyfully for His kingdom.

MORE HOMEOWNERS FACING INSOLVENCY

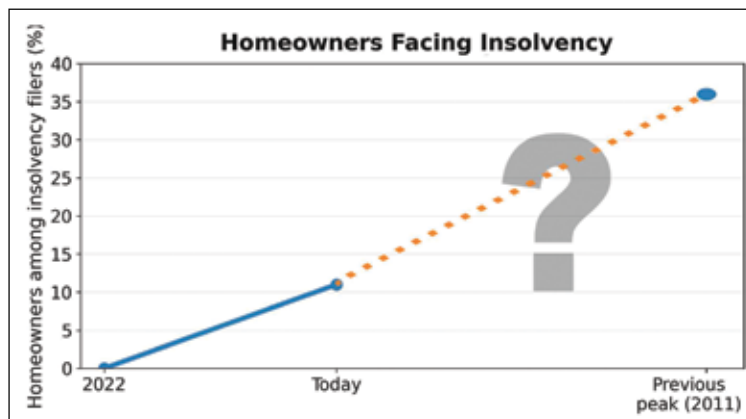
BY MARK PENNINGA

Canadians have long been struggling with personal debt, but Scott Terrio, a manager at Hoyes, Michalos Licensed Insolvency Trustees told *The Hub* that the bigger story is *who* is now feeling the pinch.

“The big thing we’re seeing now that we weren’t seeing a year ago or a year and a half ago is homeowners calling us.... We didn’t speak to homeowners for a decade in this industry because of the housing boom. When houses are going up 20 percent a year, and you’re swimming in equity, you don’t need an insolvency trustee.”

The latest data from Statistics Canada reveals this marked increase in household debt, up 4.4 percent from a year prior. Canadian households now have the highest debt burden among G7 countries and the second-highest of 38 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (only Switzerland is higher).

Hoyes Michalos has a homeowner bankruptcy index, which shows that insolvent homeowners have an average of \$112,000 in unsecured debt in addition to their mortgage. The index shows that the percent of bankruptcy filers



who own homes has increased from 0 percent in 2022 to 11 percent today and “we are going to be back at 36 [when it peaked in 2011] at some point. Guaranteed,” Terrio added.

The fact that 1 out of every 7 dollars is now being spent on debt payments verifies the wisdom of the Teacher in Proverbs 22:7 when he said that “the borrower is slave to the lender.” A home can be very attractive, especially when home values increase year after year. But the Great Teacher also reminds us in Luke 14:28 to first count the cost: “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” Sadly, many don’t, and are now paying for it.

SOCIAL MEDIA PUSHES PORNOGRAPHY ON CHILDREN WITHIN MINUTES

BY JONATHAN VAN MAREN

Social media is now one of the primary pipelines to porn addiction for both children and young adults.

Global Witness, an organization that investigates the impact of Big Tech on human rights, conducted tests last year to determine how quickly children could access pornography on social media platforms.

According to the *Guardian*, Global Witness conducted one test before the implementation of the U.K.’s Online Safety Act in July 2025, and one after. In just a few clicks, TikTok directed children’s accounts to pornography.

“Global Witness set up fake accounts using a 13-year-old’s birth date and turned on the video app’s ‘restricted mode,’ which limits exposure to ‘sexually suggestive’ content,” the *Guardian* reported. “Researchers found TikTok suggested sexualised and explicit search terms to seven test accounts that were

created on clean phones with no search history.”

I have seen similar tests conducted myself – a completely new account set up, with no history, and no algorithm as of yet – and highly sexual content was recommended within minutes. Countless young people have reported being first exposed to pornographic material on social media; many teenagers have told me that Instagram is a key on-ramp into pornography.

If they so much as pause for a fraction of a second as they scroll past a sexually explicit image, the pause is detected by the algorithm, and more sexual content is pushed into their feed. That content escalates in explicitness, and the algorithm almost literally reels them in with a conveyor belt of sexual imagery. Many young men who had successfully freed themselves from pornography have told me that going onto Instagram caused relapses into addiction.

Snapchat is no better. Pornography is easily accessible within five clicks without ever leaving the app. The National Centre on Sexual Exploitation lists the social media app as one of the worst offenders on its annual “Dirty Dozen” list.

Despite all this – and this evidence has been mounting for years – many parents choose to deliberately turn a blind eye to what their children or teens are doing online; what apps they use; and which social media platforms they have. This abdication of responsibility has led to enormous misery, addiction, and genuine damage, during the formative developmental years.

As Tim Challies wrote years ago already when begging parents not to give their children smartphones: “Please don’t give them porn for Christmas.”

Jonathon Van Maren blogs at thebridgehead.ca.



ONTARIO'S "CONSERVATIVE" GOVERNMENT OPPOSES BILL THAT WOULD HAVE BANNED GAMBLING ADS

BY JON DYKSTRA



Ontario is awash in new gamblers. As ARPA Canada reported earlier this year:

"A recent study found that since iGaming Ontario was introduced, total monthly wagers increased by 654% between April 2022 and August 2025, and the number of active player accounts rose 239%. Calls to Ontario's mental health and addictions helpline rose at an accelerated annual rate (7% above the previous trend) after iGaming Ontario was introduced in 2022. The highest increase in calls was among young men aged 15 to 24."

The province's iGaming Ontario reported that in the 2024-25 fiscal year, it oversaw \$82.7 billion in total wagers. That amounts to an average of \$5,000 being bet, and \$180 being lost, by every man, woman, and child in the province. How much revenue does the government get out of this? It's surprisingly low: a little over \$181 million, with the rest going to the private gaming operators. That means the government is overseeing an enormous expansion of gambling, but making only a smidge over \$11 per man, woman, and child from it.

These iGaming Ontario numbers don't even account for the billions more spent on the government's own Ontario

Lottery and Gaming. While it's hard to know just how much is being gambled through its lotteries and other offerings, what is clear is how much it contributes to government coffers: \$2.25 billion in 2024-25, or \$140 from every man, woman, and child.

Earlier this year, billionaire investor Warren Buffett characterized sports gambling as a tax that the rich like because "they don't have to pay it." Why don't they have to pay? Because it is an entirely voluntary tax – if you don't want to give the government your money, you can simply choose not to gamble. That's why he also agreed that it was "a tax on stupidity." But, of course, some people have a hard time *not* gambling. Various estimates put the number of problem gamblers at 1.1 to 11 percent of Ontarians, or between 160,000 and 1.6 million Ontarians getting hurt by a product their government is pushing on them. As Buffett put it:

"I don't like things that make a sucker out of people. I particularly don't like them when the government sponsors them. I don't think the function of the government is to play its people for suckers."

So when a bill was proposed, earlier this year, to ban gambling advertising in Ontario, it was a reason to celebrate. Gambling advertising

has gotten inescapable – as ARPA Canada shared, "one analysis in 2024 estimated that Canadian viewers of live sports broadcasts were exposed to 2.8 references to sports betting per minute" (emphasis added). This bill wasn't going to undo all the damage being done, but it was certainly a step in the right direction. And, all the more remarkably, the bill was being proposed by four members of Ontario's opposition Liberals. Things are bad indeed when even the Liberals see a need to rein things in. But the ostensibly "conservative" government said no. While they offered up reasons to oppose the Liberals' bill, what the Conservatives didn't do was propose an alternative to it – they spoke of the need for moving "thoughtfully and methodically" but in the meantime Ontarians are left with the destructive status quo.

What's wrong with gambling can perhaps be best understood in contrast to other ways we can make money. Gamblers make bets that, should they win, are covered by those who bet the other way and lost – your gain only comes via others' pain. Meanwhile, if you make money any other legal way, your wealth will come by *benefiting* others. Whether you are a housepainter or an accountant, the money that you thankfully receive comes from others who are thankful too for what they've gotten from you in exchange. Your gain is also their gain. God calls us to love our neighbor, not exploit him, so wealth gained at our neighbor's expense is an unacceptable way to take in money.

More could be said, but for those who think gambling is harmless entertainment I'll offer up just one more objection. Even if you've got your gambling under control, every bet you make is that little bit more motivation for the government to keep at this... to the great harm of many, who aren't in control of their gambling. If you love your neighbor, you should be lobbying the government to stop pushing, and just simply stop running, such a destructive enterprise.

NEARLY 60% OF VIOLENT CRIME CASES NOW BEING STAYED OR WITHDRAWN

BY MARK PENNINGA

J “Justice delayed has become justice denied,” concluded a recent report from *The Hub* about the amount of time it is taking for criminal justice cases to be completed.

Digging into the most recent data available across Canada, the report found that the median amount of time it takes to complete a case – from first appearance to a final decision – has increased 60 percent in just eight years. It’s gone from averaging around 4 months – varying from 121 to 124 days – for the 8 years preceding 2016, to now being well over 6 months, or 198 days for 2023/24.

There are many costs to delaying justice, with a big one being guilty people set free because they haven’t been offered a trial within the “reasonable time” promised in the Charter of Rights. The same report found that over the same time period, there has been a corresponding increase in the number of cases that have been stayed or withdrawn. That means

no finding of guilt or innocence has been reached. As *The Hub’s* David Snow reports:

“Focusing on Canada outside Quebec [because QC stats aren’t as up to date], the proportion of criminal cases that were stayed or withdrawn increased from just under 35 percent in 2007/08 to 40 percent by 2019/20. The increase accelerated sharply after the pandemic, to the extent that more than 50 percent of criminal cases outside Quebec now end without a determination of guilt or innocence.”

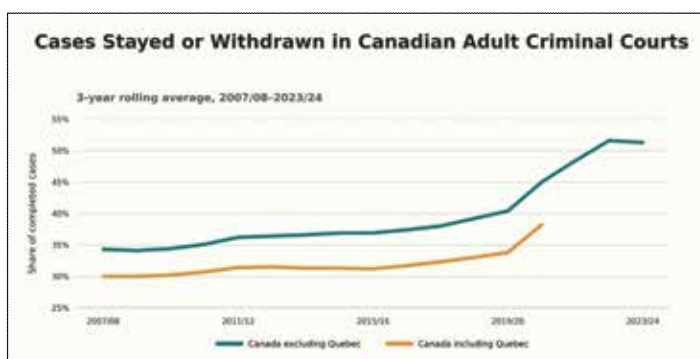
This is particularly the case for violent crimes, where now nearly three in five

cases are stayed or withdrawn.

As a result, fewer people are being found guilty, dropping from 63 percent to 46 percent. This isn’t because there are more acquittals. In fact, of the 228,425 adult court cases in 2023/2024:

- 105,371 were found guilty
- 118,265 were stayed or withdrawn
- only 2,442 were acquitted

God, who is perfectly just, calls us to image His justice. “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act” we are instructed in Proverbs 3:27. And as we read in Jeremiah 21:12, it must be done promptly. “Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed.” So the Charter of Rights’ call for trials in a “reasonable time” is good – we don’t want people who’ve never been convicted, languishing in jail for years on end before they even have a trial. Imagine if you are innocent, and you’re made to wait in jail for even “just” 4 months. This needs to be fixed.



LIBERAL PARTY SUPPORT HIGHEST AMONG BABY BOOMERS

MARTY VANDRIEL

More than any other age group, boomers overwhelmingly support the Liberal Party. A July 2026 poll conducted by Abacus Data asked 4,200 Canadian adults which party they would likely vote for if an election were held that day. 52% of voters who were age 60 and older supported the Liberals, versus 32% voicing support for the Conservative Party.

Meanwhile, among all other voting age groups – ages 18 to 29, 30 to 44, and 45 to 59 – support was almost dead even between the Liberals and Conservatives.

Why the difference? One possibility was offered up by *National Post* columnist Amy Hamm, who suggested that seniors are more heavily influenced by left-leaning TV broadcasters such as *CBC News* than younger age groups, who tend to get news from a wider variety of sources, with a broader range of political perspectives. Hamm wrote about the *CBC*:

“Citizens should expect our national broadcaster to engage in nonpartisan news reporting. In years long past, the *CBC* arguably did... These days, the *CBC* frames Prime Minister Carney’s failures as successes, and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre as an angry parliamentary jester.”

While it can be hard to judge what outlets are trustworthy, Christians have the wisdom from the Lord’s Word to guide our thinking and to test our sources for the wrong biases. Scripture tells us, too, to hear out multiple sources before making judgments, because, as Solomon reminds us, “The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him” (Prov. 18:17).





SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM IS TEARING DOWN TRANSGENDER LIES, BUT ONLY GOD'S PEOPLE CAN OFFER UP HIS TRUTH

BY JON DYKSTRA

Indiana Fever's Sophie Cunningham is a WNBA player – she plays basketball for a living – but it isn't her skill on the court that's made her famous. Her first foray into infamy occurred last year, when she horse-collared opposing guard Jacy Sheldon and threw her to the ground after Sheldon poked Cunningham's marquee teammate, Caitlin Clark, in the eye. Cunningham then used her newfound fame and her good looks to get into the 2026 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue, and get a stint as a ring girl for July's UFC 329.

While some opposing players might not have appreciated Cunningham the "enforcer," the haters came out en masse after a July 21 interview with ESPN in which she made clear her opposition to men competing in women's sports.

"I got a lot of negative feedback about me hating trans. And I'm like, 'I never once said that,'" she says. "I think that I am here to extend love. But I also think with that love is truth, being honest. And I want to protect young girls in a locker room, or young girls in sport who shouldn't have to go against biological men."

It was a common sense take, but her own coach refused to have any part of it. When asked for her take on "biological males in women's sports," Fever coach Stephanie White dodged, and then threw Cunningham under the bus:

"I wouldn't really say that I'm educated enough from a scientific standpoint. I don't ever believe that exclusion is the answer."

Exclusion is never the answer? This is a coach in the Women's National Basketball Association which exists even though there is already a National Basketball Association that both men and women are eligible to play in. Why then does the WNBA exist? To exclude men. Because when men aren't excluded, then women will be. There is not a single female player in the NBA, not because any rule prevents it, but because biology does. This "inclusive" coach doesn't get that she's in an inherently exclusive league.

During a July 28 game with the Fever visiting the Seattle Storm, two teen girls were cussed out by one of the Storm's owners because they had a sign supporting Cunningham's stand. When

the Fever played the Portland Fire on July 31, the Fire coach got asked about men in women's sports, and he insisted he was "completely supportive of everyone." Then, when the Fever played the Minnesota Lynx on August 2, head coach Cheryl Reeve wore a "Trans kids belong" shirt, and ESPN commentators Ryan Ruocco and Rebecca Lobos pointed it out, and encouraged viewers to "go and listen" to Reeve's "incredibly thoughtful" comments defending procedures that mutilate and sterilize kids.

Cunningham hasn't backed down, tweeting out a picture of coach Cheryl Reeve in her shirt and captioning it "There is no such thing as 'TRANS KIDS'" followed by a smiling clown emoji. But there is some irony in Cunningham taking a stand against men in women's sports. Twelve years ago she played for the Rock Bridge High School Bruins when the team's primary kicker went down with a season-ending ACL injury. Long before we started pretending boys could become girls, we were pretending that girls could play football with the boys. It's the very same kind of biological blindness that insists girls can withstand hits from 250-pound linebackers. And what kind of lesson is it for these giant boys to tell them it's no big thing to treat women just like men? Cunningham is certainly courageous, but in the past she's also participated in the confusion.

Sports media commentator Clay Travis offered to clear away the confusion with an Aug. 3 tweet:

"Important announcement: I am upping my offer, \$10 million dollars for a head-to-head basketball game between the defending WNBA champion Las Vegas Aces and a boys' high school state title team of my choice. If the Aces beat my team, I will give them \$10 million."

The WNBA salary cap in 2026 is \$7 million for a 45-game season. Travis is calling this "inclusive" league out, offering to more than double the Aces' salary for one extra game's

worth of work... if only they can beat high school boys. If there really is no difference between men and women, then why wouldn't the very best women ballers in the world be confident about beating high school boys? Because deep down they do know what they've been saying about gender swapping is nonsense.

We should admire Cunningham for her courage, and Travis for being willing to back his stand with big bucks. But what the world needs to hear now is the clarity that only God's Word offers. Why is it so stupid for men to play against women? And why does the world have to pretend otherwise? It's because they've rejected God's Word, and that's left them without any foundation to stand on. Christians know that men and women are all made in God's Image (Gen. 1:26-27) and this, then, is the basis of our worth and our equality. But apart from God, what makes us valuable? The world has nowhere to turn but our abilities. That's why they say we can kill the unborn, and for that matter the elderly and disabled – their lives are said to not be as valuable because they can't do as much. But then how do they explain equality? Only by pretending that men and women can do exactly the same things. To say otherwise – to say that men can play basketball better than women, for example – is then understood to be an assault on women's worth. So we're all expected to ignore our eyes, and just believe that women can be oil rig workers, and "trans women are women."

God's people are getting some help from the Cunninghams and Traveses of the world in exposing these crazy lies. But the Church needs to step up and point the world to the God who defines reality. This is our moment to give Him the glory by providing the world with His answers – let's not let it slip by.

Photo is adapted from an August 2, 2026 photo by John McClellan and is used under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license.

GLOBAL FIRES ARE DOWN – IS THAT HOW IT FELT TO YOU?

BY JON DYKSTRA



Wildfires have been in the news because of the smoke drifting into heavily populated areas, but also because of the heat US president Donald Trump generated when he decided it was Canada's fault. He accused his northern neighbor of "willful negligence" in its forest management. Meanwhile, others pointed to climate change as the culprit.

The news coverage probably left most of us with the impression that this was one of the worst years for forest fires. So it surprised me to learn that, as of August 5, the year 2026 was – compared to the last 14 years – a much better year than normal, with far less burning both in North America and the world overall. Climate catastrophism critic Bjørn Lomborg shared that North

America is experiencing its lowest total acreage burning over those last 14 years, and every single continent has less area burning this year than the average over the same period.

Is that how it felt to you? Not for me. And that's because of the media's focus on when things go bad. Sharing disasters is their default, and it only makes sense. Heavy smoke in Toronto is understandably going to get more coverage than huge swaths of land elsewhere that aren't burning. But the media's systemic negativity bias will often leave us with the wrong impression, and could have us worried about disasters that aren't quite so disastrous. So when you see them preaching doom and gloom, be alert to how you may only be getting the pessimistic side of the story.

17 BABIES BORN AND LEFT TO DIE IN ALBERTA

BY JON DYKSTRA



Richard Dur, the Executive Director of ProLife Alberta, writing in *The Western Standard*, shared this grim statistic: "Seventeen babies were born alive in Alberta following labour-induced late-term abortions in 2025 and left to die." Because the abortionists' goal had always been to kill these children, even after they were born, that goal remained. This is one more example of how the pro-choice side is simply pro-death. This had nothing to do with "my body, my choice" – these babies weren't in their

mother's body any longer.

Can something be done to stop this killing? Maybe. Two decades ago, Premier Danielle Smith, writing as a *Calgary Herald* columnist, condemned just this sort of killing. And the current Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services, Andriana LaGrange, might lend us a sympathetic ear too, as she used to be the president of Red Deer Pro-life. So, this might be a time to go all "persistent widow" (Luke 18:1-8) on them both.

Go to LeftToDie.ca to learn more.

RANK OUR NEWS COVERAGE: WHAT DO YOU WANT MORE OF?

There's a whole world of news out there we could cover, so we're asking for your feedback on what kinds of news coverage you find the most helpful.

So will you lend a hand? Scan the QR code with your phone, or go to ReformedPerspective.ca/rating on your computer, and let us know which News in Perspective articles you most appreciated this issue. And if you can weigh in on other 2026 news items, that's even better!





SHOULD ALBERTA SEPARATE?

Why one Christian decided to vote "no"

by Harma-Mae Smit

"Canada is like an old cow. The West feeds it. Ontario and Quebec milk it. And you can well imagine what it's doing in the Maritimes."

~ attributed to Tommy Douglas, premier of Saskatchewan from 1944-1961

I am a true-blue Albertan, born and raised in this province, and I truly haven't found a better place to live. However, with a referendum looming in October I've been presented with the choice of whether my allegiance is to Alberta or to my country Canada. In October, Albertans will vote on the question:

"Should Alberta remain a province of Canada, or should the Government of Alberta commence the legal process

required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada?"

Maybe your back goes up immediately – with words like *disloyal*, *unpatriotic*, and *betrayal* going through your mind. Or maybe you feel disillusioned with Canada and understand why a province would want to separate.

If I'm perfectly honest, I never felt like Alberta independence was a real thing. It's been an idea at the back of Alberta political dialogue for my whole life, but mostly proposed in a joking way – "Wouldn't we be better off if we were our own country?" But now the sentiment is real enough to send enough signatures on a petition to get the question put to a referendum.

Despite my skepticism of independence, I have always been sympathetic to western alienation. But my instinct was still to vote "stay" – that there was something good about loyalty, that grievance wasn't enough of a reason to leave, that respect for my country meant not tearing it apart. But my instinct was not enough. So, when faced with writing this article, I knew what I had to do – I had to go beyond my own feelings and impressions. I needed to go out and talk to other Albertans, to figure out what exactly was going on, and to hear in their own words why they supported or did not support independence. But more importantly than that, I needed to compare their thoughts and opinions to the Word of God. What should Christians think of all this separatism talk?

BACKGROUND

Let's first start with the "why" behind the independence movement. I have sympathy for western alienation, and in my view it started with the eastern provinces viewing the development of the West as a resource for them to profit from. And while that makes sense from the perspective of Central Canada, the West never felt fully included in Canada.

Oil complicated this picture. It turned Alberta from a "have not" province based on farming to a "have" province based on oil, and gave it some power in terms of financial wealth. However, the federal government saw this as further resources to profit from, and implemented a series of taxes and programs to spread the financial wealth around the rest of Canada.

For example, here is how one prominent supporter of Albertan independence, Tim Stevens, put it in a speech on April 10:

"Alberta, having about 12% of the population of Canada, contributes nearly 20% to the federal tax revenue. And when this takes place, we have very little influence over the political future of our country. For instance, many of the elections are decided by Ontario and Quebec. And before people here even cast their vote, who our next government is going to be has already been decided."

There is a feeling in Alberta that many provinces in Canada are happy to take our money as long as we don't have any opinions on either how the country is run or what the federal government wants to do in our own province. Separatists will argue that through all these years, Albertans have tried through various political means to reform this system, to give Alberta a louder voice in a country they fund. Their conclusion is that the lack of success makes separation our only option.

So this is why I'm sympathetic to some of the arguments of the separatists. However, this raises several questions. Is "grievance" enough of a reason to base a new country on? Or even just the simple fact of being treated unfairly? God calls

us to respect and obey our leaders, which means we have some responsibility in the place where we're at. When do we judge we've made "enough" effort and our responsibility has come to an end? Lastly, there's the question of the harm it would cause to our brothers and sisters in the rest of Canada. Even the mention of separation causes some economic instability. Is this justified?

I'm sympathetic and yet I feel a deep loyalty to Canada, and the home it provided to my Dutch ancestors fleeing the aftermath of WWII, to my husband when he immigrated, and now provides to our family.

"Personally, I argue that Alberta independence is compatible with biblical Christianity," says Michael Wagner, another well-known supporter of independence, "but desiring Canada to stay together can also legitimately be a Christian perspective. So I don't think the Bible requires Alberta Christians to support independence."

Each Christian needs to think about *why* they are voting one way or the other.

LOVE FOR COUNTRY, LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR

While the motivations for separation are understandable, so is the backlash against the idea. For those who love Canada, it stirs up strong emotions. It's like a sibling threatening to leave the family or to go "no contact." This is true not only in the rest of the country, but in Alberta itself. While much of Alberta feels alienated from the political apparatus out East, many still feel deep loyalty and patriotism for Canada itself. Some have even become Canadian citizens specifically because they love Canada, and don't want to be part of a different country. This is why this issue has become so divisive.

I began to reach out to various friends to hear how they've been thinking this issue through. "We have also been given political responsibility as those who vote," one says to me.

"In a small way, we are those who bear the sword when we vote, when we choose what we believe is right for

our nation. It is not evil to make what one believes to be the right choice in that vote. What is evil is insurrection, rebellion, and violence. But a referendum (democratic vote) is none of those things. Nor is a free discussion about why we think a political decision is right or wrong. Christians should concur with the legitimate result of the election, but they are free to think and vote as they see fit."

It is true that mechanisms for provinces to leave have been worked out by the courts, and Alberta is not the first province to explore the option of leaving (see Quebec and Nova Scotia). It's not immoral to explore an existing legal pathway to independence. But the motivations and reasons behind doing so may be.

Take the issue of grievances. "It's one thing to forgive a grievance when it's in the past," the same friend tells me. "It's another to remain complicit when that injustice is still ongoing. We can love (an act, not a feeling) our nation without believing that the nation has our best interests at heart."

However, another friend argues, "As a father, I do not want to raise my boys to think that if you feel like you are treated unfairly, the answer is to threaten grievous harm to get what you want. That's extortion and sinful." He goes on to add, "A sovereign God has overseen this election, Carney is doing some good things in which I can rejoice, and I can pray for God's hand in those areas that concern me and trust in Him."

Next, I decide to reach out to my sister and get her opinion. She texts back to me: "One of the things that comes up the most often in the Bible is 'take care of the widows and orphans and the poor' – will separating improve people's lives? Right now equalization payments benefit poorer provinces – isn't that a good thing from a Christian perspective?"

I quickly text back, "One argument would be that the Bible teaches us to voluntarily help the poor, not that other people (the government) should *make* us help the poor."

She replies, "I would say that it's more that we should have an attitude of help-

Jasper's rainbow sidewalk is just one of many throughout the province. Alberta might be a bit out of step with the rest of the country, but as this shows, it's only half a step.



ing the poor – including through the government.”

That resonated with me, because it put into words something I had been struggling to articulate. If I want to keep Alberta's money because I resent helping others like me in the rest of Canada, maybe my motivation is wrong. I might not agree with exactly how the government takes the money, but I should maintain my care for others even while I might advocate for better use of the money we send.

Lastly, I decide to listen to a speech available on YouTube on a Christian perspective on Albertan independence. In it, Clint Humfrey, senior pastor of Calvary Grace Church in Calgary, urges Christians to support the cause:

“That is what we need today here in Alberta. We need to expect great things from God and attempt great things for God... We ought to seek the relief of our neighbors groaning. We ought to seek the relief of our own groaning in our churches, but we also ought to seek the relief of our children's future and the provision for them... If you have no

hope, you will not be able to have the drive to see what could be done. And it starts with having hope in Jesus Christ for eternal life. And that then gives you the ability to have hope to try things... to try things all for the glory of God.”

For a brief moment, his excitement fired me up. But his vision was not my vision, though I certainly care about doing great things for God. The energy and effort required to build a new nation is not where I feel God calling me to work today, even as I try to care for my neighbors around me in my quiet, ordinary life.

LOVE FOR GOD

I feel somewhat lost in all the arguments for and against. My husband is one of the people whose opinions I value most in this world. So, on a recent trip out of town I took the opportunity of discussing it with him.

“Why don't you support independence?” I ask.

“Because it's about money,” he says. “What are we supposed to do when we're afraid? Rely on God and keep our eyes

fixed on Jesus. Yes, things are hard for people and gas prices are high. But – ” he gestures at the fields as we drive by, “wouldn't you say Alberta is rich?”

“Ye-es,” I answer, thinking of the not-so-rich country my husband grew up in.

“So Alberta is prosperous, let's trust God will continue to prosper us.”

“Okay, so what about this,” I say. “The argument is that the federal government does a lot of unchristian things with our money, and if we kept more of it we could use it for more Christian things.”

“Really?” he says. “Do you really think Alberta is more Christian? Alberta isn't more Christian.”

“Why do you say that?”

“We have all the same issues as the rest of Canada.”

“But maybe statistically the number of Christians is slightly higher in Alberta?”

“Think about it,” he says. “Say the Prime Minister gives us what we want – more say, and lets us keep our money. We'd be happy, right? We say it's all these unchristian laws, but that makes me think it's about the money.”

I nod along because in my discussions I had come across many supporters of having more sovereignty but staying in Canada (and using this referendum as leverage to get it), or arguments that threatening separation had worked for Quebec so we should do it too. I think there are ardent separatists for whom nothing but independence would satisfy, and I hope Christians who vote to leave are not primarily motivated by the idea of leverage – but this group is smaller than the number of people who might vote “leave.”

“So, biblically,” I say, “what would you say the Christian thing is to do?”

“What does the Bible say? ‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar's.’ That goes deeper than money – it goes to everything: respect, support, everything unless the government comes against our faith.”

I nod again, thinking of something similar John Calvin said that I'd read a while back:

“But Peter requires something more of us when he says, ‘Honor the king’ (1 Pet. 2: 17); and Solomon, when he

says, 'My son, fear thou the Lord and the king' (Prov. 24: 21). For, under the term honor, the former includes a sincere and candid esteem, and the latter, by joining the king with God, shows that he is invested with a kind of sacred veneration and dignity..."

My husband looks over at me.

"And you know what? The government is coming against our faith. Why not fight that more? We're willing to stand up for our money, to fight taxes, etc. We'll fight when the government takes our money and gives it to someone else, but otherwise we stick to ourselves because we don't want to rock the boat."

He pauses. "There's a reason God gave us this government, and put these people in power over us. Maybe it's to teach us how much we need to call on Him."

I think about all the energy that had gone into this separatism debate, and whether it was distracting us from other things.

He reaches over and grabs my hand. "Look at Psalms 35-40. I've been reading these in the morning lately. It's all about the poor being oppressed. But who rescues them? God. Who fixes injustice? God. We need to cry out to Him. He's the one who has our lives in His hands."

Later, I look up Psalms 35-41. In Psalm 37, I read:

*Trust in the Lord and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe
pasture.*

*...Be still before the Lord
and wait patiently for Him;
do not fret when people succeed
in their ways,
when they carry out their
wicked schemes.*

*Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;
do not fret – it leads only to evil.
For those who are evil will be destroyed,
but those who hope in the Lord will
inherit the land.*

We can spend a lot of time fretting in our lives, over what we perceive as un-

fair, over evildoers "getting away" with something, over what might happen in our futures. But we don't need to despair when God is on our side.

I want to be fair, so I reach out to Michael Wagner by email. He replies:

"The federal government in recent years has imposed policies on Alberta that undermine the well-being of many Albertans and their families. Looking for an alternative that provides a better future for Alberta has nothing to do with greed, ungodly grievances, or threats. Independence is an option that would make it possible for Albertans to choose political leaders who will adopt policies that will benefit Alberta rather than harm Alberta."

He also says, "It's about justice, not greed."

I think about the issues at hand for many evenings as I rock my baby to sleep, staring at her beautiful face and wondering about the kind of future I want for my family. For me, my jour-

ney over the past couple years has been learning to fully trust God with everything in my life. To let go of control and really believe God will take care of my life. What kind of country do I want my daughter to live in?

I think about the "what if" vision that the supporters of independence have put forward, a vision of a more Christian nation we could build if we could just start over from scratch. I think about how much easier it is to tear things down rather than to build them. I think about Canada stagnating, losing its place in the world, and what that would look like for my daughter's future. I think about the nation that I love and what I would want to tell her about it.

Ultimately I don't have control over the future. It is enough if my daughter is able to trust herself into the hands of God.

And in the end, I will stay Albertan and Canadian. I don't see a compelling vision of Alberta as a sovereign nation yet, and I haven't given up on Canada. I haven't done everything in my power to change the country I love for the better yet. And so I will continue to trust myself and my family into God's hands. RP





IS IT WRONG TO GO?

...and other considerations in deciding how to vote in Alberta's separation referendum

by Jon Dykstra

I have deep roots in Alberta, having lived there for the first 30+ years of my life. I was also heavily involved in politics through a half dozen different campaigns, and during those years I thought long and hard about what a better Alberta might look like.

I have since been separated from my home province by mileage and decades. While I am still a very interested observer, the distance allows me to act as more of an impartial observer than I would have been able to be two decades ago. I'm going to try here, to make a limited point – that it would be okay for Alberta to go. Not that it *should* go, but just that going is an option on the table that Christians can consider.

Even as I think the referendum is well worth talking about, I don't think it has

any chance of success. A June 5 Ipsos poll had only 19% of Albertans interested in starting the process, and only 18% who actually wanted to go. Angus Reid had support as high as 35% for starting the process, but that was back in May, and their guesstimate was the highest of all the pollsters.

So, I'm not writing to sway voters one way or the other. The reason I wanted to write is because some of the issues brought up are universal – they apply not just for Albertans trying to figure out how to vote, but whenever Christians are making any decision. Kevin DeYoung tackled decision-making in his excellent book *Just Do Something*, so, inspired by him, here are a handful of questions to help shape a Christian's decision-making process.

Q.1 HAS GOD LEFT THE DECISION UP TO ME?

Another way to phrase this question would be, *is this a wrong/right matter?* If it is, then we know what to do – we need to do whatever it is that God commands. Screwing up the courage to do so might be hard, but if we know it is a moral matter then we already know what we should do. God's will be done.

However, as Kevin DeYoung notes in *Just Do Something*, a lot of our decisions aren't so simple, precisely because they aren't about wrong or right. God leaves some pretty big decisions up to us: what kind of job we'll pursue, where we'll live, who we will marry, whether we should partner up to start a company. Big stuff. Huge stuff!

We can and should look to God for

guidance, and talk to our parents and the other wise people He's gifted us. We can come to Him in prayer and ask Him to make our motivations pure. We can look to His word for wisdom. But then it is up to us; He gives us a decision to make.

Take marriage as an example. You can look over every page of the Bible, and you just aren't going to find the name of the person God has in mind for you. He's left it to you, to figure out who *you* have in mind for you. Now, you can't marry an unbeliever because He's said we should not be unequally yoked (2 Cor. 6:14). He also offers guidance on the *kind* of man or woman you should be impressed by. But, if a young man, Timmy, has a couple of those kind of ladies sitting in the pews nearby him each Sunday, then it will be up to him to make a choice. And up to whoever Timmy asks to make her own.

Now let's direct the question above to the separation referendum: is this a matter of wrong and right? The possible answers to the question can go a few different ways:

1. Yes it is, which is why we have to vote *against*
2. Yes it is, so we have to vote *for* separation
3. No it is not, so God has left the decision up to us.

So which is it?

Before trying to answer that, let's clear away one distraction. That something *can* be done for the wrong reasons is not proof that it *is* wrong. Mankind has the sad ability to make just about anything immoral if we try.

So, as noted, Timmy could have a couple of wonderful godly young women to consider – either could be a good God-honoring choice. But if he asks out Helen only because she has a cool car he'd like to drive, his selfishness and disregard for her heart would turn a legitimate action into a sinful one. That doesn't change the fact that Helen is a great girl. So, for our purposes, that people *could* have bad motivations for voting for (or against) separation is not

what we're trying to figure out. It is no surprise that it *could* be done sinfully because *anything* can be done sinfully. But what we're trying to figure out is whether seeking to leave Canada is sinful all by itself, or whether it's something God leaves for us to decide.

To that end let's ask a couple of clarifying questions.

A) Is there something about leaving that is wrong?

Some Christians have invoked Romans 13 to argue that because God calls us to be in submission to our authorities it would be wrong for Alberta to remove itself from being under the authority of the federal government.

It's a good idea to go to Scripture, but let's dig a little deeper and consider what sort of submission God speaks of here. Under a dictatorship, as Paul and most of the world lived under when this was written, they had no means of changing their leaders. But in a democracy, we do. So, while we know God has placed the Liberals in charge of Canada, we don't think it would be wrong for us to try, via democratic means, to remove ourselves from being under their authority the next time an election is called. We'd likely thank God for such a result.

So, how then, is it so very different for Alberta, via democratic means, to seek to replace this authority over them? Can we characterize such a vote as rebellion against, or disrespect for God's appointed authorities? No, because, after all, this is simply following the process via the means those authorities laid out.

This is an important point – what submission involves – that often gets confused, such that some Christians will characterize taking the government to court as disrespectful, because, again, didn't God put them in authority over us? But Paul used the courts (Acts 25), and could do so while writing Romans 13, because those courts and that process were a part of the very authority he was in submission to. And what we have in the separation referendum is another government-given process that we can access in submission.

B) Would it be wrong not to go?

Or in other words, should Christians feel obligated to vote *for* the referendum?

While I think there are reasons that could be offered for leaving, that's not the same thing as saying Christians must choose to go. To go back to Timmy and his marriage prospects, that there are reasons for him to ask out Susan doesn't mean he has to. There are, after all, other possibilities to consider, including Helen.

So would it actually be wrong to stay?

I think that would be a very tough case to make but let's for the sake of argument, make a hypothetical case where it wouldn't be so tough. Let's imagine that the federal government was evil – it was murdering a quarter of its citizens before they were even born, and was now going after the elderly and disabled too. We won't find that hard to imagine, because that is what's happening right now. Now let's imagine Alberta was ruled by wise godly Christians who sought to honor God, and were desperately trying to stop the federal government from pushing abortion and euthanasia in their province but they just couldn't so long as the province was still under the federal thumb. In those circumstances would it be wrong to stay?

Under those circumstances, I think we might well conclude it would be wrong, based on just how many unborn and elderly and disabled lives could be saved if Alberta left. But those aren't the circumstances we have, are they?

Even Alberta at its best is far from godly. Danielle Smith has no qualms about abortion, and euthanasia is paid for by provincial coffers with no protest. Even where the province is out of step with the rest of our Liberal country, it is only a half-step, with the premier's stance against transgenderism a good example. Yes, she defended kids from this mutilation, but at the very same time she was recruiting doctors from Quebec to better enable confused Albertan adults to mutilate themselves.

So this is not some black and white choice between an evil and a godly government. And as such, I don't think there is a clear case to be made that Alberta must go either.

Which would mean God is leaving the decision to us.

Q.2 HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS?

We make a million decisions every day, and not all of them deserve the same amount of attention. So we need to treat things proportionately.

If you are going to buy a new car, that deserves more of your time and maybe prayerful consideration than if you're buying a coffee. Though if you're buying a coffee every day, that could warrant some consideration too, because that's now become a bigger budgetary matter. But not everything is big. If you're trying to decide between toast and cereal this morning, it's not worth much brain space. Don't take forever deciding – that'd be wasting the time that God has entrusted to your care.

So, we do need to treat big things as big, but also treat small things as small. And I'd make the case that for the vast majority of us, the separation referendum shouldn't be a big thing.

Why? First, there's every reason to think the separation vote is going to lose in a landslide. So, give it enough time to go cast your vote, but there are a lot of matters likely to actually happen that are, therefore, more deserving of your attention.

Second, even if separation were to happen, would it solve any of our most pressing political problems? No. If it were only the Alberta government in power, God's people would still need to be just as busy standing up for the unborn, the elderly, and the disabled.

So, this isn't nothing; but it isn't the big way forward that will save Alberta either. We can give it more brain space and passion than our toast vs. cereal dilemma, but for both practical and prioritization reasons, should it get all that much more?

Q.3 ARE MY MOTIVATIONS PURE?

As noted, we can do the right thing for the wrong reasons. That's why Kevin DeYoung suggests (again, in his excellent book *Just Do Something*) that when we're making the very decisions that God has left up to us – what job we'll take, whether we're going to move, whether we should buy that gaming system – a good prayer



we can bring to Him is to ask that He make our motivations pure.

So, it's important that Christians don't vote for separation with a middle finger in the air aimed at Ottawa. But in our call to love our neighbors as ourselves, someone might vote for separation thinking of what a helpful example a free Alberta could be to the rest of Canada, showing what could be done with a different approach.

One Albertan might vote for separation thinking that if only we stop those equalization payments, Albertans, and more specifically him, will now be able to live a life of leisure, rolling in all those extra billions. But another voter might well want separation to end those equalization payments so that the federal government will stop incentivizing people to live where jobs are hard to come by. They could vote out of concern for their neighboring Canadians who are getting harmed by this government program.

So, the same act – the same decision – could be done in submission or defiance of God, based on our own motivations. Let's pray, then, that God be honored in all that we do.

Q.4 IN MY ESTIMATION, IS IT WISE?

So where do we land when a matter isn't wrong or right, when we have given it its due consideration, and after we've

questioned our own motivations? Then we arrive at the point where we have to decide for ourselves whether it is the wise thing to do.

Wisdom can be sought in consultation. Ask your parents. Read relevant articles. Debate things with your friends. But it'll be up to you.

CONCLUSION

I'm not going to make a case for separation or against, but I hope I've made a good case for Christian liberty. And in doing so, I hope I've also made the case for charity towards your brothers and sisters who are voting the opposite way you are. We do need to vote to God's glory. But what I'm arguing here is that in this referendum, that will be done more through the motivation and manner in which we vote, than in what direction we cast our ballot.

Honoring God is more than submitting to His will, but certainly not less. When He has expressed His will, then we need to submit no matter what it might cost to follow Him. But we can be bold too, when He leaves the decision-making up to us, knowing that our Heavenly Father will be pleased with whatever we might decide, just so long as we are trying to please Him. RP



PERHAPS YOU SHOULD RUN

Obedience
belongs to us.
The results belong
to the Lord.

by Paul Lawton

Every four years, for a brief season, nomination papers open and the question becomes concrete: who will step forward to govern our towns and cities?

Budgets and bylaws will be passed, libraries and parks funded, streets and neighborhoods planned, and public moral judgments made. Decisions will be made. The question is, by whom, and according to what vision of justice and the public good?

I write to suggest that some of you should step forward, and that those who do must let God's Word govern the

campaign and leave the result to the Lord. I write this while running for municipal council in my home city of Peterborough, Ontario. I do not write from the safety of hindsight. The campaign is underway, and whatever attention or pressure may come as election day approaches has not yet come. That is part of why I want to think clearly now.

I have said that I am not running despite being a Christian, but because I am a Christian. I believe public office is a responsibility before God and a trust from the people. That means honesty, stewardship, justice, neighbor-love, and

service.

That confession must govern my campaign, my exercise of office if elected, and my response to the result if not.

Furthermore, that confession raises a more basic question. Is Christian faith merely a private motive a candidate brings into politics, or is civil office itself under Christ? The prevailing ideal of religious neutrality draws the line there: Christians may hold office, but they must not insist that God's Word governs the office. Scripture and our confessions reject that division.

"I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME"

Perhaps your first objection is your calendar.

You have a job, perhaps two. You have children. You serve as an elder or deacon, sit on a school board, help govern a Christian organization, teach Sunday school or catechism, care for aging parents, practice hospitality, and seek opportunities for evangelism. You already have more good work before you than hours in which to do it.

Those responsibilities may be why you should not run. But municipal elections generally come only every four years. The opportunity to stand is not permanently available, and for many of us a truly quiet calendar is not a few months away but decades away. If we wait until our responsibilities have thinned out and life finally feels manageable, the nomination period will have closed and someone else will have stepped forward. Scripture warns us against burying what has been entrusted to us, and it tells us that whoever knows the good he ought to do and fails to do it sins.

That does not mean every capable Christian is commanded to become a candidate. Capability is not identical to calling. But capability does create a responsibility to discern.

I ran as a federal candidate in 2021. I did not win. Campaigning did take time. Yet I learned that public service need not simply subtract from family life. At times it can be woven into it.

My family came with me to rallies, debates, and candidate events. They helped deliver literature. My oldest daughter baked cupcakes for the campaign. We traveled, talked, worked, and learned together.

Time itself is finite, but family life is not simply a ledger in which every hour spent in public service is an hour stolen from one's children. A child who comes to a debate, helps deliver flyers, watches his father speak with an opponent, or prays for an election is not necessarily being deprived of family life. He may be receiving a memorable form of Christian instruction. The campaign became part of our life together. My children saw that public

responsibility was not merely something their father discussed at the dinner table. It was something a Christian family could practice.

This must not be romanticized. A man who neglects his wife and children while claiming to save the country has misunderstood Christian service. A wife should not be steamrolled by political ambition, and children should not be treated as campaign props. Some families are in seasons when candidacy would plainly be irresponsible.

Still, "I have a family" or "I am already serving" should not always end the discussion.

WHEN THE COST BECAME PERSONAL

After the 2021 federal election, the Peterborough Public Library began hosting "Drag Queen Story Time" events for children.

A friend and I organized two peaceful protests, one in September 2022 and another in January 2023. We said publicly that God made human beings male and female, that this created distinction is good, and that deliberately blurring it is harmful, particularly when children are involved.

In the days before, during, and after the second protest, the opposition became much more intense and personal.

Some people involved in the counter-protest found my employer through LinkedIn. They tweeted at the company, telephoned, and tried to have me fired.

That was wicked behavior.

I wish I could say that I met the pressure with calm confidence. I did not. When people began contacting my employer, the possible cost was no longer theoretical. I had a wife and nine children to provide for. I found myself thinking about what would happen if I lost my job and how I would continue caring for them.

I was afraid, and I am ashamed that I did not trust God's fatherly care more readily. Thankfully, I did not withdraw what I had said or abandon the stand we had taken, and I discovered then that willingness in principle, and steadiness under pressure, are not quite the same thing. Courage is not the absence of fear. It is obedience while fear is still present.

In the end, I was not fired, although I was placed under pressure at work. That experience made me more active in seeking other employment. In time, an opportunity arose with ARPA Canada.



Campaigning can get you invited to events and interviews.



Running for office can give you the opportunity to share truth with people you might never otherwise communicate with.

The public advocacy that some people had tried to make a professional liability became an asset and part of the experience that fitted me for my present work.

There was other good as well. My friend and I were quoted in the local newspaper saying plainly that God made human beings male and female, and that this is good. My friend was later interviewed on national radio, where he had a further opportunity to speak about the issue. The truth about God's created order went out more widely than it otherwise might have.

We did not persuade the library to stop hosting "Drag Queen Story Time," so we did not achieve the immediate result we had sought. But silence did not have the last word.

God has not promised that every Christian who speaks publicly will keep his job or quickly receive a better one. Faithful Christians have lost employment, income, professional standing, friendships, and much more. But, as Lord's Day 10 teaches, "all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand." I can now identify several ways the Lord used that period for good. At the time, I could not see them. That is often the nature of obedience. We are called to obey before we are shown what the Lord intends to do with it.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK PLAINLY

I am now in another campaign, and if attention increases as election day approaches, I expect some questions concerning my previous advocacy, and my Christian beliefs.

I welcome those questions.

If reporters, voters, or opponents ask me about abortion, transgender ideology, drag events directed at children, or my belief that Jesus Christ is Lord of public life, I hope to answer plainly. Public attention can bring pressure, but it can also widen the audience for truth. The concern is not that people may discover what I believe. The concern is whether, when pressed, I will speak with the clarity, charity, and confidence that those beliefs require.

Honest scrutiny is not persecution. A candidate asks the public to entrust him with authority. Voters and journalists are

CHRIST IS LORD OF THE MAGISTRATE TOO

by Paul Lawton

The apostle John calls Jesus Christ “the ruler of the kings of the earth.” Psalm 2 commands kings and judges to serve the Lord with fear and to kiss the Son. Civil rulers are not autonomous authorities who may acknowledge God if they find it personally meaningful. They are servants who receive their authority from Him and will answer to Him.

Belgic Confession Article 36 speaks with refreshing directness:

“...because of the depravity of the human race, our good God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers. He wants the world to be governed by laws and policies so that human lawlessness may be restrained and that everything may be conducted in good order among human beings.”

The Confession does not stop at saying that government should keep traffic moving and prevent theft. It says that civil rulers are called “to contribute to the advancement of a society that is pleasing to God.” They are to act subject to God’s law, remove obstacles to the preaching of the gospel and divine worship, resist anti-Christian power, and do so while refraining from absolute authority and remaining within the office entrusted to them.

This is neither statism nor religious neutrality.

The magistrate does not administer the sacraments or exercise ecclesiastical discipline. Those responsibilities belong to Christ’s church. Yet civil rulers are not therefore free to act as though Christ has no claim on public life. They should acknowledge Christ, govern subject to God’s law, protect the free course of the Word, and resist anti-Christian power by the lawful means entrusted to their office.

The magistrate must not usurp the government of the church, but neither may he pretend that civil government is religiously neutral.

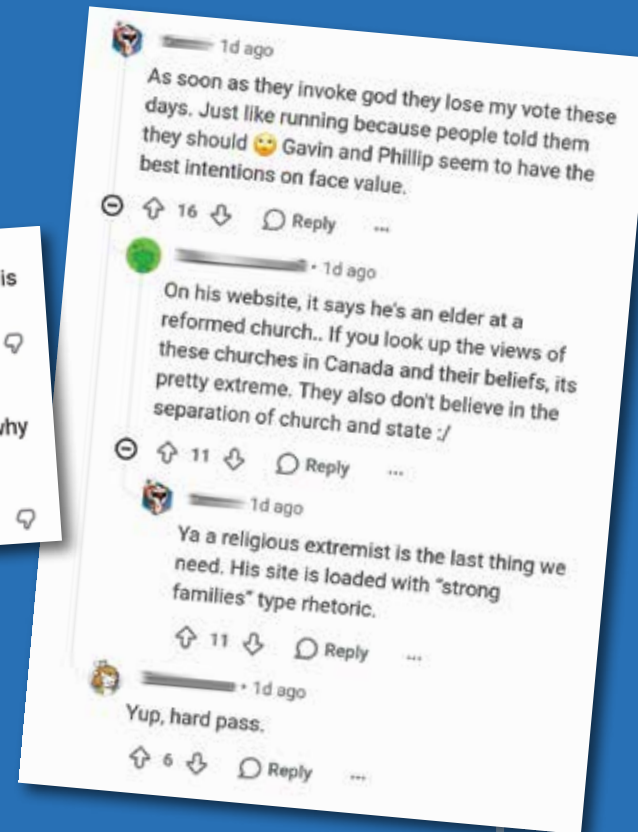
A Christian understanding of government therefore includes the restraint of evil, the protection of the good, the preservation of public order, the honoring of marriage and family, respect for private property, the protection of preborn children, and recognition of the created distinction

between male and female. It also includes the restraint of government itself. Civil rulers are not saviors, and their authority is never absolute.

Some of these matters are primarily the responsibility of federal or provincial government, rather than municipal. A city council cannot change Canada’s Criminal Code or determine federal abortion law, for example. But no municipal decision falls outside God’s moral order. At times the moral vision is unmistakable, as when councils fund Pride events, fly the Progress Pride flag on civic property, or use municipal bylaws to restrict the delivery of pro-life literature depicting the victims of abortion. More often, that moral vision is expressed less dramatically through decisions about libraries, public spaces, policing budgets, taxation, zoning, neighborhoods, and the treatment of families. In either case, council is acting from some view of the human person and of what a good society ought to be.

Because Christ is Lord, politics matters. Because Christ is Savior, politics cannot save.

That should make Christians more willing to serve and less willing to compromise. We can work seriously for a good political result without acting as though an election decides the fate of Christ’s kingdom.



A couple of online responses to Paul’s unabashed love for His God and appreciation for His Word, particularly as expressed in Gen. 1:26-27.

entitled to ask about his record, beliefs, judgment, and character. Some criticism may be true and necessary for me to hear. A difficult question is not an attack simply because I would have preferred an easier one.

There is, however, a subtler danger.

A candidate can begin responding to opposition before it arrives. He imagines the headline, the social-media campaign, the accusation of bigotry, or the votes that may be lost. Then he edits himself in advance. No one has ordered him to deny what he believes. He simply learns to say less and less of substance.

A Christian who had worked on many political campaigns once told me about a pro-life candidate who had spent years counseling women outside an abortion clinic. Her faith and concern for preborn children were central to why she was running, and the first draft of her brochure said so.

Then came a series of individually plausible revisions. The campaign did not want her to appear to be a one-issue candidate. Voters needed to learn more about her family and background. Some of the material about abortion no longer seemed to fit the brochure's tone.

By about the tenth draft, the brochure described a brave and bold woman who would defend the oppressed, but it no longer told voters what she had spent years bravely doing. Nothing in the handout was an explicit lie. Yet the overall picture was no longer candid.

A campaign message must be selective. It may not be deceptive.

That is why the 9th Commandment matters so much. Prudence asks how, when, and where a relevant truth should be spoken. Fear asks how much truth can be removed while leaving every remaining sentence technically accurate.

A CANDIDATE UNDER THE 9TH COMMANDMENT

The Heidelberg Catechism's Lord's Day 43, in unpacking the 9th Commandment, treats lying and deceit as works of the devil. We are taught that God is forbidding here not only false testimony, but also twisting another's words, gossip, slander, and rash condemnation. Positively,

the 9th Commandment requires us to love the truth, speak it candidly, and defend and advance our neighbour's honor and reputation.

That is a demanding political ethic. It means a Christian candidate not only shouldn't tell explicit falsehoods, he mustn't even deliberately cultivate a false impression.

Obviously, a Christian candidate will not be able to include everything he believes in every campaign piece. But he should ask whether a reasonable voter would feel deceived if an omitted conviction became public the next day. When asked a direct and relevant question, he should answer it rather than hide behind words designed to leave opposite audiences with opposite impressions.

The same commandment governs how we speak about our opponents.

Christians on the political right are not immune to gossip, exaggeration, rash judgment, or caricature. We may call abortion the killing of preborn children. We may say that gender ideology rebels against the created order. We may identify attempts to have a man fired for lawful Christian speech as wicked. The 9th Commandment calls for moral clarity.

We may not twist an opponent's words, invent motives, repeat allegations we have not verified, or treat every person on the other side as though he were guilty of everything done by anyone associated with his cause. We may oppose a policy as foolish, unjust, destructive, or contrary to God's law without pretending to know every motive in the heart of the person promoting it.

The commandment also requires truthfulness about the office itself. Candidates should not promise powers the office does not possess. A municipal councillor must not pretend to be able to solve every social problem, command every public institution, or repair every failure of federal and provincial government. Exaggerating our own authority is also a form of false witness.

Finally, the commandment applies when falsehood favors us. If supporters exaggerate our accomplishments, circulate an untrue allegation against an opponent, or attribute an endorsement we

did not receive, we may not quietly enjoy the advantage. We should correct flattering falsehoods as readily as accusations made against us.

The Christian candidate should be difficult to intimidate and difficult to provoke. He should refuse both cowardly concealment and slanderous combativeness.

WHY MUNICIPAL OFFICE?

Municipal politics may offer a particular opportunity for principled Christian service.

Municipal elections in Ontario are non-partisan, so candidates do not run under formal party banners. That removes one important part of the machinery of compromise. A municipal councillor is not formally required to defend an entire federal or provincial platform, submit to a party leader, or vote according to the direction of a caucus whip. He can own his judgment and explain his vote issue by issue.

That can make it easier to act as a principled Christian.

It does not make faithfulness easy.

There are still media narratives, activist groups, professional associations, donors, influential residents, council colleagues, city staff, and informal voting blocs. There is still the desire to be liked. There is still the fear of being treated as unreasonable, extreme, ignorant, or hateful.

In some ways, municipal pressure can be more personal. There is no national party organization absorbing the criticism. The councillor meets his opponents at the grocery store, the arena, the library, and the school event. The people affected by his decisions may be his neighbors, former colleagues, customers, fellow church members, or parents whose children play with his own.

Municipal independence therefore creates both an opportunity and a responsibility. A councillor has greater freedom to act according to principle, but he also has fewer excuses when he does not.

Municipal government is also wonderfully concrete. It concerns public order, roads, taxes, libraries, parks, planning, policing budgets, infrastructure, and whether families can use public spaces in safety.



The author, in front of where he seeks to serve: “A candidate should take the office seriously and take his campaign seriously too, genuinely seek to win. You want to win because winning provides an opportunity to govern. But victory must remain a means of service rather than becoming a god.”

Christian political involvement cannot be limited to dramatic protests or national controversies. We also need Christians who will read reports, steward tax dollars, protect neighborhoods, maintain good order, and carry out ordinary public duties faithfully.

A Christian candidate should be prepared not only to advocate or protest, but to govern.

OBEDIENCE AND RESULTS

A phrase I once heard in a sermon has stayed with me:

“Obedience belongs to us. The results belong to the Lord.”

Proverbs 21:31 expresses the same truth: “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord.”

That horse must still be prepared. Confidence in providence is not an excuse

for carelessness, passivity, or half-hearted work. A candidate should take the office seriously and take his campaign seriously too, genuinely seek to win. You want to win because winning provides an opportunity to govern.

But victory must remain a means of service rather than becoming a god. Victory does not vindicate sinful methods, and defeat does not transform poor preparation, unnecessary harshness, or dishonesty into faithfulness. My loss in the 2021 federal election did not mean that the candidacy had been pointless. It formed my family, gave me experience, and contributed to later opportunities. Yet I could not know those results in advance. I was responsible to act faithfully and leave the consequences to God.

The same is true now. I do not know whether I will win my municipal election. I do not know what attention or pressure may come before election day. I do know

that Christ’s lordship will not be strengthened by my victory or weakened by my defeat.

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD RUN

Our churches contain men who manage employees, read financial statements, chair meetings, teach clearly, withstand conflict, make difficult decisions, and carry heavy responsibilities. Some serve as elders or deacons. Others sit on school boards, own businesses, work in the trades, farm, practise law, teach, manage organizations, or serve in the professions.

Those existing responsibilities may be reasons not to run, but they may also be evidence that God has given you gifts public office requires. You need not already be an expert in municipal law or public finance. Much of that can be learned. The question is not whether you are already a fully formed politician. It is whether the Lord has given you something your neighbors presently need.

It is therefore worth asking whether refusing to step forward could itself sometimes be unfaithful. That question should not be answered quickly, but with prayer, Scripture, counsel from family and church leadership, and honest examination of motive.

Are you declining because you already carry responsibilities that must not be abandoned, or because political office is public, costly, and likely to bring criticism? Are you guarding your family, or guarding your comfort? Are you exercising humility, or burying a talent?

You may never have spare time. You may not feel fearless. You may lose. Do not confuse ambition with calling or candidacy with entitlement to office. But if, after prayer and counsel, you believe God is calling you to offer yourself as a candidate, step forward.

Speak plainly. Tell the truth about yourself, your opponents, and the office. Defend your neighbor’s good name. Refuse to make public approval your master or electoral victory your god.

Someone will govern your community, and that government will act from some moral vision. The question is which one.

Obedience belongs to us. The results belong to the Lord. RP

Ruin & restoration and our part

by Christine Farenhorst

When the world falls into spiritual darkness and all you see around you is chaos and misery, what then?

Isaiah, in chapter 24, spoke of how “The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken.” Was he speaking only to the people of his day about the earth being broken? Was he judging the nations of his time about the world being violently shaken? Or was he also speaking to the nations of the world today? Are our present lives, and the lives of those around us, in a state of rebellion against Almighty God?

RUINS ALL AROUND

Most people enjoy eating a fine smorgasbord. As a matter of fact, the Chinese Mandarin restaurant is one of my favorite places to dine. To walk by the mouth-watering dishes displayed, and to anticipate dining, is delightful. To deposit a little scoop of this and a tad of that on a warm, hand-held plate, creates thankful moments.

There are other smorgasbords displayed to us, however, which do not generate pleasure. The world is actually a smorgasbord right now – a literal smorgasbord of brokenness – of ruin. No matter where we turn in the

newspapers, no matter what we turn to on our laptops, there are ruins we can choose to read about, or literally see misery portrayed on our screen. Grim headlines underline this actuality. Our plate of daily current events is filled with somber, unappetizing incidents.

- For example, it has of late been disclosed that the North Korean president, Kim Jong Un, is supporting a policy that requires soldiers to commit suicide on the battlefield to avoid capture, while fighting Russia’s war against Ukraine.
- For example, it has been verified that twenty-nine Christians were massacred in the Islamic state of Nigeria, during a soccer match in the spring of this year, 2026. The attack took place on a Sunday, included the torching of a church, and most of the victims were youths and women.
- For example, earlier this year of 2026, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, Canada, investigated a Dr. MacLean of London, Ontario. Dr. MacLean diagnosed a man with inflammatory bowel disease while sitting with him in a car outside a Tim Horton’s. Afterwards, he personally drove this man, who was prone to depression, to a MAiD location where his life was ended. Dr. MacClean was only verbally cautioned by CPSO.
- For example, Canadian Bill C-9, also known as the Combatting Hate Act, passed the House of Commons, Senate and received Royal Assent.



Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin meeting in China last year – North Korea has been supplying Russia with troops for their war with Ukraine since as early as 2024.

Photo credit: The President of the Russian Federation website www.kremlin.ru, and used under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 license.

It removed the religious defence to hate speech in the Criminal Code.

- For example, the horrible tragedy of the earthquakes which hit Venezuela. Venezuelan morgues were filling up rapidly. At the end of June 2026, the death toll was reported to be more than 2,300. However, the projected number of people missing and presumed dead, was running into many thousands more. Dead children arrived at morgues so badly decomposed that they were unrecognizable.

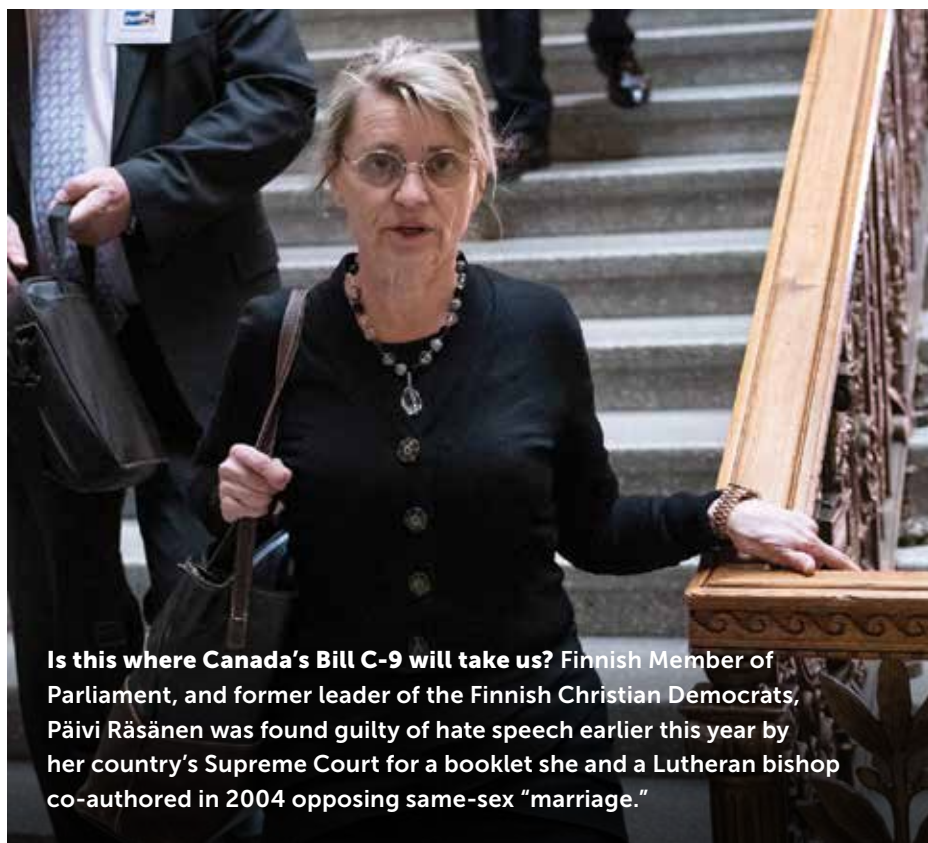
These smorgasbord current events detail a world that is a far cry from the “It was good” phrase, in Genesis 1. They reflect a world fallen into sin.

ARE WE PART OF GOD’S RESTORATION?

Should we, therefore, mourn and lament over these present evil times? It is a fact, that like Jeremiah lamented, it is not a bad thing for us also to weep over worldwide sin.

However, it is also a good thing to sit down and examine ourselves, to study our own hearts carefully, to make sure that our motives, our interactions with others and our priorities, are not in any way contributing to the evil around us.

- For example, do we encourage our next-door neighbors to live without fear? Does our joy in the prospect of life eternal, reflect in loving our neighbors, in bringing them both soup and the Gospel?
- For example, do we speak openly about these disasters with people we meet? Do we know our Bible well enough to testify with a smile that “God is our refuge and our strength” and that “therefore we will not fear” (Ps. 46)? When those nearby have a cast-down soul, can we boldly, like the Reformers before us, boost the spirits of those around us with personal anecdotes of answered prayer and songs of cheer? It is said of Luther, who loved the 46th Psalm



Is this where Canada’s Bill C-9 will take us? Finnish Member of Parliament, and former leader of the Finnish Christian Democrats, Päivi Räsänen was found guilty of hate speech earlier this year by her country’s Supreme Court for a booklet she and a Lutheran bishop co-authored in 2004 opposing same-sex “marriage.”

Photo credit: Modified from a picture by Lauri Heikkinen and the Finnish Government and used under a CC by 2.0 Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

dearly, that when his companions were cast down because of the seeming strength of the opposition, he would say: “Come, let us sing the Forty-Sixth Psalm, friends.”

- For example, do we testify to those dying in pain on a hospital bed, Jesus’ words in John 14 that their hearts ought not to be troubled? And can we explain why their hearts ought not to be troubled? Can we percolate the steadfast faith of Job to friends? Can we say with certainty to others, “I know that my Redeemer lives”? The evangelist, John Wesley, died on March 2, 1791, at the age of 87. As he lay dying, with a group of friends gathered around his bed, Wesley’s last words were from Psalm 46, “The best of all is, God is with us.” He repeated this as he lifted his arms: “The best of all is, God is with us.”

My niece’s daughter, Amy, died more than a month ago. She was thirty-five

years old and had special needs – and she was a person who knew and loved the Lord Jesus. A small story was told of her during the funeral. Amy had a friend whose name was Melissa. Melissa could not speak. During a Special Olympics day for those with special needs, there was a race – a walking race from one point to another. Amy’s friend was participating in that race. But as she began to walk with all the other contestants, she suddenly froze. She seemed to be afraid and not able to move. Amy saw that her friend was afraid and walked away from the sidelines where she was watching and came up to Melissa. She took Melissa’s hand and told her it was all right. And Amy and Melissa finished that race together.

*And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
His truth to triumph through us.* **RP**

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THE PITY PARTY PIT

AND HOW TO GET OUT OF IT

An exhortation to mothers on guarding our hearts and minds from the sin of self-pity

by Brianna Stevens

Homemaking and motherhood are hard. There are days and even seasons when the monotony can feel palpable as we change one more diaper, wash one more dish, and prepare one more meal. “Does anyone in this house notice my hard work? Appreciate it? A thank you would be nice.” Before we know it, a woe-is-me, victim mindset takes hold and, *voilà*, we’ve fallen into the Pity Party Pit.

“Well, wait one minute,” our flesh says. “Surely my feelings are justified. I’ve been in prayer over this. I’ve been crying to the Lord for help. He’s seen how unappreciated my work is; how hard I’ve been trying to serve my family; to honor Him. If there is any sin happening, it’s sin being done to me, not by me.”

HIT THE PAUSE BUTTON

Let’s pause here.

These are all understandable feelings, *but are they right thinking?* As Christian women living in a world saturated with self-care mantras, we can’t let ourselves be shaped by them. We need to fill our minds with the truth of God’s Word so we aren’t tossed to and fro on the world’s waves of self-help philosophy. Right thinking means knowing what God says about our hardships and struggles and how He commands us to deal with them.

We are called to take all thoughts captive to Christ, to walk in the Spirit and not the flesh, and to be content in all circumstances... and that means all.

Yikes! That’s a tall order. Or is it? Does our loving Father give us commands without also giving us the grace to obey? Christ Himself tells His disciples in John 14:15-18a:

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans...”

Do you want to hear something encouraging? This is just one of over 7,000 precious promises found in Scripture that God has for us to lay hold of. When we realize that many of these promises are accessible now, we can encourage our hearts and minds to walk according to our new nature and not be dragged down by the old man who has been crucified with Christ. Life, and life abundant, is what Christ has made available to us; and He has given us every tool to make a life abundant a reality.

With that, we can confidently declare that self-pity has no place in our new nature, including no place in our homemaking or motherhood. Knowing this, let’s replace the lies we’ve been telling ourselves with God’s Word, which is a “lamp unto [our] feet and a light unto

[our] path” and lay hold of the rope that pulls us out of this pit...

HE LETS US SEE IT COMING

We serve a loving and kind God. In fact, the Lord is so kind in His dealings with us, that He gives us ample opportunity to see sin coming and put into practice our new nature and gifts found in Christ. Let’s take a look at how James lays out the process of how our sin is actually birthed:

“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (James 1:14-15, NKJV)

If we read this Scripture carefully, we can see that the road to actual sin is a process. James explains that this process starts with our own desires enticing us. So, if we find ourselves in the Pity Party Pit, we can know that we have an unmet desire. The sin of self-pity typically is the result of multiple sinful thoughts about unmet desires that have not been confessed, repented of, or corrected. Rather, they’ve been stewed upon or vented in an ungodly way.

For me, my secret desire (that is often unmet, being the mother of four small children) is control. When I lose control, I begin to stew on my frustrations. The stewing makes it very easy for me to fall

into the Pity Party Pit, especially when I continue down this path of sin by validating my ungodly feelings rather than confessing them.

Let me set the scene. It usually goes something like this...

I have a great day planned for the family. I've taken every measure to prepare all meals and activities the night before. Stress-free and the livin's easy! Spur-of-the-moment play-date planning? Check!

Carpe diem!

We all sit down to breakfast with our Bible open, ready to honor Christ as living sacrifices.

"I hate eggs," says my three-year-old.

"Okay," I think to myself. "He's three. Correct and overlook the offense."

Then the two oldest start arguing over animal facts from the last *Wild Kratts* episode we watched while my three-year-old continues to pout about the eggs. Before I can gather my next thought, I hear my 9-month-old crying, only to find him in his crib rolling around in a blown-out diaper.

"Honey! Can you make me coffee?" shouts my husband from downstairs.

[Insert short-circuit sound]

My brain goes into over-stimulation overload and I feel the mom-lecture coming on.

"You can stop now, Brianna," I tell myself. "Stop now and redirect this in a godly way."

In my flesh, I decide that's a hard no – and I burst.

I unleash my unrighteous anger (which I call righteous anger in the moment of course) on anyone within earshot. I speak in a tone unbecoming of a Christian woman, let alone a Christian mother, and decide to spray everyone around me in a shower of sin disguised as godly wisdom.

Does this sound familiar?

It's about this time that I see the Pity Party Pit. Why does it look so inviting? It's wooing me toward it like the woman Proverbs warns about. Sweet like honey? No – a deadly poison. Instead of taking the path around the Pity Party Pit, straight into the arms of Christ, I jump headlong into it. For a moment it tastes sweet, but I quickly begin to taste the



There are days and even seasons when the monotony can feel palpable as we change one more diaper, wash one more dish, and prepare one more meal. "Does anyone in this house notice my hard work? Appreciate it? A thank you would be nice."

bitterness. Then, almost instantaneously, follow the accusations of the enemy:

"You're a terrible mother. You really shouldn't have more children."

"You were just praying THIS morning about being a more gentle mother, Brianna. You're hopeless."

Sound familiar again?

THERE IS A WAY OUT

It's easy to see the process of sin unfold when you write it down on paper, but in the moment it is much more deceitful and difficult to see. This calls for prayer. The Lord is faithful to answer us when we pray according to His will. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says:

As I like to tell my kids:
 “Put on your Kingdom goggles.” See things through God’s eyes, obey, and watch Christ bless you with fullness of joy as you seek to abide in Him.



“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13, NKJV)

As we can all see by my own failure described above, the Lord did give me a way out; I just didn’t take it. The enemy also chose to attack me directly after I had fallen into the Pity Party Pit with accusations about my identity. However, herein lies the Achilles’ heel of Satan – and our way out of the pit.

When Christ died on the cross, Colossians 2:15 says:

“Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”

Furthermore, Romans 8:1 encourages our hearts: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

The devil’s accusations that keep us trapped in the Pity Party Pit have no hold on us. Christ has defeated Satan

and all his minions. He has “disarmed them and put them to open shame.” When the devil or our own hearts accuse us, we can confidently declare our identity in Christ, confess our sin, and repent. I highly recommend doing this out loud. I speak the truths of Scripture out loud over myself, my husband, and my children daily. I even do it when I am by myself doing chores. We are:

- *Elect* (Luke 18:7)
- *New creatures* (2 Cor. 5:17)
- *Heirs* (Rom. 8:17)
- *Citizens of Heaven* (Phil. 3:20)
- *Children of Light* (Eph. 5:8)
- *Kings* (Rev. 5:10)
- *a Royal Priesthood* (1 Pet. 2:9)
- and my personal favorites, *the aroma of Christ* (2 Cor. 2:15), and *Free* (John 8:36)

Do I sound crazy? Maybe.

Do I care? No.

We are who Christ says we are, and we must do whatever it takes to replace lies about our identity and our reality with truth. Only when we know the truth and how it applies to every nook and cranny of our life, will it set us free. This is when we can start walking out our new nature. Bible study, time in prayer, confession

and repentance are all growth and healing opportunities our loving Father has provided us through Christ. These are gifts freely given that we must make use of if we are to be effective in glorifying God through our homemaking. There is so much grace to be received – more than you and I can even comprehend.

CALLED TO BATTLE

Conquering and triumphing over the sin of self-pity calls for war. As mothers, what better reason to go to war than for our own soul and the souls of those under our care? We must walk worthy of our calling in Christ, using the sword of the Spirit – which is the Word of God – to cut down

all sin that sprouts forth in our hearts. We are to take every thought captive to Christ and walk in humble submission. The Lord Jesus says that fullness of joy is found in obedience to His commands. If He commanded it, He will give us the grace to obey.

Our pastor, Zach Wilke, recently exhorted our congregation, “If you want a flourishing garden, pulling weeds is a necessary first step, but it will not actively produce the fruit you desire. For that, you must plant seeds, you must water them, you must prune the branches, and you must defend them against invaders.”

SEE THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE

Are you feeling downcast because your child just colored all over the table you just cleaned?

Are you feeling frustrated because you can’t seem to get into a regular Bible time?

Are you ticked off because your husband just put his three-day-old blueberry-crusted smoothie cup in the sink right after you started the dishwasher?

Think of these moments as opportunities to train in righteousness, practice godliness, and petition God in prayer. As I like to tell my kids: “Put on your Kingdom goggles.” See things through

God's eyes, obey, and watch Christ bless you with fullness of joy as you seek to abide in Him. These are good works, faith-strengthening tests, and obstacles prepared for you directly by the hand of God – all of it to mold you more into the likeness of our Savior.

Remember, this is the entire point. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches us, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." You and I were created to be living sacrifices unto God and to find fullness of joy while doing it.

So instead of grumbling – out loud or quietly in our hearts – speak life, speak truth.

"Lord, thank You so much for washable markers and an opportunity to disciple my child."

"Lord, forgive me for not being in Your Word regularly in this season. I am without excuse, but I also thank You for giving me an abundance of good work and teaching me to live out my faith."

"Lord, thank You for my husband's blueberry-crusted, three-day-old smoothie cup. I'm so grateful for him working hard to provide food for our family. One day I will miss this."

Okay, maybe we won't miss the blueberry-crusted smoothie cup – but you get the picture.

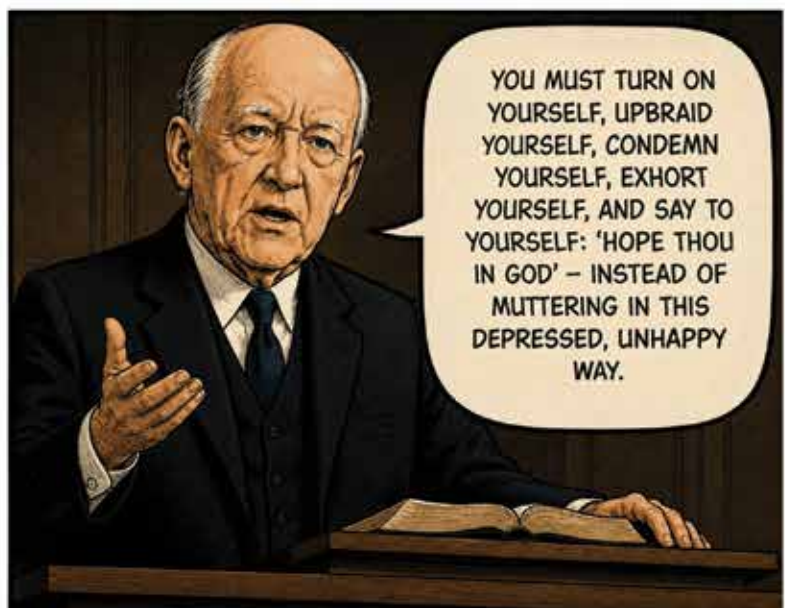
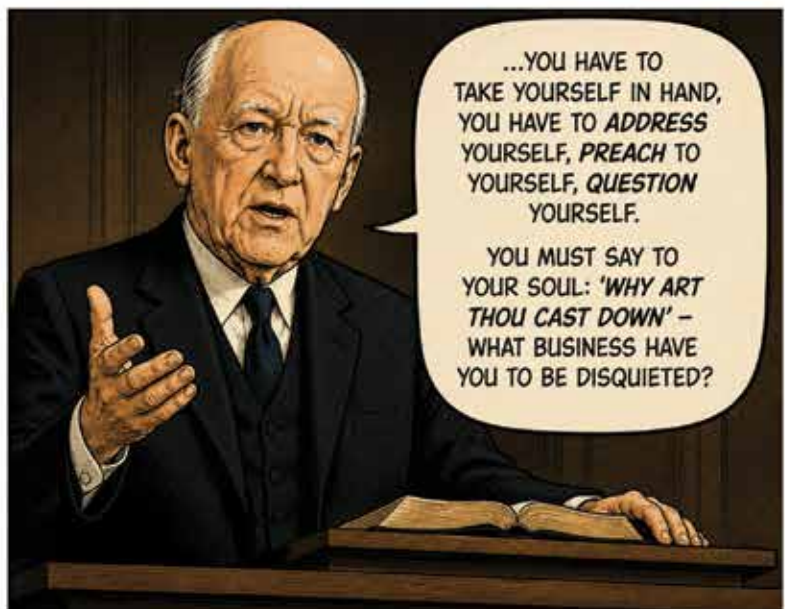
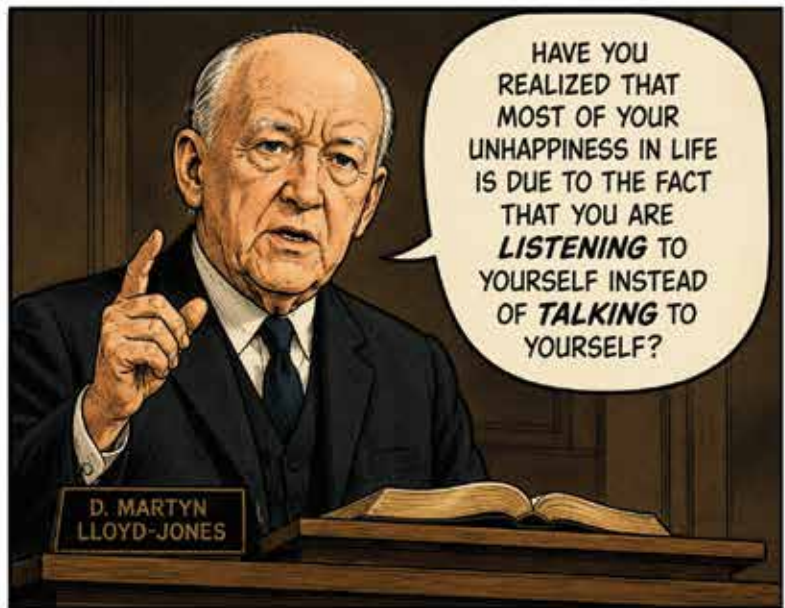
REPLACE GRUMBLES WITH GRATITUDE

Cultivating a heart of thankfulness pushes out a heart filled with grumbles and self-pity. Thanksgiving toward God for all of our blessings – starting with the fact that we are alive and breathing, all the way up to our salvation – should be meditated upon each morning. When we create a habit of thinking upon all we are grateful for, it's amazing how the devil's flaming darts are extinguished. It's amazing how quickly our Lord can pull us out of the muck and mire and reorient our eyes toward Him.

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things." (Phil. 4:8, NKJV)

We're in this race together. Eyes up. ^{RP}

Brianna Stevens is a mother to four, wife to one, and a recovering pity-party thrower. Her passion is to encourage women to run the race well.



Comic created by Jon Dykstra using ChatGPT

Matrescence:

THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A MOTHER

by Harma-Mae Smit

I was deeply ashamed. “I just want to go back to before,” I said to my husband, burying my face in his shoulder. I’d been so excited for this baby and now that she was here, I’d never felt so lost, so disconnected from who I was, so anxious and miserable. I lay awake at night for hours with my heart pounding, unable to sleep in case my baby needed me. And at the same time, I couldn’t adjust to being needed so deeply and constantly.

“You don’t want to go back,” my husband told me. “I know you don’t. Because I can tell, you’re happy.”

I pulled back and stared at him. “I’m *happy*?” I was crying all the time, desperate for some stability in the current chaos that was our life.

“Yes,” he said, and the strange thing was, he was right.

Because now, when I go back and look at pictures of that time, of the crazy first few months with a newborn daughter, I see my calm, serene face gazing down at my baby, or smiling into the camera. I was happy to be a mother, and I was also so disconnected from myself that I couldn’t feel that happiness. I didn’t think I felt happy at all.

It might seem a bit cliché to write



about motherhood, or maybe a bit presumptuous, so soon after having my first baby. But after having gone through it I found we don’t talk about it enough.

It makes sense in a way, since it’s impossible to put into words before you go through it. And there is an element of not wanting to scare other women.

But most of what is written is about the objective, factual motions of having a baby – the sleepless nights, the changes in your body, the lists of supplies the baby will need. There is less written about the experience of having your identity overturned and changed into something else, into something we assume should come naturally but instead often develops in us with time and experience. That big word – motherhood.

How do you go through something hard that’s simultaneously such a blessing? What is it like to go through an experience that strips everything out of you and takes you apart, only to put you back together in a way that feels like you’re more fully yourself?

There’s a word I never heard until recently, a word, *matrescence*, that means the process of becoming a mother. It’s similar to the word *adolescence*, which is the process of forming your adult identity, or in other words,

an in-between stage between childhood and being a grown-up. When I heard “matrescence,” I loved that there was a word for it, a word that is less a black-and-white before-and-after (once you have a baby you’re suddenly a mother), but rather a word that demonstrates it’s

a process and a journey, and you might not be “there” right away. At the same time, it’s about becoming yourself in a new way, not becoming somebody totally different and alien to yourself. I was afraid I had lost touch with who I was but that wasn’t true – I was still myself, but myself in a different way.

I have to note that this piece of writing is one hundred percent my experience. The experience of “becoming” is different for every woman (and I’d imagine fathers would have their own too). I don’t want to say this is what anyone *should* experience, but I want to share my journey for those who may experience similar things, to know there are others out there that feel like they do. And to share some insight for others who aren’t mothers, into what at least one experience was like. In a culture where motherhood is becoming less and less common, talking about it matters more. Because the mundane realities of sleepless nights don’t express the wonder of the experience, and yet that is what is primarily noticeable from the outside.

So with that said, here are a few aspects of my experience.

“IT TAKES A VILLAGE”

I felt like an awful mother those first weeks. I felt like this baby who cried constantly could not love me. I felt like my daughter was a stranger I’d expected to know and understand and yet I somehow didn’t. Like I’d never received the mother instinct I was supposed to be born with.

My husband gently contradicted me, batting away each negative thought as they rose up in me. But more than that, he insisted I talk to other mothers. I was sure I was the only woman in the world who felt this way. But he was sure I wasn’t.

I wanted to retreat into the internet, to anonymously compare my feelings to women who posted online, to predict my experience from the challenges they asked questions about. I’ve always been hesitant to be vulnerable. I feel sure that my shortcomings will lead others to judge me, and when it came to motherhood, I was terrified that mothers who



seemed to have it all under control would know how I was failing. It felt safer to anonymously browse the internet. But my husband insisted the internet was not reality.

He was sure that other women felt like they were floundering too even if I thought they had it all together. So I spoke the words, face-to-face, to other women that I was having a hard time.

“Thank you for your questions,” one friend told me after I’d bombarded her with queries about her experience in her first weeks after giving birth. “I’d almost forgotten about what that time was like. It’s good to remember how it felt.”

Other women admitted in hushed tones that they had also been anxious, that they also hadn’t known how to cope. For some, our conversation was a space to speak what they’d experienced out loud, to admit to someone else that they hadn’t had it all together way back when. And I could hear that no one had done everything “perfectly,” the way my ideals insisted, shaped by what doctors had told me and what I thought other mothers had done before me.

I had been ashamed to accept help because I thought I was falling short if I couldn’t do it on my own, but to find out

others hadn’t done it all by themselves either freed me. I asked for help, and got it.

And when I asked for help, I finally had the time to see my daughter – to really sit and watch her, lying on her blanket in the sun with her legs kicking in the air and her little hands just starting to reach out to what was in front of her. She had felt a bit like a stranger when I’d first met her, though I’d carried her inside me for nine months, a stranger I was oddly and fiercely protective of for some reason. It was strange to be so protective of someone I was still getting to know, to feel so rightly needed by a little being whom I’d barely met. But as I found the time to watch her, I found out who she was. Her personality pushed up through her newborn surface, emerging and proving she was her own person though she seemed so dependent on me. Her eyes widened at the world around her and I began to see how new it must all be to her. I didn’t have to push myself to take her hand and show her everything. I wanted to show the world to my daughter.

As I got to know her, I began to know myself again as well, that I was still myself, yet transformed into the person who was her mother. I saw the world



with new eyes. I hadn't been sure I could be happy as a mother, but little by little I could feel that I was happy.

"It takes a village," is the cliché about raising children, and so many nowadays are raising children without a village. But in the Church, we have more than a village, we have a body.

"For the body does not consist of one member but of many.... If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." (1 Cor. 12:14,26).

And yet we so often cannot speak to each other about what we are feeling. We are afraid to let others see under our polished surfaces. And yes, not everyone will respond well when we share. But I will never forget the ladies who came around me from within the Church and reassured me that they had experienced similar feelings. If we never try to share, we will never find those who do.

It's utterly terrifying to be vulnerable. But my baby, so utterly vulnerable herself, needed me and more than just me. In my own strength I was not enough. I needed others, I needed God, and I needed help to see how to lean on God's strength. The body of Christ came around me and reassured me that I was not alone. And then I could reach out and help my baby, and through my baby, help others.

MOTHERHOOD AS A SERVICE

When I was pregnant, strangers started talking to me. "Congratulations! How many months?" they said, or, "When are you due?" I'm used to feeling somewhat invisible as I move through the world, but as my belly grew, I no longer faded into the crowd. And since I was excited, I enjoyed the excitement of people around me, even as I marveled that the thought of a birth could make so many people smile like that.

And now that my daughter is here, I

am still visible, dragging our stroller and diaper bag and car seat wherever we go. And if I manage to enter a room quietly, my daughter announces herself – *I'm here too, look at me!* And then a wonderful thing happens – wonderful to me, at least, as a person who was always afraid others were annoyed when she took up too much space or spoke too loudly. People's faces soften at the sight of a baby, they pause and smile, and somehow their cares are lifted for a moment as her tiny hands reach out to them.

If I'd known before how simple it was to make people happy when you have a baby, that I could just show up with my daughter and make them smile, I would've been surprised. Maybe it's the culture around us that complains about babies crying on airplanes and in restaurants that trained me to expect others to be annoyed with my baby. But almost always, she brings joy just by existing near them. And I wonder, what other small ways of bringing joy to others have I overlooked?

"I really needed this," more than one person told me, as my daughter snuggled her face into their chest, or held their finger in her hand. Seniors' eyes tear up with the memory of their own children, once so young. People who had a tough day find a moment of peace, a moment to let out their breath while holding her. Because a baby means hope.

It's not always easy to get out of the house. There's a lot more to take. There's a lot more germs to face. I don't know how my daughter will react. But so often when I go out, it feels worth it.

I never thought becoming a mother could be a way to serve people I barely knew.

RADICAL SHIFT

The happiness motherhood brings is impossible to put into words. It's easier to talk about the complexities of breastfeeding, the difficulties of getting your child to sleep, or how long a single day can feel with a newborn who needs you every moment. No wonder most of our cultural conversation about motherhood revolves around objective realities like this. It's easier to give advice about what

car seat to buy than to explain how full your heart feels even while your eyes are scratchy with tiredness. It's not something I experienced before I became a mother.

And yet I know I would've bristled a bit if a mother had told me I could never understand her love before I'd given birth, as if she were suggesting I was not a fully realized person because I wasn't a mother. No, it's not a necessary experience in life. And yet I have to admit, to my single self's chagrin, that I had no idea. And I have to admit now that I would never have been able to explain my joy to my former self anyway.

I bring this up because the natural disconnect between those who aren't mothers and aren't sure what the fuss is all about, and the mothers who insist they love every minute even though they look like they don't, has been increased in our culture. Young people don't know why they should have children, and I don't know how to tell them that it's a life-changing experience that's worth it.

It's worth it. If you're not sure, I can't tell you what it's like or why, despite feeling stretched in ways you've never felt before, you will be glad you did it, but I'm trying as best I can to contradict the narrative that life with children is a misery.

GOD "FILLS YOUR CUP"

There's a lot of advice out there about filling your cup, or in other words, about taking care of yourself so you can take care of others. And it's true that some advice to new mothers is so self-sacrificial that it's unhealthy and unsustainable.



It is good as a new mother to do things that bring you joy and comfort – spending time with your husband without the baby, or getting out for a bit with good friends, or just taking an unhurried bubble bath. But you can do these things for yourself and still feel stretched out.

In the beginning, I *did* take time for myself here and there. But I always knew I had to go back, and I still felt like what

I had to do was beyond me. I was terrified at how I wanted these breaks to last forever, and I felt like that must make me a bad mother.

It turns out that filling your own cup can't help you wrap your mind around who you're becoming, though it does help you connect to who you are in the moment. To become comfortable with the person you're becoming, the person

you don't quite know yet, you need to lean on someone who already knows what you can be. You need to lean on God.

I've always struggled to fully trust in my relationship with God. I tend to think God gives me hard things that I don't like to make me grow, and that I need to just endure them. But I forget I can trust He will bring me *good*, and often this good can even feel good. He is not out to make me miserable, as I tend to mistrustfully be afraid He is.

So it was hard for me to turn to God in my matrescence. He'd blessed me with a daughter and I felt like He'd be angry that I thought it was hard. I felt guilty that I had thoughts that I wanted to go back to before. And the guilt stopped me from bringing all my struggles to God. My mistrust led me to think He wouldn't help me with them, that I should be doing better and be happier all on my own.

But I did have to rely on God. I'm still learning when it comes to this. But I can pray in the middle of the night for strength to take care of my baby. I can even pray things get easier with her – and things did eventually get easier. I'm not a better Christian, or a better mother, if I suffer more. I can be happy. I can believe God wants me to be happy in the blessings He gives me.

“You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” (Ps. 23: 5-6)

TRUST THE PROCESS

Motherhood keeps changing. One moment I'm dealing with cluster feeding, the next moment I'm figuring out how to feed solids. And I know my daughter will continue to grow and face new challenges and I'll have to navigate that. By accepting that I'm in the middle of becoming, rather than having attained a goal, I find I adapt to the shifting waves of change better. I don't know it all. I'm learning, just like my baby is.

After all, my identity is not in being a mother, and it certainly is not in all the things that felt like my identity before I became a mother (whether jobs, interests, abilities, connections or possessions). My identity is in Christ.

“For in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him,” or as the NIV says, “brought to fullness.” It is through Christ that we find ourselves and the full potential of who He truly created us to be. It is through Him that we can even go beyond ourselves and our frail human abilities.

It's scary to let go of who you thought you were. It's terrifying to do hard things and feel like you're bad at them, or failing at them, or that you just don't have it in you to do them. It's even worse to do this without relying on the God who knows you, who can tell you that you are not losing yourself because you are centered in Him.

Instead of clinging to what I knew before, I learned to let go and go through the process, to trust God and discover that I was still myself even though I had grown into something I never could have imagined for myself. It was not the stereotype of “good mother” that I'd had before I became one. It was not what the world told me a good mother looks like, or the ideal in my head of what I should be like. Instead, it looks like a vulnerable woman who needs lots of help from her family in Christ and from God, and at the same time, one who connected with the joy she truly had within herself all along. It's wonderful to become a mother. **RP**





FREE REFORMED SCHOOL ASS. (TAS.) INC.

JOHN CALVIN SCHOOL

49-53 HOWICK STREET
LAUNCESTON, TAS. 7250
Ph: 6344 3794
Email: admin@jcs.tas.edu.au
www.jcs.tas.edu.au
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John Calvin School Launceston is a small, close-knit Independent Christian School in Tasmania with 25 dedicated staff and 120 students, committed to providing Christ-centred education. We have exciting opportunities for full-time and part-time positions:

Full-Time Business Manager

Key responsibilities:

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

Applicants must have:

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

What's in it for you?

- Flexible 3-day working week
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- A high-impact position with autonomy and purpose
- A fulfilling role in beautiful, peaceful Tasmania

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Applicants must:

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- Hold (or be able to acquire) a Working with Vulnerable People registration

What's in it for you?

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

Sign me up!
How do I apply?

- For more information contact Mrs K Wielstra - Business Manager wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Find application forms at www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment
- Send completed applications to board@jcs.tas.edu.au



FAITHWORKS, KENTUCKY

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund

An International Relief and Development Agency, working on behalf of our Reformed Community

email: admin@crwrf.ca



www.crwrf.ca/faithworks



DUFFERIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

invites applications for full-time opening for
MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS 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

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{IN A NUTSHELL}

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY JON DYKSTRA

DONE BEFORE THE FIRST DOWN

Notre Dame's famed football coach Knute Rockne wasn't above employing psychology to give his team an edge. A legend is told of how, when he was about to face the much better University of Southern California (USC) team, he spent the week beforehand scouring the city of South Bend for its largest men. He found a hundred, all 6'5" or taller, and every one of them weighed 300 pounds or more. Then he decked them out in Notre Dame uniforms and the pads and helmets only made them look even bigger.

When it was game time, he marched them out. One after another, these giants ran onto the field, right past the opposing players. The USC coach kept telling his guys, "They can only field 11 men at a time," but it didn't matter. None of them played a minute, but the opposition was so intimidated at the sight of them that they dropped passes, committed fumbles, and even ran into each other in their crossing routes. And Notre Dame won the game.

Did it happen? Maybe. But the reason the story is told is because *this sort of thing does happen*. Think of the men who spied out Israel and got intimidated by the giants of the land before any battle was even fought. Consider today's battles and how often God's truth is more loudly defended by non-Christians like Ben Shapiro or Jordan Peterson than by us – we've run from the battle and left it up to others, scared of what we might, but haven't yet, had to face. How often are we beaten before we've even begun?

Thankfully, our God is not just mighty – bigger than any giant on the football field sidelines, or standing in front of a Canaanite army – but He is also gracious and forgiving. So let's fall on our knees, and get ready to put up our fists when God next calls us to fight for His glory.

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

JUST BE YOURSELF, THEY SAY

There's a story told about Abe Lincoln, that when he was at a hometown soiree, he approached the lady of his interest and told her, "Mary Todd, I want to dance with you in the worst way." And after a turn around the floor together, she could only say, "You wanted to dance in the worst way, and you certainly did."

HAVE SCIENTISTS CREATED LIFE?

Every few years media outlets share a startling scientific advancement about how a group of scientists have "created life." A couple recent examples include J. Craig Venter back in 2010 for creating "the world's first synthetic life form" and Elizabeth Strychalski and her crew in 2021 who "crafted a single-celled

synthetic organism that divides and multiplies just like the real thing." Why is this so important? Because there's only two explanations for how life began: God, or godless. And these supposed "creations of life" are seen as steps towards coming up with a godless explanation.

So have scientists actually created life? No. They've tinkered, placing engineered DNA in already living cells. So, they began with life and ended up with life. And as Jonathan Sarfati noted:

"It took an enormous amount of intelligence to make this cell, and they borrowed a lot of information from already-existing cells. In particular, they synthesized the genome of *Mycoplasma mycoides*, with 1.08 million base-pairs (bp)³ and about 985 genes.... it cost US\$40 million and 200 man-years to produce."

So with their brilliant minds, supercomputers, lab equipment, refined chemicals, all sorts of intentionality, and a living cell to start with they've managed to create life. Which is supposed to show us something about how it all could have happened accidentally and unintelligently?

Tell that to a devoted evolutionist and they'll probably tell you it's only a matter of time before scientists figure out how life started by itself. But time hasn't proven to be their friend. When Darwin proposed his theory, he thought the cell was made up of the membrane, nucleus, and nucleolus which could be seen under his day's microscopes. The ribosomes, Golgi apparatus, mitochondria and other microscopic machines were missed entirely, and the nucleus was a black box – unknown and disregarded – which made it a lot easier to ignore God's fingerprints evident all over the cell's design. But since then every new discovery has shown how much more complicated single-celled life is than previously realized. That means the more we are discovering, the more and more impossible abiogenesis – life from non-life – is revealed to be. And the more obvious the need for a great Genius to be behind it all.

GREAT TRUTHS FROM SMALL CHILDREN

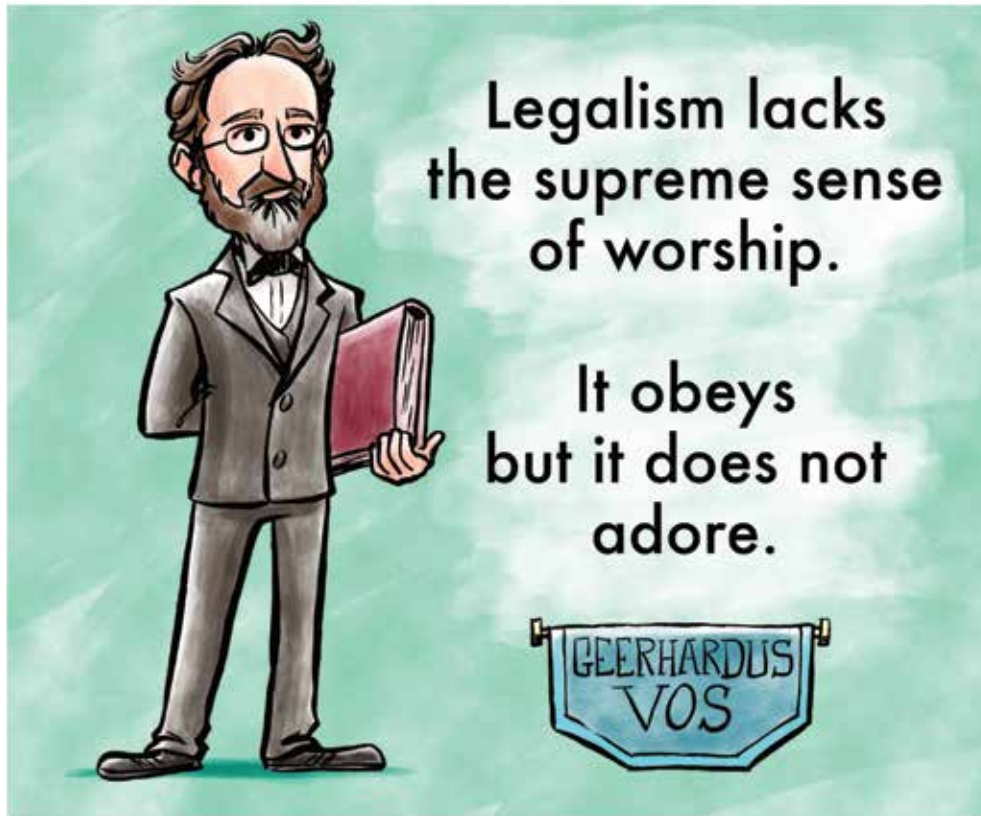
- Never hold a dustbuster and a cat at the same time.
- Only Grampa can make money come out of your ears.
- If you want a kitten, start out by asking for a horse.
- Puppies still have bad breath even after eating a tic tac.
- Never ask your 3-year-old brother to hold a tomato.
- Don't hit back – they always catch the second person.
- Dogs will guard your bike, but not your food.

SOURCE: As discovered across the Internet

HOCUS POCUS!

Everyone knows that the phrase "Hocus Pocus" is a part of many magic acts, usually right after the wand waving, and right before the puff of smoke. But did you know it has its origins in the Mass?

When the priest held up the Communion bread he would speak a few words in Latin. The actual words used are the same



Artwork copyright © Paul Cox www.refoons.com

ones Jesus spoke at the Last Supper: "This is my body." In Latin that becomes *Hoc est corpus meum*. For the common people this would seem a lot like magic since Roman Catholics believe the priest is able to turn the bread into the actual body of Christ. So in their minds, he said a few magic words, and poof, suddenly the bread was transformed.

SOURCE: 1001 More Things You Always Wanted to Know About the Bible

THAT SPECK IN YOUR NEIGHBOR'S EYE

The faults we spot so easily in others may well be the ones we excuse in ourselves. Of course, there is some artistry in our self-deception – we aren't going to bluntly say, it is wrong for my kids to be curt and impatient, but I'm allowed to be. No, we'll say it's wrong for them, but then relabel our own conduct as something more acceptable or even admirable, as this poetic ditty demonstrates:

Stubbornness we deprecate;
firmness we condone.
The former is our neighbor's trait;
the latter is our own.

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

WHY NOT FUND MY EDUCATIONAL TRIP TO EUROPE TOO?

Our professor had written for the local daily newspaper for decades, and explained that before universities started offering journalism programs, his newspaper would put all their new

hires through a 3-month training program. When journalism degrees became a thing, the paper cut back their own training program to just a month or two, and required all applicants have a journalism degree. So a young man or woman who wanted to be a journalist now had to invest 2 to 4 years of their life, and a lot of their own money, and taxpayer money too, on tuition, to get a piece of paper that would save the newspaper just a month or two of training.

That doesn't math.

Meanwhile the government could talk about how it was directing so much new money towards post-secondary institutions so we could have a more educated workforce. But at what cost? As has been said:

"If your college degree doesn't have enough value for you to pay it off, it certainly doesn't have enough value for me to pay it off."

BOYS, DO YOU WANT THIS TO HAPPEN TO YOU?

Dinosaurs didn't read. And now they're extinct.

WHY FIVE-DOLLAR BILLS ARE PRO-LIFE

Scott Klusendorf is always a captivating speaker, but the kids' attention became a little more fixed when he started waving money around. "Who wants this \$5 bill?" A chorus of "Me!"s filled the gym. He waved the crisp blue note one more time, and then suddenly crumpled it up tightly in the palm of his hand. "Who wants it now?" Forty arms shot up once again. He dropped it to the ground and started stomping on it. "What about now?"

After throwing the much-abused bill to one lucky member of his audience, Scott got to the moral of his money message. "Why did you still want the bill, even when it looked different, and even when it was much smaller?"

The children all knew the answer to that one, "Because it was still worth the same!"

Right – the bill's worth wasn't affected by its size, or by what it looked like. And the very same thing is true for people too. We are all worth the same no matter our size, or what we look like. The unborn might look different, and might be smaller but they have the same value as all humans.

JUBAL WAS WAY AHEAD OF HIS TIME

Organs are the universal instrument in most of our churches, with pianos filling in only where organs can't be had. But why do we love organs so?

After asking that question to a number of people the most interesting answer I got was, "Because organs are in the Bible." Yes, it is true – if you look up Genesis 4:21 you'll find that Jubal was "the father of all such as who handle the harp and organ." This is a rather remarkable achievement when you consider Jubal was only three generations removed from Adam. The organ also pops up in the most musical book of the Bible, the Psalms. "Praise him with stringed instruments and organs" (Ps. 150:4).

It turns out though, that this is too good to be true. The King James is the only translation that uses the word *organ*. Other versions translate the Hebrew word *ugab* found in these two texts as either flute or pipe.

Why did the KJV go with organ? Well, one reason may have something to do with what happened when the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek. *Ugab* became the Greek word *organon*.

SOURCE: *What the Good Book Didn't Say*

HOW TO EVANGELIZE WITHOUT CONVERTING ANYONE AT ALL

Charles Finney was an American Presbyterian pastor whose preaching sometimes had quite the edge, including a satirical sermon credited to him titled, "How to preach without converting anybody." Highlights included:

- Talk about Christ as an infinitely friendly and good-natured being. Talk about "Jesus as a gentleman" who would never offend anyone. Ignore the temple cleansing or any of those scathing rebukes of sinners and hypocrites which so often made His hearers tremble.
- Focus on friendship above all. Then, once you have made a new friend, avoid talking about any doctrines that are offensive to the carnal mind, lest you risk losing the friendship.
- Avoid all heat and enthusiasm in your delivery, so that you never make the impression that you really believe what you say.
- Make appeals to the emotions, and not the conscience, of your hearers. Ask your listeners "Do you want a better marriage?" or "Do you want to be happier?" Don't ask them if they have kept the Ten Commandments.
- Talk about Jesus, but don't talk about sin or hell. Tell them about the savior, but make it unclear why they need to be saved, or what they need to be saved from.

SOURCE: Adapted from Charles Finney's "How to preach without converting anybody."

THE INEXPLICABLE JEWISH BIBLE

Have you ever wondered how Jews interpret Old Testament passages that foreshadow Jesus? That question was answered in a *Larry King Live* some years ago. On a show that featured Rabbi Harold Kushner and Pastor John MacArthur as guests, a caller phoned in to ask about Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac. The answers the rabbi and the pastor gave were revealing:

Rabbi Harold Kushner: "That stirring Genesis chapter 22 about the command to sacrifice Isaac is one the I have never really been happy with. I'm sorry that we read it every year at the high holidays because I can never make sense of it."

John MacArthur: "Can I add a comment?"

Larry King: "Go ahead."

John MacArthur: "I think the reason, if all you accept is the Old Testament, you have a problem with the story of Isaac is because the story of Isaac is a picture of God giving his Son Jesus Christ as an offering for sin, and that's where the imagery there is brought to its fullness."

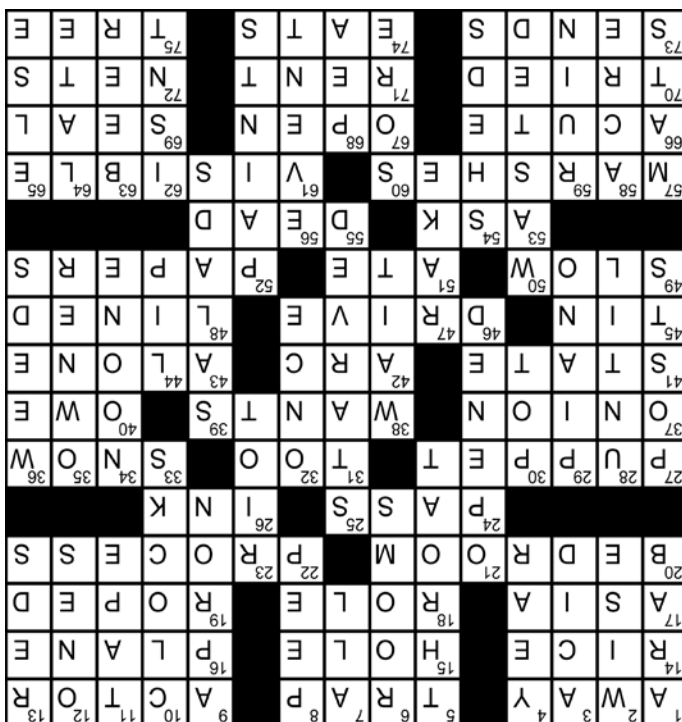
FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT?

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 Paul uses some strong contrasts to explain why Christians should not date or marry unbelievers. He says:

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"

Powerful stuff, but it is also something our young people have heard before...and ignored before. It is possible, however, to use biblical imagery in a new and fresh way – Tom Seidler showed how to do it in an article in *Evangelicals Now* (back in July 2003). Since we are alive in Christ, and unbelievers are dead in Adam, Tom's advice to teens was very simple: "Don't date a corpse."

CROSSWORD SOLUTION SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER



WE NEED YOUR HELP! BREAKING NEWS BREAKING NEWS BREAKING NEWS



Mrs. Ganderpol, our designer,
has **DISAPPEARED**,
taking with her the
CELEBRATORY STICKERS
we designed for the 25th
issue of Come & Explore!

YOUR MISSION, should
you choose to accept it,
is to follow the clues left
by Mrs. Ganderpol and
retrieve the stickers!

I hereby grant you
CLEARANCE LEVEL 25.
Take this folder and
use its contents as
well as the documents
provided by the PDF
found at the link
mentioned on the
next page.
Time is ticking!

J. BRUCE

URGENT
classified document
level: 25

Ganderpost, S.

Come +
EXPLORE

THE CASE
« OF THE »

MISSING STICKERS

CLASSIFIED



! IMPORTANT INFORMATION !

With your parents' permission (but better yet have your parents join the fun) and with a laptop/computer/tablet (phone not recommended) go to:

www.reformedperspective.ca/kids

and open THE CASE OF THE MISSING STICKERS PDF.
You will need this magazine and the PDF going forward.

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL INSTRUCTED.

CLUE 1



The other geese at the office heard Mrs. Ganderpol sing these lyrics on her way out:

"Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start..."

Find the very first issue of Come & Explore and figure out this clue.
It will tell you where to go next:

I AM 14 WIDE AND 14 TALL
I HAVE 15 WORDS
BUT YOU DON'T NEED 'EM ALL
YOU ONLY NEED THE THIRD.

NOTE: The answer to this clue will take you to the NEXT ISSUE. Within the next issue is the answer to clue 2 (and so on it goes). Don't forget to write down the big, bold letter or symbol you find per issue for the PASSCODE at the end of the game. Have fun!

CLUE 2



The following highlighters were found on Mrs. Ganderpol's desk along with this note:



MAD GAB

FIRST THE YELLOWS
THEN THE BLUES,
FOLLOWED BY PURPLE,
FINISH WITH GREEN.
PUT IT TOGETHER, SAY IT FAST,
THEN YOU'LL KNOW WHERE
TO GO AT LAST.

CLUE 3

PASSCODE

It is reported that Mrs. Ganderpol has significantly annoyed her colleagues with her favorite joke. It ends in "Becauuuuuse". Within its question is where you turn next!

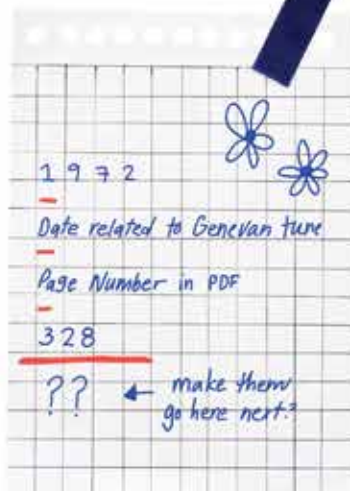


Ganderpol, S.

CLUE 4

PASSCODE

This note was found under Mrs. Ganderpol's calculator.



CLUE 5

PASSCODE

This is Mrs. Ganderpol's, but we want Mark's kind, not Jon's, to tell you where to go next.



CLUE 6



If monocular means independently
And binocular means together
Find the issue with a different animal
for which rectangular means 300?



CLUE 7



Using the **missing words** from the fill in the blanks found in
this particular issue, use the number system below to find the
missing word indicated and then the indicated letter to
assemble the letters for the next clue.

— — — — — — — — V —

WORD - LETTER

6	-	8
2	-	5
1	-	4
7	-	3
5	-	10
10	-	3
4	-	1
8	-	2
9	-	6

CLUE 8



Find the page that has the blank from this sentence:
"was set down to the fire, warm blankets piled high and a hot

--- ---
sitting next to the couch."

CLUE 9



CLUE 10



This notebook, found in Mrs. Ganderpol's purse had only this page written on it.

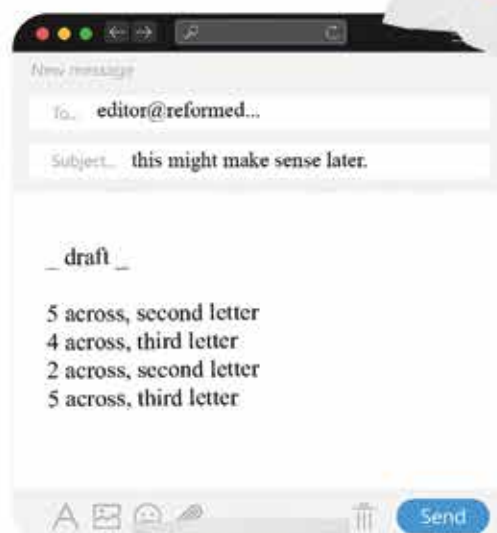


Ganderpol, S.

CLUE 11



Here is a screenshot of a draft email that was found in Mrs. Ganderpol's folder on her laptop. Whatever could it mean?



CLUE 12



The stickers are still missing
Mrs. Ganderpol is too,
But what if stuck to her bottle we found,
Is the final clue?

FINAL NOTE FROM DIRECTOR J. BRUCE

As much as it may interest you to skip
to the final clue, the PASSCODE is
necessary to proceed to the discovery of
Mrs. Ganderpol's whereabouts. The game
is afoot 😊

Taking you

BEHIND THE SCENES

of the last 25 issues of

Come +
EXPLORE

Ganderpot, S.



1. Working on "The Map" sketches on our cluttered kitchen table.

2. Refined sketches for "Camel" in the "office" (aka couch).

3. One of the few weird places Come & Explore was worked on. Most of the "chicken" spread was made in the bathroom at RMH Vancouver while my daughter slept in the evenings. Also, yes, chips are absolutely mandatory to fuel the creative process.

4. Sketching, particularly messy, sometimes frustrating sketches is how every page begins to take shape. The eagle issue took a few hours of sketching before deciding to switch to drawing them in charcoal. But all that sketching paid off! (3 cheers for perseverance!). Not pictured: 10 additional pages of messy eagle sketches.

5. Charcoal drawings for the "Eagle" spread from the "office".

6. Working on Come & Explore on the kitchen table with my daughter.

7. It is always helpful to work off of a reference photo for poses, but sometimes one can't be found, so I act it out myself and get one of my kids to take a picture I can work off of. This pose was for one of the latest issues, do you recognize it?

8. The very first mock up sketch for the very first issue of Come & Explore! There were a few ideas for the page, "Hey Kids", "RP Youth Pages", "Let's Explore" before we settled on "Come & Explore".

9. Before switching to digital art (not AI!) for the illustrations, each one was hand painted and scanned into the issue. Being able to do the issue digitally from start to finish now has freed up time for more fun things for the magazine!



Hi!

I'm Stephanie Vanderpool! It has been my greatest pleasure to create Come & Explore for the past 25 issues! I remember looking through RP when I was a kid and thinking "I hope one day they add a kids' section." Fast forward x-amount of years later, in 2022, where I was flipping through the magazine and thinking again that it should have a kids' page (but I did not have the courage to approach them about it). Little did I know what God had prepared! Just a few weeks later, Mark and Jon approached me about creating a kids' section and, well, here we are! God has been so generous with each issue, giving me direction in what to focus on and giving me the gifts needed to create each spread! Glory be to Him alone! A word of thanks to my husband who would fold laundry while I chased deadlines and special thanks to my editors, Jon and Jan - I can make things look pretty, but they make sure it all makes sense and the commas are in the right place. I keep them real busy.

Oh, and "Hi" to my kids - your joy in God's creation is the biggest inspiration. These are for you.

...THE
CELEBRATION
CONTINUES!

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

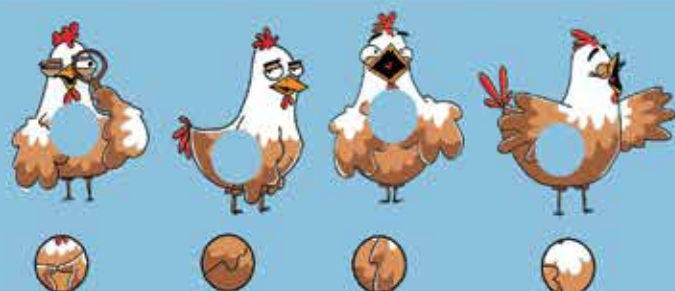
Can you spot the
8 differences
between these
two pictures?

COLOR BY NUMBER



- 1 - grey
- 2 - light grey
- 3 - bright blue
- 4 - yellow
- 5 - black

- 1 - orangey brown
- 2 - lime green
- 3 - black
- 4 - tan



Match the chicken to its missing section.

MATCHING

CQAN JAN XWUH 24 RBBDB XO LXVN JWM NGYUXAN. XXYB.
FN ANJURINM CXX UJCN CQJC R JV KJM JC VJCG. QJQJ.

A = J



PICTURE COUNT



Count how many times each picture appears above and write the number in the box beside.



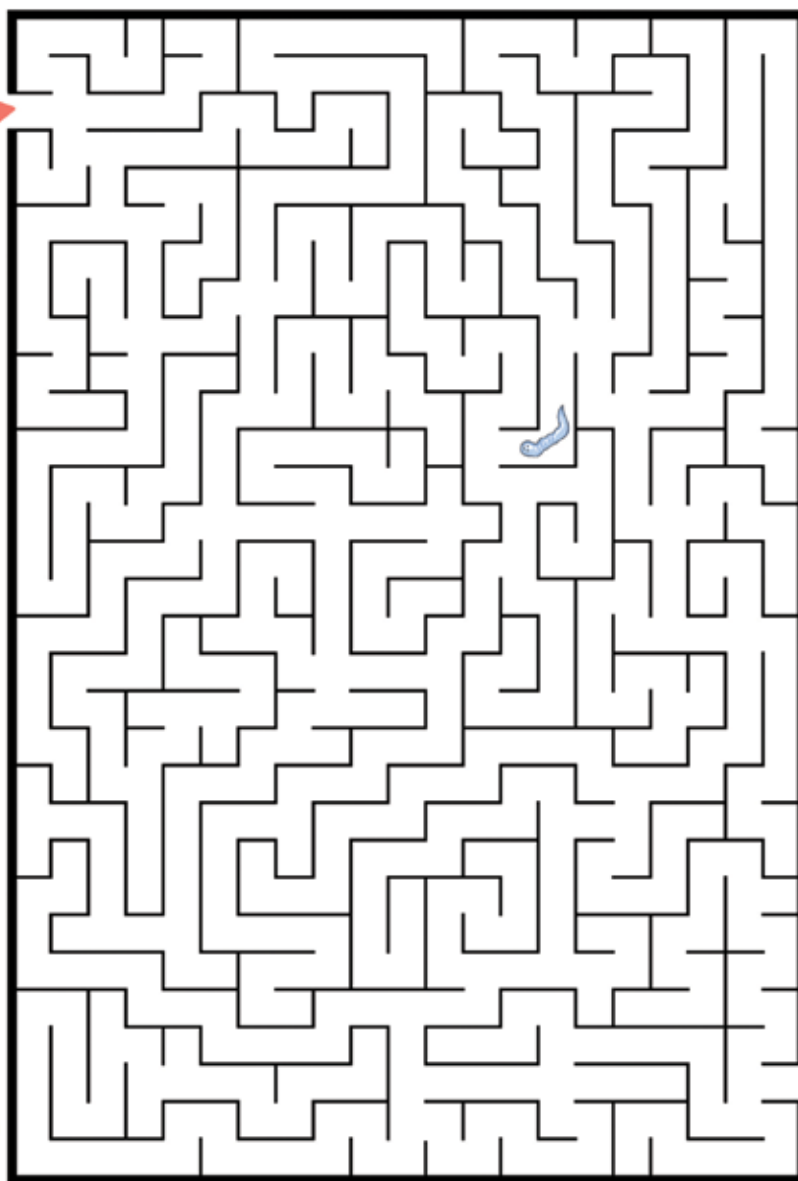
PLAYER 1

CAN YOU NAME ALL OF THE COME & EXPLORE ISSUES?

GIVE IT A SHOT FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN AN RP MERCH GIFT CARD. SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW TO GET STARTED!



THREE \$50 GIFT CARDS TO BE WON!



TWO PLAYER MAZE

Grab two pens, a sibling or parent.

Begin at the arrow on opposite sides of the maze. Have a countdown.

BEGIN!

The first one to reach the worm wins!

FUN FACT:

Figure out the cipher at the bottom of the opposite page to find it out!



PLAYER 2

WORDSEARCH

GRANDPARENTS
LIGHTHOUSE
CELEBRATION
MICROVERSE
TEMPTATION
KINDNESS
SLUGGARD
TREASURE
LAUGHTER
MACHINE
BOREDOM
JOYFUL
PRAYER

BABIES
ARMOR
GIFTS
SHEEP
EAGLE
PEARL
GEESE
CANDY
CAMEL
YOUTH
JOE
MAP

A	V	K	S	H	E	E	P	R	O	C	E	L	E	B	R	A	T	I	O	N	B	Q
Z	F	O	E	L	G	A	E	Y	K	X	O	P	A	M	A	K	T	R	S	E	V	K
S	U	Y	D	R	G	D	L	A	V	K	D	M	A	C	H	I	N	E	Z	V	B	N
O	C	N	U	E	Z	T	Y	T	L	I	G	H	T	H	O	U	S	E	S	R	C	S
R	S	I	F	T	I	S	T	I	B	Y	K	C	W	E	A	C	Q	F	T	L	T	S
O	T	O	Y	H	B	T	E	A	B	H	L	I	V	U	P	E	A	R	L	H	V	E
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E	E	S	U	U	R	I	P	C	D	I	M	H	Z	D	R	K	T	A	E	R	R	R
Z	R	L	T	A	E	G	T	A	Z	R	A	R	Q	Z	N	A	P	L	F	L	O	E
M	A	U	H	L	D	Y	A	N	D	U	C	S	Z	D	Q	E	Y	W	C	D	M	V
K	P	G	P	R	O	B	T	D	D	P	B	A	B	I	E	S	S	E	F	C	R	O
S	D	G	I	X	M	B	I	Y	R	M	U	J	O	E	Y	O	P	S	R	O	A	R
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H	G	Z	M	J	J	I	L	W	N	F	P	O	K	G	E	E	S	E	L	I	H	H

SCREEN-FAST 2026: HOW'D WE ALL DO?

by Caitlin Hamoen

Last year's screen-fast set the bar pretty high with over 900 people signing up to participate. This year, nearly 800 of you decided to once again sign on and limit your screen time for 10 straight days. It was encouraging for everyone involved to have so many others participating and promoting this challenge. We heard back from 130 screen-fasters and found out that over 70% completed 8 or more days.

Many of you also shared what you learned, how your kids got involved, tips for making the best use of your time, and the things you struggled with.

DOING THIS TOGETHER

- "Every day I made a recording of what my day was like and sent it to all my children. The support from them was great. The reporting got me through the hard days because not only would I fail myself, but I would fail my children."
- "I found that when my family did it alongside me, (unlike last year) it was much easier to stay off of my devices."

I SPENT TIME WITH...

- "My nephew came over when there was 3 days left... I spent a lot of time with him and it was sooo fun too!"
- "It was a hot week and I spent time with my kids and grandkids in the pool and just left my phone in the house the whole time. We also

had campfires most evenings and chatted around the fire without the distraction of a screen."

- "We ate a lot of meals outside, played games, took walks, worked outside together, and did a lot of reading."
- "Because I didn't always have video games to fall back onto, I wanted to spend more time outside or with my siblings."
- "We observed our teen and ten-year-old son lounging on the youngest's bunkbed having a conversation, something that would have never happened outside of our screen fast. They sought each other out, I think, because they were 'bored.' We also had an hour and a half conversation at one point with our teen about infant and adult baptism, morphing into other subjects...a conversation we felt he would not have initiated if he had not been 'forced' off his phone."
- "My kids were surprised I had time to play with them – that was a big hit to my heart."

IT WAS MORE PEACEFUL

- "...we found everyone's mood improved dramatically with no/less screens. The younger ones played much more pleasantly and creatively. We had better family conversations. It felt more peaceful in our home."
- "As a mom I definitely appreciated



not being asked every hour if they could go on either the Nintendo or tv! They all enjoyed a lot more time outside and we actually had later nights spent together because we were just enjoying our time outside and losing track of time.”

- “The kids took time to tinker, play and just be kids. There was no battle to shut the tv off.”

JUST ME AND MY BRAIN

- “This fast helped me realize how much I habitually use my phone to entertain my brain in moments through the day. I was much less distracted without that constant pull.”
- “I’m nursing a baby right now and it’s ‘nice’ to scroll through the boredom. But I sat in silence and let my brain rest instead of consuming content – which I think was good for my tired mind.”
- “I found myself more mentally available, having less things on my mind that I’ve read or watched on a short reel or a headline.”
- “The background ‘noise’ of social media quieted and it was a noticeable relief for me. I thought I would miss the content but I don’t miss it.”

I HAD TIME TO...

- “I finished and/or worked on a few projects that I have been working on that I probably wouldn’t have touched this summer, so that was good.”
- “I managed to get trousers mended, pillow cases re sewn, garden seriously weeded, read several chapters in a couple of books I’ve been ‘meaning to’ read, cleaned out a room or two and did a 1000-piece puzzle...”

THE BLESSING OF SLEEP

- “...going 10 days without and seeing the benefit in my own productivity, presence, and even sleep, has me realizing what a blessing it would be if our schools also stepped away from screens.”
- “I noticed that my siblings slept in later because they didn’t have to rush to be the first one to get a screen.”

I DIDN’T KNOW I COULD...

- “Well, as a soon-to-be senior at 63 years old, I hesitantly joined as I love movies and the long and short of it was that I thanked the Spirit for nudging (okay, pushing) me to participate in this challenge. Two key takeaways: 1) My body can move more than I thought it could! When you’re sedentary, you’re well... not moving. I was so bored during this screenfast that I actually tackled some hard, physical labour outside, with wonderful results for my efforts! 2) Sleep. Who knew that a screenfast would leave me bushed at the end of the day?! (see point one) Hello to voluntarily going to bed ON TIME instead of scrolling ad infinitum till the wee hours.”

RULES ARE HERE TO HELP

- “In hindsight, I think I should have made the rules for myself a bit harder. It was good for me to be off social media, but I found myself surprised at how many times I was still googling this or that and spending time on my phone ... because I hadn’t made no googling part of my ‘fast.’”
- “I found the information provided this year allowed participants to build the screen fast in a way that made sense to them. It’s not about the rules; it’s about the bigger picture.”

TIME WITH THE LORD...

- “I meditated in God’s Word, relying on the Holy Spirit to fill my summer days with good and enjoyable things. A certain verse in the New Testament stood out to me: ‘But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly’ (Matt. 6:17-18, NKJV). Jesus said that if we fast faithfully we will be rewarded by our Father. What better way to be rewarded than to dwell in the words and presence of our Heavenly Father without screens or technology to distract us?”
- “I also found it easier to talk to God in

prayer, and do my devotions because I could pay more attention.”

- “It was also amazing to discover God’s Word together as a family.”
- “It was very helpful to remind me not to grab for my phone first thing in the morning and to spend that time talking to God and doing my devotionals instead.”

WHAT’S NEXT?

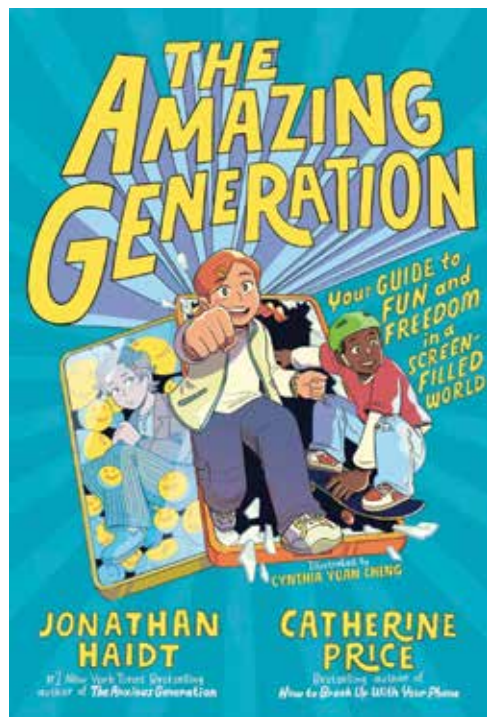
- “I am going to keep social media off my phone the remainder of the Summer to continue good habits!”
- “Some aspects of the fast will continue beyond the fast and I pray that the Lord will give me the discernment and discipline to continue making wiser choices with the time He has given me day to day.”
- “We are happy to have participated in the screen fast and are praying that we will maintain our motivation to implement more conscious screen restrictions so that our family will continue to reap the benefits we experienced.”
- “Going forward I think we will set clear times when screens may or may not be allowed to stop the constant asking. I also had deleted social media apps from my phone for the fast and do not intend to redownload them...”

SOME TIPS

- “...as long you put your phone physically away in the evening it made it much easier to screenfast!”
- “Another thing my wife and I did shortly before the fast began was installing a phone holder for our devices above the kitchen counter where, as a general practice, our phones stay while we are at home and also overnight. Not feeling every buzz in your pocket has allowed us to be more present with each other and our kids and also forces us to go out of our way to use our phones should the need arise.” 

*Caitlin Hamoen is RP's digital editor, and the one who read all your helpful feedback.
Picture by Hannah Penninga.*

reviewed by Jan Broersma



The Amazing Generation:

Your guide to fun and freedom
in a screen-filled world

BY JONATHAN HAIDT AND CATHERINE PRICE
2025 / 236 pages

The old blue rocking chair is the most comfortable chair in our house, and my husband and I have built a useful strategy around it. If we casually leave a book on the table beside it – the kind of thing our kids should read, but may not pick up on their own – our kids will eventually flip through it and very possibly read it.

That's how we enticed our two middle-schoolers to check out *The Amazing Generation*, co-written by Jonathan Haidt (of *The Anxious Generation* fame) and Catherine Price (author of *How to Break Up with Your Phone*). This is a positive and helpful book that encourages young people to choose the richness of real life over a shallow, screen-focused existence.

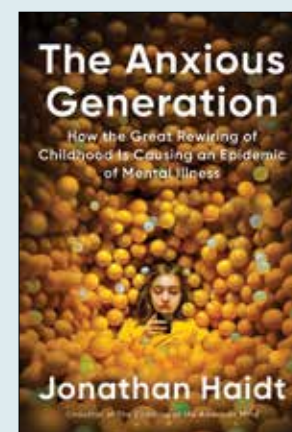
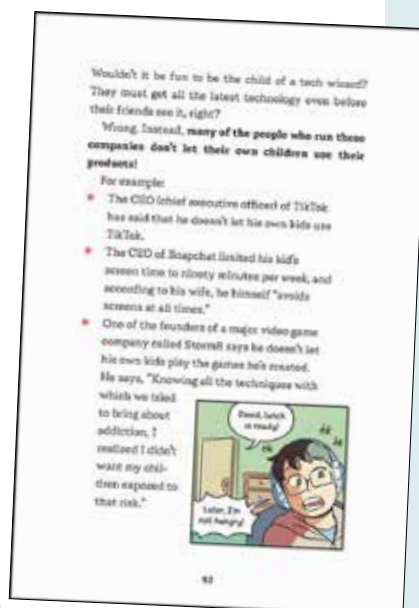
Our kids were skeptical about the book at first, and I couldn't really blame them. The messaging is a little over-the-top – to quote the book, “Don't let the evil tech wizards hack your brain! Be a rebel instead!” – and is likely to earn some eye-rolling from the target tween/teen audience. Fortunately, much of the content and presentation is compelling enough to keep pulling readers back in. More importantly, it's

hard to argue with the authors' very convincing arguments that, for example, most apps are “addictive by design,” and many tech companies are very aware that their products are hurting kids.

The book is cleverly designed as half informative guide, half graphic novel, with the graphic novel following six kids through a year of their lives. Predictably, the three “low-tech” kids have all kinds of interesting experiences and adventures, developing skills and having fun with their friends, while the three tech-dependent kids' lives are clearly less rich and fulfilling. That said, the kids' behaviors ring true – for example, fixating on recording and posting an experience rather than actually living it meaningfully – and will likely hit uncomfortably close to home for many readers, young and not so young.

The informative part of the book is designed to grab and hold middle-schoolers' attention, with fairly short sections of text interspersed with features like “Meet a rebel” (profiles





THE ONE FOR ADULTS

The Amazing Generation is the kinder, gentler, kid version of Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation*. It's the original that got everyone talking, especially his argument that social media and smart-phones are an experiment run amuck, with our kids as the primary and most vulnerable test subjects. We don't have to be a social psychologist like Haidt to know that he's on to something. His findings line up with our own parental experiences. We know what it was like to grow up without a phone, so we can spot the shortened attention spans in our own kids, and the new pressures they deal with in maintaining an always-on connection with their friends via chats, texts, and social media. Since we're not immune ourselves, we can also empathize with the pull tech has on our kids. If we're struggling as adults, we get that it's just that much harder on our kids.

In rewriting his material specifically to reach kids, I think Haidt's focus changed some, from trying to shock adults into realizing there really is a problem, to now offering a more upbeat, hopeful message about how we can rein this in. So, if you want the upbeat delivery, read your kid's copy of *The Amazing Generation*. But if you want the full meal deal, there's lots to learn in *The Anxious Generation*.

One caution I'll add is that the author's evolutionary presuppositions pop up. But thankfully, his belief in evolution is not important to his findings.

— Jon Dykstra

of real young adults who have, in some way, rejected tech), stats and facts, quotes (often quite outrageous or ominous) from prominent tech-company executives, and real-life musings from teens and twenty-somethings about their experiences. Some of the latter are quite impactful – e.g., “I missed out on my entire teenagehood because of social media and my phone” – while others are helpful and encouraging: “I would tell my younger self to get off social media and go make some memories.”

The information in the book is also solid (as one would expect from the two authors), and would be interesting for almost any age. For example, the book describes the addictive “dopamine triggers” (like bright colors, unpredictability, and rewards) that are built into many apps, which are easily recognizable, and which in fact mirror the design of slot machines. This type of information can help kids identify when and how they're being manipulated, and hopefully help them become less susceptible to that manipulation.

The overall message of the book isn't to abandon technology entirely, but rather to “Use technology as a tool – don't let technology use you,” and “Fill your life with real friendship, freedom, and fun.” (These are the two tenets of “The Rebels' Code.”) The balance suggested feels reasonable; for example, kids are encouraged to limit and wait to use certain technologies, not to become full Luddite “rebels.” The book also suggests lots of realistic alternatives, and strategies for going low-tech even when kids feel like they're the only one (including asking their parents if they can blame them for limits and restrictions, to save face in front of their peers).

My only quibble is that the book ultimately encourages fairly self-centered motives for choosing a life of real, non-screen experiences, like learning new skills, having fun, and developing good relationships. Late in the book it mentions that you can also feel good by “doing things that matter” – “things that help other people... or make the world better,” but the point feels like an afterthought.

Overall, though, this would be a great conversation starter, and is a book that has enough substance to be worth a read for both the older and the younger members of the family... even if you have to use the “comfortable chair” trick to get them to open it in the first place. **RP**



YOU MIGHT RELATE TO MARY BENNET, BUT YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO IMITATE HER

by Harma-Mae Smit

Mary Bennet gets a lot of good press. In *Pride and Prejudice*, she is one of the heroine Elizabeth Bennet's three younger sisters, and she's known as the bookish one. Maybe because readers of *Pride and Prejudice* may be bookish as well, we tend to feel the story overlooks her, so many a blog post, and articles, and even sequel novels have been written bemoaning this fact. This is in spite of the plentiful evidence that Jane Austen herself did not like her. Despite Mary being bookish, Austen did not mean to point to her as a character that we should imitate.

This is astonishing, as the bookish girl is a pretty strong stereotype for female heroines by now – just think of Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, Hermione in *Harry Potter*, or Jane Eyre. All of them readers, some a bit know-it-all, but all with a heart of gold. The character of Mary Bennet is swimming directly against the current in this matter.

And readers relate to Mary – many of us know what it feels like to be “plainer” than those around us, to feel less intelligent even though we're desperately trying to appear smart, to feel like no more than a background character in someone else's story. Who can't relate to wanting some distinction of your own, even if it's not beauty? We like books about bookish characters proving themselves because we're reassured that our bookishness will not be our undoing, and that someday those around us will realize that our bookishness has value.

But Jane Austen does not give us that satisfaction with Mary.

Evidence of dissatisfaction with Mary's story can easily be found. Both *The Guardian* and *The Atlantic* have written articles about the proliferation of sequels about Mary Bennet, which include: *The Independence of Miss Mary Bennet*, *The Forgotten Sister*, *The Pursuit of Mary Bennet*, and of course, one called *There's Something About Mary, Bennet*. Many, many authors have seen potential in her character, and clearly many readers want to read about that potential.

SO WHAT ARE MARY'S FAULTS, ACCORDING TO JANE AUSTEN?

It's not that she's bookish and plain. It's that she appears to read only in order to lecture others about what she's read. She appears to practice music only in order to draw attention to herself with it. As a result, neither her speeches on the books she reads nor her performances on the piano avoid sounding "affected."

"Mary had neither genius nor taste; and though vanity had given her application, it had given her likewise a pedantic air and conceited manner, which would have injured a higher degree of excellence than she had reached."

In other places Austen defends the reading of books and applying oneself to improving oneself, but Austen never vindicates these aspects of Mary. She really doesn't do much with her character plot-wise, and demonstrates that her way of being is just as "silly" as the younger sisters Kitty and Lydia's way of living. Mary does not get a character arc or much development at all. She has no romantic events come her way either.

I don't think Jane Austen was against bookish girls. I don't think she was subtly fighting against education for women, or against women having an opinion. I think she had a more complex idea here.

What Jane Austen is trying to show is how one trait, overemphasized and over-developed, can be ridiculous.

It's kind of amazing how, despite all of Mary's deficiencies in beauty and intelligence, her self-absorption is still derided as vanity by Austen. This is an important point! We like to think if we haven't been given all the advantages other people have, we're protected from vanity. We're given a free pass to focus on ourselves, because after all, we aren't as advantaged as everyone else. People should recognize and encourage us in what we do have.

However, this very lack of humility can prevent improvement in the areas we might have relative strength in! It's Mary's air of condescension that makes her sisters dislike her speeches more – no one likes to be talked down to. Her

piano-playing, while better than some, is less pleasant to listen to because of how conceited she makes it sound – she's all-too-aware she is more skilled than Elizabeth. Her vanity in these things prevents her from using her gifts in a way that would actually give pleasure to other people (and Elizabeth proves you can give some pleasure to a listener even without being the best piano-player ever). And Mary's vanity likely prevents her from even seeing the ways her gifts fall short of what she thinks they are. She doesn't improve in the areas of attitude and mannerisms because she doesn't think she needs to.

LOVE IS MORE EXCELLENT

Does this mean she deserves to be laughed at by her sisters, or shamed by Mr. Bennet at the Netherfield ball? Of course not. Mr. Bennet's treatment of her, in particular, is meant to highlight his shortcomings as a father and his insensitivity to what might improve his daughters' characters. (For more on this, see the article in this issue about Mr. Bennet.)

Now, if Mary actually is meant to have a character arc, perhaps one of Elizabeth's or Jane's attempts to rein in their younger sister's vanities would sink in. As it is, we as readers are only left with the impression her vanity leaves on us, with the implication it is a warning – do not get so consumed in creating your own space for your own gifts that you blind yourself to how useless they are to anyone outside yourself. This is basically the opposite of every "find yourself" message in novels and media that is so common.

Because, what is the reason we develop our gifts and talents? God did make each one of us unique, and he didn't intend for some gifts to be laughed at or looked down upon. But He does have a purpose for our gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul talks about the body and how each member belongs, even the parts that seem weaker. Yet Paul goes on in 1 Corinthians 13 to talk about a "more excellent way" – love. Our gifts are to be used in love, to build others up. No one should look down on another, and at the same time those who feel "less honorable"

should remember their role is indispensable because it builds up others, not just themselves.

We can draw inspiration from another Mary in Scripture, who humbly sat at Jesus' feet to learn from Him. She was interested in study, to the extent she seemingly neglected other practical tasks. It's not study that is the problem. But her attitude of humility, and her interest in things that really mattered, made her different from her Austen namesake. She focused her eyes on Jesus and what He called her to do, rather than her own motivations.

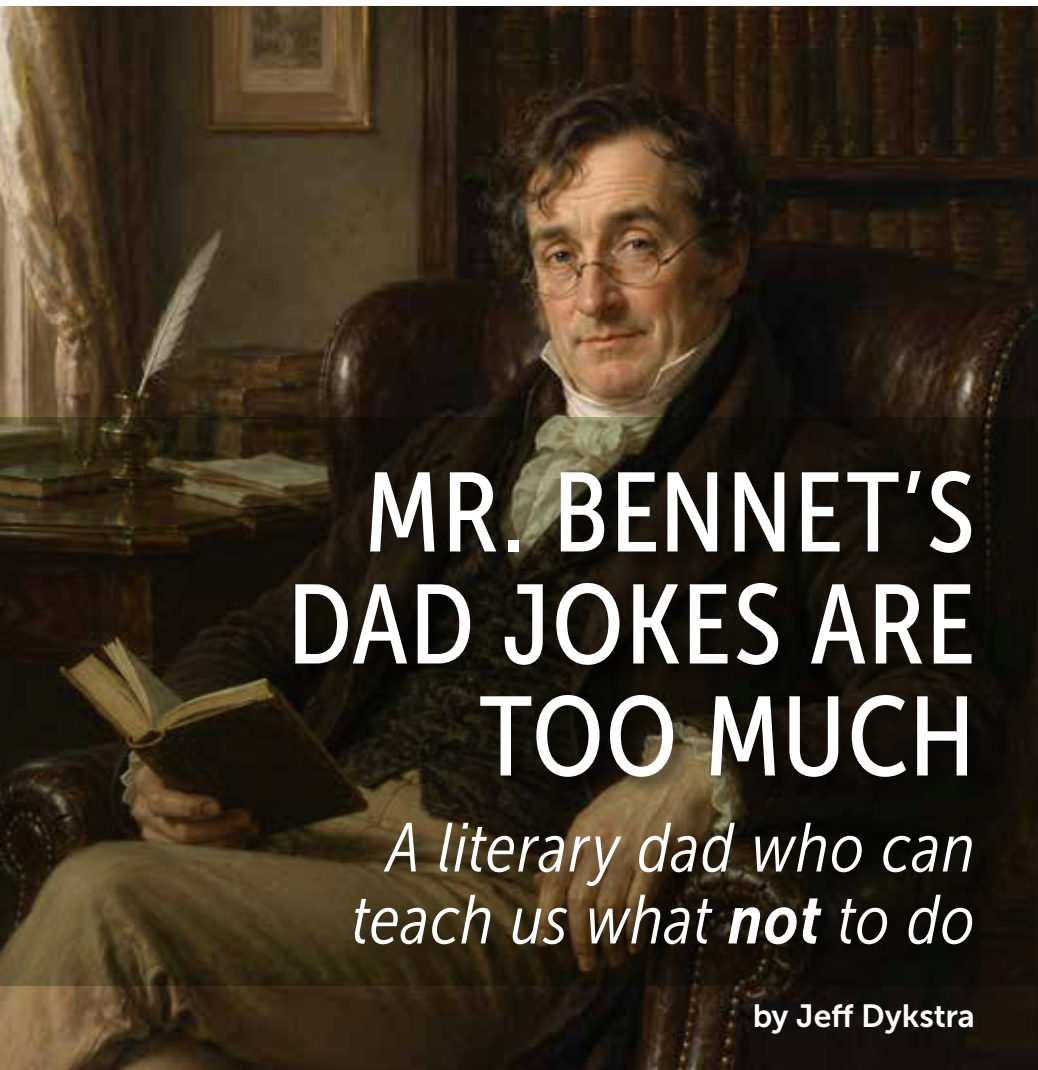
A MORAL OF THE STORY

So perhaps for us bookish types, we can take the message that there's nothing wrong with being bookish, but it's our attitude to others as a result that can be the problem. Even if others don't understand us, it doesn't give us justification to feel superior to them. Even if we are actually better in one area than someone else we know, rubbing that in everyone's faces will not help anyone else, and can even be destructive to ourselves.

But then again, this is not meant to be the main message of the novel – Mary is merely one of dozens of Austen side-characters that demonstrate how one over-developed characteristic renders one ridiculous. It's Darcy and Elizabeth who get character arcs, and who change throughout the novel. Austen uses their story to tell her message. Though if you look at how Austen takes down her main characters' characteristics of "pride and prejudice," maybe Mary Bennet's characterization does support the overall theme of the novel after all.

What about you? Do you find yourself with a lot of sympathy for Mary Bennet, or do you find her tiresome (as her sisters did)? Was Jane Austen too harsh on her? 

Harma-Mae Smit loves exploring how faith interacts with daily living, and diving into local history! She lives in Edmonton with her husband and daughter, and you can learn more about her at her website HarmaMaeSmit.com.



MR. BENNET'S DAD JOKES ARE TOO MUCH

*A literary dad who can
teach us what **not** to do*

by Jeff Dykstra

Dads like to be funny, and there's no question about it but that Mr. Bennet – from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* – is a funny guy. For those who have had no exposure to the novel (or the many movies), Mr. Bennet is the father of five young women whom his wife would like to see married as soon as possible.

THE WIT OF MR. BENNET

Mr. Bennet is best known for spending much of his time making ironic remarks at the expense of both his daughters and his overwrought wife of twenty-three years.

For example, when his wife wants their family to get to know the latest eligible bachelor in the neighborhood, Austen tells us that Mr. Bennet is

“...among the earliest of those who

waited on Mr. Bingley. He had always intended to visit him, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go; and till the evening after the visit was paid she had no knowledge of it.”

Unsurprisingly, his hilarious gag puts his wife under further stress. When she complains that “You have no compassion for my poor nerves,” he responds ironically:

“You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least.”

Which leads to the question of what exactly he has been doing for the last twenty years...

THE WEAKNESS OF MR. BENNET

For male readers in particular, Mr. Bennet's irony probably makes a typical “women's novel” a little more appealing. But do we understand what a poor example of a husband and father he is?

In his dismissive attitude to his daughters, he labels them all as “silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy [Elizabeth, his second oldest] has something more of quickness than her sisters.” In spite of his greater respect for Elizabeth, he does not take even her seriously when she warns him about her younger sister Lydia's desire to go to Brighton. It's not just his wife; in his eyes, none of his children warrant his respect either.

For our purposes, what we need to see is that Mr. Bennet's humor can mask how he is withdrawing from his responsibilities as a father. He refuses to take the family to Brighton himself, yet he allows Lydia to go under the “supervision” of Colonel Forster and his young bride, Mrs. Forster, who is not much older than the 15-year-old Lydia herself. He knows she might run wild, but uses irony to distance himself from having to call out Lydia's silliness and keep her out of trouble:

“Lydia will never be easy until she has exposed herself in some public place or other, and we can never expect her to do it with so little expense or inconvenience to her family as under the present circumstances.”

Rather than actively supervising his silly young daughter, whom he himself calls “a common flirt,” he reasons that:

“Colonel Forster is a sensible man, and will keep her out of any real mischief.... At Brighton she will be of less importance... than she has been here. Let us hope, therefore, that her being there may teach her her own insignificance. At any rate, she cannot grow many degrees worse, without authorising us to lock her up for the rest of her life.”

Mr. Bennet's motives for his parenting and marital style are clearly revealed by Austen's narration: “To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her

ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement.” He thought her funny. But to laugh *at*.

THE WIT OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus uses irony in a way that might remind you of Mr. Bennet – it has some bite. His extended rebuke of the Pharisees and teachers in Matthew 23 begins with backhanded praise: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.” In other words, He praises them as worth listening to, even as He denounces them as hypocrites.

In the same discourse, He, again, both praises and condemns in the same sentence, saying, “you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.”

Jesus’ healing of the man born blind in John 9 offers Him the opportunity to call the Pharisees to truly see their own need of spiritual healing: “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind may see and those who see may become blind.”

So, if both Jesus and Mr. Bennet are masters of ironic wit, what’s the difference?

The first difference is the choice of target. Mr. Bennet’s irony, motivated mostly by his disappointment with his marriage, targets those he considers to be ignorant... though if they are so it is largely due to his own failure to grant them whatever wisdom he has. Jesus condemns those who truly deserve the rebukes He gives them, because He is defending His people against their arrogance and error.

The second difference is the motivation and attitude behind it. Mr. Bennet puts up his irony as a wall between himself and his family, disengaging from their troubles. But Jesus never disengaged. Like His Father, who grieved at the unfaithfulness of Ephraim that would eventually bring them under His long-delayed judgment (Hos. 11:5-9, 12:14), Jesus wept over the coming judgment of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44).

THE WEAKNESS OF JESUS CHRIST

Mr. Bennet has failed to guide and protect his family, and that failure and the irony that he uses to cover it up show a

weakness of character. Mr. Bennet’s ultimately callous wit is not an example for us, but a warning.

Jesus’ weakness is not like Mr. Bennet’s weakness. It is not a character trait, nor a passive response to disappointing circumstances. The Son of God deliberately embraced weakness, to become one of us. His willingness to be hurt, to be a man of sorrows (Is. 53:3), is not a cautionary tale, but is a comfort for us.

Unlike Mr. Bennet, who, for most of *Pride and Prejudice*, uses irony to distract himself and others from his obligations, Jesus not only felt compassion, but acted on it, whether in His teaching the crowds (Matt. 9, Mark 6), healing the sick (Matt. 14), feeding the hungry (Matthew 15, Mark 8), casting out demons (Mark 9), or raising the dead (Luke 7).

THE WAY OF JESUS CHRIST FOR HUSBANDS AND DADS

Husbands and fathers who want to follow the example of our Savior and not Mr. Bennet can get biblical guidance from Proverbs 1-9, and from Paul’s commands and fatherly example.

Proverbs puts much of its instruction in the form of a father’s earnest exhortation to his son. It is striking that the very first verse in which the father speaks already shows a great difference from Mr. Bennet’s attitude, because the father of Proverbs upholds the wisdom of his wife: “Hear my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching” (1:8). Throughout Proverbs, there are as many warnings against disrespect for mothers as for fathers.

Paul’s instructions give Christian husbands and fathers further guidance for their task:

- Contrary to Mr. Bennet’s behavior, fathers are commanded not to provoke their children, either to anger (Eph. 6:4) or to discouragement (Col. 3:21). It is worth considering whether some (or much) fatherly joking and teasing is actually the “corrupting talk” warned against in Ephesians 4:29, rather than what “is good for building up.” A good test might be simply how a son or daughter reacts to a nickname or a

teasing remark: grin or grimace?

- Positively, a Christian father should be doing what Mr. Bennet retreated from doing: committing himself to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4), as does the father figure in Proverbs 1-9 – “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).
- If a Christian husband truly believes, as Mr. Bennet did, that he has a foolish wife – or he in any way is dissatisfied with her – then he should reflect on his own prior foolishness. After all, he was the one who chose her and he needs to concern himself first with the log in his own eye rather than the speck in hers (Matt. 7:1-5). Having done that, he may take on the head’s role of building both himself and his wife up in the wisdom of Christ. Since he and his wife are “one flesh,” he should love her as Christ loves the church, guiding her (and himself) to be “holy and without blemish.” Let them both grow together through joining a Bible study for both men and women, shared devotions and podcasts (see reformedperspective.ca), and discussion motivated by questions like “What did you get out of that sermon?”

BENEFITTING FROM BENNET

Mr. Bennet finally realizes how destructive his parental and spousal neglect has been when it is too late for him to do much about the problems he’s allowed to develop. Thankfully another character steps in to save the day.

Christian men who see their failures and sins as fathers and husbands may yet have time to make changes. But whether it is too late, or there is time yet, you will need to turn to another to save the day. Fathers must come before God in Christ, to receive forgiveness, whether it is for the sin of withdrawing from family responsibilities, or performing them in a sin-stained manner. We can ask, knowing forgiveness will be given. And then we can seek the strength and guidance of the Spirit and the Word to become husbands more like Christ and fathers more like their Father in heaven. 

FILMS

by Jon Dykstra

CHRISTIAN MOVIES ARE IMPROVING

ReformedPerspective.ca/movies

I CAN ONLY IMAGINE 2

DRAMA / BIOGRAPHICAL

2026 / 110 MINUTES

RATING: 9/10



This is... *wonderful*.

In the original, *MercyMe* singer Bart Millard shared the true story of how he overcame an abusive childhood to pen one of today's most popular Christian songs, *I Can Only Imagine*.

Now he's back, it's twenty years later, and he's wondering what happens after your dreams have come true, but you still have a lot of life to keep living.

He might be a famous singer, but his troubles are relatable. Bart's son has diabetes, and resents his dad's hovering. Add to that, Bart hasn't written a hit in ages, and has a fierce bout of writer's block. So he's not succeeding on the home front, and not doing so great at his job either, and now he just wants to know when it's going to get easier. He wants God to tell him, *why does it have to be so hard?* The answer given is the one God gave Job too – God is God and we are not, *and we can trust Him*.

While this is, like the original, quite intense there's fun too. The guys on tour are pulling pranks and swapping great stories. And, of course, there's fantastic music all around. It's not technically a "musical" but with the music up front and everywhere this is *totally* a musical.

So, a tear-jerker – have the kleenex box nearby – but by far the best film I've seen this year.

SIGHT

DRAMA / BIOGRAPHICAL

2024 / 103 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10



How did a kid growing up in a communist country, without access to an education, become the most acclaimed eye doctor in the world? *Sight* is the remarkable true story of driven doctor Ming Wang, who has used his exceptional talents to restore eyesight to tens of thousands. He grew up in the shadow of Chairman Mao's "Great Leap Forward" (1958-1962), which was supposed to turn China into an industrialized giant, but led instead to mass starvation and the deaths of 15–55 million.

The big caution is the opening, when we see a woman pour acid into the eyes of a little girl under her care – in some parts of India a street beggar will make more money if they are legitimately blind. The camera pans away just before the stepmother pours the liquid but we still hear the young girl's screams. If you're watching this with your family, just tell your kids how it begins, and then skip right over this scene and start at the 2:25 mark. For other, smaller concerns see the detailed longer online review.

There are some very good performances here, so I really liked *Sight*. It was an education on communist China, and inspiring too. Who would enjoy this? I think most any adults would... if you fast-forward through the first 2.5 minutes.

THE FORGE

FAMILY / DRAMA

2024 / 125 MINUTES

RATING: 7/10



Isaiah is a high school graduate, still living with his mom, and only starts looking for work when his mom delivers an ultimatum: get a job or get out. His attitude gets in the way even as he's filling in his first application – some old guy starts chatting him up, and Isaiah doesn't have any time for him.

Then that old guy turns out to be the company president. Whoops!

Isaiah thinks he's blown it, but this gentleman, Joshua Moore, is also the leader of The Forge, a mentorship group made up of older men who come together twice a week to share a meal with the young men they are deliberately discipling. Isaiah's less than impressive application marks him as a young man in need of what The Forge has to offer.

This is cinema as sermon, but the appeal is that it is a decent one. Even in churches where older men are involved in the lives of the next generation, there's not likely to be the sort of deliberateness shown here. Is Isaiah's almost instantaneous turnaround realistic? Nope. But are there young men who, for want of a real-life mentor, are turning to a Jordan Peterson, or maybe even a Nick Fuentes-type, because they are looking for someone to teach them what it means to be a man? Yup. So there is a harvest in need of harvesters.

A GREAT AWAKENING

DRAMA / BIOGRAPHICAL

2026 / 129 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10

If you like watching movies worth talking about afterwards, you need to see *A Great Awakening*.

America's "Great Awakening" was a revival that occurred through the 1730s and 1740s. You've likely heard of one of the key figures, George Whitefield, the traveling pastor with the booming voice that could be heard by tens of thousands at a time. But did you know he was friends with the printer, inventor, and American Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin?

They formed a partnership early on, with Franklin happy to print and sell Whitefield's sermons and pamphlets. However, Franklin wasn't interested in the Gospel – only the money that could be made.

There's nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9), so this blast from the past has a lot to say about today's issues. In what may be my favorite clip, Whitefield takes to the pulpit in an Anglican church, and starts with this story:

"In 1675, the Archbishop of Canterbury became acquainted with an actor of some renown, Mr. Betterton. One day, the Archbishop said, 'Mr. Betterton, pray tell me, how is it that you actors on the stage can so move your audiences while speaking of things imaginary, while we in the pulpit speak of things real, which our congregations receive as if they were but imaginary things?' 'Why, my Lord,' Mr. Betterton replied, 'the answer is quite plain. We actors speak of things imaginary as if they were real, while you, in the pulpit speak of things real as if they were imaginary.'"

Whitefield attacks the formalism

of his time – Christians going through the motions but not living like they believed in a mighty God who is to be feared and loved and Who will not countenance us being lukewarm (Rev. 3:16).

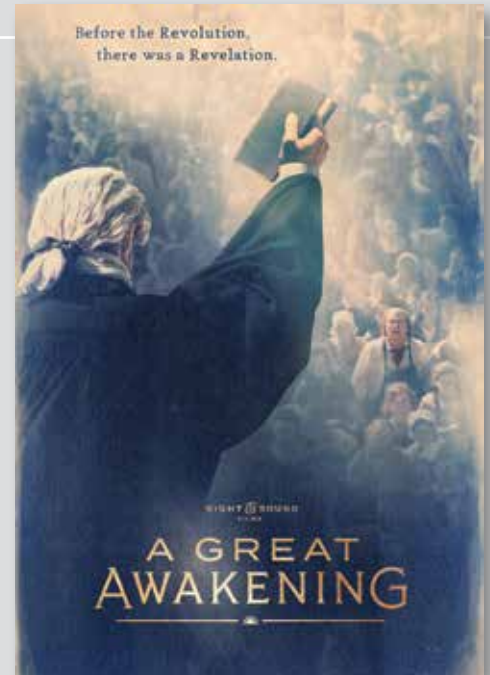
Towards the end of the movie, the elderly Franklin gives a surprising speech to the 1787 Constitutional Convention, suggesting that they begin now, to start each day with prayer. Why?

"I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?"

And what response did this deist get to his encouragement for those assembled to turn to the God Who will decide whether or not they would succeed in founding a country? The film shows us Alexander Hamilton rising to object. Hamilton didn't like the optics. He thought beginning with prayer now would make them look weak.

And isn't this our concern too? Whenever we speak up in public about any moral matter, we seem to always want to ground our arguments in common sense, or public opinion, but certainly not on God's Word. After all, to appeal to God's Word would make our position seem weak, right? Like we've got nothing better to offer than some religious text that so many others don't even believe in.

But if that's how we're thinking – and I believe it is – then we should take the lumps that Whitefield dished



out to the Anglican churchmen. Then we are acting as if the reality of God as Creator and Upholder of all is just some imaginary thing. Then we are acting as if the opinions of the masses and their "common sense" were our only real firm foundation. Then we are getting things exactly backwards, and we need to stop offering up such a confused performance, and start speaking of our God as the Sovereign Lord He really is.

The one caution would be a single misuse of God's Name by Benjamin Franklin. God's Name is dishonored endlessly in secular films and I just don't understand why Christian filmmakers feel the need to do so in their own movies too. There was, of course, no f-bombs dropped – you can't have *that* in a Christian film. I can only guess that it might have been included as an instance of an unbeliever accidentally giving God the credit that is His due.

A Great Awakening was good enough to keep even my teens engaged (though, admittedly, they wouldn't give it the 8 I've awarded it) and it has enough depth to it that it's worth watching multiple times.

Animation aimed at the parents

We've had two animated films this summer aimed more at adults than kids, conjuring up warm and fuzzy memories of decades past.

TOY STORY 5

ANIMATED
2026 / 102 MINUTES
RATING: 8/10

Buzz and Woody and Jessie and the whole gang of toys are back. Their little girl Bonnie is an imaginative kid who loves playing with her toys, but is having trouble making friends. When she does stir up the courage to wave at a couple of neighborhood kids, they just stare back before rushing inside their house. Bonnie heads back inside her own home to ask: "Mom, dad, why won't anyone be my friend?"

So what do her parents do? They gift their eight-year-old a "Lilypad," or Lily as she's known by the other toys. It's an iPad-type device loaded with "educational" games. All the other kids have moved on from toys to just tap, tap, tapping on their screens, so Bonnie's parents figure that's a good reason to get their little girl doing it too. And Bonnie does love her Lily – she seems downright glued to it. That has Jessie and the rest of the toys less than impressed. How can they get their imaginative little girl back?

Lily is definitely the villain of the piece, but she's no cackling, super-baddie. She loves Bonnie too, and with a quick flurry of online friend requests, she manages to secure Bonnie a "friend" in just 15 seconds. But is a screen friend the same thing as an in-real-life one? The toys know it just ain't so... and eventually Bonnie, her parents, and even Lily will figure it out too.

One caution: Pixar is generally very good with language, but I heard someone blurt out that they were going to "wipe your a..." with the last word cut off before completion. I also heard one "jeez" and an "oh my gosh."

Story-wise, this is a solid *Toy Story* outing, but what many parents will love is its moral – that screens are taking over our kids' childhoods, and we need to rein it all in. Tech, in general, is the target, but parents should be understood as the bigger baddies. What are Bonnie's mom and dad doing, handing her an iPad and just walking away? I'm not a fan of heavy-handed moralizing, but I was annoyed that parental irresponsibility was the only point of the film's cinema-as-sermon that was delivered with any delicacy. If



there's ever a time for a cinematic boot-to-the-head, isn't this it?

Parents will be able to use this to kick off a conversation about how they want their kids to respond to technology's pull, its temptations, and its possibilities. That makes *Toy Story 5* a must-see for most of us – one to watch and discuss, and then put the lessons learned into practice.



THE SUPER MARIO GALAXY MOVIE

ANIMATED / FAMILY
2026 / 97 MINUTES
RATING: 6/10

Plumbers Mario and Luigi are back, and this time they are fighting not just Bowser but his son, Bowser Jr. too, and they are rescuing not just one princess but two. If the story's a little stale, there's still plenty of surprises of the "easter-egg" variety. This film

is less about the plot than it is about the guest appearances sprinkled throughout – characters pop up from all over the Mario gaming universe, and even beyond.

It's up to Mario and Luigi, and the two princesses, to save the

day, and if it's going to take an endless series of chase and fight scenes to do it, well, then that is just what will have to happen!

The overall caution would be "weirdness." Bowser gets chucked into lava and re-emerges as a skeletal version of himself. Weird to have him unperturbed about his skeletal form. It's weird that Bowser Jr. has a dad but no mom. Weird too that Princess Peach and Princess Rosalina have no parents at all. Weirdest of all: in a brief post-credit appearance, a nihilistic floating blue star tells imprisoned villains that we all eventually turn to dust. But maybe that's what you get when you turn a bunch of video games into a movie: a story that has lots of action, but little coherence.

I had a hard time rating this one. If you *didn't* play the games, then this is just one loud, bright, frantic mess, with not much of a plot to enjoy. And even for fans, this isn't going to be a film they'll want to rewatch again and again – they'll revisit the first instead. So I've slotted it a notch below the original, with a 6.

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Mehwish



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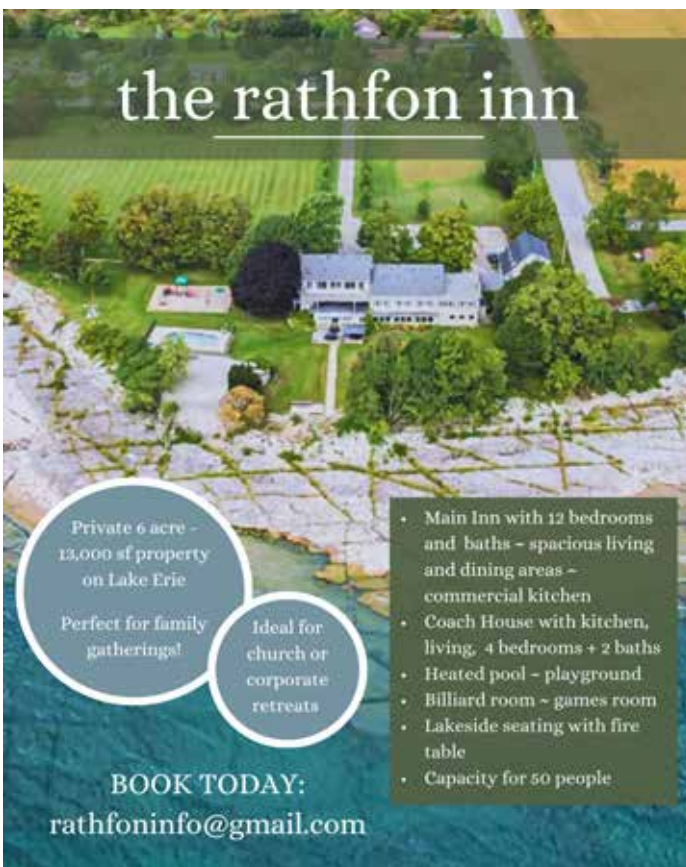
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BEWARE THE NEW THIEVES

Clever online scammers are targeting Christians, old and young – here's what to watch for

by Marty VanDriel

Gerry lost his dear wife Margaret in 2020, after nearly forty years of marriage. He never thought that he would be the lonely type, but now that she was gone, he realized that while the kids and grandkids loved him, and checked in on him regularly, they had their own lives and were busy with so many things. While not much of a social media guy, Gerry had a Facebook account that kept him connected to

friends and family. After Margaret's passing, he received many condolences and messages that really helped him through a tough time.

One friend of a Facebook friend who lived on the other side of the country continued to message Gerry after he accepted her friend request during this time of grief. Laura had lost her husband a few years ago, and she knew how lonely it could get after the family settled back

into their normal routines, and the house felt so empty. Their conversations switched to private messenger so that prying Facebook eyes wouldn't have anything to gossip about, and the connections became an important part of Gerry's day.

After a month of regular, frequent communication, Gerry grew to rely on Laura and considered her a true friend. They were both interested in politics, and had many interesting chats about how Canadian culture was changing so quickly. They wondered what life was going to be like for their grandchildren in the coming decades. They shared the challenges they faced as singles in churches where most people were part of a couple. Neither of them liked Facetime or other video chat services, so most of their talks took place through Whatsapp, or Messenger or email.

A few months into their friendship, Laura became gravely sick. Her illness was life threatening, and she was devastated. Professing her confidence in Jesus, she told Gerry she was not afraid of death, but still had a lot to live for. Treatments for her illness were very expensive, and Laura was not a wealthy widow. Gerry was happy he could do something for her, and sent money through e-transfers to help her pay the bills that began to pile up. The treatments became more and more expensive, and for a while, Laura insisted that Gerry stop sending funds; it wasn't



"Love scams" can take place over weeks and even months.

worth it anymore with all the pain she was experiencing; she was at peace with stopping the treatment. Gerry insisted: she had to fight on, for the sake of her children and friends, and it wasn't right to give up hope!

Perhaps by now, dear reader, you recognize the themes of what has become a far too common scenario. Lonely people are fooled by deceivers who take advantage of them by pretending to be someone who cares. "Laura" never existed; the man who invented her had dozens of other online personalities that he used to connect with men and women around the globe. All the money that Gerry sent enriched this thief's bank account, and never paid for a penny of treatment for anyone. And since he didn't even live in Canada, there was no way to recover the hundreds of thousands of dollars that Gerry sent that were supposed to help someone who never was.

Now, thankfully, this is a fictionalized account and Gerry is not a real person, so the harm he suffered didn't happen. But I'm sharing his story because this exact thing is happening to real people all across Canada, and we need to know what to look out for.

EXTORTING THE YOUNG

Now let me tell you about Logan, a shy teenager, especially bashful around girls at his Christian high school. His Instagram profile painted an active picture – posts after every hockey game, after a day at the lake, and an afternoon on the slopes. His profile led to lots of connections with teens with similar interests, and he began to have more "conversations" with these virtual friends than with his classmates. Chelsea, a girl from the States, became an even closer friend, and Logan looked forward to their interactions more and more, and perhaps to meeting her some day. Logan grew more intimate with Chelsea, and although he knew he shouldn't, he traded inappropriate pictures with her.

Again, by now you may have guessed the deceit that had happened. Chelsea was not a girl from Florida but a con man, and now that he had these



Logan, a shy young man, began to have more "conversations" with virtual friends than with his classmates. Chelsea, a girl from the States, became an even closer friend, and Logan looked forward to their interactions more and more, and perhaps to meeting her some day....

compromising photos, he had the tools needed to begin extorting Logan. Small Venmo transfers grew larger and larger, and if Logan didn't comply, these pictures would be shared with everyone he knew. Weeks of torment followed for the beleaguered teenager.

Logan's parents noticed how their normally happy son had turned morose, with no energy for the things that usually brought him joy. Dad took Logan out for coffee, and when pressed, his son confessed his dilemma. With help from the local authorities, the extortionist was frozen out from further contact. The family's ward elder visited with Logan, and was a huge comfort for the teenager, reminding him that "all have sinned, and all fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23-24). It's a simple message that Logan knew from his youth, but such a comforting thing to be reminded!

While Logan's story ended well, this type of extortion is extremely dangerous.

Especially younger victims see their world tumbling down around them. Some have become so distraught, not seeing any way out from their dilemma, that they have taken their own lives.

A NEW DANGER

While both Gerry and Logan are not real people, what happened to them is actually happening to people across the world, with frauds and scammers using social media and modern communication tools to rob unsuspecting citizens.

Our online profiles show our hobbies, our loved ones, our careers, and other things important to us, and that become the means by which thieves find connection points with us. A seemingly innocent message or connection opens the door to a virtual relationship that builds up over time. We begin to trust the person on the other end of that email chain or iMessage conversation. And these thieves are happy to play the long game, not asking you for money in the early days of your friendship. It could

be more than a year before they “strike” – they will wait till they’ve become someone you trust, someone that you want to help.

So what can you do to protect yourself? Here are three simple rules to help you shut down these scoundrels.

Rule 1: Do I actually know you?

Today’s thieves rarely come to your front door – they approach through electronic communication like phone

calls, social media connections, and emails. You may believe you have a friendship with someone; you may even have pictures of this person, or have seen their online presence for some years, you may even have phone conversations with someone – but unless you have seen them in person, there is a chance that this person is deceiving you. You can shut down most scams and schemes by following this rule: if I haven’t seen you in person, we don’t really have a

relationship, and I certainly will not send you any gifts, financial or otherwise.

While the scams in this story took a long time to set up, other schemes and frauds can materialize quickly. For example, your “utility company” may phone you to let you know that your service is being disconnected due to missed payments, unless you are able to pay over the phone *right now*.

Even more distressing: fake kidnappers have used voice recordings

EFFECTIVE GIVING

How to donate responsibly

By worldly and historical standards, Canadians are incredibly wealthy, with much more than we need for our daily living. And Canadian Christians are generous givers to Kingdom causes, living out this command from Hebrews 13:16: “Do not neglect to do good, and to share what you have, for with such sacrifices, God is pleased.”

Unfortunately, scammers and thieves will often try to take advantage of this generosity of spirit, and they do succeed. So how can we ensure that our giving is as effective as possible? Here are a few suggestions.

LOCAL IS EASIER TO ASSESS

If you support a food bank in your town, you can visit the facility, talk to staff members, and find out about needs. When you donate to local causes, you can witness in person how effective the institution is in its core mandate, and you can monitor how funds are used with their published financial statements and in annual meetings. While there are many worthy causes all over the world, it’s good to be able to see in person how an organization functions, and what it does with the gifts it receives. So does that mean you shouldn’t donate internationally? You can, but only to trusted organizations – ideally ones you’ve researched and known for years, or one your church is suggesting – and not to distant organizations who introduce themselves over the phone, via email, or through the mail.

LOOK FOR OVERSIGHT

A charity should be well governed to be effective in its mission, and to prevent fraud and personal enrichment. Look for a board of directors, with more than one or two members, that oversees the organization and sets direction. Reformed churches often set up boards to govern and direct mission projects, theological schools, and other causes. Sometimes

these boards report directly to a church’s consistory: this can be a helpful structure for accountability and guidance.

CONSIDER CAREFULLY

If you can’t see a charity in action, do a little further investigation to find out about its operations. How many orphanages are really in use? How are they managed? How do they hire their staff? What percentage of their budget is spent on “head office administration”? Canada Revenue Agency publishes information on registered Canadian charities at <https://apps.cra-arc.gc.ca/ebci/hacc/srch/pub/> sharing their tax returns and even showing a pie chart with a breakdown of how funds are received, and how they are spent. The IRS publishes tax returns for American charities at: apps.irs.gov/app/eos

Even with these tools, it can be very difficult to judge how effective a charity is when we are far removed from their locations. “Considering carefully” means that you will say no to some organizations, not because you know they are bad, but simply because you aren’t able to verify with confidence that they are being good stewards.

CONCENTRATE YOUR GIVING

Some charities rely on direct mail to solicit donations, and sometimes they will ask for very small amounts (every gift helps!). When you respond to their request with a gift of \$10, you have just become another target for them to send more and more mail! Sometimes, your small gift will actually cost that charity money, because of all the additional pleas for help they will send your way in the coming months and years. It may be wiser to concentrate your giving on charities that you know more about, and where a higher percentage of your gift will be used on its mission (and not on more mailing!).

– Marty VanDriel



of grandchildren to extort money from vulnerable seniors: “You must send these funds *now* or you will never see them again!”

Rule 2: Don’t answer your phone if the number calling is not one you recognize!

You cannot be sure that a caller is who they say they are. Even if the call is from your local area code, or the area code where you have relatives or connections, just let the incoming call go to your voice mail. If the matter is legitimate and important, the caller will leave a message, and you can verify that whoever is calling is really with the company they say they are with, by looking up their phone number from your latest bill or statement. And if the message does turn out to be a loved one, you can simply call them back!

Rule 3: Slow down, and tell someone!

Most scammers rely on a sense of urgency to make you act more quickly than you normally would. “Get on

your computer *now* and make this E-transfer, or else this terrible consequence will follow.” We get flustered when we are put in a stressful situation; our normal logic gets pushed aside in our panic.

Hang up the phone, close up the email or message, and call a trusted friend or loved one. Most of the time, the messenger’s urgency is a tactic designed to bully you into doing something you normally would not do without double checking its legitimacy.

HOW CAN WE HELP EACH OTHER?

“It is not good for man to be alone,” said the Lord in Genesis 2, and this applies not just to finding a marriage partner, but also to human beings as social creatures. We need relationships, for both giving and receiving love and friendship. In our modern, internet connected world, more and more people have stronger virtual connections than they experience in real life. Many people are lonely!

One of the most important ways for us to help our loved ones not become victims of these types of scams is very

Fake kidnappers have used voice recordings of grandchildren to extort money from vulnerable seniors!

old fashioned. But it’s also very effective. Keep up your personal, face-to-face visits with your family and friends and neighbors. There is nothing that can replace a real conversation with a real human being. Ask questions of each other; find out from one another what is going on in our lives. Stop by for a coffee regularly!

Especially retirees and seniors benefit from these conversations. They may be more lonely and isolated than younger folks. They often won’t be as aware of the dangers of virtual connections, and they may not have heard of the scams and schemes with which you are familiar.

Don’t be afraid to ask financial questions: many of our seniors want to be generous with what the Lord entrusted to them. This is a wonderful impulse! But you can help the seniors in your life with good counsel on how to support Christian causes for maximum impact.

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS

Victims of fraud or extortion often feel ashamed of their situation. If they've traded inappropriate pictures, they feel guilty and unlovable. If they've been defrauded of money, they feel foolish, as if it was their fault. If this is you, dear reader, please know that there is such great relief in telling someone your troubles – tell a friend, tell your parents, tell your elder. Do not keep your troubles private! It is a joy to be part of a church community that bears one another's burdens.

And if you have sinned in your interactions, confess your sins to the Lord! Our God is patient, loving, and compassionate. He is able to forgive anything that you have done, and He wants to assure you that because of Jesus' work, your sins are removed as far as the east is from the west! You are washed, you are clean! 1 John 1:9 reminds us "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice! 

Marty VanDriel has been interested in helping folks "avoid getting ripped off" since he began listening to consumer advocate Clark Howard back in the '90s! An RP reader from the Fraser Valley alerted VanDriel to incidents of these scams among Canadian Christians. VanDriel's favorite financial advice is to read and reflect on the book of Proverbs regularly!

4 WAYS TO AVOID A FINANCIAL FLEECING

How to invest carefully

Modern scammers have learned how we can be enticed by the lure of large financial returns, especially when presented as exclusive opportunities for a small group of people.

This scheme doesn't only happen online; sometimes the most effective thieves are very popular figures in their own home town... until their schemes unravel. We might think these things only happen in big cities, but unfortunately, they occur wherever sinful men live in community. In my small town, dozens of seniors lost millions of dollars after investing with a person they trusted.

So here are a few rules to avoid entrapment:

1. IF SOMETHING SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, DON'T BITE!

Real investing is, by its nature, risky. Investors know that these are the risks associated with any business, and that success is not guaranteed in any endeavor. So, if someone promises you an above average return, and states that there is no risk – it's a sure thing! – *do not believe them!* Even if a brother or friend states that you are guaranteed a 12% return, when banks are paying 3% or 4% interest on CD's, do not believe them! It does not matter how many other people are praising this investment; it doesn't matter if this opportunity is only available to a few carefully selected people. Don't be fooled by a "guarantee." It's not a promise, it's a lie. (P.S., if someone reads this, and disagrees, please email me – mvandriel@trivan.com and I'd be glad to talk this through with you!)

2. DON'T DEPOSIT MONEY FOR OTHER PEOPLE

When someone who doesn't owe you money wants you to deposit cheques or money orders or wired funds into your bank account, don't allow it! Thieves have developed all kinds of ruses and stories to explain why they need this service performed. It could be overpayment for something you are selling, or it could be a commission for a small task you did for them remotely (like writing an online review or forwarding

messages to friends). Do not be distracted by the elaborate story, because part two of this scam is definitely coming.

The scammer will ask for a portion of these funds back, as a commission, or a splitting of expenses, or explain that they made a mistake and sent you too much. The thief will hassle, hound, and threaten you until this amount is sent to him. Whatever portion you send back to him is likely to be the amount you are being robbed, because the cheque or money order or wired funds of the original deposit turn out to be fraudulent after a few weeks. Or they might take more, because they have used the transaction to get access to your bank account information.

3. IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, DON'T INVEST

Investor Peter Lynch said: "If you can't explain to a 10-year-old in two minutes or less why you own a stock, you shouldn't own it." The same principle applies to private investment opportunities. If you can't understand how a company will be profitable, or how a company's business plan works, or the technology behind the product or service, you may wish to decline. Confidence say: "I'm sorry, but I just don't understand how your business is going to make money, and so I'm going to decline this opportunity." And end that conversation!

4. WEALTH GROWS SLOWLY

Ripoff artists normally promise not just a large return, but a quick investment increase. When you hear someone promise large increases in a short period of time, remember what Solomon wrote in Proverbs 13:11: "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it." He echoes that point in Proverbs 21:5: "The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty."

– Marty VanDriel

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

STEPHANIE SIKMA IS PRINTING HAMILTON

by Harma-Mae Smit



*Stephanie at an opening
at the Art Gallery of Hamilton.*

I've always thought printmaking was a fascinating form of art – first carving your design into wood or lino, and then pressing that inked design onto paper. It involves thinking about an image in a unique way.

So when I heard about a Reformed printmaker, I was eager to interview Stephanie Sikma for this column. What follows has been edited for length and clarity.

HARMA-MAE SMIT: Linocuts are a unique form of art. What are the challenges and joys of using this type of technique to create art?

STEPHANIE SIKMA: One of the challenges of being a printmaker is explaining the process to people who are curious but unfamiliar. It's a multistep process that is very analog. I draw on piece of linoleum (smooth and gray, not like the flooring), carve out all the areas I want to be white, ink up the carved block of linoleum with a roller, and then press a piece of paper onto the block so that the ink transfers onto the paper and I get an image.

The absolute best part is carving a block. When I draw my image out on the linoblock it tends to be a little sketchy and not very detailed. This is partly because I'm impatient to start carving, and also that I like to let the physicality of the carving process guide the mark-making that happens, rather than follow a very prescribed outline. Seeing a block printed for the first time is always a thrill, but after that comes the slog, which is the

trial and error that's necessary to get multiple good prints. It's a very tricky process. A fellow printmaker once put it this way, 'Printmaking is fun because it takes a perfectly simple process like drawing and makes it as complicated and error prone as possible.'

When I'm carving a block, time vanishes and there's a wonderful feeling of effortless focus and attention that clears my mind. The scientific suggestion that roughly 25% of your brain's motor cortex is dedicated solely to the hands makes perfect sense to me. We're not meant to be using our amazingly designed hands to simply hold a phone and slide along a screen, doomscrolling. There are so many different ways to exercise creativity and make things with our hands but, in our current environment, resisting the role of passive consumer of entertainment requires deep intentionality.

HMS: I love that one of your subjects is urban architecture. How did this theme come about?

SS: Growing up in Hamilton, Ontario, I've always been captivated by the sight of the industrial waterfront. I remember as a young child looking out the window as we drove home over the Skyway bridge from visiting my grandparents in Burlington. I would make sure to stay awake long enough to catch sight of the steel mills before falling asleep in the car.

To this day, I find the steel factories possess a fascinating beauty, or to quote W.B. Yeats, a "terrible beauty." I'm definitely drawn to the contrast between the

▼ **Above and Below | Linocut - 12 x 18"**

The industrial waterfront in Hamilton - a "terrible beauty."



industrial and the organic. You have these large and elaborate industrial structures that speak loudly of human ingenuity and environmental impact, but the presence of nature (and by extension, God) in the wide-open sky and water of Lake Ontario looms larger.

HMS: How does being a Christian inform your work?

SS: My faith informs my artistic practice as it does all areas of my life. I don't think the moniker of "Christian art" or "Christian artist" is especially helpful; rather it's perhaps better to think in terms of art made by Christians.

The distinction may seem trifling so allow me to explain. I believe the Lord made me with artistic gifts that I can cultivate, grow, and use with discernment. When I develop my gifts and make art, I do so in the knowledge that I'm fulfilling God's purpose for me and honouring Him through the stewardship of what He's given me. Whether or not someone looks at my work and takes from it an explicitly Christian message does not change the fact that my art is an expression of my Christianity. Indeed, art that is heavily didactic can run the risk of missing the artistic

qualities that would carry the artist's message further. An indication of the framework of my faith often comes through in the titles I give my pieces.

HMS: What does a typical day look like for you?

SS: During the school year, a typical day sees me headed to work at Guido de Bres Christian High School in Hamilton where I teach two art classes every school day morning. I enjoy teaching, and being part-time gives me the space to keep up my own artistic practice as well as get done the things necessary as a married mother of three school-aged children. Often a piece will take me longer than I would like because of the other demands on my time, however, I'm very grateful to be in a position where I can make and sell art. Creating art without the pressure of it being a sole source of income provides creative freedom and, frankly, keeps it very enjoyable. Teaching is also a calling and teaching visual art has helped me grow as an artist. The most rewarding thing with teaching art is helping young people develop their abilities, creativity, and understanding of art.

Contemporary society tends to decide the worthwhileness of any



▲ The "Above and Below" linoblock - this is what a carved linoblock looks like before ink is applied.

▼ **I Lift My Eyes | Linocut - 10 x 6"**

This is a 2 block print. The blue block of the clouds was printed first and then the trees were printed on top of the clouds.



undertaking by how much money it can get you. Art gets undervalued because it's not seen as a viable way to make a living, and it's true that while lucrative positions within the art industry exist, they're highly competitive and many folks will not make an above average income working in the creative fields. But if we believe we are made in God's image and God is a creator, then following through on our creative energy and abilities has the inherent value of allowing us to live more fully in the image of God. Similarly, looking at and appreciating art isn't a superfluous activity. To engage with art is to gratefully receive a gift and unwrap it to see what's inside, instead of ignoring the gift and the one who gave it to you.

You can see more of Stephanie Sikma's work at www.stephaniesikma.com, on Instagram at [@stephaniesikma](https://www.instagram.com/stephaniesikma), or on Facebook at [Facebook.com/stephaniesikma](https://www.facebook.com/stephaniesikma). She also shares her work at shows and exhibitions, including, most recently, at the McMaster Innovation Park.

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 harma-mae@reformedperspective.ca, including their contact information. 

► **Hold On**
Charcoal on
toned paper
- 13 x 12"

A charcoal drawing rather than a print. Inspiration can come from the most difficult things in life, and when the artist's dad died suddenly, creating this piece helped remind her of what art is for – to help us experience life, process feelings, and see beauty.



▲ **Landed Banking and
Loan Company** | Linocut
- 10 x 12.5"

This old bank is right across from a bus stop where, as a university student, the artist used to wait for the bus to get home from McMaster. She spent a fair amount of time admiring its neo-classical design. When creating this linocut, she challenged herself to use a two-point perspective.

▼ **Sola Scriptura (William Farel)** | Linocut - 12 x 18"

This print is based off the statue of William Farel in Switzerland and inspired by Renaissance woodcuts and the work of Albrecht Dürer. This was commissioned by the Guido Board as a retirement gift for Mr. George Alkema, who had had a poster of Farel in his classroom for many years.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

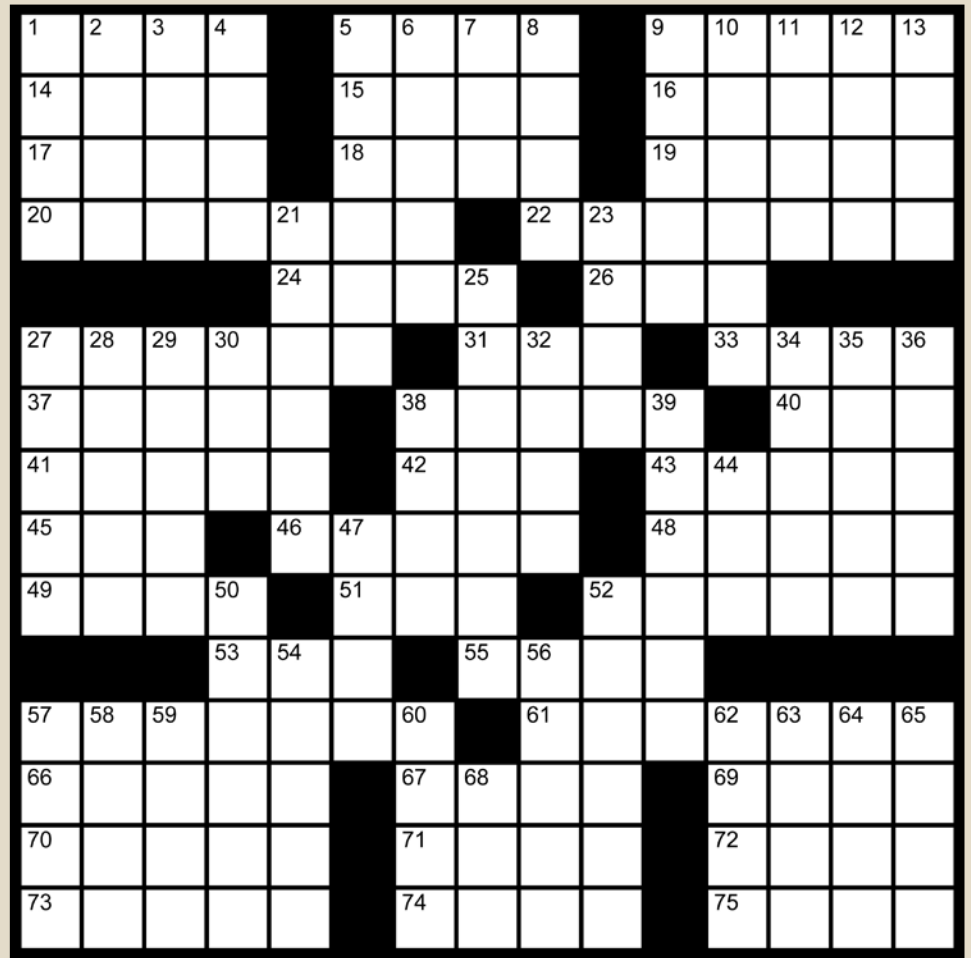
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2026

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 47.

ACROSS

1. "...the idols shall utterly pass _____" (Is. 2)
5. Looking back at part that got you stuck?
9. Mask-wearing ancient Greek performer
14. American politician Condoleezza _____
15. One of these in one is an accomplishment.
16. It's used by a carpenter to do his level best.
17. "seven churches... in _____" (Rev. 1)
18. What kind of model a good father is
19. _____ in: inveigled, duped
20. One place that frogs swarmed (Ex. 8)
22. Kind of server you likely don't want to meet
24. "my words will not _____ away." (Luke 21)
26. "...with _____ on the scroll." (Jer. 36)
27. Casey on *Mr. Dressup* or Kermit the Frog
31. "Inside of a dog, it's _____ dark to read." (Marx)
33. "his clothing white as _____" (Matt. 28)
37. It's red, white or yellow.
38. "I will care for all your _____" (Judges 19)
40. Take out a mortgage for part of tower?
41. Each one has its own song(s) and bird.
42. Red Cross in the U.S. (acronym)
43. "by works and not by faith _____" (James 2)
45. Noisy but long-lasting roof material
46. "I will _____ them out..." (Josh. 13)
48. Type of seahorse or butterflyfish
49. "not _____ to fulfill his promise" (2 Pet. 3)
51. "she _____ until she was satisfied" (Ruth 2)
52. "See you in the funny _____!"
53. "ashamed to _____ for... soldiers" (Ezra 8)
55. "raised him from the _____" (Gal. 1)
57. Sounds like Marsha's... swamps?
61. Spectrum of light from violet to red
66. Kind of care provided in emergency rooms
67. "his ears are _____ to their prayer" (1 Pet. 3)
69. "and _____ it with the king's ring" (Esther 8)
70. Attempted to be crazy tired?
71. Part of parental fee for living at home?
72. Catchy NBA team name
73. "Epaphras... _____ greetings" (Phile. 1)
74. "he _____ grass like an ox" (Job 40)
75. Baobab or kapok, for example



DOWN

1. Traditional descendant of Ishmael
2. "Let the _____ hear and..." (Prov. 1)
3. _____ reflux
4. "stayed a _____ and six months" (Acts 18)
5. "my _____ is parched." (Ps. 69)
6. Mixed-up Moors inside the house?
7. "_____ have turned aside" (Rom. 3)
8. Palindromic barnyard sound
9. Plane's parking space
10. Chronometers
11. Where you find the 18 1/2 minute gap (1972)
12. "which _____ are to go?" (Ex. 10)
13. Cincinnati sports team
21. "yet he _____ my eyes." (John 9)
23. _____ Act (1715 British law)
25. Famished
27. What Samson pulled up (Judges 16)
28. "stay... _____ you depart..." (Mark 6)
29. A modern harpsichord
30. "there is death in the _____!" (2 Kings 4)
32. "he did this _____ for all" (Heb. 7)
34. "_____ stayed with him" (Gen. 45)
35. One who has it
36. "like poisonous _____" (Hosea 10)
38. "_____ for one another" (1 Cor. 11)
39. Partly how Mom gets a lad's veggies in him?
44. A kind of service you do not want
47. Outdoor implement
50. "I have _____ my hours." (da Vinci)
52. Tainted _____ ain't the right tint
54. Part of rainwashed storage?
56. _____ horizon: black hole boundary
57. _____ Sundin (Swedish hockey player)
58. Half of an _____ - area of triumph for Jonathan (2 Sam. 14)
59. "plunge people into _____" (1 Tim. 6)
60. Feeling from thorns of distorted rose?
62. "_____ ' It Romantic?" (Ella Fitzgerald song)
63. Root or ginger _____
64. Better _____ than never, but better never _____
65. Conditional statement word in programming
68. "The Princess and the _____" (Andersen story)

SOMEBODY GAVE THIS TO YOU

by Mark Penninga

In your hands is a gift. That's right – this magazine was paid for by someone else who wanted you to have it.

It cost us \$33,663.02 to print and ship 11,340 copies of the May/June issue of this magazine, and that doesn't include the cost of actually making the content (the writers, editors, designers, and more). So the bare cost of each copy, simply to print and ship it, is \$3. The real cost is over \$5.

Where did we get the funds to pay each printing invoice? Advertising is a big help. But 83% of our income is from donations. Last year, about 1,000 individuals, families, and businesses made a donation, providing us with the means to publish this magazine and our other resources, like the Real Talk podcast.

These people are likely sitting next to you in your pew. It is like they bought you a Starbucks coffee every couple of months. Again, and again, and again.

Getting to know these donors has been an incredible joy and privilege. Many of them aren't just paying for you to get RP. They are also funding significant parts of

your church and school budgets, and helping cover the budgets of many other non-profits. You may think they must be "wealthy" – the kind of people who can write a cheque and hardly feel it. But most of these donors are no different than you. They simply decided to invest some of their income in this cause. Like you, they are "seeking first His kingdom," and they do so with joy. This is one more way they did so.

Because of their generosity, not only can RP exist, we can do so without government funding. The list of media in Canada that doesn't get government subsidies is very short. And unlike the few who can do this without government funding, we can also do so without charging a subscription. As a result, we can share our content far and wide online. Our "reach" over the past year was about 2.5 million.

Why do I share this with you? The donors themselves all received their income from the LORD. Sometimes we don't notice the gifts we receive every day, from



the LORD and from the hands of those beside us. Yet these gifts are all examples of the LORD's care and love for us. In this case, in a world awash with secular media, God has put God-honoring media in your lap so that you and your family have a wholesome alternative.

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

– Ps. 103:2

"Take care lest you forget the LORD your God....for it is He who gives you power to get wealth."

– Deut. 8:11-18

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."

– James 1:17 



WHAT'S MISSING?

You've arrived at the end of the magazine, and we'd love to hear from you about what else we could have covered. Was there an issue raised that was missing an important point? Is there a topic or issue we really need to be addressing? What did we miss? Use your phone to click on the QR code – or go to ReformedPerspective.ca/whatsmissing – and please let us know.

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